

Merseyside Historic Characterisation Project St Helens Report

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Merseyside Historic Characterisation Project
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Sarah-Jane Farr
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1 Summary and Introduction

1.1 The project

The Merseyside Historic Characterisation Project (MHCP) was undertaken by the Merseyside Archaeological Advisory Service, based in National Museums Liverpool. The project covers the five local authorities which make up the Merseyside area, Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton and Wirral.

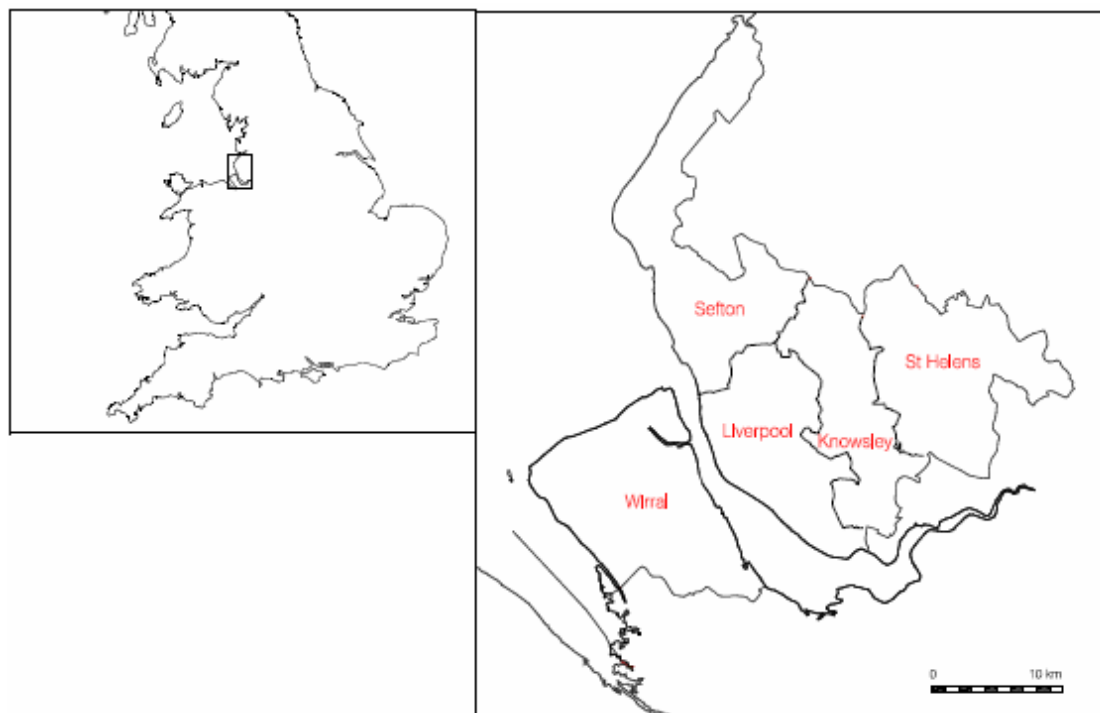


Figure 1 Location of the Merseyside project area

Commissioned by English Heritage in 2003, the MHCP was the first of a number of surveys to develop and explore a methodology for historic landscape characterisation of a large metropolitan conurbation. The project commenced in April 2003 with methodology development, pilot phase and implementation to June 2005, after which the dedicated project officer post was vacant until April 2008. The project was subsequently reviewed, recast and completed between 2008- July 2010. Data was transferred to the Historic Environment Record in August 2010; report editing and production was finalised in 2011.

The project reporting is via five separate reports, one for each of the local authority, areas consisting of the following sections:

Section 1 to 5: provides an introduction to historic landscape characterisation, project background, methodology and sources.

Section 6: introduces the area of Merseyside.

Section 7 and 8: introduce the local authority study area and overview of the historic character from the project analysis.

Section 9: the core body and historic character analysis of the study area, using statistics and graphic examples to demonstrate project findings, interpretation and analysis.

Appendices: provide more technical and detailed information on the project including methodology, statistics and management guidance.

In addition, the project carried out a Historic Settlement study for each local authority area. These are provided separately from this main report.

1.2 Context – the national HLC programme

English Heritage's programme of Historic Landscape Characterisation projects have been developing since the 1990s (see Fairclough *et al.* 1999 & English Heritage / Somerset CC 2003). Rather than concentrate on selected sites or confined designated areas the HLC approach adopts a more holistic definition of the historic environment. Initiatives seek to document and describe the wider historic landscape of an area through providing consistent evidence on our changing landscapes, whether this is in largely rural or urban areas. HLC projects look to describe the evolution of the present day landscape as an aid to understanding the scale of change, the capacity to absorb change and what gives a place its distinctive character and sense of place.

