



# City of Sunderland Landscape Character Assessment



Prepared by LUC for Sunderland City Council  
September 2015

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**Project Title:** City of Sunderland Landscape Character Assessment

**Client:** Sunderland City Council

Version	Date	Version Details	Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by Principal
1	23 June 2014	Outline draft	LUC	PDM	SCO
2	15 October 2014	Draft report	LUC	PDM	SCO
3	9 July 2015	Final draft report	LUC	PDM	SCO
4	7 September 2015	Final report	LUC	PDM	SCO



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# 1 Introduction







# 1 Introduction

## Background

- 1.1 This report presents a description and assessment of the landscape of the City of Sunderland administrative area. It has been prepared to provide part of the evidence base for forthcoming development planning documents. It builds on earlier work undertaken by a number of bodies. As part of the study, a more detailed examination of the South Sunderland Growth Area (SSGA) was also carried out. This element of the study forms a separate but linked report to the Council.

### Landscape character assessment

- 1.2 Landscape character comprises the distinct set of elements that makes a landscape recognisable, and gives it a unique 'sense of place'. Landscape character assessment is the process of mapping, classifying and describing the patterns and variations which contribute to the character of a landscape.
- 1.3 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) came into effect in the UK in March 2007 and is adopted and promoted by the Council of Europe. The ELC definition of landscape is all embracing:
- "Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors."***
- 1.4 Following the introduction of the ELC, a broader approach to 'landscape' has been pursued at a national level, grounded in the principle that all landscapes matter. The ELC applies to *"all landscapes everywhere and in any condition – land, inland water, inter-tidal, marine, natural, rural, urban and peri-urban, outstanding, ordinary and degraded."*<sup>1</sup>
- 1.5 Previous landscape character assessment has been undertaken in Sunderland, primarily the Sunderland Landscape Character Assessment, published in draft form in 2009.<sup>2</sup> A review of existing character studies is included in Appendix 1 to this report.

## Study Area

- 1.6 The study area has been defined as the whole of the City of Sunderland administrative area, including the main settlements of Sunderland, Washington, Houghton-le-Spring and Hetton-le-Hole. The study area is shown in Figure 1.1.
- 1.7 All areas within the borough are included in the assessment, whether developed or undeveloped. 'Landscape', as considered in this study, therefore includes 'townscape' and 'seascape' and covers built-up areas, open space, the coast and rural areas, in line with the ELC approach outlined above.
- 1.8 Landscape does not stop at administrative boundaries, but continues seamlessly beyond Sunderland into South Tyneside, Gateshead and County Durham. Although landscapes beyond the city boundary are excluded, their character still has an indirect effect upon that of the study area. Landscape character assessments carried out for neighbouring areas have been reviewed (Appendix 1), and areas of continuous character are identified.



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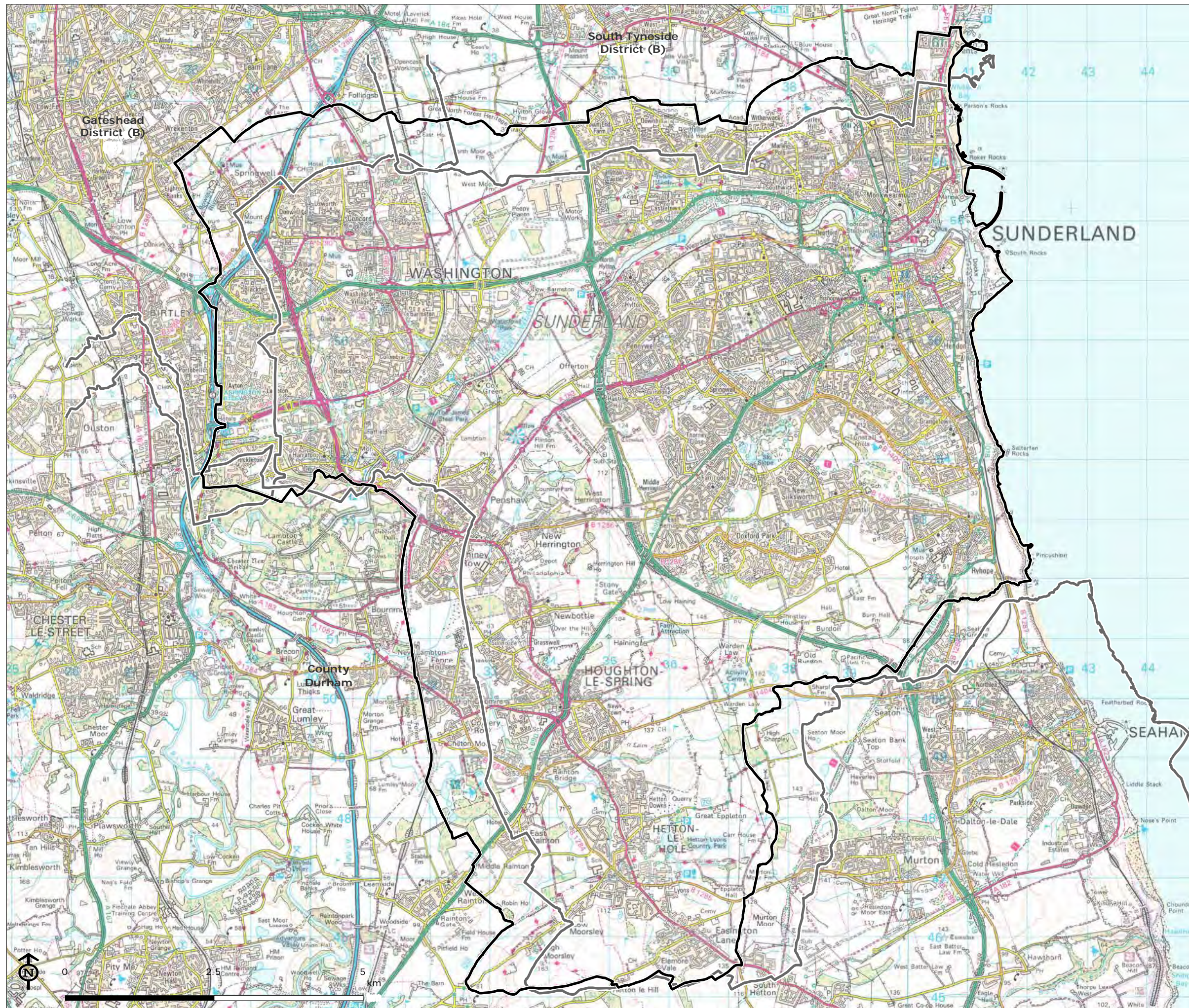
<sup>1</sup> Land Use Consultants (2009) *Guidelines for Implementing the European Landscape Convention*. Natural England.

<sup>2</sup> Sunderland City Council (2009) DRAFT Landscape Character Assessment.

# Sunderland City Council Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 1.1: Study Area

-  Sunderland City boundary
-  Other Local Authority boundary



Map Scale @ A3: 1:62,500



## Approach

- 1.9 The approach to the study has been led by good practice guidance on the topic published in 2014 by Natural England in 2014,<sup>3</sup> and in 2002 by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage.<sup>4</sup> It has also been informed by planning policy and other background information. A detailed method statement is provided in Appendix 1.
- 1.10 The study has identified variations in landscape character and describes these for all parts of Sunderland. The LCA has defined eleven landscape character types, which are subdivided into a total of 30 character areas. The landscape character types share common characteristics which may inform broader management decisions. Character areas are geographically distinct examples of a type, which display these common characteristics but nevertheless have their own distinct identity and sense of place.
- 1.11 Landscape character assessment can be carried out at a variety of scales, identifying increasingly detailed changes in character at smaller and smaller scales. Due to the small size and dense nature of the Sunderland landscape, the City of Sunderland LCA has been carried out at a scale of 1:25,000 in rural areas, and 1:10,000 in urban areas. At these small scales the mapped boundaries of character areas are relatively precise, following clear features which can be identified on the ground. However, there remain cases where these boundaries are indicative of transition between one character and another, rather than an abrupt change. It must also be recognised that there are variations within each character area at smaller scales, particularly for urban localities.
- 1.12 As well as providing a description of the landscape, the City of Sunderland LCA provides some strategic guidance. The aim of this is to ensure that landscape is given due importance in planning decisions, and the guidance is therefore aimed at developers, land managers and planning officers. It aims to be practical in nature, setting out measures by which local landscape character can be enhanced and protected. These are set out as a series of 'dos and don'ts' which apply to landscape character types as a whole.
- 1.13 For each character area, features of particular value are identified and an evaluation of landscape value has been made. Based on generic criteria for judging landscape value presented in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3),<sup>5</sup> which are reproduced in Appendix 1, a judgement has been made as to whether the overarching strategy for each character area is based around *landscape protection* or *landscape enhancement*, or in some cases a combination of the two. These headings are defined in the European Landscape Convention as follows:
- ***"Landscape protection*** means actions to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape.
  - ***Landscape enhancement*** means action from a perspective of sustainable development, to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape, so as to guide and harmonise change which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes."<sup>6</sup>
- 1.14 The areas where the strategy is aimed at *landscape protection* equate to the areas of higher landscape value within the City of Sunderland, and these are identified in Figure 3.2. Other features and designations indicating locally valued landscapes include key open spaces and parks, nature reserves and conservation areas. These are shown alongside the landscape strategies in Figure 3.2.
- 1.15 It should be noted that there will be aspects of *landscape enhancement* areas that merit protection, and vice versa. This is made explicit in a number of cases but remains true for all character areas to a greater or lesser extent. All landscapes are valued, and all landscapes have the potential to be enhanced.

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<sup>3</sup> Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment.

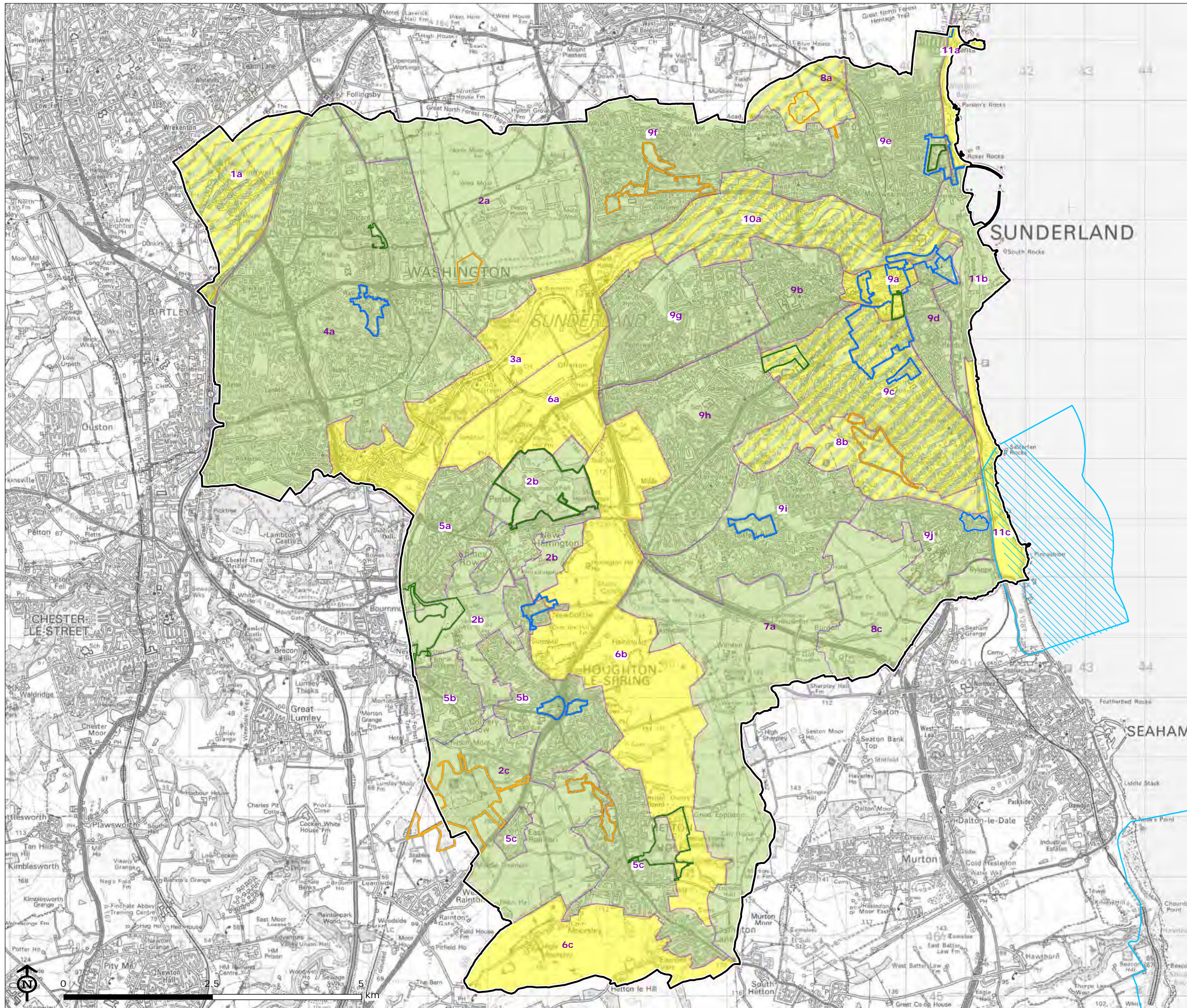
<sup>4</sup> Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002) Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland.

<sup>5</sup> Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Routledge.

<sup>6</sup> European Landscape Convention, Article 1. Available at <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/176.htm>

# Sunderland City Council Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 3.2: Landscape Strategy



- Sunderland City boundary
- Landscape Character Area
- Landscape strategy**
- Landscape enhancement
- Landscape protection
- Landscape protection and enhancement
- Other designations indicating landscape/townscape value**
- Conservation Area
- Durham Heritage Coast
- Green Flag parks and Country Parks
- Local Nature Reserve

Map Scale @ A3: 1:62,500



- 1.16 The overarching strategy sets the tone for a brief statement of the landscape potential of each character area. These are aspirational in nature and do not represent statements of Sunderland City Council policy. It is intended, however, that they will inform approaches to development planning and development management in each area, in order to make the most of Sunderland's landscape resource.

## Glossary

- 1.17 The following glossary provides definitions of the key terms used in the study. Definitions for the technical terms associated with landscape character assessment are drawn from the glossary provided in GLVIA3.

**Elements or features:** The individual parts which make up a landscape, for example trees, buildings, hedges, landmarks, etc.

**Key characteristics:** The combinations of elements which are particularly important to the current character of a landscape, and help to give an area its distinctive sense of place.

**Landscape character:** A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.

**Landscape character area:** These are single unique areas which are discrete geographical examples of a particular landscape character type.

**Landscape character assessment:** The process of identifying and describing variation in the character of a landscape, and using this information to assist in managing change in the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combinations of elements and features which make each landscape distinctive.

**Landscape character type:** These are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogenous in character. They share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation and historical land use and settlement patterns, and perceptual and aesthetic attributes.

**Landscape value:** The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different people for different reasons.

**Seascape:** Coastal landscapes which have views of the sea, and which have cultural, historical or perceptual associations with the marine environment.

**Townscape:** The character and composition of the built environment including buildings and the different types of urban open space, and the relationships between them.

**Tranquillity:** A state of calm and quietude associated with peace and with being away from modern development, considered to be a significant asset of some landscapes.



# 2 Evolution of the Landscape







## 2 Evolution of the Landscape

### Introduction

- 2.1 The City of Sunderland is a metropolitan borough, located at the mouth of the River Wear in the Tyne and Wear region. Sunderland covers around 140 km<sup>2</sup>, and has a population of around 275,000 (2011 figures) which has declined in recent years. The majority of the population live in Sunderland and its suburbs, with the new town of Washington being the next-largest settlement.
- 2.2 The area has historically been part of County Durham, but the present boundaries date from local government reorganisation in 1974. It formed part of the Tyne and Wear County Council area until becoming a unitary authority in 1986: Sunderland was granted city status in 1992. Sunderland is bordered by South Tyneside to the north, Gateshead to the north west, and County Durham to the south west and south. The east flank of the borough is open to the North Sea.
- 2.3 Settlement of the area dates back to prehistoric times, evidenced by the cursus on Hastings Hill. In the Early Middle Ages, St Peter's church at Monkwearmouth was founded as part of the monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow. Sunderland itself began as a fishing village from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Coal mining began to emerge as a major industry from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, driving the expansion of the town and harbour, and the development of numerous mining settlements through the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The later 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the development of the new town of Washington, and the emergence of new industries including car manufacturing replacing coal mining which had ceased by the mid-1990s.

**Figure 2.1 The Wearmouth Bridge spans the river gorge at Sunderland**



## Physical influences

### Geology

- 2.4 The City of Sunderland is divided between the more elevated coastal areas underlain by rocks of the Magnesian Limestone series, and the western areas which overlies the earlier coal measures.
- 2.5 The Durham Coal Measures date from the Westphalian stage of the later Carboniferous, around 304-313 million years ago, and originate in swampy forested deltas. Western Sunderland lies over the Middle and Upper Coal Measures, which form part of the wider Durham Coalfield and have long been exploited for fuel. The coal measures comprise layers of mudstone, siltstone and sandstone as well as the coal seams themselves, which lie at various depths across the area. The coal measures are largely obscured by later deposits of glacial till, though there are outcrops at Springwell where sandstone is quarried.
- 2.6 Formally referred to as part of the Zechstein Group of sedimentary rocks, the Magnesian Limestone dates from the later Permian period, some 230-250 million years ago. These rocks were laid down over the coal measures on the bed of the Zechstein Sea, a warm shallow inland sea covering an area somewhat larger than the modern North Sea. The Magnesian Limestone comprises limestones rich in magnesium, in the form of the mineral dolomite.
- 2.7 The Magnesian Limestone comprises a series of distinct Permian formations. The oldest, the Yellow Sands, can be seen at the base of Claxheugh Rock. Over this is the Marl Slate, which has yielded important fossil fish and plants. Next is the Ford Formation, within which are the remains of a barrier reef, forming harder dolomite that can be seen in outcrops on the Tunstall Hills. The slightly later Roker Formation includes the Concretionary Limestone or 'cannon-ball rock' that is found in outcrops on Carley Hill near Roker.
- 2.8 Both the coal measures and the Magnesian Limestone are overlain by till; thick clay deposited by glaciers during the last ice ages. These deposits, and the associated beds of sand and gravel, are up to 2 million years old, and largely obscure the underlying geology except where outcrops occur.

### Topography

- 2.9 Topography across the area clearly follows the underlying geology, with the higher ground to the east. The highest point within Sunderland is Warden Law, 174m above sea level, the northern edge of a moorland plateau which extends south into County Durham. From this high point the land shelves gently down to the coast, and also gently northwards to the Wear. This raised area forms an undulating plateau with some distinctive hills. The land drops steadily to the coast, with only a small area of lower ground around the river mouth.
- 2.10 To the west, the land drops sharply at the escarpment which marks the edge of the Magnesian Limestone. West of the escarpment the land is lower, with generally less variation in topography. There are distinct ridges within this area, to the south at East Rainton and more substantially at Springwell in the north west of the area, where the land rises to just over 150m.

### Hydrology

- 2.11 The Wear is the only substantial river in the area, flowing north east from Durham and south of Washington. It cuts through the Magnesian Limestone to reach the North Sea, forming a distinct gorge. The broad river forms distinct meanders in places, though other sections are straighter. Within Sunderland, the whole river is tidal.
- 2.12 Minor burns drain the area, flowing west and east from the watershed above the limestone escarpment. Eastward-flowing watercourses include the Hendon Burn which drains much of urban Sunderland, entering the North Sea near Hendon. To the south, Ryhope Dene is one a distinctive series of small incised valleys which occur along the Durham coast. The western side of the escarpment is drained by a series of burns which converge around Fence Houses and flow west to join the Wear at Chester-le-Street.
- 2.13 On the north side of the Wear, the Biddick Burn drains the south side of Washington via a narrow dene, while the flatter northern side is drained by the River Don, which flows north to join the Tyne at Jarrow.

## Coastline

- 2.14 The coastline of Sunderland is derived from its Magnesian Limestone geology, with important outcrops of limestone at Roker in particular, where they stand atop sandy beaches divided by wave-cut rocks. The mouth of the River Wear has been heavily modified by harbour works over the years, and now exhibits little in the way of natural landform. South of the harbour, the low cliffs, not reaching over 20m in height, are formed mainly of glacial clay over limestone. In front of these cliffs are further wave-cut platforms and small shingle beaches. Erosion of the limestone has produced natural arches and small sea-stacks along the coast near Ryhope.

Figure 2.2 The Sunderland coastline at Roker



## Human influences

### Early history

- 2.15 The Sunderland area has been settled by people since at least the Mesolithic period; the date of a number of finds including flints. During the Neolithic, several monuments were constructed along the limestone escarpment. At Hastings Hill there is a causewayed enclosure and a cursus: the former is an irregular oval enclosure of 92m by 65m; the latter is a long rectangle, 43m by 400m, framed by ditches. Both features are of uncertain purpose. Both Neolithic and Bronze Age burials have been excavated from nearby barrows. Further south at Copt Hill another barrow has also been found to contain burials of these periods.
- 2.16 The Romans maintained military sites in the wider area at Arbeia in South Shields, and to the west in Chester-le-Street. However, there is little sign of Roman settlement in the area, although Roman artefacts have been recovered from several sites. A Roman bronze of Jupiter was found at Carley Hill in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century. During the Early Medieval period the area lay within the kingdom of Bernicia, which was taken over by the Anglo-Saxons in around 600 AD, and became part of the kingdom of Northumbria shortly after.
- 2.17 During the 7<sup>th</sup> century Monkwearmouth-Jarrow Priory was founded by a local nobleman, Benedict Biscop, on land by the Wear granted by King Ecgfrith of Northumbria. The monastery became a major centre of Anglo-Saxon learning and was home to Bede, author of an important 8<sup>th</sup>-century

history of the English. From the later 8<sup>th</sup> century, the monastery suffered from Viking raids, and Northumbria was absorbed into Viking Danelaw in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

### Medieval and post-medieval

- 2.18 Numerous villages in the area are first documented in 930 AD, when King Athelstan, following his conquest of the Danelaw, granted the lands in the area to the Bishop of Durham. The area was surveyed on behalf of Bishop Hugh du Puiset in 1183, with the resulting Boldon Book detailing the settlements of Wearmouth, Tunstall, Ryhope and Burdon. Bishop Hugh granted a charter founding the borough of Sunderland around this time, though it grew only slowly in comparison with Newcastle to the north. A further survey in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, undertaken for Bishop Thomas Hatfield, illustrates the scale of change in land ownership during this period. This survey records several dams on the Wear, and a port at Hendon on the coast.
- 2.19 The monastery at Wearmouth was re-founded in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, later becoming a cell of Durham Priory until the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s. Parts of the present St Peter's Church date from this period. Hylton Castle and the nearby St Catherine's Chapel were built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, though much altered since. The wider landscape of Sunderland was one of small villages, including Ryhope, Tunstall and Houghton-le-Spring, each with its surrounding field system, and separated by areas of common grazing.

Figure 2.3 Hylton Castle



- 2.20 Coal was recovered in the area from the earliest times, with intermittent records of coal being shipped at Sunderland through the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The establishment of a colliery at Offerton in the later 16<sup>th</sup> century marked the first large-scale venture, developed in association with salt pans on the riverside. Sunderland's role as a coal port began to grow from this time, and by 1700 was well established with links to Germany and the Netherlands.

### Industrial revolution

- 2.21 Major collieries were developed across the Durham Coalfield from the later 18<sup>th</sup> century. Newbottle, Washington and Penshaw collieries were all well established by 1800. Soon after it was realised that the coal seams continued under the Magnesian Limestone, leading to a further series of deep mines at Hetton (1822), Ryhope (1859) and Silksworth (1873). The most significant pit was Monkwearmouth, sunk in 1826; at 1,500 feet (457m) it was the deepest mine in the world at the time. The mines brought huge and rapid changes to the landscape of the area,

since each required large numbers of workers to be housed close by. Brick-built rows of houses were put up at each site, with attendant churches and other buildings.

- 2.22 At the same time, the advent of railways allowed transport of the coal to the staithes along the Wear. The Sunderland area includes a range of early railways including rope-hauled routes and waggonways. Railway pioneer George Stephenson planned several of these early routes, such as the 8-mile-long Hetton Company's Railway. The surrounding farmland was largely enclosed during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, resulting in the modern pattern of large fields enclosed by hedges, with remnant woodlands largely restricted to inaccessible denes and steep slopes.
- 2.23 Meanwhile Sunderland itself continued to expand, from a population of around 5,000 in 1700 to over 12,000 a century later, and 146,000 a century after that. Shipbuilding emerged as a major industry, as the Wearmouth port was successively expanded. The rapid population growth led to overcrowding despite the geographical expansion of the built up area. Distinctive types of housing were developed, principally the Sunderland Cottage, a single-storey dwelling built in long terraces with a back yard. During the second half 19<sup>th</sup> century public works were undertaken, including the waterworks at Ryhope, and public parks at Roker and Mowbray Park.

**Figure 2.4 Industrial character of the Wear**



### 20<sup>th</sup> century to present

- 2.24 Industry continued to drive population growth into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1930s insanitary conditions spurred the development of major new housing estates, which began a large-scale expansion of the built-up area. The building of new estates continued throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly during the decades after the Second World War. To the west of Sunderland, the new town of Washington was designated in 1964; the older village still forms the core of the town, but is surrounded by planned residential areas and open spaces.
- 2.25 Urban expansion was coupled with the closure of coal mines, which left large areas of land requiring restoration; Washington new town was built on land left vacant by the closure of Washington Colliery. Colliery closures continued through the 1970s and 80s, until closure of Monkwearmouth, the last colliery in the Durham Coalfield, in 1993. Shipbuilding also declined, with only one shipyard now remaining on the Wear. The closure of mines led to the closure of railways, leaving the landscape criss-crossed with disused embankments and cuttings. In their place, major dual carriageways now cut across the area.

- 2.26 New industries have come into the area, most notably the extensive Nissan factory, built over the former Sunderland Aerodrome, itself a former RAF base. Other infrastructure includes power lines which run north-south through the area, and wind turbines at the Nissan plant and on Eppleton Moor. Urban expansion has continued, merging the built up area of Sunderland with the outlying settlements of Ryhope and Silksworth. Residential areas now link up the former mining villages around Houghton-le-Spring and Hetton-le-Hole, forming a ribbon of settlement between Penshaw and Easington Lane. The former mine lands in this area have been reclaimed as open spaces, including Herrington Country Park and Rainton Meadows Nature Reserve.

**Figure 2.5 New housing near Ryhope**



## The modern landscape

### Land cover and land use

- 2.27 Around 80 km<sup>2</sup> of the City of Sunderland is defined as built up, representing around 60% of the study area. The remaining 40% comprises mainly farmland, the majority of which is arable and composed of large fields with limited field boundary structure. Pasture is only predominant along the steeper ground of the limestone escarpment, and in smaller enclosures at settlement edges.
- 2.28 There are no areas of extensive woodland cover within the city boundary, although there are important local woodlands. The River Wear is the main corridor of native woodland, along with other watercourses such as Ryhope Dene. There are woodlands on the steeper slopes of the escarpment, and extensive new woodland plantings have been undertaken on reclaimed mining and industrial sites.
- 2.29 Although all the mines have closed, quarrying for stone is still carried on in several locations, including prominent sites on the escarpment. Industry still has a role in the character of the area, nowhere more clearly than the extensive Nissan factory complex north of the Wear, but also along the Wear corridor within Sunderland. Modern business parks now occupy large sites at Rainton Bridge and Doxford International. Nowhere in the area is far from a major road, with the A19, A690 and A1231 forming the principal network, and connecting to the A1 just to the west. Several other dual carriageways and A roads connect the area, and even minor roads are generally busy.

## Settlement

- 2.30 The main Sunderland conurbation is approximately bounded by the A19 to the west, taking in areas on both sides of the Wear and extending almost to the Council boundary to north and south. The villages to the south, including Silksworth, Tunstall and Ryhope, although separated by green corridors, are joined to this urban area. The centre of Sunderland remains by the Wear, although the 19<sup>th</sup>-century core is set back from the older riverside. Little remains of the earliest settlement except occasional street patterns and old churches. Outlying villages, long since absorbed by the growing city, are similarly marked by fossilised village greens or road alignments.
- 2.31 The inner parts of this conurbation comprise dense 19<sup>th</sup>-century rows of terraces, with substantial areas of the distinctive Sunderland Cottages. Outer areas are more spacious, extensive suburbs laid out in large-scale building programmes of the inter-war and post-war years. More recent development continues to infill or replace these earlier suburbs.
- 2.32 To the south west, the villages of Penshaw, Houghton-le-Spring, Hetton-le-Hole and their neighbours retain the character of former mining settlements. Dense terraces added on to older village cores, and subsequently infilled with later housing, give the area a fragmented character. A different form of development is seen at Washington where comprehensive, rather than piecemeal, development followed mine closures. The new town which was established in the 1960s has its own distinct character, varied across the settlement but unified by green corridors and transport links.

## Biodiversity and geodiversity

- 2.33 Sunderland hosts nationally and internationally important habitats and species. The vegetated sea cliffs along the Magnesian Limestone coast support unique plant communities, and the rocky shoreline/beach provide habitat for Sanderling, Purple Sandpiper and Turnstone; the undeveloped coast is protected at international level as a special area of conservation, special protection area and Ramsar site.

**Figure 2.6 Magnesian Limestone and calcareous grasslands at Carley Hill**



- 2.34 Inland there are a number of sites of special scientific importance (SSSI), including geological and biological sites. Often these interests are combined, particularly along the Magnesian Limestone escarpment where distinctive outcrops also support the special plant communities of limestone grassland. Several of these are also local nature reserves (LNR), at Fulwell Hill, Tunstall Hills and



Hetton Bogs. There are further LNRs at Hylton Dene and Barmston Pond. In addition to these is the Wildlife Trust reserve at Rainton Meadows.

- 2.35 At a local level, the Council have identified over 60 local wildlife sites (LWS) covering locally and regionally important habitats. Primarily these are woodland sites, wetlands, grasslands and riversides, although a number of semi-formal spaces, such as parks and cemeteries are included. Recent additions to this list include post-industrial sites such as the railway sidings by Sunderland Docks, which support regenerating woodland habitats. All of the protected sites are linked by wildlife corridors, following watercourses, woodlands, open space corridors and the coast.
- 2.36 Geodiversity at a local level is recognised by a series of six local geological sites (LGS). These include coastal cliffs, railway cuttings, and outcrops along the escarpment and elsewhere. Each of these sites, as well as the geological SSSIs, is focused on the Magnesian Limestone which contributes so much to the character of the local landscape.

