

6 Merseyside

6.1 Administrative set-up

Merseyside takes its name from the River Mersey and is a metropolitan county in North West England. Merseyside came into existence as a metropolitan county in 1974, after the passage of the Local Government Act 1972, and the county consists of five metropolitan boroughs adjoining the Mersey Estuary, including the City of Liverpool. Merseyside encompasses about 645 km² (249 sq miles) and has a population of around 1,350,100 (Office of National Statistics).

Merseyside	Males (thousands)	Females (thousands)	Total (thousands)	Area (hectares)	Number of people per hectare
Knowsley	71.7	79.1	150.8	8629.3	17.48
Liverpool	212.7	222.8	435.5	11159.08	39.03
Sefton	131.3	144.9	276.2	15455.66	17.87
St Helens	86.5	91	177.5	13589.08	13.06
Wirral	147.7	162.4	310.1	15704.9	19.75
Total	649.9	700.2	1350.1	64538.02	107.19

Table 3 Demographics of Merseyside (sourced various from ONS www.statistics.gov.uk)

Merseyside County Council was abolished in 1986, and so its districts (the metropolitan boroughs) are now essentially unitary authorities. However, the metropolitan county continues to exist in law and as a geographic frame of reference. Merseyside is divided into two parts by the Mersey Estuary: the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral is located to the west of the estuary on the Wirral Peninsula; the rest of the county is located on the eastern side of the estuary. The eastern boroughs of Merseyside border Lancashire to the north and Greater Manchester to the east, and both parts of Merseyside, west and east of the estuary, border Cheshire to the south. The territory comprising the county of Merseyside previously consisted of the county boroughs of Birkenhead, Wallasey, Liverpool, Bootle, Southport and St Helens. Birkenhead and Wallasey were part of the county of Cheshire, whilst Liverpool, Bootle, Southport and St Helens were part of the county of Lancashire.

post-1974		pre-1974			
Metropolitan county	Metropolitan borough	County boroughs	Non-county boroughs	Urban districts	Rural districts
Merseyside is an amalgamation of 22 former local government districts, including six county boroughs and two municipal boroughs.	Knowsley			Huyton with Roby Kirkby Prescot	West Lancashire Whiston
	Liverpool	Liverpool			
	Sefton	Bootle Southport	Crosby	Formby Litherland	West Lancashire
	St Helens	St Helens		Ashton-in-Makerfield Billinge and Winstanley Haydock Rainford	Whiston
	Wirral	Birkenhead Wallasey	Bebington	Hoylake Wirral	

Table 4 Merseyside Administration

6.2 Landscape

The physical landscape

Merseyside is a sub-region in the north-west of England. Lying between the Pennines and the coast, it is about seventy to eighty miles in width from east to west and about hundred miles in length from north to south. Its eastern fringes include parts of the Pennines; its northern extent lies in the Furness area of Lancashire, while the southern limits are in the agricultural areas on the fringes of the Cheshire Plain. The only firm boundary is formed by the coast at the west.

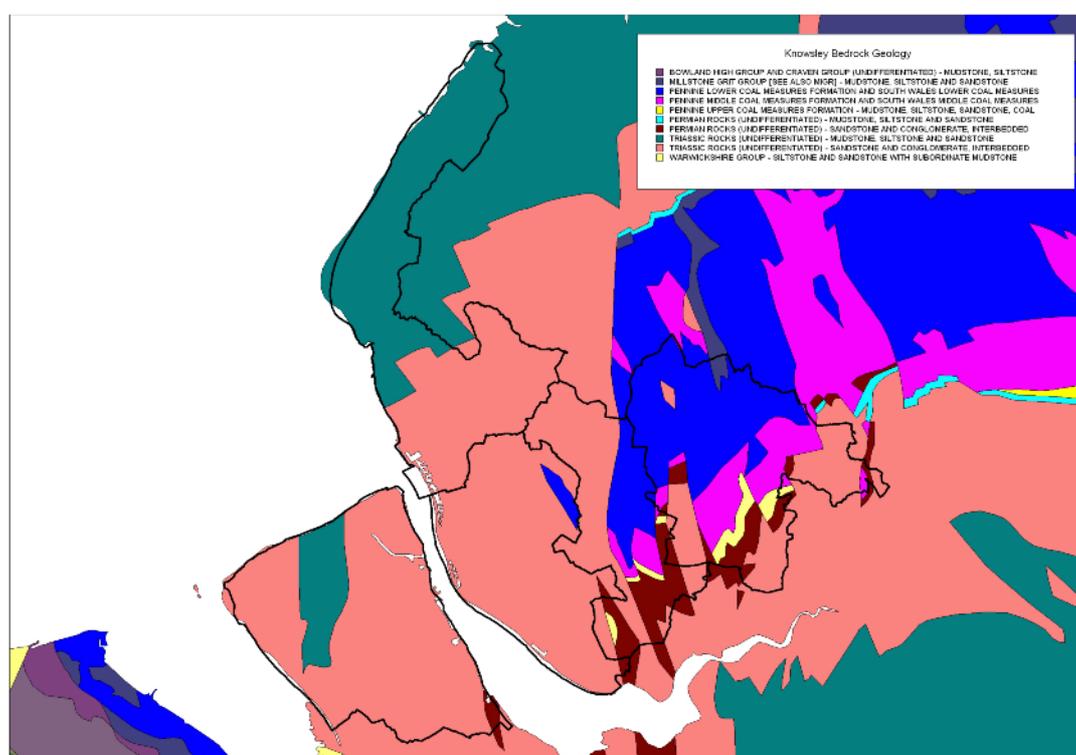


Figure 5 Bedrock Geology of the Merseyside Region.
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The solid geology of the area is dominated by sandstones and mudstones of Triassic age, with the sandstones forming the higher ground at the northern end of the Wirral and Liverpool. The south-western edge of the Lancashire Coalfield, comprising Upper Carboniferous rocks, outcrops beneath St. Helens and east Liverpool. Surface outcrops of the underlying geology are rare and the majority of the area is mantled by

thick deposits of till and pockets of sand and gravel deposited by glaciers at the end of the last ice age, some 15,000 years ago.

Carboniferous - The oldest rocks occur in the St. Helens-Knowsley area and are of Carboniferous age (354-290 million years old). They are of the Upper Carboniferous Coal Measures forming the south-westernmost part of the Lancashire Coalfield. The sediments now forming these rocks were deposited on an extensive series of low-lying, swampy river deltas built out into shallow marine waters. The periodic flooding and building of the deltas along the coastline resulted in the deposition of a series of coals (representing the compressed remains of the luxuriant swamp vegetation) interspersed with thicker layers of shale, clay, sandstone and mudstone.

Triassic - The Triassic (248-205 million years old) period is represented by red mudstones and sandstones that underlie virtually the entire area. These rocks were deposited under arid, desert conditions. The Lower Triassic sandstones of the Sherwood Sandstone Group form low, but prominent ridges at Wallasey and Birkenhead on the Wirral Peninsula and Crosby on the north side of the Mersey Estuary. The Sherwood Sandstone Group consists largely of red, yellow, and brown sandstones that often show colour mottling. Pebbles are scattered through much of the sequence and include the well known Chester Pebble Bed, whose smoothness and roundness indicates that they were transported by a large and powerful braided-river system, probably on the margin of an arid, desert mountain range. The sandstones, where present close to the surface, give rise to free-draining soils which support heath land vegetation such as at Thurstaston, Wirral. The mudstones of the overlying Triassic Mercia Mudstone Group probably represent wind-blown dust that settled in shallow salt-lakes and sun-baked mudflats on the extensive flood plain. These rocks underlie much of the land to the north of the Mersey Estuary.

Quaternary - Britain's climate has varied significantly over the last two million years with periods of temperate climate interrupted by repeated advances and retreats of glaciers and ice sheets. Collectively these periods are known as the Ice Age and the actions of the ice sheets have been instrumental in forming the current landscape. The main deposit of Quaternary age is till (or boulder clay), which formed in and beneath glaciers and ice-sheets. During the last glacial advance some 20,000 years ago, ice invaded from the Irish Sea area and deposited till, sands and gravels over much of the Merseyside area. Also associated with the glacial advance are deposits of fine, wind transported silt known as loess.

(Information on geology sourced and largely reproduced from Natural England web page www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/geodiversity/englands/counties/area_ID23.a.spx Accessed August 2011.)

