



Supplementary Planning Guidance in **Sefton**

Landscape Character Assessment of Sefton

December 2003

Andy Wallis
Planning and Economic
Regeneration Director
Balliol House
Balliol Road
Bootle

Sefton Council 





Landscape Character Assessment

The reason for this SPG, and the assessment work on which it is based, is set out in the SPG.

It may be thought that a big SPG is not needed for the rural area, where there is least likely to be major development pressure. Some reasons for the approach are given in the SPG. There are other uses for this SPG which partly explains its size.

The work done to support a planning policy for the rural landscape is equally important for landscape management. The SPG is relevant to the Mersey Forest Plan, for example. Indeed, the initial survey has already had an influence on Forest Plan policies and implementation.

The Assessment is very relevant to coastal management. Some of you may know that has been a major debate in Formby and Ainsdale about coast nature conservation policies (tree-felling); an SPG like this would have greatly helped that debate if it had been available.

The assessment will be relevant to emerging initiatives such as the Mersey Waterfront and Ribble Park proposals.

It is also a crucial background to more detailed planning work we need to do such as Conservation Area Character Statements for the rural conservation areas.

English Heritage is considering a county-wide survey of the historic landscape, and this SPG should form a key building block in that process.

Aside from all that, it carries forward an approach to the landscape and the environmental capital of Sefton which has gained some recognition outside Sefton, and which is worth continuing to do properly. But most important of all, it provides a reasonably objective assessment of the inherent value of the landscape which surrounds us, and which all too often is taken for granted.



Contents

Introduction:	Content and Method	Page 5
Figure 1	The Landscape Assessment Process	Page 6
Figure 2	Character Map of Sefton	Page 7
Character Areas:	Classification, Description, Strategy and Guidelines	ppp
A Sefton Coast		Page 8
1	Sandy Foreshore	Page 9
2	Coastal Dunes	Page 10
3	Dune Backlands	Page 13
B Lancashire Plain		Page 16
4	Coastal Marshlands	Page 17
5	Carr Farmlands	Page 19
6	Estate Farmlands	Page 22
7	Settled Farmlands	Page 25
8	Enclosed Marsh	Page 28
9	Sandstone Hills	Page 28
Appendices		
A Surveys & Databases (references)		Page 29
B Strategy Options		Page 29
C Statement of Public Consultation		Page 30
D List of Useful Contacts		Page 30
Footnotes		Page 30





Introduction

This guidance explains how the Landscape Character Assessment Policy GBC5 of the UDP is to be interpreted and applied as a tool for all those whose activities affect the rural landscape. It sets out and explains the criteria, characteristics and guidelines against which development proposals will be assessed. The guidance, together with the surveys on which it is based, can also be used to assist Landscape Management if required.

Landscape Character Assessment is a reasonably objective way of identifying the elements of a landscape which make up its particular character. Such an assessment helps to guide decisions about proposals which may affect that particular character.

It is an aid to understanding what, how, and why the landscape is shaped and how to ensure that change and development does not undermine whatever is characteristic or valued about any particular landscape and the ways that can be considered to improve the local distinctiveness of a place or area.

Context

Landscape Character Assessment has developed over the last 10 years and grown in importance due to the requirements set out in Central Government guidance and policies and as the emphasis on sustainability has increased, reinforcing the relevance of landscape character assessment in development plans and development control. Ways of carrying out assessments have evolved from work carried out by the then Countryside Commission, English Heritage and English Nature. In many cases this work built on similar work done by County Planning Authorities on their landscapes, for example Warwickshire and Staffordshire County Councils¹. This work was based on a realisation that the whole landscape is of value, and was supported by government policy guidance which moved away from designations to a more general approach to landscape conservation (see for example, PPG 15 Planning & the Historic Environment section 6.40). *Note: footnotes are on page 30.*

Working in parallel, the Commission and English Nature developed the Countryside Character Map of England and the Natural Areas Map of England². The Countryside Character Map defines Regional Character Areas for the whole of England. Within Volume 2 (North West) three Regional Character Areas are found within Sefton: the

Sefton Coast; the Lancashire and Amounderness Plain and the Merseyside Conurbation.

The Countryside Agency (CoAg) developed Landscape Assessment Guidance³ which set out a method of analysing landscapes applicable at a variety of levels, from national to local. The Sefton Landscape Character Assessment is based on this method.

A Landscape Character Assessment for Sefton

The previous UDP included policies for the protection of defined 'Heritage Landscapes'. It was decided to replace these local designations with a broader approach to the landscape of the Borough reflecting its overall value, in line with government guidance and advice from the Countryside Agency. A survey was commissioned the results of which have been accepted by the Planning Authority as the basis for developing planning policy and guidance⁴. Supplementary planning guidance has been derived from this survey using a method developed by the consultant combined with guidance detailed in CoAg's Landscape Character Assessment noted above.

The survey, and the assessment process, has been informed by a number of relevant surveys and databases as set out in Appendix A.

Method

The Assessment Process is set out in Figure 1. The baseline survey provides the information for Stage 1 and 2. Stage 1 results in the Classification and Descriptions for each Landscape Character type and area. It maps their extent (Figure 2), based on collated information (see Appendix A), including geology, soils, field and cultural patterns, ecology, heritage and historical features and patterns, land use and tree cover. Clear summary descriptions of the character areas identify the key characteristics of each Landscape Character Area. Within Sefton there are seven areas, an additional two have character profiles only, where they form an immediate or close boundary with Sefton. The Character Areas (numbered 1-9) form individual headings throughout the document. Characteristics of the Landscape Character types (that is sub-divisions within the Character Area), which make up the 'whole' are briefly outlined, before summarising the pressures or key issues upon the area, which threaten the integrity of the landscape type/area.



The decision making part of the process (Stages 2 and 3) was undertaken by the Planning Department using methodology set out by the consultant, together with CoAg advice as noted above, to provide the strategy and guidelines. This part of the process reviews findings from Stages 1. It identifies the condition of the landscape by assessing its overall intactness, evidence of change, trends which may cause future change and potential development pressures. It predicts the consequences of land use trends and development pressures on the landscape and positive and negative effects (vulnerability and sensitivity to change) on the key characteristics. Threats to the integrity of the landscape type/ area are defined.

The distinction between the character of a particular landscape and its condition provides a rational basis on which to assess the need and/ or opportunities for enhancement. The judgements aim to distinguish between those areas of countryside where the character is already strong and where conservation or restoration of the existing pattern should be a priority; and other areas where the landscape is less distinct, or in poor condition and where there are opportunities to strengthen and enhance or create new landscapes and/ or accommodate change. To aid this process, strategy options, detailed in Appendix B, provide an idea of the distinctions between categories. These are not rigid and most landscapes will fall somewhere between the extremes. The strategy in these areas will need to strike a balance between conservation, restoration and new design. The balance will vary from place to place, depending on the inherent character of a particular landscape and the reasons why it has become degraded.

Conclusions of the Stage 2 analysis are then translated into a Strategy Statement or Vision

For the future (Stage 3), which is a short statement that encapsulates the essence of what the strategy is trying to achieve. This is supported by a firm set of guidelines, that set out how the vision can be achieved. These will be used to guide opportunities towards conservation, preservation, enhancement and restoration and set priorities for those responsible for implementation through planning policies and countryside management.

Whilst attempting to accommodate change in the countryside it is important to note that historic patterns of settlement and land use, as well as natural features including geology topography and the ecology of the area are key determinants of landscape character and that land use change should, where possible, respect these patterns (i.e. change should be **appropriate** to its setting). The impact of land use change, in particular new development,

can also be minimised, if it is targeted at those landscapes which are least sensitive to change.

Sensitivity can be defined as the degree to which the countryside can accept change without causing irreparable damage to the essential character and fabric of the landscape. Sensitivity is closely related to the nature and pattern of key elements that define the particular landscape. Landscapes with 'time depth' (i.e. those that display a long and continuous history of evolution), together with those that are characterised by a clear and consistent pattern of key elements, tend to be more sensitive to change than landscapes of more recent origin, or those that have few distinguishing features. Visibility is also a factor which contributes to sensitivity, particularly at a site level.

Figure 1: The Landscape Assessment Process

STAGE 1 SURVEY

COLLATION & ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION		
• Desk study	• Field survey	• Consultation

CLASSIFICATION & DESCRIPTION	
• Character areas	• Landscape types

STAGE 2 EVALUATION

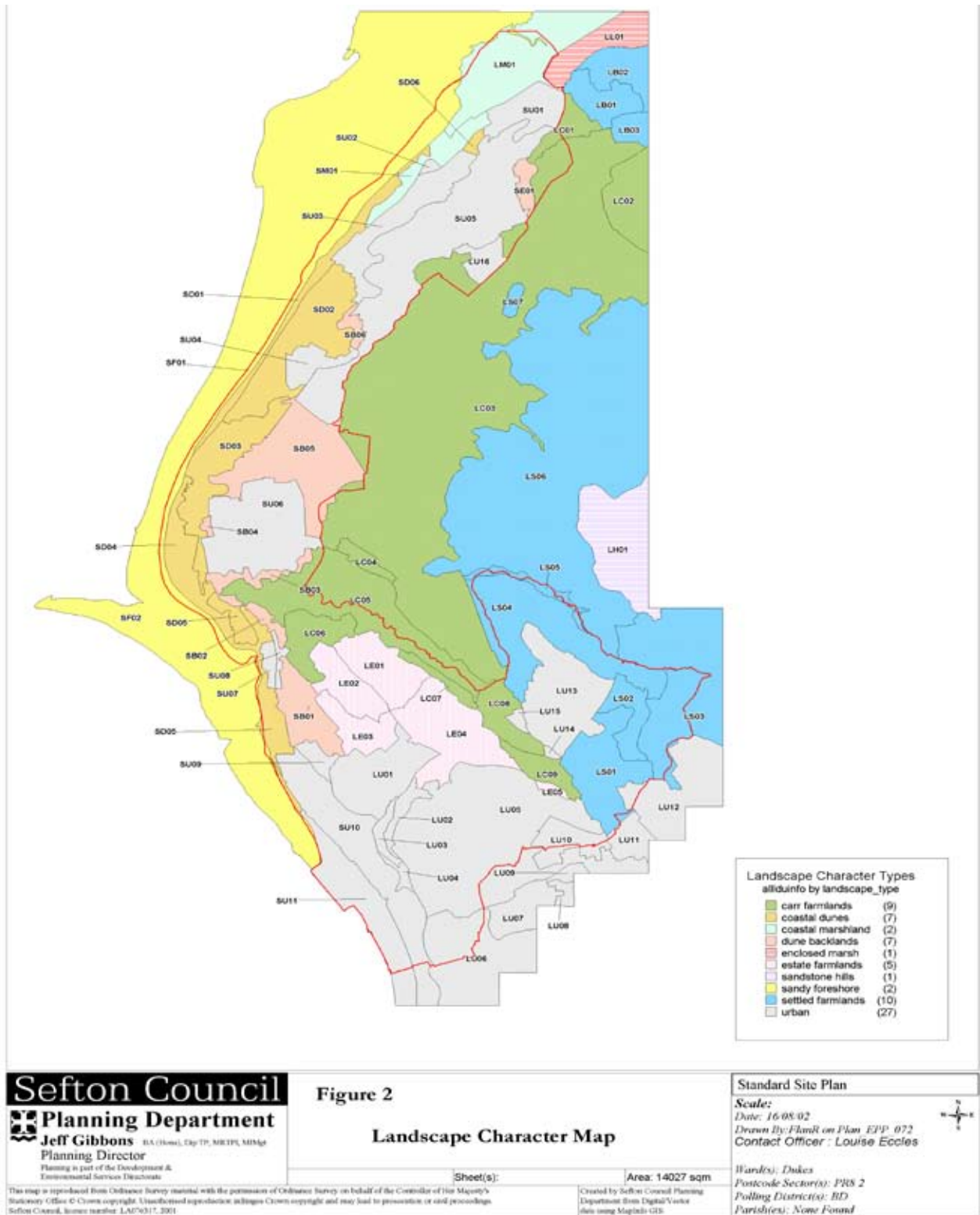
REVIEW & ANALYSIS		
• Condition	• Forces for change	• Public opinion