### Cultural heritage

- 2.37 The main historic interest in Sunderland is its industrial heritage, which includes early railways, quarrying and mining activity, and now vanished factories and brickworks. Though many of these features are no longer standing, their presence in the landscape is often clear. In particular, the lines of former railways can be traced over long stretches, forming linear wooded features through rural areas and corridors of open space within settlements. Other industrial sites have been reclaimed, and new landscapes have been created in their place. Industrial landmarks include the Victorian waterworks at Ryhope, the bridges over the Wear, and the long outer piers of the harbour.
- 2.38 Other significant features, while not industrial in character, nevertheless owe much to the prosperity which mining and shipbuilding brought. The grand buildings of the city centre and the iconic Penshaw Monument both reflect this heritage. Many listed buildings make a positive contribution to the townscape, particularly where they are clustered together within broader conservation areas. There are important earlier monuments in the area, including the Neolithic cursus and barrows along the limestone edge, all of which are scheduled. The importance of Monkwearmouth and its Medieval monastery was highlighted in a recent bid for World Heritage Site status. Old legends survive in the landscape, such as the story of the Lambton Worm.

### Access and recreation

- 2.39 Open space pervades the built up areas of Sunderland, particularly so in Washington where open space was planned into the new town from the start. In earlier times builders saw less need for green space, creating high-density areas of terraces. Instead, public parks were established and several survive in the area, most notably Mowbray Park and Roker Park. These are connected to open spaces at all scales through the area by a series of strategic green corridors following the river, the escarpment and the coast, and by local corridors such as the ribbon of Barnes Park.
- 2.40 Access to the countryside is provided by a network of local footpaths, though with major roads serving as an impediment to movement. Long distance cycle routes pass through the area, with two coast-to-coast routes terminating at Wearmouth.

# 3 Landscape Classification





# 3 Landscape Classification

## Introduction

3.1 This section sets out the classification of the landscapes of City of Sunderland. The classification draws on earlier work presented in a number of documents, including:

- Natural England National Character Area Profiles (2013);
- Limestone Landscape Partnership 'Landscape Conservation Action Plan' (2010);
- Sunderland Landscape Character Assessment (draft 2009);
- The Great North Forest Plan (adopted 2003);
- South Tyneside Landscape Character Study (2012);
- Landscape Character Assessment for Gateshead Council (2007); and
- County Durham Landscape Character Assessment (2008)

3.2 These documents are reviewed in **Appendix 2**, and the key findings are summarised below.

### National character areas

3.3 At a national level, the landscape of Sunderland is divided between the Tyne and Wear Lowlands to the west, and the Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau to the east. Natural England has recently published more detailed profiles of these areas, setting out detailed descriptions, drivers for change, and objectives for the landscape. These objectives are expressed as 'Statements of Environmental Opportunity', and provide a framework for the development of local landscape guidance.

### District and local level landscape classification

3.4 The 2009 draft Sunderland Landscape Character Assessment identified and described 17 landscape character areas. These were not grouped into landscape character types (LCT), but the Landscape Conservation Action Plan published by the Limestone Landscape Partnership drew on these area boundaries in defining a series of LCTs across the partnership area. The Action Plan defined six LCTs within the Magnesian Limestone areas of Sunderland, which are closely aligned with the LCTs defined in the County Durham Landscape Character Assessment.













3.5 A further exercise undertaken by Durham County Council extended the Tyne and Wear Lowlands LCTs, as defined in the County Durham Landscape Character Assessment, into Sunderland, resulting in a set of eight LCTs covering the non-urban areas of the city.

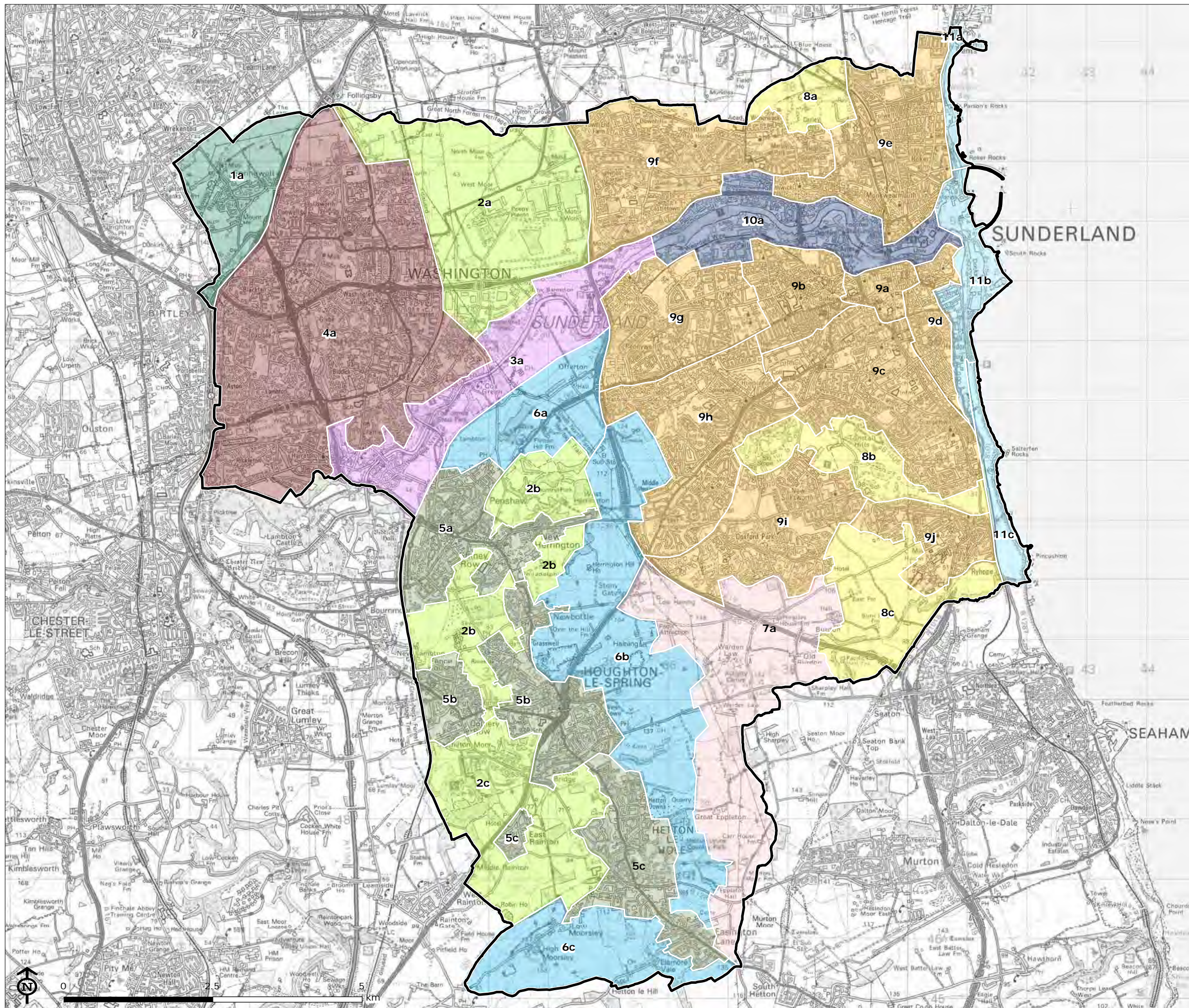
3.6 These eight LCTs, with some changes, have been adopted as a basis for present classification. However, the brief requires the characterisation of urban as well as non-urban areas, and additional urban LCTs were therefore introduced.

3.7 The landscape classification is set out in **Table 3.1** and is illustrated in **Figure 3.1**. The eleven LCTs nest into the two national character areas, and are subdivided into a total of 30 character areas.

# Sunderland City Council Landscape Character Assessment

**Figure 3.1: Landscape Classification**

-  Sunderland City boundary
- Landscape Character Types\*\***
-  Clay Plateau
-  Coalfield Lowland Terraces
-  Coalfield Ridge
-  Coalfield Villages
-  Coastal Limestone Plateau
-  Incised Lowland Valley
-  Limestone Coast
-  Limestone Escarpment
-  Urban Limestone Gorge
-  Urban Limestone Plateau
-  Urban New Town



**Note**  
\*\* Refer to Table 3.1 for further information on landscape character areas.

**Map Scale @ A3: 1:62,500**



**Table 3.1 Landscape classification**

Landscape Character Type	Landscape Character Areas
National Character Area: Tyne and Wear Lowlands	
1. Coalfield Ridge	1a. Springwell Rise
2. Coalfield Lowland Terraces	2a. Usworth Lowland
	2b. Peshaw to Houghton Open Spaces
	2c. Rainton Lowland
3. Incised Lowland Valley	3a. Weardale
4. Urban New Town	4a. Washington
5. Coalfield Villages	5a. Peshaw and Herrington
	5b. Houghton-le-Spring, Fence Houses and Newbottle
	5c. Hetton-le-Hole, Easington Lane and East Rainton
National Character Area: Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau	
6. Limestone Escarpment	6a. Peshaw Hill
	6b. Hastings Hill and Copt Hill
	6c. High Moorsley
7. Clay Plateau	7a. Warden Law and Eppleton Moor
8. Coastal Limestone Plateau	8a. Carley Hill
	8b. Tunstall Hills
	8c. Burdon to Ryhope
9. Urban Limestone Plateau	9a. Sunderland City Centre
	9b. Millfield and Pallion
	9c. Ashbrooke, Hillview and Grangetown
	9d. East End and Hendon
	9e. Southwick, Fulwell, Monkwearmouth and Roker
	9f. Hylton Castle, Downhill and Castletown
	9g. South Hylton, Pennywell and Ford
	9h. Thorney Close, Herrington and Grindon
	9i. Silksworth and Tunstall
	9j. Ryhope
10. Urban Limestone Gorge	10a. River Wear Gorge
11. Limestone Coast	11a. North Sunderland Coast
	11b. Sunderland Harbour and Docks
	11c. South Sunderland Coast

# 4 Landscape Character Types and Areas









## 4 Landscape Character Types and Areas

### Introduction

- 4.1 This chapter provides details on each landscape character type (LCT) and each character area, as defined in **Table 3.1**. The chapter is arranged by LCTs, and for each LCT the following descriptive information is included:
- A brief description of the location and extent of the LCT;
  - A map of the LCT, showing the character areas within it;
  - Key characteristics of the LCT; and
  - Descriptions and photographs of the individual character areas within the LCT.
- 4.2 Landscape guidance is also provided for each LCT, including:
- A summary of the sensitive features and key issues for landscape within the LCT;
  - Development guidelines for the LCT as a whole, presented as a series of 'dos and don'ts';
  - A list of the valued landscape aspects of each character area; and
  - A strategy statement for each character area, describing how the landscape should be protected and/or enhanced.
- 4.3 **Figure 3.1** shows the LCTs and character areas. Landscape strategy is mapped on **Figure 3.2**.

# LCT 1: Coalfield Ridge

## Description

### Location and extents

- 4.4 This LCT encompasses a prominent ridge of elevated land located at the eastern edge of the Durham and Northumberland Coalfield. The ridge separates the Wear Valley to the south east from the Team Valley to the west. The LCT comprises the undeveloped landscape of the ridge between Washington and Gateshead.

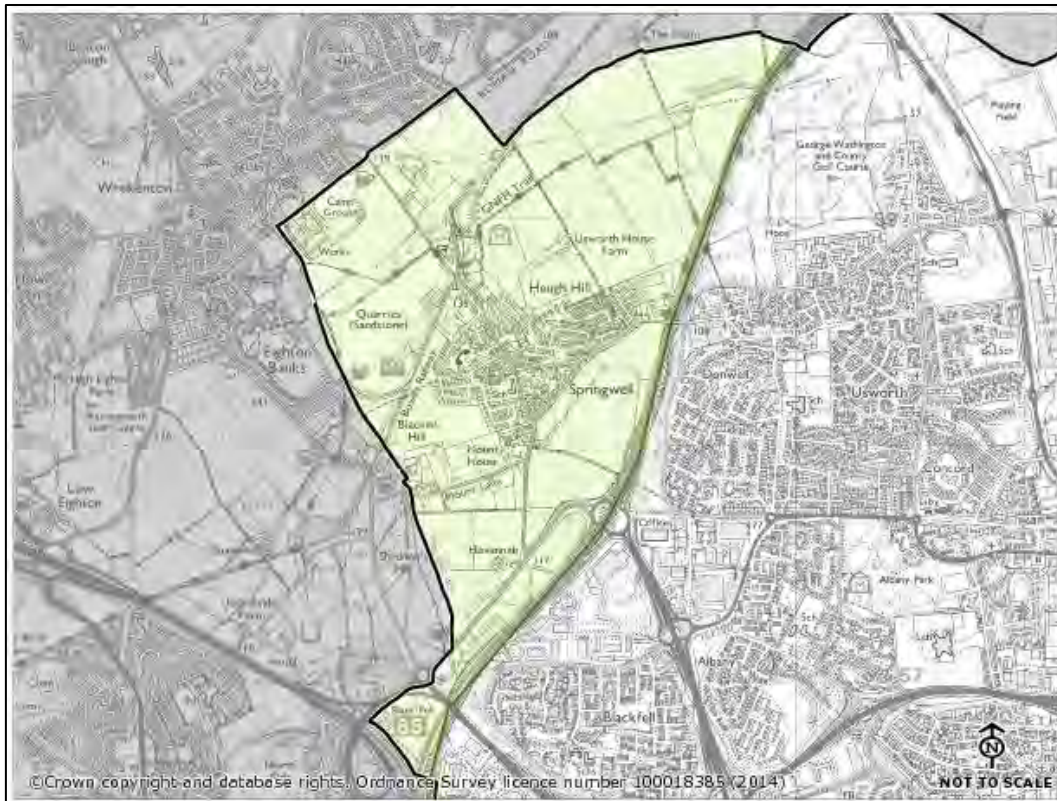
### Key characteristics of the Coalfield Ridge

- 4.5 Key characteristics of the Coalfield Ridge LCT:
- Prominent outcrop of sandstone within the otherwise low-lying Tyne and Wear Lowlands;
  - A mix of pastoral and arable land at settlement edges;
  - Sandstone-built vernacular dwellings;
  - Industrial heritage of railways and quarrying; and
  - Elevated position provides long open views across adjacent areas.
- 4.6 There is one landscape character area within the Coalfield Ridge LCT.

### 1a Springwell Rise

- 4.7 This character area is located at the far north west corner the Sunderland City Council area. It is bounded along the south east by the A194(M) motorway, and extends to the Council boundary to north and west.
- 4.8 Springwell Rise encompasses an outcrop of sandstone creating a prominent ridge within the otherwise low-lying Tyne and Wear Lowlands. The ridge rises to around 150m between Springwell and Eighton Banks, and slopes gently to the south and east.

Figure 4.1 Location of Springwell Rise



- 4.9 The village of Springwell is located on the south east side of Heugh Hill and comprises a historical 19th century core characterised by a distinct sandstone vernacular associated with the Springwell Quarry, which is still active immediately west of the village. The character area is bounded by settlement in Washington to the south east, and Wrekenton in the north west.
- 4.10 Agricultural land cover consists of large arable fields within the areas of lower elevation to the north and smaller pastoral fields and paddocks at a higher elevation. Fields are generally bounded by weak remnant hedgerow and sparse tree cover providing an open large-scale landscape with a lack of enclosure. There are a number of industrial sites and urban fringe land uses including allotments.
- 4.11 At the northern edge of the character area, the B1288 Leam Lane follows the route of the Wrakendike, a Roman road which served the 2<sup>nd</sup>-century fort at Arbeia, now in South Shields. More recent communication links include the Bowes Railway, opened in 1826. Engineered by George Stephenson, the line included a rope-haulage system to bring coal wagons up the steep inclines. Part of the railway and its associated structures and apparatus has been preserved, and now operates as the Bowes Railway and Museum. The railway is a scheduled monument, while some of the former tracks and sidings are local wildlife sites.



*Clockwise from top left: 19<sup>th</sup>-century core of Springwell village; the Bowes Railway and Museum; panoramic views over Sunderland.*

- 4.12 The Great North Forest Heritage Trail runs through this area, and there are a number of other public footpaths including the route of the Bowes Railway, which also forms part of the National Cycle Network. The elevated position allows long panoramic views across Sunderland and into County Durham. The A194(M) motorway forms a dominant feature in the south and east, effectively cutting off the area from the rest of Sunderland.

## Guidance and strategy

### Sensitive features for the Coalfield Ridge LCT

- 4.13 The key sensitive features, issues and trends within this landscape are listed below, and guidelines for this area are set out in **Table 4.1**.
- Bowes Railway (scheduled monument) and Museum.
  - Negative impact of A194(M) running along the southern and eastern edge of the LCA
  - Recreational value of Great North Forest Heritage Trail, footpaths and bridleways.
  - Distinct character of sandstone houses in the village core.
  - Long-term restoration or reuse of Springwell Quarry.
  - Open panoramic views over neighbouring landscapes.

**Table 4.1 Guidelines for the Coalfield Ridge LCT**

Strengths/ Opportunities/ Challenges	Do	Don't
Bowes Railway and Museum	Enhance accessibility including links to local recreational areas and wider networks	Allow development which would challenge the enjoyment of the railway
Recreational trails footpaths and bridleways	Continue to maintain recreational routes	Permit development that will encroach on recreational routes
Major roads		Allow major roads to become a barrier to access into this landscape from the urban area to the south east
Distinct sandstone vernacular of historical village core	Promote restoration of historical buildings that is sensitive and in keeping with its setting  Promote the use of building materials that are in keeping with the architectural styles	Permit the demolition of buildings historical building within the village  Permit development that will encroach on or substantially alter the vernacular architecture of the historical village core
Restoration of Springwell Quarry	Promote the long term restoration/reuse of Springwell Quarry, incorporating measures for recreation and biodiversity, as well as interpretation of exposed geology	
Open, panoramic views		Permit development that will substantially alter the view from valued viewpoints

### Landscape Strategy

4.14 For each area within this LCT, an initial assessment of landscape value has been made and an overarching landscape strategy has been assigned. The guidelines in Table 4.1 should be applied in the context of this landscape strategy.

#### *1a Springwell Rise*

4.15 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.

- Distinct sandstone building materials of 19<sup>th</sup> century housing provides a strong architectural vernacular of the relatively intact village core.
- Bowes Railway and museum represents an important historical feature in the local area, with wider significance to the industrial history of the region.
- The elevated ridge provides open panoramic views across neighbouring landscapes.
- Undeveloped steeper slopes provide breaks between the settlements of Gateshead and Washington.

4.16 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards an open, largely undeveloped area surrounding the hill-top nuclear settlement of Springwell. High-quality recreational access will link Springwell with both Washington and Gateshead, and will enable access to an interpretation of natural and cultural heritage, including the sandstone geology and historic Bowes Railway. Woodland on lower ground and at settlement edges will help to integrate the A194 and to enhance the visual break between Gateshead and Washington.

This will be combined with **landscape protection** of the open landscape surrounding the village, that plays a prominent role in the setting of the village and of the Bowes Railway scheduled monument. On higher ground the open views to the sea and across the surrounding landscape will be retained. The sandstone vernacular of the historical village core will be protected from insensitive development to retain its distinct character.

# LCT 2: Coalfield Lowland Terraces

## Description

### Location and extents

- 4.17 This LCT occurs within the Tyne and Wear Lowlands which occupy the eastern edge of the Durham Coalfield. The LCT is constrained to the north, east and south by the escarpment of the Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau that rises sharply forming a distinct boundary between the two different bedrock types. The LCT extends south and west into County Durham covering an area of gently rolling topography that forms a transitional landscape between the Magnesian Limestone escarpment and the Wear Valley to the west.

### Key characteristics of the Coalfield Lowland Terraces

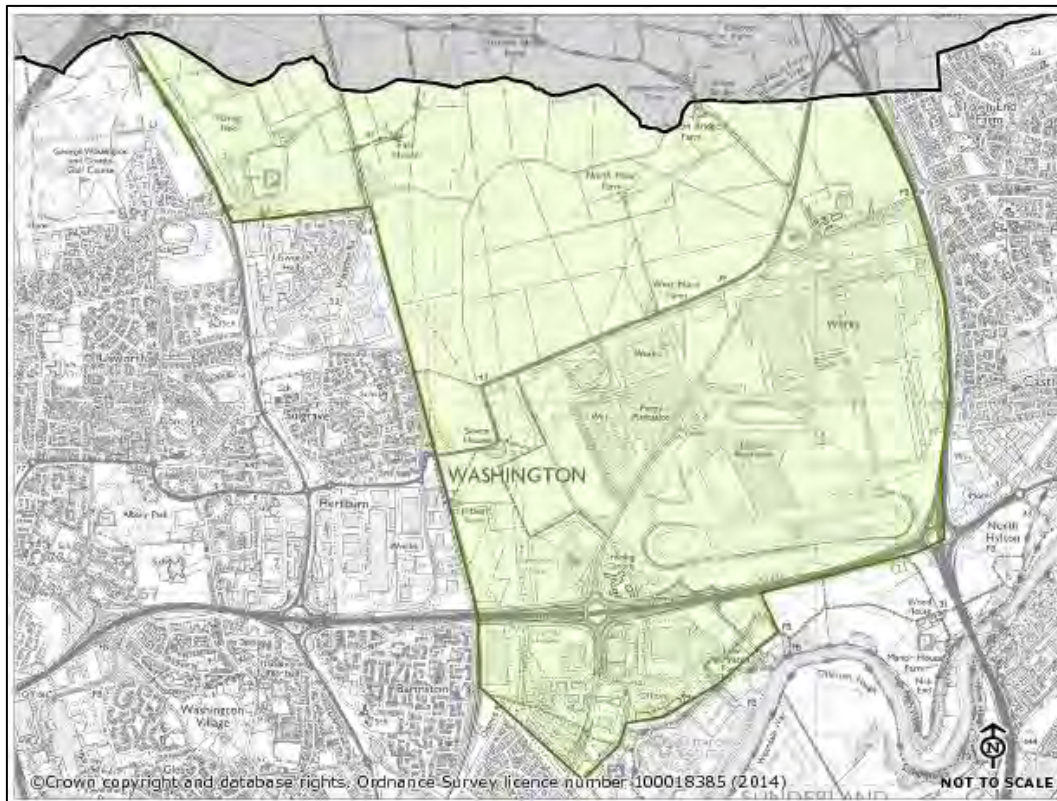
- 4.18 Key characteristics of the Coalfield Lowland Terraces LCT:
- Lowland transitional landscape between the Magnesian Limestone escarpment to the east and Wear Valley to the west;
  - Underlying Carboniferous Coal Measures are masked by thick layers of glacial deposits;
  - The topography is gently rolling or flat in areas of boulder clay, with a more undulating terrain associated with river valleys, and with the remains of glacial moraines;
  - Agricultural land use is mixed but predominantly arable with semi-regular patterns of medium and large-scale fields bounded by low hawthorn hedges and pockets of recently planted woodland;
  - Former colliery workings and spoil heaps have now been reclaimed, with large tracts of recently restored land;
  - Fragmented by industrial and residential development, the landscape includes corridors of open space between settlements, often with urban fringe character;
  - Large industrial complexes and industrial estates are present;
  - Long and relatively open views across County Durham from the elevated foot slopes of the Limestone Escarpment to the west; these become less frequent towards the low lying Wear Valley.
- 4.19 The Coalfield Lowland Terraces LCT has been subdivided into three character areas. These are described below.



## 2a Usworth Lowland

- 4.20 This character area covers the flat agricultural and industrial land north of the River Wear, between Washington and Sunderland. This character area extends northwards into South Tyneside.

**Figure 4.2 Location of Usworth Lowland**



- 4.21 This area is almost entirely flat, with an elevation between 30m and 45m except in the north west where it wraps around the north of Usworth. The area is bounded by the urban edge of Washington to the west, and the A19 dual carriageway to the east. It forms part of a wider area of undeveloped agricultural land between Sunderland, Washington, Gateshead and South Tyneside, and is identified in South Tyneside's Landscape Character Assessment as also forming part of the Boldon Fell character area (Area 31).
- 4.22 Land cover across the northern part of this LCA consists of large scale arable fields bordered by remnant and weak hedgerows with sparse tree cover. There are a few isolated farms in this area but little other development. Some woodland occurs along the River Don, and though some of this is in South Tyneside it contributes to the character of this area. South of the A1290, which bisects the area, industrial development becomes the main land use. Nissan and Vantec occupy a substantial section of this character area, incorporating numerous very large buildings, hardstandings, a test track and ten wind turbines. New and old woodland contains the development from some angles, though it is highly visible from elevated locations.
- 4.23 This area also includes the A1231 dual carriageway, and the Pattinson Industrial Estate to the south. The latter includes business premises with views over the wooded Wear Valley (LCT 3). The whole area is crossed by a number of high voltage electricity lines, with large pylons appearing to overwhelm many landscape features and interrupting views. Roads, including the minor ones, are typically busy with traffic.
- 4.24 The landscape has an open character, which enables views over to the Boldon Hills to the north east, in South Tyneside. Views looking south towards Sunderland are limited by the large industrial structures associated with the Nissan car factory. The area has a generally low recreational value, with a limited number of underused public footpaths and bridleways. The Great North Forest Heritage Trail passes through the north between Washington and West Boldon, and there are footpaths around Barmston Pond Local Nature Reserve, which supports a range of

bird life. A number of local wildlife sites cover plantations and grasslands around the Nissan factory, and the ponds and burns further north. This flat landscape was previously used as a RAF station during the First and Second World Wars. It later became Sunderland Airport, and today the North East Aviation Museum occupies part of the airfield north of the Nissan factory.

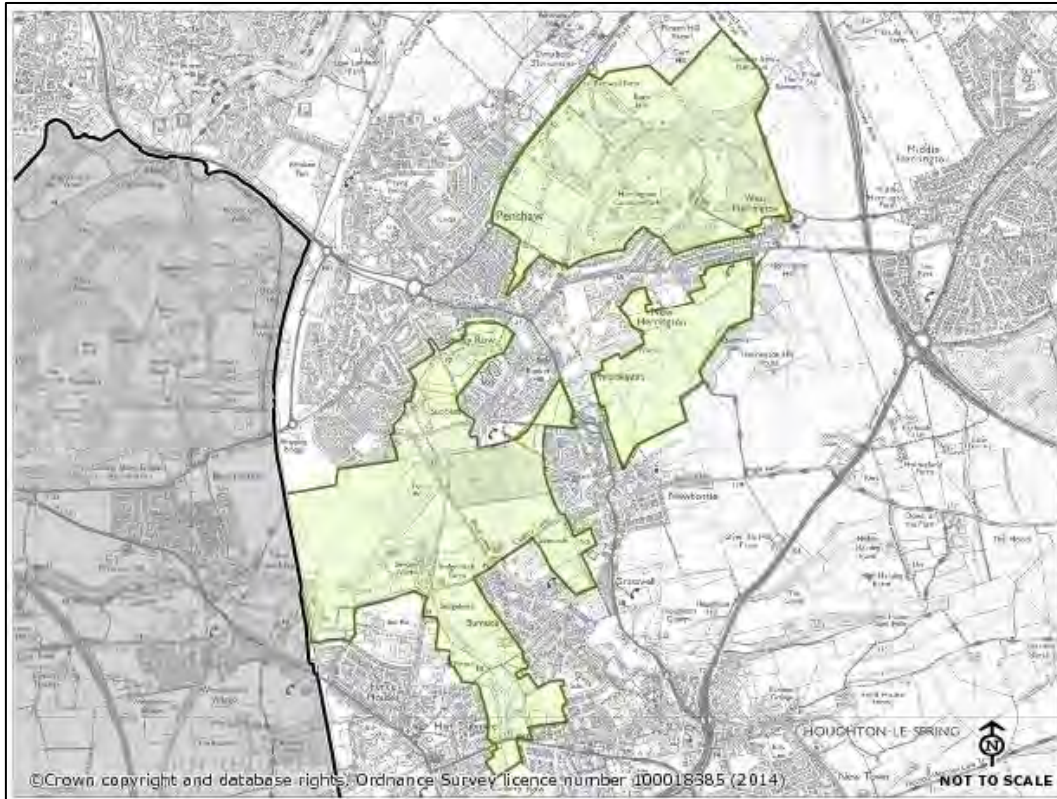


*Clockwise from top left: view across the flat landscape to the Nissan wind turbines; flat agricultural land to the north of the Nissan Car Plant; the entrance to the Nissan car plant; bridleway at Nissan Way.*

## 2b Penshaw to Houghton Open Spaces

- 4.25 This area covers the open spaces around and between the settlements of Penshaw, Newbottle and Houghton-le-Spring. It includes Herrington Country Park, land south of New Herrington, and the areas between Fence Houses and Newbottle. These areas are linked by their history of industrial use and their settlement fringe character. This character area is bounded by the limestone escarpment in the north and east and extends west towards Bournmoor in County Durham.
- 4.26 Lowland landscape with gentle undulations that slopes generally westward towards the River Wear. The area is drained by the Herrington Burn which flows south west, and the tributary Moors Burn from the south. The landform of the area is partly man-made, the result of large-scale industrial land uses and subsequent restoration. This area includes the sites of Herrington and Lambton Collieries, and the Lambton Coke Works, all of which have been cleared and restored.

Figure 4.3 Location of Penshaw to Houghton Open Spaces



- 4.27 Generally a peri-urban area with a limited amount of productive agricultural land. The landscape wraps around the settlements of Penshaw, Shiny Row, New Herrington, Philadelphia, Houghton-le-Spring, High Dubmire and Fence Houses. Playing fields, industrial estates and vacant land blur the urban/rural boundary throughout this area. The most undeveloped part of the area are the large fields south of New Herrington, which adjoin the Limestone Escarpment (LCT 6). There are isolated houses and industrial land uses around Sedgely, where the open space narrows to a corridor around the Moors Burn, separating High Dubmire from Houghton-le-Spring.
- 4.28 Herrington Country Park is located on reclaimed land, and represents a substantial outdoor recreational facility within the region, with walking and cycling routes, ponds, and extensive woodland planting. It is overlooked by the Magnesian Limestone escarpment, and the distinctive Penshaw Monument to the north. To the south of Shiny Row, the former Lambton Coke Works has been reclaimed as a second major open space, known as Elba Park. Both these parks are connected into adjacent settlements by footpath networks.
- 4.29 Extensive recent woodland planting in this area includes Russell Wood as well as the two parks. Foxcover Wood in Herrington Country Park is a local wildlife site, and there are two proposed LWS at Philadelphia Pond, Success Railway Cutting and Sedgely Ponds.