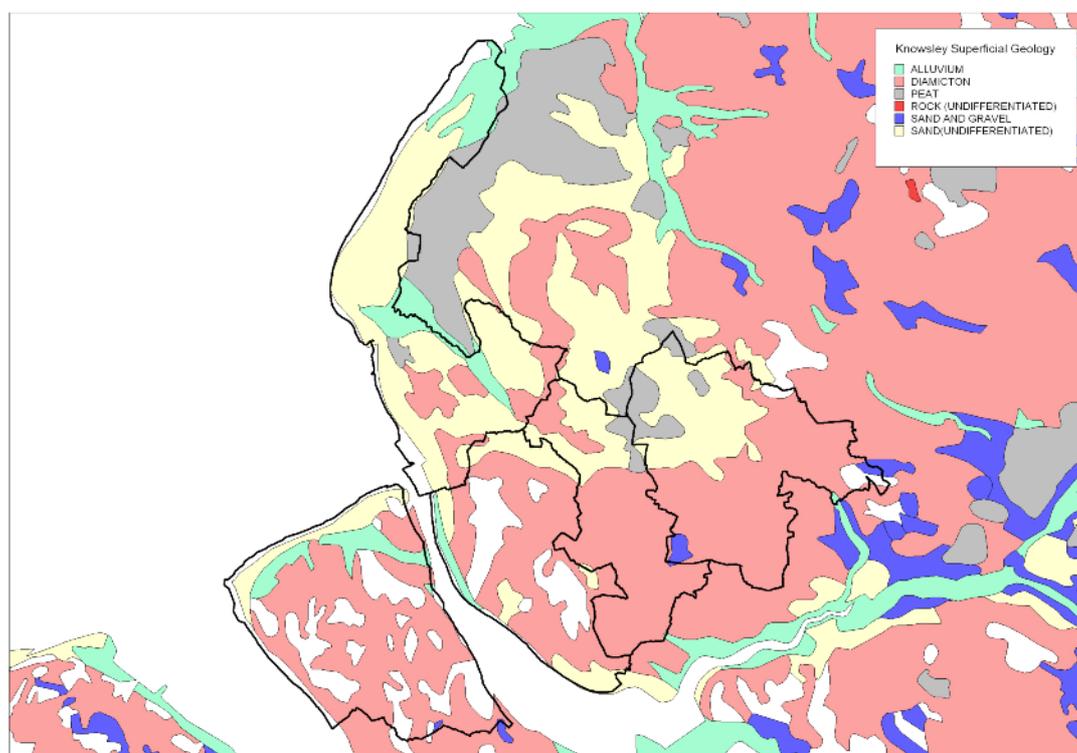


Figure 6 Superficial Geology of the Merseyside Region
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Merseyside itself is generally low-lying. On both sides of the estuary low Triassic sandstone plateau reach levels of about 60 metres above sea level which in places rise directly from the estuary giving a high, open outlook over Liverpool from the crests of Everton, Wavertree and Woolton, and on Wirral from Oxtan, Bidston and the hills between Heswall and Thurstaston. On the eastern edges of Merseyside sub-region, there is a more extensive area of sandstone plateau at approximately the same level (Ormskirk and Skelmersdale, West Lancashire), and it is this sharper rise to the higher ground of the Ashurst-Billinge ridge (Billinge, St Helens metropolitan borough area) which, in physical terms, marks the Merseyside boundary. Below 60 metre Skelmersdale level the main features are formed in a varied cover of boulder clay and other superficial deposits. Extensive raised moorlands in places give monotonously flat and ill-drained peat areas, notably around Rainford and Simonswood. Parts of the boulder clays are patchily covered with Shirdley Hill Sand up to ten feet in thickness which is of considerable importance on account of its

extreme purity and even texture as one of the main bases of the glass industry of St Helens. The coastline between the northern fringes of the conurbation of Liverpool and Southport is formed by a sixteen mile belt of sand dunes with the greatest width at Formby.

The Urban Landscape

In common with other conurbations, Merseyside is made up of distinct urban centres (many of which have continued to grow in their own right) along side those that have clearly been engulfed by the expansion of a larger dominant centre.

In 1922 C. B. Fawcett defined a conurbation as, "an area occupied by a continuous series of dwellings, factories and other buildings, harbours and docks, urban parks and playing fields etc., not separated from each other by rural land; though in many cases in this country such an area includes enclaves of rural land still in agricultural occupation". This 'bricks and mortar' definition provides what is probably the narrowest interpretation of the conurbation concept. Fawcett re-defined Merseyside ten years later (1932), the two definitions varying only slightly on the Lancashire side of the Mersey, because of the spread of the built-up area over the decade, but on the Wirral the 1931 area, which included the whole of the boroughs of Birkenhead, Wallasey and Bebington, is more than double that of 1922 which included only a narrow strip from one and a half to two miles deep along the Mersey as far south as the parish of Bebington. Some of these variations on the Wirral between the two dates can be explained by changed local authority boundaries but they nevertheless indicate something of the rapid physical growth of the built-up area on that side of the river during this decade.

The present-day built-up area of Merseyside has increased considerably around the fringes of the conurbation, particularly on Wirral, with the development of commuter belt housing. In the north-east of Merseyside the large scale development of Kirkby is wholly a product of the period since 1952 when the first houses of the overspill scheme were completed, and in the south-east a further large expansion has taken place at Halewood (both Knowsley). To the north the gap between Crosby and Formby has decreased with extension of both settlements (Sefton). Similarly there has been a rapid growth around Ellesmere Port (now within Cheshire West and Chester authority) further reducing the gaps between it and Bebington (Wirral). Expansion of most of the ring of settlements at a short distance around the conurbation has continued and in some cases the physical break between the two is

so small as to be insignificant in visual terms, as for example the A59 road between Liverpool and Maghull (Sefton). In addition there has been infilling of spaces within the older part of the conurbation.

The ring road marks the general extent of Victorian Liverpool. Outside the ring road the majority of development is post-war housing with some areas of farmland, golf courses and parkland associated with country houses, such as Croxteth and Bowring (Liverpool-Knowsley). The amount of open countryside within the urban fabric of the Merseyside conurbation is extremely limited and generally is restricted to isolated pockets of versatile, high quality Grade 2 land. To a lesser extent, the Leeds & Liverpool Canal and the railway network form important landscape corridors. The urban growth and built-up landscape of the Liverpool Conurbation is dominant on the north of the Mersey Estuary and extends to Birkenhead to the south. The urban influence overrides the underlying geology and physiography with just hints remaining of previous landscape elements such as the sandstone ridge at Allerton and Childwall (Liverpool).

Historical and Archaeological Landscape

The most visible archaeological and historic interest relates to the 19th century industrialisation of the area allied to the growth of Liverpool as a world port. However, archaeological evidence does exist for prehistoric human activity in the area from about 8,000 BC and significant evidence exists for Romano-British rural settlement from around the 2nd to 4th century AD. Although evidence is sparser for Anglian and Scandinavian activity, historic place-names and finds demonstrate settlement and national and international maritime trading activity.

The later medieval period (c. 12th-16th Century) saw the development of towns and villages. Although little above upstanding remains survive in the urban areas to attest this period, the landscape displays the rich and diverse complex of settlements some of which expanded into towns and are strong visible reminders of the once industrial strength of the region.

Historic urban settlement character is one of the key priority areas for research within Merseyside and one for which there is currently least documented archaeological evidence to inform the existing wide range of regeneration activity in the area.

Publications summarising Merseyside's archaeological background and research can be found in the Journals of Merseyside Archaeological Society (Merseyside Archaeological Society, 2002 and 2008).

Existing Studies

A range of area and site based landscape studies have been carried out in Merseyside, some historic environment led. Those of most immediate relevance are outlined below.

Archaeology and landscape studies:

In the 1980s a series of reports reviewing the archaeology of Merseyside's rural fringes was commissioned by the then Merseyside County Council and undertaken by the County Museum's Archaeological Survey Department. This did not cover the existing urban areas in any detail. The final report on medieval towns was originally confined to three towns. In 1988 the research was widened to include other settlements in south west Lancashire that became towns, although study was limited to origins and development up to AD 1800 through identification of its plan form, key urban components, economy, buildings and overall archaeological potential.

The 'Historic Towns Survey Report' was important to understanding the origins and growth of urban settlement in the area, demonstrating that distinct and individual settlements developed into centres of commerce and industry long before many of them took second place to the physical and economic growth of Liverpool.

There has not been any systematic survey of Merseyside's industrial archaeology. In the late 1970s (resurveyed in 1984) the then North Western Society for Industrial Archaeology and History identified key industrial sites in Merseyside. Some industrial archaeological survey was carried out in Helens town during the 1980s, but this was limited to identifying key industrial sites and industries and not the town as a whole.

Sefton district has carried out work on heritage landscapes and has a Landscape Character Assessment survey (Warnock 1999). This was supplemented by Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) work carried out by Lancashire County Archaeology Service in 2002. Covering former Lancashire County boundaries, Sefton involvement was encouraged through liaison between English Heritage, Sefton Council landscape officer, Merseyside Archaeological Officer and head of the Joint Countryside Advisory Service (now Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service)

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) project was carried out by the Natural and Historic Environment Team of Cheshire County Council with funding from English Heritage. The project has examined the whole of Cheshire, together with Halton, Warrington, and the essentially 'greenbelt' rural area of Wirral. Merseyside Archaeological Advisory Service supported Wirral's characterisation through data supply and liaison with Cheshire colleagues of parameters and the Characterisation project staff liaised over Characterisation project Service. This project was published in 2008 – the results for the Wirral have been incorporated into this study.

In order to safeguard landscape character and guide landscape regeneration, in 2005 St Helens Council commissioned Land Use Consultants to carry out a Landscape Character Assessment across St Helens Borough.

The English Heritage led Historic Environment of Liverpool Project (HELP, 2002 - 2010) was the first of its kind in the country and consisted of a range of partners whose integrated initiatives were designed to promote the importance of Liverpool's historic environment within a context of rapid change. Initiatives included addressing the problems of rejuvenating buildings at risk, seeking World Heritage Site status for the City, thematic architectural survey and promoting access to heritage. The Merseyside Historic Characterisation Project (MHCP) was piloted in Liverpool as it formed an integral part of HELP, primarily by contributing historic landscape context to the other initiatives.

Information on the variety of other relevant local authority led studies was sought as part of the project design preparation - the MHCP aimed to be aware of relevant completed work in order to contribute to and be informed by such studies. For instance, urban capacity studies form a key part of the Merseyside authorities planning for housing requirements allied to more detailed strategies in progress within the Merseyside 'Pathfinder' area encompassing land in Liverpool, Sefton and Wirral. Merseyside local authorities are also proposing a new Green Belt Study.

