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# South Sunderland Growth Area Landscape Character Assessment

Prepared by LUC for Sunderland City Council  
January 2015



**Project Title:** City of Sunderland Landscape Character Assessment

**Client:** Sunderland City Council

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# 1 Introduction

## Background

- 1.1 This report presents a description and assessment of the landscape of the South Sunderland Growth Area (SSGA). It has been prepared to provide part of the evidence base for a supplementary planning document (SPD), which will be published by Sunderland City Council to guide development within the SSGA.
- 1.2 The SSGA has been identified as an area of significant housing development in the Local Development Framework Core Strategy. It is anticipated that the SSGA will meet a significant **part of the city's housing needs**.
- 1.3 This report forms one output of a wider study which aims to describe and assess the landscape of the City of Sunderland administrative area. The city-wide landscape character assessment is presented in a separate report, but the two aspects of the study were undertaken simultaneously and are designed to be compatible. Essentially the SSGA report presents a more detailed look at this specific area, inset within the city-wide study.

## Landscape character assessment

- 1.4 **Landscape character** comprises the distinct set of elements that makes a landscape recognisable, and gives it a unique 'sense of place'. **Landscape character assessment** is the process of mapping, classifying and describing the patterns and variations which contribute to the character of a landscape.
- 1.5 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) came into effect in the UK in March 2007 and is adopted and promoted by the Council of Europe. The ELC definition of landscape is all embracing:  
***"Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors."***
- 1.6 Following the introduction of the ELC, a broader approach to 'landscape' has been pursued at a national level, grounded in the principle that all landscapes matter. The ELC applies to ***"all landscapes everywhere and in any condition – land, inland water, inter-tidal, marine, natural, rural, urban and peri-urban, outstanding, ordinary and degraded."***<sup>1</sup>

## Study Area

- 1.7 The study area for the purposes of this report is the SSGA boundary as defined by Sunderland City Council, though note has been taken of important links with the surrounding landscape, and of key views beyond the SSGA boundary. This study has also been informed by the city-wide landscape character assessment, which looks at all aspects of the Sunderland area, including townscape, and its wider context.
- 1.8 **The Council's previous planning work has subdivided the SSGA into four sub-areas.** From west to east these are named Chapelgarth, Cherry Knowle, land to the north of Burdon Lane, and South Ryhope. The SSGA boundary and the four sub-areas are shown on **Figure 1**.

## Structure of the report

- 1.9 The background to the landscape of the SSGA, from the earliest times to the present, is set out in **Section 2**. **Section 3** describes the relationship between the SSGA and the surrounding landscape, and describes some general principles for development. More detailed analysis and recommendations are set out for each sub-area in **Section 4**.

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<sup>1</sup> Land Use Consultants (2009) *Guidelines for Implementing the European Landscape Convention*. Natural England.

South Sunderland Growth Area: Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 1: Study Area

Sunderland City boundary

South Sunderland Growth Area (SSGA) boundary:

