

CHARACTER TYPE 5

DEGRADED AND RESTORED LANDSCAPES

Description

For the purpose of the study, degraded and restored landscape is defined as land which has been altered from its former state by mining, extraction and industrial uses and/or restored to a condition other than for viable agricultural use.

Degraded and restored landscapes relate directly to their original cause or source such as the colliery, quarry or industrial area responsible. They are found throughout the Makerfield Basin from Goose Green to the north-west to Astley Green Colliery to the south-east.

Together these landscapes provide potential for wildlife and recreational open space within densely developed industrial and residential areas. They remain a legacy to the area's industrial past, providing a variety of landforms, and often create good views over the surrounding area.



Photo. 115 Bickershaw Colliery near Fir Tree Flash.

Excluded from this landscape character type are colliery spoil mounds, which have been reclaimed, topsoiled, grassed and now returned to a viable agricultural use e.g. at Tamer Lane End, Bickershaw and adjacent to Cleworth Hall, Tyldesley. Also excluded are areas of former open cast works where 'panels' of extraction have taken place between retained hedgerows and the land once again returned to grazing or arable use e.g. to the south of the A580 at Astley and the recently restored farmland to the west of the M6, adjacent to Rycroft Farm/Ashton Road. These areas are now sufficiently well-restored to be considered as contiguous with adjacent agricultural landscape types, with only the landform indicating that the original ground levels have been significantly altered.

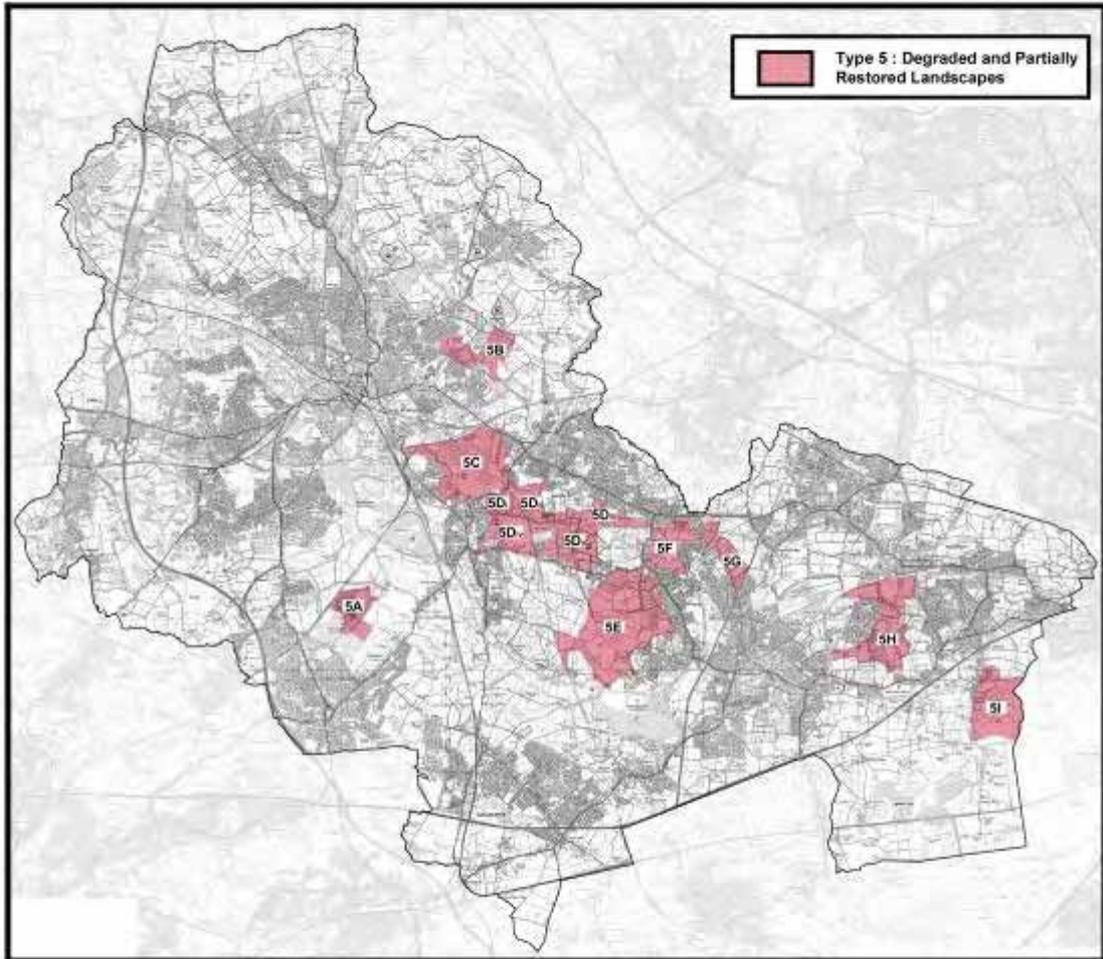
The following breakdown of this landscape character type into areas, reflects the above categories and relate to distinctive areas of land within the Makerfield Basin.

Specific landscapes included within this character type are:

- Colliery spoil mounds re-graded to form gently sloping domed landforms, mainly sown with grass, e.g. Gin Pit.
- Colliery spoil mounds which remain un-graded and unreclaimed with extensive areas of bare spoil, occasional steep spoil slopes and numerous small water bodies, e.g. spoil heaps between Plank Lane, Bickershaw and Tamer Lane End, Leigh.
- Colliery spoil mounds which have been re-graded to form extensive, evenly graded plateaux like landforms, e.g. former colliery land to the west of Hindley.
- Colliery spoil mounds which have received restoration treatment and management to enhance and diversify their habitats and wildlife potential, e.g. Ince Mosses.
- Other tips and former industrial areas have received basic restoration e.g. land at Dangerous Corner and the former Iron and Steel Works at Kirkless.

Key Characteristics:

- Numerous unconnected areas of degraded land in various stages of restoration, neglect or careful management
- Often associated with disused or derelict former mineral railway lines, usually on embankments formed from colliery spoil
- Artificial landforms
- Areas of open space often surrounded by dense urban or sub-urban infrastructure
- Locally important habitat for wildlife
- Locally important for leisure and recreation
- Higher open ground often affording good views



Cultural History

This landscape type is in area a fraction of the area which existed, perhaps 100 years ago, when possibly mining, quarrying, foundry work and similar industries were at their greatest extent. It is important to realise that coal in particular was immensely valuable, as George Orwell described:-

'Our civilization,, is founded on coal, more completely than one realizes until one stops to think about it. The machines that keep us alive, and the machines that make machines, are all directly or indirectly dependent upon coal. In the metabolism of the Western world the coal-miner is second in importance only to the man who ploughs the soil. He is a sort of caryatid upon whose shoulders nearly everything that is not grimy is supported. For this reason the actual process by which coal is extracted is well worth watching, if you get the chance and are willing to take the trouble....

Watching coal-miners at work, you realize momentarily what different universes people inhabit. Down there where coal is dug is a sort of world apart which one can quite easily go through life without ever hearing about. Probably the majority of people would even prefer not to hear about it. Yet it is the absolutely necessary counterpart of our world above. Practically everything we do, from eating an ice to crossing the Atlantic, and from baking a loaf to writing a novel, involves the use of coal, directly or indirectly. For all the arts of peace coal is needed; if war breaks out it is needed all the more. In time of revolution the miner must go on working or the revolution must stop, for revolution as much as reaction needs coal. Whatever may be happening on the surface, the hacking and shovelling have got to continue without a pause, or at any rate without pausing for more than a few weeks at the most.

Orwell, George 1937 'The Road to Wigan Pier'.