7 Wirral

7.1 Location and administration

The Metropolitan Borough of Wirral lies on a peninsula between the River Mersey and the River Dee. The City of Liverpool lies to the east, the Irish Sea and Wales to the west. Wirral is a mixture of business, residential areas and countryside.

The borough has a population of more than 313,000 people (Census 2001) and is linked to the UK's national motorway network via the M53 and M56. Wirral is classified as a Large Urban District by DEFRA this is because over 80% of its population lives in an urban area with a population between 250,000 and 750,000.

Birkenhead is Wirral's largest town, followed by Wallasey. Both centres have grown around the dockland areas which have attracted important industrial development¹.

Central Birkenhead is the focus for Wirral's retail trade and has benefited from major regeneration schemes funded by resources from central government and the European Commission. Liscard Precinct in nearby Wallasey is the other main shopping centre, with local centres in smaller towns such as Upton, Prenton, New Ferry, Moreton, Hoylake, West Kirby, Bebington, Greasby, Heswall and Bromborough, as well as out of centre shopping areas like the South Wirral Retail Park in Bromborough¹.

Places of interest in Wirral include Birkenhead Priory, Brimstage Hall, Wirral Country Park, Hilbre Island, the famous model industrial village of Port Sunlight, the Williamson Art Gallery and new Wirral Museum in Birkenhead, as well as the seaside resorts of New Brighton, Hoylake, West Kirby and Thurstaston.

Over the last decade Birkenhead has seen several major regeneration schemes - City Lands, Hamilton Quarter, Lairdsid and now Wirral Waterfront - all of these have been transforming the town with investment in shopping, transport, office developments, leisure, culture and education.

Industries tend to be in the eastern half of the peninsula, with docklands and a Freeport in Birkenhead and Wallasey. Major industries are also based in Port Sunlight, Bromborough and Eastham.

A network of roads, rail, air, and sea services connect the peninsula with regional, national and world destinations. Two road tunnels link Wirral to Liverpool. The Queensway Tunnel links Birkenhead and Liverpool, while the Kingsway Tunnel connects Wallasey to Liverpool. They provide the only road routes across the Mersey estuary and the M53, which runs the length of Wirral, connects with the Kingsway Tunnel. An extensive rail network serves Wirral providing a direct link with the main station at Liverpool Lime Street for Intercity destinations throughout Britain.

Wirral is also a major location for maritime services, its traditions established through the Mersey Ferries, which date back hundreds of years and still run regular services for commuters across the River Mersey.

The Metropolitan Borough of Wirral was created in the 1974 local government reorganisation - when it became part of Merseyside. Before then Wirral was made up of five districts based on the old County Boroughs and was part of Cheshire. Wirral is now the third largest metropolitan authority in the northwest.

Wirral Council was Conservative-controlled from its inception in 1974 until 15 October 1986 when the Conservative Group resigned the Chairs of committees. It was then balanced, with no party in overall control, until May 1995, when Labour took control. From December 2001 the Council has again been balanced.¹

¹ www.wirral.gov.uk. (Wirral Council Web site. Accessed July 2010)

7.2 Geology and Topography

The geology of the Wirral peninsula is dominated by glacial boulder clay overlying Triassic sandstone, the only exception being a small area of Carboniferous sandstone and shales near Neston.

These combine to form a low-lying but gently rolling platform punctuated by numerous low sandstone outcrops. The pastoral landscape of central Wirral is separated from the industrial areas of Merseyside by a dramatic sandstone ridge which extends from Bidston Hill in the north, through Noctorum and Mountwood to Storeton in the south. The Welsh side of the River Dee is quite hilly and the bedrock consists of Carboniferous limestones overlain by mudstones and sandstones including coal measures.

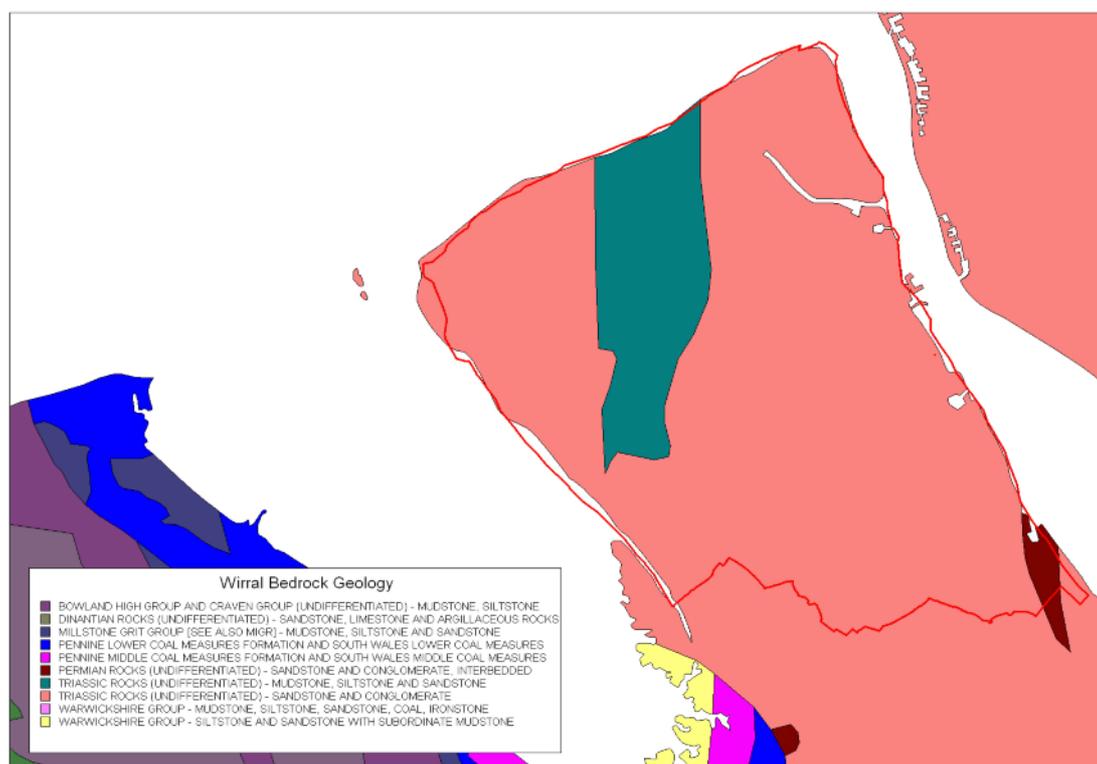


Figure 7 Bedrock Geology of Wirral

(Based upon DiGMapGB-625 data 1: 625 000 ESRI® [Bedrock deposits] with the permission of the British Geological Survey).). (© Crown Copyright and database right 2003. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100019088. English Heritage).

All subdivisions of the Triassic sandstone are found on the surface or in exposed cuttings in some part of the Wirral, but for the most part they are hidden under superficial glacial deposits. The Lower Triassic sandstones of the Sherwood Sandstone Group form low, but prominent ridges at Wallasey and Birkenhead on the

Wirral Peninsula and Crosby on the north side of the Mersey Estuary. The Sherwood Sandstone Group consists largely of red, yellow, and brown sandstones that often show colour mottling. Pebbles are scattered through much of the sequence and include the well known Chester Pebble Bed. The smoothness and roundness of the pebbles within the Chester Pebble Bed indicates that they were transported by a large and powerful braided-river system, probably on the margin of an arid, desert mountain range. The sandstones, where present close to the surface, give rise to free-draining soils which support heathland vegetation such as at Thurstaston, on the Wirral.