Chapelgarth

Cherry Knowle

Land North of Burdon Lane

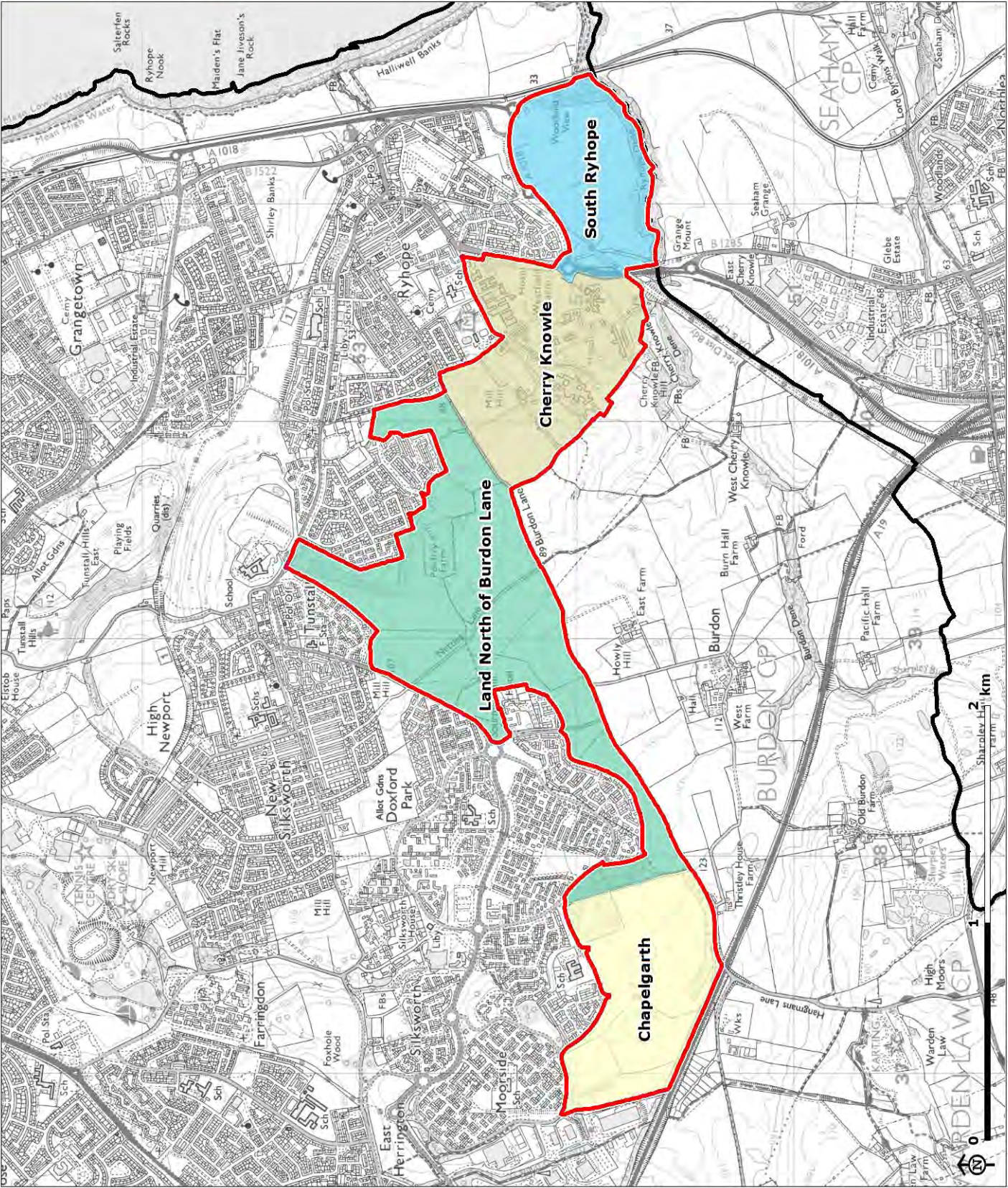
South Ryhope

Source: Sunderland City Council

Map Scale @ A4: 1:25,000

LUC

Sunderland City Council



## Methodology

- 1.10 The approach to the study has been based on good practice guidance on the topic published in 2002 by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage.<sup>2</sup> It has also been informed by more recent guidance on specific aspects of landscape assessment. A detailed method statement is provided as an appendix to the City of Sunderland Landscape Character Assessment report. For the purposes of the SSGA study, this was supplemented by more detailed field survey and recording of individual features, to inform the finer grain of the assessment.

## Glossary

- 1.11 The following glossary provides definitions of the key terms used in the study. Definitions for the technical terms associated with landscape character assessment are drawn from the glossary provided in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.<sup>3</sup>

**Elements or features:** The individual parts which make up a landscape, for example trees, buildings, hedges, landmarks, etc.

**Key characteristics:** The combinations of elements which are particularly important to the current character of a landscape, and help to give an area its distinctive sense of place.

**Landscape character:** A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.

**Landscape character area:** These are single unique areas which are discrete geographical examples of a particular landscape character type.

**Landscape character assessment:** The process of identifying and describing variation in the character of a landscape, and using this information to assist in managing change in the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combinations of elements and features which make each landscape distinctive.

**Landscape character type:** These are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogenous in character. They share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation and historical land use and settlement patterns, and perceptual and aesthetic attributes.

**Landscape value:** The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different people for different reasons.

**Seascape:** Coastal landscapes which have views of the sea, and which have cultural, historical or perceptual associations with the marine environment.

**Townscape:** The character and composition of the built environment including buildings and the different types of urban open space, and the relationships between them.

**Tranquillity:** A state of calm and quietude associated with peace and with being away from modern development, considered to be a significant asset of some landscapes.

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<sup>2</sup> Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002) Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland.

<sup>3</sup> Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Routledge.

