

APPENDIX 2 LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT

The sensitivity of the landscape character receptors which may receive significant landscape effects are assessed below. Landscape sensitivity is not absolute and can only be defined in relation to each development and its location. To assess the sensitivity of a particular landscape it is good practice to consider the value attached to the landscape and its susceptibility to the particular form of change likely to result from the proposed development. Assessment text relates to the sensitivity of the landscape receptor as a whole, to the proposed development, with additional comments regarding the Site where relevant. In the main this has been taken from 'A Landscape Strategy for Cheshire West and Chester Borough' (quotes shown in italics) as well as from local sources and site assessment. The table below is based on guidance provided within LI TGN 02/21 - specifically table 1 within that document.

Host Landscape: 9A – Cheshire Plain West - Dunham to Tarvin Plain

Factors affecting sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity to Solar Development	Higher Sensitivity to Solar Development	Explanation	Judgement
Value attached to Landscapes				
Designated scenic quality	No specific designation	National or regional designation	No national or local landscape designations	Community
Natural Heritage	Landscape with little evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contributes positively to the landscape	Landscape with strong evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contributes positively to the landscape	Generally flat, predominantly used for dairy agriculture. Dotted with hundreds of small field ponds which provide an important habitat network but designated ecological sites are limited. One regionally important geological / Geomorphological Site at Dunham-on-the-Hill cutting	Community
Cultural Heritage	Landscape with little evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contributes positively to the landscape	Landscape with strong evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contributes positively to the landscape	Combination of medieval fields and those which have undergone improvement and 20 th century adaption. Roman roads cross the area with a number of ancient settlements and several ancient monuments. Many of the older villages are protected as Conservation Areas	Regional
Landscape condition/ quality	Landscape which is in a poor physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure	Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure	<i>'Generally good, with key characteristic elements that make up the plain generally intact. However, some field boundaries are undermanaged or being removed. Suburban and settlement fringe land use, such as</i>	Regional

Factors affecting sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity to Solar Development	Higher Sensitivity to Solar Development	Explanation	Judgement
			<i>equine related sited serve to erode the pastoral character in places.</i>	
Cultural associations	Landscape which has few recognised connections with notable people, events and the arts	Landscape which has well recognised connections with notable people, events and the arts	Industrial heritage is evident but no specific cultural associations	Community
Distinctiveness	Landscape that has a weak sense of identity or a sense of identity that is appreciated principally by local communities.	Landscape offering many recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important	The landscapes distinctiveness is generally influenced by external factors such as Helsby Hill and the oil refinery that both form distinct landmarks within the wider view. However, the landscape within the character area is not particularly distinct	Community
Amenity and recreation	Limited amenity/recreational function where experience of the landscape is important	Well used for recreation where experience of the landscape is important; or forms part of a view that is important to a recreational experience. May contain National Trails or other long-distance routes.	Extensive PRoW network including parts of Longster Trail and North Cheshire Way. Multiple outdoor adventure, water sports and training activities at Manley Mere education centre	Community
Perceptual (Scenic)	Landscape that has little that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense	Landscape that appeals strongly to the senses, primarily the visual sense	Oil refinery dominates the view to the north but also views out to Helsby Hill and long views to Welsh hills to west. Open flat nature of the character area means that large scale elements are difficult to screen, however, low level elements could be mitigated using native planting	Community
Perceptual (Wildness and Tranquillity)	Landscape with a weak perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies	Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies.	Away from energy and transport infrastructure the plain can be peaceful in nature with some degree of tranquillity possible.	Community
Function	Landscape which does not perform a clearly identifiable and valuable function,	Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly	The rural landscape is primarily used as pastoral farmland but with the wider industrial context of the Mersey estuary is generally apparent throughout the character area, especially to the north. The landscape	Community

Factors affecting sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity to Solar Development	Higher Sensitivity to Solar Development	Explanation	Judgement
	particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape.	in the healthy functioning of the landscape	within the character area provides a gap between adjacent settlements	
Overall Judgement of Value				Community