Many of the collieries were well serviced by mineral railway lines, connecting to the main lines running through the area. Coal was of course the principal fuel for railway locomotives and Wigan one of the biggest suppliers. When collieries began to cause localised subsidence on these lines and on the Leeds to Liverpool Canal, colliery spoil was extensively used to reform the track bed. Colliery spoil is acidic, reducing the number of plants capable of growing on it and producing a sulphuric acid leachate creating widespread damage to ditches and streams into which it drains.

Other areas of spoil were formed when clay and sand pits were filled in, usually with colliery spoil or capped with colliery spoil. The Kirkless site has one substantial area of slag from the foundry which stood there.

Much of the dereliction left as the coal industry began to close down after c.1960 was treated by Lancashire County Council, Greater Manchester Joint Reclamation Team and Wigan Council with varying degrees of success. One of the problems with derelict land reclamation has always been determining a realistic objective. To reclaim land for agricultural use requires a great deal of work and expense.

A further consideration is whether or not 'reclamation' is required. Many of the rarer plant species grow on nutrient poor substrates so that treating derelict land with soil mediums and improving nutrient levels destroys the rarer plants and encourages dense swards of species-poor grassland. The varied landscape areas of this landscape type illustrate some of these problems.

Reclamation works are still proceeding on various sites in Wigan with other agencies now involved, such as the North West Regional Development Agency and the National Coalfield Programme. These sites include Sandyforth Former Opencast Site, Ashton and Bickershaw Colliery, Leigh.

The involvement of the latter exemplifies one of the serious cultural problems associated with the closing of the mining industry in the 1980s – large scale deprivation. This is still being addressed by Wigan Borough Council and the 'Greenheart' Regional Park initiative is a flagship scheme.

Key cultural elements in the landscape:

- Numerous areas of degraded land in various stages of restoration, neglect or careful management.
- Many sites of high Industrial Archaeology significance.
- Economic deprivation of surrounding communities following mine closures.
- Sites of high interest for wildlife.

AREA 5.A THE THREE SISTERS

Description

The Three Sisters area represents a former colliery spoil tip which has been re-graded to form a single mounded area with hollowed core, enclosing and completely screening a motor racing circuit.

It is located on a spur of land to the south of the confluence of 2 minor stream valleys adjacent to Bryn Hall Farm, Ashton in Makerfield and is surrounded by open countryside apart from the presence of South Lancashire Industrial Estate to the south-west. The open nature of the low-lying farmland tends to exaggerate the impact of the mounding on the surrounding area, creating an unnatural landform, despite associated dense woodland planting.

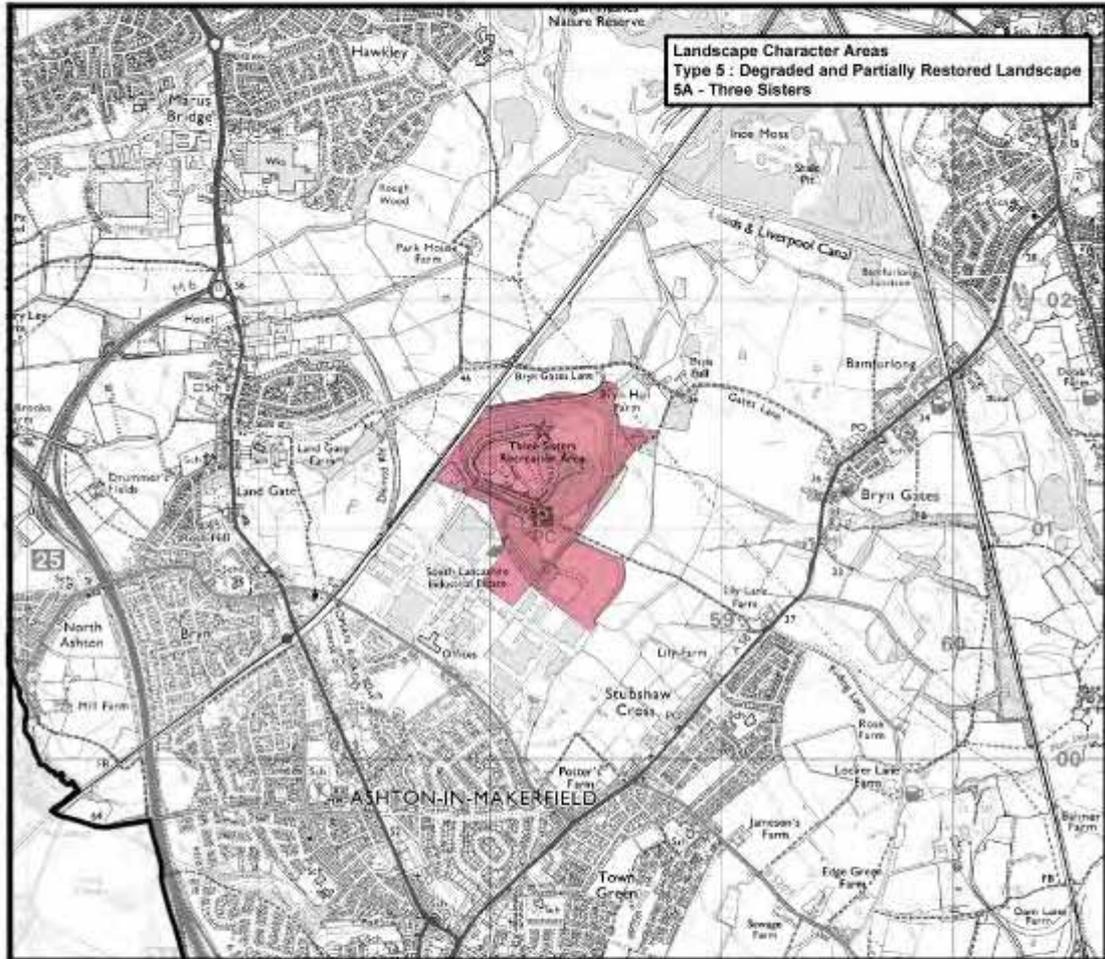


Photo. 160 Three Sisters from the A49.

The re-graded external batters to the mound have been planted predominantly with native woodland (now relatively mature) and provided with a circular, gravel surfaced, recreational footpath. A Visitor Centre is situated to the south of the site, adjacent to parking areas and a fishing pond. The site provides a centre for conservation activities linked to the Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust's Ranger Service.

Key Characteristics:

- Unnatural re-graded landform
- Well-established wooded slopes
- Racing Circuit
- Visitor Centre and Pond
- Footpath system and car parking



Cultural History

The Three Sisters is the name given to three huge colliery spoil heaps, the product of Garswood Hall Colliery. The colliery closed in 1958. During the late 1960s the Greater Manchester and Lancashire Joint Reclamation Teams carried out major re-grading of the area, reducing the overall height of the heaps, creating an internal 'basin' shape for leisure activity use.



Photo. 158 – Three Sisters Race Track.

A visitor centre was provided and in the basin area and a car and motor bike racing circuit was constructed. A lake was established at the south-western side of the area for angling and sailing. Car parking was provided for visitors. An immense number of trees and shrubs were planted, which now shroud the entire external envelope of the site. In 1974 the area was passed to the control of Wigan Council. All the facilities are still in use, but sailing has ceased, to be replaced by model boat sailing and canoeing. Wildlife in the rapidly maturing woodlands and around the lake has increased dramatically since Wigan Council took over the area and this has greatly improved visitor numbers.

In 2003 a 'Friends of Three Sisters' group was established to improve community participation in and access to the area in conjunction with the Wigan Ranger Service. The group carry out voluntary works around the site and are very active. A new wetland education facility is currently being developed on the site of the former BMX track.

Key cultural elements:

- Remains of Garswood Colliery and Three Sisters Spoil Heaps
- Creation of the Three Sisters Recreation Area.

