

APPENDIX 12

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

Policy LCR1.1 deals with Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). Each of the 13 LCAs is briefly described below. Further detail is to be included in a supplementary planning document. The boundaries of the LCAs are shown on the Proposals Map and in Diagram 1.

A. Woodford

Located at the extreme south of the Borough, the relative flatness of this LCA has facilitated the establishment of Woodford Aerodrome, the major part of which lies in Stockport. The land, which is in predominantly pastoral use with medium sized, even and rectangular field patterns, slopes away gently to the valley of the River Dean along the south-western boundary.

The roads through the area are characterised by varying degrees of ribbon development making up the settlement of Woodford. Infill development has occurred over the years and it is likely that only a few opportunities for such development remain. The northern part of the area has been affected by the construction of the Manchester Airport Eastern Link Road and will be further affected by the construction of the Poynton Bypass.

The area contains a number of outdoor recreation facilities and while there may be scope for additional facilities their cumulative impact will need to be carefully monitored. This area contains a significant number of the remaining ponds in the Borough and these should be protected for their ecological value. Re-instatement of degraded hedges in the area, and the planting of new areas of woodland, particularly along the urban boundary and along the existing and proposed major road lines, should be encouraged.

B. Heald Green Fringe

This LCA is similar to Woodford in terms of its generally flat landform, field patterns and vegetation cover, but is more affected by “urban fringe” uses. The area is split into three compartments by urban development. The western part, together with adjoining land in Manchester, forms a narrow green finger between the two districts. The larger central area contains a number of institutional uses and is bisected by the new A34 road. The smaller eastern area, south of Grove Lane, includes sports grounds, a mobile home park and a number of residential properties, many with large gardens.

In this LCA the pressure for urban and semi-urban development is likely to be considerable and care will be needed to protect the remaining open and agricultural character of the area. Tree planting should be encouraged, particularly in and around the institutional grounds and along the major road lines.

C. Ladybrook Valley

This LCA covers the full extent of the Ladybrook Valley within Stockport, from High Lane in the east to the junction with the Mersey Valley at Cheadle. From High Lane to just east of Bramhall the Ladybrook forms the boundary with Macclesfield Borough. Most of this area was included within the former statutory river valley local plan, though the area of Bramhall Golf Course has been added in defining the LCA boundary. The central part of the valley contains the parkland grounds of Bramhall Hall.

The valley forms a very valuable recreational and ecological resource penetrating the urban area and linking the Mersey Valley with the open land to the south east of the Borough. The open valley is, however, very narrow for much of its length and it is vital to safeguard what remains of its countryside character. For this reason even recreation facilities of a formal nature may not be appropriate.

To the west where the LCA leaves the Green Belt and winds through residential areas between Cheadle and Gatley, the safeguarding of domestic gardens from further encroachment by infill development will form an important part of safeguarding the character of this area.

D. River Mersey

This LCA is defined to include parts of the urban area as well as Green Belt land. Because of the valley form and the mixing of uses these areas are visually related to the remaining open land and any further development within the urban area needs to take full account of its impact on the LCA.

The structure of this area is far from uniform. The east-west course of the M60 Motorway is a dominant feature. There are also three substantial existing areas of industrial and commercial development, medium density residential areas, and a major utility site at Stockport Sewage Treatment Works.

The impact which these developments have had on the valley emphasise the importance of protecting and enhancing the open land that remains. This is made up of a predominantly “parkland” area south of the M60 (including the buildings and grounds of Abney Hall, Alexandra Hospital and the former Barnes Hospital). To the north of the motorway in the western part of the LCA is an area of open valley floor with some remaining agricultural character, much of which forms part of the Mersey flood plain. Significant areas of local open space are interspersed with the residential areas on the valley sides.

E. Tame Valley

The Tame Valley in the northern part of the Borough is a LCA where substantial environmental and recreational improvements have been implemented over

many years through joint working and countryside management schemes. The valley includes several environmental designations including Country Park, Local Nature Reserve and several Sites of Biological Importance. Protection and enhancement of this valuable resource which serves some of the more urbanised parts of the Borough will continue to be central to the Council's approach.

In the southern part the LCA overlaps with the Town Centre/M60 Gateway area and in this area there are a number of potential development sites where the impact of proposals on the LCA will be an important factor.

F. Brinnington East

This is the smallest LCA and covers an area of Green Belt linking the Tame and Goyt valleys to the east of Brinnington. The area is dominated by the M60 Motorway, but also includes schools, residential institution and depot sites and Sites of Biological Importance. There may be scope for further tree planting to soften the impact of the roads on adjoining areas.