Susceptibility

Scale	Landscapes where scale of development is similar to or smaller than scale of receiving landscape	Landscapes where scale of development is larger than scale of receiving landscape	The character area forms one element within the larger scale estuarine landscape. Travelling through the character area, this wider landscape is broken down into smaller more enclosed individual fields with the field structure and field edge vegetation limiting onward visibility within the character area	Medium
Landform	Smooth regular flowing, or uniform landscapes	Dramatic and rugged landscapes	Flat open landscape but with a sometimes-irregular field pattern where medieval field structure is intact. Otherwise, a fairly uniform landscape.	Low
Openness/enclosure	Enclosed and sheltered landscapes	Open and exposed landscapes	When within the character area the flat nature of the landscape encloses onward views to low lying elements, however from much of the character area external influences such as the sandstone ridge, Welsh Hills and oil refinery provide a backdrop to views.	Low
Land cover, complexity and patterns	Areas of simple or regular landcover, linear features and patterns or with a mosaic of vegetation cover	Complex, intimate or irregular patterns or with limited vegetation cover	While woodland is relatively sparse within the character area, many of the field boundaries have strong mature vegetation which encloses and filters views across the surrounding farmland. The generally flat nature of the character area also limits the potential vantage points for views from within the character area	Medium

Factors affecting sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity to Solar Development	Higher Sensitivity to Solar Development	Explanation	Judgement
Built Environment	Contemporary masts, pylons, industrial elements, buildings infrastructure, settlements	Established, traditional or historic built character	Much of the historic field structure, small village and country lanes are intact within the character area. However regional infrastructure associated with the estuary such as the M56, wind turbines and oil refinery exert an influence over this more traditional character	Medium
Views intervisibility	Visually contained and have limited inward or outward views	Extensive views within or of the area with distant horizons.	Strong intervisibility with the sandstone ridge to the east but flat and well vegetated nature of the landscape tends to visually contain views within the immediate context	Medium
Landscapes that form settings, skylines, backdrops, focal points	Generally low-lying landscapes without distinctive landform or horizon	Areas with strong features, focal points that define the setting or skyline	Character area provides part of a wider setting to views from the adjacent sandstone ridge but a setting that also contains large infrastructure associated with the estuary. Landscape within the character area is low lying and generally flat	Medium
Overall Judgement of Susceptibility				Medium
Overall Judgement of Sensitivity				Medium / Low

2B – Sandstone Ridge – Helsby Hill

Factors affecting sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity to Solar Development	Higher Sensitivity to Solar Development	Explanation	Judgement
Value attached to Landscapes				
Designated scenic quality	No specific designation	National or regional designation	Locally designated as an Area of Special County Value	Regional
Natural Heritage	Landscape with little evidence of ecological, geological,	Landscape with strong evidence of ecological,	Includes Local Wildlife Sites with woodland, semi-improved grassland and dwarf shrub heath habitats of	Regional

Factors affecting sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity to Solar Development	Higher Sensitivity to Solar Development	Explanation	Judgement
	geomorphological or physiographic interest which contributes positively to the landscape	geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contributes positively to the landscape	nature conservation interest. Many habitats within the LCA are of principal importance	
Cultural Heritage	Landscape with little evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contributes positively to the landscape	Landscape with strong evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contributes positively to the landscape	Late Bronze Age hill fort and Scheduled Monument at Helsby Hil. National Trust owned land that attracts a lot of visitors	Regional
Landscape condition/ quality	Landscape which is in a poor physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure	Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure	The sandstone outcrop at Helsby Hill is managed by the National Trust with some area managed for nature conservation. Some hedgerows are gappy in nature and boundary walls in a declining condition	Regional
Cultural associations	Landscape which has few recognised connections with notable people, events and the arts	Landscape which has well recognised connections with notable people, events and the arts	Limited association with any notable people events or the arts	Community
Distinctiveness	Landscape that has a weak sense of identity or a sense of identity that is appreciated principally by local communities.	Landscape offering many recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important	Helsby Hill is a prominent land mark in the surrounding estuarine environment. The rugged sandstone cliffs contrast with the surrounding largely flat landscape	Regional
Amenity and recreation	Limited amenity/recreational function where experience of the landscape is important	Well used for recreation where experience of the landscape is important; or forms part of a view that is important to a recreational experience. May contain National Trails or other long-distance routes.	The National Trust owned area is particularly well used and accessible by numerous PRow routes	Regional