Landscape Sensitivity and Change

The site has undergone a complete transformation following the abandonment of the colliery site. The spoil heaps, once locally famous landmarks, have now been amalgamated and reduced in height to form the gently graded, although still dominant, roughly circular shape containing the racing circuit.

Tree planting has taken place on all sides of the mounds, camouflaging the site's activity and reducing the effects of noise. Further changes to the site have been the introduction of informal recreation through the development of footpath routes, the fishing pond and associated Ranger Centre. The site is linked to the adjoining Forestry Commission site of Viridor Wood.

The re-mounded area still creates a feature and local landmark within the surrounding landscape, whilst the sensitivity of the area's racing circuit is reduced by its location away from residential areas adjoining the South Lancashire Industrial Estate.

Key elements of landscape sensitivity:

- Creates an artificially formed feature and local landmark

Key elements of landscape change:

- Creation of single landform from three colliery spoil heaps
- Establishment of tree planting
- Introduction of recreational use

Recommended Management and Landscape Objectives

The Three Sisters site is already managed by Wigan Council as a facility for motor racing, fishing and passive recreation. Footpaths around the site are well used and have links to the north joining to Bryn Gates Lane and to the east to the A58 at Lily Lane Farm via Viridor Wood. The woodland areas were planted at time of the sites restoration and are now in need of thinning and coppice work. The creation of open areas to form vistas could also be considered within the site particularly to the north where excellent views are afforded to the Pennines.

Management of the Landscape:

- Maintain existing management regime for the facility
- Consider additional native woodland planting to form a physical link with Virdor Wood
- Undertake thinning and general woodland management to the plantations on the site
- Consider opening up vistas through the woodland to views to the east and north/east

AREA 5.B KIRKLESS

Description

The Kirkless area is split into two by a flight of locks on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal adjacent to Kirkless Hall. A disused railway line forms the southern boundary of the site, with residential areas to the north and west. An industrial estate, formerly the Kirkless Iron and Steel Works occupies the centre of the site. The land occupies steeply rising ground running from the urban valley floor up towards Top Lock and affords good views of Wigan town centre and across towards Ashurst Beacon. The land to either side of the lock system, part of the site of the former Kirkless Iron and Steel Works, was reclaimed in the early 1990s. It has been previously subject to industrial tipping. Small ponds are present and are currently used for fishing.



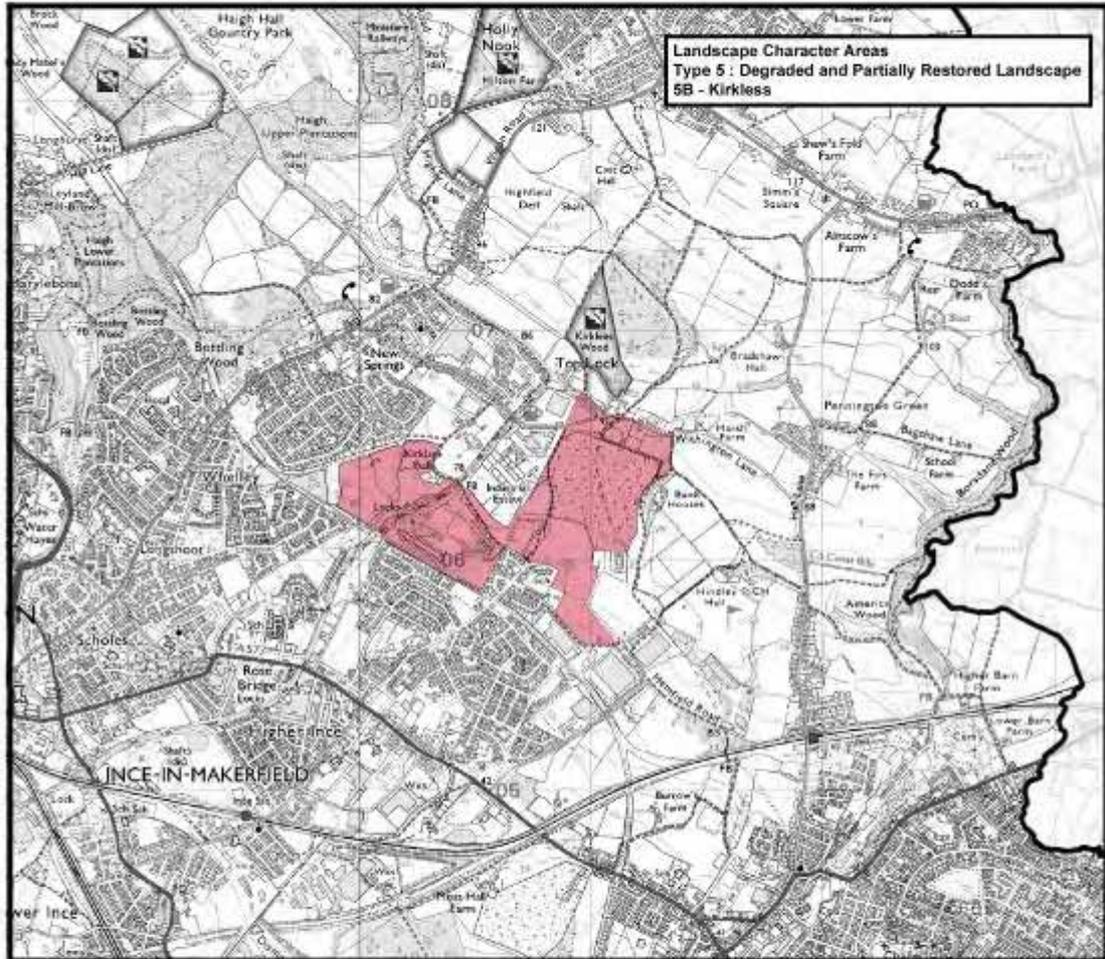
Photo. 126 View towards Wigan Town Centre from Top Lock.

Small areas have been fenced and planted with maturing trees and shrubs. A narrow margin of land associated with the canal has been maintained as a cut grassed strip alongside the towpath. This is in stark contrast to the degraded land to either side, which is not subject to routine maintenance and management. The Whelley Loop Line crosses the southern boundary of the site at the toe of the slag heap. Another strategic route also crosses the heart of the site, crossing the Canal at Kirkless Hall. The canal promenade follows the towpath from Wigan centre north towards the rural areas of Haigh and Aspull.

To the east of the former Kirkless Iron and Steel works is a former refuse tip, which has been planted recently. The tip is discharging gas and a number of vent pipes have been inserted on its summit. The former tip is grassed to the east, north and west, but has a substantial area of bare shale on its south-western face. The planting appears to be in two phases, the first around the base of the tip, the second, more recent, running around the shoulders and part of its summit.

Key Characteristics:

- Flight of Canal locks, footbridges and associated spillways
- Canal towpath
- Elevated position with views across Wigan town centre and towards Ashurst Beacon
- Channelled open space mainly associated with the Canal
- Kirkless Hall
- Degraded land, including former basic slag heaps
- Extremely large former refuse tip
- The site of the Kirkless Iron and Steel works, now an industrial estate.
- Uneven ground mainly not reinstated, including small ponds
- Areas of young tree planting



Cultural History:

The area contains a number of old buildings of note. The most dominant of these is Kirkless Hall, built c. 1663 on a moated site of some antiquity. This was the core of an extensive estate covering '59 Cheshire acres' with gardens, orchards and ancillary buildings. In 1749 the owner sank two pits in the area and a slow decline commenced, the moat disappearing by the late C19th. Adjacent to the Canal to the east is a black and white timbered public house of great character.



Photo. 126 Kirkless Hall from canal bridge.

Adjoining the area to the southwest of Kirkless Hall was the site of Peel Hall, also a moated site of some antiquity. Still extant in 1907, it has now been subsumed by development. Just east of Peel Hall was Ince Hall, a half-timbered Jacobean structure and part of the Peel Ditch estate, standing in a rectangular site. The Hall has since been demolished and the gardens have become playing fields.