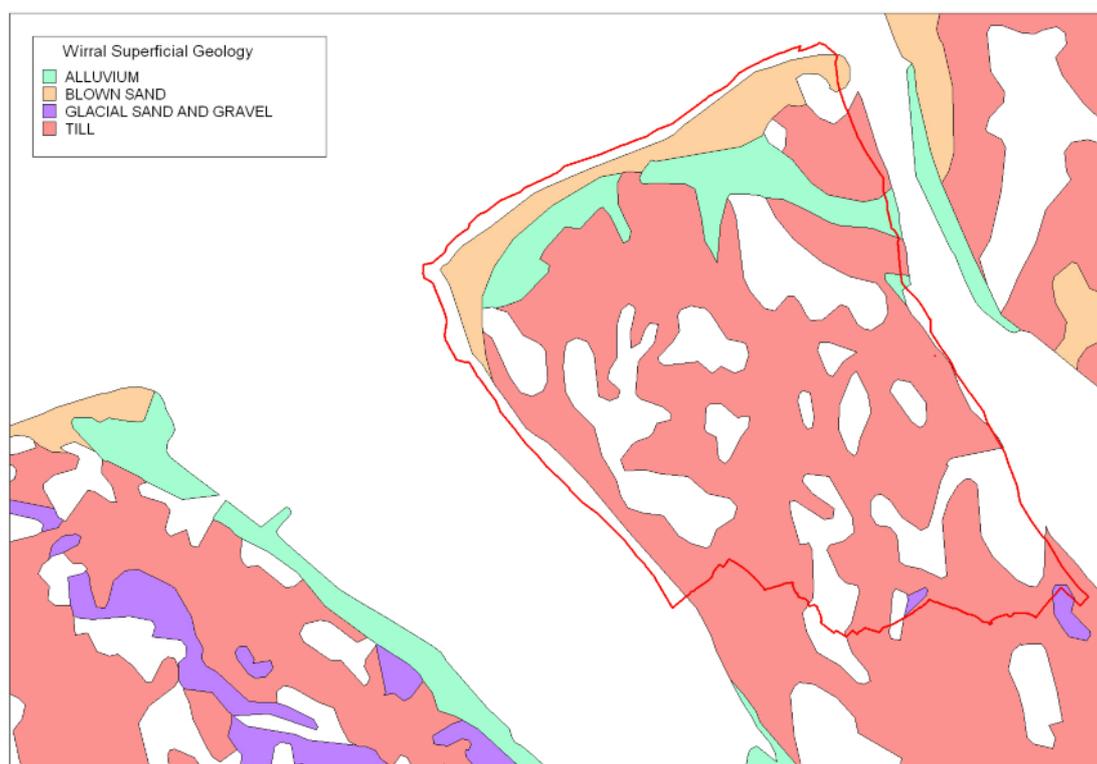


Figure 8 Superficial Geology of Wirral.
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The mudstones of the overlying Triassic Mercia Mudstone Group probably represent wind-blown dust that settled in shallow salt-lakes and sun-baked mudflats on the extensive flood plain. These rocks underlie much of the land to the north of the Mersey Estuary and east to Warrington. The arid conditions under which these rocks were deposited are indicated by the occurrence of numerous layers of salt, which formed through the evaporation of mineral-rich water under the intense desert sun. No rocks younger than the Triassic are found within the Wirral Peninsula, suggesting that terrestrial conditions have prevailed since this time.

While the superficial geology mainly consists of till and associated glacial and fluvio-glacial deposits, there are spreads of blown sand along the Irish Sea coast (notably at Meols) and a complex series of coastal zone deposits, including a clearly marked buried channel linked to the River Mersey between Birkenhead and Wallasey.

7.3 Wirral – Social and Economic Development

Wirral borough has some of the most affluent wards in the country and some that rate amongst the most deprived. Many of Wirral's citizens enjoy an excellent quality of life, with good quality housing, schools, employment opportunities and living environment. However, in Wirral's more deprived areas, which are mostly located on the east side of the borough, the lives of the residents can be very different. These areas are characterised by pockets of high unemployment, low skills levels, poorer quality housing, unacceptable levels of anti-social behaviour and high levels of ill health (Wirral Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2009, 2009). Areas classified as most deprived (according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2007) are predominantly in the docklands areas (i.e. Bidston, Birkenhead, Tranmere and Seacombe).

The population of Wirral grew at an incredible rate from 5,865 to 184,197 over the course of the 19th Century. Over the next one hundred years this trend continued until it reached a peak of 338,954 in 1981. Since this time the population has fallen gradually as the country's industrial heartlands began to decline. Wirral did not decline on the same scale as neighbouring Liverpool however.

Year	Population 10 years earlier	Current Total Population in Year
1801		5,865
1811	5,865	6,480
1821	6,480	7,973
1831	7,973	12,706
1841	12,706	26,212
1851	26,212	51,708
1861	51,708	72,681
1871	72,681	93,654
1881	93,654	114,627
1891	114,627	145,109
1901	145,109	184,197
1911	184,197	233,849
1921	233,849	263,632
1931	263,632	297,213
1941	297,213	313,677

1951	313,677	331,070
1961	331,070	342,978
1971	342,978	355,315
1981	355,315	338,954
1991	338,954	336,105
2001	336,105	312,289

Table 5 Population Change in Wirral 1801 to 2001 (Source: Vision of Britain. www.visionofbritain.org.uk)

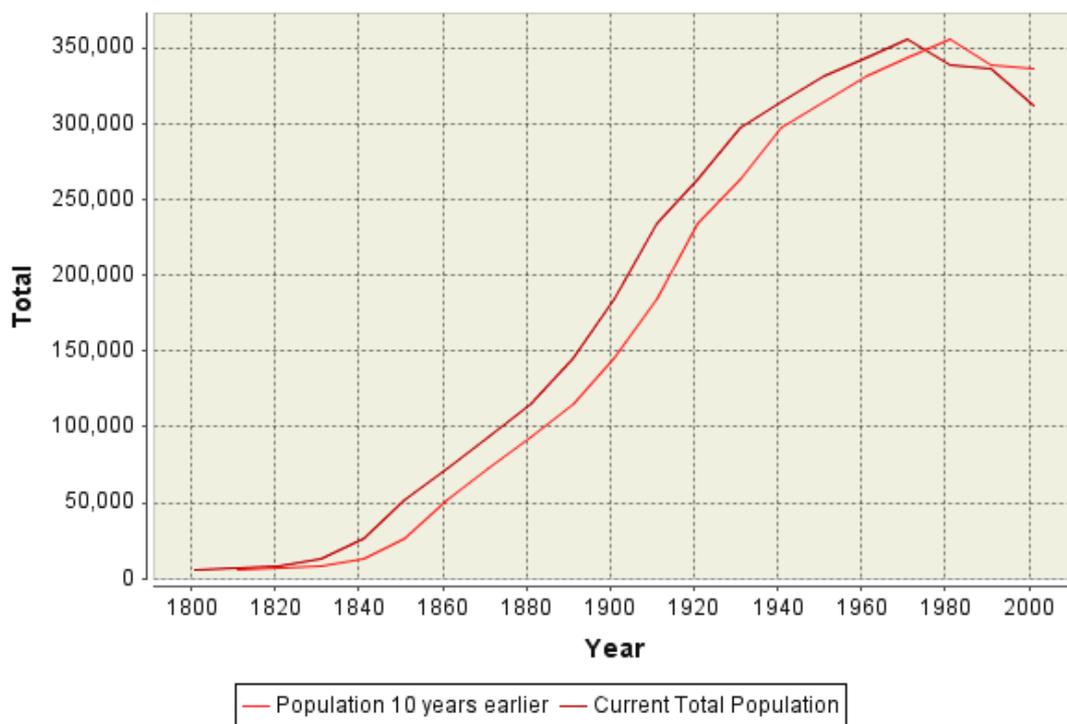


Figure 9 Wirral Population for the years 1801 to 2001 (Source: Vision of Britain. www.visionofbritain.org.uk)

From the Office of National Statistics (ONS), the total population of the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral in 2001 was 312,293 of which 53% are female, 21% are below 15 years of age (compared with 20% nationally) and 8.6% of the population are 75+ compared to a national average of 7.6%. The total population declined by 3% over the period 1991 to 2001, contrasting with the national trend of an increase of 2.5%. Significant demographics include the fact that 30% of all households have no car (the national average is 27%) and nearly 23% of people are permanently sick or disabled. In addition, there is a high unemployment rate (4.3%) in comparison to the national average (3.4%).

The overall population for Wirral is expected to increase by almost 3% between 2004 and 2026, with an increasingly older population structure - the older population (aged 65 years and above) are expected to increase fastest (35% increase) by 2026. This trend is expected to continue, and by 2031 this population will total 82,500 (44% increase). In contrast, for the 0-14 age group, the population is expected to decrease by around 5.5% by 2026 (Wirral Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2009).

8 The Historic Character of Wirral

The results for Wirral relate to the MHCP Study Area (see section 8.2 maps), which excluded the rural area (essentially the central and mid-west greenbelt) that was characterised by the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project (Cheshire County Council, 2007)

8.1 An Overview of Wirral's Historic Character

The following is an overview of the Wirral character types analysis (see section 9).

The survey recorded only those extant fields that fell within the urban MHCP Study Area. Fieldscapes outside of the MHCP Study Area are covered in the Historic Landscape Characterisation Survey of Cheshire (Cheshire County Council, 2007). Only twelve instances (polygons) of **Field Systems** were recorded - about 0.27% (approximately 23.6 ha) of the Wirral MHCP Study. The majority of extant field systems can be found in the central part of the Wirral Peninsula, although a few outlying fields can be found in West Kirby. The earliest enclosure identified in Wirral is thought to have originated in the medieval period. Much of the land is made up of semi-regular shaped fields, indicative of post-medieval to early 19th Century piecemeal enclosure. The remainder comprises surveyed enclosure fields formed in the mid 19th and 20th centuries. Historically, field systems were more visible in the landscape - even as late as 1936 field systems accounted for some 2769 ha of land (within the Wirral MHCP Survey Area). The current recorded total is just under 24 ha - it is only during the last seventy years or so, that field systems have been consumed by urban expansion (particularly in the form of residential, industrial and commercial development).

The **Residential** housing stock of Wirral appears as four distinct bands, representing four separate phases of development. The bands appear to emanate westward from the old centre of Birkenhead and, to a lesser extent, from the historic settlements of West Kirby and Heswall. The development of the Residential Broad Type in Wirral can be seen as corollary to that of Liverpool - an expansion away from established or historic foci (i.e. Birkenhead) on the river front, moving in land to consume further settlement sites. Whereas, in Liverpool the consumption of land appears to have been total, urban development in the Wirral appears somewhat piecemeal, with large areas (particularly the central and western parts of the Peninsula) still largely unaffected.

Some of the earliest settlement patterns in the Wirral landscape are visible as dispersed farmsteads, vernacular cottages and 'ribbon' settlement development. These are present in rural areas, but have also become surrounded by later urban development. A number of small village settlements have origins in the medieval period - these include Upton, Bidston, West Kirby, Greasby, Woodchurch, Poulton, Moreton and Bromborough.