Factors affecting sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity to Solar Development	Higher Sensitivity to Solar Development	Explanation	Judgement
Perceptual (Scenic)	Landscape that has little that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense	Landscape that appeals strongly to the senses, primarily the visual sense	The outward view from Helsby Hill is expansive and notable for the mix of urban and industrial alongside more rural landscape. Its prominence in the wider landscape makes it particularly sensitive to any direct change to the landscape within the character area and particularly at the summit of the hill.	Regional
Perceptual (Wildness and Tranquillity)	Landscape with a weak perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies	Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies.	The summit provides a ' <i>sense of peace and quiet away from popular areas</i> '	Regional
Function	Landscape which does not perform a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape.	Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape	The landscape provides a recreational resource for the surrounding population and also acts as a clearly defined landmark within the estuarine environment	Regional
Overall Judgement of Value				Regional

Susceptibility

Scale	Landscapes where scale of development is similar to or smaller than scale of receiving landscape	Landscapes where scale of development is larger than scale of receiving landscape	The character area would be highly susceptible to development within it but less so to development within the wider panoramic view where there is already large-scale regional infrastructure such as the oil refinery and wind turbines along the estuary.	High
Landform	Smooth regular flowing, or uniform landscapes	Dramatic and rugged landscapes	The sandstone outcrop is notable for its dramatic and rugged peak that contrasts to the surrounding largely flat landscape	High

Factors affecting sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity to Solar Development	Higher Sensitivity to Solar Development	Explanation	Judgement
Openness/enclosure	Enclosed and sheltered landscapes	Open and exposed landscapes	The character area is open and exposed due to its prominent position in the wider landscape and intervisibility with surrounding character areas	High
Land cover, complexity and patterns	Areas of simple or regular landcover, linear features and patterns or with a mosaic of vegetation cover	Complex, intimate or irregular patterns or with limited vegetation cover	Limited vegetation at peak but lower areas well wooded	Medium
Built Environment	Contemporary masts, pylons, industrial elements, buildings infrastructure, settlements	Established, traditional or historic built character	Presence of energy infrastructure in wider landscape but limited within character area.	High
Views intervisibility	Visually contained and have limited inward or outward views	Extensive views within or of the area with distant horizons.	Extensively visible from the surrounding area due to its prominence in a largely flat estuarine environment	High
Landscapes that form settings, skylines, backdrops, focal points	Generally low-lying landscapes without distinctive landform or horizon	Areas with strong features, focal points that define the setting or skyline	Helsby Hill is a defining feature in the wider landscape	High

Factors affecting sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity to Solar Development	Higher Sensitivity to Solar Development	Explanation	Judgement
Overall Judgement of Susceptibility				High
Overall Judgement of Sensitivity				Medium / High

3A – Sandstone Fringe - Helsby to Tarporley

Factors affecting sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity to Solar Development	Higher Sensitivity to Solar Development	Explanation	Judgement
Value attached to Landscapes				
Designated scenic quality	No specific designation	National or regional designation	A small part of the character area that connects the two sandstone ridge areas falls within an Area of Special County Value.	Regional / Community
Natural Heritage	Landscape with little evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contributes positively to the landscape	Landscape with strong evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contributes positively to the landscape	Some areas of ancient woodland within the LCA along with remnant fragments of acid grassland. Network of field provides additional ecological features within the landscape	Community
Cultural Heritage	Landscape with little evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contributes positively to the landscape	Landscape with strong evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contributes positively to the landscape	Mostly late 18 th and early 19 th planned enclosure. Distinctive landscape setting around Alvanley	Community
Landscape condition/ quality	Landscape which is in a poor physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure	Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure	Described as being <i>'in active agricultural use and is managed accordingly. Although hedgerow network is generally intact, there are some gaps in the network and some over mature hedgerow trees.'</i>	Community