G. Goyt Valley

One of the largest LCAs, this follows the course of the River Goyt from the border with Derbyshire/Cheshire at Strines to the edge of the Town Centre/M60 Gateway. Like the Tame Valley the Goyt Valley forms a very important environmental and recreational resource in close proximity to a number of the urban settlements of the Borough, and has been protected and enhanced for these purposes over a number of years.

The valley contains a mixture of agricultural land, Sites of Biological Importance (including a number of the Borough's ancient woodlands), developed sites including schools and factories, and the Borough's only remaining significant mineral working at Offerton.

As with the Tame, there will continue to be an emphasis on maintaining the countryside character of the valley. The LCA contains a number of sites where proposals may come forward on "Major Existing Developed Site" in the Green Belt under Policy GBA1.7 of the UDP. The landscape impact of proposals on these sites will be a major factor in their consideration. In addition, the mitigation of the environmental impact of the proposed Stockport north-south bypass will be an important issue in this LCA.

H. Offerton/Poise Brook

This LCA has similarities to LCA "F" at Brinnington East, being relatively small and in this case dominated by the potential effects of a new road proposal (the Stockport North-South Bypass) as opposed to an existing motorway. On completion of the road there will be potential development land in the LCA and the overriding consideration in dealing with proposals for transport or other

development will be to retain as much as possible of the value of the area as a Green wedge between areas of urban development, to enhance its value for recreation, and to encourage additional planting and landscaping in connection with development proposals.

I. Hazel Grove/High Lane

This is a large LCA between the Goyt and Ladybrook valleys, draining to the west via a number of brooks from the prominent feature of Marple Ridge in the east. The area contains SBIs including ancient woodland, but is dominated by farmsteads and hamlets, with two major golf courses adjoining the urban area to the west and one adjoining Marple to the north east. Two major north-south recreation routes cross the area in the form of the Macclesfield Canal and the Middlewood Way.

The western part of the area is affected by the proposed north-south bypass. Measures to mitigate the impact of the road on the landscape and to strengthen the planting at urban/rural boundaries, together with enhancements to the agricultural landscape, will be important factors in this LCA.

J. Mellor Moor

One of the two easternmost LCAs in the Borough, this is an upland area forming part of the Peak Fringe. Settlement is confined to the Conservation Area at Mellor/Moorend and to a handful of isolated farmsteads. This is part of the Gritstone Edge and large parts of the area are within Areas of Search for minerals. There is evidence of past quarrying but no current workings. A small part of Mellor Moor is designated as an SBI.

Any landscaping proposals in this area must respect the generally open moorland fringe character and the generally “unimproved” nature of the land. Any further tree and woodland planting would need to be carefully considered. Repair and maintenance of the deteriorating drystone walls in the area, which form an important part of its landscape character, should be encouraged. In this LCA and others in the eastern part of the Borough unsympathetic highway works could be particularly damaging, and any schemes should be well thought out, taking account of the UDP “Quiet Lanes” policy (TD2.2).

K. Marple Bridge

This is a transitional area between the Pennine Fringe and the Goyt and Etherow valleys, characterised by a number of east-west flowing stream valleys, the intervening ridges in the west having been developed. The western parts of the stream valleys therefore form a series of green wedges penetrating the built up part of Marple Bridge. The eastern part of the central valley and the Mill Brow area form a designated conservation area, and there are SBIs in each of the valleys.

There are areas of former quarrying in the northern part and Areas of Search for sand and sandstone/gritstone are identified. There is a significant amount of “ribbon development” within the LCA at Lane Ends.

L. Ludworth Moor

This area has similar characteristics to Mellor Moor as a Pennine fringe area with limited tree cover, significant stone resources and evidence of past working. A much larger area of Ludworth Moor is designated as a Site of Biological Importance than is the case at Mellor, and the area has a high value as a habitat for birds. There is one of only two Sites of Special Scientific Interest in the Borough at Ludworth Intakes (designated for its geological interest as a peri-glacial feature). There are two Ancient Monuments within the LCA, which is also traversed by the Cown Edge Way recreation route.

Similar landscaping considerations to LCA “J” Mellor Moor will apply.

M. Etherow Parklands

The final LCA comprises the Etherow Valley (which was the subject of a statutory valley local plan along with the River Goyt) and the higher ground to the west between Romiley and Woodley. The area is heavily wooded with a range of interesting landscape features including mill lakes and stone buildings. The main river valley and its tributaries have several SBIs including much ancient woodland, and the Etherow itself has a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserve and Country Park. The main settlement in the area is Compstall which has a designated Conservation Area.

Towards the west of the area the land rises from Romiley Golf Course towards the ridge of Werneth Low, while at the far west the “Top o th’ Hill” area forms a valuable elevated area between the built up areas of Romiley, Bredbury and Woodley.

