



**CONGLETON
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT
Part I
Congleton Town Council**

CONGLETON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT Part I

Prepared for:

Congleton Town Council

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I Introduction

Background and purpose of the Landscape Character Assessment

- I.1 The context for the Congleton Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is the preparation of the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan by Congleton Town Council. The LCA is intended as an evidence base to inform its policies and proposals and the determination of planning applications, and to be a reference for local initiatives affecting landscape and landscape management.
- I.2 Congleton occupies a central position within Cheshire East, and was the main settlement within the former Congleton Borough. At the last census in 2011 it had a population of 26,482 but as it is a fast-growing town this will now be much larger, putting pressure on the town’s historic character and rural setting.
- I.3 The study area for this local LCA is the parish of Congleton, the area served by Congleton Town Council. The town is expanding within the parish and also into neighbouring parishes to the north and west. The [Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment \(2018\)](#) see Figure 1 below - has left both the town and these transitional areas blank. The current study is confined to the Neighbourhood Plan area, but could be extended to cover the larger town in future.

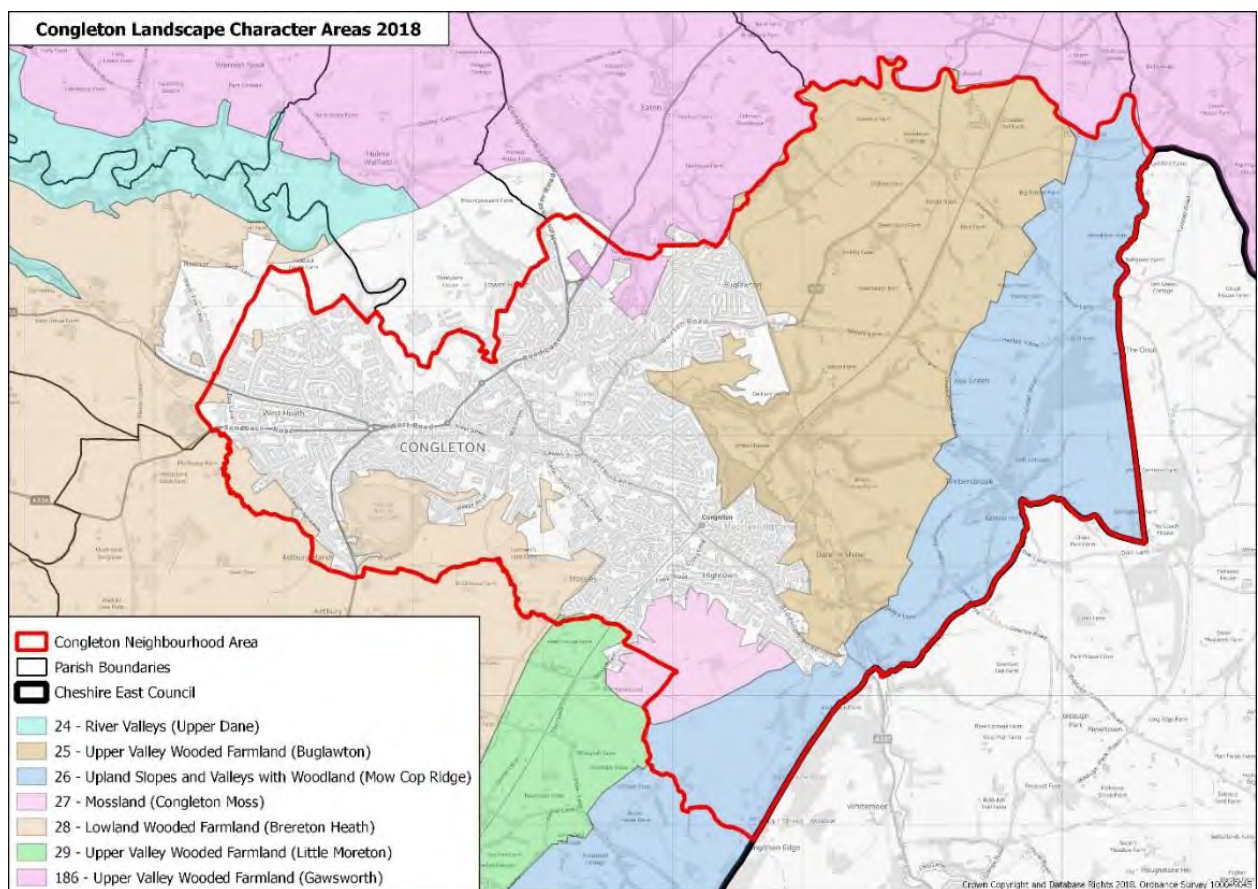


Figure 1: Cheshire East LCA Landscape Character Areas.

- I.4 This assessment follows the aims of the [European Landscape Convention \(ELC\)](#). The ELC is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape, and is a Council of Europe (not EU) convention and therefore remains valid post-Brexit.
- I.5 The ELC definition of ‘landscape’ is “*an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*”. The term ‘landscape’ encompasses townscape as the Convention covers “*natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas. It includes land, inland water and marine areas. It concerns landscapes that might be considered outstanding as well as everyday or degraded landscapes*”.
- I.6 The ELC approach focuses on the connection between people and place - so urban areas, where most people live, need to be included. It also promotes action to protect, manage and plan landscapes, and cooperation across boundaries. Landscape character assessment is a tool which can help with these aims.

Planning policy

- I.7 At the time of the assessment local planning policy was set out in the [Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy \(CELPs\)](#), dated July 2017. A [Publication Draft Site Allocations and Development Policies Document \(SADPD\)](#) was dated August 2019.
- I.8 The [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) was updated in February 2019. The policy most relevant to the Congleton LCA is as follows: Paragraph 9: “*Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area*”.
- I.9 There are numerous other references to character in the NPPF. Paragraph 79 constrains the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless: “*e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it: ...would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area*”. Paragraph 83 refers to planning policies and decision which enable “*c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside*”. Paragraph 85 refers to the growth of town centres in a way that “*reflects their distinctive characteristics*”, while paragraphs 110, 125, 130, 132 refer to character in connection with good design.
- I.10 Paragraph 122 requires “*d) the desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens)*” to be taken into account whilst also making efficient use of land, and paragraph 127 similarly requires developments to be “*c) ...sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting...*”.
- I.11 Paragraph 170 is about conserving and enhancing the natural environment, including “*b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services*”.

Approach to landscape character assessment

- I.12 The approach taken in this local assessment follows [Natural England guidance](#).
- I.13 [Landscape character assessment](#) is the process of mapping, classifying and describing the patterns and variations which contribute to the character of a landscape and give it its unique 'sense of place'. It analyses the combination of natural and cultural factors which have led to the present-day landscape/townscape, and identifies areas with a distinctive combination of factors which makes them different from each other.
- I.14 The assessment divides Congleton parish into landscape character types - categories of landscape which can be found in more than one place, and landscape character areas - geographically specific areas within the types that are influenced by local factors and context. The generic landscape character types are described in [Chapter 5](#) and the landscape character areas in Part 2.
- I.15 Under the landscape character types current forces for changes are considered and opportunities identified for enhancement, landscape management and mitigation of adverse effects of change. Locally specific issues are discussed under individual landscape character area profiles.
- I.16 The study considers the continuities, and also the changing boundaries, between town and country. Some areas do not in any case fit neatly into a rural or urban category, an example being Astbury Mere, an essentially man-made landscape within the town which is now semi-natural. From within the town, glimpses of the Cloud, Rainow Hill and Congleton Edge, and the presence of the River Dane are reminders of the natural context, while viewpoints on the upland edge provide panoramic views of the town.
- I.17 There is no one way to classify landscapes as it depends on the purpose and scale of the assessment, together with a degree of subjective judgement. The town of Congleton is relatively complex for its size and could be categorised in different ways.

Existing landscape character assessments

- I.18 Assessment can be carried out at different scales. Natural England's [National Character Area](#) (NCA) assessment, which provides the broadest context for the study, places Congleton in the [Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain NCA](#).
- I.19 At the county scale the Cheshire East LCA has carried forward and updated the relevant parts of the [Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment](#) (2008). The earlier [Landscape Assessment of Congleton](#) (1999), was carried out for the former Congleton Borough Council, and is at a similar scale. None of the existing LCAs include the urban areas but the Landscape Assessment of Congleton includes a short description of the settlement.

- I.20 [The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation](#) (HLC) covers the whole of the parish, including settlements, in more detail than the LCAs. It classifies the area in 3 'time slices' - 1870-75 (1st edition Ordnance Survey maps), 1904-10 (3rd edition OS maps) and 2007-8 (the date of publication). Figures 5 and 6 show the changes that have occurred over this period. The HLC has defined 'Medieval' features as dating from before 1600, 'Post Medieval' as from 1600 to 1904-10 (3rd edition OS maps), and 'C20th' which covers features from then up to the date of publication of the HLC.
- I.21 Since the [Cheshire East LCA](#) already provides a recent assessment of rural areas, the focus is on the town. The descriptions of urban areas are based on a finer grain analysis than in the countryside. Time has not permitted a detailed townscape study of buildings and open spaces but the extent and characteristics of different periods of development are taken into consideration

Areas of particular landscape and townscape interest

- I.22 The contribution made to Congleton's landscape/townscape by existing landscape and heritage designations and settings is discussed under each landscape character area profile in Part 2, although the topic cannot be covered in detail.
- I.23 Sizeable landscape areas contributing to amenity and sense of place within and around the town are identified and discussed under landscape character area profiles where relevant. They vary from open countryside to town landscapes to public open space.
- I.24 Smaller areas of landscape interest within the fabric of the town, both public and private, have also been identified as 'neighbourhood landscape/townscape areas'. They too are variable in character but contribute to amenity and sense of place.

Following chapters

- I.25 [Chapter 2](#) provides an overview of the landscape of Congleton.
[Chapter 3](#) discusses landscape change and current issues affecting the study area.
[Chapter 4](#) shows how the study area has been classified.
[Chapter 5](#) discusses the landscape character types, identifying key characteristics, a review of ecosystem services, an overall strategy, landscape/townscape issues, and opportunities for each character type.
- I.26 Part 2 of the landscape character assessment sets out profiles for each of the landscape character areas.

2 The landscape of Congleton

Physical influences

- 2.1 Solid geology below the town is Triassic in age but mainly covered by superficial deposits of Quaternary age (Ice Age to the present). Figure 2 below shows the superficial geology of the study area with Congleton landscape character areas, described in more detail in Part 2, superimposed for reference. The variations in topography, geology and soils influence the way that Congleton has developed, the way the land is farmed, and the remnant natural habitats. Urbanisation has masked or removed some of the differences in the underlying natural landscape but they are the basis for restoring or enhancing local distinctiveness.
- 2.2 Within the lowland areas, glacial tills (boulder clay) and other glaciofluvial deposits, particularly sand, form an undulating terrain that gradually rises to the east towards the Carboniferous gritstones and sandstones of the upland edge. These are separated from the Triassic rocks of the Cheshire Plain by the Red Rock Fault which runs north-south along the eastern edge of the Plain. Watercourses arising in the uplands and Congleton Moss have become incised into the superficial deposits, forming valleys that are often steep-sided. An area to the south west of the Marsh and towards Astbury, is flat, formed of lacustrine (lake) deposits. Remnant peat is present on Congleton Moss.

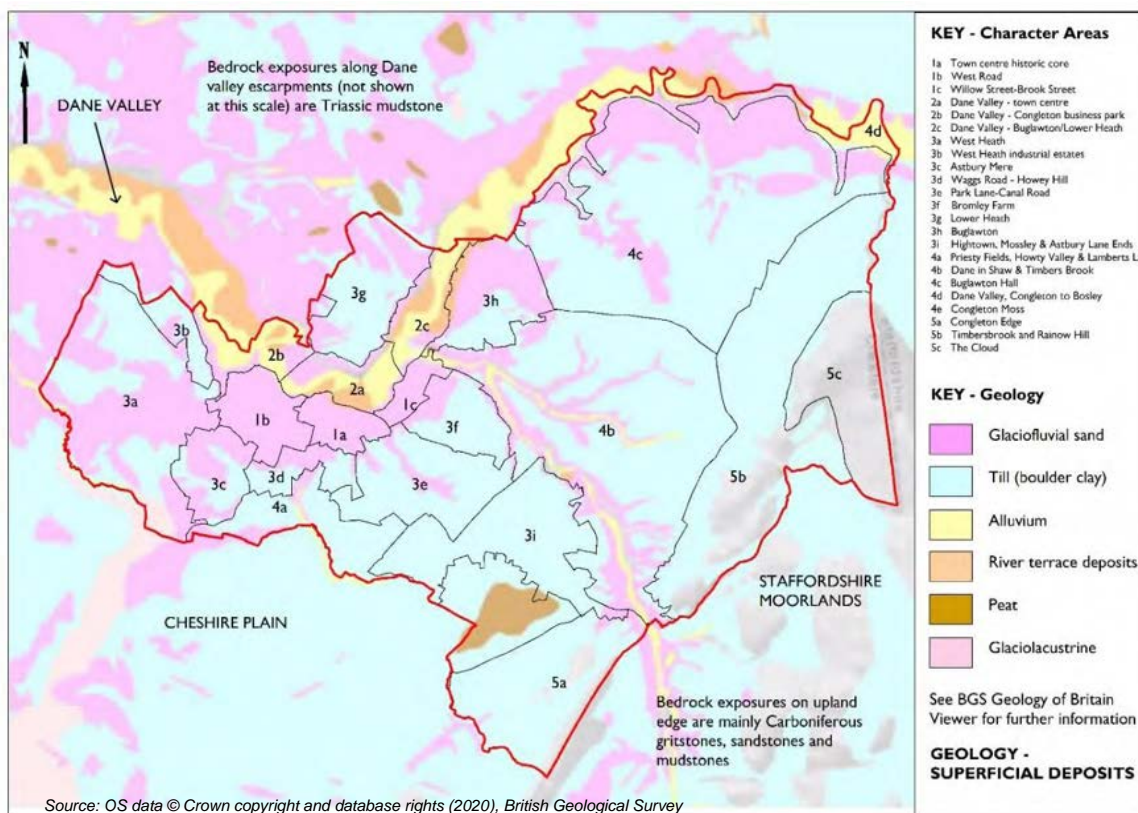


Figure 2: Superficial geology

2.3 Lowland Congleton is part of Natural England’s Meres and Mosses [Natural Area](#) but only the parts of Congleton Moss least affected by peat cutting remain as wetland with a natural origin. The largest water bodies, at Astbury Mere and Westlow Mere, are a result of sand quarrying below the water table. Former marl pits, from which material with a higher pH was extracted to spread on fields as a soil improver, have usually been filled in by developers within the town but some are still present within farmland or golf courses. The most valuable habitats within the parish are the semi-natural ancient woodlands on steep slopes, the species-rich grassland of Dane-in-Shaw Pasture SSSI, and heathland on top of the Cloud. See Cheshire Wildlife Trust’s report (2017) on [Protecting and enhancing Congleton’s natural environment](#).

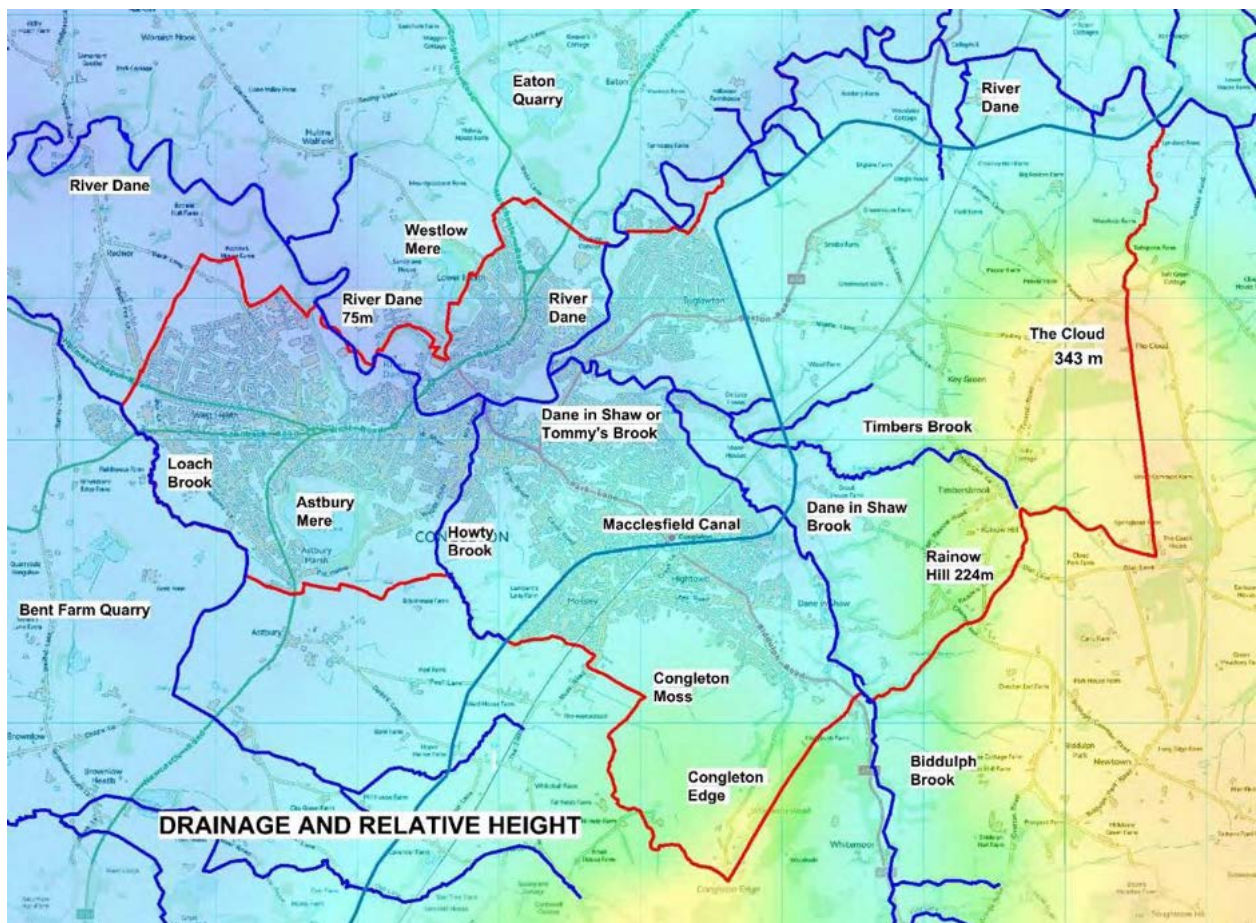


Figure 3: Plan to show watercourses and relative height of land

2.4 The main influence on the form of Congleton town is the River Dane but other watercourses draining into the Dane have influenced Congleton’s urban form more than might be apparent, as some are now hidden or lost. The minor valleys and ridges inbetween are still present although usually built over, and the result is that some parts of the town feel quite enclosed, and others provide long views between or over buildings to the upland edge or to distant landmarks.