Following the construction of the Leeds Liverpool Canal to Wigan, the canal company came to an agreement with the rival Lancaster Canal Company to connect the two at Top Lock. The Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company built a spectacular flight of locks up to this point, arguably the most dramatic remains of the Industrial Revolution in Wigan. These locks are stone-faced and have massive oak lock gates. Spillways on either side of the lock corridor carry excess water down to the lower level of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.

The flight of locks runs from the Lower Ince area, through Higher Ince towards Top Lock and is crossed by the A577 at Rose Bridge.

Following the construction of the canal, Rose Bridge Colliery was sunk in the 1830s and new shafts in 1858. A railway was built in the 1860s to bypass Wigan to the east. The Round House Branch, from its construction in 1869, served the Rose Bridge Colliery as well as the Kirkless Iron and Steel Works until the line was closed in the 1930s.



Photo. 125 - Kirkless Iron and Steel Mill site – now derelict.

Kirkless was the main centre for mining cannel coal and was well-established by the end of the C17th. Coal and cannel mining continued until 1858. In 1865, the Wigan Coal and Iron Co. Ltd was formed at Kirkless by a group of various owners and rapidly expanded the site, so that by 1873 they had ten blast furnaces. In the 1880s they established open hearth furnaces and at the end of the decade had rolling mills in use. The surplus material from the iron works, slag, was used as a material for paving flags and a flag works stood at the south of the complex

The Wigan Coal and Iron Company was a huge company, but following the financial crisis of the 1920s it was split into two corporations and the Kirkless site was closed down. The Kirkless workshops were then used by the Wigan Coal Corporation and later the NCB (for the whole of the northwest) for the repair of mining equipment and locomotives. The workshops are currently part of a trading estate.

To the east of Kirkless a vast spoil heap was formed from the colliery spoil, tipped from a series of sidings from an extensive mineral line loop.

Key cultural elements in the landscape:

- The Leeds and Liverpool Canal with its associated locks, spillways and bridges
- Kirkless Hall
- Tips associated with Kirkless Colliery.
- The Kirkless Iron and Steel Works - Wigan Coal and Iron Co. Ltd
- Remains of Round House Sidings.
- Colliery spoil heaps to the east and (outside the Landscape Area) to the northwest.

Landscape Sensitivity and Change

The area would once have formed agricultural land and provided a connection between the arable fields of Haigh and Hindley Halls. It was completely subsumed by industrial development in the 19th century and is now centred along the axis of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal lock system. Adjoining land, forming part of the old Kirkless Iron and Steel slag heaps, now lies derelict with few features relating to its former industrial use. Similarly, Kirkless Hall lies in an unmanaged and unkempt area of grassland. The site of the Kirkless Iron and Steel works is now an Industrial Estate.



Photo. 134 Colliery spoil heap at Kirkless.

The huge colliery spoil heap between Kirkless and Bank Houses has been planted and much of it has established grassland on it. However, the site is hazardous through emissions of gas and is fenced off. North-east of Top Lock, Kirkless, is a large spoil heap, now almost entirely concealed in vegetation.

Only the Canal and its immediate environs of neatly trimmed grass remain as functioning elements in the landscape. It now forms a major recreational feature and attraction, together with its associated bridges and other canal architecture, and will be sensitive to the effects of any future development planned adjacent.

Key elements of landscape sensitivity:

- The Leeds and Liverpool Canal, together with associated features
- Potential for industrial archaeology
- Kirkless Hall
- Sensitive to adjoining development and misuse

Key elements of landscape change:

- Change from agricultural to industrial use
- Decline and disuse to industrial areas
- Recreational use of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal

Recommended Management and Landscape Objectives

The Kirkless area is an historic and dramatic area of landscape dominated by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and an impressive flight of locks leading down into the centre of Wigan. This is a magnificent feature worthy of greater recognition and public interest and should be subject to heritage interpretation and careful planning control to adjoining areas. Further elements of interest next to the canal are Kirkless Hall and the former steelworks site together with excellent views across the Makerfield Basin towards Ashurst Beacon in the west. In addition the site has potential to forge stronger and more direct footpath routes through to Haigh Hall and Aspull.

Unfortunately the land directly associated with the canal has been pinched into a narrow strip with new housing development left uncomfortably close to the canal and unsympathetically designed. This is now a detracting feature to what should be a major tourist feature for the Wigan area. Adequate car parking and an interpretive centre linked to the canal should also be considered. Any redevelopment of land within the former steel works site should provide for additional land to be allocated alongside the canal as a buffer zone. This should include visual barriers in the form of linear belts of woodland planting.

The present industrial estate occupying some of the former steelworks buildings is in great need of refurbishment. This should include if possible, the retention and refurbishment of the old steelworks buildings and the removal of more recent buildings of poor quality. The design of new buildings should be carefully considered. The currently conflicts between access for heavy lorries and the need to maintain the listed bridge structures require addressing.

The present strip of mown grassland associated with the canal edges should remain open and fairly formal in keeping with 'standard canal-side management'. The remainder of the former steel works slag-heap site could be attractively utilised as public open space but may be difficult to justify in light of the proximity of adjoining woodlands and the Haigh Hall Country Park immediately to the north. Any redevelopment should retain the areas original sett sandstone paving towards the canal bridges and should seek to enhance the canal-side landscape. Land to the south of Kirkless Hall adjacent to the canal locks is presently unmanaged and also creates a detracting element. This land appears to be directly related to the Hall and if restored as a period garden as part of the Hall would be an asset to the area and could form a further leisure attraction. The main emphasis of the area however should remain with the canal, the restoration of its architectural features and future of leisure boat use.

Management of the Landscape:

- Encourage canal based activity
- Consider the area as a major heritage tourist and leisure attraction with purpose constructed car park and heritage centre, possibly using the old hall or one of the former steelworks buildings

- Encourage regular maintenance to historic canal architecture
- Investigate opportunities to reinvigorate the historic Kirkless Hall and gardens as a further leisure attraction
- Re-route HGV access into the former steelworks to avoid using the listed canal bridges and setted routes
- Address the relationship between the former steelworks buildings and the canal envelope, removing, where possible, inappropriate fencing and creating a new planted perimeter
- Encourage the removal of eyesores such as tipped materials, particularly when these are easily viewed from footpath routes
- When considering the future use of the former steel works site allow the nominal installation of a 20m wide strip of planted space to the canal-side boundary as a backdrop to the canal. If the site is redeveloped, it may be worth considering further pedestrian connections from the site to the canal and carefully opening up some discreet and attractive views in some areas
- Consider stronger and more direct footpath routes through to Haigh Hall and Aspull. Retain original sett surfacing in the vicinity
- Monitor potential water pollution and fly tipping. Urgently implement clean up procedures if necessary

AREA 5.C INCE MOSS/AMBERSWOOD COMMON

Description

Ince Moss and Amberswood Common combine former peat mossland and extensive areas of colliery spoil which have been re-graded following open-cast mining and re-shaped to create a new and attractive landscape of naturalistic open space. Native tree planting has been densely established on raised mounding and knolls with a rich bio-diversity of wild flora covering wide areas of nutrient poor, low-lying former mossland.