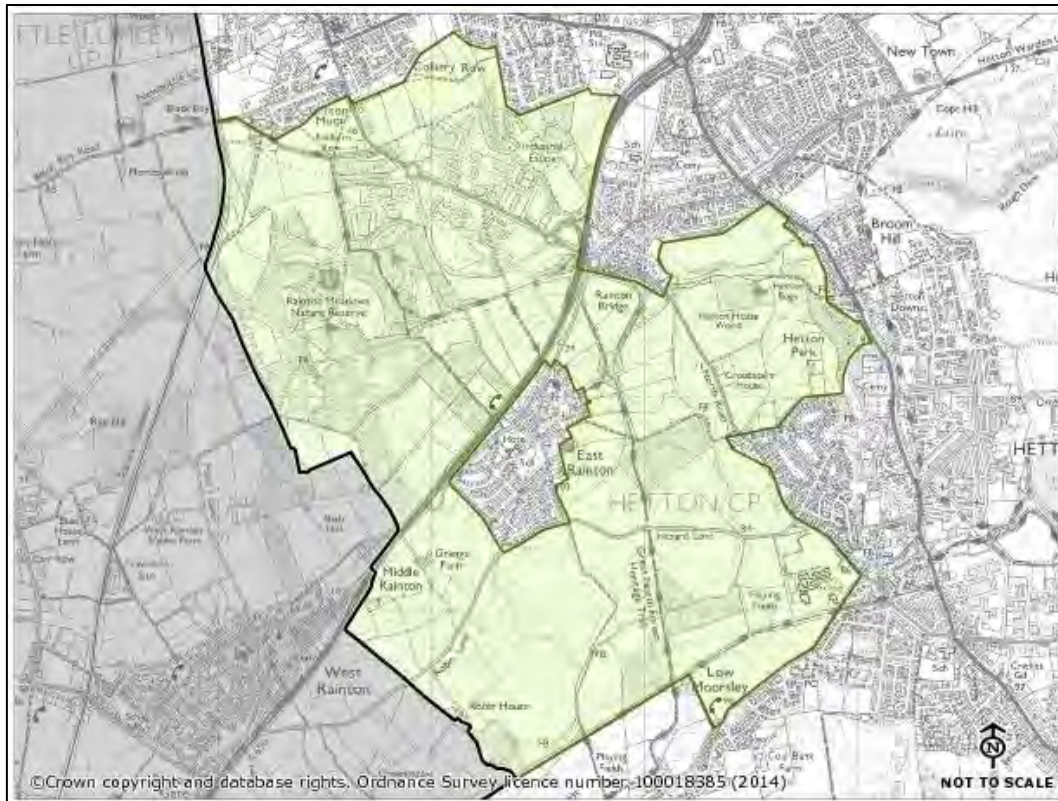


*Clockwise from top left: Lake within Herrington Country Park; view over the Country Park from Penshaw Hill; view south over Penshaw open spaces from Penshaw Hill; view of West Herrington below the escarpment.*

## 2c Rainton Lowland

- 4.30 This area includes the landscape to the west of Houghton-le-Spring and Hetton-le-Hole, which wraps around the settlement of East Rainton. The character of this area extends westward into County Durham. The Rainton Lowland is differentiated from other areas of this LCT by the low ridge, rising to 114m, on which East Rainton is built, and which extends south west into County Durham. This ridge shares some characteristics with the Coalfield Ridge (LCT 1), including the availability of long westward views, looking over the Wear Valley.
- 4.31 A gently rolling landscape that slopes generally to the north west towards the River Wear. To the south and east the area adjoins the rising ground of the Limestone Escarpment (LCT 6). The area is drained by the Hetton Burn and its tributaries, which flow north and north west to join the Moors Burn near High Dubmire.
- 4.32 Land cover comprises large to medium size arable fields bounded by weak hedgerow cover, with smaller fields of pasture or grassland. There are numerous recent woodland plantations throughout this area, and concentrated on the reclaimed land of Rainton Meadows and Hetton Houses Wood. Woodland follows burns and former railway lines through this landscape. Rainton Meadows incorporates semi-natural grasslands and ponds. The area is surrounded by settlements (LCT 5): Colliery Row and Houghton-le-Spring to the north, Hetton-le-Hole and Easington Lane to the east; and East Rainton in the centre. The Rainton Bridge Business Park is located in this area, which is bisected by the A690 dual carriageway.

Figure 4.4 Location of Rainton Lowland



- 4.33 There are several local wildlife sites covering woods and wetlands in this area. Hetton Bogs LNR (SSSI) and SSSI and Hetton Houses Wood ancient woodland lie to the east, and there is a further SSSI at Joe's Pond. Rainton Meadows is operated by the Durham Wildlife Trust as a publicly accessible nature reserve with a visitor centre. The Great North Forest Heritage Trail crosses this area, as well as the Walney to Wear (W2W) cross-country cycle route linking Hetton-le-Hole to Pitlington.
- 4.34 Historically this area has long been exploited for its coal reserves. The various pits of the Rainton Colliery were located across this area: land associated with the North Pit has been reclaimed to build Rainton Bridge Business Park; and land associated with Rainton Meadows Pit and Nicholson's Pit now forms Rainton Meadows Nature Reserve. The colliery operated until 1978, and was served by numerous railways, the lines of which can still be traced in the landscape.



*Clockwise from top left: sculpture in Rainton Meadows; a pond within the nature reserve; Rainton Business Park; view north from High Moorsley.*

## Guidance and strategy

### Sensitive features for the Coalfield Lowland Terraces LCT

4.35 The key sensitive features, issues and trends within this landscape are listed below, and guidelines for this area are set out in **Table 4.2**.

- Negative impact of infrastructure, including major roads and industrial and business parks.
- Recreational value of parks, footpaths and cycleways.
- Settlement fringe character of parts of the landscape.
- Maintenance of the distinction between settlements.

**Table 4.2 Guidelines for the Coalfield Lowland Terraces LCT**

Strengths/ Opportunities/ Challenges	Do	Don't
Major roads	<p>Seek to integrate any new roads through careful alignment.</p> <p>Preserve access routes for pedestrians and cyclists.</p> <p>Seek to maintain green network connections, compensating any loss of woodland, trees or open space with new publicly accessible spaces.</p>	<p>Allow major roads to become a barrier to access to and from areas of parkland and open space.</p>
Industrial estates and complexes	<p>Seek opportunities to enhance and extend landscaping and integrate new buildings into the landscape. Utilise native species which occur locally, e.g. Grey Poplar.</p> <p>Aim to enhance maintenance of landscapes in and around industrial and commercial premises, including woodland and hedges.</p>	<p>Permit industrial/commercial development that will adversely encroach on the Green Belt and block green corridors through this already fragmented landscape.</p>
Parks, open spaces and access	<p>Enhance accessibility including maintaining and upgrading links between communities and recreational areas.</p> <p>Seek opportunities to enhance routes through the area, e.g. the footpath / bridleway at Barmston Lane, and better links into South Tyneside and Gateshead.</p> <p>Promote pedestrian and cycle access to work places.</p> <p>Provide links to wider networks, for example between the River Wear Trail and neighbouring areas.</p> <p>Enhance features of the functional floodplain / Lumley Park Burn catchment.</p>	<p>Permit settlement and industrial development that will encroach on the open space and parkland.</p> <p>Allow recreational routes to become neglected or obstructed.</p> <p>Allow development that urbanises/ further modifies the streams or has any negative impact to water quality and flood incidences</p>
Settlement fringe	<p>Seek opportunities to enhance and strengthen settlement boundaries, for example woodland belts. New development may offer such opportunities.</p>	<p>Permit piecemeal development which will further erode the distinction between urban and rural in this landscape.</p>
Settlement separation	<p>With reference to Green Belt policy and supporting studies, ensure careful consideration of development proposals which could erode the distinction between settlements in this area.</p>	<p>Permit infill of strategic green corridors which separate settlements.</p>

## Landscape strategy

- 4.36 For each area within this LCT, an initial assessment of landscape value has been made and an overarching landscape strategy has been assigned. The guidelines in Table 4.1 should be applied in the context of this landscape strategy.

### 2a Usworth Lowland

- 4.37 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.
- Large undeveloped area within north Sunderland, which acts as a settlement break between Sunderland and Washington.
  - Continuous with large area of similar farmland to the north, in South Tyneside.
  - North East Aircraft Museum is a visitor attraction and also illustrates the history of this landscape as an airfield.
  - Barmston Pond Local Nature Reserve provides ecological interest in the area.
- 4.38 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards a high-biodiversity area incorporating potential for recreation within and around the existing and potential future commercial development. The existing limited hedges and tree cover in the north should be maintained and this structure enhanced as part of any new proposals. The open aspect of land between Sunderland and South Tyneside should be retained in line with Green Belt purposes where applicable. Views to Boldon Downhill enhance the sense of place of this location. Connections could be improved through better green networks around the existing land uses, linking up currently isolated features such as the Barmston Pond nature reserve. Pedestrian and cycle links between adjacent residential areas and the River Wear would improve recreational opportunities and routes to work.

### 2b Penshaw to Houghton Open Spaces

- 4.39 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.
- Open space resources of Herrington Country Park and Elba Park, with walking and cycle routes.
  - These open spaces reflect substantial investment in the restoration and enhancement of this landscape.
  - Extensive recently planted woodlands forming a valuable habitat network.
  - Important landscape setting of settlements within the Coalfield Villages (see LCT5).
- 4.40 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards a series of linked, accessible and biodiverse open spaces, edged by strong settlement boundaries. The value of open spaces will be increased by better links with neighbouring spaces and settlements, and by improving the experience of the existing links. New settlement expansion will present opportunities to create new, more robust settlement boundaries in place of urban fringe, and an enhanced setting for these villages (see LCT 5). New road proposals in the area should allow for non-motorised links, and for retention of green networks for wildlife through this fragmented landscape. Interventions should reflect on the area's industrial heritage, and its setting at the foot of the limestone escarpment. Existing high-quality open spaces will be protected: these include Herrington Country Park and its setting in relation to the limestone escarpment, as well as Elba Park.



### *2c Rainton Lowland*

- 4.41 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.
- Rainton Meadows is an important nature reserve and visitor attraction.
  - Hetton Bogs is a local nature reserve (LNR) and SSSI.
  - Substantial investment in restoring and enhancing the landscape of this area, evidenced by the nature reserve and business park.
  - Southern area is more intact, with less impact of past mining activities.
  - Crossed by historical rail routes, now used as footpaths and cycle routes.
  - The area provides a functional floodplain associated with the Moors Burn.
- 4.42 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards an area of biodiverse farmland and open space, with good quality multi-functional green networks linking into the adjacent settlements. The area provides setting and accessible open space for these settlements, and its value will be enhanced by providing additional links and improving existing ones. The series of wildlife reserves in this area make it one of the most biodiversity-rich locations in Sunderland, with the added bonus of being readily accessible. Opportunities should be taken to build on this network, extending it into neighbouring areas and into the business park, for example. New residential or commercial development in this area will present opportunities to provide stronger settlement boundaries in place of urban fringe. The high quality accessible landscapes at Rainton Meadows Nature Reserve will be protected, along with their settings.

## LCT 3: Incised Lowland Valley

### Description

#### Location and extents

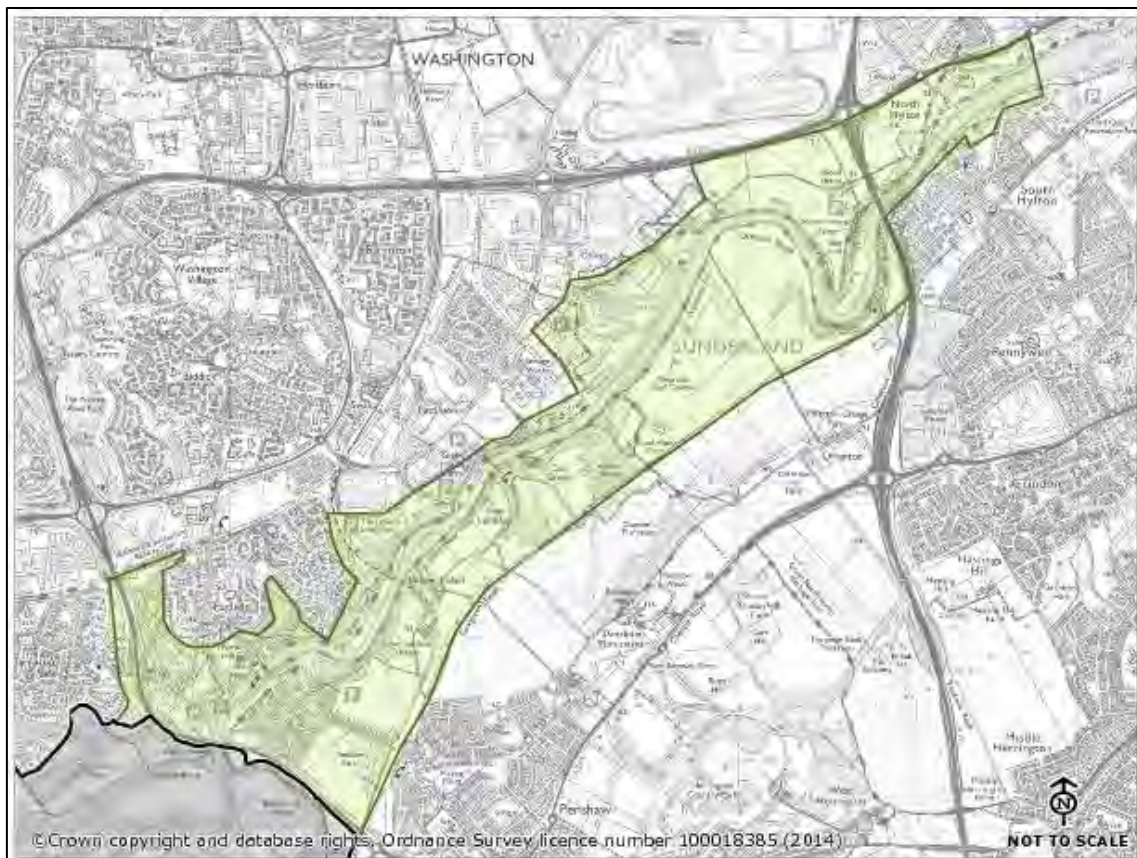
- 4.43 This LCT covers the incised valley of the River Wear in the western half of the city. It extends along the river valley from the A182 at the Council boundary, as far upstream as South Hylton. The LCT comprises the incised valley and adjacent low-lying ground bounded by Washington to the north west. In the south the LCT is bounded by the rising ground of Penshaw Hill, part of the Limestone Escarpment LCT. To the south west the LCT continues along the Wear into County Durham.

#### Key characteristics of the Incised Lowland Valley

- 4.44 Key characteristics of the Incised Lowland Valley LCT:
- Steeply incised lowland valley;
  - Tidal river with exposed mud flats at low tide;
  - Densely wooded river banks with native and ancient woodland;
  - Adjacent superficial geology formed of Pelaw clay, glacial till, and alluvium;
  - Occasional riverside buildings and landmark bridges, though limited settlement;
  - River terraces with medium sized arable and pastoral fields; and
  - Distinct area with a quiet enclosed character.
- 4.45 There is one landscape character area with the Incised Lowland Valley LCT, which is described below with reference to its valued features.

### 3a Weardale

Figure 4.5 Location of Weardale



- 4.46 This character area covers the incised valley of the River Wear located in the western half of Sunderland. It includes the lower area of the Biddick Burn valley to the south of Washington.
- 4.47 The River Wear is incised across the sedimentary rocks of the coal measures and the glacial deposits which overlie them. The resulting river valley runs from south west to north east, relatively straight except for a tight meander west of the A19. The river itself is tidal throughout this stretch of the valley, with un-canalised soft river edges providing a naturalistic estuarine character along most of the steeply sloping river banks.
- 4.48 Along the south side of the river, and in the north east, there are areas of agricultural land cover including arable fields, pastoral fields and horse paddocks bounded by remnant hedgerow cover. These are subdivided by woodland blocks and a golf course. The steep river banks have a particularly good coverage of native deciduous woodland. The north side of the river is more fragmented, with undeveloped areas comprising pasture and amenity grassland, but still set within a dense woodland network. Most of the riverside woodlands are identified as local wildlife sites.



*Clockwise from top left: grade II\* listed Victoria Viaduct; footbridge at Cox Green; riverside at South Hylton; Penshaw Bridge at Fatfield.*

- 4.49 Residential areas and commercial development in Washington flank the north side of the river. Though these are generally screened from view. Development within the valley includes the small riverside village of Cox Green and the residential area of Mount Pleasant, adjacent to older houses at Penshaw Bridge. There are a number of farmsteads in the area. The river is crossed by a series of bridges. Penshaw Road Bridge is a bow-string girder structure built in 1900. The Victoria Viaduct was constructed in 1838 using local sandstone from Penshaw Quarry. Although now disused it is a grade II\* listed building. Along the riverside are numerous sites of former staithes, collieries, industrial works, and ship yards.
- 4.50 The recreational value of this LCA is high with much of the northern side of the river being publicly accessible. Recreational areas include James Steel Park, Princess Anne Park at Fatfield, and the Wearside Golf Course. These are linked up by the River Wear Trail and Weardale Way, which follow the riverside, and are connected to a good network of public footpaths and cycle routes, including the C2C Cycleway to the north. The Washington Wetland Centre is a major wildfowl reserve and visitor attraction.
- 4.51 The steep changes in level, limited vehicle access, and narrow lanes in his area create a strong sense of seclusion and tranquillity which is in stark contrast to the city that surrounds it. Worm Hill at Fatfield is associated with the local legend of the “Lambton Worm”.

## Guidance and strategy

### Sensitive features for the Incised Lowland Valley LCT

4.52 The key sensitive features, issues and trends within this landscape are listed below, and guidelines for this area are set out in **Table 4.3**

- Prominence of the Victoria Viaduct and Penshaw Road Bridge.
- Wooded skyline when viewed from the river banks.
- Negative impact of A19 running through the LCA.
- Recreational value of trails, paths and cycleways.

**Table 4.3 Guidelines for the Limestone Escarpment LCT**

Strengths/ Opportunities/ Challenges	Do	Don't
Prominent bridges	Enhance accessibility including links to local recreational areas and wider networks.	Allow development which would challenge the prominence of the viaduct or other valued bridges, either locally or in the wider landscape.
Woodlands and wooded skyline	Maintain the character of wooded skylines by ensuring long-term maintenance of woodlands.  Continue to protect this key land cover type, including promotion of access and understanding.  Manage invasive species such as Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam.	Permit expansion of settlement or industrial estates that would encroach on the skyline.  Allow woodlands to become neglected.  Allow the further spread of invasive species.
Soft river edges	Continue to support and enhance local access (from the bank on foot/bike, and from the river by boat) to safe areas of river bank.	Permit expansion of canalisation or other inappropriate riverside developments.
Recreational trails paths and cycleways	Continue to maintain recreational routes, and develop routes that link in with the Victoria Viaduct to enhance its recreational value.	Permit development that will encroach on or obstruct recreational routes.

### Landscape strategy

- 4.53 For each area within this LCT, an initial assessment of landscape value has been made and an overarching landscape strategy has been assigned. The guidelines in Table 4.1 should be applied in the context of this landscape strategy.

#### *3a Weardale*

- 4.54 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.
- This LCA has a high recreational value with parks, footpaths and cycleways where experience on the landscape is important.
  - Area acts as a popular access point to the river.
  - Represents an area of open space and provides tranquil qualities within the densely populated urban area.
  - Area has a strong scenic quality composed of wooded banks and landmark features such as Victoria Viaduct.
  - The only major river valley within the Sunderland city council area.
  - Wooded areas and undeveloped river bank provide sense of enclosure.
- 4.55 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape protection** of the existing wooded gorge landscape as a largely undeveloped wildlife and recreation corridor through the area. The existing soft river banks should be retained to preserve the biodiversity value of the tidal river and riparian habitats. Maintenance of the open skyline as seen from the riverside will preserve the quiet, tranquil character of the riverside walks. Carefully considered development could enhance the value of open space by providing positive utilisation for underused locations. Promotion and upgrading of footpaths and cycleways will enhance recreational access and improve the open space value of adjacent farmland. Biodiversity value will be enhanced by managing the Wear woodlands, and ensuring their connection, via woodlands and hedges, to habitat networks spreading out into adjacent farmland, settlement and business parks.

# LCT 4: Urban New Town

## Description

### Location and extents

- 4.56 This LCT covers the new town of Washington in the north west of the Council area. The new town has a distinct settlement character unlike other built-up areas within Sunderland, but with features which are common to new town developments in other parts of the UK.

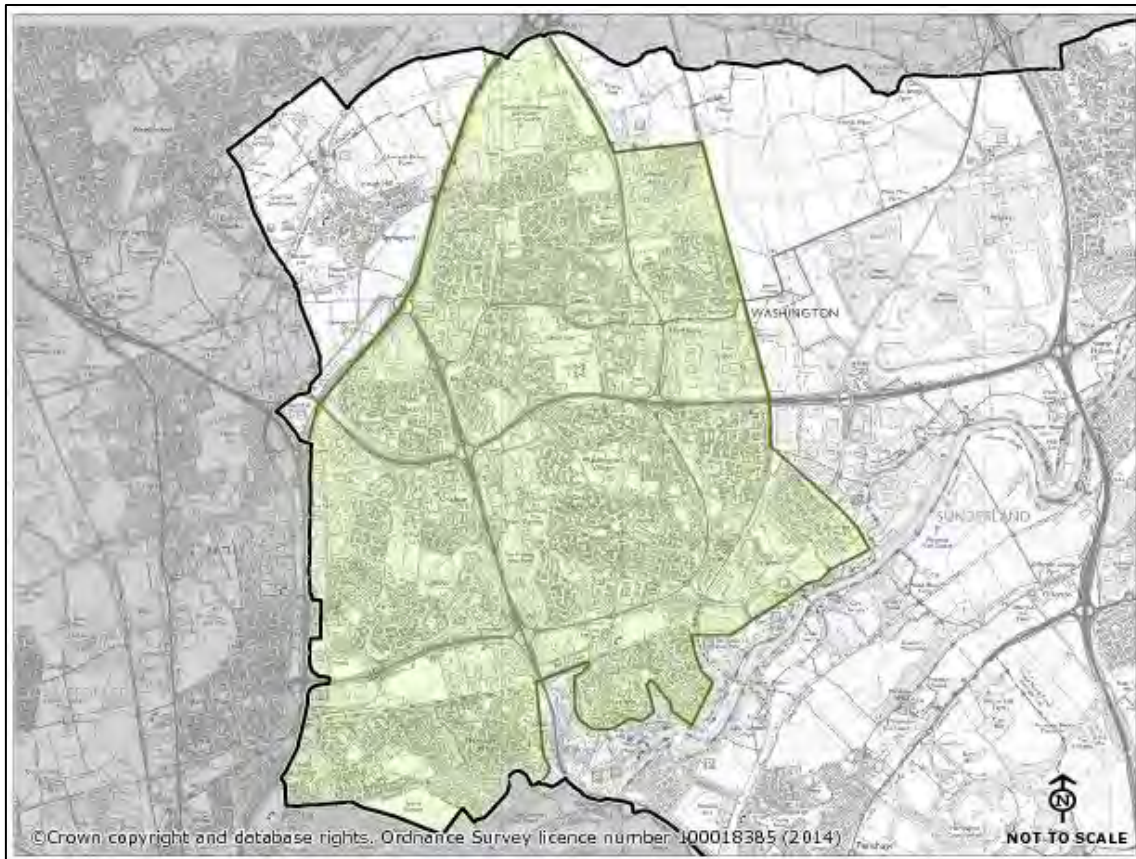
### Key characteristics of the Urban New Town

- 4.57 Key characteristics of the Urban New Town LCT:
- Low-lying, gently sloping landscape, with detailed features largely obscured by urban development;
  - Distinct hierarchy of transport infrastructure, from major dual carriageways which dissect the area, to distributor roads and residential culs-de-sac;
  - Historic village cores surrounded by extensive post-war urban development, the result of strictly planned and controlled expansion;
  - Dense green network of open spaces and woodlands providing connectivity of access but often obscuring views;
  - Self-contained residential areas, separated by roads and green space, each united by common house designs, materials and densities, often with 'themed' street names; and
  - Large-scale commercial and industrial buildings occupy their distinct zones within the new town structure.
- 4.58 There is one landscape character area within the Urban New Town LCT. This is described below with reference to its valued features.

### 4a Washington

- 4.59 This character area covers the residential, commercial and industrial areas of Washington occupying the north west of Sunderland City Council area. Washington is bounded by the A1 and A194 to the west, the Wear Valley to the south, and by the A1231 and railway line to the north east. It occupies the south-facing slopes which shelve down from Springwell Rise.
- 4.60 The underlying landscape is almost completely obscured by urban development, composed of housing, commercial and industrial areas, landscaped parklands, and recreation grounds. Topography only plays a key role along the southern edge, adjacent to the Wear Valley, and along the incised valley of the tributary Biddick Burn.
- 4.61 Residential areas comprise housing estates built predominantly during the 1960s and 1970s including: Donwell; Concord; Sulgrave; Albany Village; Blackfell; Oxclose; and Biddick. Each of these has a unity of layout and design, and is self-contained: visually screened from neighbouring areas; and physically separated by road infrastructure. Connectivity is provided by a dense green network which infiltrates throughout the new town. Landscaped parks and planted woodlands separate and enclose distinctive areas of residential housing. Several of these woodlands and open spaces are identified as local wildlife sites, including much of Princess Anne Park.
- 4.62 The new town is dissected by two major dual carriageways: the north-south A182; and the east-west A1231, with the partly-dualled A195 looping around from south west to north. Together with the adjacent A1(M) and A194(M), the flyovers, roundabouts and other large road infrastructure are prominent features within this area. For the most part, road infrastructure is well screened by woodland planting.

Figure 4.6 Location of Washington



- 4.63 Earlier settlement is evident at Washington Village, focused on the Old Hall which dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The structure of the medieval village, now a conservation area, can be discerned, although there are few other buildings from before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At Great Usworth, like Washington Village identified as a 'historic village', a similarly historic settlement layout is preserved, though with very few early buildings in place. Less remains of medieval Little Usworth, though this was developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with Front Street still serving as a local centre. Victorian properties are evident at Concord, Sulgrave, Harraton and New Washington (Columbia), each associated with coal mine(s). These scattered villages were forged together from 1964 onwards as Washington New Town was designated and implemented.
- 4.64 Much of the area of the new town was formerly occupied by coal mines, with old maps showing numerous pits and railways. Of these, only Washington F Pit survives intact: the grade II listed engine house is now an industrial museum. Modern industry is concentrated in large-scale business parks, located mainly on the periphery of the town.





*Clockwise from top left: typical residential street in Washington new town; Washington Village view over Washington from the south; war memorial on the village green.*

## Guidance and strategy

### Sensitive features for the Urban New Town LCT

- 4.65 The key sensitive features, issues and trends within this landscape are listed below, and guidelines for this area are set out in **Table 4.4**
- Negative impact of major roads running through the settlement.
  - Recreational value of open space, footpaths and cycleways.
  - Distinct character of each individual area of the settlement.

**Table 4.4 Guidelines for the Urban New Town LCT**

Strengths/ Opportunities/ Challenges	Do	Don't
Major roads		Allow major roads to become a barrier to access into areas of parkland or using footpaths and cycleways.
Open space, footpaths and cycleways	<p>Maintain strong network of mature, high quality open spaces through the settlement.</p> <p>Continue to maintain and promote access for all across the settlement, linking to wider networks along the river and to workplaces around Washington.</p>	Permit settlement and industrial development that will encroach on the open space.
Distinctive settlement characters	Maintain the diverse character of individual estates and housing areas. Promote appreciation of the development of the post-war new town.	<p>Allow distinct character areas to be eroded by uniform development.</p> <p>Allow demolition of older, traditional buildings: instead promote sensitive restoration.</p>

**Landscape strategy**

4.66 For each area within this LCT, an initial assessment of landscape value has been made and an overarching landscape strategy has been assigned. The guidelines in Table 4.1 should be applied in the context of this landscape strategy.

*4a Washington*

4.67 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.

- A distinctive character deriving from its development as a planned new town.
- Washington Village conservation area provides a historical dimension to this predominantly 20<sup>th</sup> century residential area.
- High levels of open space, woodland and off-road walking and cycling routes permeate the settlement.
- Semi-natural parklands along the Biddick Burn and River Wear.

4.68 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards an interconnected urban area featuring high quality open spaces and biodiverse habitats throughout the settlement. The new town layout provides the existing framework, and enhancement of the experience of these routes and spaces will increase their usage and value. Biodiversity will be enhanced through management of grass, planting and woodlands. Links to the Wear valley, Barmston Pond and the other more substantive open spaces will be retained and upgraded where necessary. Maintenance of the separate character of each of the different housing areas will retain a sense of diversity, which will be augmented by reflecting the older history which is evident in pockets of the new town. Green links will be provided to employment sites in this and in adjacent areas.

# LCT 5: Coalfield Villages

## Description

### Location and extents

- 4.69 This LCT includes the sequence of smaller settlements which occupy the south west part of the City of Sunderland. These settlements have their origins in the coal-mining boom of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and maintain a character distinct from other settlements in Sunderland, being more closely related to the mining villages of County Durham.

### Key characteristics of the Coalfield Villages

- 4.70 Key characteristics of the Coalfield Villages LCT:
- Settlements set within a lowland transitional landscape between the Magnesian Limestone escarpment to the east and Wear Valley to the west;
  - Underlying carboniferous Coal Measures are masked by thick layers of glacial deposits with a gently rolling and slightly undulating terrain;
  - Settlement pattern associated with collieries and quarry workings, with distinctive rows of 19<sup>th</sup>-century brick terrace houses and smaller medieval village cores;
  - Fragmented settlement pattern arising from rapid unplanned growth of mining settlements and their subsequent decline, with more recent infill development;
  - Long and relatively open views across County Durham from the elevated foot-slopes of the Limestone Escarpment to the west, these become less frequent towards the low lying Wear Valley.
- 4.71 The Coalfield Villages LCT comprises a series of distinct but physically linked settlements, from Penshaw in the north to Easington Lane in the south. These settlements maintain their own identities, but share common characteristics. For the purposes of this report they have been subdivided into three separate character areas. These are described below.

### 5a Penshaw and Herrington

- 4.72 This area consists of the villages of Penshaw, Shiney Row, Philadelphia, New Herrington and West Herrington which combine to form one relatively densely populated urban area.
- 4.73 This character area covers a gently undulating urban area that slopes in a south and south east direction on the foot-slopes of the distinctive Penshaw Hill. The area is bounded to the north by the distinct east-west orientated spur of Penshaw Hill, to the east by the Magnesian Limestone escarpment and Herrington Country Park, to the west by the boundary of County Durham, and to the south by agricultural, reclaimed and recreational land.
- 4.74 Old Penshaw and West Herrington are identified as historic villages in the Historic Environment Records, having pre-1856 development and 18<sup>th</sup>-century churches. Otherwise, the area comprises a mix of modern, post war and 19<sup>th</sup>-century housing. The larger villages of Penshaw and Shiney Row occupy the western part of the area, with the smaller village of Philadelphia located to the south east and comprising Victorian terraces. Adjacent to Philadelphia, Success primarily consists of post-WW2 semi-detached properties. The linear village of New Herrington is located along the B1286 to the east of the character area and consists of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century housing associated with the former Herrington Pit and Herrington Limestone Quarry. New Herrington and West Herrington are separated from Philadelphia by the large industrial site of the Philadelphia Complex.
- 4.75 The settlement pattern within this character area evolved around the Durham coal mining boom of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the earliest settlement comprising distinct blocks and rows of miners terrace housing associated with the former Penshaw Colliery, Newbottle Colliery, Mill Pit, and Herrington Pit. Settlement growth during the 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen predominantly post-war and modern housing and some industrial estates infill the land between the historic mining villages of

Penshaw, Shiny Row, Philadelphia and New Herrington to form one fragmented urban area of differing type and age. Much of the housing lacks distinctiveness, though there are occasional landmark buildings such as churches and the Joicey Aged Miners' Homes on Milburn Terrace.