2.5 The plan overleaf shows the watercourses and minor ridges within the town, showing

how the settlement has been fragmented or otherwise affected by the incised drainage pattern and the topography. Along the edges of the valley there may be a sharp change of slope with a steep slope below. In other areas the drop in height is gentler, as between the town centre and the river within Congleton Park. River terraces are also present and can influence development locally. In some areas the natural landscape form has been lost due to industrial, mineral or transport development.

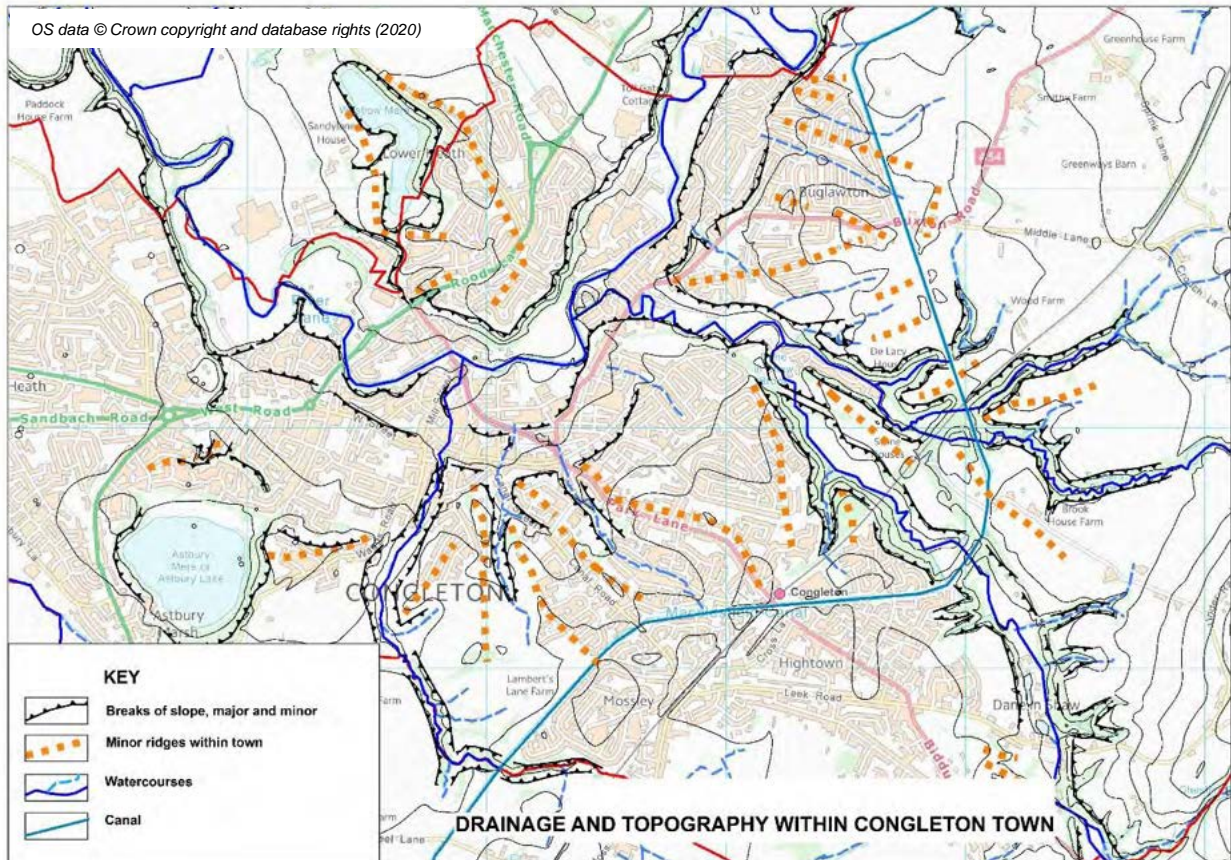


Figure 4: Drainage and topography within the settlement

Cultural influences

2.6 Congleton's growth as a market, mill and commuter town, and a local civic and retail centre has been described elsewhere. Congleton was a small settlement until after the 2nd world war, distinguished by a concentration of mainly textile mills - first silk, then also cotton, ribbons, fustian cutting and clothing manufacture - in the bottom of the wooded River Dane valley, and it was closely surrounded by farmland.

2.7 In the early C20th the farmland was composed of small fields, classified in Cheshire's [Historic Landscape Characterisation](#) (HLC) as belonging to the ancient fieldscapes group (thought to be enclosed before 1600) including the 'Medieval Town Fields', which preserve characteristics of open field arable which covered large areas to the south and east of Congleton. West Heath farmland was enclosed or reorganised in the C19th as shown on the map overleaf. Areas of parkland attached to country residences were also present around the town such as at Dane Bank and Daisy Bank.

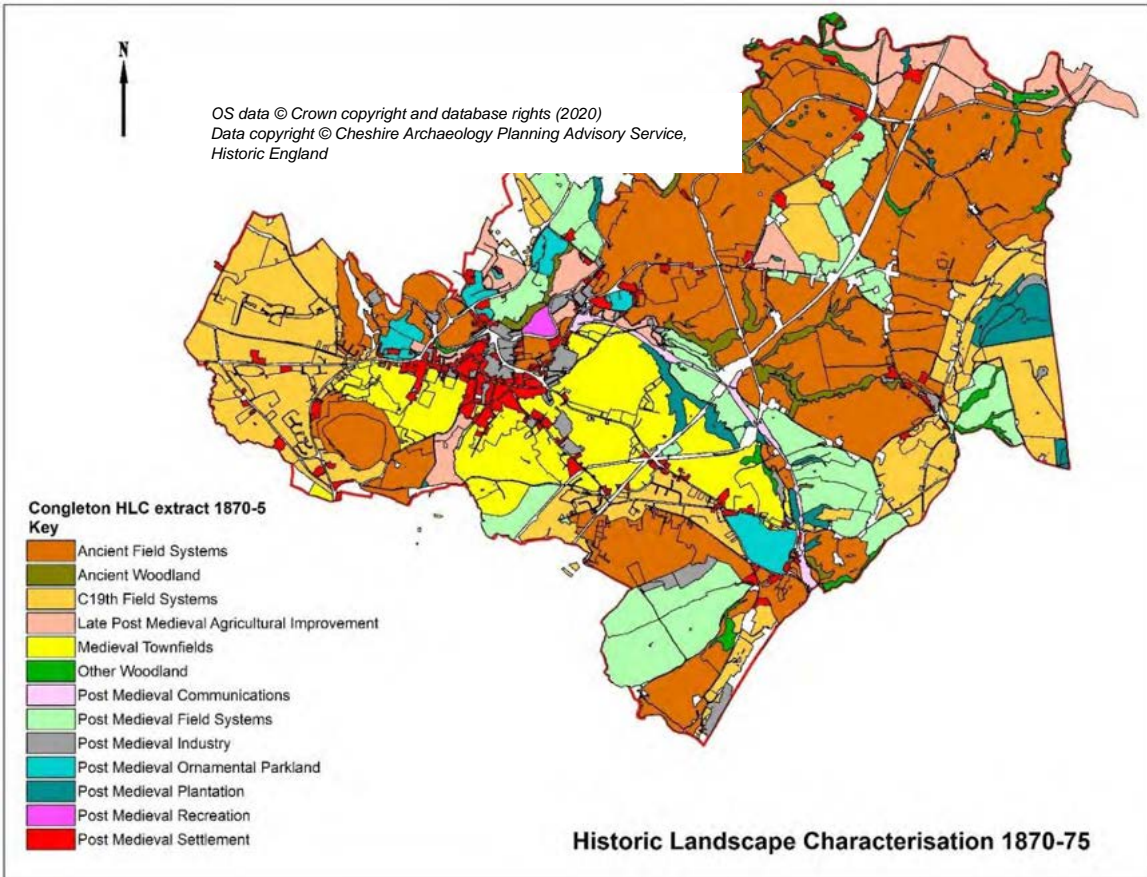


Figure 5: Settlement and fieldscapes in 1870-75

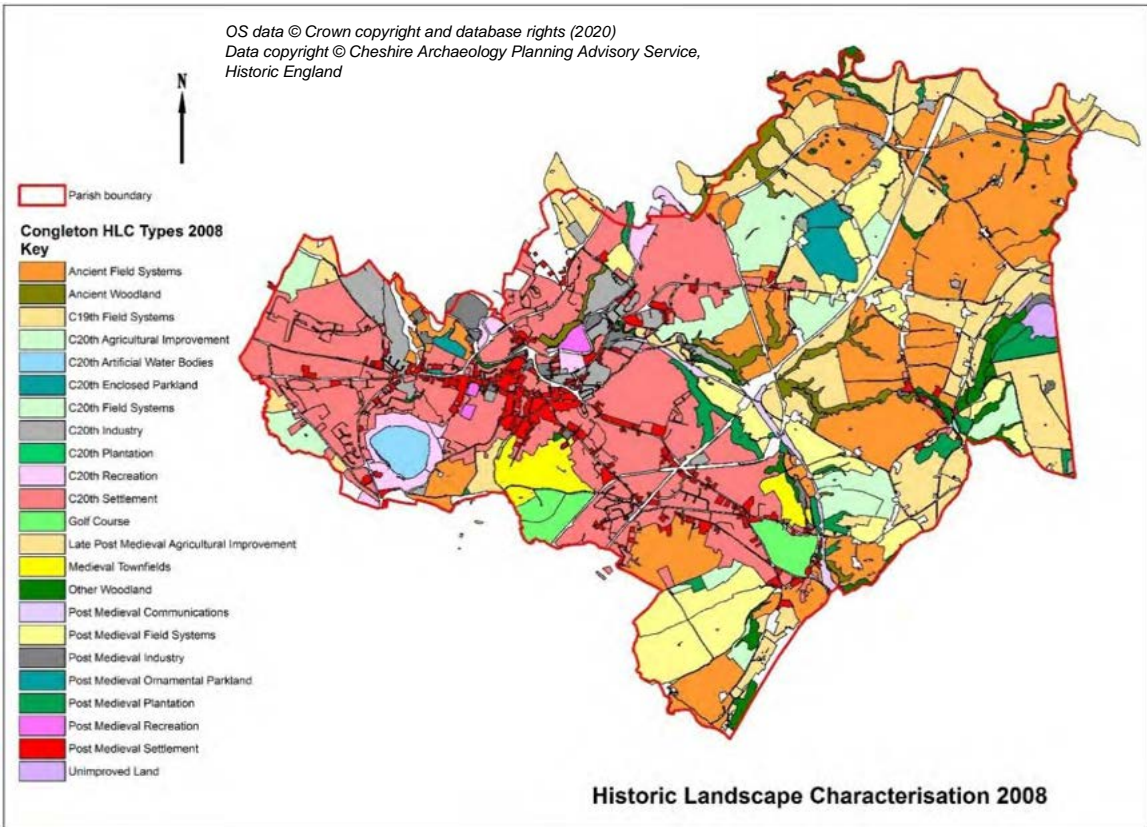


Figure 6: Settlement and fieldscapes in 2007-8

- 2.8 The remnants of ancient fieldscapes to the south of the town still provide an attractive mix of small-scale fields, hedgerows and wooded valleys while the countryside to the east, between the town and the gritstone ridge of The Cloud, Rainow Hill and Congleton Edge, has extensive areas of ancient enclosure.
- 2.9 The Macclesfield canal which opened in 1831, and the railways which first opened in 1841, dissected the earlier pattern of small fields and wooded valleys, producing an unusual topography of natural slopes and valley bottoms, and man-made cuttings and embankments. Within this landscape of small-scale enclosure some species-rich meadow and ancient woodland has survived, as at Dane in Shaw Pasture SSSI.

The development of the town

- 2.10 Different periods of development can be identified as shown in Figure 9 below. Some are not well represented as Congleton grew only slowly until the mid C20th. Note that the red area in Congleton Moss indicates peat extraction, not buildings.

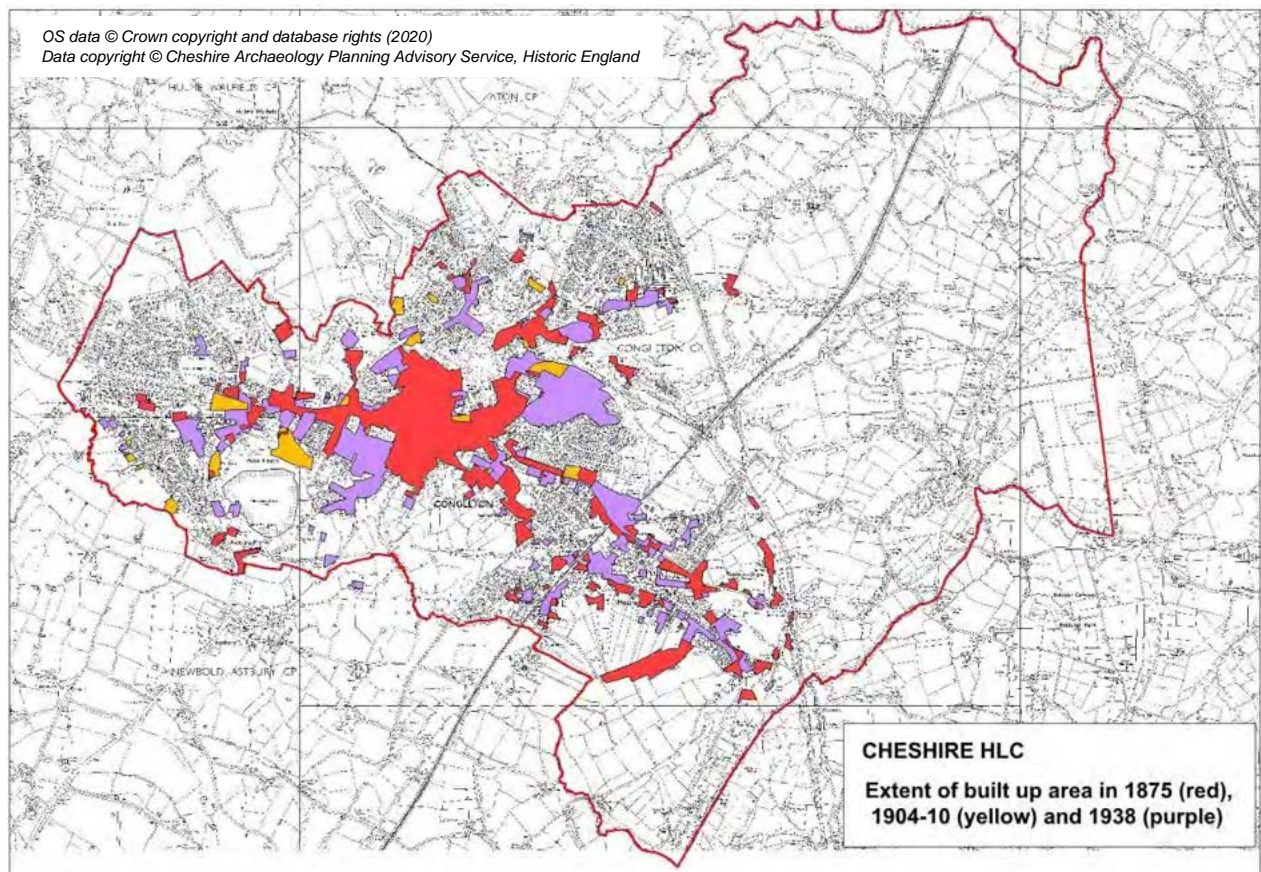


Figure 7: The evolution of the town

Pre-C19th

- 2.11 The older buildings which have survived in the town centre are described in the Conservation Area appraisals. The Medieval street pattern still exists.