## 2 Evolution of the Landscape

### Introduction

- 2.1 The City of Sunderland is a metropolitan borough, located at the mouth of the River Wear in the Tyne and Wear region. Sunderland covers around 85.5 km<sup>2</sup>, and has a population of around 275,000 (2011 figures) which has declined in recent years. The majority of the population live in Sunderland and its suburbs, with the new town of Washington being the next-largest settlement.
- 2.2 The area has historically been part of County Durham, but the present boundaries date from local government reorganisation in 1974. It formed part of the Tyne and Wear County Council area until becoming a unitary authority in 1986: Sunderland was granted city status in 1992. Sunderland is bordered by South Tyneside to the north, Gateshead to the north-west, and County Durham to the south-west and south. The east flank of the borough is open to the North Sea.
- 2.3 The SSGA lies at the southern edge of the built up area of Sunderland, close to the southern boundary of the borough. It is to the south of the settlements of Doxford Park and Ryhope, and to the north of the hamlet of Burdon. Covering 277ha, the area is relatively long and narrow, just under 5km from west to east, but rarely more than 600-700m across.
- 2.4 The following sections describe how the landscape of the study area has developed from the earliest times to its present condition.

### Physical influences

#### Geology

- 2.5 The area covered by the SSGA is underlain by rocks of the Magnesian Limestone series. Formally referred to as part of the Zechstein Group of sedimentary rocks, the Magnesian Limestone dates from the later Permian period, some 230-250 million years ago. These rocks were laid down on the bed of the Zechstein Sea, a warm shallow inland sea covering an area somewhat larger than the modern North Sea. The Magnesian Limestone comprises limestones rich in magnesium, in the form of the mineral dolomite.



*Boulder of Concretionary Limestone, on the SSGA site.*

- 2.6 The eastern parts of the SSGA, approximately east of Tunstall Lodge, overlie the Ford Formation. Within this stratum is the remains of a barrier reef, forming harder dolomite that underlies the highest parts of the SSGA, around Nettles Lane. Outside the SSGA this reef can be seen in outcrops on the Tunstall Hills. Further east, the South Ryhope area overlies the slightly later Roker Formation, **which includes the Concretionary Limestone or 'cannon-ball rock' that is found in outcrops on Carley Hill near Roker.**
- 2.7 Below the Magnesian Limestone, the area is underlain by coal-bearing strata dating from around 310 million years ago during the Carboniferous period. The Magnesian Limestone is overlaid by glacial deposits laid down during more recent ice ages. Within the SSGA, these deposits are relatively deep, obscuring most of the underlying limestone. The superficial deposits are thickest in the western part of the SSGA, and thinner in the east.

### Topography

- 2.8 The SSGA is set on the northern flank of the hills which occupy southern Sunderland. **Figure 2** illustrates the relative elevation of the land. The highest part of the site is in the south-west, along the A19, at around 140m. The land slopes gently to the north-east, dropping to around 80m at its northern point on Tunstall Bank, and to around 30m at the eastern end of the site, adjacent to Ryhope Dene.



*Looking east to west across the SSGA, from Mill Hill towards Chapelgarth.*

### Hydrology

- 2.9 There is little above-ground drainage evident within the SSGA, and no substantial watercourses. A small stream flows through Blakeney Woods; this presumably is culverted below housing to the north and flows into the Hendon Burn. Beyond the site, a minor drain flows through the valley to the north of Ryhope, while to the south the land drains into the series of denes along **Sunderland's southern boundary with County Durham.** Ryhope Dene is an example of a deeply incised gully which formed following the retreat of ice after the last period of glaciation. These denes are a distinctive feature of the wider area, cutting through the limestone plateau along the Durham coast.



## Human influences

- 2.10 The following paragraphs describe the historical development of the landscape of the SSGA, and have drawn on the Tyne and Wear Historic Landscape Characterisation,<sup>4</sup> and on historical maps of the area, which are reproduced in the South Sunderland SPD.

### Prehistoric

- 2.11 The burial complex on Warden Law, to the south-west of the SSGA, includes a number of barrows and cists, and has been the site of numerous prehistoric and Bronze Age finds. Prehistoric remains have also been discovered at Tunstall Hills, and in a cave near Ryhope. Similarly, Roman artefacts have been recovered from Ryhope Dene. It is clear that humans have been active in the area since at least Neolithic times, though there is no sign of their impact on the landscape of the SSGA until the medieval period.

### Medieval and post-medieval

- 2.12 The villages of Ryhope, Burdon and Silksworth are first documented in 930 AD, when King Athelstan granted the lands in the area to the Bishop of Durham. Ryhope had a population of around 150 by the 14<sup>th</sup> century, who farmed common lands around the village. These commons were subdivided in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, by which time the core of the village and its green had taken shape. A Chapel of St Leonard is recorded at Silksworth in the middle ages, giving rise to the local name Chapel Garth. The village itself grew up around a Tudor manor house.



*Ryhope village green.*

- 2.13 By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the settlement pattern had changed little since medieval times, with well-established villages at Silksworth, Tunstall and Ryhope to the north, and Burdon to the south. The surrounding farmland, originally a mix of strip fields and common grazing, was gradually enclosed through this period. Woodland at Blakeney Woods and Ryhope Dene was established by the post-medieval period, and has changed little since.