**Figure 4.7 Location of Penshaw and Herrington**



- 4.76 A number of regionally important A and B roads are located within this character area, including: the north west-south east A182; north-south A183; and north east-south west A183 and B1519. The oversized western section of the A182 (Washington Highway) forms a significant barrier between the urban areas of Penshaw and Shiny Row.
- 4.77 The elevated land in the north and east of this character area located on the foot-slopes of the limestone escarpment enables open views west across the Wear Valley towards Country Durham and the north Pennines beyond. As the land slopes south and west down into the Wear Valley, views from within Shiny Row, Philadelphia, and New Herrington become much more contained and screened by the presence of vegetation, buildings and other urban infrastructure. Views north and north east towards Sunderland are screened by the Magnesian Limestone escarpment which serves to detach this area from the city.
- 4.78 There are a number of recreational sports fields and parks within this character area, including Elba Park to the south west, and substantial of recreational facilities within neighbouring areas. The latter include the regionally important Herrington Country Park that borders to the northeast (see LCT 2) and Lambton Park located over the border in County Durham to immediate west.

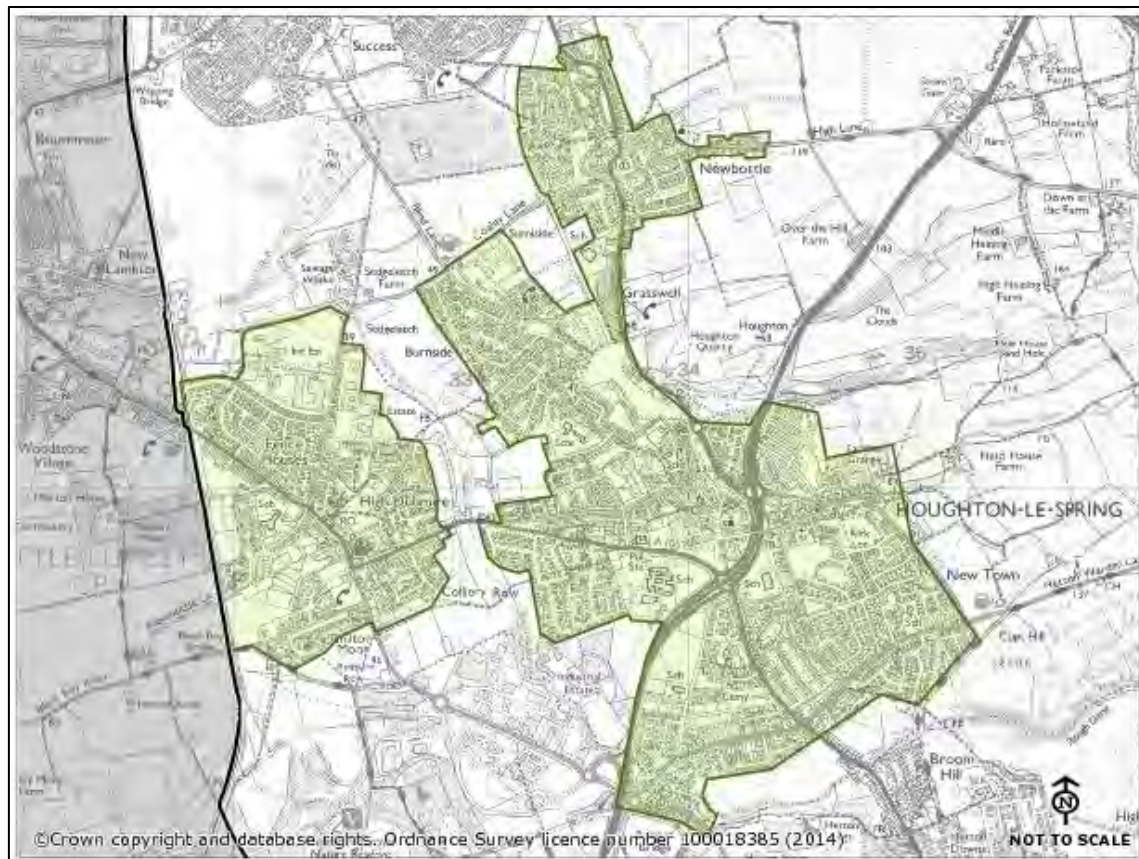


*Clockwise from top left: view from Penshaw to West Herrington; views west towards County Durham from within Penshaw village; retired miners cottages in Penshaw village; 19<sup>th</sup> century terrace houses associated with Penshaw Colliery.*

### **5b Houghton-le-Spring, Fence Houses and Newbottle**

- 4.79 This character area comprises two separate urban areas. The eastern area comprises Houghton-le-Spring and the village of Newbottle to the north. The western urban area contains the conjoined settlement of Fence Houses, Chilton Moor and High Dubmire. The open area between the two forms part of the Coalfield Lowland Terraces (LCT2). To the east is the limestone escarpment (LCT6) and County Durham is to the west.
- 4.80 The topography of this character area consists of the gently undulating foot-slopes of Houghton Hill and Copt Hill, part of the limestone escarpment to the east, which slopes gradually west into the flatter Wear Valley. The area extends onto the escarpment itself at Newbottle.
- 4.81 The town of Houghton-le-Spring, located along the western edge of the limestone escarpment, represents the largest settlement within this character area with the smaller village of Newbottle located along the A182 to the north and the villages of Fence Houses and High Dubmire located to the west.
- 4.82 Early settlement is evident in the medieval core of Houghton-le-Spring, focussed on the Church of St. Michael & All Angels parts of which date back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The church is now severed from the old main street by the A690 which cuts through the centre of the settlement. The present settlement location and pattern is largely connected with the Durham coal mining boom of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with distinctive blocks and rows of traditional miners terrace housing associated with Betty Pit, Newbottle Pit, North Pit and Houghton Colliery being a feature within the area. Limestone quarrying has also played an important role in settlement pattern with Newbottle Quarry, Copt Hill Quarry, and Houghton Quarry located on the eastern boundary. The last is still operating for landfill purposes and is a prominent feature close to the town.

Figure 4.8 Location of Houghton-le-Spring, Fence Houses and Newbottle



- 4.83 During 20<sup>th</sup> century, further settlement expansion has infilled land, and connected up the older mining communities to form a fragmented urban area characterised by different housing types and ages. Scattered patches of agricultural land and open space have remained undeveloped and now provide green corridors and settlements breaks between villages.
- 4.84 The village of Newbottle and eastern areas of Houghton-le-Spring are located on the edge of the Magnesian Limestone escarpment; this elevated position allows views west over the Wear Valley towards County Durham and the north Pennines beyond. As the land slopes down into the Wear Valley to the west, views become contained by buildings and other urban infrastructure.



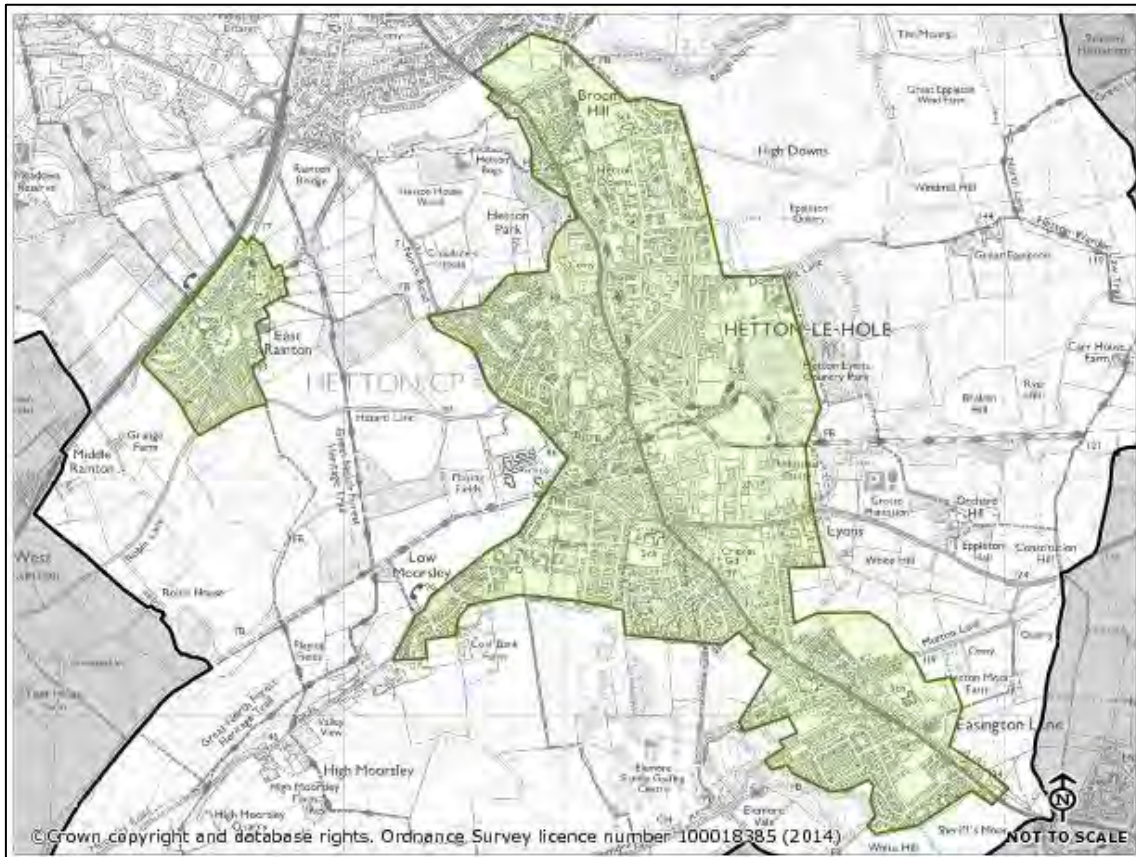
*Clockwise from top left: the village core of Houghton-le-Spring; restored industrial building; the dualled A690 dividing Houghton-le-Spring; overlooking Houghton-le-Spring from Copt Hill.*

### 5c Hetton-le-Hole, Easington Lane and East Rainton

- 4.85 This character area comprises Hetton-le-Hole and its southerly neighbour Easington Lane, as well as the separate settlement of East Rainton to the west. Hetton-le-Hole is on the edge of the Magnesian Limestone escarpment, with Easington Lane built on higher ground. East Rainton is located on a ridge of elevated land within the Coalfield Lowland Terraces (LCT2).
- 4.86 The topography that underlines and surrounding this character area play a key role in its character. Hetton-le-Hole is located on the undulating foot-slopes of the Magnesian Limestone that encloses the town to the south and east. East Rainton is located on the brow of a prominent north-south orientated ridge to the west of Hetton-le-Hole.
- 4.87 Limestone quarrying has played an important role in early settlement development with the historic core of Hetton-le-Hole built of the distinct yellow Magnesian Limestone sourced from local quarries such as Curlew Hope Quarry and Eppleton Quarry. The present settlement pattern is generally connected with the Durham coal mining boom of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with blocks and rows of traditional miners' terrace housing and Sunderland Cottages associated with Eppleton Colliery, Hetton Colliery. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, settlement expansion added inter-war and post-war housing estates which connected up the formerly separate mining communities. East Rainton is a medieval village dating back to at least the 12<sup>th</sup>-century, with an older village core to the north, and much larger expansion of post-war and modern semidetached and detached housing to the south. The village now predominantly serves as a commuter village for the larger settlements in the North East.
- 4.88 Hetton-le-Hole is sited beside the Hetton Burn, the valley of which has become a significant green space within the settlement, and forms the focus of a SSSI and Local Nature Reserve downstream at Hetton Bogs. A network of footpaths follow the burn as it infiltrates the settlement, providing a wooded corridor linking various parts of the village. To the east, Hetton Lyons Park provides further accessible open space at the foot of the escarpment. Other pathways and cycleway follow former mineral and passenger rail lines, including the Walney to Wear (W2W) coast to coast cycle

route linking Pitlington, Hetton-le-Hole and Warden Law; and the Stephenson Trail, which follows the route of the world's first railway to be fully operated by steam engines, built in 1822 by Robert Stephenson.

**Figure 4.9 Location of Hetton-le-Hole, Easington Lane and East Rainton**



- 4.89 The elevated position of Easington Lane on the Magnesian Limestone escarpment enables open views west towards East Rainton, County Durham and the north Pennines beyond. As the land slopes down towards Hetton Burn, elevation is lost and views become much more contained and screened by vegetation, buildings and other urban infrastructure. The elevated position of East Rainton enables views open across the surrounding landscape from village edges.





*Clockwise from top left: Low Moorsley, looking north east to Hetton with Eppleton Moor behind; inter-war housing in East Rainton; modified Sunderland cottages in Hetton; Hetton-le-Hole village centre.*

## Guidance and strategy

### Sensitive features for the Coalfield Villages LCT

4.90 The key sensitive features, issues and trends within this landscape are listed below, and guidelines for this area are set out in **Table 4.5**.

- Negative impact of A182 and A690 running through the area.
- Preservation of open space and green corridors between settlements.
- Distinctive building types and settlement patterns.

**Table 4.5 Guidelines for the Coalfield Villages LCT**

Strengths/ Opportunities/ Challenges	Do	Don't
Major roads	Aim to improve integration of these features through planting.	Allow further infrastructure development to adversely affect settlement cohesion.
Open space and green corridors	Take opportunities to improve the quality of open spaces throughout this LCT, at all scales from local spaces to larger areas serving	Permit development which would remove open space and decrease connectivity.

Strengths/ Opportunities/ Challenges	Do	Don't
	<p>communities.</p> <p>Preserve and enhance links, using former rail routes where these remain available, to connect with wider networks and open space in neighbouring areas, e.g. Herrington Country Park, Rainton Meadows.</p>	
Distinctive buildings and patterns	<p>Preserve remaining areas of miners' rows and Sunderland Cottages. Seek to retain original character of these building types where practicable. Promote restoration of these building types over replacement.</p> <p>Recognise the locally significant historic core of key villages and enhance their value through design.</p>	Permit significant losses of these building types or changes to settlement patterns which would erase links to the industrial heritage of the area.
Industrial heritage	Promote interpretation of historic mineral workings, rail lines and other features.	Allow historic features to be gradually lost, removed or obscured.

### Landscape strategy

4.91 For each area within this LCT, an initial assessment of landscape value has been made and an overarching landscape strategy has been assigned. The guidelines in Table 4.1 should be applied in the context of this landscape strategy.

#### *5a Penshaw and Herrington*

4.92 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.

- Distinctive buildings such as the Aged Miners' Homes and the brick terraces more generally.
- Remaining links to industrial heritage of the area.
- Historic villages of Penshaw and West Herrington.
- Access to open spaces and parkland in neighbouring areas (see LCT 2).

4.93 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards a high quality settlement character, retaining the best historic features of the mining village, reducing the fragmentation of settlement form, and enhancing links to and from the surrounding open spaces. New development offers the opportunity to remove vacant land and to provide new open spaces and access. The fragmented nature of the settlement allows open space to permeate the settlement, giving access to major open spaces at Herrington Country Park and Elba Park, and enhancement of these links will provide benefits to connectivity. Retention of linear open spaces, such as along the Herrington Burn, will continue the positive contrast with dense built development and preserve the setting of the villages alongside the escarpment. The completion of the Sunderland Central Route will allow the reduction in scale of the A182 roundabout in Shiney Row.

### *5b Houghton-le-Spring, Fence Houses and Newbottle*

4.94 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.

- Conservation areas within historic village cores of Newbottle and Houghton-le-Spring, with local landmark buildings throughout the area.
- Strong connections to industrial heritage of the area.
- Distinctive building types including Sunderland cottages and miners' rows.
- Historic settlement pattern associated the Durham coal mining boom of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Long relatively open views towards County Durham and the north Pennines.

4.95 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards a series of settlements in a high quality setting beneath the limestone escarpment. Development in these areas offers important opportunities to remove vacant and underused land; to provide new open spaces; and to improve green links with the surrounding area. Completion of the Sunderland Central Route will provide opportunities for new and enhanced open space along the Moors Burn, with benefits for biodiversity and recreation. The character of conservation areas will be preserved and the value of unlisted but characteristic buildings, such as the miners' rows at Grasswell, will be recognised in development plans. Developments will reflect the history of the area, and will introduce good quality, well designed places with adequate open space that makes a positive contribution to the area.

### *5c Hetton-le-Hole, Easington Lane and East Rainton*

4.96 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.

- Historic villages of East Rainton and Hetton-le-Hole, with local landmark buildings throughout the area.
- Strong connections to industrial heritage of the area.
- Distinctive building types including Sunderland cottages and miners' rows.
- Historic settlement pattern associated the Durham coal mining boom of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Long relatively open views towards County Durham and the north Pennines.

4.97 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards a high quality and locally distinct series of settlements. The settlement pattern and character will continue to reflect the underlying topography: the coalfield in the west and the Magnesian limestone in the east. The expansive views across the surrounding landscape will be maintained. Characteristic but unlisted buildings, such as the limestone buildings in Hetton-le-Hole, will inform new development in the settlements. These developments will provide opportunities to reduce the quantity of vacant or underused land, and will allow the creation of new and enhanced open spaces. The setting of the settlements will be enhanced by the introduction of more robust settlement boundaries, and the whole will be brought together by a green network of links between the limestone escarpment, the settlements and the nature reserves of the land to the east (LCT 2).

# LCT 6: Limestone Escarpment

## Description

### Location and extents

- 4.98 This LCT occurs at the western edge of the Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau, where the plateau drops sharply away to the Tyne and Wear Lowlands to the west. The escarpment extends through the whole of Sunderland, from Boldon Downhill in the north to High Moorsley in the south. However, it has been identified as a distinct LCT only in the areas south of the Wear. The LCT covers the continuous band of steep limestone hills linking Penshaw Hill in the north with High Moorsley in the south.

### Key characteristics of the Limestone Escarpment

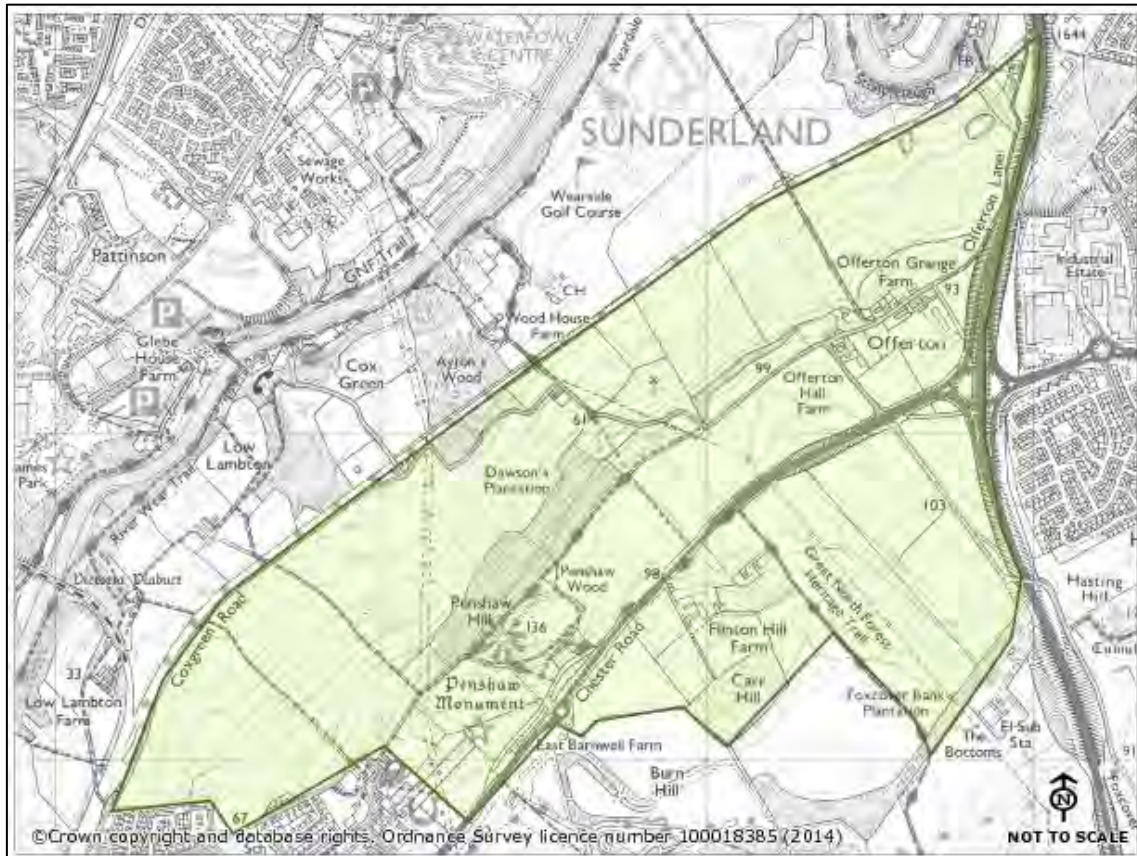
- 4.99 Key characteristics of the Limestone Escarpment LCT:
- Steep, west-facing slopes, often prominently visible from the lowland to the west, rising to high points of between 100m and 163m;
  - The escarpment follows an irregular, indented line comprising distinct individual hills and spurs, divided by valleys and narrow denes;
  - Underlying Magnesian Limestone expressed as a series of hilltop outcrops, and within quarried areas;
  - A dry landscape with few water bodies due to the permeability of the Magnesian Limestone;
  - Generally open landcover of large arable fields, with low hedges and occasional field boundary trees;
  - Frequent deciduous woodlands including some ancient woodland, on steeper slopes and in the occasional narrow denes which dissect the scarp;
  - Magnesian Limestone grassland habitat occurs on limestone outcrops, supporting nationally rare flora and fauna; the flowery nature of limestone grassland is characteristic;
  - Settlement is generally found at the foot of the escarpment, though some of the mining villages have expanded onto more gentle slopes;
  - A large number of limestone quarries, both active and historic, have been excavated into the scarp, and there are traces of the former deep-coal mines within the area; and
  - Long open views from the top of the scarp, across County Durham towards the Pennines to the west and north west.
- 4.100 The Limestone Escarpment LCT has been subdivided into three character areas. These are described below.

### 6a Penshaw Hill

- 4.101 This character area covers the ridge running north east from the edge of Penshaw to the A19, including the hamlet of Offerton, and the outlying Carr Hill to the south.
- 4.102 Penshaw Hill lies at the northern end of the open limestone escarpment landscape. Its modest height (136m) is emphasised by its location, extending westward from the main escarpment in a long ridge. It rises high above the Wear Valley to the north, and above the lowland of Herrington Country Park to the south.
- 4.103 The 19<sup>th</sup>-century Greek temple which tops the hill is one of the iconic features of the Sunderland landscape. A popular destination, it offers panoramic views over the western part of the borough and beyond. The monument today stands within a small area of open access land managed by the National Trust, and is on the Great North Forest Trail which enables access north to the Wear and south into the country park.

- 4.104 Land cover across the hill is a mix of arable and pastoral, with important areas of calcareous grassland on the hill top, and well-established deciduous woodland at Penshaw Wood.
- 4.105 Quarrying of limestone has taken place at several locations in the past, though generally the area is undeveloped. The settlement of Penshaw is immediately to the south west, though the only settlement in the area is the hamlet of Offerton on the ridge, and farms to the south of the A183. The A19 and A183 cut across the scarp in this area, creating abrupt edges and introducing noise and movement. Pylons also cross over the ridge: a high-voltage power line to the north of the monument and two parallel lower-voltage lines to the south.

**Figure 4.10 Location of Penshaw Hill**



- 4.106 Penshaw Hill is associated with the local legend of the Lambton Worm, a monstrous beast which is said to have coiled itself around the hill. The monument commemorates John Lambton, 1st Earl of Durham, local landowner and politician, and a prominent supporter of the Reform Bill of 1832.

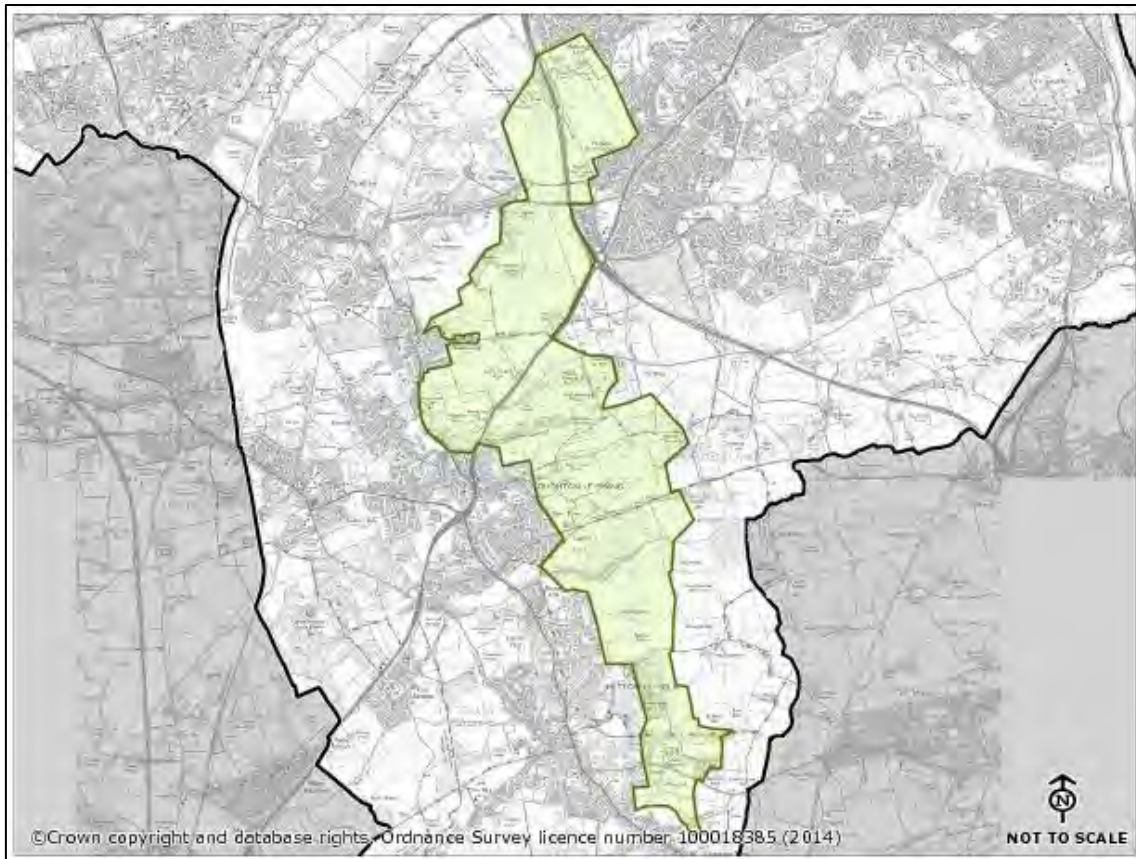


*Clockwise from top left: Penshaw Monument; vernacular farm buildings at Offerton; view along the scarp from Penshaw Monument; limestone grassland at Grimestone Banks.*

### 6b Hastings Hill and Copt Hill

- 4.107 This character area includes the section of the scarp between Hastings Hill in the north, and the edge of Easington Lane to the south.
- 4.108 The Magnesian Limestone escarpment runs in a north-south direction, indented by distinct individual hills and spurs and divided by narrow denes. Underlying Magnesian Limestone expressed as the hilltop outcroppings of Hastings Hill and Houghton Hill. The top of the scarp rises to 150m at High Downs, though is lower in the north. To the north east of this area is the urban landscape of Sunderland (LCT9), and to the south east the Clay Plateau (LCT7). At the foot of the escarpment are the Coalfield Villages (LCT5).
- 4.109 Land cover is predominantly arable farmland with some pastoral grazing land on steeper slopes, and paddocks. Field sizes are generally large with weak hedgerow boundaries. Important areas of calcareous grassland are present, with SSSIs at Hastings Hill and Herrington Hill. Tree cover is generally sparse except in denes and on steeper slopes where there are dense native woodlands, and occasional sycamore copses.
- 4.110 The historical importance of this area is evident in the placing of significant prehistoric monuments, including barrows and a cursus, on Hastings Hill and Copt Hill, both of which locations have yielded Neolithic and Bronze Age archaeology. Quarrying of limestone, sand and gravel has taken place at several locations, with extraction ongoing at Eppleton Quarry, and landfill operations at Houghton Quarry. Elsewhere there are traces of historic quarries and restored land.
- 4.111 Generally this part of the escarpment is undeveloped and sparsely settled, aside from farms and occasional cottages. A number of major roads cross the scarp, including the dual-carriageway A690, and the A19 which runs north-south through the escarpment, dividing Hastings Hill from the rest of the area. Other smaller roads also climb west to east over the escarpment, and there are high-voltage transmission lines following the A19.

**Figure 4.11 Location of Hastings Hill and Copt Hill**



4.112 The Great North Forest Heritage Trail passes through the area, utilising in part a former mineral railway at Lyons. Part of Hetton Lyons Country Park extends onto the escarpment, and the Walney to Wear cycle route passes through the park and across the scarp on its way to Sunderland. The Houghton-le-Spring Golf Course is on Copt Hill and a number of local footpaths traverse the escarpment.



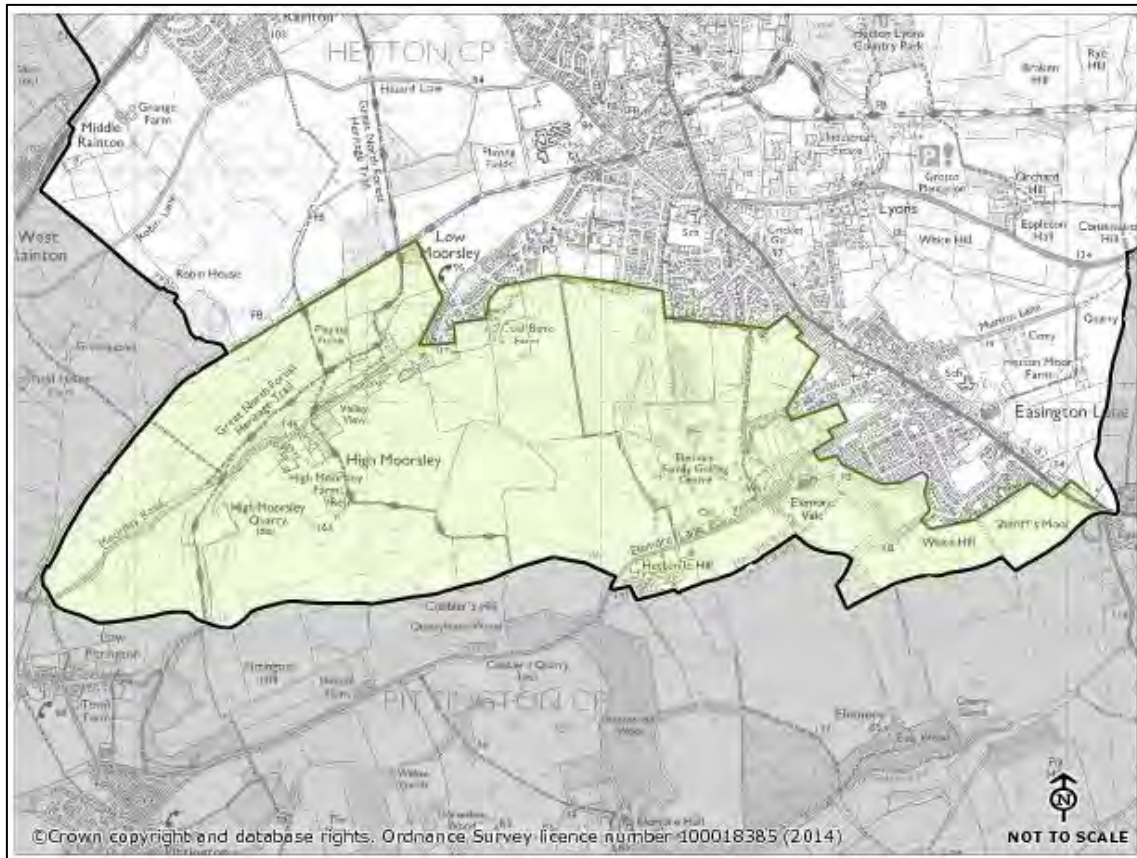
*Clockwise from top left: Eppleton Quarry at Hetton-le-Hole; view over Houghton-le-Spring from Copt Hill.*

### **6c High Moorsley**

- 4.113 This character area includes the north-facing escarpment in the south of the borough. It lies to the south and west of Low Moorsley and Easington Lane, and includes High Moorsley and Hetton-le-Hill. The escarpment continues southward into County Durham, while to the north are the Coalfield Lowland Terraces (LCT2).
- 4.114 High Moorsley lies at the southern end of the limestone escarpment within Sunderland, forming a spur of elevated land that extends westward towards the Wear valley. The steep north western

edge of the escarpment emphasises the height (163m) of the escarpment, the highest distinct summit in this area.