EVALUATION		
• Vulnerability	• Sensitivity	• Importance

STAGE 3 POLICY & GUIDANCE

STRATEGY	
• Management	• Land use change

POLICY FORMULATION	
• Character based policies	• Designation policies





A. Sefton Coast

The Sefton Coast is a small, but varied region of intertidal flats, salt marsh, sand dunes and former dune slacks which extend northwards in a narrow belt from the outskirts of Liverpool to the Ribble estuary. In many ways this region can be thought of as the seaward fringe to the adjoining Lancashire Plain. Indeed there is much evidence to suggest that the landscapes of the Sefton Coast are of relatively recent origin, having developed only in the last 4000 years or so. Prior to this, the original coastline lay further inland, following a line now marked by rising ground along the eastern edge of the fen peats and silts of the Alt basin.

The Sefton Coast and much of the adjoining Lancashire Plain are underlain by soft sandstone's and mudstones of Triassic age which are almost entirely masked by thick deposits of glacial and more recent drift, creating a generally flat, low-lying topography. Minor variations in landform reflect the different types of drift and, in particular, their mode of origin, rather than the underlying solid geology. The drift sequence consists of a semi-continuous spread of glacial till, overlain by fluvio-glacial sands and gravels, laid down as the ice sheets decayed at the end of the last Ice Age. Variations in sea level and the position of the coastline during and immediately after this period guided the subsequent deposition of marine, estuarine and river alluvium across the region, associated with the development of peat in localised hollows and shallow basins.

Continued sea level changes since the end of the last Ice Age have led to some of the older drift being reworked to form the extensive beaches and adjoining dune belt that lie along the Sefton coast. These dunes, which are of recent wind blown origin, form the dominant landscape feature in the region, rising locally to 20 metres above sea level in the vicinity of Ainsdale and Formby. A large area in the central part of this dune belt was successfully afforested in phases from the late 19th century in an attempt to stabilise the dunes. Two principal landowners were involved, Charles Weld Blundell and Jonathan Formby, and in the period 1887 to 1920, many thousands of young pines were planted, mainly on the landward side of the dunes. The main species were Corsican and Austrian pine with smaller numbers of Scots, maritime and mountain pine. A considerable amount of felling occurred during the second world war and although some restocking was subsequently undertaken, forestry management generally declined in the post war period.

Inland of the coastal dunes, there is a gently undulating zone of blown sand, rarely exceeding 10 metres, which is slightly raised above the adjoining fen peats. It is this zone,

situated between the mobile dunes and the wet mosslands, that has been most modified by human activities and where much of the present day urban development is situated.

The Sefton Coast remained relatively unaffected by early settlement, and it was only after the comprehensive drainage of the inland mosses and meres in the 17th and 18th centuries that the region become more accessible and began to change. Sea bathing became increasingly fashionable in the 18th century, leading to the early development of resorts such as Southport and Ainsdale. The much improved access afforded by the development of the railway system in the 1840's led to a rapid expansion of these coastal resorts. This has had a significant impact on the landscapes of the Sefton coast, which today have a strong urban fringe/recreational character. The largest settlement is Southport which serves as both a holiday and dormitory town for the nearby industrial conurbation's of Manchester and Liverpool. In all of the coastal resorts extensive areas of modern housing now surround the older Victorian core.

The above description defines the Sefton Coast as a broad landscape region. Within this area three distinct types of landscape can be distinguished, each of which represents a particular aspect of the wider regional character. These include:

- Sandy foreshore
- Coastal dunes
- Dune backlands

Note :

The Coastal Dunes are afforded significant protection, due to their status as :

*Sites of Biological or Geological Interest;
Sites of International & National Nature Conservation
Importance;*

And position within or designation as:

*Coastal Planning Zone;
Coastal park and ;
Local Nature Reserve*

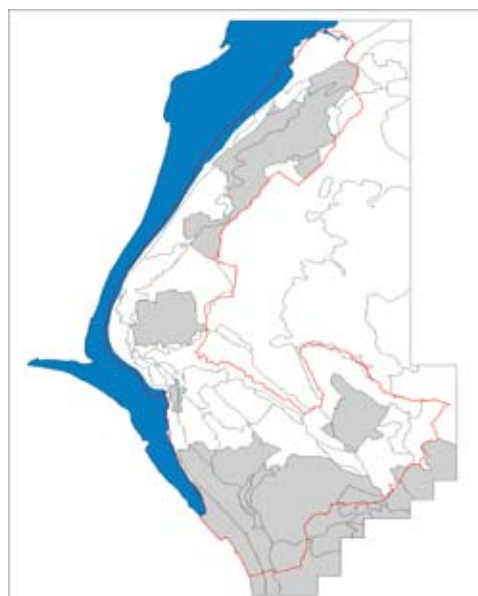
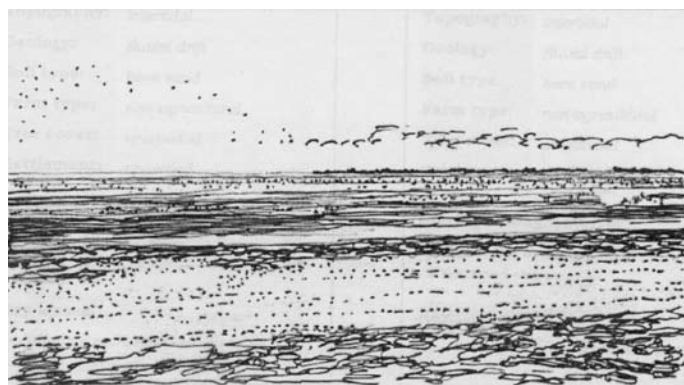
Management of the coastal areas is well documented in the documents referenced in, and Chapter 12 itself, of the UDP. This includes amongst others, The Sefton Coast Management Plan 1997, Sefton Coast Candidate Special Area of Conservation, Conservation Strategy 1999, Beach



Management Strategy 1991 and Shoreline Management Plans. Any guidelines documented here shall be read in conjunction with Chapter 12 of the UDP and document listed therein, in order to formulate a correct assessment of the requirements for a particular area.

1. Sandy foreshore

An exposed, intertidal landscape, characterised by a gently sloping sandy beach with distant views out over the sea to the far horizon. This is a dynamic landscape where the constant ebb and flow of the tide and the different moods of the sea create a series of ever changing scenes; at low tide the extensive sandy flats with pools of shimmering water are peppered by flocks of feeding birds, while at high tide the beach shrinks to a narrow strip of land sandwiched between the breaking waves and the adjoining dunes.



Key characteristics

- **constantly changing intertidal foreshore**
- **extensive sandy beach at low tide**
- **wide views to far horizon**
- **strong impression of sky and space**
- **strandline marked by vegetation and other debris**
- **large flocks of feeding birds**
- **ever present roar of the wind and sea**

Sandy foreshore

The sandy foreshore comprises a number of component land description units (LDU's). These have been defined by the occurrence of certain key characteristics, which are summarised below. A first attempt has also been made to summarise the key issues affecting each LDU.

SF01 (Sefton coast)		SF02 (Sefton coast)	
Topography:	intertidal	Topography:	intertidal
Geology:	fluvial drift	Geology:	fluvial drift
Soil type:	bare sand	Soil type:	bare sand
Land use:	rough/wild land	Land use:	rough/wild land
Tree cover:	unwooded	Tree cover:	unwooded
Settlement:	unsettled	Settlement:	unsettled
Distinguishing features:		Distinguishing features:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high water beach • open character 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low water beach • exposed character 	
Key issues:		Key issues:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • informal recreation - localised impact 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sand extraction - localised impact 	

Summary Of Pressures

- Natural forces, such as winds and tides are the biggest influence to change. Climate change over the next 50 years or so is expected to have substantial



impacts.

- Recreational use of the sandy foreshore results in littering of the beach area, which in turn generates 'sweeping' of the beach to remove this debris, generally in summer months. This action itself interferes with the ever changing natural process of deposition and the creation of 'peaks and troughs' (potential building blocks for the dunes themselves), along the foreshore, which are levelled out and this effectively destroys the tidal process.
- The Historic Landscape Characterisation Document (June 2001) comments on the potential effects to the archaeology within the type through the sandwinning process. It recommends more research into the archaeology of this type.

Strategy Statement

Conserve the constantly changing intertidal foreshore, the beach, the long and open views, the impression and experiences of wind and elements and ecological habitats, particularly for feeding birds. Question the required extent and duration of future sandwinning proposals, encouraging greater archaeological studies throughout the character type and encourage sustainable management of recreational usage. Incorporate any proposals and findings from studies into relevant Beach and Coastal Management Plans and documents.