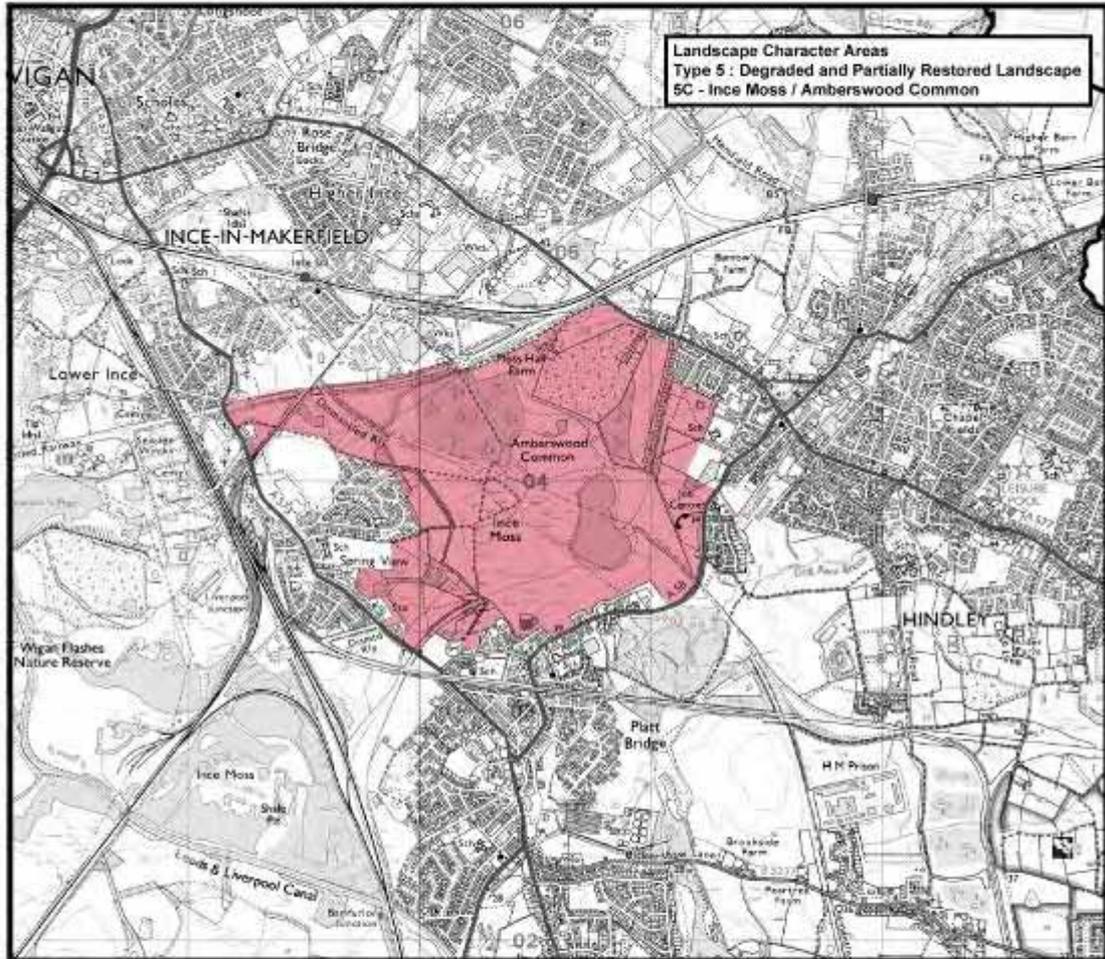
Photo. 105 Amberswood Common.

A high water table has facilitated wetland scrapes, ponds and larger water bodies which add to a broad mosaic of flora and habitat. The mounded and planted areas create an intimacy of interlinked spaces with larger enclosures physically and visually separating the site from surrounding areas of dense housing and industry.

The area has an established and managed footpath system which appears to be well-used and respected by the local community. A large area of the site is designated as open access land and as a nature reserve.

Key Characteristics:

- Rich and diverse range of flora and fauna
- Associated wetlands
- Graded mounding and established woodland
- Former area of mossland and colliery spoil
- Contained and intimate landscape
- Passive recreational use
- Well-used footpath system



Cultural History

This area formed the northern part of Ince Moss, an extensive mossland area extending across the whole of the Makerfield basin to the southeast of the town. It was for a considerable period an area of wilderness, with a high water table making it impossible to drain. 'Turf' (peat) was cut from the moss by local people as a fuel, as was coal, but this was on a small scale until the construction of Leeds and Liverpool Canal to the south. The name Amberswood Common probably relates to the commoner's rights to such material over the area.

During the later C19th, the eastern boundary of this area was formed by the course of the L & NWR Lancashire Union Line with its important junction to the Eccles, Tyldesley and Wigan Line, all of which have now long since been removed. However, parts of their embankments remain in the area. Amberswood Colliery, also known as Moss Colliery, stood close to Moss Hall Farm to the north and operated briefly from 1894-6. A mineral railway ran through the centre of area connecting the mine to the main North Union Railway. Two other mines were also sunk in this area but were also short-lived. The mining produced large quantities of spoil in the area which accumulated to form extensive flat-topped heaps.

In the same period, just east of Moss Colliery and also standing in the mossland, was a hospital for infectious diseases - a small facility with brick walls around it.

During the C20th the area was subject to opencast mining, which reduced levels generally. The original C19th spoil heaps were re-graded fairly recently and a more naturalistic landform achieved.



Photo. 105 Purple Vetch, Amberswood.

In 1999, Amberswood was planted with woodland as a Red Rose Forest Community Forest Initiative, a project involving Wigan Borough Council and Groundwork Wigan and Chorley. External funding was successfully sought for the project and the area now forms a key gateway site within Greenheart, Wigan Council's regional park initiative.

Key cultural elements in the landscape:

- Former mossland with high water table
- Area subjected to colliery working, soil deposition and associated railways in the C19th
- Former common land, now restored to public access
- Rich in flora and fauna

Landscape Sensitivity and Change

The original mossland area was formerly sensitive to previous industrial development and drainage although vestigial areas of mossland habitat are now recovering between extensive areas of colliery spoil. The subtle restoration and management of this area has created an environment and range of habitats which is arguably more attractive and diverse than the original pre-industrial landscape. Wetland areas have been created for both wildlife and fishing and the provision of surfaced footpaths has made the area accessible to local residents for passive recreation.

The landscape appears to be generally respected, despite the dense urban residential areas around it. Fringe areas of the open space however are prone to domestic fly tipping. The large areas of established planting greatly reduce the visual effects of surrounding development, creating a naturalistic environment completely separated from the urban areas.

Key elements of landscape sensitivity:

- Mossland areas sensitive to water table changes
- Sensitive to pressures from the urban fringe

Key elements of landscape change:

- Change from mossland to colliery workings, followed by restoration to naturalistic area
- Introduction of informal recreation
- Establishment of woodland planting creating seclusion
- Enhanced habitats

Recommended Management and Landscape Objectives

The restored areas of Ince Common/Amberswood is yet another hidden jewel in Wigan's landscape. This is an imaginatively restored landscape providing varied landform and a wealth of diverse habitat from wetlands to woodland. It is important to manage the level of the water table within the site as this is the key to much of the site's biodiversity. Ince Common/Amberswood also provides a large area of open space with a range of surfaced footpaths set within a developed urban/suburban framework. The site appears to be well respected and managed with little evidence of litter, vandalism or erosion. Site maintenance provides for differential mowing and the encouragement of a wide diversity of native flora.

This area includes a section of woodland planted using Forestry Commission grants and has been designated as an area of Open Access. Open Access land should be subject to careful monitoring to ensure that public access does not result in disturbance of wildlife habitats i.e. dogs being allowed to run without leads.

Minor tipping from rear garden boundaries is locally a problem that needs addressing before it becomes more widely accepted. Signage within the open space is limited and if visitors are not familiar with the site it is easy to become disorientated. This is part of the site's charm but may dissuade some from using the area particularly for 'through' routes. The presence of the site does not appear to be advertised by signage from the surrounding main roads and car parking facilities are limited. Improvements to signage both inside and outside the site should therefore be considered together with a designated car park and wildlife/habitat interpretation.