**Figure 4.12 Location of High Moorsley**



- 4.115 The plateau to the south of the scarp is arable, with large fields and discontinuous hedges. There are clumps of woodland in association with settlements and farms, and along the steeper parts of the ground. The escarpment itself supports calcareous grassland, which extends into a former quarry at high Moorsley, both of which areas are SSSIs. Besides old quarries, North Hetton Colliery and Elemore Colliery were located in this area, with a mineral railway along the north base of the scarp.
- 4.116 The Great North Forest Heritage Trail crosses over this hill, with expansive views in all directions. There is open space at Elemore Vale and a nearby golf course, readily accessible from Easington Lane.

## Guidance and strategy

### Sensitive features for the Limestone Escarpment LCT

- 4.117 The key sensitive features, issues and trends within this landscape are listed below, and guidelines for this area are set out in **Table 4.6**.
- Prominence of the Penshaw Monument within the Sunderland landscape and further afield, and its status as a widely recognised landmark.
  - Open skylines when viewed from lower ground, including the Wear Valley and the Penshaw to Hetton-le-Hole area.
  - Important Magnesian Limestone grassland habitats are characteristic of this landscape and support unique assemblages of species.
  - Negative impact of major roads and power lines cutting across the escarpment.



- Limited foot and cycle access, especially north-south through this area.
- Ongoing quarrying and landfill activities.

**Table 4.6 Guidelines for the Limestone Escarpment LCT**

Strengths/ Opportunities/ Challenges	Do	Don't
Landmark Penshaw Monument	<p>Continue to promote as a key feature of the Sunderland landscape, with panoramic views.</p> <p>Enhance accessibility including links to local recreational areas and wider networks.</p> <p>Seek to reduce the impact of pylons which cross the hill in this area.</p>	<p>Allow development which would challenge the prominence of the monument, either locally or in the wider landscape.</p>
Open skylines of the scarp	<p>Maintain the character of skylines in prominent parts of the scarp, including wooded skylines in some areas</p>	<p>Permit settlement expansion which would encroach upon the skyline.</p> <p>Permit large wind turbines on the escarpment, where they are likely to be seen as 'overbearing' in views from lower ground due to the height of the escarpment.</p>
Magnesian Limestone grasslands	<p>Continue to protect this key land cover type, including promotion of access and understanding.</p> <p>Ensure all remaining areas of grassland are recorded and protected where practicable.</p>	<p>Allow gradual, piecemeal erosion of remaining areas.</p> <p>Permit inappropriate management which could damage biodiversity.</p>
Major roads	<p>Seek to integrate roads through planting, alternative access provision.</p>	<p>Allow major roads to become a barrier to access into this landscape from the urban area to the east.</p>
Quarrying and landfill	<p>Continue to permit appropriate quarrying activities, which express the underlying geology of the scarp.</p> <p>Secure and maintain safe access to former quarry sites to promote understanding of local geodiversity.</p> <p>Develop recreational access as part of future remediation projects, providing opportunities for nearby communities.</p>	<p>Allow quarrying to erode the character and skyline of the more prominent parts of the escarpment.</p>

### Landscape strategy

4.118 For each area within this LCT, an initial assessment of landscape value has been made and an overarching landscape strategy has been assigned. The guidelines in Table 4.1 should be applied in the context of this landscape strategy.

### *6a Penshaw Hill*

- 4.119 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.
- Unique landmark monument set in a prominent location, widely visible across the surrounding area, and with layers of cultural associations.
  - Penshaw Hill clearly expresses the underlying Magnesian Limestone geology in its landform and also its biodiversity value.
  - The hill acts as a popular, accessible viewpoint, available to residents and visitors alike.
  - Strong relationship with the Wear Valley to the north, from where it is seen as a wooded ridge topped by the monument.
  - A largely undeveloped area providing highly visible open space between settlements; the hamlet of Offerton retains a rural character despite its location adjacent to the A19.
- 4.120 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape protection** of the setting of the landmark Penshaw Monument, which is important to the identity of Sunderland more widely. The open spaces and recreational routes through this landscape will be maintained and enhanced through improved links to Herrington Country Park and the River Wear. The outward views across the surrounding landscape will be maintained. Management of woodlands and grasslands will maintain and promote the biodiversity value of the area, and its important role in habitat networks. Extension of woodland on lower ground will help to integrate the A183 and improve the settlement boundary of Penshaw. The open nature of the ridge will be retained to protect the setting of the monument, and opportunities will be sought to remove existing infrastructure from the skyline.

### *6b Hastings Hill and Copt Hill*

- 4.121 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.
- Escarpments edge clearly expresses the underlying Magnesian Limestone geology in its landform and also its biodiversity value.
  - The area has numerous important local and regional recreational facilities.
  - Strong relationship with the Wear valley lowlands to the east, from where it is seen as a prominent escarpment.
  - A largely undeveloped area providing highly visible open space between settlements.
  - Scheduled monuments including the Seven Sisters round barrow and Hastings Hill cursus.
- 4.122 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape protection** of the open nature of the west-facing escarpment, and the setting it provides to the coalfield villages. North-south green links will be developed to connect and complement the strong existing east-west recreational and habitat connectivity. Woodlands will be maintained and hedges will be enhanced to build on the existing network of biodiversity sites. Opportunities will be developed for access and interpretation of the Magnesian Limestone geology, and to appreciate the open westward views from the area. Quarries and workings will be restored to provide biodiverse open spaces which reflect this geology. Recreational links will provide connections between the coalfield villages and the high-quality open spaces to the west, and with the suburbs of Sunderland in the east. Development at settlement edges will provide opportunities to enhance settlement boundaries without impacting on the open skyline of the escarpment.

### *6c High Moorsley*

- 4.123 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.
- Steep escarpment edge forms a prominent feature, particularly seen from West Rainton.
  - Clearly expressed Magnesian Limestone geology and valuable limestone grassland habitat.
  - Important local open space.
- 4.124 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape protection** of the open character and recreational opportunities within this landscape. The provision of access will be maintained and enhanced through interpretation of limestone geology and biodiversity. Expansion of woodland at the edge of Hetton-le-Hole and Easington Lane will improve their settlement boundaries and will contribute to the sense of place. The open skyline of the ridge will be maintained to protect this important visual feature, and to maintain the open views which are available to the west. Hedges will be maintained as an important feature in habitat networks, linking the existing biodiversity reservoirs that include woodland and calcareous grasslands. The area will also provide important green infrastructure links between Sunderland and County Durham to the south.

# LCT 7: Clay Plateau

## Description

### Location and extents

- 4.125 This LCT occurs on the Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau. The Clay Plateau extends under from Boldon Downhill in the north to Easington Lane in the south. However, it has been identified as a distinct LCT only to the south of the built-up area, where the underlying character is not masked by development. The LCT covers a continuous band of higher ground between the Limestone Escarpment in the west (LCT 6) and the Coastal Limestone Plateau in the east (LCT 8).

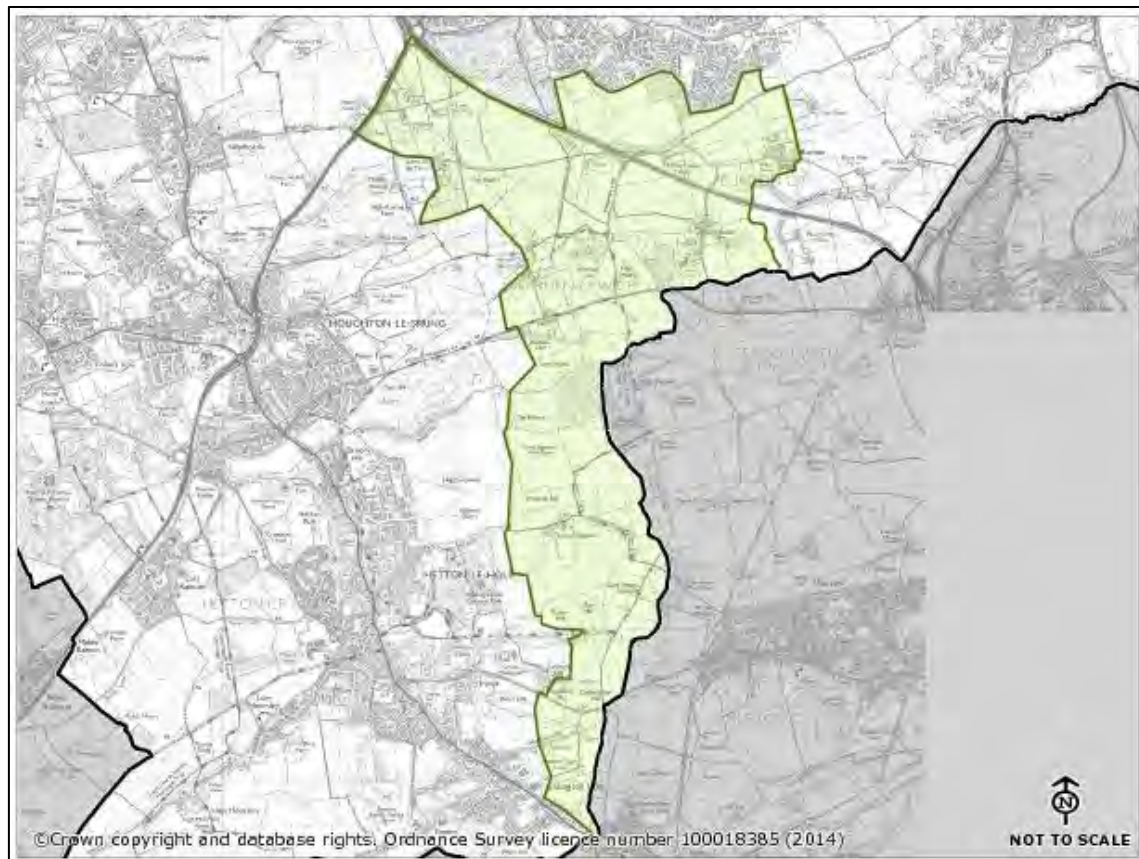
### Key characteristics of the Clay Plateau LCT

- 4.126 Key characteristics of the Clay Plateau LCT:
- Elevated plateau between 100m and 170m;
  - Underlying Magnesian Limestone weakly expressed, thickly overlaid by deposits of glacial till;
  - Open and gently undulating, a relatively exposed landscape;
  - A dry landscape with few water bodies due to the permeability of the Magnesian Limestone;
  - High ground often prominently visible from the lowland to the west;
  - A farmed landscape of large arable fields with some pasture;
  - Occasional woodland plantations and shelter belts; and
  - Evidence of prehistoric activity as well as long-established farming and mineral extraction.
- 4.127 The Clay Plateau LCT comprises a single character area, which is described below with reference to its valued features.

### 7a Warden Law and Eppleton Moor

- 4.128 This character area covers the elevated plateau that extends from the urban edge of Silksworth and Moorside in the north through to Easington Lane in the south. It includes the highest ground in Sunderland, and continues south into County Durham.
- 4.129 This is an elevated plateau, rising to high points of 170m at Warden Law, and sloping south towards the A19 and the urban area, offering broad views to the north as far as the Cleadon Hills. The high ground continues southwards into County Durham, gradually reducing in height to around 120m at Easington Lane. The highest ground around Warden Law is often clearly visible from the lowland to the west, where it is seen above the slope of the Limestone Escarpment. Although generally hidden beneath clay, the underlying limestone is apparent at the former Warden Law Quarry, where a local wildlife site lies on former settling ponds. Other LWS in this area cover ancient woodland at Blakeney Woods and the former Eppleton Railway cutting.
- 4.130 The area has a generally open land cover of large geometric arable fields, with weak hedgerows and occasional field boundary ash, oak and small copses of mature sycamore. There is limited settlement aside from the hamlets of Burdon, Warden Law and Old Burdon, recorded as historic villages in the Historic Environment Record. These three clusters comprise tight groupings of traditional buildings, sheltered by deciduous woodlands.
- 4.131 Among the most striking features in the area are the wooded hummocks at Warden Law, which mark the sites of Neolithic cist burials. A Neolithic barrow slightly to the north was lost to Warden Law Quarry, which has since been reused as a karting track. Other recreational landscapes include the fishing lakes and golf course around Old Burdon. This area is crossed by the A19, and busy rural roads including the B1260, Burdon Lane and Hangman's Lane. Combined with its proximity to urban areas, and sporadic development as at Stoneygate, the north-facing slopes have a settlement fringe character.

Figure 4.13 Location of Warden Law and Eppleton Moor



4.132 The southern part of the area has less of an urban influence, comprising larger scale farmed moorland and coniferous plantations. The four turbines of Great Eppleton Wind Farm are in this area, along with two further turbines just outside the Sunderland boundary. Alongside the pylons which traverse the character area from north to south, these are often highly visible features on the skyline.



*Clockwise from top left: looking north west from Hangman's Lane; wooded barrow at Warden Law; wind turbines and pylons on Eppleton Moor; mature trees at Chapelgarth.*

## Guidance and strategy

### Sensitive features for the Clay Plateau LCT

- 4.133 The key sensitive features, issues and trends within this landscape are listed below, and guidelines for this area are set out in **Table 4.7**.
- Urban fringe elements such as sporadic development.
  - Pressure for urban expansion, including the proposed South Sunderland Growth Area.
  - Potential for further wind energy proposals.
  - Lack of field boundary trees and sustainability of hedgerows.

**Table 4.7 Guidelines for the Clay Plateau LCT**

Strengths/ Opportunities/ Challenges	Do	Don't
Urban fringe	Continue to use green belt to control sporadic development in this area.  Seek landscape enhancement, including long-term maintenance, in association with any development proposal.	Allow piecemeal development to erode the essentially rural character of this area.  Permit creeping urbanisation of rural roads through the proliferation of pavements, signs, street lighting etc.
South Sunderland Growth Area	The SSGA is the subject of a more detailed landscape character assessment which provides specific recommendations	
Wind energy	Ensure any proposals are carefully considered in terms of siting and design so as to be compatible in appearance with the operational turbines.	Permit multiple smaller turbines where these could conflict visually with the existing turbines.
Field boundary trees and hedgerows	Support initiatives to enhance and restore hedges and field boundary trees to ensure their survival as a feature in the long term.	Permit further removal of hedges or trees without compensatory measures in place.

**Landscape strategy**

4.134 For each area within this LCT, an initial assessment of landscape value has been made and an overarching landscape strategy has been assigned. The guidelines in Table 4.1 should be applied in the context of this landscape strategy.

*7a Warden Law and Eppleton Moor*

4.135 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.

- Broad views across Sunderland from networks of accessible footpaths.
- Intact areas of landscape structure, for example at Chapelgarth or the wooded barrows on Warden Law.
- Vernacular character of historic farming settlements.
- Great North Forest Trail following the historic Salters' Way trading route to Yorkshire.

4.136 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards an area of well-maintained and biodiverse farmland, with opportunities for accessible recreation. Existing landscape structure will be retained and enhanced where appropriate, e.g. through improved hedgerow management, to form connected habitat networks. New development will provide opportunities to enhance settlement boundaries, but should be accommodated without further spread of urban fringe into this landscape. Development that would alter the character of the traditional farming settlements should be resisted. Recreational access through this landscape will be enhanced by upgraded paths and off-road routes in place of existing paths routed along busy roads. Paths and cycle routes will be accessible to all and will provide opportunities for views across the landscape, and for interpretation of the Magnesian Limestone biodiversity.

# LCT 8: Coastal Limestone Plateau

## Description

### Location and extents

- 4.137 This LCT occurs at the eastern edge of the Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau, where the plateau drops away towards the North Sea coast. The LCT extends southwards from Carley Hill but is expressed only where not overlaid by urban development.

### Key characteristics of the Coastal Limestone Plateau LCT

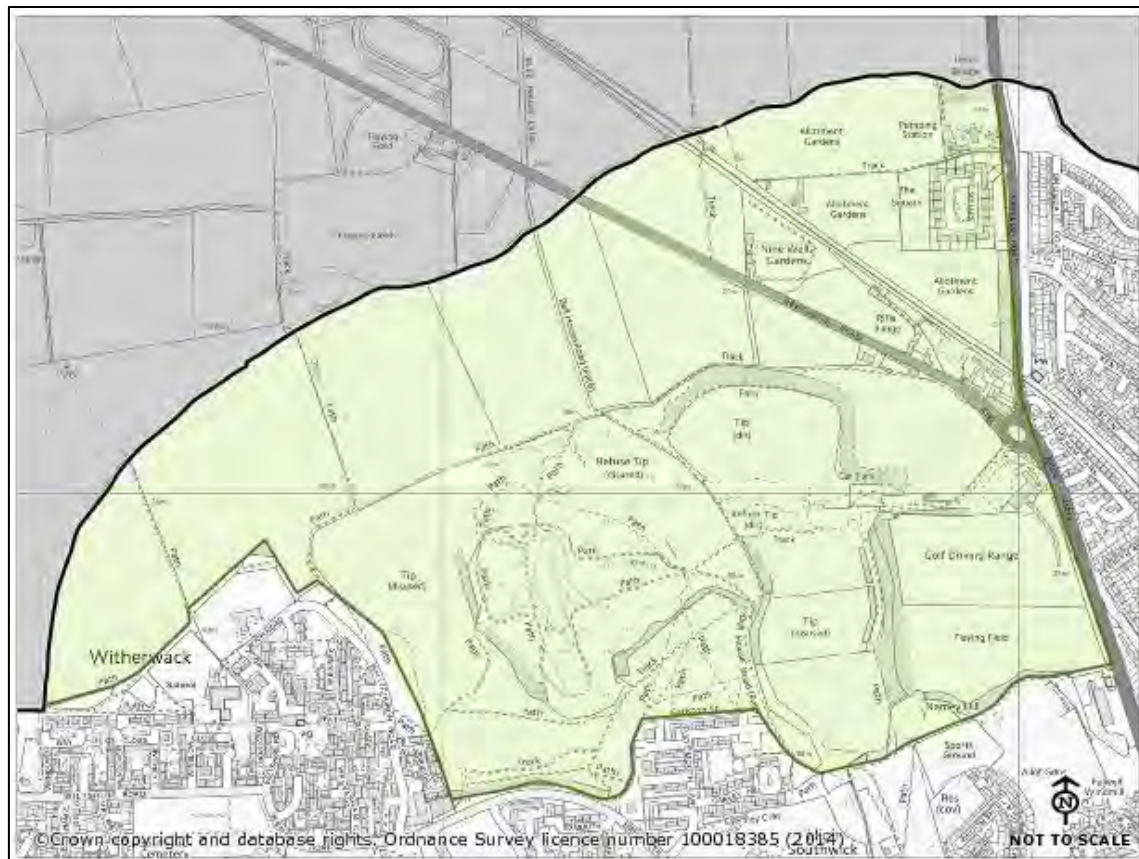
- 4.138 Key characteristics of the Coastal Limestone Plateau LCT:
- Low plateau of rolling terrain, incised by narrow steep-sided denes;
  - Though coastal-facing, the influence of the sea is moderated by that of the neighbouring urban areas;
  - Gently rounded topography of Magnesian Limestone, with distinct outcrops in places, and elsewhere covered by glacial till;
  - Predominantly arable farmland with regular patterns of medium and large-scale fields;
  - Significant areas of public open space often associated with settlement fringe development;
  - A visually open landscape with relatively few trees, other than ancient ash woods in sheltered denes; and
  - Coal and quarrying has had a substantial influence on the landscape, its main legacy being in the settlement pattern.
- 4.139 The Coastal Limestone Plateau LCT has been subdivided into three character areas, inset within the built-up area (LCT9). These are described below.

### 8a Carley Hill

- 4.140 This character area covers a prominent outcrop of Magnesian Limestone on the urban edge to the north of Sunderland. It comprises the undeveloped area between the Fulwell, Marley Potts and Witherwack areas of the city.
- 4.141 Carley Hill rises to around 75m above sea level, gently sloping to the north towards the South Tyneside boundary and Boldon Flats. The hill comprises an outcrop of Magnesian Limestone which has a long history of quarrying. The sites of the Fulwell, Southwick and Carley Hill limestone quarries occupy the majority of the hilltop, and provide important exposures of the Concretionary Limestone. The quarries are protected as a SSSI.
- 4.142 Quarrying ceased in this area in 1957 and subsequent infilling and restoration has masked most of the quarries. The hilltop is now a series of grassland spaces within a framework of woodland and linked by a path network. The Magnesian Limestone grasslands support a unique assemblage of flora and fauna, recognised in the SSSI designation of Fulwell & Carley Hill Quarries, as well as being a Local Nature Reserve.
- 4.143 The area to the north below Carley Hill slopes gently down to a small burn, with large open fields separated by ditches and remnant hedgerows. This part of the area is closer in character with the lower-lying Boldon Flats landscape to the north. The A184 and railway line cut across this part of the area; beyond these routes is a large group of allotments and the grade II listed Fulwell Waterworks.
- 4.144 Other features on Carley Hill include the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Fulwell Windmill, restored to working condition in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and a grade II listed sound mirror used to detect German Zeppelins in the First World War. The hill is now a significant recreational resource for the surrounding areas, with open views to the north and west.



Figure 4.14 Location of Carley Hill



*Clockwise from top left: Carley Hill quarry workings; open space by Whitchurch Road.*

### 8b Tunstall Hills

4.145 This character area includes the prominent limestone hills and adjacent dene which forms a green corridor in south Sunderland, between the residential areas of Hillview and Grangetown to the north, and Ryhope, Tunstall and New Silksworth to the south.

Figure 4.15 Location of Tunstall Hills



- 4.146 The Tunstall Hills rise to 110m at the Maiden Paps, and form a linear ridge to the north of this area. Much of the character area is low lying, formed from a glacial drainage channel which cut east-west across the coastal plateau. This channel is now drained to the west of Tunstall Hills by the Hendon Burn, and to the east by a minor burn which flows into the North Sea. The Tunstall Hills are formed of the distinctive outcrops of the Ford Formation of the Magnesian Limestone, and are protected as a SSSI. Further exposures of the Ford Formation at Newport Railway Cutting are identified as a local geological site.
- 4.147 The area has been the site of mineral extraction, with Silksworth Colliery operating here from 1869 to 1971, and Ryhope Colliery further east, which was active from 1857 to 1966. Both sites are fully reclaimed with the only visible features remaining being railway cuttings.
- 4.148 Land cover is a mix of semi-improved grassland and arable, with small to medium fields divided by often sparse hedges. Magnesian Limestone grassland habitat occurs on the Tunstall Hills, supporting nationally rare flora and fauna recognised in the SSSI designation. There are woodlands on steeper slopes, with recently planted woodland on reclaimed land north of Ryhope. West of Silksworth Lane, the area becomes more managed. The Silksworth Sports Complex occupies this area, incorporating playing fields, a ski slope and fishing ponds. The Venerable Bede Secondary School is on the elevated site of Ryhope Colliery in the south.
- 4.149 This character area forms an important green corridor between the densely populated areas that surround it. With only a few roads, it is tranquil in places in strong contrast to the adjacent city suburbs that surround. NCN Route 1 follows the railway line through the area, and there are paths across Tunstall Hills, but otherwise access is relatively limited. The limestone escarpment of Tunstall Hills is a very prominent landscape feature within the Sunderland area. Long open views are available in all directions from the summit.

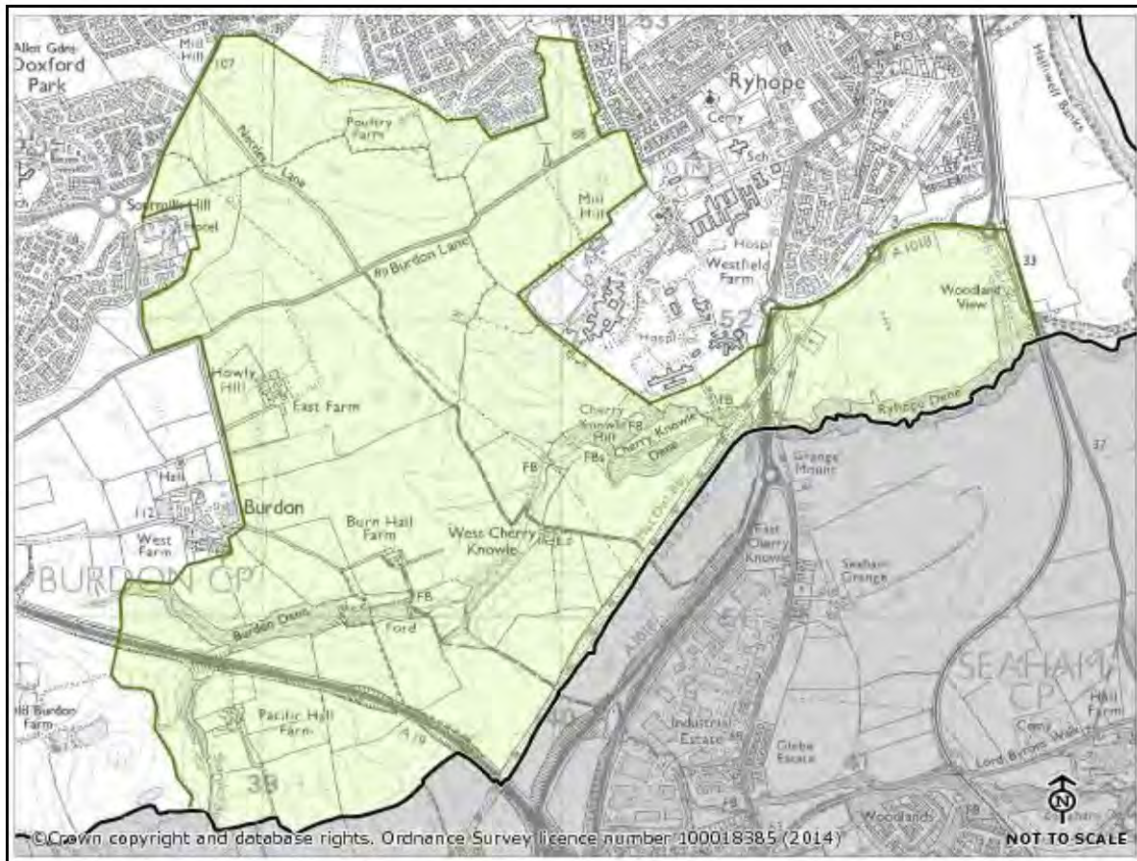


*Clockwise from top left: Tunstall Hills from Silksworth Lane; outcrop on Tunstall Hills; view north over the city; woodland along Newport Dene.*

### **8c Burdon to Ryhope**

- 4.150 This character area is located at the south eastern corner of the Sunderland City Council area, occupying an area of generally open agricultural land to the south of Ryhope and Doxford Park, and extending into County Durham.
- 4.151 The Magnesian Limestone is not directly expressed in this area, but the hard reef limestone of the Ford Formation underlies the high ground in the north of the area, rising to 107m at Mill Hill near Tunstall, and 92m at another Mill Hill by Ryhope. Both hills, as their shared name suggests, were the sites of windmills when the adjacent settlements were rural villages.
- 4.152 The general coastal slope is apparent across the rest of this area, which is deeply incised by a series of burns to form a classic Durham coastal dene. Consecutively named Burdon Dene, Cherry Knowle Dene and Ryhope Dene, this is a distinctive feature but largely hidden in the wider landscape. It supports ancient woodland on its steep sides, protected as a sequence of local wildlife sites, but has been damaged by motorcycle access causing erosion and loss of understorey.

**Figure 4.16 Location of Burdon to Ryhope**



*Clockwise from top left: Howly Hill Farm from Burdon; coastal view from north of Burdon Lane; West Cherry Knowle by Cherry Knowle Dene; secluded, wooded landscape within the dene.*

- 4.153 The remaining part of the area comprises large open and geometric arable field patterns with some small pasture fields along the denes. Field boundaries are weak, with gappy or overgrown hedges and very few field boundary trees. Denser woodland is limited to the denes as noted above, though there is mature woodland around the adjacent settled areas.
- 4.154 The urban edge has a strong influence on local character, with some abrupt settlement boundaries on the north edge. Traffic on Burdon Lane extends the urban influence. Much of the area is within the proposed South Sunderland Growth Area, which includes the adjacent Cherry Knowle Hospital site. Further south, the area is more rural in character, with farms and limited views of settlement, though the A19 cuts through the landscape. Several features outside this area have an important influence on its character: the Victorian structure planting around the hospital and the woodland around Burdon (see LCT7) add mature tree cover; while the chimney of Ryhope Pumping Station is a visual focus.

## Guidance and strategy

### Sensitive features for the Coastal Limestone Plateau LCT

- 4.155 The key sensitive features, issues and trends within this landscape are listed below, and guidelines for this area are set out in **Table 4.8**.
- Visual connection to the coast.
  - Magnesian Limestone geology and grassland habitats are unique to this area.
  - Urban fringe including abrupt settlement edges.
  - Pressure for urban expansion, including the proposed South Sunderland Growth Area.
  - Valued open space resources.
  - Inappropriate motorcycle access causing erosion and damage in denes.

**Table 4.8 Guidelines for the Coastal Limestone Plateau LCT**

Strengths/ Opportunities/ Challenges	Do	Don't
Coastal aspect	Maintain coastal views and links to the coast where practicable.	Permit development that blocks views or cuts the visual connection to the coastal strip.
Magnesian Limestone	<p>Continue to protect remaining Magnesian Limestone grasslands, supporting initiatives to enhance and maintain these in the long term.</p> <p>Where development is permitted in limestone areas, ensure planting proposals are appropriate to the habitat.</p> <p>Promote understanding of and access to the unique geology of this landscape.</p>	Permit piecemeal erosion of remaining areas of grassland habitat.
Urban fringe	<p>Continue to use green belt to control sporadic development in this area.</p> <p>Seek landscape enhancement, including long-term maintenance, in association with any development proposal.</p> <p>Seek to enhance currently abrupt settlement boundaries, and promote maintenance of hedges, woodlands and trees within the area, for the benefit of habitat networks.</p> <p>Create buffers and enhance woodland along the coastal dunes.</p>	<p>Allow piecemeal development to erode the essentially rural character of this area.</p> <p>Permit creeping urbanisation of rural roads through the proliferation of pavements, signs, street lighting etc.</p> <p>Allow development to obstruct key open space and wildlife corridors through the wider city.</p>
South Sunderland Growth Area	The SSGA is the subject of a more detailed landscape character assessment which provides specific recommendations.	
Valuable open spaces	Promote access and enhance means of access for all user groups, including provision of additional links to neighbouring urban areas.	Permit development which results in net loss of publicly accessible open spaces.
Inappropriate access	Seek to work with landowners to control access, and promote understanding of the importance of dene woodlands.	Permit unchecked access to cause irreparable damage to landscape features.