Policy Guidelines

<p>1. Conserve the changing but 'natural' appearance and experiences of the intertidal foreshore.</p>	<p>Allow to continue the natural processes which create the constantly changing intertidal foreshore, subject to flood defence requirements to be specified in Shoreline Management Plans (see ref .. above). Proposals should however endeavour to provide sensitive and sustainable solutions which minimise changes to Landscape Character.</p> <p>Continued recreational usage and access to the beach with some greater consideration towards sustainable management systems for the control of litter.</p>
---	--

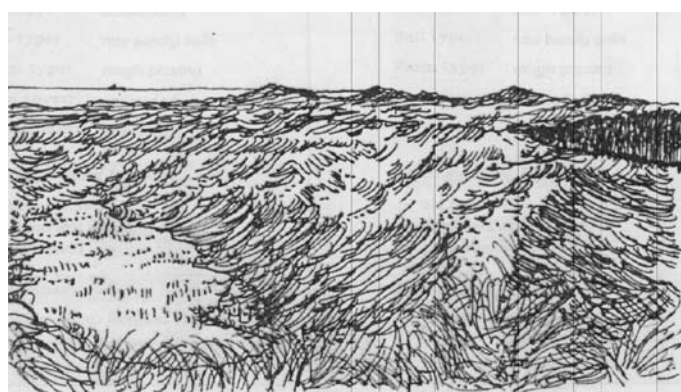
<p>2. Strengthen interpretation, understanding and potentially management by further studies into archaeological components.</p>	<p>Further archaeological studies have been recommended in the Historic Characterisation document, to better inform understanding, interpretation and management of the Sandy Foreshore area. Findings should be incorporated into Beach and Coastal Management Plans and documents.</p>
<p>3. Conserve ecological habitats created by the sandy foreshore.</p>	<p>Support the natural processes which create the habitat for feeding birds.</p>
<p>4. Conserve the Foreshore area by restricting development and monitoring current activities</p>	<p>Monitor activities within the Foreshore Area such as sand-winning and bait digging to prevent over exploitation.</p> <p>Any potentially future redundant areas should aim to restore key characteristics where feasible. Limit and where feasible deny car parking access to Foreshore areas.</p> <p>Any signs etc should fit within a co-ordinated framework of approved details for the beach front/Foreshore area.</p>
<p>5. Conserve the Foreshore by continuing the zone areas to control conflicting usages</p>	<p>To promote conservation of ecological habitats for feeding/wading birds by restricting use of beach for dogs.</p>

2. Coastal dunes

A visually diverse semi-natural landscape characterised by a small scale, undulating topography comprising ridges of mobile and fixed dunes, interspersed with occasional damp hollows. Landcover is dominated by extensive tracts of marram grass with localised areas of blown sand along the seaward side of the dunes. Views from within this landscape are typically short and enclosed by the undulating landform, creating a strong sense of visual containment. This impression is reinforced by the presence of mature pine plantations along the back of the dunes, and is in contrast to the wider vistas and glimpses of the sea afforded

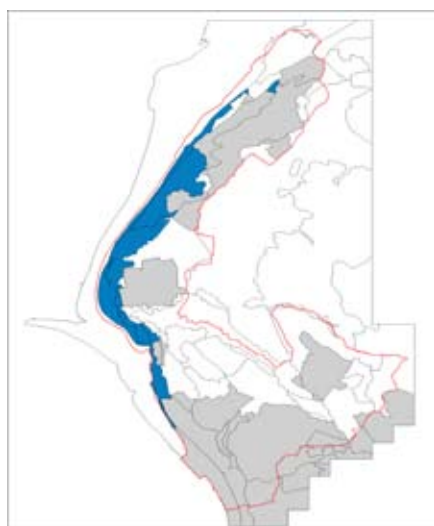


from the summits of the seaward dunes. Although the dark mass of the pinewoods can appear somewhat incongruous, this impression is often balanced by the intricate nature of the transition between woodland and open dune. This dynamic relationship, which reflects successive phases of planting followed by piecemeal clearance, is indicative of the underlying character of the dune landscape.



Key characteristics

- small scale undulating topography
- intimate, visually contained landscape
- wide vistas and glimpses of the sea from dune summits
- mobile dunes with areas of blown sand
- older 'fixed' dunes dominated by marram grass
- occasional damp hollows with shallow pools
- localised pinewoods to the rear of the dunes



Coastal dunes

The coastal dunes comprise a number of component land description units (LDU's). These have been defined by the occurrence of certain key characteristics, which are summarised below. A first attempt has also been made to summarise the key issues affecting each LDU.

SD01 (Sefton coast)		SD02/04/06 (Sefton coast)	
Topography:	coastal dunes	Topography:	coastal dunes
Geology:	blown sand	Geology:	blown sand
Soil type:	raw sandy soils	Soil type:	raw sandy soils
Land use:	rough/wild land	Land use:	rough/wild land
Settlement:	unsettled	Settlement:	unsettled
Tree cover:	unwooded	Tree cover:	unwooded
Distinguishing features:		Distinguishing features:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • young dunes • prominent landform • bare sand 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • old dunes • prominent landform • dune vegetation 	
Key issues:		Key issues:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • urban edge - localised impact • leisure development – localised impact 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • urban edge - localised high impact • leisure development - localised impact • localised scrub encroachment 	

SD03 (Formby Hills)		SD05 (Cabin Hill)	
Topography:	coastal dunes	Topography:	coastal dunes
Geology:	blown sand	Geology:	blown sand
Soil type:	raw sandy soils	Soil type:	raw sandy soils
Land use:	rough/wild land	Land use:	rough/wild land
Settlement:	unsettled	Settlement:	unsettled
Tree cover:	secondary/recent	Tree cover:	unwooded
Distinguishing features:		Distinguishing features:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pine plantation • dune vegetation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dune slack • shallow pool 	
Key issues:		Key issues:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forestry- widespread impact • urban edge - localised high impact 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • built features - localised impact 	



Summary Of Pressures

- Urban expansion and regeneration, including of roads, car parks and associated infrastructure, settlement (particularly new and existing housing), possible additional military establishments and recreational uses such as golf courses, new roads (Marine Drive) prevent accretion/operation of the natural dune system.
- Impacts of amenity, recreation and forestry aspects of the pine plantations. The pinewood plantations destroy visual unity of the open dune character and dune vegetation.
- Recreational requirements seeking access to the sea or dunes, pathways sometimes emphasising the linear (Sefton Coastal Footpath) rather than reflecting the character of the dunes. Desired access to the sea would create myriad of paths destroying vegetation if not controlled.
- Natural forces which created the Dunes are equally likely to change and modify their form/ extent over time. For instance the lowering of the water table may be due to 'natural' elements, but which nevertheless reduce the dune stacks, habitats and introduce other less desirable species.
- Loss of historical context of arable Asparagus fields, due to neglect/agricultural changes
- Loss of habitats for protected species due to removal of pine plantations.
- Introduction of competitive grey squirrel species, threatening red squirrels through planting and regeneration which encourages movement into the area through loss of 'island'/isolated planting.

encourage retention of historic associations both of the dune system itself and their relationship with adjacent land uses. Land uses such as golf and nature reserves are acceptable, but these need to retain and further promote the survival of existing and 'natural' landforms and ecological or archaeological interests.

Policy Guidelines

1. Conserve the small scale, intimate and undulating topography and visual unity of the dune landscape.

It is important to recognise the different dune formations, depending on their location and the manner in which these are located geographically within the area. That is how a narrow linear and longitudinal belt of younger dunes (post 1850) closest to the Sandy foreshore are flanked by the older wider belt of 'fixed' dunes behind. Both types of dunes are threatened where in immediate proximity to the urban edge. Usual permitted development within Green Belt should be considered more carefully, due to the status of the coastal dunes noted above, to prevent further piecemeal development occurring within these areas.

Shoreline Management Plans (see P ..) will put forward proposals for those areas which are currently experiencing erosion and which may require additional flood defence interventions. These should however seek to minimise changes to the landscape character and provide sustainable and sensitive solutions.

Strategy Statement

Conserve and strengthen the dune type landscape character of the small scale undulating topography, with its relatively narrow east-west band of the 'mobile' and 'fixed' dunes and occasional shallow pools. Conserve the visual unity with its contrasting and intimate views from within the dunes to the wide open and distant views afforded from dune summits. Strictly limit further development, both built and forestry type plantations, monitor and manage remaining plantations and recreational usage and



2. Conserve sections of the existing pinewood plantations for purposes of habitat and amenity management. Selective removal of pinewood areas with restoration of open dune and associated vegetation to agreed selected areas.

The forest plantations within these areas mask the original landform and its archaeological, ecological and landscape context. Constant albeit piecemeal development within the woodland areas has hidden the scale of development, trees integrate the developments but mask the extent of erosion of the coastal dune area. Development should not be permitted, either within the woodland areas or more open dune areas.

Although not 'natural', Pine plantations have to some degree become accepted and cherished by local inhabitants and contribute to local distinctiveness. Particularly nearest to development they should continue to form a physical buffer to harsh winds and blown sands. They should continue to integrate existing development and maintain the habitat for the red squirrels.

Proposed and agreed selective removal of pinewood areas (see documents noted in Chapter 12 of the Sefton UDP), will contribute to improved visual unity of the dune areas, by permitting the flow of the dune areas, particularly in a north-south direction. Continued management however of remaining plantations is recommended, to ensure retention of important red squirrel habitat and to assess whether removal of seaward areas of planting results in significant death/loss to remaining woodlands through increased windblow etc.

3. Conserve historical routes and built features, enhance interpretation of archaeological, historical and ecological aspects

Notable built features are few, but include the listed building of St. Luke's Church, characteristic in its use of stone, with stone gravestones and boundary walls. In some instances the long linear paths to the sea follow previous fisherman routes. Public interpretation of the historical elements would contribute to local distinctiveness, both for visitors and local inhabitants. Long linear routes should not otherwise be imposed upon the dune area, as these are not easily integrated into the undulating topography. Equally emphasis of long and linear routes through tree planting should be avoided.

The Historic Characterisation Document states that archaeological studies within this area are limited and these are recommended.

4. Conserve the rich variety of dune habitats

Any permitted development should ensure that any proposed planting is appropriate. The range of dune habitats varies within an area and it is important to recognise for example, whether an acid or calcifugous system, or both, is in place. Careful ecological studies should be undertaken, not just to the site in question (as would be required under policy DQ2) but also to adjacent areas, as these may be relevant to the desirable retention of habitats. Further advice in appropriate species mix compositions, possibly through use of NVC classifications would be useful.

5. Conserve or restore, where feasible, additional areas of the open dune systems

Additional restoration and management of areas of open dune should be encouraged and promoted, particularly to existing land uses within the coastal dunes such as golf courses, schools etc, possibly promoting regeneration to neglected, underused land or set aside. Greater ownership of land in private occupancy by organisations such as English Nature, Sefton Council or the Forestry Commission and further protection and survival.