The commercial cores in the district were formed in the late post-medieval period (c.1700 to 1851). The distribution of surviving examples indicates that they developed as part of historic settlements along early transport routes and at river crossing points, such as at Birkenhead. Although a small settlement had been established here in the medieval period, it was not until the mid 19th century that a definite historic core was formed. Further later post-medieval villages include the ferry crossing sites at Rock Ferry and New Ferry. Further early modern settlements include the seaside towns of New Brighton and Hoylake.

The industrial revolution generated unprecedented urban growth – significant survival from this period remains in Birkenhead, Tranmere and New Brighton. The majority of housing in this band dates to pre-1900, with notable concentrations in New Brighton, Wallasey and central Birkenhead. Much of this in the form of relatively affluent suburbs comprising villa, detached and semi-detached housing located towards the north-western, central (around Birkenhead Park) and southern-most parts of the of the Peninsula. Victorian working class gridiron terraced housing is found in the central part of Birkenhead, and larger middle-class semi-detached and terraced housing is located towards the south. Further affluent Victorian detached, villa and large semi-detached housing is found along the northern coast of the Wirral, particularly in West Kirby and Hoylake. Early 20th century gridiron terraced housing, representing westwards growth and expansion of Birkenhead Town, can be found in the north-central (Wallasey and Liscard), central (Birkenhead) and south-central (Tranmere) parts of the Wirral Peninsula.

The communities within Wirral are, probably more so than almost any other metropolitan area, a creation of the 20th century - the 'urban sprawl' of Wirral. The majority of the existing development in the area took place between the 1920s and the mid 1970s. For the Inter War years, much of the expansion occurred on previously Greenfield sites, leading to a substantial loss of agricultural, rough land and woodland areas. Although the expansion was predominantly westwards (i.e. away from Birkenhead), it also occurred around existing settlements, such as West Kirby,

Heswall, Greasby, Irby, Upton, Bebington and Bromborough. Nearly 53% of the Residential total belongs to the later Twentieth Century (1946 to 2000), reflecting urban expansion at the time of improved communication routes and the creation of a commuter belt. The band contains a number of pre-existing historic settlement cores that have been consumed by later development (for example Heswall, Greasby and Prenton), a number of post-war planned estates (such as Woodchurch), and a number of modern housing developments.

There are currently 318.38 ha of land assigned to the **Commercial Broad Type**, representing around 3.6% of the Wirral MHCP Study Area total. Many of the commercial MHCP types share characteristics such as the scale of buildings and sites and the types of locations in which they are generally to be found, and can be grouped together. Commercial activity is dominated by the Commercial Retail (33.33% - 106.10 ha) and Business Park (20.75% - 66.05 ha) sectors. If the Commercial Office and Office Sub Types are combined, they make up 22.61% of the Wirral MHCP Study Area. A large part of these sub types are contained within the central business district (the old commercial core). The commercial core (as a separate entity) constitutes just over 6% of the overall Commercial Broad type in the Wirral MHCP Study Area, and is concentrated within or near historic cores.

Most commercial buildings post-date 1840. Many building types - offices, pubs, shopping arcades, department stores, and hotels - are largely nineteenth-century creations. Victorian and Edwardian commercial buildings have transformed our townscapes and gave many English town centres their distinctive character. Shops and pubs can also play a particular role in enlivening residential districts too.

Commercial Offices are also concentrated in the historic cores, alongside many retail outlets. Many office blocks, including civic offices, can be found in the central (Birkenhead) and south-western (Heswall) parts of the Wirral Peninsula. The oldest offices and retail buildings are concentrated in the Birkenhead central business district and in the historic cores - the earliest commercial centre (from the MHCP) is at located at New Ferry, followed by historic cores at Liscard, Wallasey, Birkenhead, Bebington and Heswall.

Modern (post-1945) commercial buildings are found throughout the Wirral Peninsula, but there is a noticeable concentration of smaller retail units and shops in Birkenhead Town centre. Here, modern commercial premises have replaced former commercial

and residential plots. Business Parks and Retail Parks tend to be found on the outskirts of urban areas, located along current communication routes.

In 1841 Wirral's industry was fairly diverse with the service sector, manufacturing and agriculture all accounting for substantial numbers of employees. By 2001 the service sector had grown enormously accounting for 66% of employee occupation according to the 2001 census. Agricultural employment has almost completely disappeared and manufacturing has declined from a 33% high in 1971 to just 15.6% in 2001 (Vision of Britain. www.visionofbritain.org.uk).

Nine principal current **Industrial Sub Types** were identified for detailed analysis on the basis of their presence in the landscape or their historical significance. Two further historical MHCP types were also identified (Glass and Iron Foundries) but these do not form part of the current Wirral character. In the past, these industries would have played an important part in the development of Wirral.

The majority of Wirral's current industrial sites are of a Manufacturing nature (40.53%), followed by Dock and Port Related Industry (27.40%), Chemical Industry (16.43%) and Municipal Works (7.84%). Older, more established industrial sites are concentrated on the eastern coast, facing on to the River Mersey. The largest (by size) is Port and Dock Related Industry - this is concentrated in the dockland areas of Birkenhead and Wallasey and to the south near Eastham Dock. Chemical Industries are concentrated towards the southeast of the Wirral, particularly near the border with Cheshire.

Pre-1900 industrial sites are concentrated along the river-front at three distinct locations - within the central docklands part of Birkenhead, the Outer Docks near Tranmere and to the south at the Port Sunlight complex. Outside of these three locations, a few pre-1900 sites occur, but they are generally small and often isolated. Early twentieth century and Inter War sites are found near pre-1900 sites, as extensions to already existing industrial areas. Some isolated Inter War sites occur near council/social housing estates. Later Twentieth Century sites are distributed throughout the Wirral, with noticeable concentrations along the riverfront (and immediate hinterland). Very few sites occur in the western half of the Wirral, and the majority of these appear to be small-scale manufacturing sites. No large-scale heavy industry sites occur in the western half of the Wirral. The surviving historic industrial buildings in Wirral display a wide variety of architectural types and dates, yet many of these have been altered in both form and function. Commerce and industry appear to

be the most common reuses of industrial sites. Many disused sites have been converted to ornamental and recreational use, or left as rough land.

The MHCP study found that the **Ornamental and Recreational Broad Type** accounted for 12.48% (1104.78 ha) of the Wirral MHCP total (MHCP study area). The largest Sub type are Sports Grounds at just over 50% (555.61 ha), followed by Public Parks at just over 28% (310.26 ha). The clear majority of the Recreational and Ornamental Sub type dates to the post-1945 period, at nearly 45% (491.96 ha). This is followed by sites dating to the Industrial Revolution 2 (1836 to 1900) period, at nearly 29% (314.74 ha).

The majority of Wirral's Parks (within the MHCP Study Area) originated in the post-1945 period, at just over 42% (131.25 ha). The majority of parks from this period can be found on the urban fringes (often in association with social and semi-detached housing), and include a number of conversions (from previously residential plots) and new parks (on previously Greenfield sites). This is followed by parks belonging to the Industrial Revolution 2 (1836 to 1900) period, at just over 34% (107.13 ha). These include both conversions and new parks (for the period). This period also includes the first publically funded park in Britain (Birkenhead Park - 60.58 ha).

The earliest **Civil** buildings in Wirral are churches and chapels. There are numerous examples of varying dates and from the medieval period onwards. Although comprising over 34% of the total number of polygons, Places of Worship only make up 13.37% of the **Civil Broad Type** total. Places of Worship are usually single entities and, generally, occupy small plots (on average 0.33 ha). Surviving examples of early local government sites include corporation yards, schools, hospitals, government buildings, public parks and cemeteries. Civic, municipal and other public buildings were also built in the 20th century in the urban centres. Civil establishments are evenly dispersed throughout the district, with the largest ones tending to be educational institutions and cemeteries. Schools are the largest Sub Type (in both number of polygons and area covered), comprising nearly 56% of the Civil Broad Type in the Wirral MHCP Study Area.

The majority of Civil Broad Type records date to the later twentieth century (1946 to 2000) at just over 56% - 255.9 ha, followed by Inter War (1918 to 1939) at 18.4% - 83.9 ha, and then Industrial Revolution 2 (1836 to 1900) at 16.3% - 74.03 ha. Pre-1900 sites make up around 18% of the total, comprising places of worship, schools, cultural buildings, cemeteries and hospitals.

The Wirral contains a number of **Communication** features that were established before 1850. These include important turnpike roads that have led to urban and industrial development. The main 19th century railways have generally survived as linear features although the nature of their usage has changed in the 20th century. Disused lines have tended to survive as footpaths or within public parks, with only minimal redevelopment taking place. Industrial railways, sidings and colliery tramways do tend to have been lost. A small section of the Manchester Ship Canal can be found to the extreme southeast of the district. The most prominent communications features in modern Wirral are the motorways, with the M53 running north to south.

Thirty-eight **Water Bodies** were recorded as current character areas in the Wirral MHCP Study Area, of which twenty-two were natural water bodies (ponds and water courses) and sixteen were artificial (reservoirs, lakes and marinas) in origin.

The majority of natural water bodies were attributed to the Industrial Revolution 2 (1836 to 1900) period, with many of these having been created through the extraction of marl, sand and gravel.

Artificial water bodies account for around 87% of the MHCP total. The largest water bodies (both in geographical size) are the coastal lakes at West Kirby and New Brighton. This is followed by reservoirs, the majority of these created as drinking water provision for the region during the Industrial Period (1836 to 1900). Many of these mid to late 19th century sites were expanded in the 20th century.