Early C19th, Victorian and Edwardian terraces



Early C19th terrace on Parson Street near West Road, shown on the Tithe Map of 1838 as part of a large well-established area of densely built streets on a grid-iron pattern.

- 2.12 Areas or remaining streets of C19th brick terraced housing on a grid-iron pattern of streets, close to the mills which provided employment, are found in a number of locations around the town centre and older parts of Buglawton. Where there is a slope, the streets are usually perpendicular to or parallel to the contours and stepped up the slope. Although this type of housing was very tightly built, earlier residents would have had easy access to allotments and the open countryside - a relationship which still exists in the Swan St/Nelson St area. In later efforts to modernise and individualise terrace houses, their appearance has usually been much altered.

Late 19th and early C20th 'garden suburbs' and interwar 'ribbon development'

- 2.13 The form and design of housing was influenced by the Housing Reform, Garden City and Town Planning movements. There are no areas large enough in Congleton to form suburbs of this housing type, but there are examples from this period.
- 2.14 Initially the town spread along main roads leading out into the countryside, while the siting of the railway station at Hightown encouraged a new nucleus of settlement away from the town centre. An example is Cross Lane in Mossley with its pre-WWI and interwar villas, irregular plots, a large number of trees, hedgerow boundaries and houses with individual architectural interest. The villas along Park Lane, and suburban housing on the Leek Road are also examples of this period of suburban ribbon development for the middle classes.
- 2.15 Higher status housing tended to be developed on elevated land as is the case with Park Lane which follows a ridge. New development was generally along the main roads out of town. However, the Restriction of Ribbon Development Act in 1935 discouraged continuation of this growth pattern, and gaps with views of the countryside remained along most roads out of Congleton until later in the C20th.



Interwar semi-detached housing on Giantswood Lane, formerly ribbon development along a rural lane

Mid-20th century planned municipal and speculative suburbs

- 2.16 The replacement of older town centre housing in poor condition by new ‘municipal’ housing estates began in the interwar period and continued in the 1950s. Local authorities, up to the early 1980s, had both the power and responsibility to improve housing conditions for their residents, and usually followed national design guidance and standards. In Congleton a reduced version of the ‘garden suburb’ was probably the model, although there have been subsequent modifications to streets, houses and gardens.
- 2.17 The new houses had gardens and were in rural settings as the estates were built on fields beyond the boundaries of the old town - the former field layouts can still be discerned in some cases but hedgerows and trees were largely removed. Early examples were the Crescent and Ruskin Road in the West Road character area and High Lowe Avenue and Tall Ash Avenue in Buglawton. The Bromley Farm estate was also started in the early 1930s. Some private estates were also built at this time, such as Doreen Avenue in Mossley and Holmesville Avenue off West Road.
- 2.18 Key characteristics of this period of housing include crescent and curvilinear street patterns, sometimes with grass verges planted with trees as was formerly the case along the Crescent, semi-detached houses and short terraces of low-density dwellings, and front gardens often defined by privet hedges and wrought iron gates. Roads are usually narrower than current standards, with small turning heads on cul-de-sacs leading to parking problems today. Interwar and 1950s housing estates would have been rather uniform in appearance.



Mid C20th semi-detached planned housing on the Bromley Farm estate, still with privet hedges.

- 2.19 It is likely that few of Congleton's residents are aware that the town was very nearly drawn into the New Towns movement in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Congleton was one of the places identified for large scale expansion of up to 120,000 people to take overspill population from Manchester, plus industrial development, to provide a self-contained town. At the time Congleton had a population of around 15,000 people. The proposal was a serious one, but was dropped in the end because of the high agricultural value of the land that would have been taken.

1960s and 1970s

- 2.20 Despite this decision, Congleton did continue to expand, but in the 1960s and 1970s the expansion was dominated by large housing developers. The models of suburban planning that were adopted were the same as those repeated elsewhere across the country, so lack local distinctiveness. While the form and character - often detached houses set in gardens, with provision for cars - was partly dictated by market demand, there were also 'economies of scale' and fewer examples of individuality in the designs than in previous years. One of the results of the drive for profit was the large-scale removal of existing landscape features, whose retention would have required non-standard designs, and higher costs. The parklands, gardens and lakes of country houses, such as Lower Daisybank and Dane Bank in Lower Heath, were obliterated with little trace. The new estates generally had moderate sized gardens but public green space tended to be limited and isolated.
- 2.21 Houses of this period are characterised by large windows, often with a horizontal emphasis. There may be white weatherboarding and generally there are front and back gardens, drives and garages for one car. Low walls bordering the pavement are common. Houses can be detached, semi-detached or grouped in short terraces, and there are many streets where bungalows are the main building form, such as Tidnock Avenue in Lower Heath. The road layouts vary from relatively traditional, sometimes loosely following the alignments of the former field patterns, with regular building lines. They may also have cul-de-sac layouts, either rectilinear or curved but not as

'wiggly' as in later developments. The suburbs at West Heath, Lower Heath, Buglawton and Mossley grew rapidly at this time.



1960s/1970s housing in West Heath with white weatherboarding and 'picture' windows

1980s-1990s suburbs

- 2.22 Further large-scale expansion and infill took place in the 1980s and 1990s. As the suburbs filled up, backland developments, and subdivisions of large plots became more common. 1980s and 1990s housing layouts provide more space for cars than in earlier estates, to the extent that garages, drives and parked vehicles can dominate the local streetscape - usually a cul-de-sac with irregular curved layout. Open plan front gardens are common, but housing densities can be higher than in 1960s and 1970s housing. With main roads being increasingly busy, noisy, and built up, housing generally faced on to internal estate roads, and provision of through routes for vehicles was uncommon. Layouts encouraged car use.



A 1980s/1990s cul-de-sac in Mossley

- 2.23 Tree preservation orders (TPOs), introduced under the Town and Country Planning Act (1947) began to be used more to ensure that more of the valuable trees were

retained in developments, although over time some have subsequently gone, without replacement. In Mossley, trees are the only survivors of the Henshall Hall estate.

- 2.24 Under European directives on biodiversity, and UK legislation such as the Countryside and Wildlife Act 1981, areas of nature conservation began to be better protected from development. Conditions were applied to planning approvals requiring new and replacement tree planting. This can be very beneficial, but use of smaller decorative tree species instead of larger native trees, and varied planting within open plan gardens has often resulted in streetscapes that are pleasant but lacking in any local character.

C21st housing

- 2.25 C21st housing development increasingly shows the influence of ideas about green infrastructure and ecosystems, and within public open space may include sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) features such as swales and drainage basins, designed to slow the rate of water runoff which would otherwise be accelerated by the increased proportion of hard surfaces due to higher building density and provision for cars. Habitats of value are likely to be retained within the scheme, as may some of the mature trees if present. The challenge for developers is to increase housing and parking densities within smaller areas without detriment to amenity and privacy, and to meet the various demands of the planning authority and other bodies.
- 2.26 C21st housing is usually in a 'neo-traditional' style, but with houses often on smaller plots than in earlier years. There is also a trend towards houses with a more vertical emphasis, with 2.5 or 3 storeys, and towards the building of apartment blocks - these, and the higher densities, give recent housing a more urban appearance. Developer contributions towards local facilities, infrastructure and maintenance of open space are usually required under Section 106 agreements (Town and Country planning Act 1990) or through Community Infrastructure Levies (Planning Act 2008).



C21st houses at Galloway Green on the site of the former Congleton cattle market

- 2.27 New housing continues to be dominated by large national residential development companies, and whilst developers often claim that their scheme responds to 'local

character' it can look remarkably similar to developments elsewhere in the UK, and in future the style will come to define a period rather than a place.

Local materials













		
<i>'Cock and hen' coping on a partly coursed and squared random stone wall in Buglawton</i>	<i>Squared and coursed stone walling on Park Lane using large blocks of rubble as coping for decorative effect</i>	<i>Part red brick part coursed stone wall with half round stone coping off Canal Street near the Cockshutts,</i>
		
<i>White painted public house with black features at Hightown</i>	<i>Late Victorian decorative red brick features house in Waggs Road</i>	<i>Listed weavers' cottages on Rood Hill in brick painted white/cream</i>
		
<i>New at Daneside in stone and red brick with grey roofs.</i>	<i>Medieval timber framed building - Ye Olde Kings Arms, High Street</i>	<i>Gritstone building, St John's School House, Old Buxton Road, Buglawton</i>
		
<i>Estate railings off Highfield Road, Canal Street, near town centre</i>	<i>Waggs Road sunken land with stone retaining walls and banking</i>	<i>Combination of low brick walls and hedging - mid C20th housing on St James Avenue, near West Road</i>

Figure 8: Examples of local building styles, materials and colours

- 2.28 The varying materials used for traditional buildings reflect Congleton's situation in an area of transition between the Cheshire Plain and the hills of the Peak District, and contribute significantly to local distinctiveness and visual interest.
- 2.29 Whilst red Cheshire brick is commonly used in older buildings throughout the lowland areas, black and white buildings are also present, both within the town and in the countryside. Some brick buildings have been painted white and a small number have coloured or white stucco, as in Moody Terrace in the town centre. Stone has also been used as a building material occasionally within the town, as on Old Buxton Road Buglawton, and for farmhouses, cottages and walls in countryside to the east towards the upland edge. Some C18th houses still have stone roofs but grey slate tiles were the predominant roofing material in the C19th and early C20th. The building stone was usually millstone grit from local quarries - the Bridestones Quarry is the only one still active in the area. Late Victorian and Edwardian houses may be in strong red Accrington or Ruabon brick, and include decorative brickwork. Bricks, tiles, timber and stone for C20th and C21st developments may however have come from anywhere.

Access to countryside and green space

- 2.30 At present most residents have easy access to the countryside or a local green space, although as the town expands the open countryside is becoming further away for some people. To the north and north west the separation between town and country is hardening through road construction. To the west, south, east, new housing estates extend the town into formerly valued countryside. One of Congleton's key characteristics is its penetration by wooded valleys and wedges of farmland, and while these generally remain, they are at risk of losing value through cumulative small losses.
- 2.31 A key concern is the severing, visually at least, of the River Dane valley and open countryside by the Congleton Link Road to the north of the town. A further concern is that as Congleton expands, it also grows closer to outlying villages and hamlets, and the point has been reached where the gaps cannot be reduced further without the perception of coalescence. Green Belt designation is only partly effective as it still allows a range of 'urban fringe' uses which can detract from rural character and quality. Green Belts are not landscape designations, as is sometimes thought.
- 2.32 The plan below shows how town and countryside are connected.

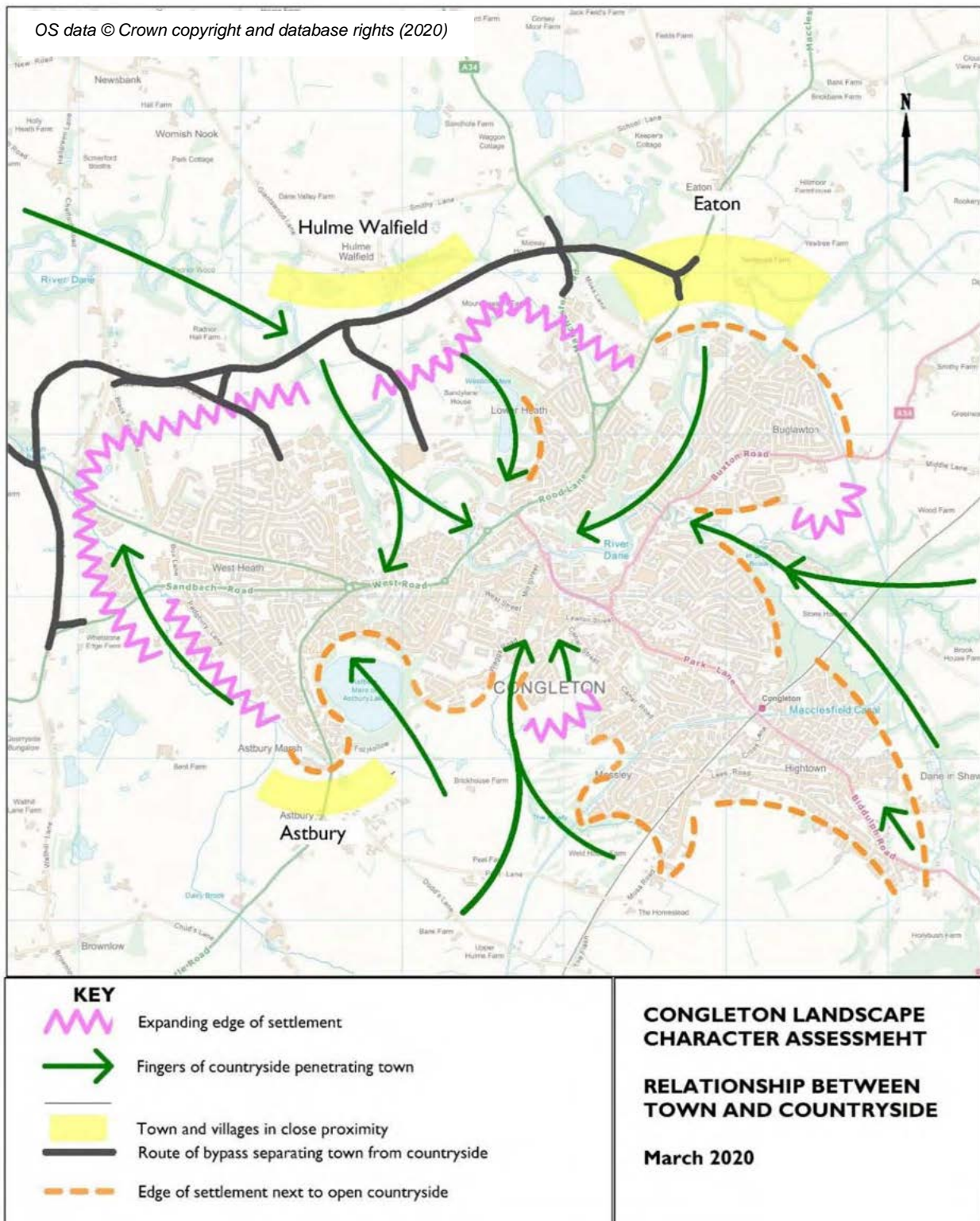


Figure 8 Overview of urban-rural connectivity

2.33 The plan below shows most, if not all, of the rights of way and other public footpaths around Congleton - the high density of the networks to the south and east of the town make these areas of high value for recreation. However, routes are lacking within the Dane valley to the north west of the town.

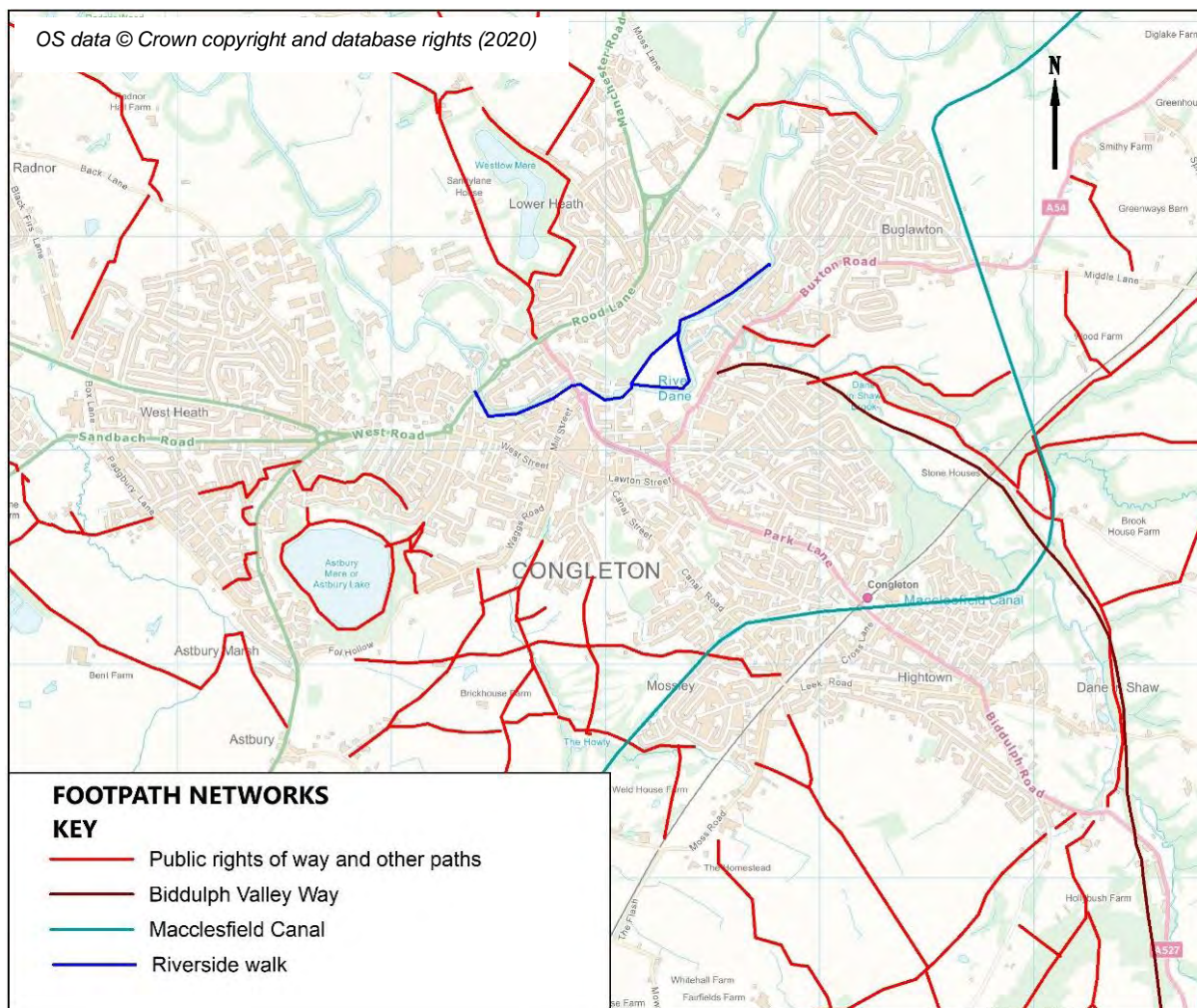


Figure 9: Footpath networks within and around Congleton

2.34 Lying within the heart of the town, Congleton Park is a Victorian park of national significance as a grade 2 site on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens. It was restored in 2005 through a National Lottery Heritage Grant. Whilst facilities are located in the flat valley bottom, the park also includes Town Wood, semi-natural ancient woodland on the steep river escarpment, with footpaths through it. The footpath network plan above shows that there is no continuous riverside walk (or cycleway) connecting with the Dane valley up or downstream from the town.