## Landscape strategy

- 4.156 For each area within this LCT, an initial assessment of landscape value has been made and an overarching landscape strategy has been assigned. The guidelines in Table 4.1 should be applied in the context of this landscape strategy.

### *8a Carley Hill*

- 4.157 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.
- Magnesian Limestone grassland habitat supports nationally rare flora and fauna.
  - Importance of geological exposures at Fulwell Quarries.
  - Northward views to Cleadon Hills and across to the coast.
  - Significant recreational open space readily accessible from adjacent neighbourhoods.
- 4.158 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards high-quality accessible open space and farmland, providing a keystone in the habitat network between Sunderland and South Tyneside. Management of woodlands will deliver biodiversity benefits, and upgrading of routes will provide access for all.

This will be combined with **landscape protection** of the key habitats and open spaces in this area, to retain its undeveloped character. The characteristic limestone outcrops will be provided with interpretation and community engagement will be encouraged to ensure 'ownership' of the hill. The open, undeveloped character of the hill will be protected as part of the essential setting of northern Sunderland, along with the panoramic views which are available from the high ground.

### *8b Tunstall Hills*

- 4.159 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.
- Magnesian Limestone outcrops and grassland habitat supporting nationally rare flora and fauna.
  - Importance of geological exposures in the area.
  - Tunstall Hills and Tunstall Bank are key viewpoints, as well as landmarks in wider views.
  - Silksworth Sports Complex provides regionally important recreational facility.
  - Important green space within the densely populated urban area.
- 4.160 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape protection** of this key area of open space within the city. The important habitats of Tunstall Hills, and the accessible areas on and around them, form an essential part of Sunderland's green infrastructure and this function should be retained. Further encroachment of residential or commercial development into this corridor of open land should be resisted, to maintain the physical connection between the Silksworth and Farringdon area and the coast.

This will be combined with **landscape enhancement** across the area, particularly the open fields at Hollycarrside and Newport Dene, where reinstatement and management of hedgerows is a priority. Onward links, both recreational and for wildlife, into the wider city can be improved and a better quality access network throughout the area could be provided. The aim will be to achieve a high quality linear area of accessible open space and well managed farmland linking suburbs and coast.

### *8c Burdon to Ryhope*

- 4.161 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.
- Coastal aspect and sea views, particularly the broad view from Burdon Lane.
  - Special character of Burdon/Cherry Knowle/Ryhope Dene, the finest example of a coastal dene within Sunderland.
  - Rural character of the southern area, with farms and hedges which are in better condition.
- 4.162 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards an area of well managed and biodiverse farmland, which allows recreational access to and from the adjacent settlements. Existing woodlands, including the important coastal denes, will be protected and managed, with new connections formed by enhanced hedges and tree planting to form a connected habitat network which links east to the coast, as well as west and south to the surrounding country. The largely undeveloped character of the majority of the landscape will be retained, alongside the introduction of robust settlement boundaries around the proposed SSGA. Recreational links will provide circular routes from the new residential and employment areas into the surrounding landscape, enabling appreciation of the biodiversity and geology of the area, as well as the broad views along the coast.



# LCT 9: Urban Limestone Plateau

## Description

### Location and extents

- 4.163 This LCT covers the densely populated urban areas of Sunderland, located on either side of the River Wear, and including the outlying settlements which are built on the undulating limestone plateau. The urban area occupies a broad 'bowl' around the mouth of the Wear, enclosed by ridges of slightly higher ground to the north, south and west. The character of these urban areas differs from that of the new town of Washington (LCT4) and the coalfield villages to the south west (LCT5).

### Key characteristics of the Urban Limestone Plateau LCT

- 4.164 Key characteristics of the Urban Limestone Plateau LCT:
- Varied topography overlying the Magnesian Limestone, generally gently undulating land with a slope towards the coast and the River Wear;
  - Character is defined by urban development rather than by other characteristics;
  - Strong association between settlement pattern, the riverside and the docks;
  - Settlement form varies from dense city centre and terraced neighbourhoods to more spacious suburbs;
  - Extensive inter-war and post-war housing estates of consistent character;
  - Individual landmark buildings or groups of buildings often help to define local character;
  - Historic cores survive as fossilised street patterns;
  - Large areas of Sunderland Cottages in several neighbourhoods;
  - Significant clusters of architectural and townscape interest recognised as conservation areas;
  - Network of formal and semi-formal open spaces at a range of scales;
  - Views across the city from higher ground, often with the sea as the backdrop;
  - Continuing development and redevelopment ensures that the character of these areas is dynamic.
- 4.165 The Urban Limestone Plateau LCT has been subdivided into ten character areas. These are described below.

### 9a Sunderland City Centre

- 4.166 This character area covers Sunderland's city core and central business district located on the southern bank of the Wear. Land use is primarily commercial, with prominent civic and historic buildings and leisure facilities; the area has a limited number of residential properties compared to neighbouring character areas. The city centre is contained by major roads: the A183 St Mary's Way to the north; A1018 Sans Street to the east; B1294 Toward Road to the south east; and the A1231 Stockton Road and Park Road to the south west. Several of these roads present barriers to pedestrian movement, particularly to the east. In the west this character area extends across St Michael's Way to include the university.
- 4.167 The underlying landscape within the area is low-lying and generally flat but with a gentle northward slope down towards the river. Topography plays a key role along the northern edge adjacent to the incised gorge of the Wear, and the city centre is closely linked to the river and its landmark bridges (refer to LCT 10).
- 4.168 The character of the area is heavily influenced by its location close to Sunderland's historical core. Sunderland itself grew up by the river slightly further east, while Bishopwearmouth to the west was a separate village. The two settlements gradually merged and this area became the central

business district of the prosperous 19<sup>th</sup>-century city. The area displays a variety of different architectural styles from Georgian terraced houses to grand commercial headquarters and municipal buildings. Many of these are listed buildings as well as city centre landmarks.

**Figure 4.17 Location of Sunderland City Centre**



- 4.169 The centre was significantly redeveloped in the late 1960s, with a large number of post-war buildings. The Bridges shopping arcade was built in the late 1980s and extended again in the 1990s. Sunderland has the second largest city centre in the north east region in terms of retail floor space, with thriving retail use on Fawcett Street and pedestrianised High Street.
- 4.170 Mowbray Park, laid out in the 19<sup>th</sup> century on a former quarry, is the principal open space in the city and includes numerous monuments and sculptures. At its northern end is the Sunderland Museum, opened in 1879. The adjacent Winter Garden is a striking modern addition, replacing the original which was destroyed by a Second World War bomb. The extensive Civic Centre was built to the west of the park in the 1960s. Sunderland University City Campus is located to the west of the city centre, incorporating the university library and several new buildings in landscaped grounds. Regeneration continues in the area south of Holmeside. Public realm improvements have been rolled out in key locations, including Mowbray Park and the new Keel Square which links north towards the river. Other areas would benefit from similar treatment.
- 4.171 The area is serviced by a number of key transport routes, being a hub of the local road network and adjacent to the road and rail river crossing at Wearmouth Bridge. Two conservation areas lie wholly within the city centre, with Ashbrooke and Old Sunderland extending into this area. Bishopwearmouth in the west covers the remnants of the medieval village, focused on the church and village green but with modern development following the old street pattern. Sunnyside covers the eastern city centre, comprising the planned streets of Georgian terraced houses as well as the commercial buildings which later replaced them. The character of Sunnyside changes gradually from west to east, becoming more fragmented toward Sans Street, where there are car parks and underused buildings.



*Clockwise from top left: 19<sup>th</sup>-century city centre buildings; John Street, looking to the Winter Garden past houses that have been converted into office premises; Georgian terraces located within Sunnyside Conservation Area; pedestrianised areas of commercial and retail premises.*

### 9b Millfield and Pallion

- 4.172 This area lies to the west of the city centre, and comprises early extensions to the city centre. Largely built before the First World War, this area includes the largest concentrations of Sunderland Cottages.
- 4.173 This area comprises dense late 19<sup>th</sup>-century and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century residential development, built to house Sunderland's rapidly expanding population. It comprises mainly brick-built terraces, including two-storey houses as well as the single-storey Sunderland Cottages. Along principal streets the terraces are embellished, e.g. with gables and bay windows on Whitehall Terrace; or elaborate brickwork on Chester Street, but elsewhere these are plain buildings. Many of the Sunderland Cottages have been remodelled with dormer extensions, creating an uneven roofline and affecting the streetscape. There are areas of more modern infill housing of a range of periods.
- 4.174 The main thoroughfares have long parades of small shops, with the key local centre being the thriving Chester Street. Otherwise this is an almost entirely residential area. Occasional schools and large Victorian and Edwardian public houses provide local landmarks. Open space is extremely scarce in this dense suburb, with only small spaces such as Diamond Hill Pocket Park. The line of the former Silksworth to Ayres Quay railway forms an important green corridor between Barnes Park and the river, though it has poor links onward to the city centre. To the north the area adjoins the riverside, though there is limited access due to major roads and commercial land use, despite potential for links through Galley's Gill. The area has also lost connection with the pubs which remain in the commercial riverside (see LCT 10). The area includes former industrial fringes which are now being redeveloped, such as the former Flint Glass Works which is now a housing development.

Figure 4.18 Location of Millfield and Pallion



4.175 At the centre of the area is Sunderland's principal hospital, occupying a large complex of institutional buildings, largely modern, with extensive parking and ancillary buildings. In places the granite cobbles underlying the road surface have broken through, exposing past layers of streetscape.

### 9c Ashbrooke, Hillview and Grangetown

4.176 This area lies to the south of the city centre, extending as far as the Tunstall Hills. It includes residential suburbs of varied date, as well as some significant open spaces.

4.177 This area lies over gently undulating ground, which slopes down from higher land along the Tunstall Hills and Humbledon Hill in the south and west, towards the city centre and the coast. Barnes Burn and Hendon Burn both flow above ground for short sections through this area, though are culverted along most of their length. The burns form the spines of Barnes Park and Backhouse Park respectively.

**Figure 4.19 Location of Ashbrooke, Hillview and Grangetown**



- 4.178 Development of this area began with construction of Ashbrooke in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, including fashionable terraces and larger suburban villas occupied by the wealthiest Sunderland families. These were laid out around parks and gardens and provided with several landmark churches. To the south, construction of villas and elaborate terraces continued in the area known as The Cedars in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today this is one of the leafiest parts of Sunderland, rich in mature trees including street trees; this is apparent both at street level and when viewed from higher ground.
- 4.179 Further south, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century village of Grangetown formed a second nexus, around which several groups of Sunderland Cottages were built during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The next major phase of development occurred after the First World War, with expansions of suburban housing filling the space between Ashbrooke and Grangetown, west along Barnes Burn and south west along Silksworth Lane. Housing of this period comprises spacious estates of substantial semi-detached properties in brick and render, often with whimsical features such as half-timbering. Following the Second World War, more estates were built, using similar street layouts but with smaller homes and a greater use terraces. These and more recent developments have brought the urban area up to the foot of Tunstall Hills.
- 4.180 New roads linking the suburbs include the dual carriageways of Ryhope Road and Essen Way, and the A690 from the south west. In the south, this area includes the Grangetown industrial estate and, across the B1405, the mixed-period housing of Hollycarrside which is somewhat detached from the rest of the character area.
- 4.181 Open space makes a key contribution to the character of this area, particularly in the north where Barnes Park and Backhouse Park make a substantial contribution to local character. However, these parks are not connected to wider networks through the area. Barnes Park was established in 1909 and subject of a substantial restoration in recent years. Extending west into the adjacent area (see character area 9g), it includes mature woodland, walks, and a Victorian bandstand, all laid out around a pond formed from the burn. Between Ashbrooke and The Cedars is Backhouse Park, featuring mature woodland around the Hendon Burn. Further south are school playing fields and the extensive cemetery at Grangetown, as well as small amenity spaces within the planned suburbs. Within Ashbrooke and Tunstall the main green spaces are private gardens with very few

substantive public spaces, and this limits opportunity for informal play and social interaction. There is access to the Tunstall Hills from the south of this area, but again this is not tied to wider green networks.

### 9d East End and Hendon

- 4.182 The East End is adjacent to the city centre and closely associated with 'old' Sunderland along the River Wear. Hendon extends southward, forming a narrow, mainly residential area between the central business district and the industrial areas around the docks (LCT11).

Figure 4.20 Location of East End and Hendon



- 4.183 At its northern end, this area incorporates the East End of Sunderland, which retains its close links with the river and sea. As the fishing village which grew up on the south bank of the Wear expanded, and the docks were established to the east, the settlement spread onto the higher ground, adjacent to the common lands of the Town Moor. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, southward expansion continued with the development of terraced housing and Sunderland Cottages, eventually filling the ground as far as Grangetown. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the East End has been comprehensively redeveloped more than once, leading to a significant reduction in population. Most recently, the high-density garths of the 1930s have been replaced with lower density housing. Together with the high-rise residential towers this has seen the fragmentation of the townscape. Isolated older buildings remain, such as the masonic lodge at the foot of Londonderry Tower, and the Parish Church on the edge of the Town Moor. Though the public realm of the East End is in need of rejuvenation, the riverside and coastal setting together with surviving heritage buildings and strong history sets this area apart. There is substantial scope for further regeneration, particularly through better links between the city centre, the river and sea. The area benefits from views over the Wear and back towards the city.
- 4.184 The Town Moor itself has been subdivided by railway sidings (see LCT 11) though part remains public open space, if underused and without trees. The Parish Church is a key landmark in this area, and survives alongside the alms houses of Trafalgar Square and the park to the south. Other historic buildings in the area have fared less well, giving this location a run-down appearance. In general, the character of this northern part of the area has been fragmented by

piecemeal redevelopment. The process of redevelopment continues further south, with recent demolitions of housing on Amberley Street.



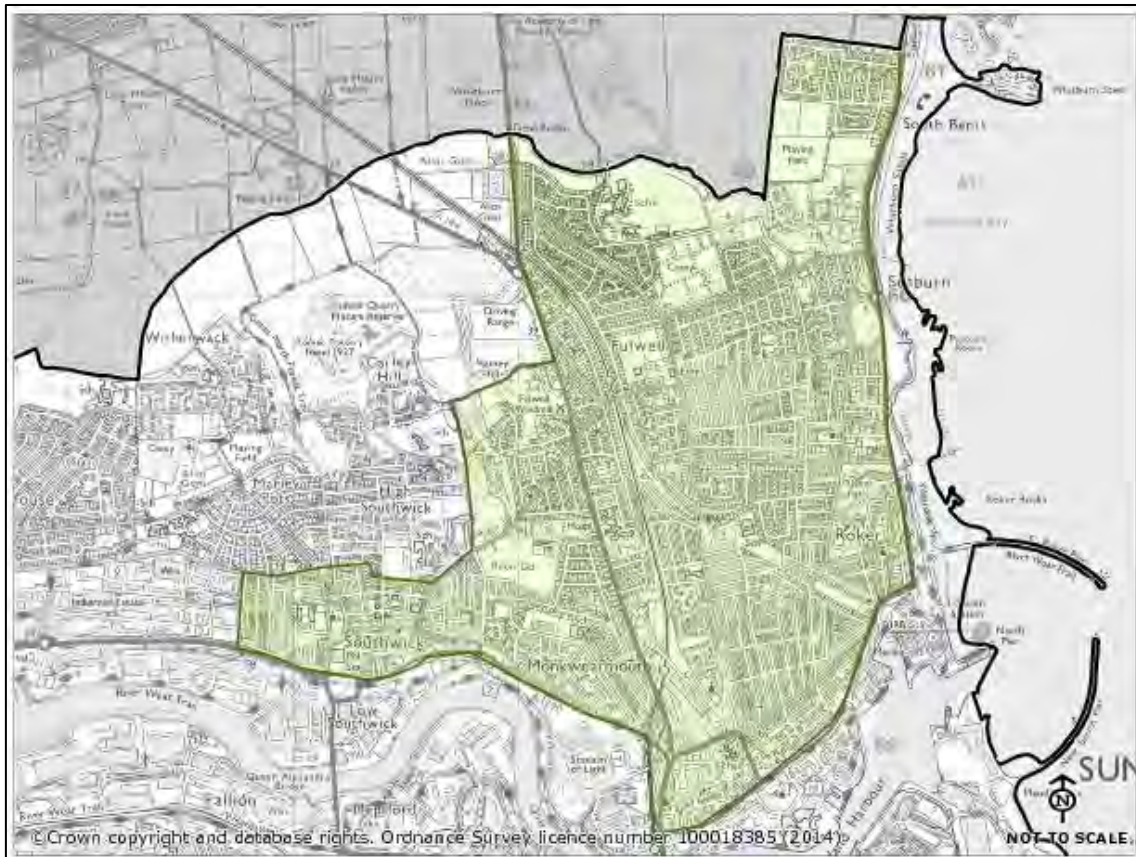
*Clockwise from top left: terraces on Gray Road; tower blocks and Holy Trinity Church viewed over an old stone wall by the Town Moor.*

- 4.185 A more coherent townscape character emerges in the Gray Road area, where the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century terraces remain largely intact, though still with some later infill. There is a concentration of Sunderland Cottages in this area, including Noble Street and Tower Street, and extending southward to Leonard Street and Cairo Street. The latter are early 20<sup>th</sup>-century developments comprising very long streets with unbroken streetscapes and very little green space. Villette Road provides the main commercial centre in this neighbourhood. The Sunderland Cottages give way to inter-war semi-detached houses at the south end of this area. The residential part of Hendon is separated from the coast by commercial and industrial land uses, as well as the school and allotments on Corporation Road. There is a sharp contrast at Toward Road between this area and leafy Ashbrooke. Links to the city centre are also poor.

#### **9e Southwick, Fulwell, Monkwearmouth and Roker**

- 4.186 This character area covers the densely populated urban area in the north east of Sunderland. To the north of the River Wear, this area encompasses Monkwearmouth, Southwick, Fulwell, Roker and Seaburn. It is a primarily residential area with some commercial and industrial development. The landscape is low-lying with gentle undulations that slope generally east and south from Carley Hill towards the coast and river. The urban landscape contrasts at the city boundary with the Whitburn Moor landscape character area in neighbouring South Tyneside.
- 4.187 Most of this area developed following the growth of shipbuilding and quays along the river, though Southwick is a former mining village and Roker and Seaburn are coastal resorts. Expansive blocks of distinctive terrace houses and Sunderland Cottages are associated with the former shipbuilding yards and Monkwearmouth Colliery. These are located within the areas of Southwick, Fulwell and Monkwearmouth, and include some of the last Sunderland Cottages to be built, in the 1930s. Meanwhile, the Victorian and Edwardian seaside resort of Roker was developed mainly after the opening of Roker Park in 1880.

**Figure 4.21 Location of Southwick, Fulwell, Monkwearmouth and Roker**



- 4.188 In the inter-war years these differing historical cores were brought together by rapid settlement expansion which saw the building of semi-detached housing estates, to form what is now one continuous area of residential development. This absorbed the former village of Fulwell, somewhat to the east of the landmark windmill on Carley Hill. More recent housing has expanded the settlement boundary north to the city boundary, and infilled former brickworks closer to the river. The latter gives a fragmented character to south eastern parts of the area.
- 4.189 Little now remains of the historic village of Monkwearmouth: the area now forms the commercial core to the north of the Wear. This commercial land use presents a barrier to ready access between residential neighbourhoods and the River Wear, which benefits from good quality open space in comparison to the available open space north of the A183 Dame Dorothy Street. Roker Park and its surrounding terraces and landmark church remain intact, within a conservation area. The surrounding housing is very dense, with a limited provision of good open space. Street trees have been lost from many locations, often replaced by parking spaces, reducing the amenity of streetscapes. Further north, Seaburn Park and the leisure centre – currently under renovation – illustrate the changing style of seaside resorts.
- 4.190 The historic shipbuilding and coal mining village of Southwick retains a separate character within the wider built up area north of the Wear. Its village green survives, now surrounded by 20<sup>th</sup>-century buildings. It has a limited connection with the coast, and today its connection with the Wear has also been eroded by the major road and commercial land uses along the riverside.
- 4.191 The area has a number of cycle routes including National Cycle Network Route 1 which follows the coast from Roker Pier north to South Tyneside. It is also the finishing point for two cross-Britain routes: the Coast to Coast (C2C); and Walney to Wear (W2W). Due to the high density of urban development this area has limited open space, largely comprising sports grounds and peripheral spaces such as around Carley Hill. Access to the coast is good, but riverside is limited by busy roads and industrial sites.



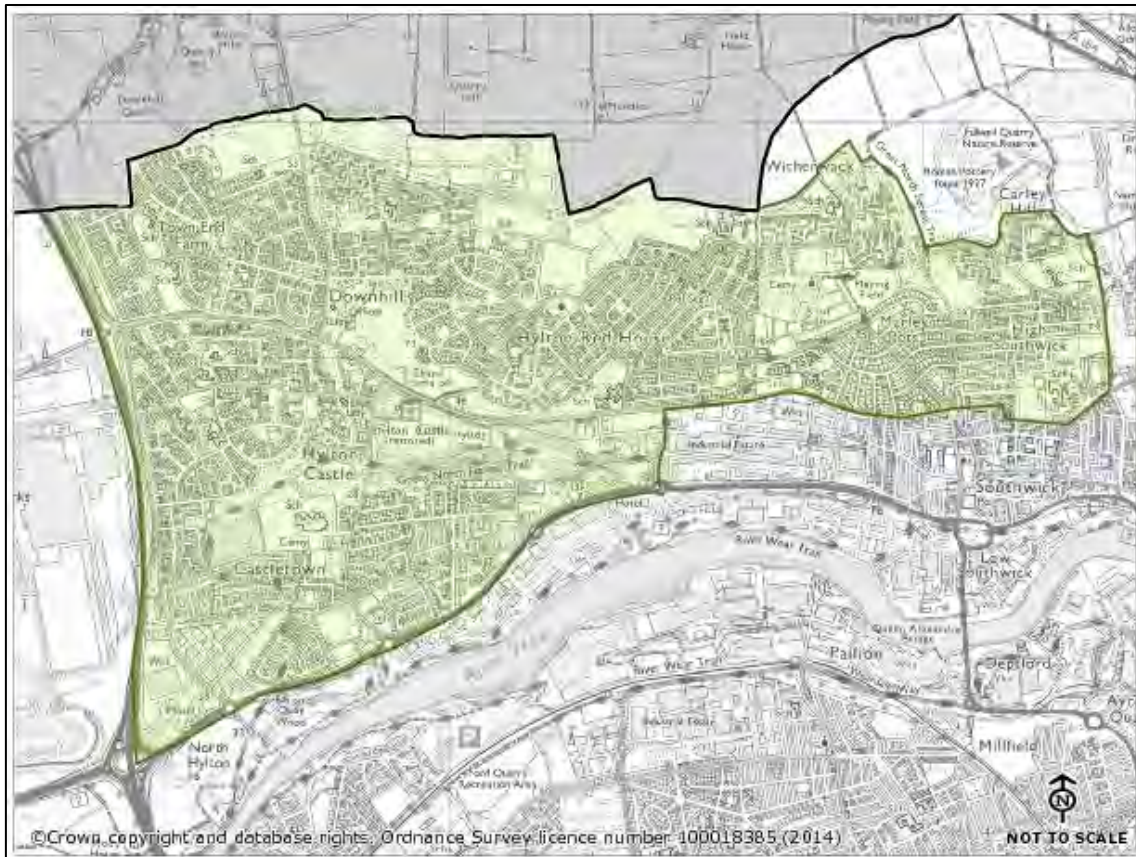


*Clockwise from top left: Late Victorian terrace houses facing Roker Park; Fulwell Windmill; lake in Roker Park; 1930s semi-detached housing.*

### **9f Hylton Castle, Downhill and Castletown**

- 4.192 This character area is located to the north of the River Wear and encompasses the residential areas of High Southwick, Marley Pots, Hylton Red House, Downhill, Town End Farm, Hylton Castle, and Castletown. It is bounded by the South Tyneside boundary to the north (Boldon Downhill landscape character area) and by the limestone gorge and associated industrial areas to the south.
- 4.193 The underlying landscape within the area consists of gentle undulations and a general slope south from Boldon Downhill towards the River Wear. There are elevated locations in the north of this area with open views looking south across the Wear. The western edge of this area overlies the Magnesian Limestone Escarpment, clearly expressed at Boldon Downhill to the north, and forming the high ground between Downhill and Hylton Red House. Hylton Dene is incised into the limestone below this high point.

Figure 4.22 Location of Hylton Castle, Downhill and Castletown



- 4.194 This is a predominantly residential area, built on formerly agricultural land mainly during the post-war years, to cope with overspill from the inner city areas. Within this, Castletown is a Victorian pit village and comprises rows of 19<sup>th</sup>-century terraces and Sunderland Cottages. The area, close to the northern bank of the Wear, was once linked to shipbuilding and the Hylton Colliery. Otherwise the oldest housing is the inter-war Marley Pots estate in the east, with successive areas added westwards through the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Population density in this area is lower than in older residential districts, with estates composed of semi-detached houses and short terraces typically with front gardens and driveways. The layout is one of culs-de-sac characterised by relatively wide roads and areas of open space between blocks of housing and on peripheries.
- 4.195 Despite the breadth of streets there are very few street trees and little mature vegetation in open spaces. This is being remedied in regeneration of the area south of Faber Road, where new housing has been designed around linear green corridors with pedestrian and cycle access, and space for trees along main streets.
- 4.196 The most significant open space in the area is Hylton Dene, a wooded valley and Local Nature Reserve (LNR) cutting through the area, providing distinct separation between housing estates. Although this provides a high-quality green corridor it does not link on to either the green belt to the west or the riverside to the east. To the north of this the restored Hylton Castle and adjacent Hylton Chapel represent key historical features in the area, dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Nothing now remains of the medieval village of Hylton which was once nearby. The open space continues onto the slopes of Downhill, also part of the LNR.
- 4.197 A corridor of open space along the north of this area includes Downhill Outdoor Sports Complex and playing fields, currently lying underused. This corridor lies at the edge of the built up area and shares many characteristics with the Limestone Escarpment (LCT6), though there is little access into the countryside to the north in South Tyneside.
- 4.198 To the south, despite historical associations, access to the river is limited by busy roads and commercial development, though there are links to Baron's Quay in the west, where Ferryboat Lane is the only road to pass under the A1231.

- 4.199 The area is subdivided by a number of key roads, including the east-west running Washington Road which skirts the limestone outcrop at Downhill, and the A1231 Washington Way which forms the southern boundary. The A19 marks the present edge of the urban area, beyond which is the Nissan factory and open farmland (see LCT 2).



*Clockwise from top left: view looking south over Sunderland from High Southwick; Hylton Castle; 1950s housing estate in Hylton Castle; post-war housing.*

### **9g South Hylton, Pennywell and Ford**

- 4.200 This character area is located to the south of the River Wear and encompasses the residential areas of South Hylton, Pennywell and the Ford housing estate. It is bounded by the Wear and industrial areas of Pallion to the north, the A19 to the west, and by the A183 Chester Road to the south. To the east the boundary is less distinct, but follows the change from older terraced housing to more recent development.
- 4.201 The underlying landscape within the area consists of gentle undulations that slope northwards from a low plateau, increasing in steepness towards the River Wear. The topography of the area allows more open views northward from elevated locations.

Figure 4.23 Location of South Hylton, Pennywell and Ford



- 4.202 This residential area comprises large housing estates developed in the 1930s, such as the Ford estate, built on formerly agricultural land to the west of earlier terraced housing. These were followed by a number of post-war housing projects, mainly social housing such as Pennywell which was the largest local authority estate in Sunderland and one of the UK's largest post-war social housing schemes. Some smaller blocks and rows of 19<sup>th</sup> century terrace housing are located within the former industrial village of South Hylton, which is now one of the only areas where housing directly adjoins the River Wear.
- 4.203 Housing estates are generally composed of semi-detached houses and terraces, built on street patterns which vary with time period: Pennywell comprises sweeping curves for example, while in Ford small outward-facing blocks are preferred. Mature street trees are an important feature of the Ford streetscape. Redevelopment continues with recent demolitions around Forest Road and rebuilding of areas in south Pennywell.
- 4.204 There are significant open spaces in this area including a small parcel of farmland between South Hylton and Pennywell, which is linked to the playing fields and SSSI at Ford Quarry. Bishopwearmouth Cemetery, the largest in Sunderland, is located within the south east corner of this character area and provides a biodiversity reservoir in the built up area. Elsewhere, open spaces are built in to planned housing estates; more so in the earlier Ford estate than in Pennywell. Often these are simply amenity grass with limited recreational or biodiversity interest. There is some provision of street trees in the Ford area, though the wide streets of Pennywell have no trees.