From the MHCP study, **Woodlands** comprise just over 1.21% (106.66 ha) of the current Wirral MHCP Study Area. For the MHCP findings, extant woodland appears to be limited towards the central and western parts of the district, away from the urban expanse of Birkenhead and satellite urban centres to its immediate south. The largest sub type is the rather generalist 'Woodland' (which comprises all woodland that could not be assigned a distinct character type) at 74.05% (78.98 ha), followed by Forestry and Plantations at 13.15% (14.02 ha). Most of the current woodland has origins before the mid 19th century. Pre-1900 woodland constitutes around 73% of all woodland recorded in the Wirral MHCP Study Area. The MHCP recorded five 'ancient woodland' sites, four of which can be found to the southeast of the MHCP Study Area, in Lower Bebington and Poulton.

The **Rough Land Broad Type** comprises natural and semi-natural land types, including mosslands, grassland/scrub, moorland, unimproved land and other land (rough land). Much of the other land (rough land) sub type is composed of green space, modern scrub, urban commons and derelict land created from both residential and industrial clearance. In general, rough land as open space can be any area that has no actual building on it but not necessarily vegetated. The MHCP Broad type constitutes around 309.76 ha of land, approximately 3.5% of the land in the Wirral MHCP Study Areal. The majority of the Rough Land Broad Type is made up by Other Land (Rough Land) at around 67.5% (209.06 ha). Mosslands form 5.46% (16.92 ha) of the current Rough Land Broad Type in the Wirral MHCP Study Area. The MHCP recorded two areas of mossland (wetland), located at Bidston Moss.

8.2 Wirral - Statistical Data and Mapping

Wirral Broad Types	1876 (hectares)	1899 (hectares)	1936 (hectares)	Current 2003 (hectares)
Industrial	364.87	466.14	625.21	849.23
Residential	1003.91	1551.59	3153.56	5249.62
Field System	5700.14	4936.46	2768.85	23.55
Woodland	187.02	164.89	137.40	106.66
Rough Land	705.95	492.98	288.66	311.66
Civil	86.08	141.36	323.62	455.16
Defence	10.99	8.62	10.83	3.70
Commercial	46.53	58.69	88.18	318.38
Communication	89.73	181.83	193.88	163.86
Recreational and Ornamental	174.20	404.82	893.41	1103.27
Water Bodies	31.11	30.54	52.92	41.58
Coastal	451.16	414.76	270.86	213.46
Other	0.92	0.08	45.34	10.77

Table 6 Wirral Broad Character Types

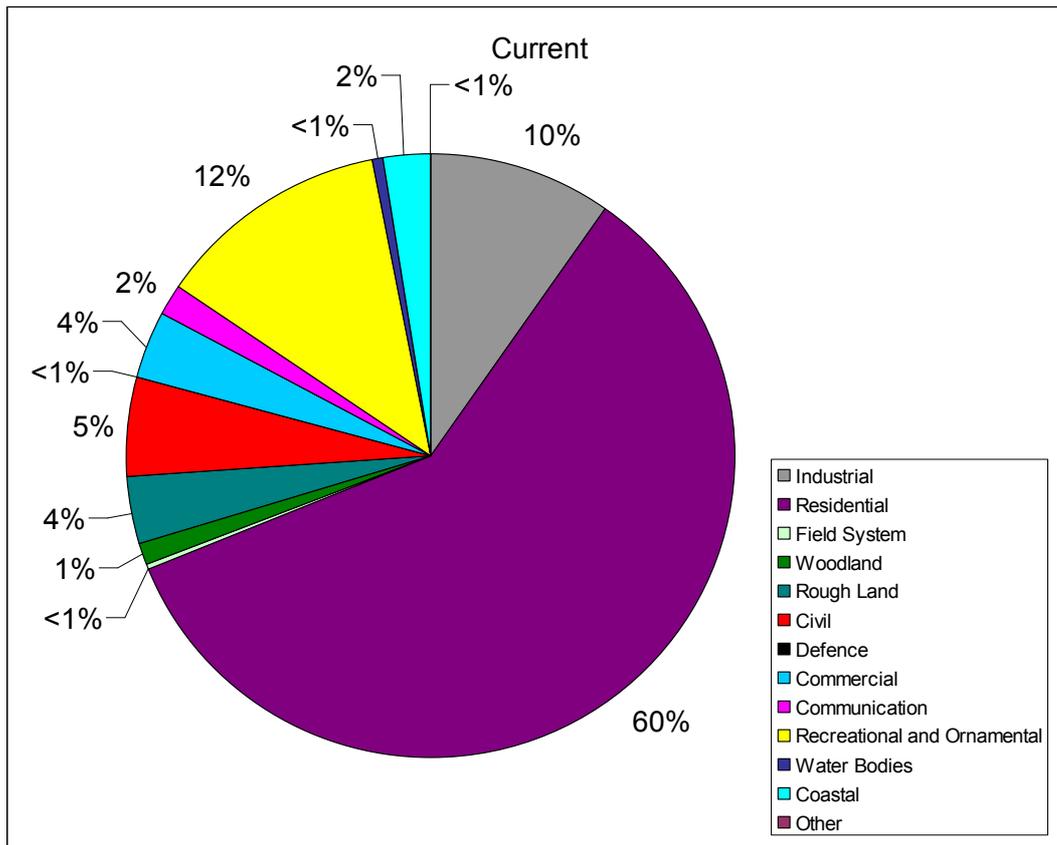


Figure 10 Pie chart showing Current (2003) Broad Types in Wirral (% of land)