2.35 Congleton parish only has Registered Common Land/Open Access Land on The Cloud. There are fewer public allotment sites (two) within Congleton than might be expected for a town of its size and there are no Registered Village Greens or Millennium Greens although there are many green spaces. Under the National Planning Policy Framework local communities can identify sites for protection by Local Green Space designation through a neighbourhood plan.

Local landscape/townscape areas

2.36 Because of the topography of the town, and the resulting development outwards in 'lobes, there are a lot of 'edges' to the settlement, including internal edges, as shown in Figures 4 and 8. Residents are consequently close to 'landscape areas' where the built environment does not predominate or where there is a good balance between built and natural environment. Some could be considered as 'green wedges' of countryside penetrating the town. The larger areas are shown below.

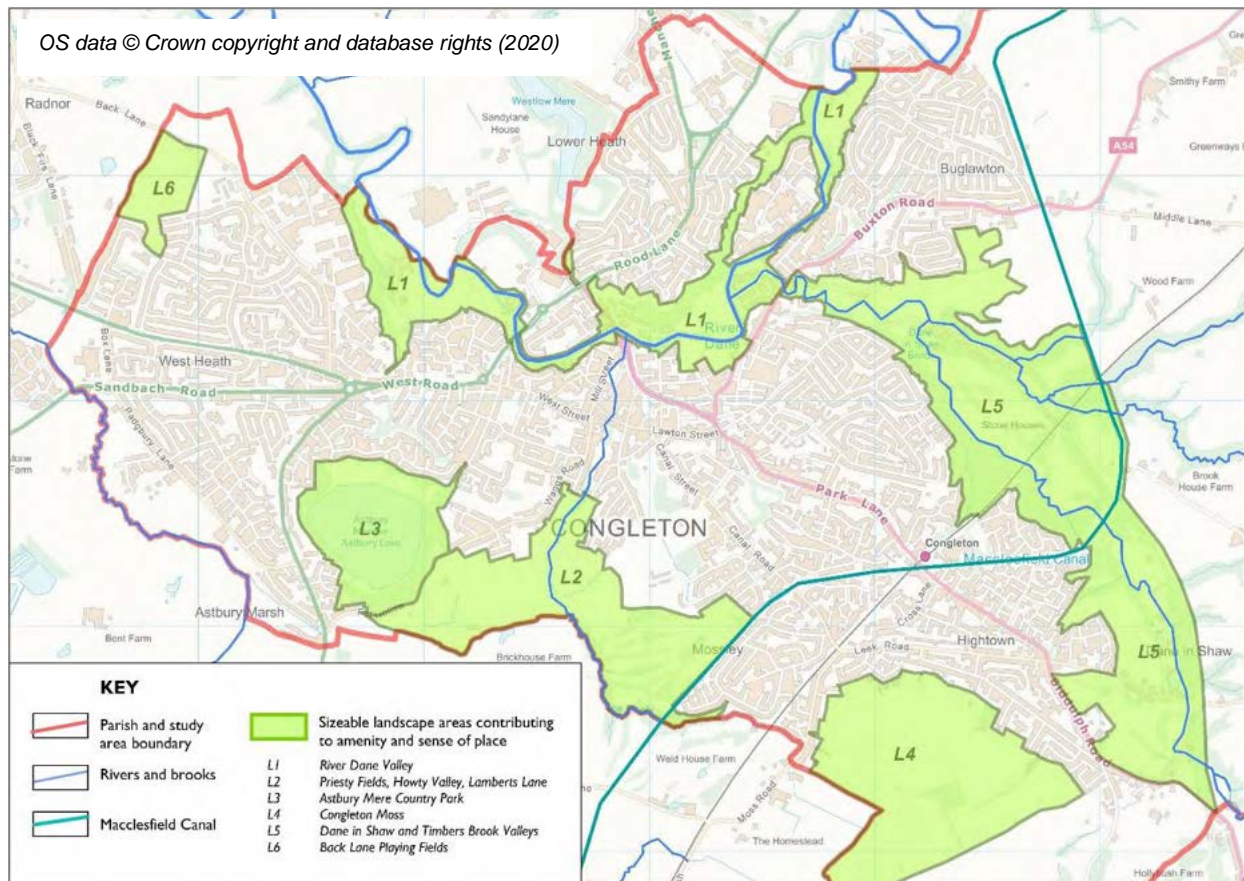


Figure 10: Sizeable 'landscape areas' within or on edge of town

2.37 The many smaller 'neighbourhood landscape/townscape areas' within the built environment also make a contribution to amenity and sense of place even where they are not directly accessible. Many contain mature trees but buildings are also likely to be prominent in these areas and to add value to them. These areas, which depend on a combination of special qualities, may be vulnerable to change. They are not the same as the 'local green spaces' which are generally smaller and are publicly accessible.

2.38 A brief description of each follows, together with a location plan showing indicative boundaries. They are also included under individual landscape character area profiles in Part 2.

Neighbourhood landscape/townscape areas

Astbury Mere northern edge

Linear area consisting of a wooded embankment and ridge left after quarrying. Includes small community orchard and right of way/bridleway, a key part of the town's multifunctional green network.

Banky Fields to Marlfields

Banky Fields green space is a remnant of a former hill, once farmland, and contains old hedgerow oak trees and footpaths. It has potential as a significant future viewpoint. It links with a further remnant of countryside within the town, sloping down to link with a small woodland within Marlfields School grounds.

Biddulph Road/Leek Road

Mature trees from former Mossley House and Henshall Hall and around the community Hall, together with the stone-built group of Holy Trinity Church, Mossley Old School, and 87 Leek Road (all locally listed).

Canal corridor

Locally distinctive sections, listed structures, wooded banks and adjoining open space with landscape, heritage, ecological and recreational value.

Danesford (West House) frontage

This part of a former country house and Danesford children's home next to the busy West Road enhances the entrance to the town, provides a setting for listed buildings and also helps to mitigate air pollution and noise. Includes an off-road footpath, and play area.

Howty Valley (town)

From the rear of Moody Hall and Bridge Street to open countryside via the Vale Allotments and the former Vale Mill site, this valley provides a setting to the Conservation Area and listed buildings, and is a wildlife corridor with amenity and wildlife (Local Wildlife Site) value.

Lawton Street Gardens

Includes the partly wooded linear burgage plots behind the townhouses on the south site of Lawton Street. as well as the Community Garden, the War Memorial garden, and the Bath House and Physic Garden which all provide tranquillity and a green haven close to the Town Hall.

Mossley Hall

Former country house including individual trees, tree groups and listed hall from c1800.

Park Lane Ridge

Trees associated with Victorian and Edwardian villas on the Park Lane ridge are prominent in the townscape

Stonehouse Green

Prominent site at entrance to the town centre with part of the former Brook Mill complex next to the Howty Brook and weavers' cottages. Place names - Brookside Street, Meadowside - recall an earlier landscape. .

St John's Church and Old Buxton Road

Includes the churchyard, old centre of Buglawton and a deep wooded tributary clough.

St Peter's Church to Highfield

The church, churchyard, Highfield House, and mature trees situated prominently on two small ridges above the town with a small incised valley between. A small field and curved track to Highfield from Canal Road give a rural character although close to the town centre. One area, but likely to be subdivided by development.

Tower Hill Water Towers

Water towers with surrounding mature trees on a prominent knoll above the Dane valley.

West Heath Avenues

The 'boulevards' of Holmes Chapel Road, Sandbach Road and parts of Newcastle Road provide a verdant entry to the town, also providing a landscape structure to the large suburb of West Heath.

Westlow Mere

The mere and its wooded banks are mainly outside the parish but surrounded by footpaths used by residents, with potential for creating views over this maturing restored landscape.

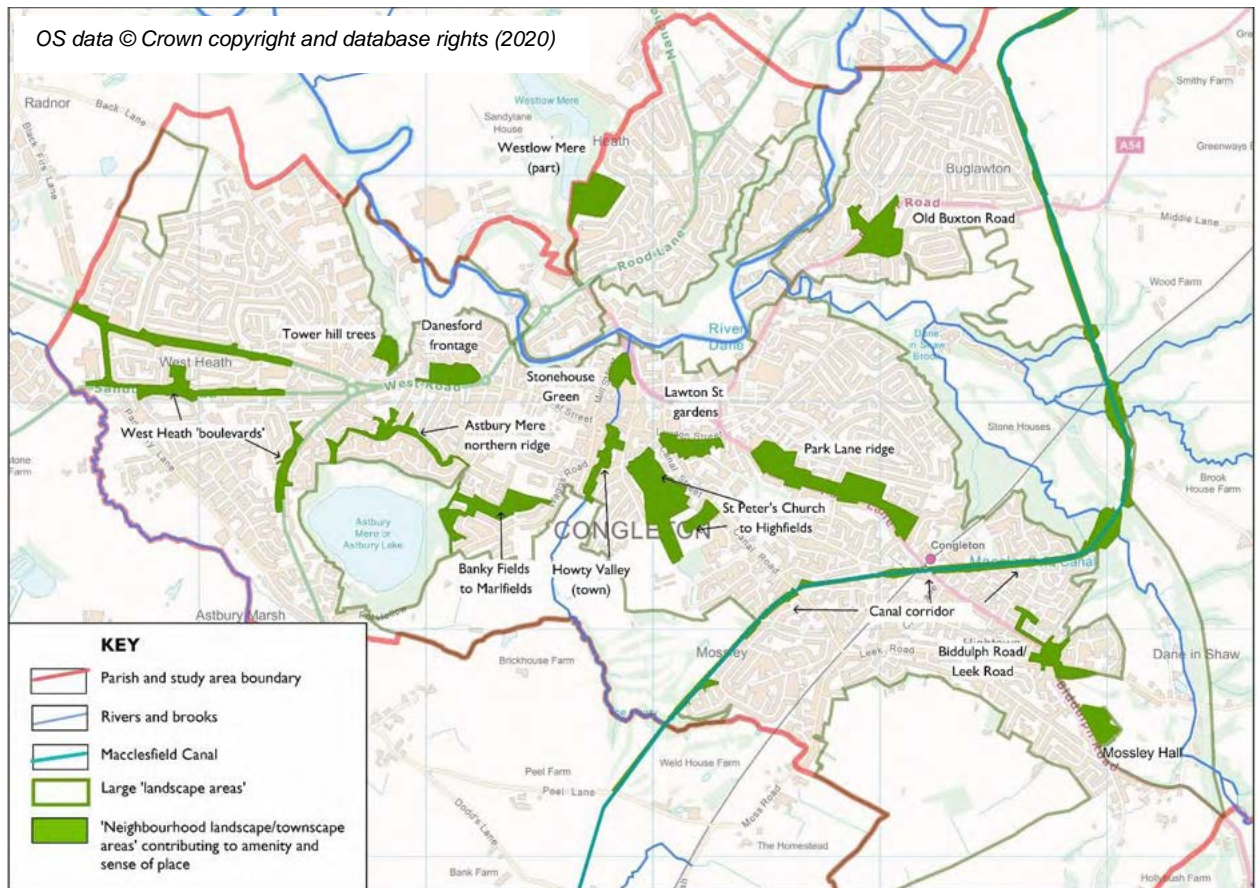


Figure 11: Neighbourhood landscape/townscape areas within Congleton town

Views and landmark features

- 2.39 Congleton is located within a group of major Cheshire/Staffordshire landmarks, as shown below. Sutton Common, the Cloud, Congleton Edge and Mow Cop are on the gritstone ridge to the east and south east of the town. They provide linear viewpoints from which very long-distance views can be obtained in clear weather.
- 2.40 The major landmarks shown overleaf can be glimpsed from within the town too - frequently as in the case of the Cloud, or rarely and surprisingly as in the case of Jodrell Bank - for instance the radio telescope is briefly seen behind the Town Hall clock tower from the top of Canal Road, then disappears as the viewer descends.
- 2.41 The 89 m high Lovell Radio Telescope at Jodrell Bank is 10.5 km from the town centre, the 72 m high BT tower at Sutton Common is 8.5 km away and the Mow Cop 'ruin', a folly originally built on the Staffordshire/Cheshire boundary as an eyecatcher to be seen from Rode Hall, is 5.8 km away.

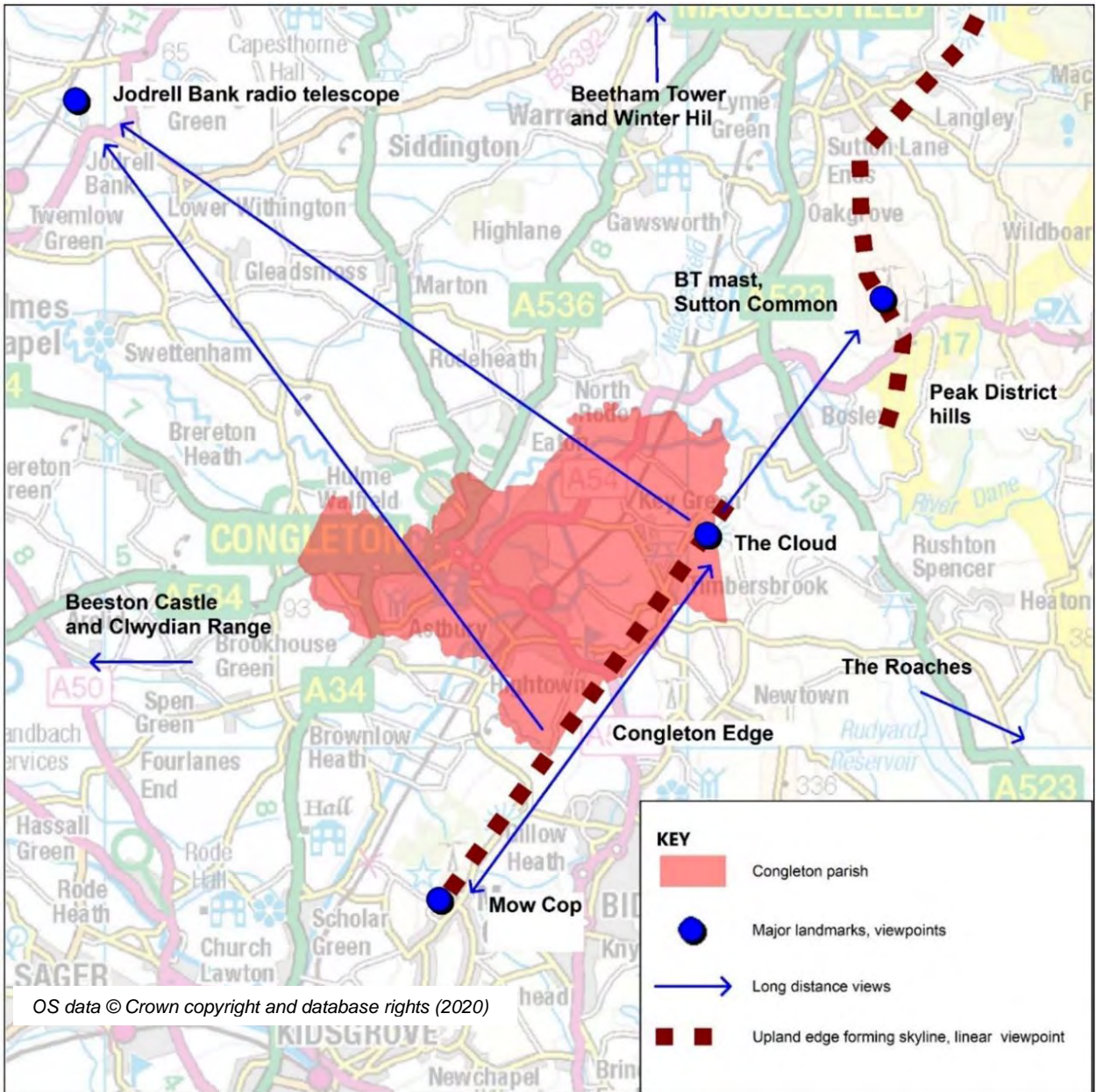


Figure 12: Broad visual context of the study area

2.42 Within the town, the water towers at West Heath and Astbury Lane Ends, the HJ Lea Oakes animal feed mill by the railway station, and the Town Hall clock tower may be more prominent in views. These landmarks and other local features which add to local distinctiveness are described in Part 2 under each character area profile. The locations of the more prominent features are shown below.

