Appendix 14.8

North West Strategy 2009 Regional Character Areas and Types
Lowland Settled Plains

Open, low lying, gently undulating agricultural landscape, forming extensive plains with horizontal grain. Simple in form & texture, varying in scale.

Location:
North Cumbria, the Cumbria coast, west Lancashire, north of Warrington & central Cheshire. This landscape occurs near Settled Mossland & Mossland.

Broad Regional Landscape Character Type: Farmed Lowland and Valley Landscapes

Physical Landscape
- Permo-Triassic bedrock, overlain by thick deposits of glacial till.
- Slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged soils.
- A gently rolling lowland topography appearing flat in places.
- Network of streams & minor rivers forming shallow valleys. Marl pits & ponds are common features.

Biodiversity & Land Use
- The heavy clay soils result in extensive areas of lowland pasture, creating a pattern of medium-large fields divided by hedges.
- A well wooded landscape with native oak woodland & plantations (deciduous & coniferous). Parkland trees & hedgerow trees strengthen the wooded character.
- Species-rich neutral grassland, which is associated in places with species-rich hedgerows & hedgebanks.

Cultural Landscape
- Mixed age enclosure: ancient-C.20th. Hedges, fences; localised hedgebanks by roads. Some villages in traditional field systems with strips/large common fields.
- Historic character includes ornamental parkland, military use (particularly WW2 airfields), canals & railways.
- Dispersed farms & villages on ridges, nucleated, C.12th-13th villages/towns (with market towns). Modern ribbon development at edges of many settlements.
- Building materials include local stone & red brick with distinctive diamond detailing. Some areas are associated with timber framed buildings.

Perceptual Landscape
- Strong feeling of tranquillity & isolation although adjacent to industrial sites or transport corridors, tranquillity is reduced.
- A settled, often comfortable lowland landscape. Strongly rural & remote in places but also on the urban periphery/adjacent to busy roads & railways.
- Expansive views from open & elevated land to higher land or the coast/estuaries. Views can be constrained by topography & hedgerows.
Urban

Urban areas, including historic town cores and more recent residential and commercial development, punctuated by areas of amenity open space.

Location:
This RLCT occurs throughout the area and includes the Merseyside and Greater Manchester conurbations.

Broad Regional Landscape Character Type: Urban and Industrial Landscapes

Physical Landscape
- Geology soils and landform vary across this RLCT - see individual landscape unit data.
- There are rivers and canals that run through urban areas and occasional ponds.

Biodiversity & Land Use
- This is an urban land use supporting industry, retail, infrastructure, services and settlement.
- Street trees and parkland containing tree groups. Some parklands support mature specimens which provide important habitat.
- This is a built landscape with habitat mainly confined to amenity grasslands, public gardens and parks and residential gardens. Derelict land and former industrial sites can provide important habitat.

Cultural Landscape
- This is a built landscape where historic field enclosure patterns are no longer clearly defined.
- Older areas have organic character with winding streets and market places. Industrial age development includes civic squares, town halls and public gardens, recent settlement include tower blocks and amenity grassland.
- Settlement varies from workers terracing associated with factories, larger villas with gardens & larger houses associated with wealthy owners. More recent development tends to be varied & includes housing estates and tower blocks.
- Building styles can be utilitarian red brick or stone workers terracing, decorative stone warehouses and civic buildings. More recent buildings styles vary greatly: often concrete buildings and more modern glass clad structures.

Perceptual Landscape
- Due to higher densities of population and a busy transport network tranquility is generally very low although there are pockets of more tranquil landscapes often associated with open spaces and canals.
- The urban character tends to be busy although parks and open spaces offer opportunities to experience relative remoteness.
- Views vary and are often limited by built development. Views to surrounding hills are locally defining characteristics. Mills and associated chimneys are often characteristic of the views in smaller industrial towns.

Urban River Valleys
Settled Mosslands

A flat, open, large scale, low-lying, agricultural landscape characterised by dark peat soils, a geometric field pattern and wide views.

Location:

Occurs mainly in southern Lakes, western Lancashire and more isolated areas in Cheshire.

Broad Regional Landscape Character Type: Wetland Landscapes

Physical Landscape

- Fluvial drift, comprising marine, in places riverine alluvium, overlain by a varying thickness of peat.
- Deep fen peat (characteristically dark in colour) with localised humic alluvial soils and patches of acid raised bog peat.
- Low lying basins (relative to adjacent areas) and often at, or below sea level, with a level topography.
- Small watercourse or brooks drain areas along with drainage ditches or embanked watercourses which divide fields.

Biodiversity & Land Use

- Intensive arable agriculture (cereals and vegetables) with some areas of pasture on less well drained soils.
- Occasional discrete blocks of secondary woodland (some carr woodland), shelterbelts and linear trees along tracks and field boundaries.
- Wet meadows and semi-improved acid grasslands.

Cultural Landscape

- Rectilinear, very large fields with internal drainage ditches, some hawthorn hedges next to roads. Earlier reclaimed land has irregular enclosure.
- Planned enclosure dating from the early attempts at draining of the land from the 12th century onwards.
- Isolated farmsteads and hamlets clustered along raised roads with some linear villages on ridges of land.
- Vernacular building style varies between areas and includes stone buildings using river cobbles and brick.