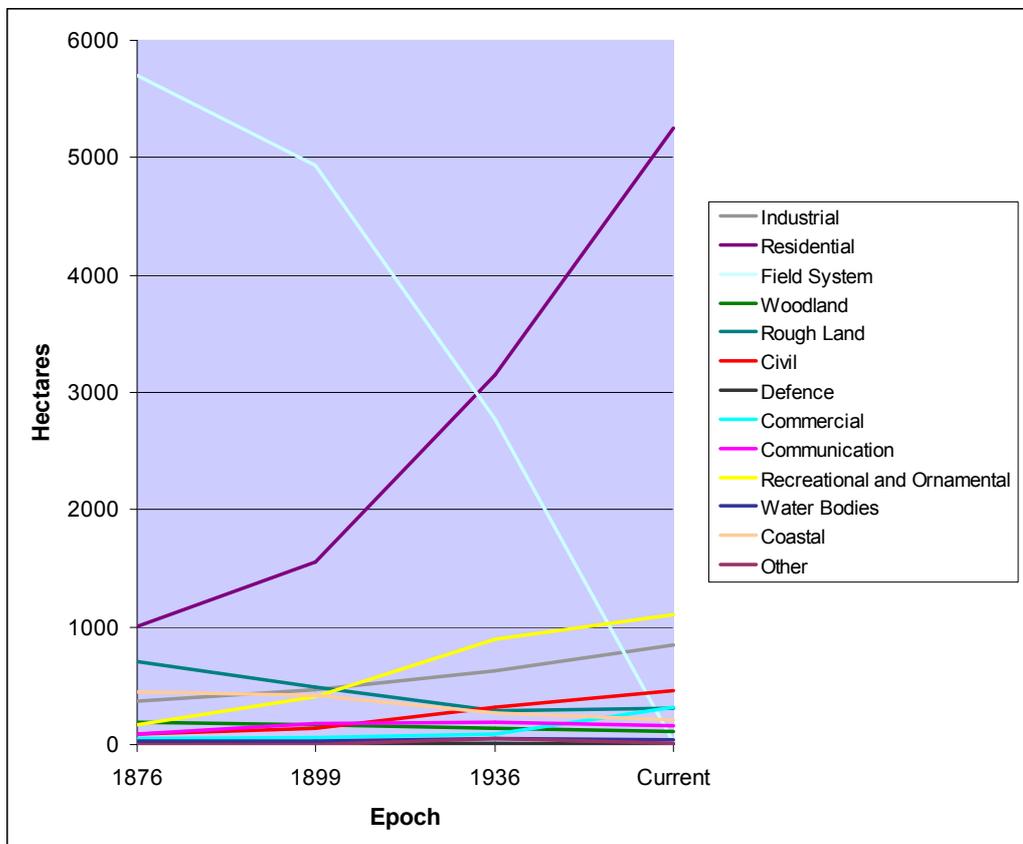


Figure 11 Graphical Representation of Wirral Broad Types through time

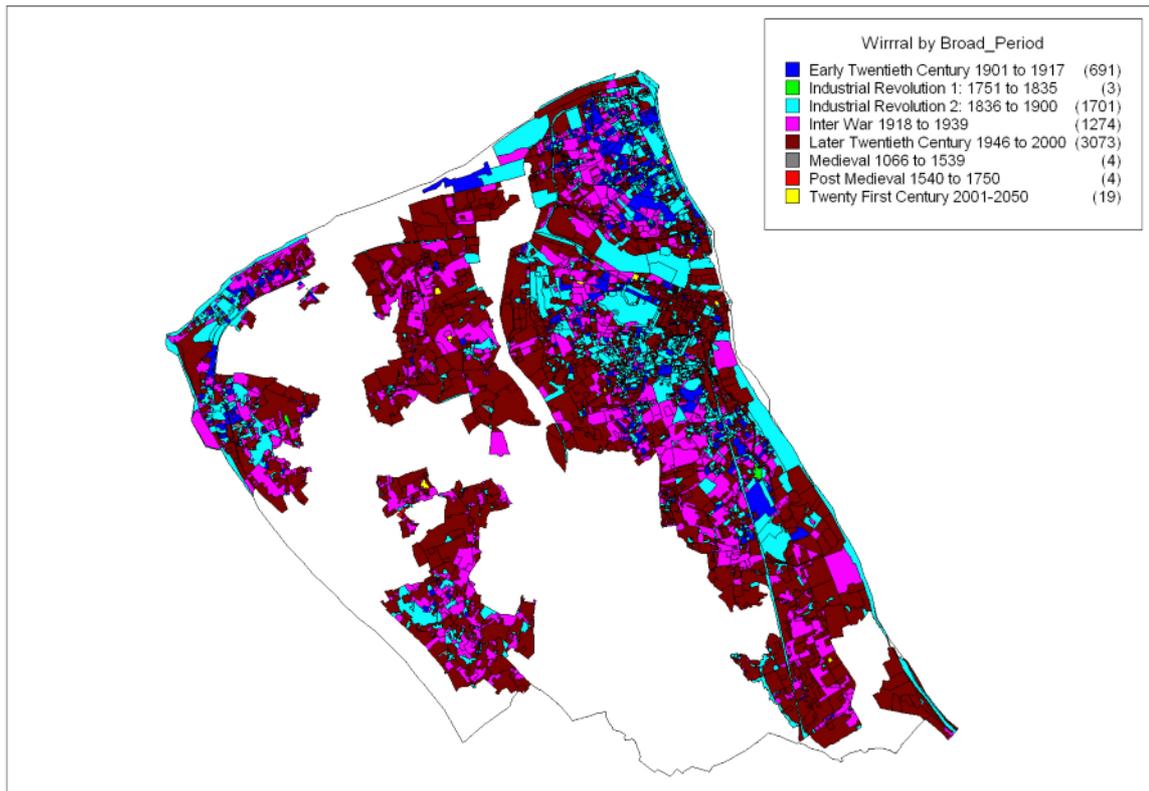


Figure 12 Wirral MHCP Study Area by Broad Period of origin
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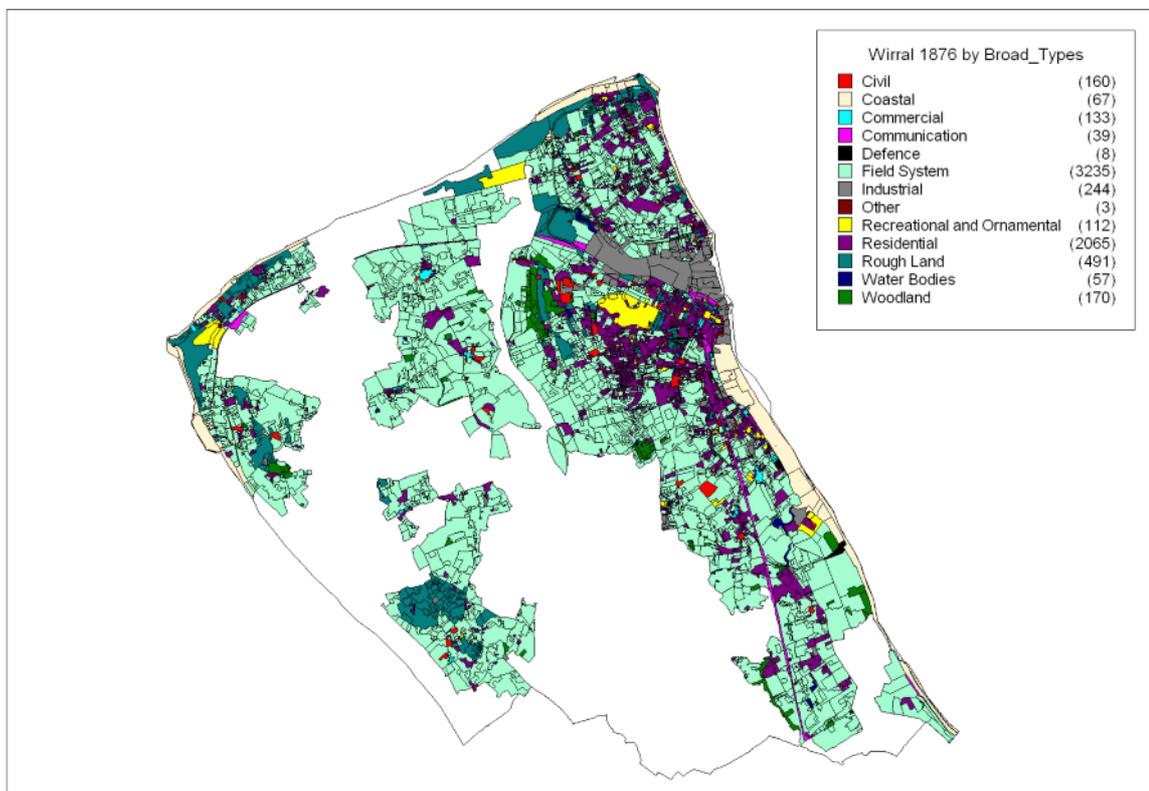


Figure 13 Wirral MHCP Characterisation in 1876
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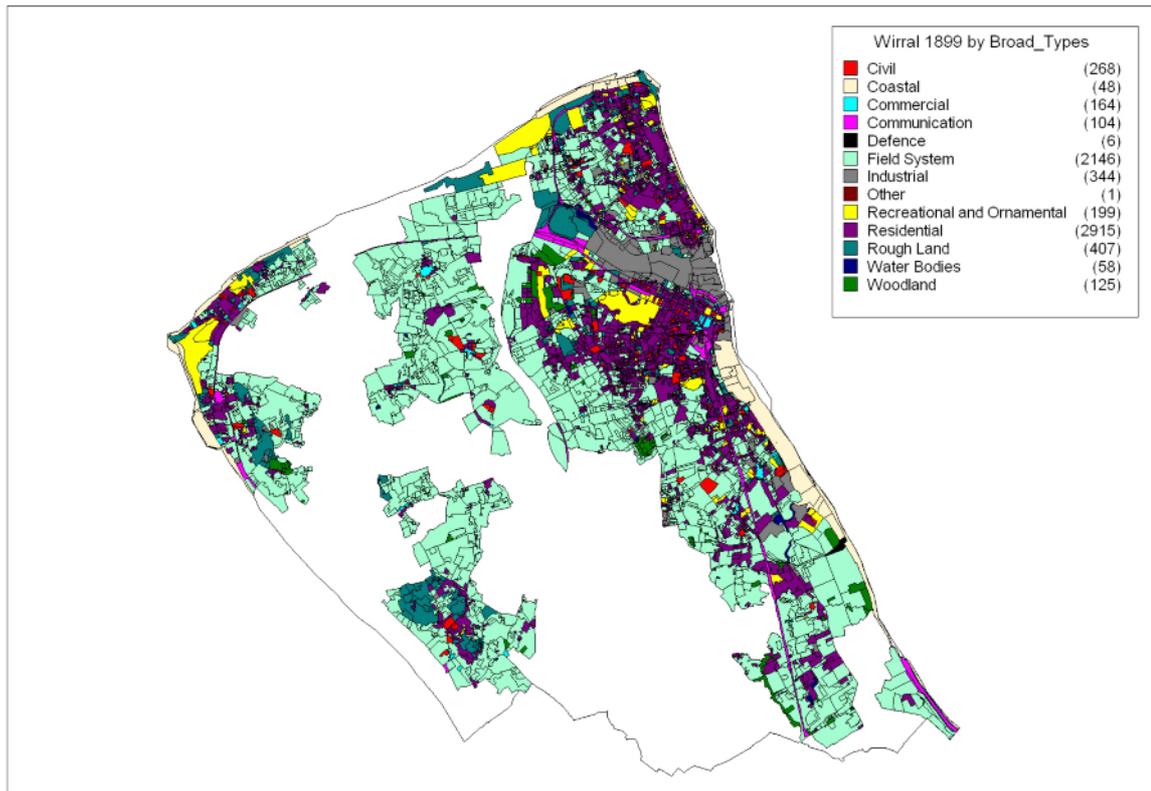