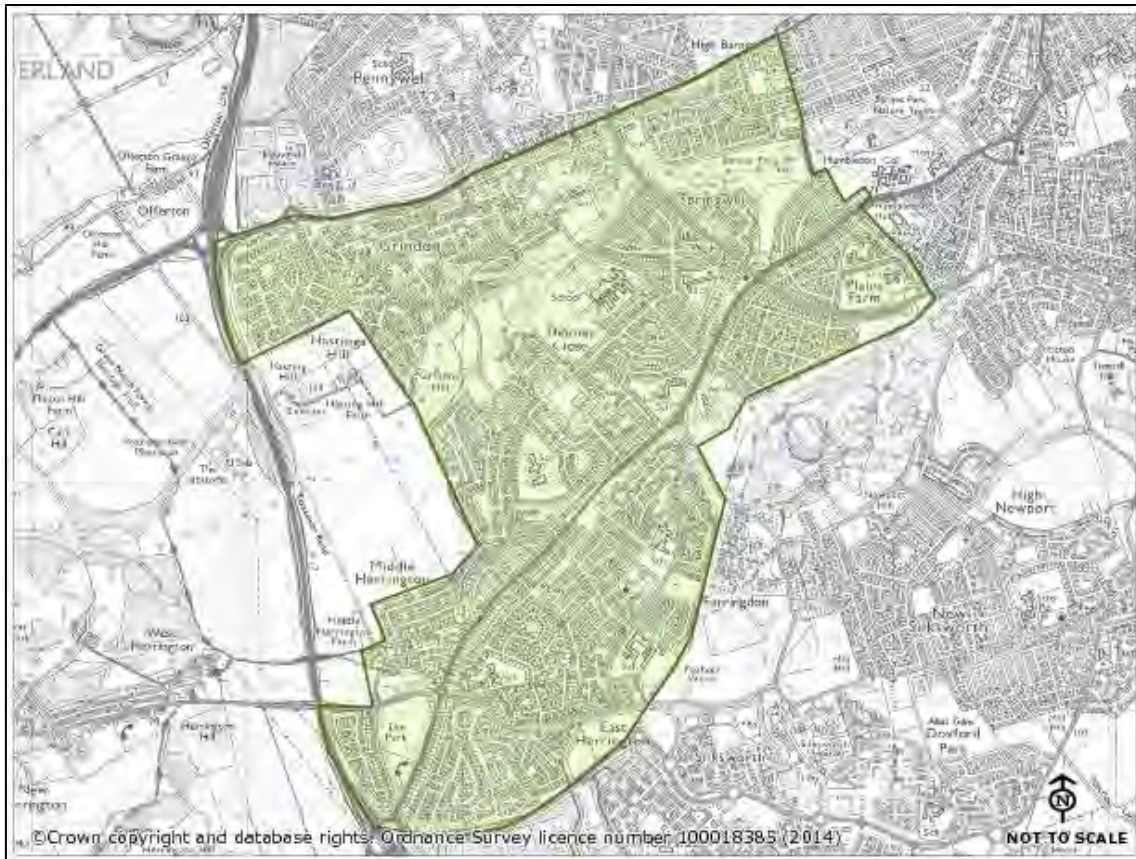


*Clockwise from top left: terraced street in South Hylton; Nissan wind turbines seen from South Hylton; Pennywell.*

### **9h Thorney Close, Herrington and Grindon**

- 4.205 This character area is located to the south west of Sunderland, and encompasses the inter-war and post-war residential areas of Thorney Close, Grindon, Springwell, Middle Herrington and East Herrington. It is bounded by the A183 Chester Road to the north, and extends outward from Humbleton to Silksworth in the south and the A19 in the west.
- 4.206 This area is built over an undulating landscape rising generally westwards to Hastings Hill. Higher ground extends east to Humbleton Hill, dipping to the valleys of the Barnes Burn to the north and the Hendon Burn to the south. The topography of the area is partly obscured by urban development, although it plays a key role in defining the character of more elevated areas close to Hastings Hill on the Limestone Escarpment to the west.
- 4.207 Early settlement in this area included Herrington village, though nothing remains today. This character area mainly consists of large housing estates developed in the 1930s along the Durham Road, followed by a number of post-war housing projects, including large-scale local authority estates such as Thorney Close, Plains Farm, Farrington and Grindon. These residential areas are composed of semi-detached houses and terraces. Layouts vary from regimented culs-de-sac in Plains Farm to the more organic Grindon estate. Many of these estates have alliterative series of street names (e.g. Galway, Geddes, Glencoe, Gatwick, etc. in Grindon). Despite broad streets, there are very few street trees in the area and small incidental open spaces have little mature vegetation.

**Figure 4.24 Location of Thorney Close, Herrington and Grindon**



4.208 Barnes Park is the principal open space in this area, following the Barnes Burn from Hastings Hill and extending east into the neighbouring area. Comprising open grassland and playing fields to the west, it becomes more wooded and more enclosed to the east, though not with the same level of mature woodland as the older park to the east of Ettrick Grove. In the west large areas of the park lack positive function or biodiversity interest, other than long grass, though there is potential for enhancement. There is only informal access into the green belt on Hastings Hill. In the south of this area, open space at Herrington Road links Herrington with the adjacent green belt. Elsewhere there are recreational sports facilities and open spaces throughout the area, most prominently the amenity space with mature trees along the A690 Durham Road.

### **9i Silksworth and Tunstall**

4.209 This character area is located on the south edge of the Sunderland conurbation, and encompasses the residential areas of Silksworth, New Silksworth, Moorside, Hall Farm, Tunstall, and Doxford Park. It is bounded by the Tunstall Hills open space to the north (LCT7) and by the settlement edge to the south, beyond which is open farmland (LCT8). It is separated from Herrington to the west by open space and former railway lines, and from Ryhope in the east by a narrow green corridor.

4.210 The underlying landscape within the area undulates across the limestone plateau. There is a general northward slope, with much of the area being relatively elevated. Changes in level play a key role in defining the character and separate identity of residential areas. The upper Hendon Burn flows above ground through this area, entering a culvert to the north.

Figure 4.25 Location of Silksworth and Tunstall



- 4.211 Early settlement within this area is evident at the old village cores of Silksworth and Tunstall. The former is more intact and designated as a conservation area centred on the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Doxford House and Silksworth Hall which, although relatively modern, succeeded a Tudor manor house. The landscaped gardens of Doxford Hall are now a public park with substantial mature trees.
- 4.212 The sinking of Silksworth Colliery in 1869 led to the establishment of New Silksworth, laid out as long terrace rows including Sunderland Cottages. The colliery drove further expansion of New Silksworth through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, merging the settlement with Tunstall, until its closure in 1971. Infill development continued, including the high rise flats located in the Gilley Law area. Eventually, this infill subsumed Silksworth into the wider built-up area of Sunderland, though Silksworth retains many aspects that depict its coalmining village past, including a former Miners Hall, public houses, a former police station as well as Sunderland cottages. Further south the Doxford Park area is a more recent development, dating largely to the 1970s and 80s. The broad, east-west B1286 Doxford Park Way meanders through the southern part of this character area, and road infrastructure forms a characteristic feature of this estate. Older flat-roofed housing in Doxford Park has recently been demolished and replaced.
- 4.213 The area has a number of recreational grounds and areas of open access land that serve as important settlement breaks between housing estates. The historic Doxford Park gardens link to open land to the north, comprising underused pasture and scrub, including Foxhole Wood. This in turn links to an east-west green corridor of open space and allotments which leads to open fields south of Ryhope. Open space and well-established woodland is a feature of the Doxford Park and Moorside area to the south, and there is extensive structure planting around the Doxford International Business Park developed in the 1990s on a large site to the south east, adjacent to the A19.



*Clockwise from top left: broad roads in Doxford Park; 1950s street in New Silksworth.*

## 9j Ryhope

- 4.214 Ryhope remains a largely self-contained settlement to the south of Sunderland, separated from the wider built up area by the Tunstall Hills. To the south is open countryside (LCT8) and the coast (LCT11) is immediately to the east.
- 4.215 Ryhope is in a coastal location on the eastern edge of the limestone plateau, although the coastal setting is not immediately apparent from the settlement except in longer views. The area slopes down steadily from high ground near Tunstall towards the older village. To the north the land drops sharply into the dene (area 8b).

**Figure 4.26 Location of Ryhope**



- 4.216 The medieval core of Ryhope survives in the form of its street plan, laid out around a triangular green. A handful of 18<sup>th</sup>-century houses face the green, though the conservation area takes in buildings from a range of periods. Ryhope expanded significantly after 1857 when Ryhope Colliery was established to the north east. Streets of terraces and Sunderland Cottages were



constructed in the vicinity of the colliery, eventually merging with the older village. Subsequent developments formed a single settlement which continued to be extended uphill with the Tunstall Bank estate in the 1960s and the Stokesley Lodge development currently under construction. Ryhope was eventually subsumed into the wider Sunderland area, but retains many aspects that depict its coalmining village past.



*Clockwise from top left: stone building in Ryhope centre; Ryhope village green; Ryhope Pumping Station; Sunderland Cottages with dormer extensions.*

- 4.217 In the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ryhope became the site of two major civic projects. Ryhope Pumping Station was established in 1867 to supply clean water from the subterranean aquifer for business and domestic use. Housed in a listed engine house, the beam engines remain in situ and are now a museum. A nearby site was chosen in 1895 for a city asylum; later renamed Cherry Knowle Hospital, it incorporated a large hospital building in landscaped grounds. This closed in the 1990s and has been demolished, with part of the site reused for new healthcare facilities. The remaining site forms part of the South Sunderland Growth Area.
- 4.218 Ryhope is well supplied with recreational open space, though there is less informal open space. However, the village is readily connected to the dene to the north and the coast to the east. The former railway line to the south of the village is a key element in the wider recreational network.

## Guidance and strategy

### Sensitive features for the Urban Limestone Plateau LCT

- 4.219 The key sensitive features, issues and trends within this landscape are listed below, and guidelines for this area are set out in **Table 4.9**.
- Ongoing redevelopment throughout the urban area.
  - Importance of open space, green networks, footpaths and cycleways.
  - Prominence of historic buildings and landmarks.

- Importance of woodland and mature trees.
- Promotion of biodiversity in built up areas.
- Negative impact of major roads running through areas of settlement.

**Table 4.9 Guidelines for the Urban Limestone Plateau LCT**

Strengths/ Opportunities/ Challenges	Do	Don't
Redevelopment	<p>Ensure redevelopment proposals maintain or enhance local characteristics, which can be used as cues for design. Refer to valued features and strategies for each area below.</p> <p>In less distinctive areas, seek to define new characteristics drawing on the wider landscape and townscape, rather than deploying standard patterns.</p> <p>Provide space for walking and cycling access and street trees to enhance recreational and amenity benefits of new housing areas.</p>	<p>Allow local character to become eroded through bland or standardised designs which do not reflect the background of the local area.</p> <p>Create disconnected places which do not link with their context and do not add to wider amenity.</p>
Open land, parks, and recreational areas	<p>Ensure that accessible open space remains a priority, and take measures to protect significant open spaces in the long term, including sustainable management.</p> <p>Enhance links between residential areas, local parks and recreational facilities. Use green corridors to connect people with places.</p> <p>Promote active use of open spaces (e.g. walking/cycling to work) to encourage ownership and community regard, as for example with the Friends of Barnes Park.</p>	<p>Permit development that will encroach on open spaces and parkland.</p> <p>Allow connections to be left un-made when opportunities arise.</p>
Historic buildings and landmarks	<p>Enhance understanding of historic buildings throughout the townscape.</p> <p>Recognise that both historic and modern buildings, as well as engineering structures or other features, may be landmarks with their own value.</p>	<p>Permit insensitive development that would challenge the prominence of landmark buildings, either locally or in the wider landscape.</p> <p>Permit development that would be insensitive to the historical context of historic buildings and landscape, whether recognised through listing or conservation area status, or otherwise</p>
Woodland and mature trees	Identify areas where new planting may be required to ensure long-	Allow piecemeal loss of street trees through changes to roadside

Strengths/ Opportunities/ Challenges	Do	Don't
	<p>term contribution of trees to the townscape and streetscape.</p> <p>Place importance on street trees where these are a feature, and seek to retain these as far as possible. Resist the replacement of street trees with parking and seek to reverse this trend where possible.</p> <p>Promote initiatives to establish new woodlands within larger open spaces, or tree plantings within smaller spaces.</p>	<p>parking, for example.</p> <p>Allow mature trees to be lost through age and to go unreplaced.</p>
Major roads	Ensure future road proposals are carefully sited and integrated into the townscape, with ample provision for pedestrian and cycle access.	Allow major roads to become a barrier between different areas of settlement and/or areas of open space and recreational parkland.

### Landscape strategy

4.220 For each area within this LCT, an initial assessment of landscape value has been made and an overarching landscape strategy has been assigned. The guidelines in Table 4.1 should be applied in the context of this landscape strategy.

#### 9a Sunderland City Centre

4.221 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.

- Landmark civic and commercial buildings.
- Intact Georgian terraces at Sunnyside.
- Extensive public realm of pedestrianised streets and spaces.
- Mowbray Park, a high-quality and well maintained Victorian park.
- Bishopwearmouth village green and surrounding historic street pattern.

4.222 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape protection** of the city centre built environment, including historic buildings, public realm, parks and views both within and outside of the conservation areas. Recognise the detailed variation in local character within this area, and ensure new development proposals contribute to local character. Continue to identify opportunities for enhanced public realm and introduction of green spaces into the city centre. Protect the setting of the city centre in relation to adjacent areas, in particular the Wear Gorge to the north where the twin bridges are such an important part of the arrival into Sunderland. Seek to enhance connectivity where dual carriageways are a barrier to pedestrian and cycle movement.

#### 9b Millfield and Pallion

4.223 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.

- The main concentration of Sunderland Cottages, a unique building type to this area.

- Intact pattern of terraced rows and back lanes.
- Limited open space emphasises the value placed on areas which are available.

4.224 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards a high-quality, high-density urban neighbourhood, where the few open spaces are well designed and maintained, and are accessible to all. Green links around this area will be enhanced, particularly connections to the riverside and the city centre. Public realm improvements will enhance key local centres including shopping streets and landmark Victorian and Edwardian buildings. Redevelopment in this area will provide opportunities to introduce further open space. The importance of the Sunderland Cottages and their distinctive streetscape will be recognised.

#### *9c Ashbrooke, Hillview and Grangetown*

4.225 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.

- Distinctive Victorian terraces, villas and churches set in mature leafy grounds.
- High quality open spaces including wooded parks.
- Changes in settlement pattern depict the growth of Sunderland through the last 150 years.

4.226 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards high-quality city centre and suburban neighbourhoods, with good access to open spaces. Green networks will extend inwards from the Tunstall Hills (LCT 8), joining up enhanced public spaces and green corridors. The introduction of street trees where appropriate will enhance the appearance and biodiversity of the suburban streets. This will be combined with **landscape protection** of the existing green spaces at Barnes Park and Backhouse Park, and the adjacent leafy townscape where street trees are such a strongly contributing factor. Links will be developed to ensure these parks form part of connected habitat networks and are accessible to people across the wider area.

#### *9d East End and Hendon*

4.227 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.

- Landmark historic buildings and other features, including walls, in the East End of Sunderland.
- Significant views of the river and estuary.
- Remnant part of the Town Moor commons.
- Distinctive Sunderland Cottages, with varied detailing in this area.

4.228 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards high-quality, high-density urban neighbourhoods, with a coherent character and good links to the city centre. Underused land in the East End will be brought back into use, and new development will provide additional connections to the river and to the sea where appropriate. The landmark historic buildings, as well as more prosaic features such as traditional walls and cobblestones, will be recognised and protected. New and enhanced green links will be promoted from the river and sea through the East End to Hendon, with better connections across the busy main roads which surround the city centre. Green spaces and public realm through the Hendon area will be enhanced and augmented as part of any new development in this area. The importance of the Sunderland Cottages and their distinctive streetscape will be recognised.

#### *9e Southwick, Fulwell, Monkwearmouth and Roker*

4.229 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.

- Roker Park, a high quality Victorian public park.
- Seafront terraces have an important relationship with the promenade (LCT11).
- Remnant historical features including Fulwell Windmill and Southwick village green.
- Distinctive Sunderland Cottages.
- Historical association with riverside industries.

4.230 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards a series of high-quality urban neighbourhoods, with good links to the coast, the river and the surrounding countryside. Green infrastructure will be developed through the area to link existing good quality open spaces and the coast, with Carley Hill (LCT 8) and the River Wear (LCT 10). Other open spaces through the area will be enhanced through better management and the removal of clutter such as fences. Public realm improvements will enhance the appearance of local centres such as Sea Road. Underused land will be brought back into positive use.

#### *9f Hylton Castle, Downhill and Castletown*

4.231 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.

- Wooded Hylton Dene with extensive network of paths.
- Boldon Downhill summit and grassland at Downhill of nature conservation value.
- Landmark Hylton Castle adds time depth to this otherwise modern suburban landscape.
- Long views southward from elevated areas in the north.

4.232 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards a series of quality suburban neighbourhoods with good access to open space, and links to the river and to the countryside. New developments in the area will follow the good example set in recent renewal around Faber Road, where new housing is set within green corridors and space is allowed for trees. The replacement of lost street trees will improve the appearance of wider streets. More benefits will be derived from the open space at Hylton Dene, an important biodiversity reservoir in the city, by better linkages into a wider access and habitat network. Most importantly, enhanced links to the River Wear will be developed to overcome the barrier of the A1231 at Hylton Dene. Underused land, including the Downhill Sports Centre, will be brought back into positive use, sympathetically designed to support views and natural grasslands associated with Boldon Downhill Summit.

#### *9g South Hylton, Pennywell and Ford*

4.233 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.

- Relationship of South Hylton with the Wear, Ford Quarry and other open space on the riverside.
- Surviving older buildings in South Hylton.
- South Hylton Pastures SSSI and surrounding farmland.
- Street trees throughout Ford.
- Bishopwearmouth Cemetery provides a major green lung for the area.

- 4.234 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards a series of quality suburban neighbourhoods linked by green infrastructure which provides recreational and biodiversity benefits. The significant open spaces in this area will be enhanced through management to integrate habitats and recreation opportunities, with important links to Claxheugh Rock and the River Wear. Opportunities will be taken to build on and link up green corridors. Redevelopment of housing in this area will follow good practice in place making, designed around green corridors with space allowed for trees. Street trees make a positive contribution to the Ford area and opportunities will be identified to introduce trees along other broad streets in the area.

*9h Thorney Close, Herrington and Grindon*

- 4.235 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.

- Continuous strip of connected open space along Barnes Park.
- Well-maintained amenity open spaces with mature trees.
- Access links to rural landscape to west, and Silksworth open space to south.

- 4.236 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards a series of quality suburban neighbourhoods with strong links to both city centre and countryside. The existing spine of Barnes Park will be enhanced with improved access and the removal of clutter such as unnecessary fences. Management and planting will be designed to promote a wider range of habitats and additional function such as sustainable drainage. This spine will be linked to other green spaces to enable access for all. A positive connection to the open countryside of Hastings Hill (LCT 6) will be sought. Redevelopment of housing in this area will follow good practice in place making, designed around green corridors with space allowed for trees. The replacement or introduction of street trees will bring benefits for the appearance of wider streets in the area.

*9i Silksworth and Tunstall*

- 4.237 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.

- Significant landscape gardens of Doxford House.
- Surviving village cores of Silksworth and Tunstall.
- Good network of green corridors linked to wider green infrastructure.
- Areas of mature woodland and trees.

- 4.238 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards a series of quality neighbourhoods, with good links to a range of open spaces and connected by green corridors. The distinct character of local areas such as the miners' rows in New Silksworth and Tunstall Village Green will be respected as well as that of the conservation area at Silksworth. Redevelopment of housing in this area will follow good practice in place making, designed around green corridors with space allowed for trees. The good provision of open space in and around the area will be enhanced through improved access and management to serve a range of biodiversity and recreation functions, with onward links to Tunstall Hills. New development in the SSGA will be an opportunity to enhance settlement boundaries, and to provide recreational and biodiversity links between the settlement and the countryside to the south.

### 9j Ryhope

4.239 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.

- Intact village core including older buildings around the village green.
- The tower of St Paul's Church is a local landmark.
- Sea views from elevated locations, mainly inland.
- Outstanding Victorian buildings and landscape of Ryhope Pumping Station, with its landmark chimney.

4.240 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** towards a quality residential neighbourhood with connections to the wider landscape and to the city. The character and setting of key buildings, both within and beyond the conservation area, will be respected and new development will be in keeping with this. New development in the SSGA will be an opportunity to enhance settlement boundaries, and to provide recreational and biodiversity links between the settlement and the countryside to the south. Green spaces within Ryhope and Tunstall Bank will be enhanced to provide green links between the area and the Tunstall Hills corridor (LCT 8) to the north.

# LCT 10: Urban Limestone Gorge

## Description

### Location and extents

- 4.241 This LCT occurs where the River Wear cuts through the Magnesian Limestone plateau to reach the coast, passing through the built-up area of Sunderland on its way.

### Key characteristics of the Urban Limestone Gorge

- 4.242 Key characteristics of the Urban Limestone Gorge LCT:
- Steep sided incised river gorge;
  - Exposed Magnesian Limestone geology;
  - Natural river bank gives way to canalised margins towards the river mouth;
  - Mix of old heavy industry and docks, with new land uses introduced by regeneration;
  - Busy communication routes alongside the river;
  - Series of landmark bridges carrying road and rail links;
  - Tidal river with mud banks exposed at low tide.
- 4.243 There is one landscape character area within the Urban Limestone Gorge LCT. This is described below with reference to its valued features.

### 10a River Wear Gorge

- 4.244 This character area includes the River Wear and its largely industrial and commercial context as it passes through the built-up area of Sunderland. The limestone gorge section of the Wear extends from Claxheugh Rock in the west, beyond which is the Incised Lowland Valley (LCT 3), to the river mouth in the east, where the river joins the Sunderland Harbour section of the Limestone Coast (LCT 11).





*Clockwise from top left: prominent Magnesian Limestone cliffs at Claxheugh Rock; view across the river from car park by Claxheugh Rock; views from the Queen Alexandra Bridge looking west; and east.*

- 4.245 The River Wear carves its way through the Magnesian Limestone on its way to the North Sea, creating a deep gorge through the coastal plateau. The steep sides of the gorge are expressed as substantial limestone cliffs in places, with the surrounding plateau up to 25m above river level. The most impressive cliffs are at Claxheugh Rocks, where the exposed Raisby and Ford Formations of the Magnesian Limestone are protected as a geological SSSI. Cliffs are also seen closer to the city centre, where the narrow point of the gorge is spanned by the Wearmouth Bridge. The river itself is tidal throughout this section, and lower-lying sections of river bank have built up from alluvial deposits.

Figure 4.27 Location of the River Wear Gorge



- 4.246 The Wear is the traditional industrial area of the city, associated with the quays and shipbuilding yards on which the city was founded, and which occupied the riverside prior to development of the docks. This area includes St Peter's Church on the north side of the river, one site of the 7<sup>th</sup>-century twin Anglo-Saxon monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow. The church was the nucleus of Monkwearmouth, which formed one of the historical centres from which the city of Sunderland developed. St Peter's Church incorporates parts of the monastery buildings, but little else survives in this area. The Heritage Environment Record identifies historic village cores at Pallion, Monkwearmouth and Old Sunderland. The Old Sunderland Riverside is intact enough to be recognised as a conservation area on the south bank. Monkwearmouth-Jarrow was the subject of an application for World Heritage Site status in 2011.
- 4.247 Large-scale coal mining was carried on by the riverside at the Monkwearmouth Colliery from 1835 until 1993 when this was the last operating mine in the County Durham coalfield. Wharves and quays, many now disused, line much of the riverside, and one shipyard remains at Pallion. The industrial character of much of the riverside remains, with areas of derelict land. Industrial and commercial land uses extend beyond the gorge in the Pallion and Hylton areas. The bridges over the gorge are key landmarks: the twin arched bridges at Wearmouth; and the Queen Alexandra Bridge further west.
- 4.248 Regeneration has introduced new land uses along the riverside, including a university campus, numerous business parks, and the Stadium of Light on the site of Monkwearmouth Colliery. Some modern residential redevelopment has taken place towards the river mouth, with new houses and flats built on former ship building yards on the north bank. Riverside access is good downstream of Deptford, particularly on the north side and at the Riverside Park on the south. High quality restoration of historic buildings has taken place, but there is much scope for improving connections between the river, the city centre and the adjacent neighbourhoods. Further upstream access is poorer, and the river is often difficult to see behind industrial buildings and high walls.

## Guidance and strategy

### Sensitive features for the Urban Limestone Gorge LCT

4.249 The key sensitive features, issues and trends within this landscape are listed below, and guidelines for this area are set out in **Table 4.10**.

- Inaccessible riverside.
- Vacant land and underused/neglected industrial townscape.
- Important heritage of Old Sunderland and Monkwearmouth areas.

**Table 4.10 Guidelines for the Urban Limestone Gorge LCT**

Strengths/ Opportunities/ Challenges	Do	Don't
Lack of access	Continue to work with landowners to extend accessible sections of riverside.  Ensure new development addresses the riverside rather than turns away from it.	Permit erosion of riverside access through inappropriate siting of development, recognising that public access may not be compatible with certain riverside land uses.
Vacant land	Promote reuse of empty sites and encourage interest through enabling improvements where appropriate.	Permit neglect to spread across large areas of the riverside.
Riverside heritage	Continue to promote the historical importance of the river, ensuring significant architectural or engineering features are retained and interpreted where practicable.	Allow historic connections to be lost through inappropriate or simply bland development.

### Landscape strategy

4.250 For each area within this LCT, an initial assessment of landscape value has been made and an overarching landscape strategy has been assigned. The guidelines in Table 4.1 should be applied in the context of this landscape strategy.

#### *10a River Wear Gorge*

4.251 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.

- The Wear is at the heart of Sunderland's sense of place, as the origin of the city's prosperity.
- The dramatic Wear gorge close to the city centre, and the landmark bridges that cross it.
- Heritage of the Monkwearmouth area and the setting of the former monastery.
- Dramatic and geologically important cliffs at Claxheugh.
- Riverside walkways and views along the river, and their proximity to the city centre.
- Landmark bridges and more recent riverside buildings.

4.252 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape protection** of the significant features of the Wear gorge, including Claxheugh Rock and the area immediately north of the city centre and East End. The latter area, between Galley's Gill and the Harbour, is iconic of Sunderland and provides the setting for a number of recent high-quality redevelopment projects. Continuation of this programme of positive intervention will link the gorge with the city centre and the East End, and will further enhance the experience of the riverside. Links between the river and the monastery church of St Peter's will build on the tourist potential of the river. Claxheugh Rock and associated open space and woodland is similarly important for local recreation, with high biodiversity and geodiversity value and links to residential areas.

This will be combined with **landscape enhancement** of remaining areas of riverside, to improve access and to promote the river as a recreation and biodiversity corridor. Underused and vacant land will be identified and targeted for reuse. Green infrastructure will be a requirement of new development and will provide opportunities to link pockets of existing open space and woodland. Further restoration of remaining industrial heritage will be encouraged.

# LCT 11 Limestone Coast

## Description

### Location and extents

- 4.253 This LCT occurs along the North Sea coast of Sunderland, from the northern Council boundary at South Bents to the southern boundary at Ryhope Dene. This LCT includes the foreshore, coastal strip and the developed seascape of Sunderland Harbour.

### Key characteristics of the Limestone Coast

- 4.254 Key characteristics of the Limestone Coast LCT:
- Narrow coastal landscape facing the North Sea;
  - Sand and shingle beaches with extensive areas of rocky foreshore;
  - Low, eroded clay cliffs;
  - Coastal development including the extensive harbour works at the mouth of the Wear, and leisure development further north; and
  - Coastal grassland hinterland in undeveloped areas.
- 4.255 The Limestone Coast LCT has been subdivided into three character areas. These are described below.

### 11a North Sunderland Coast

- 4.256 This character area covers a thin stretch of coast running from South Bents at the northern Council boundary, to Roker Pier at Sunderland Harbour. It continues northward into the coast of South Tyneside.



*Clockwise from top left: new housing at Marine Walk; promenade at Marine Walk; above Roker Cliffs; buildings face the sea at Roker seafront.*

4.257 The foreshore of this stretch of coast forms a sandy beach stretching from Whitburn in South Tyneside, south to Sunderland Harbour. The sand is interrupted only by the wave-cut platform at Parsons Rocks, and by further exposed rock at its northern end. The hinterland in this area is low lying, rising to no more than 15m above sea level, with shallow cliffs at Roker. The Magnesian Limestone 'cannonball rock' is found at Roker Cliffs.

**Figure 4.28 Location of North Sunderland Coast**



- 4.258 The A183 follows this stretch of coast, immediately above the high-tide mark. The hinterland is developed, including the settlements of Seaburn, Roker and South Bents (character area 9e). The sandy beach has made Roker a popular seaside resort since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and the seafront here has a formal promenade along the elevated A183, with leisure services at beach level. The lower promenade is linked to Roker Park via a bridge under the A183.
- 4.259 Further north the coastal edge is given over to amenity grassland, with large leisure and retail developments inland at Seaburn. Coastal infrastructure includes the 850m-long Roker Pier with its own lighthouse, and a smaller lighthouse further north. The remains of 18<sup>th</sup>-century gun emplacements can be seen along the cliff top. At the northern end of this area is Whitburn Bents, a historic fishing hamlet, now also a Conservation Area.
- 4.260 Roker Cliffs & Parson's Rocks is a local geological site, and the foreshore is within the Durham Coast SSSI, which overlaps with SPA, SAC and Ramsar designations. Roker Park Conservation Area extends east as far as the high-tide line, taking in a stretch of the seafront. The built-up promenade and busy roads create a distinctly urban resort character to this stretch of the Sunderland coast.

### **11b Sunderland Harbour and Docks**

- 4.261 This character area includes the Sunderland harbour and docks at the mouth of the Wear, from Roker Pier in the north to Hendon Beach in the south. It includes the extensive disused railway sidings, industrial areas and derelict land between the coast and the A1018 Commercial Road.
- 4.262 This area comprises the essentially man-made seascape of piers, docks and harbours which have been developed at the mouth of the River Wear since the earliest settlements in the area. Large-scale remodelling of the river mouth began with the 1717 establishment of the River Wear Commissioners who initiated the construction of the old north and south piers, and undertook dredging. The docks were added in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the outer harbour was created between 1885 and 1903.

Figure 4.29 Location of Sunderland Harbour and Docks



- 4.263 The Port of Sunderland now controls the docks, and these areas are not accessible. They include the large Hudson Dock, smaller Hendon Dock and surrounding quays and storage areas. A number of 19<sup>th</sup>-century features remain in this working area, although some are in poor condition or are isolated amongst modern utilitarian structures. To the south of the docks are a sewage works and an oil depot, extending the inaccessible developed coastline.
- 4.264 Along the inland side of the docks is a large area of disused railway sidings, formerly providing direct access to cargo ships. The remaining railway line runs along the coast to the south, but much of this area is now scrubland, its ecological value recognised in Local Wildlife Site status. Inland from the sidings, this character area includes the industrial townscape east of the A1018, including commercial premises and derelict land. Although not especially coastal, this area continues the utilitarian and relatively inaccessible character of the docks.
- 4.265 North of the Wear, the area within the harbour has been regenerated. The site of the North Dock shipbuilding yards is now a marina, surrounded by modern housing and leisure developments.





*Clockwise from top left: the mouth of the Wear; Sunderland Docks; blocked access under the railway; vacant land.*

### 11c South Sunderland Coast

- 4.266 This character area includes the generally undeveloped coastal strip which runs from Hendon Beach at the south end of the docks, to the Council boundary at Ryhope Dene in the south. It includes areas of coastal grassland between the shore and the railway line.
- 4.267 South of the docks, the coastal strip is largely undeveloped. The foreshore comprises sand and shingle beaches with extensive wave-cut platforms. This is backed by low cliffs which rise gradually to the south to around 25m above sea level. The Magnesian Limestone is exposed in these cliffs, topped by thick layers of clay. The cliffs are heavily eroded in places, resulting in shallow caves, natural arches and sea stacks at Pincushion. In areas with less limestone and more clay, the cliffs are eroding at rates of up to 80cm per year.
- 4.268 The hinterland in this area comprises coastal grasslands without trees, and arable fields over the wider section to the south. At Hendon Beach in the north, a promenade and car park have been installed, with recent footpath works along the embankment, adjacent to the dock railway line. The railway line and the recently realigned A1018 form a barrier to accessing the coast, though there are several rights of way through the coastal dunes. These area linked by the recently developed coastal footpath which continues south along the Durham Coast.