The national programme of HLC projects have been supported and developed by English Heritage in partnership with local government historic environment colleagues, chiefly by the archaeological advisory services in recognition of providing a more spatial dimension to the local Historic Environment Record. HLC gives broad-

brush overviews of complex aspects of the historic environment using a desk-based programme of GIS mapping and analysis. The principles guiding characterisation projects are that:

- It is the present day landscape under study - the identification and documentation of time-depth change to see where earlier landscapes still exist in the present.
- HLC is a spatial survey, consistently covering the entire modern landscape character as a whole, not individual site point data recording or 'special' areas of particular historic date.
- Natural and semi -natural features (i.e. woodland, hedges) are part of the human influenced landscape and are as relevant to understanding character as much as archaeological remains.
- HLC provides information for interpretation and context within which other more detailed data can be considered and further research can be developed; not a prescribed view or definition of our historic environment. In this way, the HLC approach also aims to enable engagement of people's views, perceptions.
- Characterisation is about supporting the intelligent management of change within our dynamic landscapes, not preservation.
- Projects need to be transparent and consistent in their recording, including the sources and methods used.
- The results need to be integrated at least within Historic Environment Record. This is in recognition of the use of projects in informing a range of planning, conservation and other strategies which involve change within the historic environment.

The urban and rural historic environment represents not only a diverse range of irreplaceable assets but also forms part of our ever-changing landscape. The HLC programme was initially developed to contribute to understanding the rural landscape, predominantly focusing on patterns of rural land use. As the method developed so did that of English Heritage's Extensive Urban Survey programme (EUS). EUS was aimed at analytical research into the historic towns of an area in order to devise appropriate management strategies for conserving the archaeological resource. However, experience from some of the earlier EUS projects of the 1990s suggested that the methodology may not be suitable for surveying those larger urban areas

whose areas consisted of significant areas of 19th and 20th century development also at risk of loss, lack of understanding as to significance and contribution to the regeneration of areas (Farr, 2001). The Government (1997-2010) policy for regeneration at the time ensured that the emphasis was on urban areas, whilst recognising the need for rural diversification.

1.3 Characterisation of urban areas

Quantification and qualification of threats to our historic environment was reported in the 'Monuments at Risk Survey' (Darvill & Fulton, 1998), which highlighted that development and urbanism (one of five types of main threats) accounted for the highest percentage of wholesale (complete) monument destruction between 1945 and 1995. Against this context, it became increasingly apparent that the policies which existed to protect and manage the historic environment had largely been most effective in dealing with individual sites and buildings rather than understanding the landscape character as a whole.

The 'Power of Place – the future of the historic environment' review (facilitated by English Heritage, 2000) and the subsequent Government response, 'The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future' (DCMS, 2001), both established an historic environment agenda based on the principles of knowledge, protection, access and potential. They advocated characterisation studies as a means of advancing knowledge and public involvement in their historic environment. Importantly the European Landscape Convention (in force 1 March 2004, ratified by the UK in March 2007) promoted the need to understand and sustainably manage both urban and rural landscapes.

The English Heritage survey programmes of Historic Landscape Characterisation and Extensive Urban Survey have been evolving to address the wider urban and rural historic landscape. Over the past decade, projects from the EUS programme have been influenced by the characterisation methodology developed for rural areas. In particular, a merger of methodologies through characterisation and recognition of the local historic environment is providing a wider knowledge base from which to inform decisions on the threats and opportunities associated with regeneration in larger urban areas (see English Heritage 2005. Characterisation Conservation Bulletin Issue 47). This holistic characterisation approach has also been extended to the other areas

i.e. farmsteads and, notably, the marine environment through English Heritage's national programme to survey of England's 'Historic Seascapes.' As with terrestrial HLC, 'Seascapes' is providing information within a dynamic changing physical, legislative and administrative environment.

The Merseyside Historic Characterisation project formed part of the early development of the HLC application into more complex metropolitan areas, using a combined method that integrated the modelling approach of HLC with that of elements of EUS. Other projects that developed this approach, and dealing with similarly mixed areas, have been completed for South Yorkshire and the Black Country, Greater Manchester forthcoming in 2011.

1.4 Applications

Beyond the basic principles of English Heritage HLC and project resource, the urban projects have been able to devise and develop their methodologies in line with their data priorities, in response to the level of knowledge available at the time and local circumstance. HLC alone will not deliver information applicable to all historic environment planning situations. It does not concentrate on individual heritage assets - it's a matter of the provision of consistent baseline data over a wide area capable of greater resolution and the promotion of the contribution that HLC can make to spatial planning. Applications of HLC are most suitably tested on a case by case basis.

Examples of the application of HLC are available in 'Using Historic Landscape Characterisation' (English Heritage & Lancashire CC, 2004). This reviewed a number of applications in areas of landscape management, character assessment and strategies; spatial planning and notably partnership, leaning and outreach. It was produced just when many of the metropolitan urban characterisation projects were getting underway. The publication highlighted issues such as the Government Housing Growth Areas and Pathfinder Areas as examples where HLC was being used as a tool to inform historic environment landscape context. Examples from completed urban characterisation projects demonstrate that data has been used, and developed, in a number of ways. For instance, the Black Country HLC has produced lists of locally distinctive features in consultation with the experience and knowledge of local professionals, which have been written into the local development strategy and also informed the development of a 'character framework' of those parts of the

Black Country expected to change most over the next decades (Quigley & Shaw, 2010).