Open areas adjacent, but within the urban fabric (greenspaces) should be promoted to develop continuity, links to coastal systems to maintain a sense of place. Loss of greenspaces to development should be avoided.

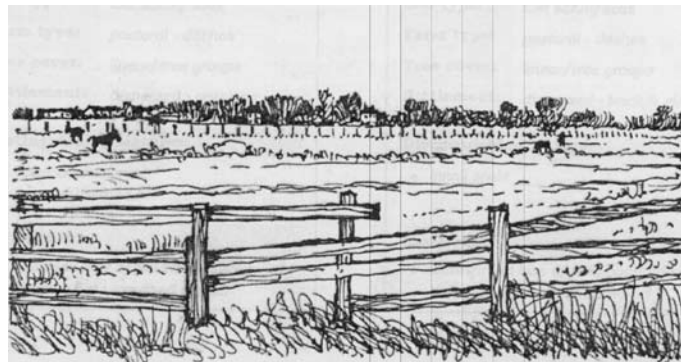
Sustainable management measures should address 'problems' such as constant road sweeping and aim to create a balance between retention and continuity of the dune systems, particularly where the longitudinal band is very narrow, where these conflict with pressures for urban development, particularly Southport Town Centre and the Marine Lake Area.

3. Dune backlands

A small scale, settled, pastoral landscape closely associated with a low-lying zone of blown sand to the rear of the coastal dune belt. This zone of hummocky ground is characterised by both wetland and heathland habitats, the latter being particularly prevalent along the interface between the backlands and the adjoining dunes. This is an intimate landscape of small rectilinear fields, scattered farms and clusters of wayside dwellings. In places the fields are hedged, but often they are poorly defined by ditches and wire fences. Lines of willow and other trees make a

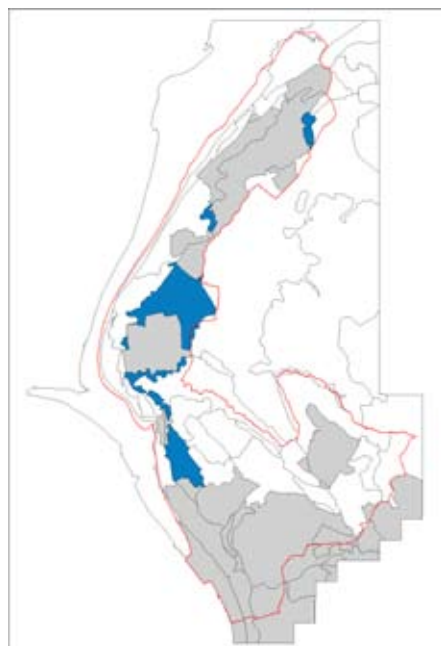


significant contribution to the character of the backlands, creating filtered views and a semblance of visual enclosure in an otherwise unwooded landscape.



Key characteristics

- low-lying hummocky topography
- sandy soils with patches of heathland
- dispersed pattern of farmsteads and wayside dwellings
- poorly defined pattern of small rectilinear fields
- lines of willow and scrub along ditches



Dune backlands

The dune backlands comprise a number of component land description units (LDU's). These have been defined on the occurrence of certain key characteristics, which are summarised below. A first attempt has also been made to summarise the key issues affecting each LDU.

SB01 (Hightown)		SB02 (Hightown)	
Topography:	levels	Topography:	levels
Geology:	blown sand	Geology:	blown sand
Soil type:	wet sandy soils	Soil type:	wet sandy soils
Land use:	pastoral-ditches	Land use:	pastoral-ditches
Settlement:	dispersed-gritstone	Settlement:	dispersed - brick & slate
Tree cover:	linear/tree groups	Tree cover:	linear/tree groups
Distinguishing features:		Distinguishing features:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • open character • sparsely settled 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small scale 	
Key issues:		Key issues:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • localised loss of field boundaries • urban edge - localised impact 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • widespread loss of field boundaries • built features - localised impact 	

SB03/SB04/SB05 (Formby)		SB06 (Hillside)	
Topography:	levels	Topography:	levels
Geology:	blown sand	Geology:	blown sand
Soil type:	wet sandy soils	Soil type:	wet sandy soils
Land use:	pastoral-ditches	Land use:	pastoral-ditches
Settlement:	settled	Settlement:	settled
Tree cover:	linear/tree groups	Tree cover:	linear/tree groups
Distinguishing features:		Distinguishing features:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small scale • filtered views 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small scale • dune heath 	
Key issues:		Key issues:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cultural pattern in decline • widespread sub-urban influences 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • urban edge - high impact • loss of cultural pattern 	



Summary Of Pressures

1. Urban expansion, inclusive of woodland and recreational uses such as sports pitches has extended considerably into the Landscape Character area and threatens its continued existence. Looking at Figure 2 the fragmented and piecemeal remaining areas are apparent, particularly to areas south of Formby and around Southport.
2. Loss of historic character by modernisation of farm houses and buildings, such as Formby Hall and Parkland.
3. Further development by the Ministry Of Defence within dune backland areas.
4. Changes in farming practices from pastoral to arable agriculture, accompanied by intensification of the latter has resulted in larger scale field patterns, loss of hedgerows and change in visual appearance.
5. Planting schemes which destroy the dune type topography/ geology, land cover, land use and visual unity by their choice of species, scale and location e.g. emphasising linear routes and are otherwise out of character with the Character Area.
6. Changes in pastoral land use through horse grazing with associated changes to field boundaries, i.e. loss of hedgerows leading to the proliferation of post and rail/ wire fencing and localised change to visual unity.
7. Loss of type, i.e. Dune Backland due to the small areas remaining and lack of awareness, ignorance and neglect of type and typical heathland or wetland vegetation.
8. Weakening of the Character Area through the imposition and dissecting of the landscape through transportation routes e.g. Sefton Coastal Footpath, A565 and associated junction, railway and Woodvale Airport.

Strategy Statement

Conserve, strengthen and enhance the low-lying hummocky topography of the remaining Dune Backland type areas and where feasible increase the type. Limit development whilst promoting traditional pastoral and recreational usage which emphasizes the informal and passive use of the coastal countryside. Strengthen and promote the pattern of hedgerows, where appropriate. Planting schemes should be appropriate to the localised type, that is either wetland or heathland type vegetation

and aim to emphasise, educate and increase this local distinctiveness. Conserve the existing small woodland blocks. Conserve historic features to maintain local distinctiveness. Encourage ecological diversity, particularly the ditches and through field ponds in the wetland areas.

Policy Guidelines

1. **Conserve the low-lying hummocky topography**

It is fundamentally the ground conditions, that is the blown sandy soils to the rear of the coastal dunes, which have created this landscape type. Retention of the type particularly given its remaining extent is paramount. Development should be strictly limited. Greater awareness, appreciation and education of the type is required. This could be through greater promotion of a good case example, such as the Freshfield Dune Heath SSSI.

A good example deserving restoration would be the area to the east and north of Formby Hall, adjacent to the dismantled railway.

2. **Conserve the pastoral land use to restore and strengthen visual unity**

Combined arable and pastoral land use contributes to the fragmented pattern. A return to pastoral use would help restore and retain visual unity, particularly to the areas of Blundellsands and Hightown and areas to the north and east of Formby. A merging of land uses would, however, be appropriate on the boundaries with the Estate Farmlands and Carr Farmlands adjacent.

In small localised areas to the north east of Formby visual unity is maintained through the retention of the low lying topography, but a new character has been imposed by the proliferation of fencing to horse grazing areas. The small scale localised changes should be accepted, but future extent limited and aim to incorporate and promote elements of the heathland vegetation.

Aim to avoid further dissection of the landscape and thus visual unity by resisting further imposition of transport routes.



3. Strengthen and enhance vegetation patterns, in particular hedgerows, heathland and woodland as appropriate

In the wetland areas planting can be either linear (along ditch boundaries), or grouped when associated with (slacks and field ponds), usually of willows.

In areas of sandy grassland exists, ecological diversity should be encouraged, particularly of heathland species, whilst retaining and promoting the open glades. Further ecological studies of the heathland possibly through NVC classification is recommended to provide useful guidance on appropriate species mix and combinations.

Small woodland blocks might be most appropriate either within the wetland areas west of Little Crosby, or agricultural areas south and west of Formby Hall. Either woodland or tree planting would be appropriate to soften the more harsh impacts of the urban edge (south-east Hightown, north/ north-east of Blundellsands and south-east Churchtown). Hedgerows should be maintained and promoted, particularly as buffer to the A565 and those areas between Formby and Ainsdale, east of the A565.

Ensure woodland blocks/plantations do not result in regeneration of woodland species leeward of existing mature species at the expense of (ie shading out) the dune heath vegetation.

4. Conserve and strengthen the heathland vegetation through promotion and education

Encourage support of the heathland type through promotional activities throughout the Character type area. Incorporate retention of the type into local and regional guidance (management plans) included promotion within greenspaces in the urban area, for example green spaces within Ainsdale, St. Annes's Church grounds, Freshfield and other than noted in 1 above restoration would be desirable to the open space to the north of Hightown/west of the railway.

5. Conserve and enhance historic character through retention & careful enhancement of built form

Where older dwellings, particularly farm houses, barns, stone walls etc. exist it is desirable to retain these (where feasible). There are several farms, houses, barns etc protected through Listed Building status. This includes various cottages, churches adjacent to the Churchtown area, namely along Botanic Road, Meols Hall and grounds, Formby Hall and associated buildings. Greater descriptions on external areas grounds context etc would be useful.

6. Conserve, restore and enhance areas of land to be redeveloped

Should areas require restoration and/or removal of existing, derelict buildings careful consideration should be afforded to redevelopment. Where 'natural' or semi-natural dune backland exists this should be retained, with redevelopment generally concentrated in those areas where the footprint of the building(s) was (were) located. Each case should be assessed individually basis.

Additional development, specifically on Ministry Of Defence land or, Airfield sites should aim to concentrate around the existing built form and where feasible not extend considerably into the more natural areas of the Dune Backland.

Ecological studies (NVC documentation) of the Altcar Rifle Range area and Woodvale Airport indicate that good examples are presently retained which are of ecological importance. Potentially different management regimes within these areas could significantly improve these habitats, this would need to be promoted and implemented with Ministry of Defence approval.

B. Lancashire plain

The Lancashire Plain is a broad, low-lying region which extends northwards along the western flank of the Pennine uplands between the Mersey basin and Morcambe Bay. The Irish Sea coast defines the present day limit of the region, although topographically the plain continues far out beneath the sea.