Open space and footpath links to the area could be improved to Low Hall Park Local Nature Reserve. The Whelley Loop Line Strategic Greenway crosses the site, with links towards Haigh and Aspull to the north. The feasibility of providing a habitat link to Ince Moss (Wigan Flashes) through a gap in the development between Spring View and Platt Bridge should also be considered together with a further footpath link to the northwest again by a disused railway line to Scotsman's Flash.

Management of the Landscape:

- Maintain existing balanced management regime for the site
- Continue to manage and protect the sites water table
- Address minor fly tipping from rear garden boundaries
- Consider signage improvements inside and outside the site
- Consider the provision of a purpose built car park and interpretation facilities
- Explore the possibility of a habitat link towards Ince Moss between Spring View and Platt Bridge

AREA 5.D HINDLEY DERELICT AND RECLAIMED LAND

Description

Area D consists of a large block of land divided into 5 distinct elements (i to v) separated by disused railway lines. Each element of land has its own subtle character change in relation to its neighbour.

(i) Low Hall Park

Area (i) is located to the north-west of the area and is now represented by recreational open space known as Low Hall Park. It is bounded to the north by Liverpool Road (A58) and comprises of a substantial area of mining subsidence in the valley of the Borsdane Brook. The subsidence has created a large lake which forms a central part of the park, surrounded by woodland mainly to the north and west. An informal footpath system has been provided with associated car parking off Liverpool Road. The site is a designated Local Nature Reserve.

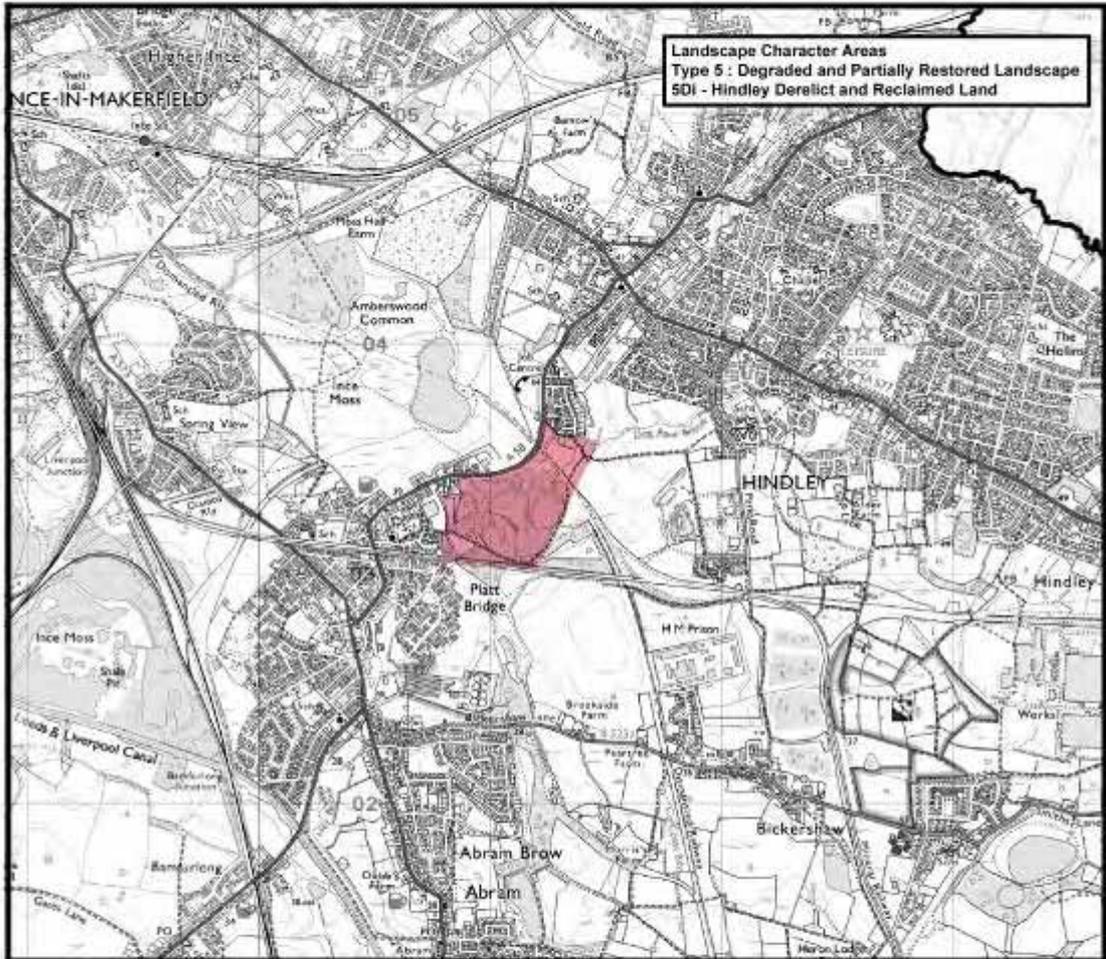


Photo. 118 Low Hall Park Local Nature Reserve, Platt Bridge.

The landscape is contained and intimate in nature and probably established on a rich topsoil, leading to a less diverse flora.

Key Characteristics:

- Large lake basin surrounded by woodland
- Limited ground flora
- Passive recreational use
- Intimate and contained landscape



Recommended Management and Landscape Objectives

The site contains only a basic infrastructure of planting, an inadequate footpath system and a lack of signage. Grassed areas have little species diversity and planted areas are now in need of thinning, coppicing and general woodland management. Planting generally has now created isolated spaces which may give rise to safety issues. The car park has been surfaced with large aggregate stone and is difficult to walk on.

Consideration should therefore be given to substantial design improvements and site management works. See also Area 5C and 3F regarding possible footpath link improvements along disused railway lines passing through the site.

Management of the Landscape:

- Undertake design improvements to create a safer more open and attractive environment with improved car parking, signage and footpaths
- Undertake a comprehensive programme of woodland management
- Consider additional footpath links along the disused railway lines passing through the site
- Consider improvements to habitat diversity including differential grass mowing
- Low Hall Park is a designated Local Nature Reserve

(ii) Derelict land between Low Hall Park and Leyland Park

This Area is located between Low Hall Park and Leyland Park and comprises of an area of derelict land, colliery spoil heap mounds and re-graded, roughly reclaimed land sporadically re-colonised by coarse grassland and young pioneer tree species. A remaining spoil heap, adjacent to Leyland Park, affords excellent views to the north-west towards Wigan centre and over Hindley towards the Pennines.



Photo. 104 Leyland Park Colliery spoil heap.

An area of reinstated and fenced grassland has been partitioned to the north-west corner of the site. It is unclear whether or not this has been used for grazing. The bulk of the site however remains unkempt and unmanaged. A number of informal muddy footpath routes cross the area, forming desire lines between the residential areas to the north and south.

Key Characteristics:

- Re-graded colliery spoil areas
- Unmanaged derelict land with naturally regenerating scrub and trees
- Large-scale, somewhat monotonous, area
- Single remaining spoil heap affords excellent views
- Area of fenced grassland to the north-west
- 'Desire line' informal footpaths

Recommended Management and Landscape Objectives

This area has been partially 'reclaimed' by grading with some restoration to pasture. The area's main potential however rests with one of Wigan's few remaining colliery spoil heaps which although very small in scale creates an interesting landform in an otherwise unremarkable area and provides an excellent vantage point for views in all directions. Footpath routes in the follow desire lines as worn tracks and are mainly impassable in wet weather. A more substantial footpath route links between Leyland Park and Low Hall Park to the west.

The area offers a useful opportunity to provide useable recreational open space for the local community providing a seamless link between Low Hall Park and Leyland Park. The design is recommended to include the spoil heap as a substantially unaltered feature with access ramped footpaths providing a heritage link with the areas past. The open space generally should provide for native structure planting and improved footpath provision. Dog Pool Brook to the north of the site could also offer habitat improvements together with possible links to Borsdane Brook to the north. See Area 3F. A car park and turning area for the open space could be considered at the head of Park Road.