Although principally a planning tool forming part of the local Historic Environment Record (HER) evidence base, the HLC products enhance the HER potential for wider public engagement. A simple exercise, which proved popular in outreach work carried out by the Merseyside Archaeological Advisory Service, was the production of digital historic and modern map overlays for areas familiar to people and subsequently invite them to contribute their local knowledge and memories.

The Merseyside project has significant potential as an initial foundation upon which individuals or groups can build more focused research within Merseyside i.e. into historic land management through field system analysis or more in depth study into historic settlement patterns.

The Merseyside Historic Characterisation project has already contributed to other projects. For instance:-

- The Historic Settlement work (whilst in draft) was shared with consultants carrying out Conservation Appraisals in Wirral (2006/7) and, in St Helens, they contributed to information of on urban settlement for the Landscape Character Assessment (2006).
- Providing GIS data for the North West Landscape Character Framework Phase 2 (Part 2) 'NW Regionalised Historic Landscape Characterisation' (Consultation Draft, May 2011, Natural England as supported by English Heritage and NW Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers).

1.5 Use of this report

Advice on the project report, and on any other management issues and opportunities arising from this report, can be obtained from the Merseyside Archaeological Officer, National Museums Liverpool. Archaeological sites, findspots, historic buildings and landscape features are recorded on the Merseyside Historic Environment Record, as used by the Merseyside Archaeological Advisory Service to assist in dealing with planning applications and other proposals and enquiries that may affect areas of historical or archaeological interest.

2 Aims and Objectives

The following has been adapted from the MHCP Revised Project Design (Merseyside Archaeological Advisory Service, July 2004) and development of the project thereafter.

2.1 Overall General Aim

To undertake a broad-brush characterisation of the landscape of Merseyside using GIS and a linked database which can be interrogated and thus encourage the management and understanding of the historic dimension of the present day landscape.

2.2 General Objectives

The five general objectives:

1. Data capture - characterisation of the visible historic environment of Merseyside, involving the recording of character types and their constituent attributes and components on the GIS database.
2. Analysis and interpretation - of the characterisation data involving:
 - Identification and analysis of landscape character types and historic character areas.
 - Assessment of the relationship between present character, past historical character and its context.
 - Desk-based study of historic settlement in the landscape.
3. Identification of management issues and guidance for character types.
4. Synthesis and reporting - which identifies and analyses the results.
5. Outreach and dissemination throughout the life of the project.

2.3 Historic Environment Objectives

The project aimed to contribute to overall historic environment management within Merseyside in four key areas, essentially reasons for carrying out the project:

Information improvement and advancement

Adding spatial context to the existing Merseyside Historic Environment Record.

Inform and support new/existing international, national and local heritage designations.

Establishing a starting point for further area/site specific/thematic etc. research through identification of gaps in knowledge.

Providing historical characterisation mapping in support of related projects forming part of the Historic Environment of Liverpool Project (HELP).

Spatial planning and regeneration

Enabling greater confidence in historic environment planning policy and advice through the identification of a landscape context for the existing individual site and area based historic environment data.

Providing the opportunity to link management of the historic environment to regeneration and other land management proposals, through improved information and consultation.

Offering the basis for an overall spatial historic environment management framework for consideration of individual development proposals.

Adding value to and informing existing area based programmes within Merseyside.

Raise awareness of the local historic environment through providing information for the production of Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks.

Technical

Integration with other local authority Geographic Information System based environmental and land management data and strategies enabled through the use of MapInfo software and database development in consultation with Mott Macdonald Merseyside Information Service.

Access

To explore with other agencies enabling user-friendly public access and ensure the product is capable of adaptation to wider public dissemination.

Involving local people in the survey through promotion and consultation.

3 Methodology

3.1 Characterisation Methodology

The project used historic, current and air photo digital mapping in a Geographic Information System (GIS); this was linked to an Access database into which the record for each identified area was created. The project also involved more conventional desk based study of pre-Ordnance Survey maps, primary and secondary documentary source, previous excavation results and the Historic Environment Record (HER) to produce information on historic settlements.

The MHCP employed a MapInfo Professional (V7.5) Geographic Information System, linked to an Access 2000 database. These two applications were controlled by a third Visual Basic application built especially for the project. This software was conceptualised by the MHCP team and developed by Mott McDonald (MIS) Liverpool in 2003-2004 (specialist software developer who supplied data, mapping packages and training to the all the local authorities of Merseyside).

HLC process involved initially identifying and drawing a boundary, or polygon, around an area on the current Ordnance Survey map. This area is then placed within one of twelve character categories termed 'Broad Types'.

Once the Broad Type of the polygon has been attributed, a more detailed HLC Sub Type definition is assigned. For example, within the Residential Broad Type a polygon may be further identified as being Terraced Housing or Semi-Detached housing (Appendix 5 for more detail).

3.2 The character types

Before characterisation work could commence, it was necessary to define the landscape character Broad and Sub Types that would be encountered within the project area to define and map the landscape, each of distinct and recognisable common character. Each polygon drawn is assigned to one of the Broad and Sub Types from the pre-defined set. The two levels of character types enable mapping to be analysed at a broader or a more refined level of detail. For the MHCP, thirteen character Broad Types of land use have been defined and eighty two attendant character Sub Types.

