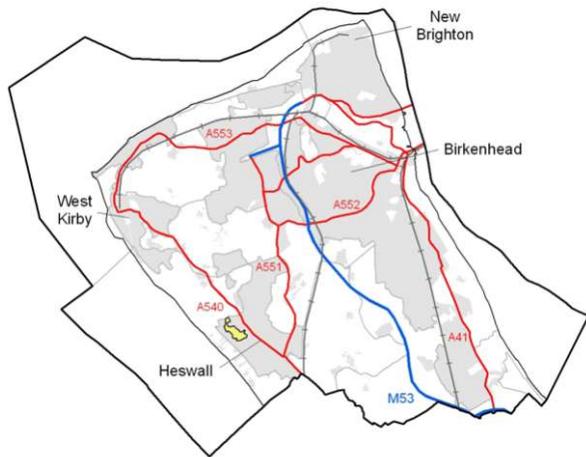


Heswall Dales



Key Characteristics

- Sloping land on the south western edge of Heswall
- Small sandstone outcrop and dales
- Mosaic of lowland heathland and establishing woodland
- Small stream on low ground in the eastern most dale
- Expansive views across the Dee Estuary towards the Welsh coastline
- Housing surrounds the dales although it tends to indistinct or recessive in views
- Sense of isolation and separation from urban areas despite their close proximity

Landscape Character

This is a small character area to the immediate west of Heswall and forms a small area of wooded heathland surrounded almost completely by housing development.

The land is a small sandstone outcrop which reaches 70m AOD at its highest point. The land falls to the south west to 60m AOD. The land is steeply undulating throughout although it tends to have flatter plateaux on the northern and western fringes and is more steeply sloping along the southern and eastern fringes.

The land is almost completely covered by a mixture of lowland heath, recognised in 1979 as the second best remaining example of lowland heath within Merseyside (the best being at Thurstaston Common). The land is covered by pockets of heathland and areas of establishing woodland. On lower ground woodland becomes more mature.

Dale Farm is within the centre of the dales and comprises a farm and large market garden cultivated for fruit and vegetables. The buildings are surrounded by mature woodland and views of them from the dales are limited.

There are pockets of wet heath and damp areas on lower ground and in small depressions within sandstone elsewhere. A stream within the eastern part of the Dale flows through mature woodland.

Woodland and tree cover

The area is characterised by pockets of heathland within more open areas, steeply sloping wooded sides and damp woodland along the lower lying areas. Dry heathland areas are dominated by heather, bell heather with some bilberry and western gorse. The extent of heathland is gradually reducing as a result of bracken establishment and natural succession to woodland. Within lower lying areas and natural valleys pockets of acidic grassland are present.

Woodland is predominantly establishing birch-oak woodland, which is present as birch scrub, and more mature areas particularly along access tracks from Oldfield Road and on lower ground around Warren Way, Pipers Lane and Queens Park.



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Built form

There is almost no built form within the character area. Dale Farm is set on low ground and is surrounded by mature woodland which provides good screening. Along Oldfield Road and Thurstaston Road, housing is almost all detached or semi-detached properties which are set within extensive mature gardens. These properties have mature trees within and surrounding them which reduces their prominence.

Where built form along Oldfield Road is visible it tends to be seen as a single line on high ground. A small pocket of housing extends from Oldfield Road within the northern part of the character area; it is of higher density than surrounding development. Houses are all red brick semi-detached properties set within small gardens. Its prominence within the character area is reduced slightly by woodland around the fringes.

Housing along the southern fringes is only visible along footpaths close to the properties. Property boundaries are often discernible through scrub and woodland only where footpaths are close to the properties. The most mature woodland tends to be concentrated around these areas and on low ground. Along many of the footpaths built development is obscured by woodland or by landform which helps to reinforce a sense of separation and remote character to the land.

Views

Nature and extent of views

Extensive panoramic views across the Dee estuary towards the Welsh coastline are features from areas of heathland within the northern part of the character area. On lower ground and in areas of more established woodland, views are more enclosed and limited to short distance views.

Built development tends to be well screened by mature vegetation and is not prominent within views.

Landmark features

- Welsh coastline
- Dee estuary

Key viewpoints

- Selective viewing points from high ground

Zones of visual influence

This character area is only visible when close to it. Views of woodland along the north eastern edge are possible from Oldfield Road. Intervening residential development prevents views of the area from central Heswall. The character area is seen as wooded slopes surrounded by housing set within woodland in views from the south west.

Quality and condition of the landscape

Landscape Condition	Good	MODERATE <i>Enhance</i>	MODERATE - GOOD <i>Conserve and Enhance</i>	GOOD <i>Conserve</i>
	Moderate	POOR - MODERATE <i>Enhance and Restore</i>	MODERATE <i>Enhance</i>	MODERATE - GOOD <i>Conserve and Enhance</i>
	Poor	POOR <i>Restore/Create</i>	POOR - MODERATE <i>Enhance and Restore</i>	MODERATE <i>Enhance</i>
		Weak	Moderate	Strong

The overall landscape strategy is **CONSERVE and ENHANCE**. Emphasis should be placed on managing key features such as woodland and heathland, whilst ensuring that urban development remains indistinct to ensure that the strength of character remains high and the condition improves.



Landscape Strength

Strong: The key features are easily identifiable and consistent across the character area. Features generally form easily recognisable patterns within the landscape which are distinctly different from the surrounding character area although the area does show some similar characteristics to Thurstaston Common and Bidston Hill.

Landscape Condition

Moderate: The key features are naturalistic in character although heathland is declining as a result of natural processes. This is altering the land from heathland to birch, which will ultimately establish as oak woodland.

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Main trends or threats to the landscape

- Urban encroachment along fringes
- Loss of expansive views as woodland matures
- Loss of heathland through either fire damage or natural colonisation
- Bracken establishment
- Upgrading of routes or signage through the area may reduce the natural remote character of the Dales



Landscape Guidelines

Landscape features

- Conserve existing expansive views across the Dee Estuary to North Wales through managing woodland vegetation
- Conserve the mosaic of open heathland and enclosed woodlands

Landscape management/agriculture

- Manage woodland and regenerating scrub to protect the heathland present on sandstone ridges
- Manage and remove encroaching bracken
- Conserve the informal character of the dales through carefully managing tourism pressure

Built form

- Conserve the mature boundaries around properties along the fringes of the character area
- Ensure any new development along the surrounding roads is set within woodland and does not make urban development more prominent within views

Other development/structures in the landscape

- Retain informal character of tourist features such as car parks and footpaths
- Conserve the wooded character of Dale Farm
- Ensure the intimate remote character of tracks and footpaths through the dales is retained
- Ensure that any interpretation installed respects the naturalistic and remote character within the character area

Capacity to accommodate change

This landscape is sloping land covered by establishing woodland, heathland and mature woodland and a stream on lower ground. Although urban pressures are close by they are rarely visible, where visible they are either seen as a few properties on a ridgeline or are dispersed within mature woodland.

Any change should ensure that it respects the natural and remote character of the dales, respects and enhances views towards the welsh coastline and does not make development more prominent within character area. It should promote positive management and conservation of heathland areas to retain the mosaic of open heathland and enclosed woodland.