The whole region is underlain by red mudstones and sandstones of Permo-Triassic age, but it is only in the southern part that this solid bedrock emerges from beneath its thick covering of glacial and more recent drift. The series of low sandstone ridges which occur in this area



were formed when deep channels were cut by ice sheets moving in a south-easterly direction from the Irish Sea into the low-lying Cheshire Plain. The estuaries of the Dee and the Mersey flow in the two main channels, while to the north of the Liverpool conurbation, the river valleys of the Alt, Ditton, Sankey and Douglas follow the same general pattern.

Elsewhere, the thick deposits of glacial till gives rise to the gently rolling topography that characterises much of the central and eastern parts of the region. Localised hollows in this impermeable till were formerly filled by peat, but most of these raised bogs have been cut over and reclaimed for agricultural use. To the north of Knowsley, the till is overlain by a thin covering of ancient wind blown sand, which although it has little effect on the shape of the land, does influence the surface pattern of vegetation and land use.

Superimposed on this glacial drift geology are more recent deposits of marine silt, river alluvium and fen peat. These give rise to the coastal marshlands and relic carrlands that occur in the western part of the Lancashire Plain. The latter are especially well developed in the irregularly shaped basin that lies just inland from the Sefton Coast. This basin became separated from the sea by the formation of a coastal dune belt some 4000 years ago. Poor drainage and a high water table within the basin provided the right conditions for the formation of fen peat and up until the 18th century this was an area of swamps, carrs, peat mosses and water filled meres. Martin Mere, between Rufford and Crossens, was the largest of these meres, covering an area of over 1200 hectares. Drainage of the Alt basin during the 18th and 19th centuries transformed this wetland landscape into high grade pastoral and arable farmland. The rich peaty soils are ideally suited to the growing of potatoes and market garden crops for the neighbouring urban markets.

Despite its proximity to the tourist resorts of the Sefton Coast and to the large urban conurbations of the Mersey basin and the Lancashire coalfield, the region still remains largely rural in character. Settlement is for the most part dispersed and characterised by scattered farms, clusters of wayside dwellings and small market towns. Small villages are a feature in places, while the former carrlands remain relatively unsettled, with only occasional isolated brick farmsteads dating from the period of wetland drainage in the 19th century.

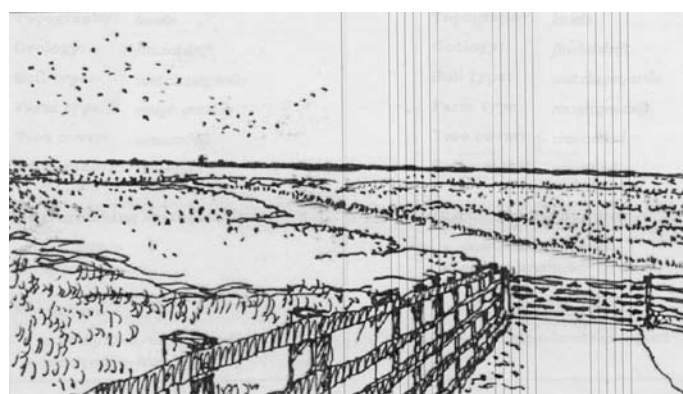
The above description defines the Lancashire Plain as a broad landscape region. Within the Sefton area four distinct types of landscape can be distinguished, each of which represents a particular aspect of the wider regional

character. These include:

- Coastal marshlands
- Enclosed marsh
- Carr farmlands
- Sandstone hills
- Estate farmlands
- Settled farmlands

4. Coastal marshlands

An exposed, low-lying, semi-natural landscape characterised by extensive tracts of unenclosed saltmarsh, which are dissected by an intricate network of muddy creeks. This is a simple, visually unified landscape with wide views out over the marsh to the far horizon. The dominant impression throughout is one of sky and space, and although the marshlands have a quiet, secluded character they can also be bleak and uninviting when exposed to the full force of winds from the sea.



Key characteristics

- flat, low-lying topography
- intricate network of muddy creeks and channels
- extensive tracts of unenclosed saltmarsh
- wide views to far horizon



- seasonally flooded shallow pools
- large flocks of feeding birds

Summary Of Pressures

- Extension of urban edge resulting in loss of type. In some instances development is unsustainable, ie Marine Lake Road requires constant sweeping of blown sand, roundabout features look unsightly and incomplete.

Strategy Statement

Conserve the remaining flat low-lying topography with its seasonal semi-submerged appearance and network of muddy creeks and channels. Limit the extent of urban expansion and development, particularly to areas north of the Fairway Park and Ride and preferably to the north and east of Marine Lake.

Policy Guidelines

1. **Conserve the flat low-lying topography with its muddy creeks and channels to conserve landscape and ecological value.**

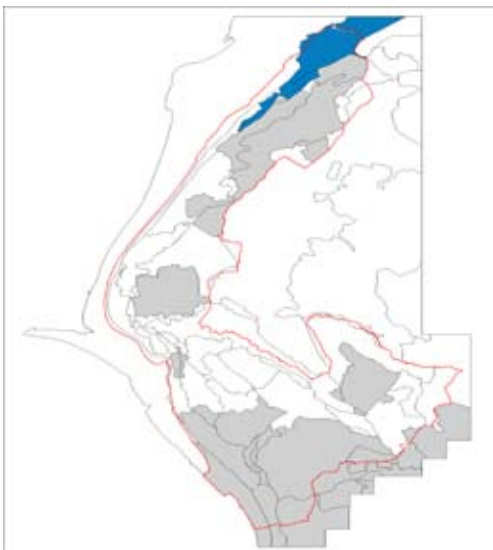
The “undisturbed” and isolated areas should be maintained. Elsewhere, the RSPB Nature Reserve is successful in retaining the key characteristics of the landscape whilst promoting ecological values. At the same time passive and informal recreational interests are represented.

Note that these areas have a regional as well as local context, particularly with a view to ornithological interests where they support the RSPB interests further inland (Martin Mere).

Although areas of sheep and cattle grazing support and encourage birdlife, the Sefton Coast Management Plan does indicate that further protection and survival could be secured should these private areas of occupancy be managed through the requirements set out in the plan.

2. **Strengthen the ecological interests & landscape characteristics within the adjacent Golf Course.**

To increase ecological values within the area and provide a stronger transition of character to an otherwise small area it would be desirable if the Golf Course area could be managed to increase areas of peripheral ‘rough’, promote use of native and traditional species (as opposed to exotics or ornamentals) and permit selected areas of seasonal flooding.



Coastal marshlands

The coastal marshlands comprise a number of component land description units (LDU’s). These have been defined on the occurrence of certain key characteristics, which are summarised below. A first attempt has also been made to summarise the key issues affecting each LDU.

SM01 (Southport)		LM02 (Crossens marsh)	
Topography:	levels	Topography:	levels
Geology:	fluvial drift	Geology:	fluvial drift
Soil type:	wet clayey soils	Soil type:	wet clayey soils
Land use:	rough/wild land	Land use:	rough/wild land
Settlement:	unsettled	Settlement:	unsettled
Tree cover:	unwooded	Tree cover:	unwooded
Distinguishing features:		Distinguishing features:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wet ditches • open character 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unenclosed saltmarsh • exposed character 	
Key issues:		Key issues:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • amenity uses - widespread impact • urban edge - high impact 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • urban edge - localised impact 	



3. Conserve Landscape Character by limiting development & man-made influences

Man-made elements such as signage, car parks etc. should be designed to minimise their impact upon the environment. Other development should not be permitted. Should the sand winning plant become redundant this area should be restored, in a sensitive manner to retain and enhance the key characteristics.

Areas detailed under SM01c particularly areas north west of Marine Lake are considered sensitive to development and although may share characteristics with the coastal marshland, visually demonstrate associations with the Coastal Dune type character. As much of SM01 has been developed, issues other than listed below are not considered relevant.

4. Conserve and enhance ecological values associated with Marine Lake

Documents such as Marine Lake Management Plan (1998) and Southport Seafront Masterplan (2002) set out the strategy and guidelines for the Marine Lake. The ecological value of the area, particularly with regards to birdlife, should be encouraged to promote continuity with adjacent areas.

5. Conserve and enhance the Coastal Dune type character north and west of Marine Lake.

The coastal dunes to the north and west of Marine Lake form a fragmented snippet of the Dune system in its narrow north-south band. They provide an important link to the Coastal Dune characteristics displayed more prominently to areas to the south. They should not be developed, but should be retained to provide north-south continuity and could be used for passive and informal recreation.

Some consideration is needed towards balancing the active and natural dune systems with development pressures within this area. Management should be positive and sustainable.

6. Conserve historic built features associated with Marine Lake and surrounds

The built form is subject to study under the Southport Seafront Strategy 2002. Documentation should be cross-referenced with Part 3 of the Design SPG. Listed Buildings such as the Promenade Hospital and features such as shelters/the Pier contribute significantly to local distinctiveness. Regeneration initiatives should not destroy but sensitively integrate the historical aspects, pattern and style of the Victorian seafront.

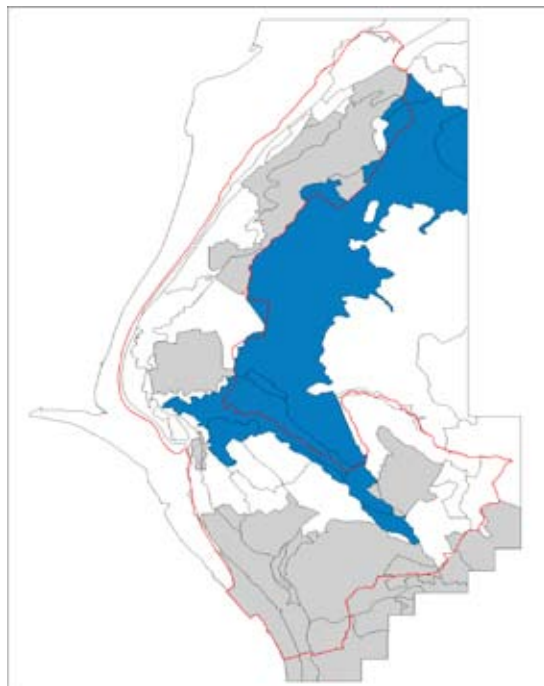
5. Carr farmlands

A flat, low-lying and sparsely populated landscape characterised by wide views to distant skylines. This is a large scale, open landscape with few vertical features of any prominence. Although tree cover is more or less restricted to discrete blocks of secondary woodland, the flat terrain emphasizes the significance of these features, creating a linked sequence of large open spaces framed by woodland edges or rising ground. The scale of the landscape is reinforced by the grid-like pattern of large arable fields and by the lack of human habitation, which is mainly restricted to isolated farmsteads linked by raised single track roads.