The Thirteen Broad Types comprise:

Civil

Coastal

Commercial

Communication

Defence

Field System

Industrial

Other Land

Recreational and Ornamental

Residential

Rough Land

Water bodies

Woodland

Each of these Broad Types encompasses a set of refined Sub Types which enable a more definition. For example, the Residential Broad Type includes 10 different Sub Types, such as Terraced Housing and Villa Housing. For the full list of Broad Types and associated Sub Type descriptions see Appendix 1.

3.3 Defining the character area

The project began in 2003 and used the available 'current' (2003) 1:10,000 OS Raster Map for initial drawing of polygons defining the character areas and the 'current' 1:2500 Landline GIS based map (2003) for checking and verification of polygons. The process of defining areas involved first looking at the current landscape using OS 1:10,000 mapping to identify discrete blocks of character, essentially based on land

use. These could include, for example, the grounds of a school or hospital, or the extent of a housing estate of a particular date, looking at the street plan and types of houses to judge the approximate date at which it was built. Each polygon area was then assigned a Broad Type and Sub Type based on its predominant character. For instance, a residential area may contain commercial elements, but it is predominantly residential in character.

The process was repeated using a series of historic maps. Historic period 'time-slices' are created to define the previous character area of the land (within the same polygon area) at a particular point in time, again based on the predominant character of the previous land uses of the site and to confirm the date of origin of the type. If the use of the land had changed more than once, previous character types could be entered into the database (as the project mapping parameters permit). For example, an existing current area of semi-detached housing could have been built on an area cleared of 19th century terraced housing which was in turn built on fields, giving one current character type and two previous types. Conversely, an area of current terraced housing could represent survival through all the previous historic map periods consulted. Where features have been present in the past that are worthy of note but not significant enough to warrant the assignment of a further previous types, the information was noted in a notes field of the record associated with the polygon.

The MHCP data capture has resulted in 25,686 individual polygon area records.

3.4 Creation of polygons

Polygons were generally drawn using the 1:10,000 mapping. Care was taken to ensure that the edges of polygons were as neat as possible and that edges joined up without leaving gaps which could cause the 'leakage' of subsequent polygons into inappropriate areas. Where character areas of different types were separated from one another by roads, the edges of the polygons were brought out to meet in the centre of the road, except where the road was being defined itself as a significant landscape feature.

3.5 Report production, incorporating review and analysis

The MHCP database has been queried to produce statistics, describe and map patterns of land use over time in each district. Each character Broad Type has been

considered in a dedicated section along with the relevant associate Sub Types occurring in each district (Section 9). Statistics have been compiled and analysed, with additional desk-based research employed to identify historical importance and flavour. Section 7 presents background to each district including socio-economic information to give context to the landscape history and change; Section 8 presents a statistical overview for each district.

4 Documentary Sources

4.1 Cartographic Sources

Full current digital map coverage of the entire study area at both 1:10,000 and 1:2500 scales, as well as some available historic mapping was employed throughout the project (under licence from the five authorities and subsequently English Heritage for the duration of the project).

The base map for the project was the current Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 Scale Raster Map digital mapping, with supplementary detail being provided by the Land-Line 1:2500 scale digital mapping. The Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 (6") First Edition mapping provided the historic underlay for the project; this was available in digital format for most of Merseyside from Landmark, with some of the Merseyside authorities having already purchased it as part of their contaminated land strategies. This mapping is well suited to comparison with modern mapping due to the relatively close similarity in scale. See Appendix 3.

4.2 Digital Sources

In addition to the above mapping sources the following material was also utilised to inform the characterisation process:

Aerial Photographic Survey: digital copy of the 1:10,000, 2000 colour vertical survey for all of Merseyside. This was used primarily in aiding the mapping of the post war urban and rural landscapes extent and character.

A range of GIS datasets: were requested from each local authority. Where available and supplied, these were employed in the characterisation of the present landscape. These consisted of information relating to designations (i.e. conservation areas, green spaces), land use surveys and specific studies (i.e. urban capacity studies). The quality and depth of the material varied according to the individual authority.

4.3 Merseyside Historic Environment Record (HER)

A digital HER¹ point data' layer of the was available during the data capture stage simply to assist understanding the interest of an area and also avoid duplication of recording any new HER 'sites' identified within the project (i.e. from historic mapping).

At the time of compiling the October 2003 MHCP Project Design (Merseyside Archaeological Service, October 2003) the HER contained about 9,600 records. The HER was restructured and transferred to its current HBSMR software in 2003 as part of its ongoing development. This enabled the database to be linked to GIS (MapInfo) for the first time.² During 2003 to 2004, over 800 new records were added to the HBSMR in order to test the system. These new sites were the result of HER documentary record enhancement within the urban areas of Merseyside, their addition to the HBSMR system prioritised to assist the characterisation data capture process.

The HER documentary archive was primarily used as supporting information during the compilation of the Historic Settlements Study carried out as part of the MHCP.

4.4 Other secondary sources

A range of documentary material (paper copies of pre-Ordnance Survey historic maps, Victoria County History, key journals, grey literature reports, bibliographic references etc) provided in-house background sources for the project.