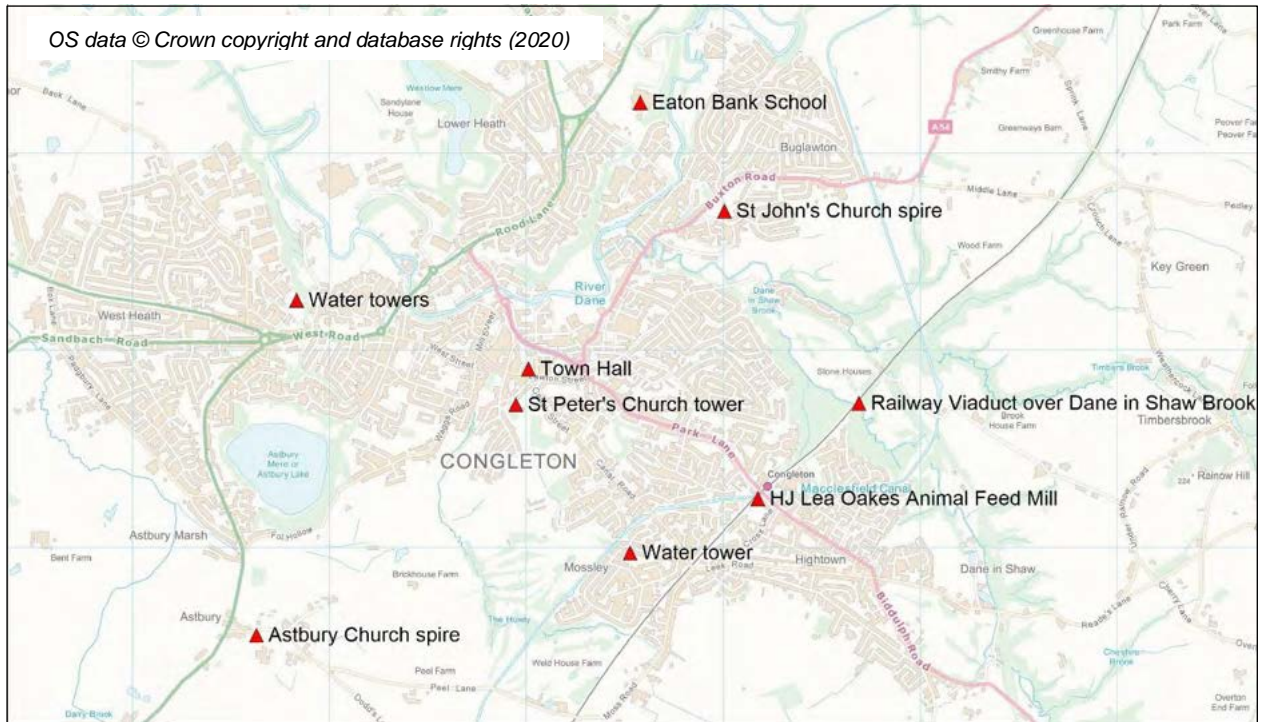


Figure 13: Landmarks



Water towers at West Heath



The Town Hall from St Peter's churchyard

Views within and from the town

- 2.43 Since much of Congleton town is oriented towards the River Dane valley, views may often be inward rather than outward looking. There are still many places where glimpses of more distant hills, local landmarks or other parts of the town can be obtained incidentally but few would qualify as 'viewpoints'. The top of the escarpment to the north of Congleton Park has the most potential, but trees block most views.
- 2.44 Minor ridges within the town, and areas to the east and south east of the settlement near the upland edge, tend to have the most outward views. The plan below shows some of the views and viewpoints from and within the town.

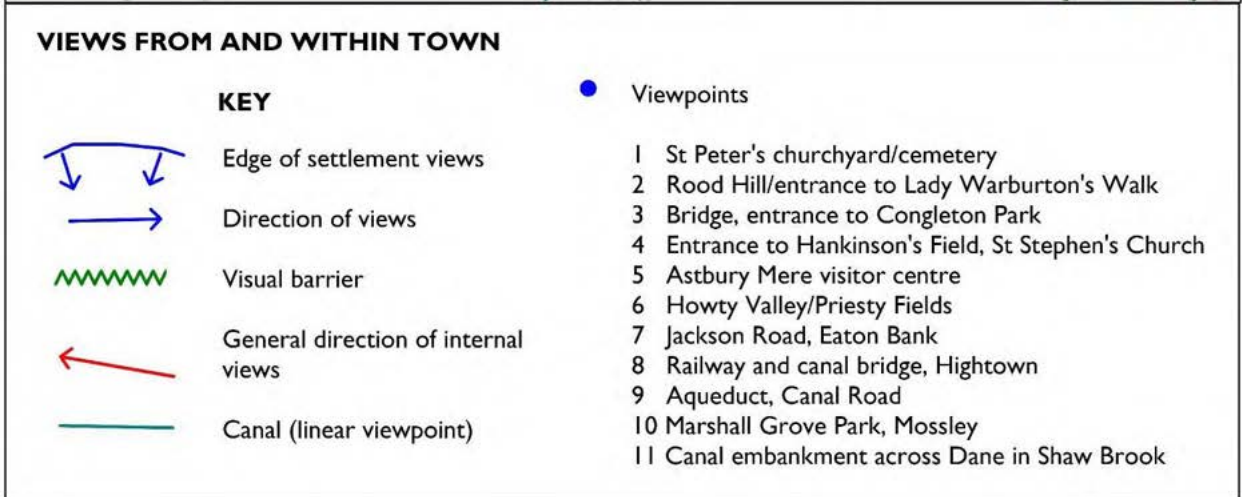
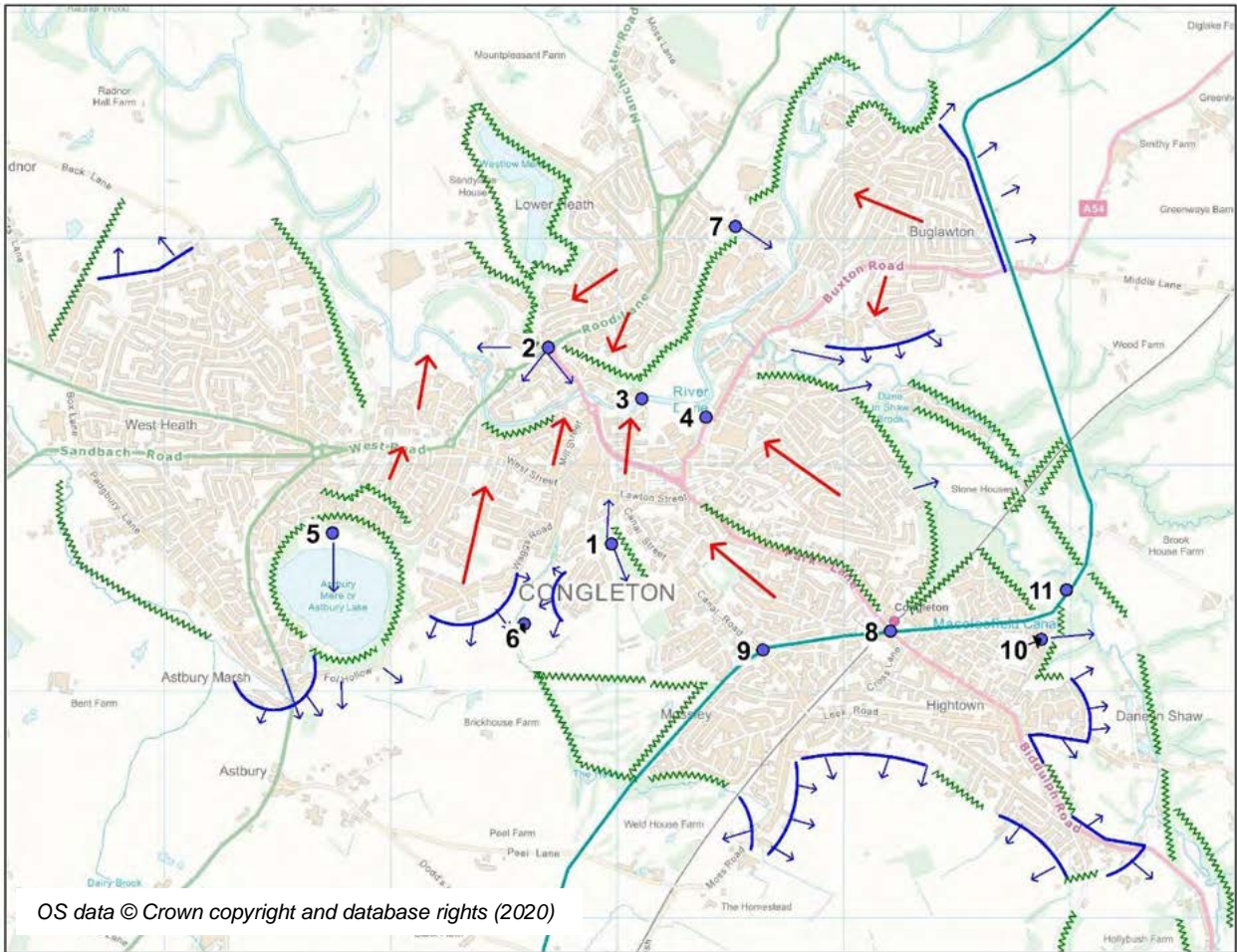


Figure 14: Views within and from Congleton

2.45 Viewers may be on foot or bicycle, or in a moving car, when the views are forward and usually framed by buildings, trees or hedges. Due to the variation in Congleton's topography, a slight rise in the road or a bend may suddenly open up a new vista or an unexpected glimpse of the Cloud. In flatter areas such as West Heath or Mossley, perspective views along straight roads are more common.



Glimpse of the Cloud beyond Little Street, Congleton town centre

2.46 Views towards the town may be obtained from the network of rights of way, disused railway, and minor roads around the town, as well as from trains on the main line railway and the Macclesfield Canal. To the east and south east of the town, there are panoramic views of the settlement from rising ground and the gritstone ridge itself.

Experiential aspects of landscape

2.47 Noise, smells, vibration, effects of weather and microclimate, associations, memories,

cultural influences and other non-visible or tangible factors affect each person's perceptions of landscape and townscape. Some of these are measurable, others remain subjective.

- 2.48 [Tranquillity mapping](#) attempts to show the relative influence of intrusive factors such as noise and disturbing features such as industrial sites but is too broad to be of much relevance to the study area. [Light pollution mapping](#) shows that all parts of the parish are affected, with a gradual diminution with distance from the town. In fact, the light produced by towns may be more apparent when viewed from countryside. Light pollution is diminishing over the UK with better designed and more efficient lighting.
- 2.49 Intrusive noise or its absence is a major factor affecting tranquillity. Strategic noise mapping data for main roads in urbanised areas is available from Defra - this shows the annual average noise levels for the 16-hour period between 7 am and 11 pm (24-hour data is also available). The plan below shows Congleton's road layout and the noise for the main through routes classified by decibel. Local knowledge can add to this information e.g. with open countryside inbetween and the wind from the south west traffic on the A34 Newcastle Road can be heard from the middle of Congleton Moss. Intermittent rail noise affects some parts of the town. Noise levels are likely to significantly increase in north and west Congleton with the opening of the Link Road.

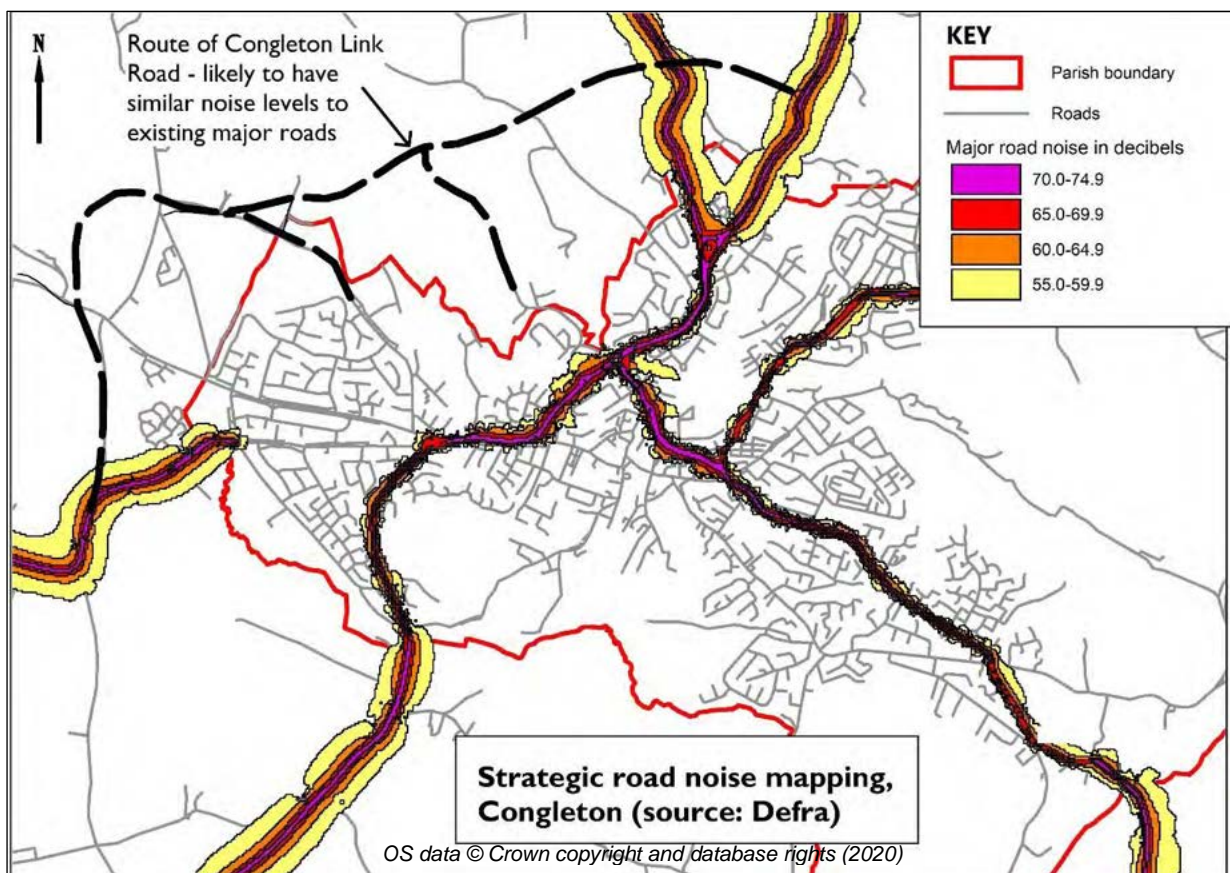


Figure 15: Strategic noise map and road layout

3 Landscape change

3.1 The [Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment](#) discusses current pressures for change, which also apply to the study area, under the following headings:

- *Development pressures*
- *Agricultural changes*
- *Increase in traffic and transport*
- *Decline in woodland management, over-maturity of specimen trees*
- *Loss of built and natural heritage, decline in townscape quality*
- *Climate change.*

3.2 The pressures that are particularly likely to cause long term, unpredictable changes to Congleton's landscape are development, including roads, and climate change.

Development pressure

3.3 Congleton is undergoing change at an accelerated rate. Strategic sites for development to the north and west of Congleton, and to its south and east are part of the [Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy](#), as is the Congleton Link Road which will bypass the town. Whilst much of this development is outside the parish, and therefore beyond the boundaries of this assessment and Congleton Neighbourhood Plan, it will in future become functionally an integral part of the town. Without going into speculation about what long term changes the new road and growth might bring, development pressures are unlikely to ease, and will have knock-on effects within the town.

Climate change

3.4 [Cheshire East Council's Local Climate Impacts Profile](#) (2006) discusses different scenarios over 3 time periods up to 2099, depending on whether carbon emissions continue to be high, or decrease to medium-high, medium-low or low levels (using the UK Climate Impacts Programme methodology).

3.5 Under all scenarios increases in winter precipitation are highly likely with decreases in summer precipitation. Winter and summer temperatures will rise under all scenarios but to a lesser extent with low emissions. What is worrying is that even with low emissions the graphs do not show much 'flattening off' over time so problems could increase into the 22nd century and beyond.

3.6 Future human adaptation responses are very uncertain. The UK is committed to action under the [Paris Agreement](#), signed in 2016 by 139 countries, but the scale of change needed for a transition to a zero-carbon economy is substantial. Goals are set out in the Government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#), including 'enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.

- 3.7 New renewable energy infrastructure and other measures could gradually change the appearance of the built and farmed landscape. Cheshire has relatively low wind levels but Congleton's gritstone ridge could have potential for wind turbines, although skyline development would be visually intrusive and against current planning policy. The use of greenfield land around Congleton for large scale solar photovoltaic arrays is a very real possibility and in relation to heating, the use of ground source pumps could disturb soils and habitats at least temporarily. There is significant potential for using the roofs of commercial and domestic buildings for solar energy generation or green roofs which will absorb carbon and support biodiversity.
- 3.8 Tree and hedgerow planting, better care of soils, and restoration of wetlands and peatlands which all increase sequestration of carbon, can help to counteract the effects of greenhouse gas emissions. They will generally benefit the landscape, but actions on the huge scale that will be needed will depend on larger landowners and tenants, including local Councils, as well as on individual residents.