Key characteristics

- flat, low-lying topography
- wide views framed by woodland edges or rising ground
- dark, peaty soils
- large fields of cereals and vegetables
- grid-like pattern of drains and ditches
- discrete blocks of secondary birch woodland
- isolated brick built farmsteads
- straight, single track roads on raised causeways



LC05 (Lower Alt levels)		LC06/LC07 (Lower Alt levels)	
Topography:	levels	Topography:	levels
Geology:	fluvial dirt	Geology:	fluvial dirt
Soil type:	wet clayey soils	Soil type:	wet peaty soils
Land use:	cropping-ditches	Land use:	cropping-ditches
Settlement:	isolated farms	Settlement:	isolated farms
Tree cover:	discrete woods	Tree cover:	discrete woods
Distinguishing features:		Distinguishing features:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • large scale • open character 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • large scale • open character 	
Key issues:		Key issues:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fragmented cultural pattern • intensive farming • road corridor - localised high impact 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • declining cultural pattern • road corridor - localised high impact 	

Carr farmlands

The Carr farmlands comprise a number of component land description units (LDU's). These have been defined on the occurrence of certain key characteristics, which are summarised below. A first attempt has also been made to summarise the key issues affecting each LDU.

LC01 Churchtown)		LC03 (West Lancs, mosslands)	
Topography:	levels	Topography:	levels
Geology:	fluvial dirt	Geology:	fluvial dirt
Soil type:	wet clayey soils	Soil type:	wet peaty soils
Land use:	cropping-ditches	Land use:	cropping-ditches
Settlement:	isolated farms	Settlement:	isolated farms
Tree cover:	discrete woods	Tree cover:	discrete woods
Distinguishing features:		Distinguishing features:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • large scale • open character 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • large scale • open character • secondary birch woodland 	
Key issues:		Key issues:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fragmented cultural pattern • intensive farming 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • declining cultural pattern • intensive farming 	

Carr farmlands

LC08 (Sefton meadows)		LC09 (Upper Alt levels)	
Topography:	rolling lowland	Topography:	levels
Geology:	fluvial dirt	Geology:	fluvial dirt
Soil type:	disturbed soils	Soil type:	wet clayey soils
Land use:	cropping	Land use:	cropping-ditches
Settlement:	isolated farms	Settlement:	isolated farms
Tree cover:	linear trees	Tree cover:	linear trees
Distinguishing features:		Distinguishing features:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • open character 	
Key issues:		Key issues:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • modified landform - high visual impact • fragmented cultural pattern • urban edge - localised impact 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fragmented cultural pattern • road corridors - localised high impact • urban edge - localised impact 	

LC02 (Martin Mere) and LC04 (Great Altcar) do not extend into SMBC.



Summary Of Pressures

- Improvements in transportation routes segregating and severing character areas, weakening the overall extent of the character area
- Expansion of the urban edge, in particular around Southport and Formby reducing Sefton's Landscape Character of this type to negligible in these areas
- Changes to topography resulting from landfill development, thus changes to land use pattern, geology, ecology etc.
- Changes to River Alt embankments result in changes to land use patterns directly adjacent the water course
- Changes to farming practices resulting through intensification, less ecological diversity on field edges/ boundaries. Current needs for diversification.

Strategy Statement

Conserve and strengthen the larger remaining areas of Carr Farmland, its flat and low-lying topography, the large scale of the landscape, their predominantly uninhabited status and arable farming pattern. Retain the grid-like pattern of drains and ditches, distant and open views, punctuated occasionally with blocks or copses of woodland. These include the areas sandwiched between Dune Backlands, Estate Farmlands and those adjacent to larger and more dominant areas of the West Lancashire Carr Farmland.

Where the patterns of the Carr Farmland have been intrinsically lost, namely to development and farming practices adjacent to Blowick Moss, attempts should be made to provide a buffer to the strong pattern and characteristics of the West Lancs Carr Farmland adjacent.

Where patterns have been lost to landfill operations a new character is being introduced, of woodlands and open areas for informal recreation and promoting ecological diversity. Areas that share a boundary with Settled Farmlands should provide a smooth transition between the different character areas.

Policy Guidelines

1. **Conserve the low-lying flat topography, large scale landscape and unity of the grid-like arable field pattern**

The flat grid-like pattern of fields, emphasized by the long and linear pattern of roads and ditches (often forming the boundaries) and the lack of vegetation are the fundamental characteristics to the retention of this open and large scale landscape of the Carr Farmland.

2. **Conserve and enhance woodland blocks and copses**

The woodland blocks or copses provide the only vertical punctuation to an otherwise flat and open large scale landscape. These should be retained and could be enhanced by introducing additional and sporadic small geometric areas of woodland planting, particularly useful as a buffer on the urban edge. They are of ecological value.

3. **Conserve and enhance visual unity**

Retain the predominantly open aspect, particularly where strong characteristics of the type meet those of adjacent West Lancashire Carr Farmland and adjacent Landscape Character Areas. Enhance visual aspects of boundaries with urban development, as noted above. Avoid the use of untraditional uncharacteristic belt-like planting schemes or built boundary features such as fencing or walls. Built features are rare, few are listed. Traditional style (brick rendered) farm buildings are visually acceptable as for example Moss Farm and Alt Bridge. Alt Bridge itself exudes a previous scale and character of the countryside, particularly noticeable given its proximity to the A565.

4. **Conserve the Carr Farmland character by restricting further development**

The encroachment by urban development has all but destroyed the type with the Sefton area, however it should be restricted, particularly in the larger areas of remaining Carr Farmland, to the south of Formby and to the north and east of Churchtown. It is important to create and maintain a smooth transition and buffer to the areas of West Lancashire Council adjacent, particularly as the Carr Farmland is designated as Landscape of Local and County Importance.



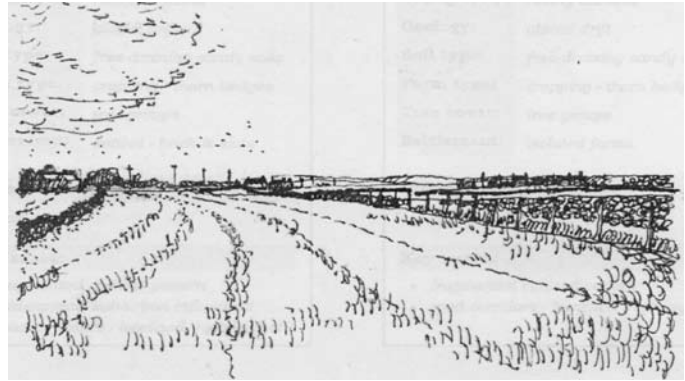
5. Create new characteristics to areas of landfill where the intrinsic pattern has been lost

The development of woodlands and open areas promoting informal and passive recreation of the countryside and ecological diversity is sought as a manner of introducing a new character, where the intrinsic pattern has been lost. This is predominantly to areas of landfill adjacent to the Switch Island motorway junction. Landscape proposals should aim to integrate with adjacent and traditional field, hedgerow, woodland planting patterns, provide a buffer to urban areas yet respect the predominantly open and agricultural aspect of adjacent areas. Long and distant views should be maintained, especially locally distinctive views such as those towards the Church of St Helen at Sefton Village.

6. Restore and protect traditional ecological habitats and diversity

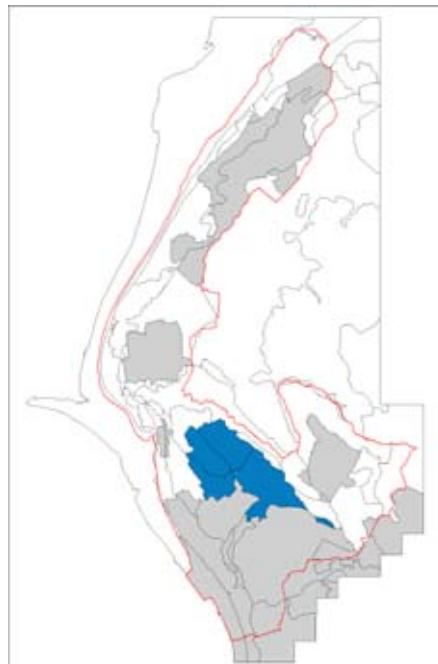
The ecological value of ditch profiles and field boundaries should be enhanced where feasible by sustainable management. Ideally these would promote the growth of grass, wildflowers and herbaceous species in a narrow band parallel to the field or ditch. Ecological advice can be offered providing guidance on potential restrictions to tree species for protection of the red squirrel habitat.

Young plantations on the landfill sites have already become a valuable ecological resource, particularly to short-eared owls and grey partridge. Ecological target notes also indicate that the area north and east of Churchtown is of ecological value, namely pond, ditch and woodland habitats. Rye Hey wetland is recommended for consideration as SLBI status.



Key characteristics

- gently rolling lowland topography
- nucleated pattern of small, closely spaced villages & hamlets
- sub-regular enclosure pattern of hedged fields
- estate plantations and belts of trees
- large country houses set in walled parkland
- brick built farmsteads and barns
- frequent field ponds with associated trees and scrub



6. Estate farmlands

A well ordered agricultural landscape characterised by country estates and small rural villages. The villages, many of which are marked by a tall church spire, are closely spaced, giving rise to a series of discrete settlement clusters linked by a network of minor roads. These clusters are set within an early sub-regular enclosure pattern of medium sized hedged fields. Small geometric plantations and belts of trees are a prominent and unifying element in this landscape, creating a sequence of framed views. These tree cover elements provide a strong sense of visual enclosure, in contrast to the adjoining, more 'open' carrlands.



Estate farmlands

The estate farmlands comprise a number of component land description units (LDU's). These have been defined by the occurrence of certain key characteristics, which are summarised below. A first attempt has also been made to summarise the key issues affecting each LDU.