Reference was also made to a number of local governmental reports (particularly Local Authority Unitary Development Plans). Project timetable, remit consistency and

1 The HER is the county strategic record and central body of archaeological information in Merseyside. It contains information on many known sites and also where the potential for remains exist and it plays a key role in the identifying, managing, conserving and presenting the historic environment.

² Historic Buildings Sites and Monuments Record (ExeGesIS SDM Ltd).

sheer amount of information, meant that it was not possible to consider emerging local authority Local Development Framework documents.

4.5 Historic Settlement Study

The aim of the historic settlement study was to produce a consistent pro-forma template of information on settlements identified across all the historical townships in all five districts of Merseyside as based on the relevant paper First Edition Ordnance Survey 6" to 1 mile maps for Lancashire (published 1848 -1851) and Cheshire (1881 - 1882) . The purpose was to help provide background information for the data capture of character area polygons and also bring together some information on known or highlight other historic settlements, many of which have been lost or disguised by urban development. It was also thought that information would be useful for alerting to areas of possible archaeological interest to support the development management advice given by Merseyside Archaeological Advisory Service to the five districts.

The study was desk-based and drew on accessible sources held within the Merseyside Historic Environment Record. A total of one hundred and seventeen separate studies were completed as follows per district: - Knowsley: 11, Liverpool: 30, Sefton: 23, St Helens: 11, Wirral: 42. This includes the slightly more detailed work on 'historic towns' (see Appendix 7 of main district report for methodology outline). The Historic Settlement Study is arranged into five district reports, which are provided separately from this main report.

The settlement study represents a consistent synthesis of information to highlight settlement by the mid to later nineteenth century, complimenting the earliest set historic period for project data capture. It is not a definitive statement on the origins of settlement across Merseyside. Further detailed documentary and fieldwork research is required. The studies were initially carried out in tandem with the characterisation data capture for each district. They were all in initial draft by April 2008 (recommencement of the MHCP data capture) and accessible to provide background information for the character area polygons. For example, a Current area of industrial expansion might contain the otherwise unidentified medieval or post-medieval core of the township.

The results from the settlement studies compliment the existing content of the Merseyside Historic Environment Record. Furthermore, they have already supported:

- the planning advice given by the Merseyside Archaeological Advisory Service, enabling quick initial reference for individual planning appraisals,

- supply (in draft) to HER enquirers and other project consultants i.e. carrying out Conservation Area Appraisals,
- the data content of a pilot interactive on the archaeology of Merseyside in the Magical History Tour exhibition (2007, National Museums Liverpool).

The Settlement Study has not only highlighted areas of new archaeological interest but has the potential to contribute to regeneration and Conservation Area appraisals simply by highlighting interest worthy of further desk-based and research in the field. In addition they may contribute to compilation of lists of buildings and areas of local interest and community based projects.

4.6 Character Area Potential

The MHCP experimented with the identification of 'potential character areas' as a means to assist in identifying areas of distinct historic survival within the current landscape. For instance, where buildings appear to form an 'enclave' or a community built around a particular industrial or religious building/centre. More-often-than-not, the buildings within these enclaves were of a certain date (or range) and of a certain architectural or vernacular style.

Simply termed 'Character Area Potential' (CAP) in the database, the noting of these buildings/ areas in the database was to try and tease out from the landscape a 'feel' for what may be significant or noteworthy. CAP was identified during the data capture characterisation process (drawing polygons based on the relevant character types) and were subjectively chosen on the basis of study of mapping and historical data for the area (see Appendix 9).

The areas highlighted as 'Character Area Potential' serve to alert to areas worthy of further work, notably comparison with the Settlement Study, Conservation Areas and potential for local listing.

5 The Merseyside Historic Characterisation Project

5.1 Review of the MHCP

Commissioned by English Heritage in 2003, the Merseyside Historic Characterisation project was the first of a number of surveys to develop and explore a methodology for historic landscape characterisation of a large metropolitan conurbation. The project commenced in April 2003 with methodology development, a refined project design, pilot phases and implementation to June 2005, after which the dedicated project officer post was vacant until April 2008. The project was subsequently reviewed, recast and completed between 2008- July 2010. Data was transferred to the Historic Environment Record in August 2010; report editing and production was finalised in 2011. Appendix 8 provides a short review of the assessment undertaken in 2008 (to plan for project delivery) and also a note on progressing particular historic environment management aspirations.

5.2 Broad Type Statistics

The following provides final Broad Type statistics with some examples of basic map queries.

Broad Type	Knowsley (hectares)	Liverpool (hectares)	St Helens (hectares)	Sefton (hectares)	Wirral (hectares)
Civil	326.26	1318.59	358.51	787.71	455.16
Coastal	0	19.21	0	1896.52	213.46
Commercial	465.27	813.27	214.95	351.11	318.38
Communication	311.51	502.72	280.43	407.86	163.86
Defence	1.32	21.58	4.63	78.95	3.7
Field System	2592.18	303.01	6607.32	4046.49	23.55
Industrial	713.93	910.4	901.99	790.36	849.23
Other	0	3.75	1.95	5.44	10.77
Recreational and Ornamental	745.11	1820.74	1253.78	1723.60	1103.27
Residential	2966.79	5175.46	2804.52	4613.93	5251.45
Rough Land	298.71	187.32	590.77	437.57	311.66
Water Bodies	16.41	10.54	182.86	74.73	41.58
Woodland	191.77	73.91	486.54	250.23	106.66
Total	8629.27	11160.53	13688.25	15464.46	8852.73

Table 1 Current Broad Type area for each district (hectares)

Table 1 summarises the final areas for each Broad Type per district and Table 2 summarises the polygon count for each Broad Type per district. (Sub Type area and polygon counts are in Appendix 10).