Preparing for community tree, hedge and orchard planting in one of Congleton's green spaces

- 3.9 Future agri-environment incentives are likely to support these measures on agricultural land, but in urban areas a more complex range of actions will be needed including retrofitting of insulation and sustainable urban drainage systems, re-naturalising watercourses and floodplains, freeing up land taken up by cars for other purposes, a degree of rewilding of the suburbs etc.
- 3.10 Measures to increase resilience to climate change offer much potential for landscape enhancement, but strategies are needed to avoid potential conflicts between different objectives (such as tree planting on land which could grow local food or expand a rare habitat). This topic cannot be adequately covered in this assessment.

4 Landscape character classification

General

- 4.1 The landscape classification has identified 6 generic local landscape character types (LCTs), within the study area, shown in Figure 10 below. There are 3 urban LCTs, 2 rural LCTs and a transitional LCT. Each type shares similar characteristics, described in [Chapter 5](#). The landscape character types are subdivided into 15 urban landscape character areas and 8 rural landscape character areas as also shown in Figure 10.
- 4.2 The relatively high number of character areas reflects the complexity of the study area. As the town outgrew its original location within the Dane valley and its southern slopes, it extended along higher land, becoming subdivided by valleys, the railway, sand quarries, and more recently by internal bypasses, into separate parts.
- 4.3 Some of the character areas could have been extended beyond the parish boundary but further assessment would have been needed so generally this is not shown.
- 4.4 Areas of transitional character (from rural to urban) are found around Congleton, some of which extend well into neighbouring parishes. These are areas which have either received planning approval for development which is not yet built or completed, or which are strategic sites for development in the [Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy](#). They are shown in Figure 16 as tentative character areas but it would be premature to assess them because they are at different stages of development. Transitional areas are only referred to where relevant.
- 4.5 Congleton is a small town, but it is too large for this assessment to have covered all parts in detail, so some generalisation has been necessary. Some explanation follows for the areas where subdivision was less straightforward.

Approach to Mixed Urban subdivisions

- 4.6 When Congleton was just a small market town the current centre was almost the whole town. As it grew in the C18th and C19th with the expansion of its textile industry it extended to the west along West Road, and to the north east to meet up with the much smaller settlement of Buglawton, at the time a separate township with its own industries. There was also a scattering of residences and country house estates and along the main roads out of town. Growth of the settlement followed the curve of the Dane valley on land above the floodplain while the town centre continued to grow as the retail and civic focus.
- 4.7 The earliest mills were dependent on water power and were therefore sometimes outside the town centre in what was then countryside. Later ones were also built within the main part of the settlement. Development related to industry to north east and west of the centre also included streets of workers' terraced cottages. To the

north east, before Mountbatten Way was built in the early 1980s, the Willow Street/Brook Street area was much better integrated with the town centre, but there is now a perceived break, so this area has been included separately.

- 4.8 To the west of the town centre, the transition is more gradual or intermittent, and there is a greater proportion of suburban development, which is on average older than that of the more peripheral suburbs. Country houses and large townhouses with gardens were built on West Street and West Road, although there were also some densely built streets of terraced cottages, as in the Astbury Street area. This mixed area of transition is a large one although mostly focused on West Road.

Approach to rural subdivisions

- 4.9 All of the rural areas are part of earlier but broader classifications.
- 4.10 The Rural Lowlands landscape character type within Congleton parish and to the east and south of the town is mainly part of the broader Higher Wooded Farmland landscape character type (LCT 11) in the [Cheshire East LCA \(2018\)](#). Description and evaluation, landscape strategy and guidelines for LCT 11 are already available online.
- 4.11 The Congleton LCA separates out the River Dane valley for consistency with Cheshire East LCA's approach to the River Dane valley below Congleton. The Congleton LCA has also separated the lowland areas around Buglawton Hall from the Dane in Shaw Brook and Timbers Brook area due to its different characteristics at the neighbourhood scale.
- 4.12 To the south of Congleton, the remaining open countryside known as the Priestly Fields, Howty Valley and Lamberts Lane area is a small part of the extensive Lower Wooded Farmland landscape character type - LCT 7 in the [Cheshire East LCA](#). The part within Congleton parish however has more of the characteristics of the Higher Wooded Farmland i.e. undulating landform, wooded valleys and fieldscapes including some of medieval origin. Most of Congleton town, apart from West Heath, would have fallen into the Higher Wooded Farmland area if it had not become built up.
- 4.13 To the south east of Congleton, Congleton Moss is part of the broader Mossland landscape character type (LCT 9) in the [Cheshire East LCA](#). Because Congleton Moss has lost much of its peat, the [Cheshire East LCA](#)'s description, evaluation, landscape strategy and guidelines for the Mosslands LCT are not wholly applicable.

Approach to transitional areas

The character areas are included for consistency with the classification within the parish boundary, but will need review as development takes place. They have not been assessed.

General recommendations

4.14 The recommendations below apply to the study area as a whole:

- Respect and protect the highly valued landscape setting of Congleton town;
- Maintain and enhance the strong connections between Congleton town and the surrounding countryside and encourage new connections where lacking;
- Conserve, and where possible, enhance existing natural character with reference to Cheshire Wildlife Trust's guidance '[Protecting and enhancing Congleton's natural environment](#)' - especially the wooded escarpments and 'green wedges' of countryside which are key landscape characteristics and important for Congleton's local distinctiveness;
- Maintain and enhance [local landscape/townscape areas](#) and features which contribute to setting and local character but may be vulnerable to change, including those identified as 'landscape areas' and 'neighbourhood landscape/townscape areas' in this assessment.
- Conserve and enhance existing developments or conversions which make a positive contribution to townscape, including structure and form, landscape features, views and landmarks, and appropriate building styles and materials;
- Incorporate measures to maximise sustainability and adaptation to climate change of new and existing development including innovative design and flexibility of layout and use, ensuring the changes are sensitive to location;
- Support land management practices that have a positive impact on characteristic landscape/townscape patterns and local biodiversity, and which can also help to mitigate climate change.
- Prioritise the provision of dedicated, safe and pleasant routes for pedestrians and cyclists, to help reduce air pollution, noise and the need for unsightly car parking areas, and to promote health and well-being.

4.15 The landscape character type profiles below include opportunities for conserving distinctive character and managing landscape change, with reference to the forces for change which are most relevant to each type.

4.16 Further opportunities for specific landscape character types are set out in [Chapter 5](#). Any recommendations that are particularly relevant for individual landscape character areas are included under their profiles in Part 2.

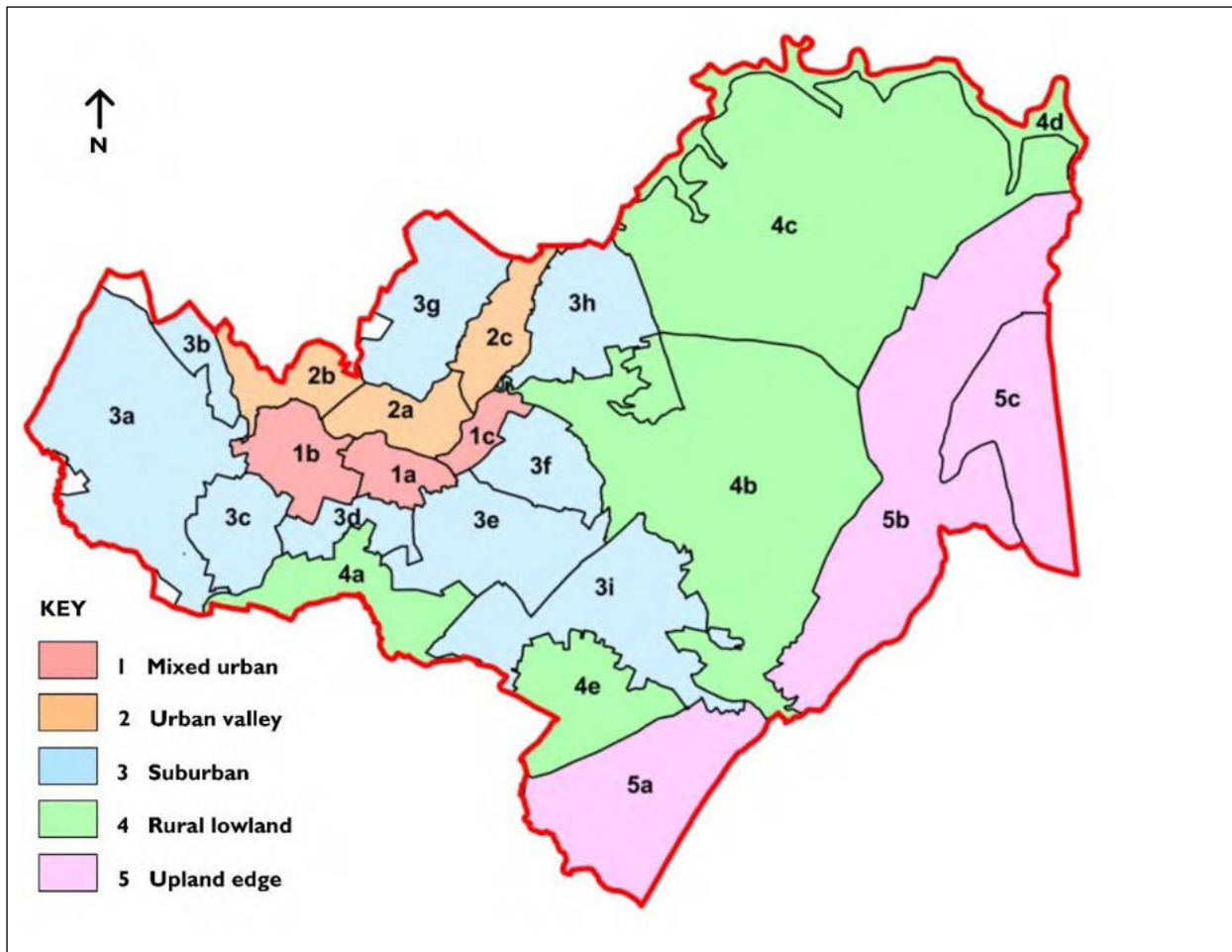


Figure 16: Local Landscape Character Types and Areas in Congleton parish

LCT No.	Local Landscape Character Types	LCA No.	Local Landscape Character Area
1	Mixed Urban	1a	Town Centre Historic Core
		1b	West Road
		1c	Willow Street / Brook Street
2	Urban Valley	2a	Dane Valley - Town Centre
		2b	Dane Valley - Congleton Business Park
		2c	Dane Valley - Buglawton / Lower Heath
3	Suburban	3a	West Heath
		3b	West Heath Industrial Estates
		3c	Astbury Mere
		3d	Waggs Road and Howey Hill
		3e	Park Lane / Canal Road
		3f	Bromley Farm
		3g	Lower Heath
		3h	Buglawton
		3i	Hightown / Mossley / Astbury Lane Ends
		4	Rural Lowlands
4b	Dane in Shaw Brook and Timbers Brook		
4c	Buglawton Hall		
4d	Dane Valley - Congleton to Bosley		
4e	Congleton Moss		
5	Upland Edge	5a	Congleton Edge
		5b	Timbersbrook and Rainow Hill
		5c	The Cloud

5 Landscape character types

5.1 This chapter contains landscape character type (LCT) key characteristics, ecosystem services provision, some landscape/townscape issues, overall landscape strategy and opportunities for the future.

Type I: MIXED URBAN

5.2 The Mixed Urban LCT has 3 subdivisions, described in Part 2:

- 1a Town centre historic core
- 1b West Road
- 1c Willow Street / Brook Street

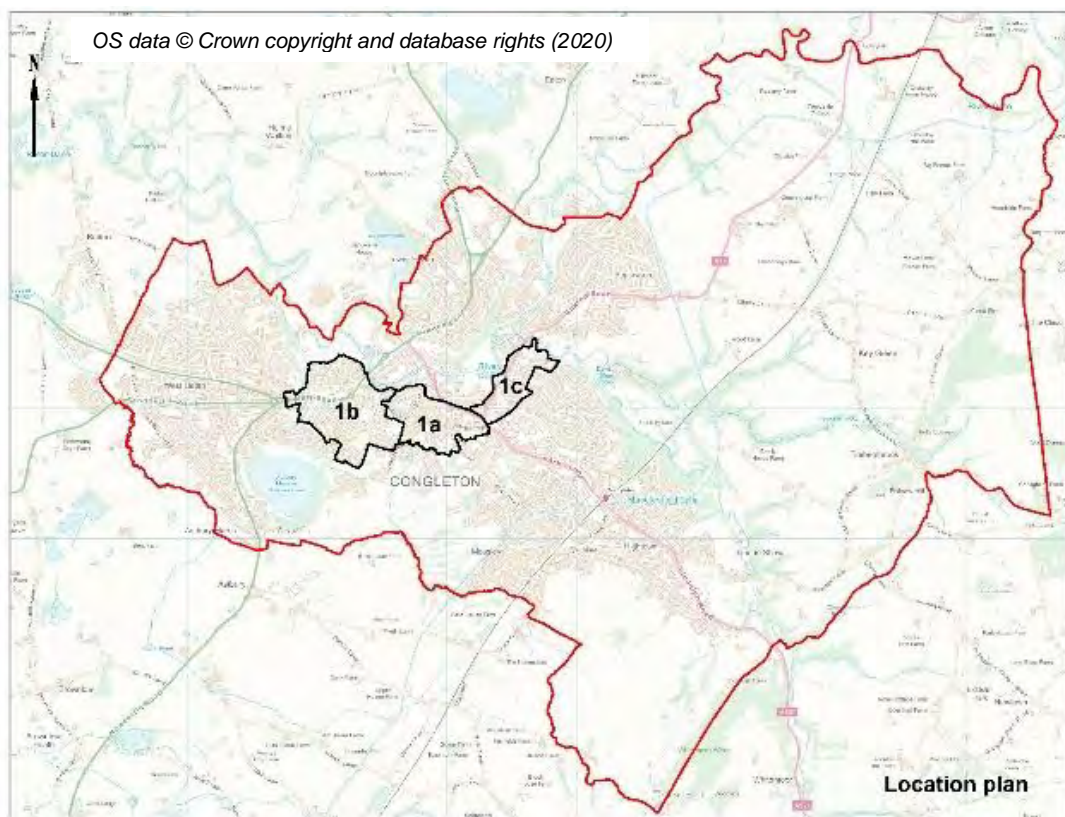


Figure 17 Mixed Urban landscape character areas

Key characteristics of Mixed Urban landscapes

- On land sloping gradually north towards the Dane Valley but above the floodplain;
- Linear form reflecting the course of the valley;
- Includes historic core of town and its later extensions to east and west;
- Contain buildings of different ages, and has a mixture of urban land uses and functions although the proportions differ;
- Former mill buildings present;

- Historic and civic buildings, medieval street pattern, variety of shops, existing mature trees, public gardens and orientation towards River Dane valley and its wooded slopes contribute to sense of place;

Ecosystem services provided by Mixed Urban landscapes

<i>Provisioning</i>	Food - gardens and allotments; Energy - potential significant solar power generation utilising roof space.
<i>Regulating</i>	Climate regulation - carbon storage through soils, urban woodland, gardens, watercourse corridors and other natural or semi-natural habitats; Water and flood regulation through general interception and storage of runoff by vegetation and permeable surfaces, and soils. Air filtering through trees, woodlands and other vegetation; Pollination through plants and insects.
<i>Cultural services</i>	Sense of place, history and inspiration through urban heritage, associations, views, aesthetic and social experiences Social, economic, educational services, cultural organisations, religious centres, festivals, shops and markets; Recreation, health and well-being through facilities including urban green spaces; tourism. Biodiversity through urban woodlands, gardens
<i>Supporting</i>	Photosynthesis, soils, water and nutrient recycling - all still occur in urban areas where there are natural or permeable surfaces

Mixed Urban landscape/townscape issues

- Some neglected buildings, areas of hard surfacing for car parking, street clutter, intrusive signage and inappropriate window and door replacements in old buildings, detracting from townscape quality;
- Development pressures on remaining areas of open space;
- Localised need for regeneration of urban fabric;
- Economic effects of development to north and west of the town could result in changes of use in older central areas;
- Reduction in ecosystem services through vegetation loss, soil sealing or disturbance by development, limited use of sustainable urban drainage measures, pollution of groundwater by industry, transport and domestic activities; decline in tranquillity through rising traffic levels, road noise and urban light pollution;

Overall landscape strategy: Conservation, enhancement and greater sustainability.

5.3 As one of East Cheshire's Silk, Cotton and Market Towns ([Cheshire East Borough Design Guide Volume I](#)), which retains much of its historic character, the overall strategy for Congleton's older Mixed Urban areas is conservation of landscape and

built heritage, with sensitive adaptation to changing climate and circumstances. This applies to non-designated places, buildings and landscape features which make a contribution to local identity, not just to Conservation Areas.