Figure 14 Wirral MHCP Characterisation in 1899
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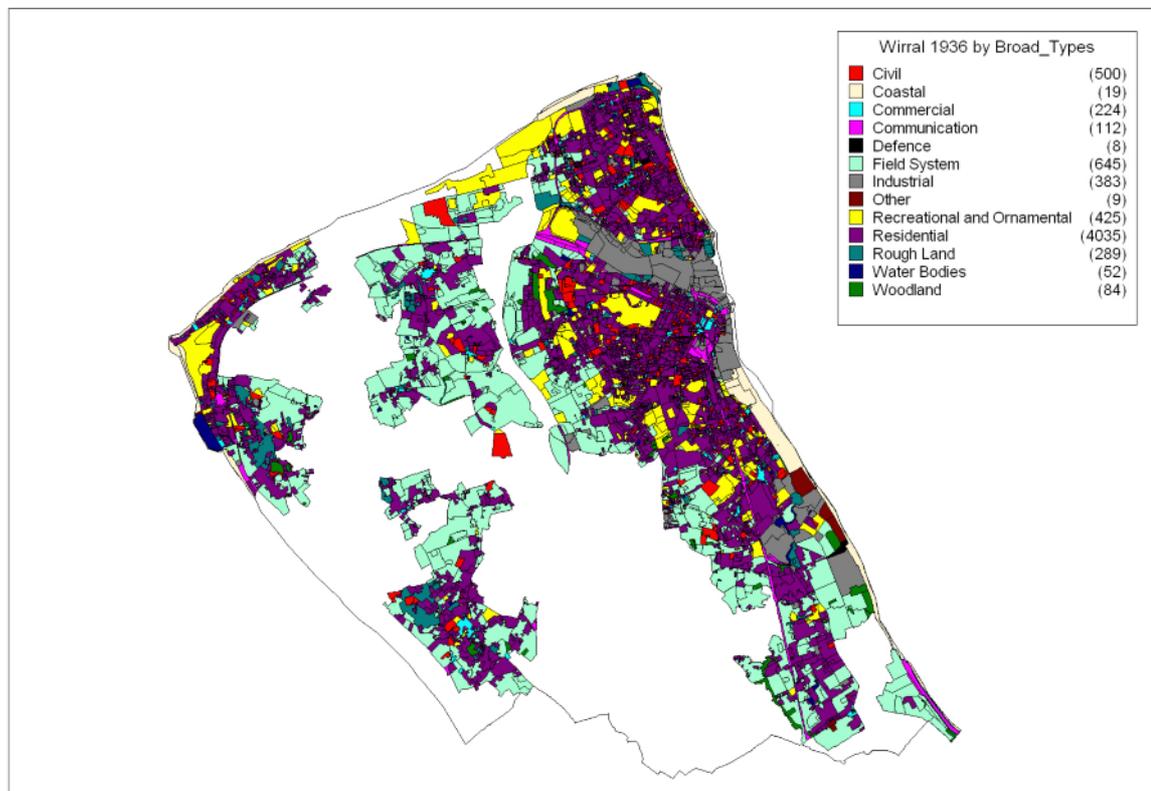


Figure 15 Wirral MHCP Characterisation in 1936
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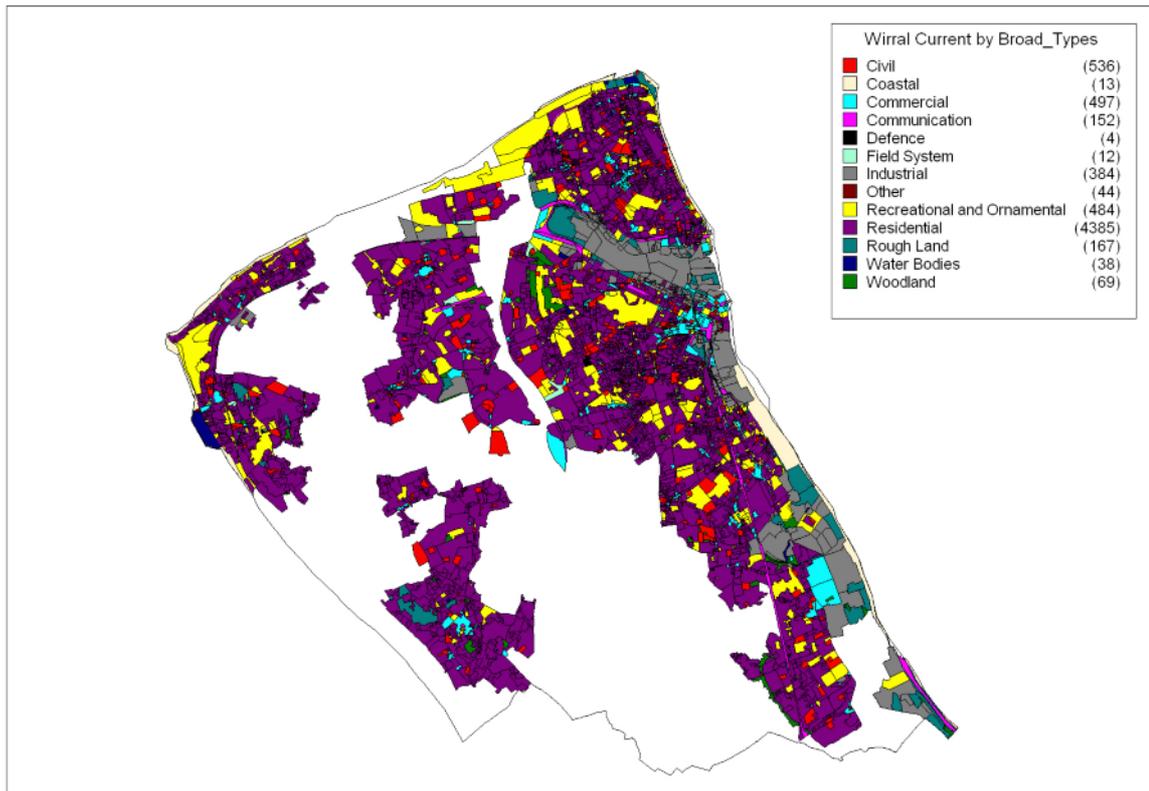


Figure 16 Wirral MHCP Characterisation Current (2003) Mapping
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Table 7 Sub Type Characterisation for Wirral from 1876, 1899, 1936 and Current (2003)
 (Hectares)

Wirral Sub Type	1876	1899	1936	2003
Airfield	0	0	0	0
Allotment Gardens	45.31	69.41	167.17	78.51
Ancient Woodland	5.34	5.34	3.49	2.68
Artificial Water Body	4.87	5.65	31.78	36.04
Barracks	0	0	0.52	0.52
Business Park	0	0	0	66.05
Camp	0	0	0	0
Canal	2.36	18.47	18.47	16.10
Cemetery	16.31	13.89	44.42	57.47
Chemical Industry	8.20	22.60	76.92	139.62
College/University	0.56	0.94	6.77	13.50
Commercial Core	13.21	13.66	19.90	19.32

Commercial Core (Office)	0.73	3.19	1.57	36.00
Commercial Core (Retail)	32.19	41.32	65.49	106.10
Council Housing	0	0	0	80.07
Crematorium	0	0	0	0
Cultural	0.99	9.01	23.39	18.48
Curved Edged Woodland	1.46	1.14	2.99	1.85
Designed Parkland	65.86	63.13	61.06	0
Detached Housing	414.15	555.91	853.75	1254.50
Disused Industry	11.62	20.26	6.14	10.03
Dock and Port Related Industry	215.95	217.23	290.68	232.79
Dunes	48.78	37.16	36.37	10.86
Extraction Industry	69.06	84.15	38.95	2.87
Farmhouse	61.18	57.78	45.55	23.12
Forestry and Plantation	0	14.02	14.02	14.02
Glass Industry	0	0	0	0
High-rise Development	0	0	0.08	17.92
Historic Route	7.37	7.37	7.37	7.37
Hospital	9.31	16.10	72.70	38.30
Industrial	6.22	8.53	14.76	16.66
Institution	4.50	5.36	8.97	9.92
Iron Industry / Foundries	4.76	4.86	7.98	0
Irregular / Large Field	0	0	0	0
Irregular / Small Field	64.17	85.00	24.91	3.99
Irregular /Medium Field	5.84	0.31	0.46	0
Lowland	5.24	0	0	0
Managed Woodland	7.83	15.40	11.99	8.31
Manufacturing Industry	2.38	57.73	113.73	344.33
Maritime Commercial Area	6.32	4.73	4.73	4.73
Model Village	4.51	23.95	60.66	54.78
Modern Housing Development	0	0		420.29
Moss (Wetlands)	91.50	61.17	19.00	16.92
Municipal Depot	0.39	1.23	10.34	14.67
Municipal Works	2.21	16.72	21.26	66.25

Natural Water Body	26.25	24.89	21.14	5.54
Nature Reserve	0	0	0	51.36
Nursery	10.95	25.53	33.92	0.36
Offices	0.41	0.52	1.22	35.99
Other (Defence)	7.80	7.91	10.31	3.19
Other (Recreational and Ornamental)	16.71	25.34	46.20	109.80
Other Land (Rough Land)	165.13	152.75	158.44	210.95
Other Land (Other)	0.92	0.08	4.63	10.77
Place of Worship	36.15	67.53	79.58	60.86
Plantation	2.38	2.28	2.28	0.81
Police Station	0.34	1.03	1.85	3.34
Prison	0	0	0	0
Private Estate	99.86	100.50	70.19	2.78
Public Park	8.24	38.45	115.90	306.87
Railway	72.72	150.40	161.88	84.31
Range	3.19	0.71	0	0
Reclaimed Land	0	0	40.71	0
Regular / Large Field	36.87	37.02	17.73	0
Regular / Medium Field	902.46	772.47	550.21	0
Regular / Small Field	1408.33	1227.82	684.16	6.29
Retail Park	0	0	0	54.92
Road	7.36	5.59	6.16	56.08
Salt Marsh	0	0	0	0
Sand and Mud Flats	402.39	377.60	234.49	202.60
School	17.93	27.52	85.95	253.29
Scrub	255.08	125.98	28.63	41.93
Semi Detached Housing	175.74	355.24	1409.94	2825.14
Semi Regular / Large Field	75.82	64.47	15.30	0
Semi Regular / Medium Field	1611.75	1458.13	795.86	3.82
Semi Regular / Small Field	1594.89	1291.24	680.22	9.45
Sports Ground	38.08	208.50	503.08	556.73
Terraced	213.91	417.54	684.36	559.11
Upland	188.99	153.07	82.60	41.86

Villa Housing	34.57	40.67	29.04	13.74
Warehousing	1.81	2.57	5.81	16.92
Woodland	170.01	126.70	106.62	78.98