LE01 (Ince Blundell)		LE03 (Crosby)		LE02 (Crosby Moss)	
Topography:	rolling lowland	Topography:	levels	Topography:	levels
Geology:	glacial drift	Geology:	fluvial dirt	Geology:	fluvial dirt
Soil type:	free-draining sandy soils	Soil type:	free-draining sandy soils	Soil type:	free-draining sandy soils
Land use:	cropping - thorn hedges	Land use:	cropping-thorn hedges	Land use:	cropping-thorn hedges
Settlement:	clustered - brick & slate	Settlement:	isolated farms - gritstone	Settlement:	isolated farms - gritstone
Tree cover:	estate plantations	Tree cover:	estate plantations	Tree cover:	estate plantations
Distinguishing features:		Distinguishing features:		Distinguishing features:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prominent tree cover • historic parklands • field ponds 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prominent tree cover • relic mossland • secondary birch woodland 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prominent tree cover • relic mossland • secondary birch woodland 	
Key issues:		Key issues:		Key issues:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • widespread loss of field boundaries • suburbanisation of villages 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	

LE04/LE05 (Sefton)		SE02 (Churchtown)	
Topography:	rolling lowland	Topography:	levels
Geology:	glacial drift	Geology:	blown sand
Soil type:	free-draining sandy soils	Soil type:	wet sandy soils
Land use:	cropping - thorn hedges	Land use:	pastoral - ditches
Settlement:	clustered - brick & slate	Settlement:	clustered
Tree cover:	tree groups	Tree cover:	estate plantations

Distinguishing features:	Distinguishing features:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • field ponds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prominent tree cover • relic mossland • secondary birch woodland
Key issues:	Key issues:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fragmented cultural pattern • incoherent tree cover • urban edge - localised high impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • declining cultural pattern • urban edge - moderate impact

Summary Of Pressures

- Change in farming practices – intensification (loss of field pattern, hedgerows, trees etc.), boundaries & ecological habitats;
- Change in land use through rural diversification;
- Local Transport initiatives & planning; e.g. the Thornton to Switch Island By-Pass road scheme
- Encroachment of the urban edge, particularly around Thornton and Netherton
- Urban development to village surrounds;
- Measures to encourage greater recreation and access into the countryside;
- Ecological guidelines & prescriptions, for instance restrictions on choice of tree species planted with a view to controlling grey squirrel encroachment;
- Non-traditional style planting of trees and shrubs

Strategy Statement

Strengthen and enhance the agricultural landscape and maintain the gently rolling low lying predominantly arable landscape pattern of sub-regular enclosure. Retain long, distant and open views framed between small geometric blocks of tree planting to rural areas adjacent. Soften boundaries with adjacent development. Conserve and enhance the retention of historical patterns, buildings styles, materials and features associated with the estates of Ince Blundell and Crosby Hall and the small villages/hamlets of Sefton, Lunt, Homer Green and Carr Houses.



Policy Guidelines

1. Conserve and enhance the low lying gently rolling topography, its association with the adjoining Carr Farmland and land use patterns.

Predominantly arable land use should be retained and encouraged. Recreational uses should concentrate on the promotion and passive enjoyment of traditional land use patterns such as the woodland blocks, fields, hedgerows, ditches and ponds.

Patterns around the Thornton, Sefton area are particularly sensitive in that pressures seem greatest in this location. The rural area forms a green wedge between Maghull to the north and Netherton to the south. Fragmentation and dissection of the rural area, should where feasible be avoided, as this would considerably weaken the strength of character in this area.

2. Conserve and enhance the visual unity of the Alt floodplain.

Views north to south and east, particularly long views and to rural areas adjacent should be retained. The negative impact of previous development should be softened by selective planting, reflecting the pattern of small woodland blocks to maintain views.

3. Conserve, strengthen and enhance the pattern of woodlands and tree blocks within the landscape

Woodlands and tree planting associated with and around the Ince Blundell and Crosby Hall estates form a dominant physical and visual feature within the landscape, much of which is afforded protection for its considerable ecological value, (which includes roe deer and red squirrels). It is acceptable to introduce new woodland, generally of small geometric blocks, which frame and permit the longer and distant views, retain and strengthen the traditional field pattern and support the ecological guidelines within the area. Fragmentation of woodland areas through development could significantly effect the movement of ecological species.

4. Conserve and enhance the irregular pattern of field boundaries, including hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and drainage ditches

Conserve the remaining hedgerows, improving and filling gaps as necessary. Re-establish hedgerows where traditionally appropriate, that is on the slightly raised topography above the floodplain, with the appropriate species and with consideration towards the ecological guidelines within the area. Field scale could be reduced, more in keeping with traditional patterns. Conserve and enhance drainage ditch profiles to encourage and support ecological diversity. Avoid the use of post and rail or timber rail fencing.

5. Conserve the setting and built form of the features and buildings within the Conservation Areas

The protection of the built form is detailed within the Conservation Leaflets for Sefton, Lunt, Homer Green and Carr Houses, available from Sefton Council. These make reference to promoting the appropriate use of building methods and materials and particularly important retaining the rural, isolated context and historic integrity to the village or hamlet setting (as appropriate), given the current pressures for urban development/ expansion.

Wherever practicable it is desirable to retain, enhance and restore the occasionally redundant and derelict barns and farm buildings within the area and retain the context of the historical landscape e.g. re-establishing old place names, or traditional features and building in local distinctiveness.

Further historical and archaeological studies should be considered and included into existing documentation, particularly grounds to and surrounding land to the Ince Blundell and Crosby Hall estates.

Despite its listing the wall surrounding the Ince Blundell estate is in poor condition and would benefit from remedial works in the near future. Equally the strategic and historic importance of the woodlands and grounds would benefit from management according to approved principles and guidelines.



6. Conserve and enhance ecological diversity of pond and field habitats

Conserve the existing and traditional pattern of pond features within the agricultural areas and encourage ecological opportunities for habitat creation and diversity. Promote some relaxation of agricultural management, from arable to pasture, in favour of encouraging diversity, and to aid retention as an agricultural landscape, but avoid changes to field boundaries (eg post and rail fencing), landform and geology.

7. Conserve the small scale pattern of country lanes within the rural areas

The winding country lanes partly define the character of the rural areas in that they often form the field boundaries. They are simple, sometimes without edging and lighting features which have a urban nature and therefore reduce their rural character.

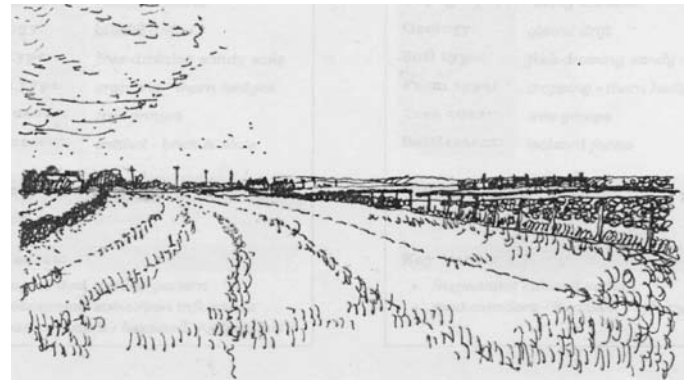
8. Conserve landscape character by restricting and controlling future development

Essential for the retention of this landscape type is the strict limitation of development, particularly encroachments into the rural areas adjacent to the Conservation Areas (so reducing the character of isolated settlements) and the reduction in extent and the disintegration of the field and ditch patterns between the urban developments to the north and south.

Development can best be accommodated in the immediate areas to the existing built form, particularly where the pattern is isolated or destroyed though association with existing development, although a green buffer or recreational uses would always be preferable and desirable. The landscape pattern should aim to be retained to the largest extent of area possible. Note that continued and piecemeal development on the urban edge, often associated with permitted development within the Green Belt, begins to erode the landscape of pattern and causes its gradual break down.

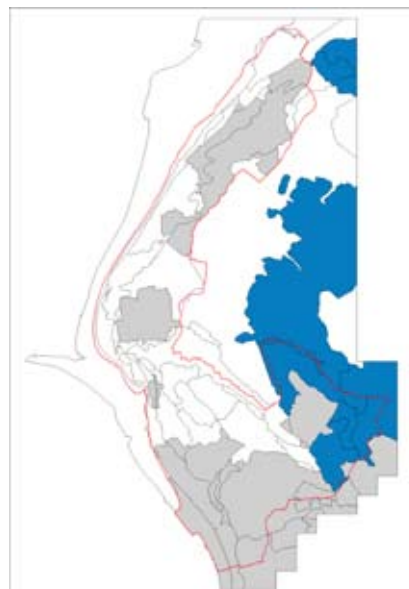
Changes in level are particularly undesirable, as are further recreational development such as football pitches, sports grounds and golf courses. Recreational uses as noted in 1 above.

This is reflected in the many red brick farmsteads and dwellings scattered throughout the area and the network of narrow rural lanes which serve them. The settled farmlands are 'open' in character with tree cover largely restricted to groups of trees around buildings and field ponds.



Key characteristics

- gently rolling lowland topography
- dispersed pattern of farmsteads and wayside dwellings
- network of narrow, rural lanes
- sub-regular enclosure pattern of hedged fields
- arable cropping with field vegetables
- frequent field ponds with associated trees and scrub
- brick built farmsteads and barns



7. Settled farmlands

An open, rolling agricultural landscape of arable farms, hedged fields and clusters of rural dwellings. A key feature of this landscape is its settled character, which contrasts strongly with the adjoining sparsely populated carrlands.



Settled farmlands

The settled farmlands comprise a number of component land description units (LDU's). These have been defined by the occurrence of certain key characteristics, which are summarised below. A first attempt has also been made to summarise the key issues affecting each LDU.

LS01 (Melling) / LS04 (Lydiate)		LE02 (Maghull Moss)	
Topography:	rolling lowland	Topography:	rolling lowland
Geology:	glacial drift	Geology:	glacial drift
Soil type:	free-draining sandy soils	Soil type:	free-draining sandy soils
Land use:	cropping - thorn hedges	Land use:	cropping - thorn hedges
Settlement:	settled - brick & slate	Settlement:	isolated farms
Tree cover:	tree groups	Tree cover:	tree groups
Distinguishing features:		Distinguishing features:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> field ponds 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> relic mossland 	
Key issues:		Key issues:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fragmented cultural pattern widespread sub -urban influences road corridors - localised high impact 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fragmented cultural pattern road corridors - localised high impact 	

LS03 (Royal Oak)		LE05 (Sudell)	
Topography:	rolling lowland	Topography:	rolling lowland
Geology:	glacial drift	Geology:	fluvial drift
Soil type:	free-draining sandy soils	Soil type:	wet clayey soils
Land use:	cropping - thorn hedges	Land use:	cropping - thorn hedges
Settlement:	dispersed - brick & slate	Settlement:	settled - brick & slate
Tree cover:	trees & woods	Tree cover:	linear trees
Distinguishing features:		Distinguishing features:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> field ponds 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> stream corridor 	

Key issues:	Key issues:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fragmented cultural pattern incoherent tree cover urban edge - localised impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fragmented cultural pattern intensive farming

Summary Of Pressures

- Changes in farming practices over the last 150 years, primarily through intensification and diversification have resulted in the change in scale and visual appearance of the landscape and its associated patterns, i.e. loss of hedgerows, trees and ancient field patterns.
- Transportation and communication requirements continue to dissect the rural character. Whilst visually the canal allows the land use to continue/ flow into its adjacent and opposite areas the changed topography and scale associated with motorways and railways forms a visual barrier to original land patterns and foreshortens the Landscape Character.
- Continuing expansion of the urban edge, particularly around Maghull, Kirby, Lydiate and Aintree reduces the extent and therefore weakens the character area between the urban settlements. Continued pressure of even 'soft' development (for example tree planting) threatens the retention and existence of the rural area in these locations.