Management of the Landscape:

- Consider open space design treatment to link Low Hall Park and Leyland Park.
- Design work to incorporate the spoil heap adjacent Leyland Park and to be based on a native structural woodland framework with linking surfaced footpaths and car park.
- Encourage the removal of eyesores such as derelict structures and fences, small areas of tipped materials, particularly when these are easily viewed from major routes.
- Consider improvements to habitat diversity
- Consider an additional footpath link to Borsdane Wood to the north

Area (iii) Land between Park Road and Hindley Green

Area (iii) is defined by land between Park Road and Hindley Green comprising of low banked, bare colliery spoil heaps, low-lying derelict land and partially reclaimed grassland and woodland. The general characteristics are of a degraded, altered and under-used landscape. Some of the rough grassland areas around Alder Farm are currently being used for horse grazing. Footpath routes tend to be informal worn routes leading to and from the housing areas to the north.

Key Characteristics:

- Largely ungraded colliery spoil heaps
- Some areas of rough grassland
- Wet ground
- Occasional horse grazing
- Altered landscape
- Lack of management

Recommended Management and Landscape Objectives

The land is currently little used and mainly unmanaged forming degraded land to the fringes of the densely developed housing areas of Hindley to the north. It is relatively featureless although contains two small parcels of woodland central to the area and a number of small ponds.

In common with area (ii) (adjoining to the west) the land would be greatly improved as part of an overall open space project. Landscaping in this area should concentrate on woodland edge planting to the north and improvements to wetland/pond habitats. The disused railway line to the southern boundary could prove an excellent through route footpath to both east and west.

Management of the Landscape:

- Consider open space design treatment to link with adjoining area (ii)
- Design work to be based on a native structural woodland framework, pond/wetland improvement works and linking surfaced footpaths
- Encourage the removal of eyesores such as derelict structures and fences, small areas of tipped materials, particularly when these are easily viewed from major routes
- Consider an additional east/west footpath link along the disused railway line to the south of the site

Area (iv) Land between Hindley Prison and Platt Bridge.

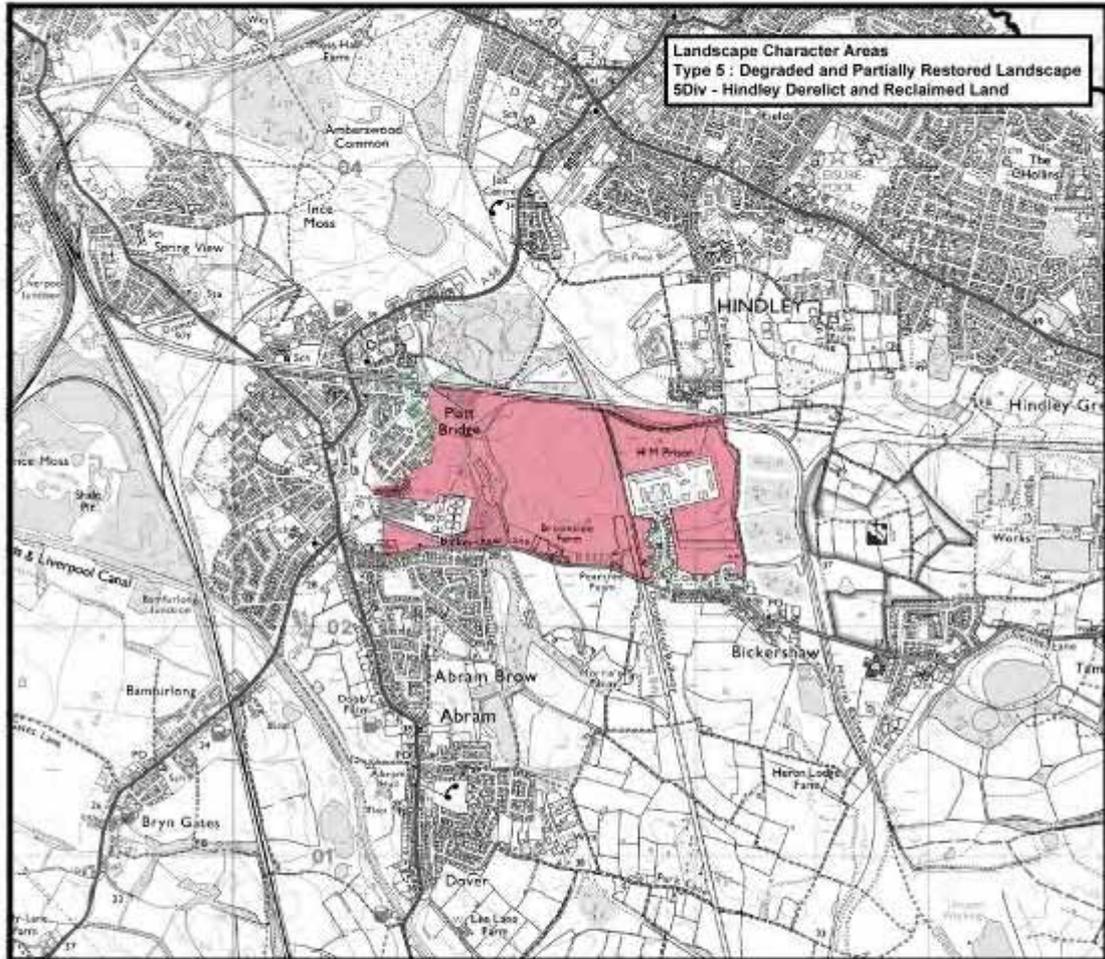
Area (iv) supports open and exposed rough grassland, with the intermittent regeneration of hawthorn immediately to the west of Hindley Prison. The area appears to have been re-graded to form a gently dome-shaped mound and lies in an unmanaged condition. There are no hedgerows except along the B5237 Bickershaw Lane with restricted views of prison. Footpaths across the area are absent.



Photo 177 Bickershaw Lane.

Key Characteristics:

- Graded dome landform
- Rough grassland with hawthorn regeneration
- Unmanaged
- Absence of footpaths



Recommended Management and Landscape Objectives

This is a relatively even area of land, again left in an unmanaged state and featureless. The land adjoins Low Hall Park to the north bordered by the disused railway line referred to under area (iii).

This area would also benefit by an amalgamation with areas (i) and (ii) forming a larger block of recreational open space. This particular area having fewer features of merit would be well suited to more formal recreational provision in the form of football or rugby pitches. Again structural envelope of native planting should be considered to the site margins. A new footpath link to the south should also be considered along the disused railway line adjacent to the prison. Car parking and pitch access could be provided off Bickershaw Lane.