Landscape opportunities for Mixed Urban Areas

General

- Refer to character area profiles in Part 2, to the [Moody Street and West Street Conservation Area](#) appraisals, and to the [Cheshire East Design Guide](#);

Development pressures

- Historic landscape, views, green space and wildlife sustained into the future, through good design and avoidance of further infill development on unbuilt land;

Increase in traffic and transport

- Sustainable travel through strategies to help reduce traffic levels, parking pressure, air pollution and noise to allow improvement in landscape quality and experience of landscape, and benefit health and well-being;

Decline in woodland management, over-maturity of specimen trees

- Urban trees and significant tree groups sustained in the urban landscape through updated surveys and assessments, long term management proposals and their implementation;
-
- New tree planting, preferably large native tree species, to become the successors of existing over-mature trees and the veteran trees of the future; support and implement a strategy for tree, shrub and hedgerow planting for climatic change benefits;
-

Loss of built and natural heritage, decline in townscape quality

- Built environment character erosion reversed through support, advice, decision-making and regulation (see Historic England [Heritage at Risk Register, West Street Town Centre](#)); higher quality public realm through reduction of visual clutter, obstacles to movement, upgraded surfacing etc;

Climate change

- Sustainability measures encouraged which also bring landscape benefits including use of unsealed surfaces, increase in vegetated surfaces, opening up of culverted watercourses; utilising roofscapes through green roofs, brown roofs (benefitting birds and invertebrates), management of gardens and green space to encourage plants and insects for pollination, replacement of fences with hedges, tree planting, more efficient lighting to reduce glare and sky glow..

Type 2: URBAN VALLEY

5.4 The Urban Valley character type has 3 subdivisions, described in Part 2:

- 2a Dane Valley - Town Centre
- 2b Dane Valley - Congleton Business Park
- 2c Dane Valley - Buglawton/Lower Heath

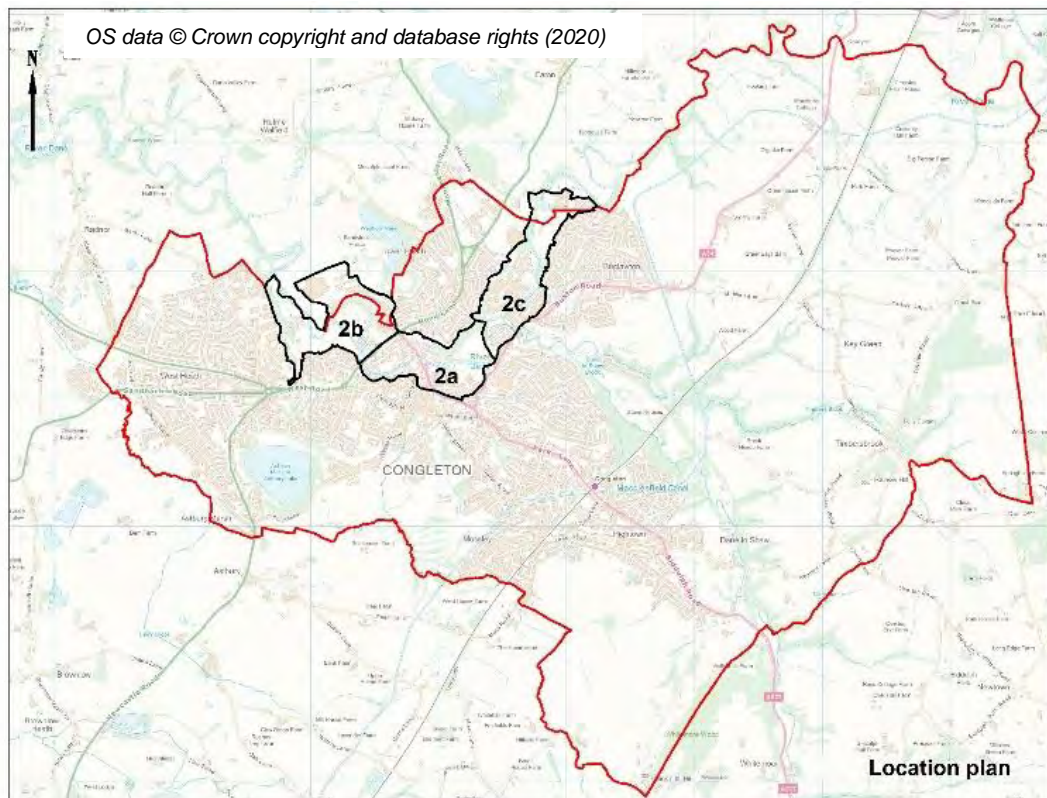


Figure 18: Urban Valley landscape character areas

Key characteristics of Urban Valley landscapes

- Defined by geography and cultural history;
- Strong association with the older parts of the settlement but also connected to newer areas of suburban development;
- Focus for the town's green infrastructure network but has a high strategic value beyond the town of Congleton, as it connects the tributary valleys of the upper Dane with the lower Dane valley;
- Mixture of natural and built land uses - approximately 50% of each;
- Concentration of former mill buildings or their replacements by apartments on a similar scale;
- Location for a large proportion of Congleton's industrial, commercial and business premises with development still continuing.
- Focus for recreation and leisure facilities including Congleton's main park.

Ecosystem services provided by Urban Valley landscapes

<i>Provisioning</i>	Food - potential timber supply from urban woodlands; Energy - potential significant solar power generation utilising industrial and domestic roof space, hydro-electric energy potential.
<i>Regulating</i>	Climate regulation - carbon storage through soils, urban woodland, gardens, river corridor and other natural or semi-natural habitats; Water and flood regulation through general interception and storage of runoff by vegetation and permeable surfaces, and soils, and floodplain water storage; Air filtering through trees, woodlands and other vegetation; Pollination through plants and insects.
<i>Cultural services</i>	Sense of place, history and inspiration through urban heritage, associations, views, aesthetic and social experiences Social, economic and cultural services - employment, cultural organisations, religious centres, theatre, festivals; Recreation, health and well-being through facilities including formal park, informal urban green spaces and accessible natural areas; Biodiversity through urban woodlands, river corridor, gardens
<i>Supporting</i>	Photosynthesis, soils, water and nutrient recycling - urban valleys are about 45-50% natural or permeable surfaces, with the remainder being built land or largely sealed surfaces such as roads.

Urban Valley landscape/townscape issues

- No continuous off-road routes connecting all parts of the Dane valley at present;
- Remaining green space within the valley is being incrementally lost to sometimes insensitive development, with less space available for nature conservation;
- Industrial heritage could be at risk if new uses cannot be found;
- Localised need for regeneration of urban fabric;
- Existing development in the floodplain could be at risk from climate change but valley has significant potential for helping to reduce future impacts of climate change;
- Unknown effects of developments to north and west of town on older central areas;
- Management of areas of nature conservation and amenity value in urban context.

Overall landscape strategy: Prioritisation of multifunctional green networks and climatic change adaptation in new development, whilst maintaining natural and cultural heritage value.

Landscape opportunities for Urban Valley landscapes

General

- Refer to landscape character area profiles in Part 2, to Conservation Area appraisals, and to the Cheshire East Design Guide.

Development pressures

- Remaining valley green infrastructure protected, including resisting pressure for development within the floodplain, to retain views, historic landscape and wildlife and quality of life to make the town attractive to business and residents;
- Landscape enhanced in new developments by retaining, buffering and extending woodlands, and strengthening green networks by planting hedges and hedgerow trees; Valley character by using appropriate native species suited to the river corridor and floodplain rather than generic 'amenity' varieties..

-

Increase in traffic and transport

- Sustainable travel through utilising urban valleys for continuous footways and cycleways for both travelling to work and recreational use with provision of more river crossing points for pedestrians and cyclists to connect residential areas to north and south, and safer crossing points where major roads are barriers to continuity.

Decline in woodland management, over-maturity of specimen trees

- Visually and ecologically significant escarpment woodlands sustained through updated surveys and assessments and long-term management proposals and implementation;
- Planting of large native tree species, to become the veteran trees of the future.

Loss of built and natural heritage, decline in townscape quality

- Maintenance and enhancement of historic built and industrial heritage and character through restoration and regeneration, with attention to detailing and quality of setting;
- Enhance setting of Dane Mill and improve Clayton Bypass corridor when opportunities arise to create a better transition between the town centre and the lower Dane valley within Congleton, and give a better impression to visitors to the business park;
- Design new developments to integrate into valley landscape, taking into consideration views from valley sides at a higher elevation, by using non-reflective materials for both elevations and roofs which are in recessive colours which blend into the landscape.

Climate change

- Mitigate effects of climatic change through making space for water, maintaining and restoring floodplain habitats and connectivity, and choosing sustainable urban drainage schemes (SUDS) options that can also benefit the landscape.

Landscape opportunities for Industrial areas including West Heath industrial estate

- Leave space for valley woodlands in future redevelopment by leaving a 15 m minimum buffer between woodlands and industrial development, link new structural planting to existing to create a stronger green infrastructure network.

Loss of built and natural heritage, decline in townscape quality

- Maximise the potential of built heritage to provide a sense of place, and respect the settings of both built and natural heritage.
- Minimise the potential visual impact of new development on existing landscape/townscape through good design. Ensure that the height of new built development does not exceed the capacity for existing woodland to screen it.

Climate change

- Greener environment for industrial and commercial areas through creation of internal green infrastructure network with hedging, incorporating large native trees where space allows.
- Landscape enhancement which also includes sustainability measures, including use of unsealed surfaces, increase in vegetated surfaces; water features in conjunction with sustainable urban drainage systems, utilising roof space through green and brown roofs (the latter benefitting birds and invertebrates), management of green space to encourage plants and insects for pollination, replacement of fences with hedges, tree planting, more efficient lighting to reduce glare and sky glow.

Type 3: SUBURBAN

5.5 The Suburban landscape character type has 8 subdivisions, described in Part 2:

- 3a West Heath
- 3b West Heath Industrial Estates
- 3c Astbury Mere
- 3d Wags Road and Howey Hill
- 3e Park Lane - Canal Road
- 3g Lower Heath
- 3h Buglawton
- 3i Hightown, Mossley and Astbury Lane Ends

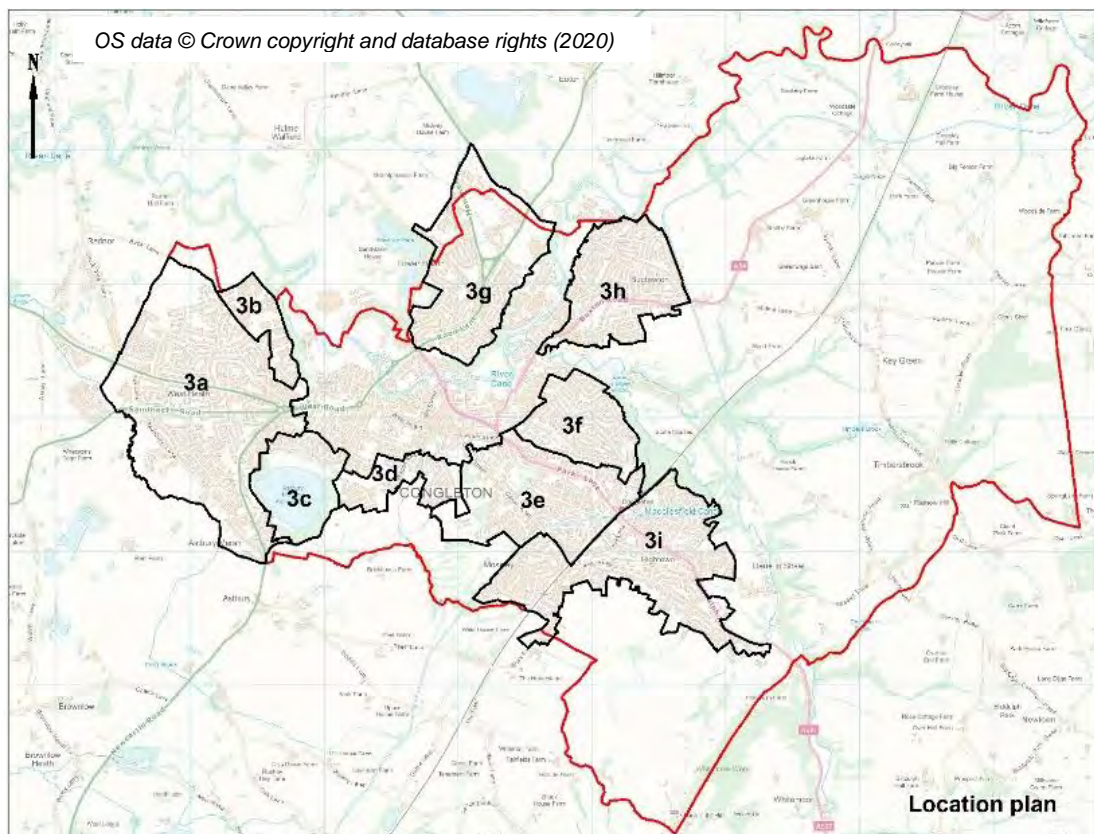


Figure 19: Suburban landscape character areas

Key characteristics of Suburban landscapes

- Generally developed away from the town centre and at a higher elevation as relatively distinct and separate parts of the settlement.
- Predominantly housing estates from the mid C20th onwards, which despite differences in age and individualisation of properties, conveys an overall similarity of character, with little local distinctiveness.

- Industrial estates which developed at the same time as the modern housing estates have been included where they are not intrusive.
- Larger recreational areas including country park which developed at the same time as the modern housing estates and adjoin them have been included.
- Typically, in a suburban area 74% of the land area is in residential use, the rest non-residential, with 16% of the land built on, and 19% as roads, rail or carparking (figures averaged, based on Master Map topographic area layer).
- Suburban areas typically include one or more through roads, and many cul-de-sac roads, with car ownership and use increasingly influencing layout and design.

Ecosystem services provided by Suburban landscapes

<i>Provisioning</i>	Food from gardens. Energy - potential significant solar power generation utilising domestic roof space
<i>Regulating</i>	Climate regulation - carbon storage through soils, urban woodland, gardens, canal corridor and other natural or semi-natural habitats; Water and flood regulation through general interception and storage of runoff by vegetation and permeable surfaces, and soils; Air filtering through trees and other vegetation; Pollination through plants and insects.
<i>Cultural services</i>	Sense of place, history and inspiration through urban heritage, associations, views, aesthetic and social experiences Social, economic and cultural services - employment, cultural organisations, religious centres, shops; Recreation, health and well-being through facilities including informal urban green spaces and accessible natural areas; Biodiversity - canal corridor, gardens, trees
<i>Supporting</i>	Photosynthesis, soils, water and nutrient recycling - suburban areas are about 46% gardens and 16% other natural or permeable surfaces,

Suburban landscapetownscape issues

- Effects of car use on land use and appearance, with loss of front gardens to sealed surfaces and tarmac dominating public realm;
- Areas of public open space generally isolated rather than forming part of a network;
- General 'fruit salad' mix of amenity and garden planting species leading to lack of the sense of place that natural habitats and species that respond to soil types and situation can provide;
- Large native species of tree replaced by smaller decorative species with more limited influence on townscape. Unsightly pruning of garden trees.

Overall landscape strategy: Increase local distinctiveness and resilience to climate change.

Landscape opportunities for Suburban landscapes

General

- Refer to landscape character area profiles in Part 2, and to the Cheshire East Design Guide.

Development pressures

- Access and views to local countryside retained by avoiding further development on greenfield land, particularly where this is of historic landscape or other value.
- Variety of plot sizes maintained in residential areas, particularly where this contributes to landscape character, by avoiding further infill or backland development. Ensure that extensions or replacements of original buildings are in scale with the plot or setting and avoid loss of front gardens to hard surfacing;

Increase in traffic and transport

- Sustainable travel options with safe routes that connect residential areas with facilities, other parts of the town and countryside as part of a wider strategy;

Decline in woodland management, over-maturity of specimen trees

- Significant trees and hedges sustained in the landscape through updated surveys and assessments with long term management proposals agreed and implemented. To include planting of large native tree species, to become the successors of existing over-mature trees and the veteran trees of the future.

Loss of built and natural heritage, decline in townscape quality

- Original features, proportions and planting that give character to suburban streets retained, with consideration given to restoration if opportunities arise;

Climate change

- Additional tree planting for carbon storage and mitigation of climatic effects encouraged in public green space, gardens and streets, in accordance with a wider strategy for the town and its surroundings. Improved connectivity and quality of green infrastructure including creation of orchards, ponds and copses;
- Landscape enhancement, including gardens, through sustainability measures, including use of unsealed surfaces, increase in vegetated surfaces; water features in conjunction with sustainable urban drainage systems, utilising roof space through green and brown roofs (the latter benefitting birds and invertebrates), management of green space to encourage plants and insects for pollination, replacement of fences with hedges, more efficient lighting to reduce glare and sky glow.