Factors affecting sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity to Solar Development	Higher Sensitivity to Solar Development	Explanation	Judgement
Cultural associations	Landscape which has few recognised connections with notable people, events and the arts	Landscape which has well recognised connections with notable people, events and the arts	No specific cultural associations	Community
Distinctiveness	Landscape that has a weak sense of identity or a sense of identity that is appreciated principally by local communities.	Landscape offering many recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important	Gently undulating topography with some expansive views out from more elevated points. The character area is not as distinctive as the adjacent sandstone ridges	Community
Amenity and recreation	Limited amenity/recreational function where experience of the landscape is important	Well used for recreation where experience of the landscape is important; or forms part of a view that is important to a recreational experience. May contain National Trails or other long-distance routes.	Presence of Longster Trail and Sandstone Trail long distance paths within the area	Regional
Perceptual (Scenic)	Landscape that has little that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense	Landscape that appeals strongly to the senses, primarily the visual sense	Semi enclosed landscape with some longer views out across the estuarine landscape, visual appeal tends to relate to the interaction with adjacent character areas	Community
Perceptual (Wildness and Tranquillity)	Landscape with a weak perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies	Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies.	Generally quiet and rural character	Community
Function	Landscape which does not perform a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape.	Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape	Very much a transitional landscape between the adjacent plain and sandstone ridge	Community
Overall Judgement of Value				Community

Factors affecting sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity to Solar Development	Higher Sensitivity to Solar Development	Explanation	Judgement
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Susceptibility

Scale	Landscapes where scale of development is similar to or smaller than scale of receiving landscape	Landscapes where scale of development is larger than scale of receiving landscape	The scale of development would be of a similar scale to the character area. When forming part of the wider view, the landscape has a greater ability to absorb large scale development	Low
Landform	Smooth regular flowing, or uniform landscapes	Dramatic and rugged landscapes	Character area is formed of gently rolling hills with relatively uniform farmland	Low
Openness/enclosure	Enclosed and sheltered landscapes	Open and exposed landscapes	Contrasting levels of openness with some areas open with long views and some areas enclosed and of a small scale	Medium
Land cover, complexity and patterns	Areas of simple or regular landcover, linear features and patterns or with a mosaic of vegetation cover	Complex, intimate or irregular patterns or with limited vegetation cover	Relative lack of woodland cover but the undulating topography and hedgerow trees provide some means for mitigating any potential visual impact	Medium / Low
Built Environment	Contemporary masts, pylons, industrial elements, buildings infrastructure, settlements	Established, traditional or historic built character	Absence of large scale visually intrusive built elements within the character area with the exception of pylons that descend Alvanley Cliff and cross the landscape	Medium / Low
Views intervisibility	Visually contained and have limited inward or outward views	Extensive views within or of the area with distant horizons.	Some areas are visually contained whereas others provide long view out across wider landscape. Despite this, the character area sits in the shadow of the sandstone ridge and as such has a limited influence over wider landscape	Medium / Low
Landscapes that form settings, skylines, backdrops, focal points	Generally low-lying landscapes without distinctive landform or horizon	Areas with strong features, focal points that define the setting or skyline	Well elevated above the adjacent plain the landscape sit in the shadow of the sandstone ridges adjacent	Medium / Low

Factors affecting sensitivity	Lower Sensitivity to Solar Development	Higher Sensitivity to Solar Development	Explanation	Judgement
Overall Judgement of Susceptibility				Medium / Low
Overall Judgement of Sensitivity				Medium / Low