Perceptual Landscape

- Tranquility exists in less populated areas or woodlands. Vertical man made features e.g. wind turbines, and noise from roads reduce tranquillity.
- Wildness is reduced in areas drained for agriculture by the strong human influence. The lack of urban features aids the retention of rural character.
- Open wide views to distant skylines or adjacent elevated landform. Vertical elements such as shelter belts may be prominent in the landscape.
Saltmarshes

A low lying, flat, dynamic landscape consisting of saltmarshes. Some are grazed, intersected by dendritic creeks running out to sea. A remote landscape.

Location:
This landscape exists in discreet units along the north west coast, from the River Eden in the north, to Neston in the south.

Broad Regional Landscape Character Type: Intertidal Landscapes

Physical Landscape
- Fluvial drift, comprising marine alluvium.
- Soft, raw soils flooded by high tides.
- Broad tracts of low lying land with a flat topography.
- Intertidal marine creeks.

Biodiversity & Land Use
- Saltmarsh and tidal creeks. Human activity is limited within this landscape.
- There are occasional patches of scrub beyond the high water mark.
- Pioneer species close to the shoreline e.g. glasswort, inland species include common saltmarsh grass & herbs such sea thrift if not grazed.

Cultural Landscape
- Largely unenclosed with only occasional hedge topped sea dykes. Man made dykes separate enclosed marshes and farmland further in land in places.
- An unenclosed and transitional landscape with limited human influence. There are old salt workings and monolithic structures in this landscape.
- This is an unsettled landscape.

Perceptual Landscape
- Tranquillity is quite high, enhanced by the strong presence of wading birds, waterfowl and the limited human activity.
- The lack of human-made features, contrast with surrounding human influences creates a sense of remoteness, enhanced by proximity to the sea.
- Views are panoramic, particularly seawards and this is enhanced by the horizontal nature of the landscape.
Estuaries/ Firths

Intertidal landscapes ranging in character with narrow, bounded riverine channels inland, and wider, open & flat channels at the sea mouth. Occasional ports & fuel terminals along banks contrast with the more dominant semi-natural character.

Location:
This RLCT occurs along the coast at the mouth of major rivers.

Broad Regional Landscape Character Type: Intertidal Landscapes

Physical Landscape
- Mainly marine sediment with limited rock.
- Marine sediments and sands.
- Landform varies according to location along the estuary, grading inland from bounded riverine channels to the more open and flat sea mouth.

Biodiversity & Land Use
- Deep channels tend to run along the estuaries. These are permanently inundated and support clams & urchins which provide food sources for diving bird species.
- Estuaries provide important habitats but there are also uses such as fuel supply lines running from fuel fields out at sea along the estuaries to terminals on the estuary banks.
- N/A
- Tidal mudflats are often internationally valuable habitats for wildfowl & wading birds.

Cultural Landscape
- There are shipwrecks in some estuaries: many were historically used as shipping lanes carrying international cargo.
- This is an unsettled landscape.
- Buildings along the shoreline provide varied built character from adjacent character types including industry and parkland. There are buoys, beacons and lights within the estuaries.

Perceptual Landscape
- Tranquillity varies, reduced in places by human activities such as industrial processes. In places, there is a strong sense of tranquillity particularly when contrasted with local urban areas.
- Remoteness is limited due to human activity, however some estuaries are more remote.
- Views can be open or channelled; sometimes views are limited by estuary banks.
Open Sea

An open & expansive marine landscape with shallow plains of mud, sand & mixed sediment. Rocks & canyons provide habitat variation for anemones & seaweeds. The open water supports a large variety of fish and some marine mammals.

Location:

This type fringes the west of the region, from the Solway Firth to the Dee Estuary and extending to the Isle of Mann and Ireland.

Broad Regional Landscape Character Type: Marine Landscapes

Physical Landscape

- Marine sediments.
- Variation of sand plains, mud plains and mixed sediment plains which can comprise coarse sediment.
- Flat to gently sloping with occasional shelves and canyons, depth varies from coastline to wave base.
- There are a variety of features including a deep canyon near Morecambe Bay and sandstone rocks off St Bees Head both providing important and unusual habitat variation supporting sponges, sea pen gardens and sea urchin ranges.

Biodiversity & Land Use

- Occasional oil drilling platforms, shipping and some energy production.
- A permanent sea front exists where slow tides closer to shore meet faster tides from the deeper Irish Sea, separating salty oceanic water from less salty inshore water creating ideal conditions for a variety of sealife e.g. dolphin & shoals of mackerel.

Cultural Landscape

- There are a significant number of shipwrecks which provide historical character, although many are not visible.
- This is an unsettled landscape.
- Occasional oil drilling platforms associated with oil and gas fields, wind turbines and features such as buoys and beacons.

Perceptual Landscape

- This is a tranquil landscape with limited human intervention, proximity to the coast does reduce tranquillity, as do structures such as buoys, beacons and wind farms.
- This is a remote landscape although the open views to settled landscapes reduces the sense of remoteness in places.
- Views are open and expansive.