Broad Type	Knowsley	Liverpool	St Helens	Sefton	Wirral
Civil	207	617	318	517	536
Coastal	0	3	0	63	13
Commercial	239	321	365	594	497
Communication	163	92	151	103	151
Defence	1	8	3	7	4
Field System	285	15	916	364	12
Industrial	164	281	384	401	384
Other	0	2	6	2	44
Recreational and Ornamental	234	361	374	339	480
Residential	1315	1392	2855	3994	4378
Rough Land	163	99	347	188	163
Water Bodies	20	8	123	22	38
Woodland	107	18	301	66	69
Total 25,686 consisting of	2898	3217	6143	6659	6769

Table 2 Current Broad Type polygon count for each district (number)

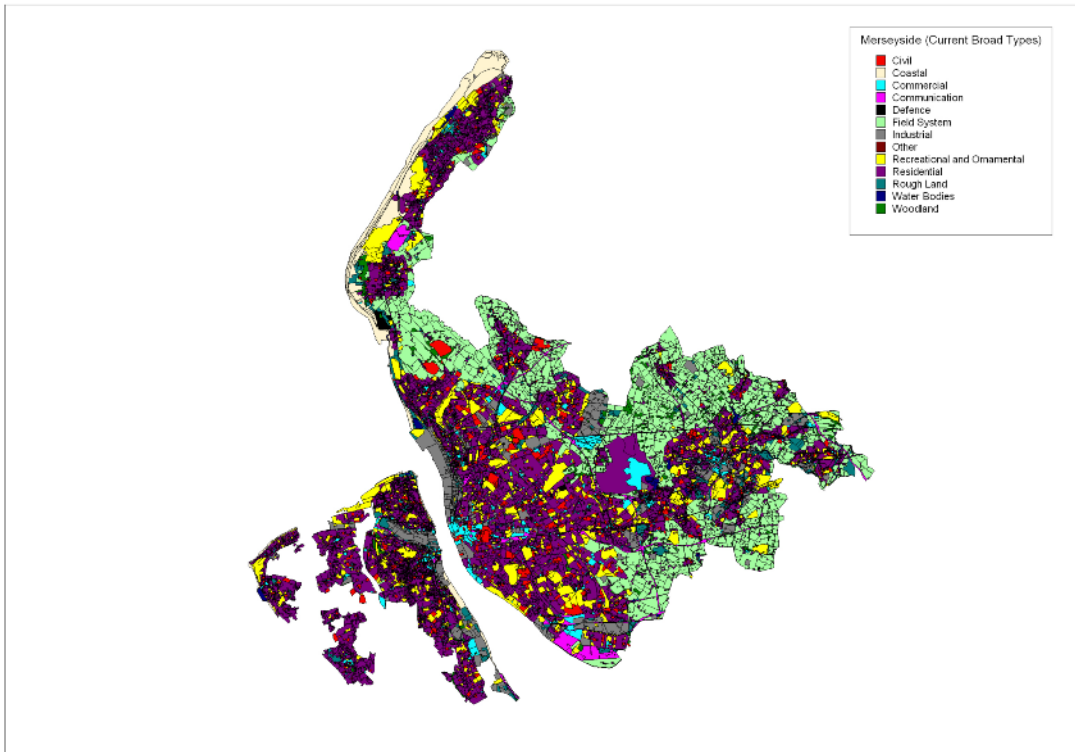


Figure 2 Current (2003) Merseyside Historic Characterisation by Broad Type

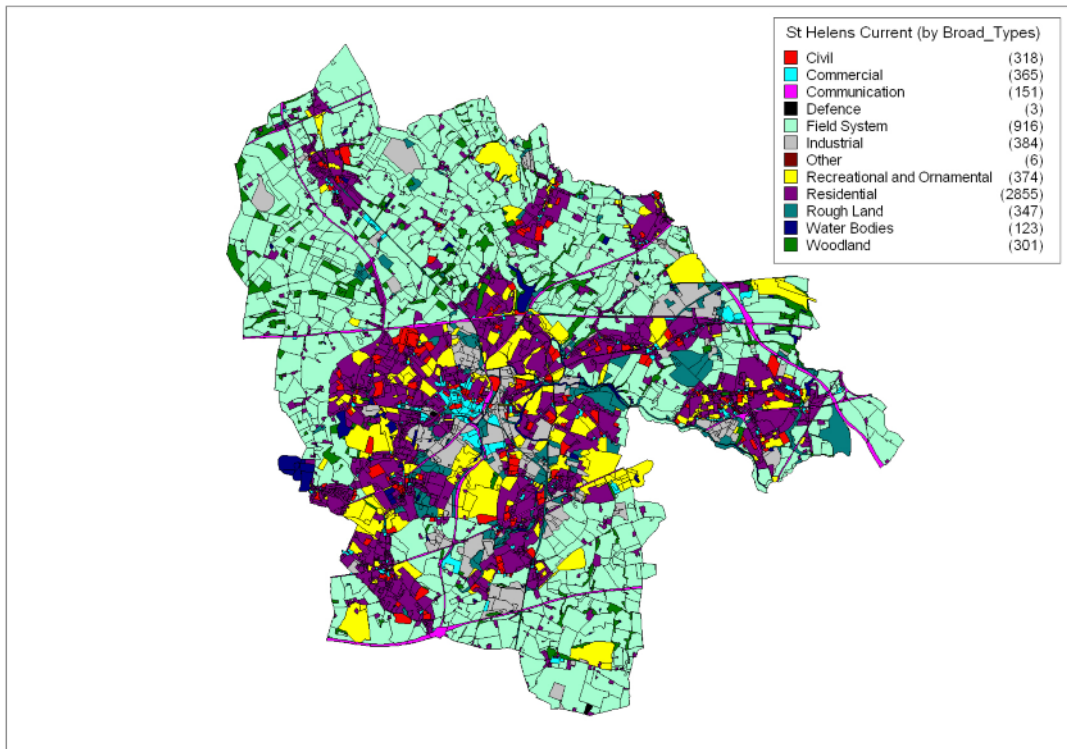


Figure 3 Example of Current (2003) district characterisation by Broad Type - St Helens

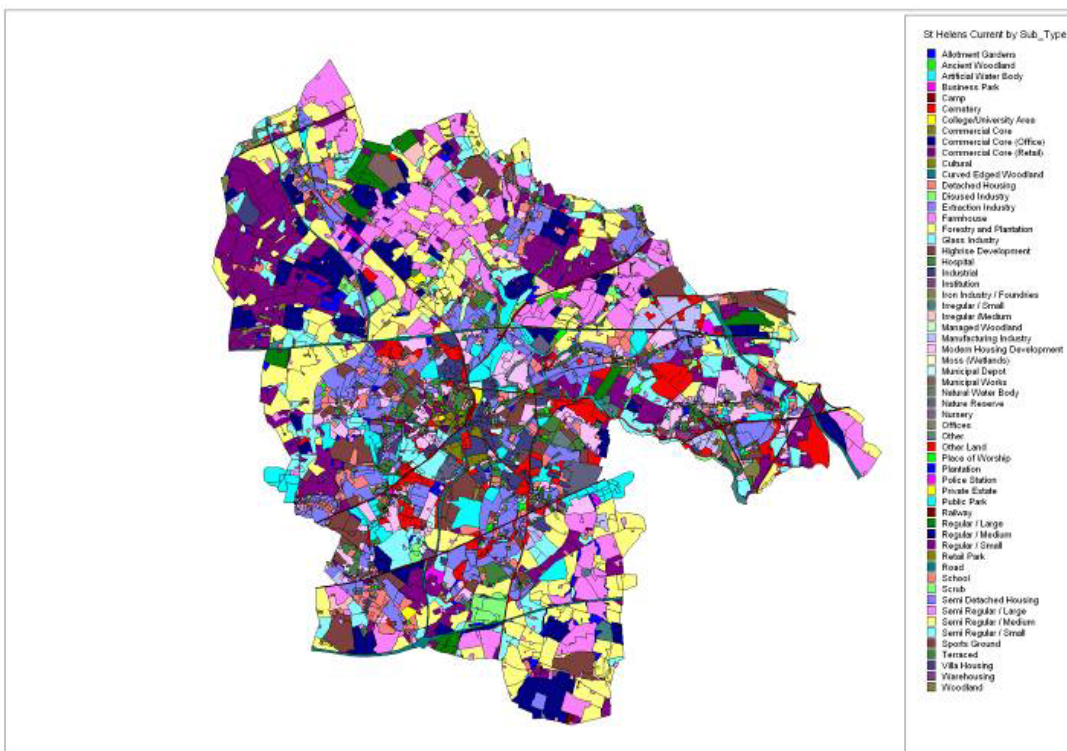


Figure 4 Example of Current (2003) district characterisation by Sub Type - St Helens

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.