Type 4: RURAL LOWLANDS

5.6 The Rural Lowlands character type has 5 subdivisions, described in Part 2:

- 4a Priestly Fields, Howty Valley and Lamberts Lane
- 4b Dane in Shaw Brook and Timbers Brook
- 4c Buglawton Hall
- 4d Dane Valley, Congleton to Bosley
- 4e Congleton Moss

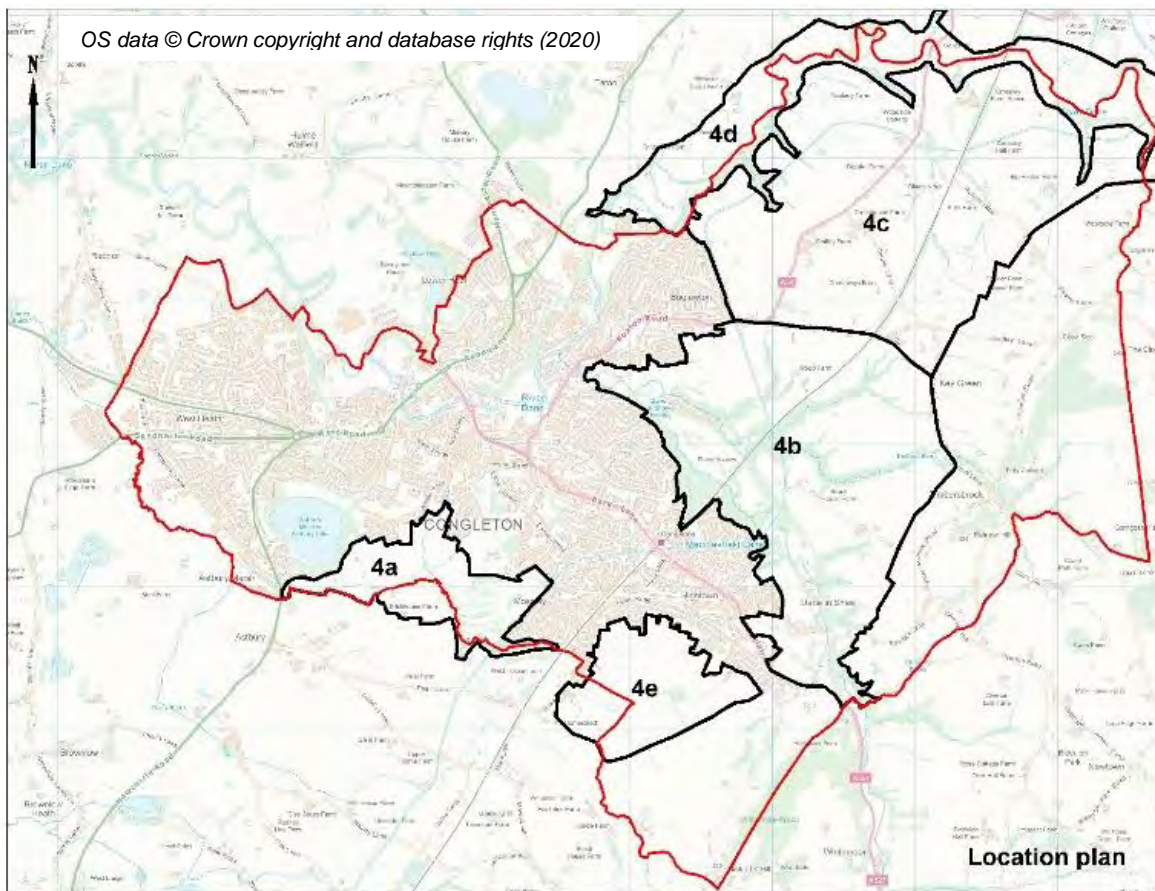


Figure 20: Rural Lowlands landscape character areas

Key characteristics of Rural Lowland landscapes

- Predominantly pastoral farmland on clay or loam soils with dispersed settlement, including small dispersed villages at Key Green and Timbersbrook;
- Transitional area between Cheshire Plain and the upland edges of Staffordshire Moorlands and the Peak District;
- Includes incised wooded cloughs, characteristic of the upland edge and its footslopes;
- Retains ancient fieldscapes, with small regular or irregular fields enclosed by hedgerows and hedgerow trees;

- Corridor for canal and rail routes;
- High recreational value due to footpaths and often dense network of rights of way

Ecosystem services provided by Rural Lowland landscapes

<i>Provisioning</i>	Food from agricultural land; potential for timber from managed woodlands; Energy - potential solar power, wind, hydroelectric generation and energy crop production (e.g. short rotation coppice, Miscanthus), water from rainfall via watercourses and groundwater.
<i>Regulating</i>	Climate regulation - potential for significant carbon storage through better management of soils, rewetting of peat on Congleton Moss, woodland creation, hedgerow tree planting, watercourse corridors and other natural or semi-natural habitats; Significant water and flood regulation through general interception and storage of runoff by vegetation and soils. Air filtering through trees, woodlands and other vegetation; Pollination through plants and insects, particularly in organic systems.
<i>Cultural services</i>	Sense of place, history and inspiration through rural heritage, associations, views, aesthetic and social experiences Recreation, health and well-being through rights of way and other routes, accessible recreational and natural areas; tourism. Biodiversity - woodlands and trees, species rich grassland, meadows, ponds, rivers and streams, hedgerows.
<i>Supporting</i>	Photosynthesis, soils, water and nutrient recycling

Rural Lowlands landscape/townscape issues

- Expansion of the town has meant loss of valuable farmland and ancient fieldscapes and put additional pressure on remaining areas for farming and recreation;
- ‘Urban fringe’ issues around town, with reduction in farming and hedgerow management, visibility of new urban edges, suburbanisation of formerly rural farm steadings and properties, increasing equestrian and recreational uses etc
- Intensive use of farmland with pressure on soils, drainage, trees and habitats;
- Limited use of land for food production to serve local population directly.

Overall landscape strategy: Sustainable land management including urban fringe strategy.

Landscape opportunities for Rural Lowland landscapes

General

- Agricultural and horticultural practices which make a positive contribution to climatic change mitigation, biodiversity and food supplies, including production of food with a known local provenance, and food for local consumption.

Development pressures

- Retain good soils as productive agricultural land, avoiding further loss of greenfield land and 'suburbanisation', and also avoiding over-enlargement of rural residential properties and barn conversions;

Agricultural changes

- Urban fringe countryside support and management for recreational and amenity role as well as agricultural or horticultural production;
- Historic landscape features identified, retained and respected, including historic boundaries and routes, remains of former cultivation systems, and historic farm steadings.

Increase in traffic and transport

- Sustainable travel for work and recreation supported through provision of safer and off-road routes through countryside for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders;

Decline in woodland management, over-maturity of specimen trees

- New and replacement hedgerow trees planted to sustain and increase tree cover in the countryside (except for Congleton Moss where there are other objectives);
- Remaining hedgerow and infield trees protected through leaving buffers, small woodlands managed for nature conservation, carbon storage and economic uses, field margins in arable land left to support wildlife including pollinators;

Climate change

- Peat soils protected from disturbance, and re-wetted where possible to increase carbon sequestration and support biodiversity.
- Space made for water within the countryside, including buffering of watercourses and retention of former marl pits which are characteristic of the area. Natural habitats restored and continuity and connectivity of blue/green networks increased to improve the resilience of wildlife as well as enhancing amenity.
- Large scale tree planting to store carbon and provide other benefits through creation of new woodlands, enlargement of existing woodlands particularly ancient woodlands, and new hedgerow tree planting.

Type 5: UPLAND EDGE

5.7 Upland Edge Areas have been subdivided into 3 local Landscape Character Areas, described in Part 2:

- 5a Congleton Edge
- 5b Timbersbrook and Rainow Hill
- 5c The Cloud

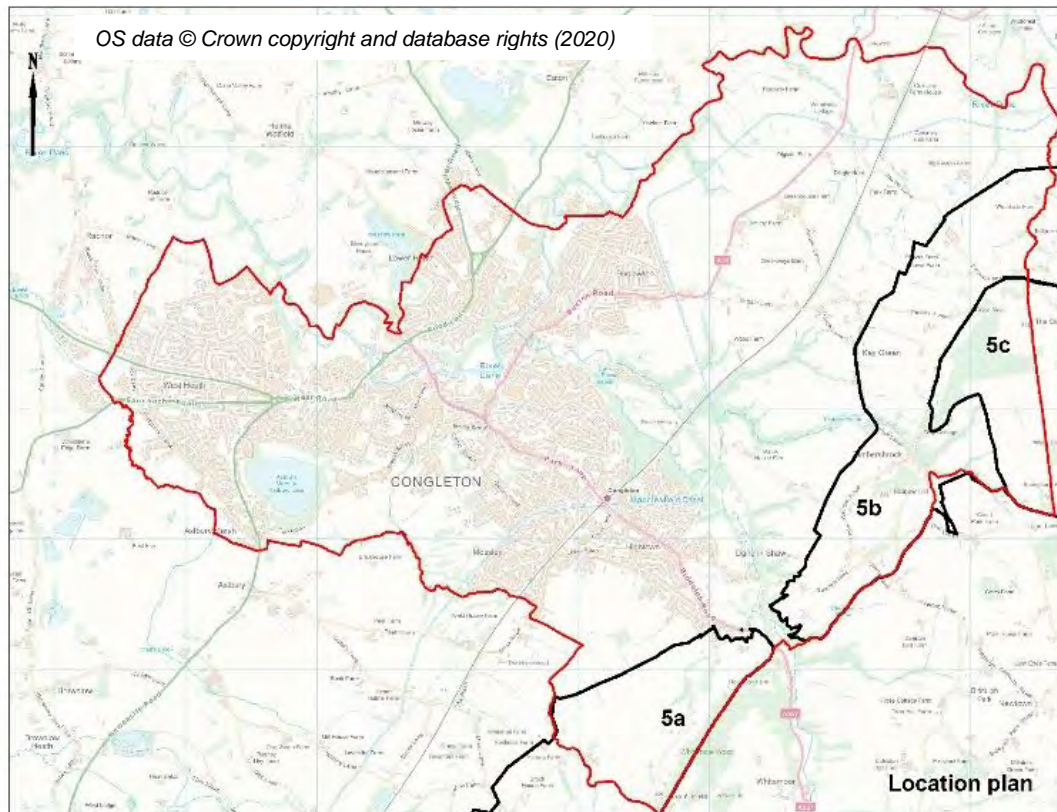


Figure 21: Upland Edge landscape character areas

Key characteristics of Upland Edge landscapes

- Summits and west-facing slopes of a distinctive gritstone ridge, followed by the parish boundary, with gaps at Timbersbrook, Biddulph valley, and Nick i'th' Hill;
- Distinctive rock exposures, habitats and cultural history;
- High recreational value due to network of rights of way including long distance Gritstone Trail;
- High quality landscape with Peak Fringe local landscape designation;
- Many scenic views, including outstanding panoramas across Cheshire Plain;
- Generally farmed landscapes, with heathland and woodland including plantations;
- Sense of exposure and openness, contrasting with the enclosure experienced in wooded cloughs and in the town.

Ecosystem services provided by Upland Edge landscapes

<i>Provisioning</i>	Food from agricultural land; potential for timber from managed woodlands; Water from rainfall via watercourses and groundwater
<i>Regulating</i>	Climate regulation - potential for significant carbon storage through better management of peat soils, other soils, woodland creation, other natural or semi-natural habitats; Significant water and flood regulation through general interception and storage of runoff by vegetation and soils. Air filtering through trees, woodlands and other vegetation; Pollination through plants and insects, particularly in organic systems.
<i>Cultural services</i>	Sense of place, history and inspiration through rural heritage, associations, views, aesthetic and social experiences Recreation, health and well-being through rights of way and other routes, accessible recreational and natural areas; tourism. Biodiversity - heathland habitats, woodlands and trees, streams, drystone walls, hedgerows.
<i>Supporting</i>	Photosynthesis, soils, water and nutrient recycling

Overall landscape strategy: Conservation, enhancement and climatic change adaptation.

Landscape opportunities for Upland Edge areas

General

- See Cheshire East LCA (2018) Upland Footslopes Landscape Character Area 12d and refer to National Trust for management guidelines for upland heath area.

Climate change

- Skylines (all significant) protected from any built development, including masts and wind turbines of any size, or solar installations. The Timbersbrook and Rainow Hill area is within the Peak Fringe local landscape designation area, identified as sensitive to wind energy;
- Peat soils conserved, including taking steps to reduce erosion and the risk of fire;
- Native woodland areas expanded and new woodland created ensuring that sensitive habitats and historic features are avoided and the best viewpoints are kept open.
- Historic boundaries maintained. Where there are hedges, encourage the planting of new hedgerow trees, otherwise maintain the network of stone walls on higher land rather than replacing with fencing or hedges.

Type 6: TRANSITIONAL

5.8 The areas shown below fall largely outside the parish boundary. Type 6 includes strategic sites for development in the [Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy](#). None of the Transitional areas have been included in the assessment but there will be significant future effects on the settlement.

- 6a Radnor Bank to Link Road
- 6b Dane Valley to Link Road
- 6c Westlow Mere to Link Road
- 3j, Tall Ash Farm - consent for housing on the edge of Buglawton.
- 3k, Black Firs area - extensions to existing residential areas in Somerford parish.

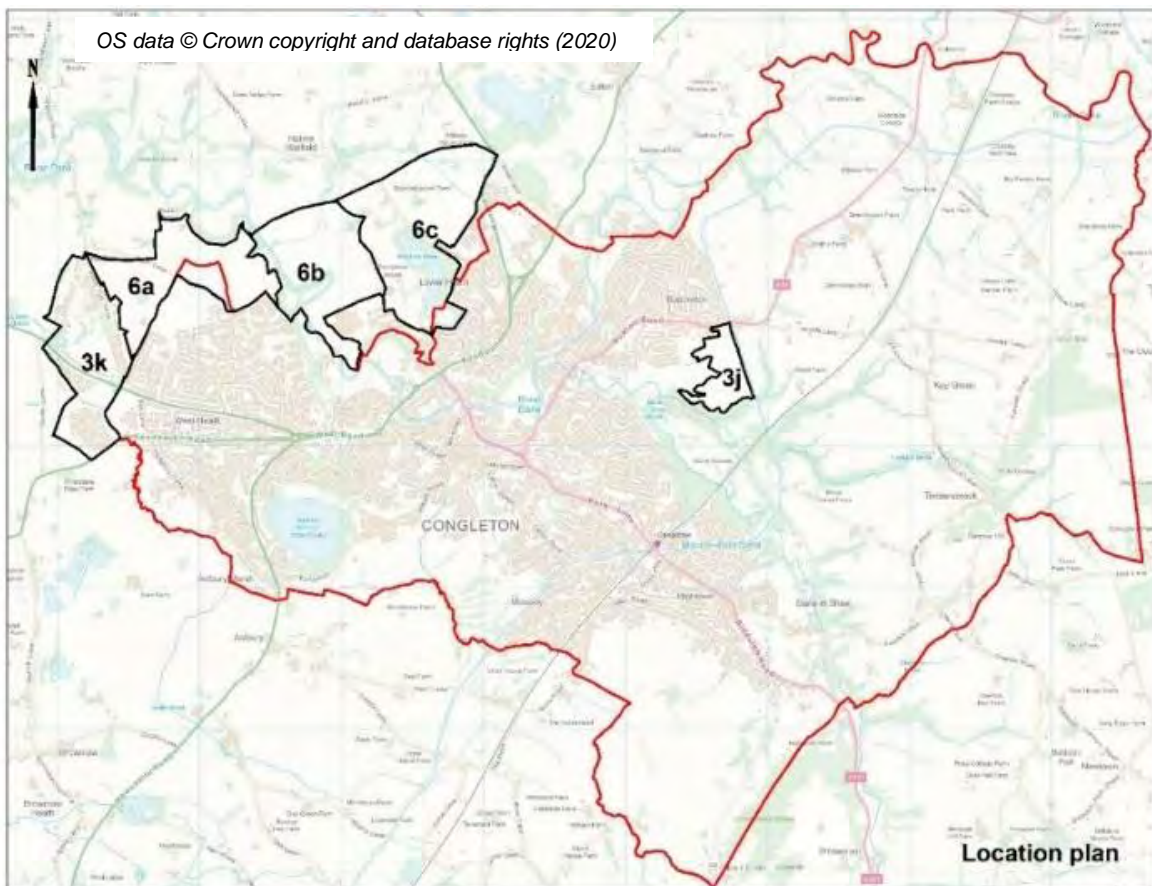


Figure 22: Transitional landscape character areas

Transitional landscape issues

- Ensuring continuity of character along the Dane Valley;
- Integrating with existing settlement;
- Integrating rural features of value to enhance local character;
- Avoiding coalescence with small rural hamlets

Ensuring connectivity with the wider countryside across barrier of new road.

APPENDICES

Appendix: References and data

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Map sources and GIS data

Description	Source
Ancient woodland	Natural England (NE)
Boundary line	Ordnance Survey (OS)
Cheshire East Landscape Character Areas	Cheshire East
Conservation Areas	Historic England/Cheshire East
English Local Authority Green Belt 2019	Government
Flood Zone 3	Environment Agency (EA)
Flood Zone 2	EA
Historic Landscape Characterisation	Cheshire Archaeology Service
Listed Buildings	Historic England/Cheshire East
Local Landscape Designations	Cheshire East
Locally Listed features	Cheshire East
Base mapping at 1:10,000 scale	Ordnance Survey Open Data
Master Map topography layer	Ordnance Survey under PSMA
Parish boundaries	Parish Maps online
Provisional Agricultural Land Classification	Natural England
Public rights of way	Cheshire East
Registered Parks and Gardens	Historic England
Rivers, canals	EA
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	Natural England
Tree Preservation Orders	Cheshire East
Road Noise	Defra
Terrain 50	OS