Strategy Statement

Conserve the ancient and strong landscape patterns associated with the gently rolling arable landscape north, east and west of Lydiate, limit development and retain the pattern of dispersed farms and dwellings. Conserve and enhance the arable landscape pattern in the eastern most area of Lydiate, particularly on boundaries with the settled farmlands of the adjacent authority and limit developments associated with the A59. Maintain the east-west flow of the landscape. Conserve, strengthen and enhance the arable landscape patterns between the eastern side of Maghull and the western side of Kirkby (neighbouring authority), this will improve the visual unity. Ensure the retention of the rural agricultural area between these settlements.



Policy Guidelines

1. Conserve and strengthen the ancient enclosure and associated landscape pattern.

Areas to the north, east and west of Lydiate demonstrate the strongest characteristics of ancient enclosure. Features such as irregular field boundaries with 'wavy' field boundaries, water filled ditches and the winding lanes connecting the dispersed settlement should be retained. There should be strict limitation on further development particularly beyond the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. A reduction in field size and the replanting of hedgerows with hedgerow trees and small sporadic woodland blocks would strengthen the existing pattern.

2. Conserve and enhance the arable landscape pattern to retain the Landscape Character and limit future development.

The existence of the Landscape Character type is in places threatened by urban expansion, particularly the area north of Maghull, around the A59 and Ashworth Hospital site and along its boundary with West Lancs. This east-west flow of the landscape should be retained. A sensitive redevelopment of the Ashworth Hospital site is necessary to respect and reflect the values of the adjacent Landscape Character within this area. Development should also be restricted in the adjoining particularly to the south-west of Aughton.

Equally urban expansion threatens the continued existence of what has become a green and rural agricultural corridor between Maghull, Kirkby and Aintree. Areas under greatest threat are those north and west of the M58 motorway and the area wedged between the M57, the Liverpool Golf Course and Aintree. Careful consideration should be afforded to maintaining the Landscape Character and maintaining this green 'buffer' between settlements.

3. Conserve the gently rolling landscape to retain visual prominence & the landscape pattern to retain unity

The gently rolling landscape gives prominence to high points in the topography, such as Melling and the ridgeline marked by the A5147 through Lydiate. Traditionally these were often punctuated by churches. The Church of St Thomas at Melling is prominent throughout the surrounding landscape. Equally the Church of Our Lady and St Katherine's Chapel (Lydiate) are particularly prominent in views from the north and the east. It is important to maintain the long and distant views, often sweeping up and beyond the fields to the settlement marked by its church, as they contribute significantly to local distinctiveness. Equally long and distant views westwards are afforded as far as the Welsh Hills from and below the ridgeline at Lydiate and these should also be retained.

The importance of retaining the landscape pattern was noted in both points above. Continued breakdown of the pattern of a character area creates visual confusion and weakens its integrity. Visual unity is strengthened by building upon the key characteristics of an area and ensuring that these values are continuous throughout the Character area. This should be encouraged.

4. Conserve and restore the landscape pattern of hedgerows, trees and woodlands.

Landscape Character should where possible be improved by replanting of hedgerows and hedgerow trees. These should build from the previous field pattern, where these still exist e.g. south of Melling there are sporadic lines of overmature trees on slightly raised field boundaries, indicating former field pattern. Equally this would greatly enhance ecological corridors throughout the area. Small scattered blocks of woodland could be introduced into the field pattern at an appropriate scale and frequency, to help provide physical and visual continuity and promote ecological diversity. These would integrate well with the patterns in adjacent areas and could help soften the impacts where the urban edge forms a stark and ugly juxtaposition with the rural area (Aintree).



5. Conserve traditional patterns of small scale linear settlement and dispersed farmsteads and dwellings.

It is important to retain the small scale nature of development within the rural area. It is this again which contributes to local distinctiveness. Melling should retain its present scale. Elsewhere the scattered farms and small linear groups of cottages (often terraced) should continue to personalise the landscape, but retain their scale, building style and traditional choice of materials (generally brick/stone). Conservation should consider being extended to the old barns which often accompany farm developments, whilst the size, scale, materials and siting of new farm sheds should reflect their position and appearance in the landscape.

The large country houses scattered throughout should be retained. Choice of new build materials should reflect the predominance of traditional brick and stone types and styles.

6. Conserve and strengthen traditional boundary treatments.

In addition to hedgerows (noted above) boundaries to development should consider appropriate and traditional materials, such as stone or brick walls, particularly if this is relevant to context. In some instances hedges would be suitable, but choice of species must be appropriate.

Field boundaries should discourage the use of post and wire and post and rail in favour of hedgerows and/ or ditches where appropriate.

7. Conserve and enhance ecological diversity.

The area is characterised by field ponds, often with associated vegetation, these should be retained. Ecological diversity along canal corridors, motorways and railways (including dismantled), should be encouraged, (by reintroducing or breaking traditional land use patterns), whilst avoiding the appearance of emphasising the route.

Ecological target notes from National Vegetation Classifications (see Appendix A) comment on the ornithological value of the arable field pattern. Retention should include this consideration.

Two further landscapes were identified within the wider study area, where they form an immediate or close boundary with Sefton. They are of use for adjacent context and character descriptions only are detailed. These are:

8. Enclosed marsh

An open, low-lying former marshland landscape characterised by large arable fields bounded by a grid-like pattern of drains, ditches and embankments. This is a visually uniform, man-made landscape where the environment is carefully controlled to maximise agricultural production.

Key characteristics

- flat, low-lying topography
- large fields of cereals and vegetables
- grid-like pattern of drains and ditches
- large, isolated farmsteads
- visually prominent sea defense embankments



9. Sandstone hills

A variant of the settled farmlands, with a more distinctly undulating and upstanding topography, closely associated with a zone of low sandstone hills. Wide views towards the coast are afforded from prominent vantage points such as Clieves Hill.

Key characteristics

- low undulating hills



- dispersed pattern of farmsteads and wayside dwellings
- network of narrow, rural lanes
- sub-regular enclosure pattern of hedged fields
- arable cropping with field vegetables
- brick built farmsteads and barns

Feb 2001

- Sefton Council's Listed Building Map and Building Reports
Conservation Area Leaflets: Homer Green; Carr Houses; Lunt Village; Lydiate Hall and Chapel; Sefton Village.
- Phase 1 Habitat Survey and National Vegetation Classification (NVC) (1988/9) Note that the NVC is due for re-survey summer 2003. The document recognises that update will be necessary on a periodic basis.
- Lancashire Historic Characterisation Programme: Sefton Council Area (2nd Draft June 2001).
- Sefton Council (1997) The Sefton Coast Management Plan. Second Review 1997-2006.
- PPG1. General Policy and Principles (England) 1997. Annex A.
- PPG7. The Countryside-Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development (England) (1997).
- Rural White Paper (England) (2000).



Appendix B

Strategy Options

CONDITION	Good	STRENGTHEN	Conserve & Strengthen	CONSERVE
	Declining	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	CREATION	Restore & Enhance	RESTORE
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		CHARACTER		

Appendix A

Surveys and Databases (References)

- Steven Warnock. Definition of Terms (2001)
- Steven Warnock. Survey Mapping (2000-2001)
Geology Topography
Soils
Land Use
Tree Cover
Settlement
Landscape Types
Fields and Cover
Extract from Land Utilisation Map (1931-32)
- Steven Warnock. Landscape Character Assessment of Sefton
Part 1 Methodology
Part 2 Descriptions

Enhancement Potential



Appendix C

Statement of public consultation

a) The 'Landscape Character' SPG was approved as a draft for public consultation and for development control purposes on 12 February 2003. It was placed on the Council's planning web-site later that year.

b) A specific period of focused consultation with interested organisations took place in July 2003. In total, over 600 letters were sent to local agents, developers, house-builders and other potentially interested groups, such as parish councils and other specialist organisations. A focussed period of consultation with the general public took place in September/October 2003. Adverts were placed in the local press and the SPG was made available in the 2 planning offices and at the 4 main public libraries (the 5th main library, at Bootle, was closed for repair in 2003).

c) This is in line with Planning Policy Guidance Note 12 'Development Plans' (PPG12) which stresses the importance of consulting widely if the Secretary of State is to give substantial weight to SPGs in the decision-making process.

d) No comments about the 'Landscape Character' SPG were received, although Formby Civic Society wrote to support all of the SPGs.

e) The Plain English Campaign has been consulted on the SPG to help make its wording clearer.

f) Revisions were made to the SPG to take account of changes proposed to the Draft Plan, to correct errors contained in the consultation draft and to clarify wording.

g) The results of the consultation process on the SPG and revisions to the SPG were reported to Planning Committee on 17 December 2003. The 'Landscape Character' SPG was adopted on 17 December 2003.

Appendix D

Useful contacts

Planning & Economic Regeneration Department (for Bootle, Waterloo, Crosby, Hightown, Maghull and Melling):

Planning & Economic Regeneration Department
Development Control
Balliol House, Balliol Road
Bootle, L20 3RY. Phone: 0151 934 3572

Planning & Economic Regeneration Department (for Southport, Formby, and Ince Blundell):

Crown Buildings
9-11 Eastbank Street
Southport, PR8 1DL. Phone: 0151 934 2206

Louise Eccles – Assistant Team Leader (Landscape)

Planning & Economic Regeneration Department
Development Control
Balliol House, Balliol Road
Bootle, L20 3RY. Phone: 0151 934 3577

(Footnotes)

¹ Countryside Commission (1991) *Assessment and Conservation of Landscape Character. The Warwickshire Project Approach*. CCP332. Countryside Commission. Cheltenham.

Staffordshire Country Council (July 2000) *Planning for Change: Supplementary planning Guidance to the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan 1996 - 2011*.

² Countryside Commission 1998 *Countryside Character Volume 2: North West* CCP536

Greenspace Ecological Consultancy (March 1997) *The Urban Mersey Basin Natural Area. A Nature Conservation Profile and Natural Area Profile*. English Nature.

³ Carys Swanick University of Sheffield and Land Use Consultants (2002) *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland*. The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage.

⁴ Report to Planning Committee August 2000.