Management of the Landscape:

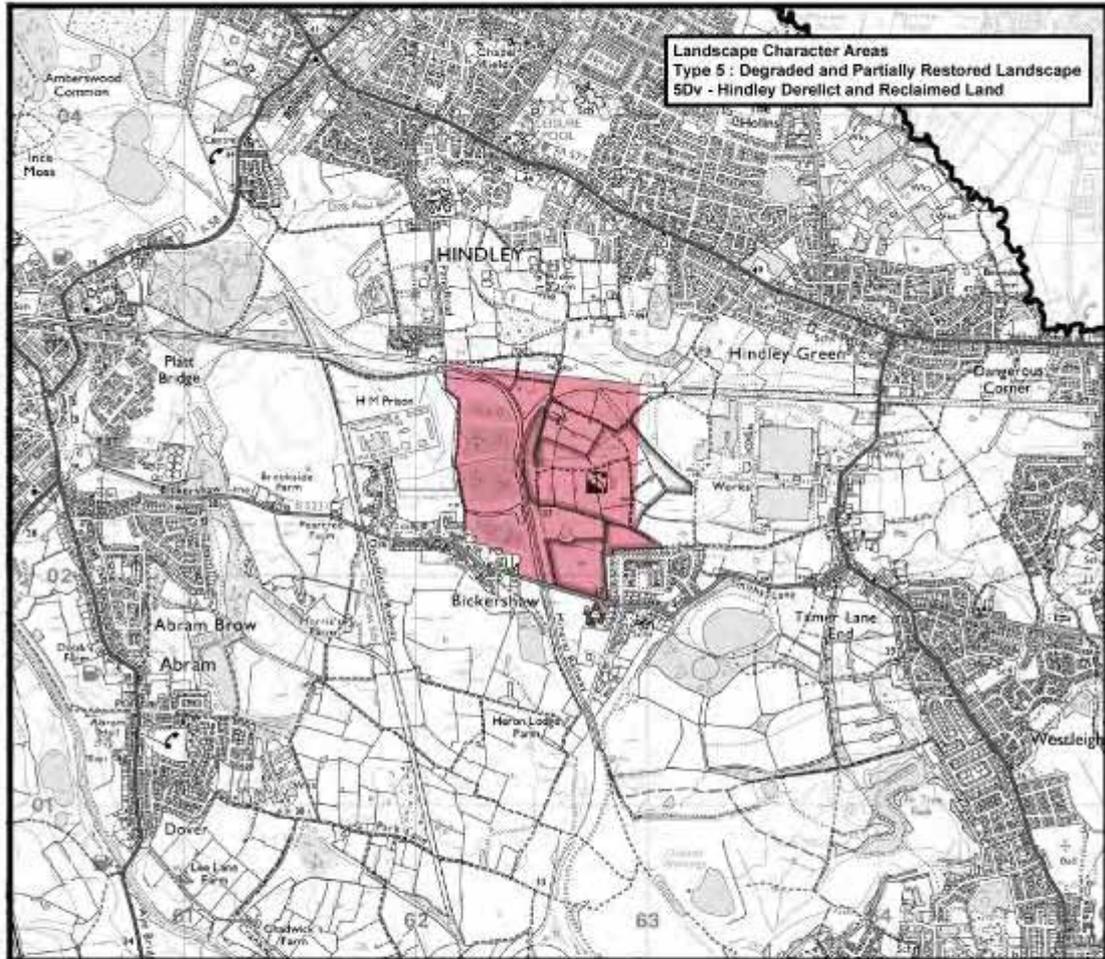
- Consider open space design treatment to link with adjoining areas (i) and (ii)
- Design work to be based on the potential for formal pitch provision with a native structural woodland framework.
- Consider an additional southerly footpath link along the disused railway line adjacent to the prison.
- Encourage the removal of eyesores such as derelict structures and fences, small areas of tipped materials, particularly when these are easily viewed from major routes.

Area (v) Land to the east of Hindley Prison and north of Bickershaw.

This is located to the east of Hindley Prison and north of Bickershaw. The land is designated as open access land to the east and consists of rough grassland with natural regeneration; low lying marshy areas and, to the west of the disused railway line, substantial areas of deciduous woodland plantation. A substantial amount of planting has taken place in this area. The area is split between the Forestry Commission's Barlow's Farm site and the Council's Victoria Fields site. A number of public rights of way are associated with the open access land.

Key Characteristics:

- Rough grassland with natural regeneration
- Deciduous plantation woodlands
- Unmanaged
- Open access land



Recommended Management and Landscape Objectives

The land is designated as open access but has been left in a rough unmanaged condition. It is currently served by informal footpath routes mainly unsurfaced with plantation woodland planted in individual blocks to west to screen the prison.

The land adjoins area iii) to the north and again would be well suited to open space use completing a continuous open space block involving all 5 areas. A number of field boundaries remain intact in the common access area. These are unusual for such areas of disturbed land and hedgerows should be retained, improved and managed within an open space design. This would broadly facilitate the continuation of woodland to the outer fringes particularly as a screen to the works to the east. Small ponds are again a feature of the area and should be retained and enhanced as necessary. The area is well provided for regarding footpath routes although these should be improved by surfacing. An additional footpath link could be considered to the south into the Bickershaw area (Area 5E) via the disused mineral railway line.

Management of the Landscape:

- Consider open space design treatment to link with adjoining area (iii)
- Design work to be based on the potential for a native structural woodland framework, retaining the existing field patterns and improving/maintaining hedgerows
- Encourage the removal of eyesores such as derelict structures and fences, small areas of tipped materials, particularly when these are easily viewed from major routes.
- Retain and consider resurfacing existing footpaths
- Consider an additional southerly footpath link along the disused mineral line into the Bickershaw area.
- Conserve existing ponds

Cultural History

This area was bisected by the L&NWR Eccles, Tyldesley and Wigan Railway Line, which ran almost east – west across the site. Opened in 1864, it closed to passenger traffic in 1964, but remained open until 1992 to serve Bickershaw Colliery. Running north – south to the west of the centre of site (H. M. Prison, Bickershaw) was the G.C.R. Wigan Junction Branch, opened in 1879, it closed around 1964 and connected to the L&NWR line to the north. Around these two lines were a number of looped mineral lines serving various collieries in the area.

Low Hall Colliery stood to the west of the area, between Borsdane Brook and Hey Brook, it comprised of a series of shafts and was at maximum production in the 1860s / 1870s. These pits were closed in 1931. Brookside Colliery, just east of the junction of Borsdane Brook with Hey Brook was approximately contemporary with Low Hall Colliery, but was closed in 1924. These pits created vast underground voids which subsided over time giving rise to the lake on Borsdane Brook, now the core of Low Park.

In 1945, part of the pit at Brookside gave way and thirteen railway wagons, a steam locomotive and its driver plunged into the shaft, the driver's body never being found.

Grange Colliery was probably sunk a little before 1899 and the spoil from this covered the bulk of the area referred to under (ii) above. The core of the spoil from this colliery forms a steep-sided mound to the west and close to Leyland Park.

Grammar Pit, a colliery sited just east of Leyland Park, Hindley, was a C19th pit which was closed in 1928. It was connected by a mineral railway line running south, as well as to the west to Grange Colliery. The spoil from Grammar Pit and its associated works form the bulk of the derelict land mentioned under (iii) above.

HM Prison, Hindley was opened in 1961 as a Borstal and was reclassified in 1983 as a Youth Custody Centre. In 1997 it was designated as a joint prison and Young Offenders Institution.

Key cultural elements in the landscape:

- The former L&NWR Eccles, Tyldesley and Wigan Railway Line
- The sites of Low Hall, Brookside, Grammar, Victoria and Grange Collieries
- The core of Grange Colliery
- H.M. Prison Hindley

Landscape Sensitivity and Change

All five areas have been substantially affected by their industrial past which was mainly colliery related. They are mostly overlooked by residential development to the north, east and west and are mainly unmanaged and unkempt in appearance.

The landscape has been left heavily degraded by tipping, grading and subsidence. Its lack of management following the abandonment of industrial use has led to the localised establishment of hawthorn and birch, particularly along the disused railway lines which now stand out in the landscape due to this natural regeneration of trees. These landscapes are new and subject to change, either from proposed development or through the provision of open space for recreation.

Their former agricultural use has largely been lost and little now remains to reflect their industrial heritage. The exception to this being the small ungraded coal spoil heap in Area (ii) which provides a last remaining link with the area's heritage and affords excellent views of the surrounding area.

Key elements of landscape sensitivity:

- Generally lacking in character and sensitivity
- Industrial heritage retained in spoil heap (Area ii)
- Overlooked by adjoining residential areas

Key elements of landscape change:

- Change from agricultural to industrial use, followed by general abandonment and loss of management
- Development of Low Hall Park
- Subject to future change for development and/or open space use