Figure 4.30 Location of South Sunderland Coast



- 4.269 The docks to the north, Hendon Cliff waste site, and industrial works inland affect the character of Hendon Beach, but further south these influences are left behind. This more natural seascape has an isolated peaceful quality that contrasts with the nearby urban development. Panoramic views along the coast and out to sea, combined with the lack of trees, give an open exposed character.
- 4.270 South of Hendon Beach, this coast is part of the Durham Coast SSSI, which overlaps with SPA, SAC and Ramsar designations. Local wildlife sites Hendon Cliffs, Halliwell Banks, Ryhope Denemouth and the Hendon Railway. The whole coast is also identified as a local geodiversity site, and south of Salterfen it is managed as part of the Durham Heritage Coast.



*Clockwise from top left: eroding clay cliffs; coastal grasslands; coastal view at Ryhope Nook; car park at Hendon Beach.*

## Guidance and strategy

### Sensitive features for the Limestone Coast LCT

- 4.271 The key sensitive features, issues and trends within this landscape are listed below, and guidelines for this area are set out in **Table 4.11**.
- Popular beaches of Roker with historic sea front.
  - Inaccessible docks, with potential lack of maintenance of historic features.
  - Pressure for further large scale industrial and commercial developments.
  - Emerging habitats along railway sidings area.
  - Erosion of cliffs to south of Hendon.
  - High habitat value of south coast recognised in international designations.

**Table 4.11 Guidelines for the Urban Limestone Gorge LCT**

Strengths/ Opportunities/ Challenges	Do	Don't
Popular beaches	Continue to promote Roker as a destination, ensuring high quality sea front is maintained.  Seek long term re-use or redevelopment of underused buildings and spaces, aiming to upgrade architectural quality where appropriate.	Allow large-scale developments which would obstruct coastal access or interfere with the relationships between seafront buildings, promenade and beach.
Inaccessible docks	Recognising safety factors, work with port authority to ensure long term retention of historic features and character of dockside buildings.	Allow comprehensive redevelopment of dockside areas without understanding the impact of any changes.
Railway sidings	Seek a long term use for this area which can preserve its valued habitats, while potentially providing access and coastal links for neighbouring residential areas.	Permit loss of this area through wholesale redevelopment or through simple neglect.
Erosion of cliffs	Monitor coastal erosion in the long term to gain an understanding of processes and potential responses.	Allow unchecked erosion to result in damage to access, biodiversity or other services.
International designations	Continue to recognise the importance of the coastal habitats at a national and international level.	Permit development or land use change which could directly or indirectly affect the coast.

### Landscape strategy

4.272 For each area within this LCT, an initial assessment of landscape value has been made and an overarching landscape strategy has been assigned. The guidelines in Table 4.1 should be applied in the context of this landscape strategy.

#### *11a North Sunderland Coast*

4.273 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.

- Open seafront promenade and formal open space.
- Historic resort seafront including buildings along the promenade, terraces and paths.
- Magnesian Limestone coastal cliffs.
- Broad sandy beaches popular with locals and visitors.

4.274 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape protection** of the high-quality seafront, which is well used by residents and popular with visitors. Upgrades of the seafront and promenade areas have already been undertaken, and a similarly high standard of design and implementation should be applied to other projects. The more undeveloped nature of the coastline further north should be retained, to protect coastal processes and shoreline habitats, and to provide contrast with the landmark harbour wall to the south. Good links inland to Roker Park and the River Wear will be retained and built upon to improve access and the experience of the seafront and harbour area.

#### *11b Sunderland Harbour and Docks*

- 4.275 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.
- Landmark dock features of 19<sup>th</sup>-century engineering.
  - Regenerated marina area of North Dock.
  - Valued habitats of grassland and regenerating scrub emerging along the railway sidings.
- 4.276 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape enhancement** of this industrial area so that it contributes positively to the setting and character of Sunderland. While much of this area is a working dock with no public access, retention and restoration of period features will enhance the area. Positive re-use and repair of vacant and underused land, both within the port and in the adjacent industrial estates, will similarly contribute to the coastal edge of Sunderland. Recognition is already given to the high biodiversity value of some vacant land, e.g. the railway sidings, though again positive management can enhance these locations. Where possible and appropriate, new or improved links should be developed to connect residential areas in the East End and Hendon with the coastline.

#### *11c South Sunderland Coast*

- 4.277 The key aspects and features of this area which contribute to landscape value are set out below.
- Open coastal landscape, with continuous access along the cliffs.
  - Attractive coastal landforms.
  - High biodiversity and geodiversity values.
  - Southward links to the Durham Coast.
- 4.278 Based on an assessment of the landscape of this area against the landscape value criteria set out in **Appendix 1**, the overarching strategy for this area is set out below.

**Landscape protection** of the undeveloped coastline, which is of international importance for biodiversity, particularly bird life. Positive management of the coastal grasslands will be sought to bolster this value. Retention of the open nature of the coast will also protect the attractive scenery and high geodiversity value of the cliffs. Existing access, including the coastal footpath and car parking at Hendon, will be maintained and upgraded where this does not conflict with the protection of coastal landscape and biodiversity.

## 5 References

- Archaeo-Environment Ltd (2009) Limestone Landscapes Historic Environment Audit and Action Plan. Limestone Landscapes Partnership.
- Durham County Council (2008) County Durham Landscape Character Assessment.
- Great North Forest (2003) Great North Forest Plan.
- Limestone Landscapes Partnership (2010) Limestone Landscapes Landscape Conservation Action Plan.
- LUC (2012) South Tyneside Landscape Character Study. South Tyneside Council.
- Natural England (2013) National Character Area Profile 14: Tyne and Wear Lowlands.
- Natural England (2013) National Character Area Profile 15: Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau.
- Sunderland City Council (2008) Sunderland Central Area Urban Design Strategy.
- Sunderland City Council (2009) Draft Sunderland Landscape Character Assessment.
- Sunderland City Council (2012) Sunderland Greenspace Audit and Report.
- Sunderland City Council (2013) Draft Settlement Break Review.
- White Young Green (2007) Landscape Character Assessment for Gateshead Council. Gateshead City Council.

The Sunderland Local Plan has been a key reference, comprising the Core Strategy and a number of supporting documents, particularly the four Sub Area Papers and the detailed Topic Papers.

# Appendix 1

## Method Statement

## Approach and guidance

The approach to the study follows the guidance provided in the following documents:

- Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment.
- Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Routledge.
- Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002) Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland.
- Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002) Topic Paper 6: Techniques and criteria for judging landscape sensitivity and capacity.

Due to the small size and dense nature of the Sunderland landscape, the character assessment was undertaken at a scale of 1:25,000 in rural areas, and 1:10,000 in urban areas. Public consultation was not within the scope of LUC's commission.

## National planning policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>7</sup> states that development plans should "*contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment*" by, among other things "*protecting and enhancing valued landscapes*" (paragraph 109). "*Conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, including landscape*", is one of the strategic priorities to be set out in Local Plans (paragraph 156).

Landscape character assessment is seen as a key part of the evidence base for Local Plan preparation, including consideration of historic landscape character and, where appropriate, assessments of landscape sensitivity (paragraph 170).

The NPPF recommends the use of "*criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged*" (paragraph 113). Particular reference is made to coastal landscapes, recommending that authorities should "*maintain the character of the undeveloped coast, protecting and enhancing its distinctive landscapes, particularly in areas defined as Heritage Coast*" (paragraph 114).

The NPPF does not specifically recommend that planning authorities should, or should not, designate landscapes at a local level. It is stated that Local Plans should "*identify land where development would be inappropriate, for instance because of its environmental or historic significance*" (paragraph 157). The need for detailed justification is a theme throughout the NPPF.

The associated online Planning Practice Guidance on landscape<sup>8</sup> highlights the need for local authorities to recognise the intrinsic character of the landscape, and set out policies for its conservation and enhancement. The guidance also reiterates the importance of coastal landscapes and Heritage Coasts, noted in the NPPF.

The Sunderland Landscape Character Assessment contributes to the aims of national planning policy by:

- Providing reliable evidence of the intrinsic character of the landscape, including its historical aspects;
- Highlighting the features of the landscape, including those of the Heritage Coast, which are valued and are worthy of conservation or enhancement;

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<sup>7</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government (2012) National Planning Policy Framework.

<sup>8</sup> Planning Practice Guidance: Natural Environment: Landscape. [<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/natural-environment/landscape/>] accessed 29 April 2014.



- Highlighting aspects of the landscape which are sensitive to changes in the landscape; and
- Providing justification for the selection of areas which could be protected for their landscape significance.

## Landscape character assessment process

The landscape characterisation included the following stages:

- desk study of maps, existing landscape character assessments and other available information;
- overlaying of layers of mapped data using GIS;
- identification of draft typology and local character areas;
- testing of this through field work;
- discussion to enable input from the client group;
- further site work to develop urban characterisation; and
- updating and finalising the draft characterisation.

The characterisation is based around the definition of generic landscape character types, and discrete local character areas, which are defined as follows:

- **landscape character types** (LCT) are generic in nature in that they may occur in more than one place, but the locations where they occur share broadly similar characteristics;
- **landscape character areas** (LCA) are single unique areas that are the geographically specific examples of a landscape character type.

The level at which both types and areas are defined reflects the scale at which the assessment was carried out, and it is recognised that more detailed assessment could be undertaken in future to give a finer-grained picture of local character.

## Existing landscape characterisation

Landscape character baseline information which has been reviewed to inform the landscape classification includes:

- Natural England National Character Area Profiles (2013);
- Sunderland City Council Landscape Character Assessment (draft 2009);
- County Durham Landscape Character Assessment (2008).
- Limestone Landscapes Character Framework (2010);
- South Tyneside Landscape Character Study;
- Landscape Character Assessment for Gateshead Council; and

### National Character Areas

The landscape of the North East Region was described and analysed in Volume I of the Countryside Character of England, first published by the Countryside Commission in 1996. This identified two national character areas (NCA) within Sunderland: the *Tyne and Wear Lowlands* to the west; and the *Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau* to the east. The background on these NCAs has been updated in the recent series of National Character Area Profiles published by Natural England, which provide detailed descriptions, key characteristics and statements of environmental opportunity for each.

Supporting documents on background data, landscape change and ecosystem services are also included in the profiles.<sup>9,10</sup>

The character descriptions contained in the profiles are briefly summarised below, mainly to highlight the distinction between the two areas, which is an important aspect of the Sunderland landscape.

### *Tyne and Wear Lowlands*

The lowlands are described as “an area of gently undulating or rolling land, incised by the valleys of the major rivers and their tributaries. It is densely populated and heavily influenced by urban settlement, industry and infrastructure.” The influence of the Coal Measures, and the legacy of coal extraction, is noted as being evident despite recent restoration work. The extent of settlement fringe is noted, resulting in “semi-natural habitats became fragmented. Sparse, lowland mixed deciduous woodland is the largest semi-natural habitat, sometimes strongly contributing to sense of place, such as the steep-sided, wooded river valley of the Wear in Durham.”

### *Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau*

This area is described as an “*open, agricultural landscape with sharply defined boundaries in the form of a steep limestone escarpment to the west and a dramatic coast of limestone cliffs, headlands and bays to the east. The River Wear cuts across the north of the area, flowing into the sea at Sunderland*”. Rural areas comprise “*arable land and grazing pasture, with small, isolated areas of wildlife-rich habitat such as Magnesian Limestone grassland and ancient woodland in the narrow valleys (or denes) running down to the coast*”, while settlement includes “*larger urban areas such as Sunderland to the north and ex-mining towns with their distinctive terraces to the south and east, to scattered traditional stone villages built around village greens on the plateau and ‘New Towns’*.” The scale of recent and ongoing landscape restoration is noted, improving water quality and removing colliery waste from the coast.

## **Draft Sunderland Landscape Character Assessment**

A draft landscape character assessment of Sunderland was published in 2009, but was never formally finalised. The characterisation identified and described 17 LCAs within Sunderland. These excluded built-up areas, and were not grouped into LCTs. A number of open spaces and green corridors within the urban areas, such as Hylton Dene and Barnes Park, were picked out as discrete character areas.

For each character area, a list of key characteristics was presented, followed by a brief overview of ‘issues and trends’. It is recognised by the Council that, while the descriptive material is not fully developed, the underlying classification is appropriate in terms of the extent and coverage of the character areas. Having been developed by the Council, the classification is based on detailed local knowledge of the area and is likely to be a reliable basis for classifying the landscape.

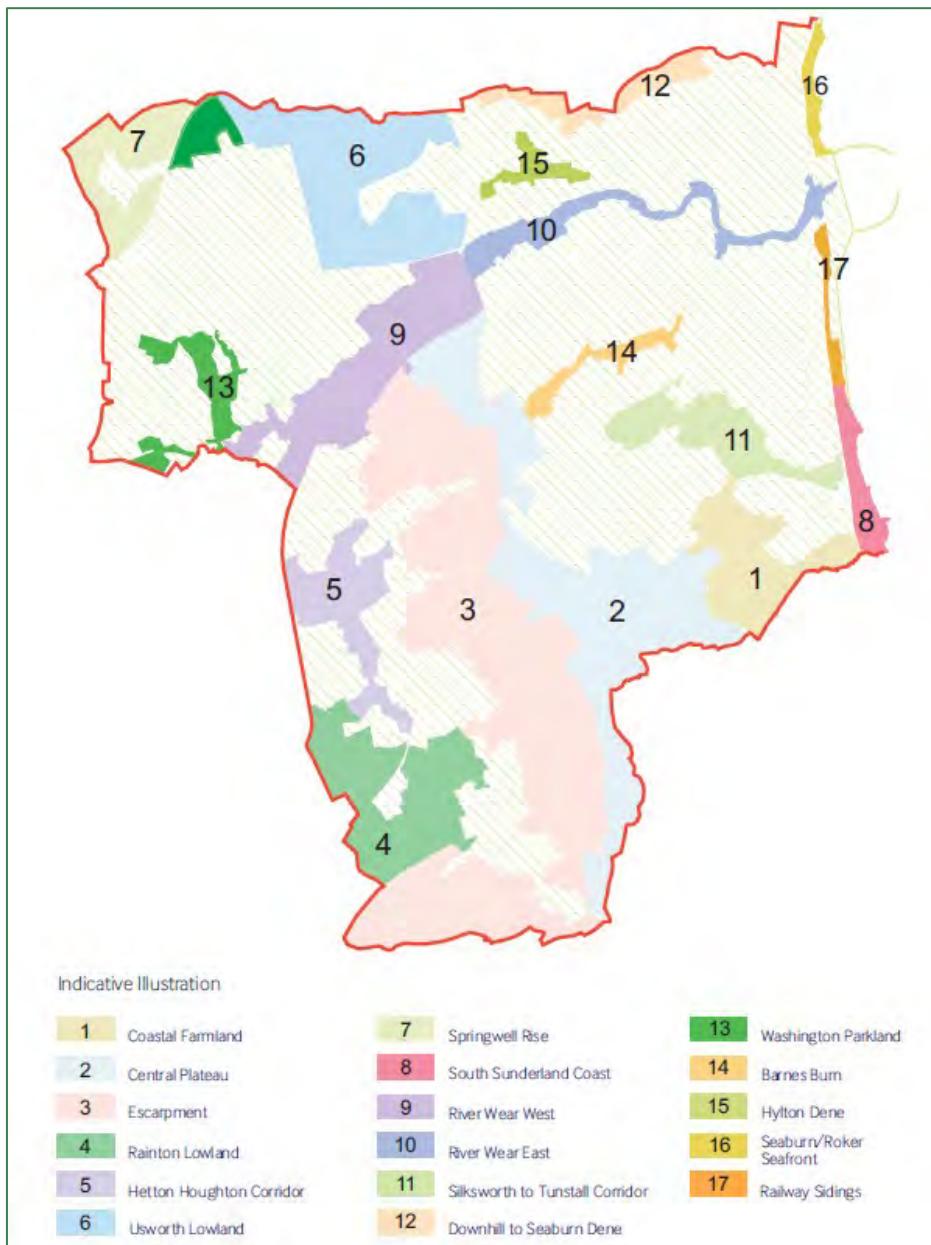
The 17 character areas are shown in **Figure A1**, which is taken from the 2009 document.

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<sup>9</sup> Natural England (2013) *National Character Area Profile 14. Tyne and Wear Lowlands*.

<sup>10</sup> Natural England (2013) *National Character Area Profile 15. Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau*.

Figure A1 Draft Sunderland character areas (2009)



### Limestone Landscapes Character Framework

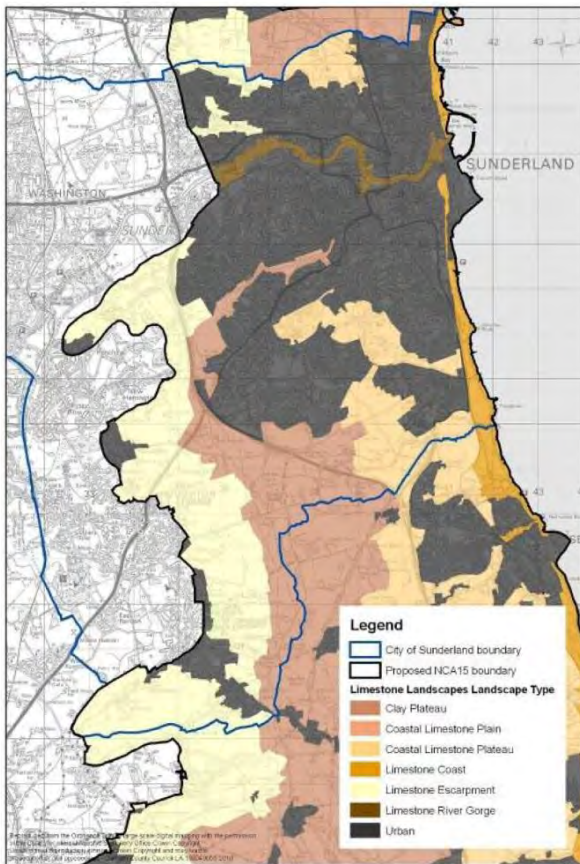
The Limestone Landscapes partnership commissioned a landscape character framework for the partnership area, which covers the Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau NCA (see above). The partnership area covers the eastern part of Sunderland and extends into South Tyneside, but is mainly within County Durham. As such, the framework follows the classification developed for the County Durham Landscape Character Assessment.

The framework defines five LCTs which occur within Sunderland. These are listed below and shown in **Figure A2**, which is taken from Figure 13 of the framework document.

- Clay Plateau;
- Coastal Limestone Plateau;
- Limestone Coast;
- Limestone Escarpment; and

- Limestone River Gorge.

**Figure A2 Limestone Landscapes LCTs in Sunderland**



### Durham Landscape Assessment

The typology developed for the Limestone Landscapes corresponds to that of the Durham Broad Landscape Types, but includes the additional *Limestone River Gorge* LCT which does not occur in County Durham.

A further extension of the Durham landscape typology was undertaken for the remaining part of Sunderland, though this has not been published. The characterisation includes the five limestone LCTs listed above, but adds a further three LCTs, listed below.

- Incised Lowland valley;
- Lowland river terraces; and
- Coalfield ridge.

This characterisation is shown in **Figure A3**, which was supplied to LUC by Sunderland Council. Of the eight LCTs listed, six are described in the Durham Landscape Assessment, although *Coalfield Ridge* and *Limestone River Gorge* are not. These classifications exclude built up areas, and do not define any LCAs. Description and key characteristics for the *Limestone River Gorge* appear in the Limestone Landscapes framework, though no description is available for the Coalfield Ridge LCT.

### South Tyneside Landscape Study

This document was published in 2012, and identifies 35 distinct LCAs across the urban and rural areas of South Tyneside. These are grouped into three broad types: coastal; urban; and urban fringe, and are shown in Figure A4. It can be seen that all the areas adjacent to Sunderland are classed as urban fringe, and note has been taken of where these extend across the Council boundary.

Figure A3 Durham broad landscape types applied in Sunderland

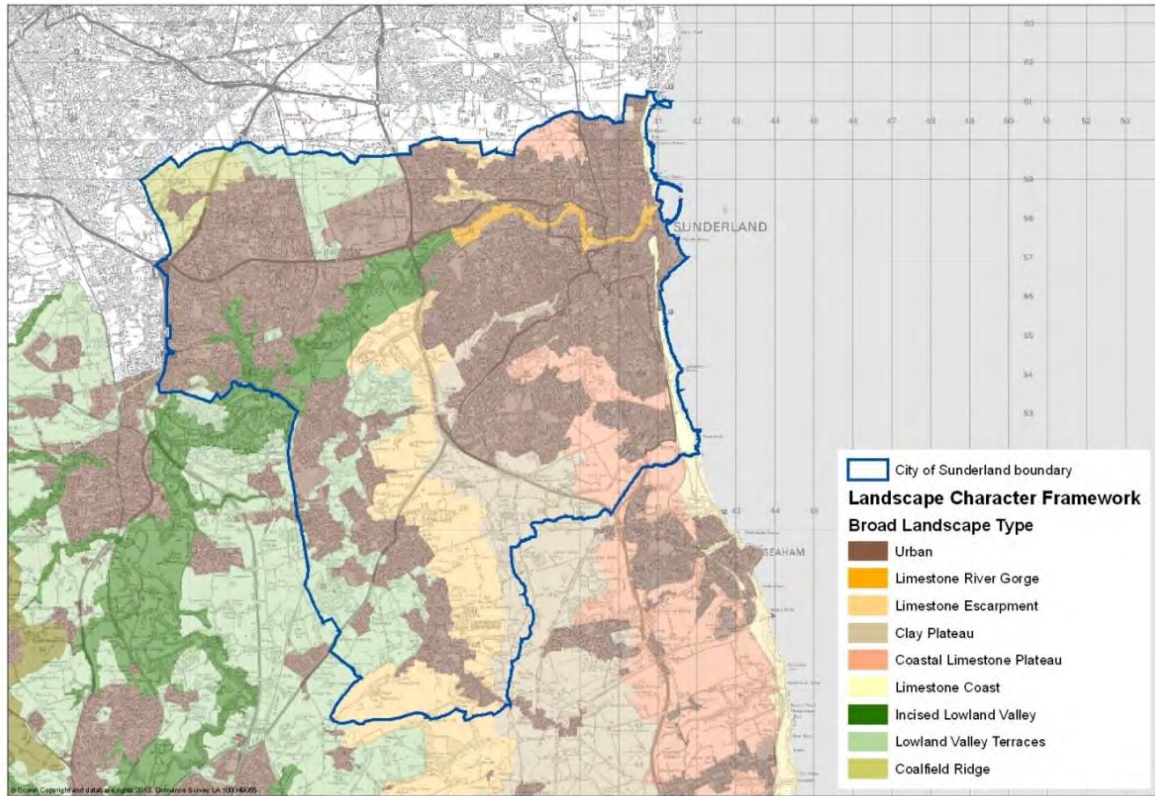
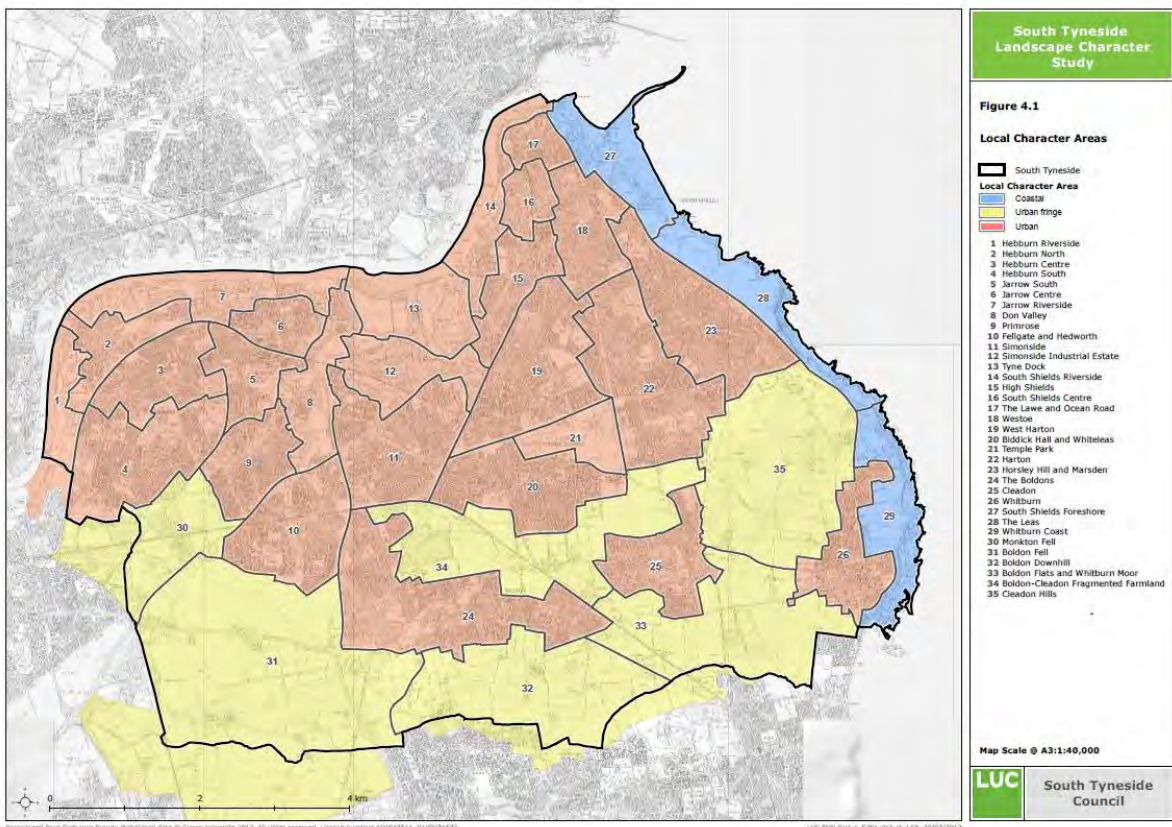


Figure A4 South Tyneside Landscape Character Study



In preparing the Sunderland LCA, LUC drew on the material reviewed above, and this has informed but not determined the resulting characterisation. In particular, the need to consider the built-up area required a fresh look at the overall classification of landscape. However, by taking note of previous work we have developed a characterisation which meets the needs of Sunderland Council, while ensuring a reasonable degree of cross-boundary consistency in both South Tyneside and County Durham.

## Other documents

A number of other key documents which have informed the development of the LCA are briefly discussed below.

### Great North Forest Plan

A character assessment was undertaken to inform the 2003 Great North Forest Plan. This identified 'local management zones' across the forest area, of which several lie within Sunderland. For each zone, the Plan gives a brief description and a short statement on landscape management strategy. Each is assigned to one of four overall management aims which are intended to guide the scale, direction and form of landscape change appropriate in each zone:

- **Conservation** of existing character;
- **Restoration** to rebuild degraded character;
- **Enhancement** to develop character through positive intervention; and
- **Reconstruction** of new landscape character through substantial landscape change.

Although the Great North Forest has been wound up as an enterprise, these strategies remain as statements of intent for the area, and have informed the development of guidance and strategy for the Sunderland LCA.

### Historic Landscape Characterisation

A Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) of Tyne and Wear was carried out by the McCord Centre at Newcastle University.<sup>11</sup> This document, and the accompanying GIS database, presents a detailed characterisation of the historic and archaeological dimension of the present rural and urban landscape. It identifies a fine grain of characterisation, classifying urban and rural areas according to past and present land use, including consideration of building types and ages. The study was undertaken by comparing and analysing historic maps.

The HLC database can be interrogated to identify the periods and types of residential development in Sunderland. Combined with observations on the settlement pattern and grain, this background information has been particularly useful in determining character area boundaries within the built up areas. The HLC has been carried out at a much more detailed level than the LCA, identifying individual building plots in some cases. For example, it clearly identifies all remaining rows of Sunderland Cottages, and the approximate dates of their construction. The HLC therefore remains as a more detailed resource underlying the LCA.

### Settlement breaks and green infrastructure

There is no existing assessment of the townscape character of the urban areas within Sunderland, however both the Sunderland Settlement Break Review (2013) and the Green Infrastructure Audit and Report (2012) provide some background information on developed areas within the study area and the greenspace within and surrounding them.

The key purpose of the Settlement Break review was to consider:

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<sup>11</sup> Collins, S. et al. (2014) *Tyne and Wear Historic Landscape Characterisation Final Report*. English Heritage Project Number 4663. McCord Centre Report 2014.1

- Whether the Settlement Breaks still have a role
- What justification there is for the retention of each Settlement Break
- What contribution each Settlement Break has made in terms of providing Green Infrastructure
- Whether any parcels of land within each of the Settlement Breaks could be released to provide opportunities for sustainable development.

The review looks at eight parcels of land across the study area and for each provides a brief history and description of the neighbouring areas of development, an appraisal of the area in terms of how it functions (or not as a greenspaces), its ecological value and any potential constraints to development.

The Sunderland Green Infrastructure Audit and Report divides the area up into 5 Area Regeneration Frameworks (ARF), and these are sub-divided into 65 “locally identified neighbourhoods” or “City Villages”. The report provides details of the provision of greenspace and associated facilities within each of the ARFs and the quantity and quality of the greenspaces in each City Village.

## Developing the landscape classification

### Rural areas

Because of the importance of cross-boundary consistency, detailed consideration was given to the alignment of the new classification for Sunderland with the existing landscape classifications in neighbouring areas. Of particular importance is the continuous character of the Magnesian Limestone Plateau which extends north and south beyond Sunderland. This area provides much of the landscape interest in Sunderland, having visual prominence and cultural associations as well as uniquely important biodiversity and geodiversity value.

As such, it was decided that the limestone landscape typology would be adopted for these areas. In doing so, it was agreed with the steering group that adoption of the typology devised by Durham County Council would also be appropriate. While changes to boundaries were made, this collection of eight LCTs has been used as the basis for the City of Sunderland LCA.

### Urban areas

None of the earlier work has attempted to classify the urban landscapes of Sunderland. Following discussion with the steering group, it was agreed that the distinction between urban and rural areas should be maintained, and that new LCTs would be devised to cover the urban areas. Three LCTs were subsequently defined to cover the three main types of settlement in Sunderland: the city itself and its suburbs; the coal-mining villages to the south-west; and the new town of Washington.

## Landscape guidance, value and strategy

The guidance and strategy have been developed for each area based on the characteristics of the LCT and the specific features of each character area. They are intended to be used to guide planning and management decisions in order to achieve protection of important features and enhancement of others, so that all areas can become high-quality multifunctional landscapes.

The overarching landscape strategy is based on an evaluation of landscape value, with reference to the criteria presented in GLVIA3. These criteria are presented as “factors which can help in the identification of valued landscapes”, and are reproduced below. Each character area has been considered against these factors, and those character areas which exhibit most of all of them have been identified for landscape protection.

- **Landscape quality (condition):** A measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements.

- **Scenic quality:** The term used to describe landscapes that appeal primarily to the senses (primarily but not wholly the visual senses).
- **Rarity:** The presence of rare elements or features in the landscape or the presence of a rare LCT.
- **Representativeness:** Whether the landscape contains a particular character and/or features or elements which are considered particularly important examples.
- **Conservation interests:** The presence of features of wildlife, earth science or archaeological or historical and cultural interest can add to the value of the landscape as well as having value in their own right.
- **Recreation value:** Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important.
- **Perceptual aspects:** A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities, notably wildness and/or tranquillity.

Some character areas contain highly valued features as well as areas requiring enhancement. In these cases landscape protection and landscape enhancement will guide the strategies for different parts of the area. These subdivisions have not been mapped but are identified in the landscape strategy text.