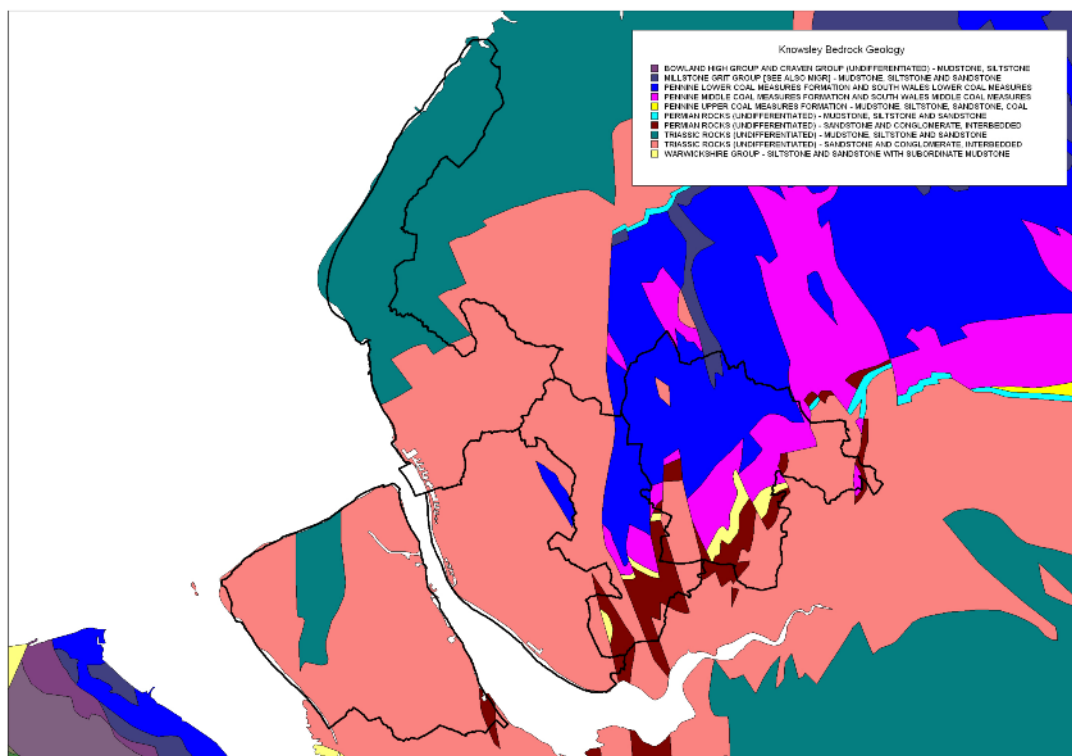


Figure 5 Bedrock Geology of the Merseyside Region. Based upon DiGMapGB-625 data 1: 625 000 ESRI® (Bedrock deposits) with the permission of the British Geological Survey. (© Crown Copyright and database right 2003. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100019088. English Heritage)

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.³

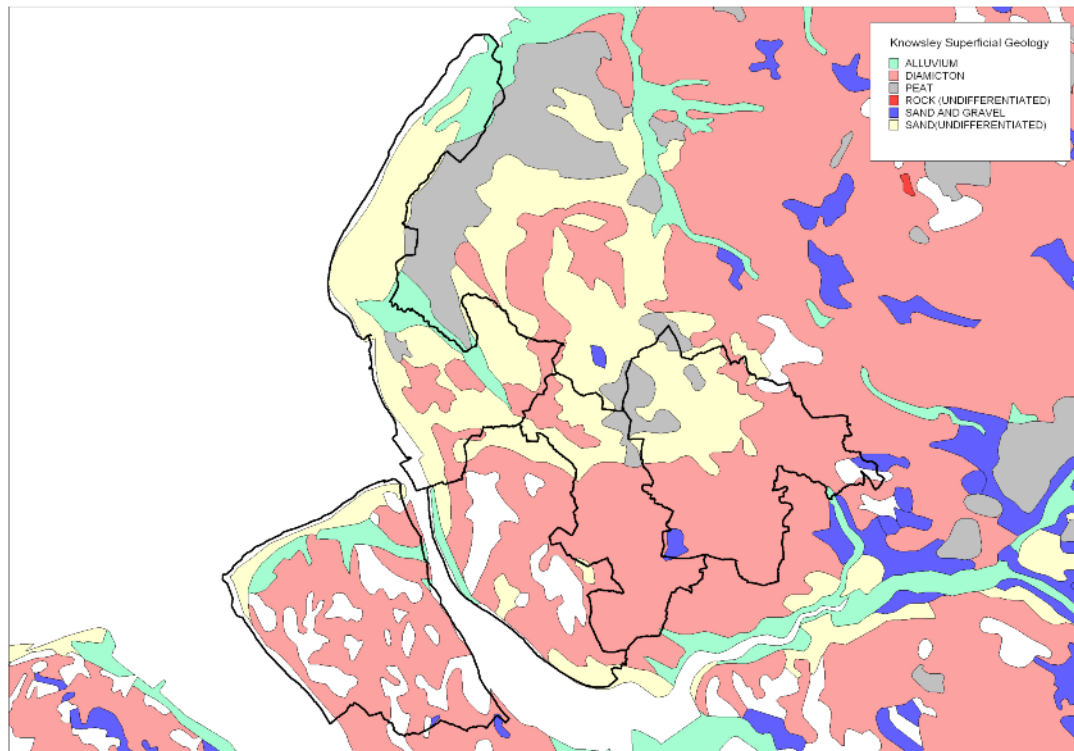


Figure 6 Superficial Geology of the Merseyside Region. Based upon DiGMapGB-625 data 1: 625 000 ESRI® (Bedrock deposits) with the permission of the British Geological Survey. (© Crown Copyright and database right 2003. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100019088. English Heritage)

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 Oxton, 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

³ (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.)

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) alongside 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 colleague 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.