### Industrial revolution

- 2.14 While coal mining in County Durham had been carried on for many years, only in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century was it appreciated that the coal measures also lay beneath the Magnesian Limestone. The first pit sunk through the limestone was at Hetton, completed in 1823. The western SSGA **boundary follows the route of the Hetton Company's Railway, which was** constructed at the same time to carry coal to the docks. Engineered by George Stephenson, at 8 miles it was the longest railway in the world at the time. Passing to the south of Ryhope, the Durham and Sunderland

<sup>4</sup> Collins, S; Aldred, O; Turner, S. (2014) Tyne and Wear Historic Landscape Characterisation. McCord Centre Report 2014.1. English Heritage Project Number 4663.

Branch of the North Eastern Railway was opened in the later 1830s, linking Shincliffe with the docks at Sunderland.

- 2.15 New collieries in the area brought not only industrial activity, but new forms of urban development to house the many workers moving into the area with their families. Ryhope Colliery was opened in 1857. Located to the north-west of the medieval village, the colliery had **its own streets of miners' rows. Silksworth Colliery opened in 1868, with another new village, New Silksworth, established to the west of Tunstall.**
- 2.16 To meet growing demands for water, both for industrial purposes and for domestic consumption following cholera outbreaks, the Sunderland and South Shields Water Company was established in 1852. The aim of the company was to access the water within the Magnesian Limestone aquifer, and a new pumping station was planned at Ryhope to draw out this resource. The pumping station was opened in 1868 and operated continuously until its closure in 1967.



*Ryhope Pumping Station, now the Engine Museum.*

- 2.17 Farmland in the area was reorganised over the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with associated loss of field boundaries. Comparison with early Ordnance Survey maps of the 1850s, with those of the 1890s, indicates that amalgamation of fields was already well underway. The 19<sup>th</sup> century maps record farm buildings at Silksworth Moor, within the Chapelgarth sub-area of the SSGA, and at Field House, south of Mill Hill. The latter was selected as the site of the "Sunderland County Lunatic Asylum", built in 1895 to provide for the mentally ill. The large main building was set in landscaped grounds, with parkland and tree belts, to the south-west of the Ryhope Pumping Station.

## 20<sup>th</sup> century

- 2.18 During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the settlements of Ryhope and New Silksworth continued to expand, with the latter having merged with Tunstall village by mid-century. The construction of Tunstall Bank estate by the local authority in the 1950s removed most of the open space between Tunstall and Ryhope. Further expansion of services occurred at the asylum, now renamed Cherry Knowle Hospital, with new buildings to the east and south of the original asylum. This included a military hospital built during the Second World War, which later became Ryhope General Hospital.
- 2.19 The railway lines across the site both closed in the 1950s. Ryhope Colliery closed in 1966, and Silksworth in 1971, and both sites have since been restored. In the 1970s the current A19 dual carriageway was constructed. Settlement expansion continued through the later 20<sup>th</sup> century with the development of Doxford Park to the south of Silksworth and New Silksworth. Further developments on the south side of Tunstall and Ryhope have established the current urban edge, abrupt in places though elsewhere softened by woodland planting, as at Hall Farm estate. Doxford International Business Park was established in 1990 and now employs over 8000 people.

- 2.20 By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, further field amalgamation had taken place across the farmed areas of the SSGA. Despite many field boundaries being lost, those which remain still follow lines discernible on the 19<sup>th</sup>-century maps.

## The modern landscape

- 2.21 This section provides an overview of the present day landscape, and notes the ongoing changes which are occurring within it. The various planning designations and policy documents which relate to the site are also briefly discussed where they have implications for the present and future landscape of the SSGA.

### Land cover and land use


- 2.22 The majority of the SSGA is farmland, as illustrated by the aerial view in **Figure 3**. The principal land use is arable, with some fields of pasture. Besides the productive land, there are areas of open ground at Tunstall Bank, associated with recent road improvements, and at Weymouth Road. Mature woodland is restricted to Blakeney Wood and a shelterbelt in the Chapelgarth area, and structure planting around Cherry Knowle. Aside from the hospital area, the only buildings in the SSGA are a group of sheds comprising a poultry farm south of Tunstall Bank.
- 2.23 The main part of Cherry Knowle Hospital closed in 1998, and was demolished around 2010, though some ancillary buildings remain in operation. Ryhope General Hospital was demolished around the same time, and has been replaced with Hopewood Park, a new mental health facility. **The new buildings, and the adjacent St Benedict's Hospice, were completed in 2014.**



*Newly completed hospital buildings at Hopewood Park.*

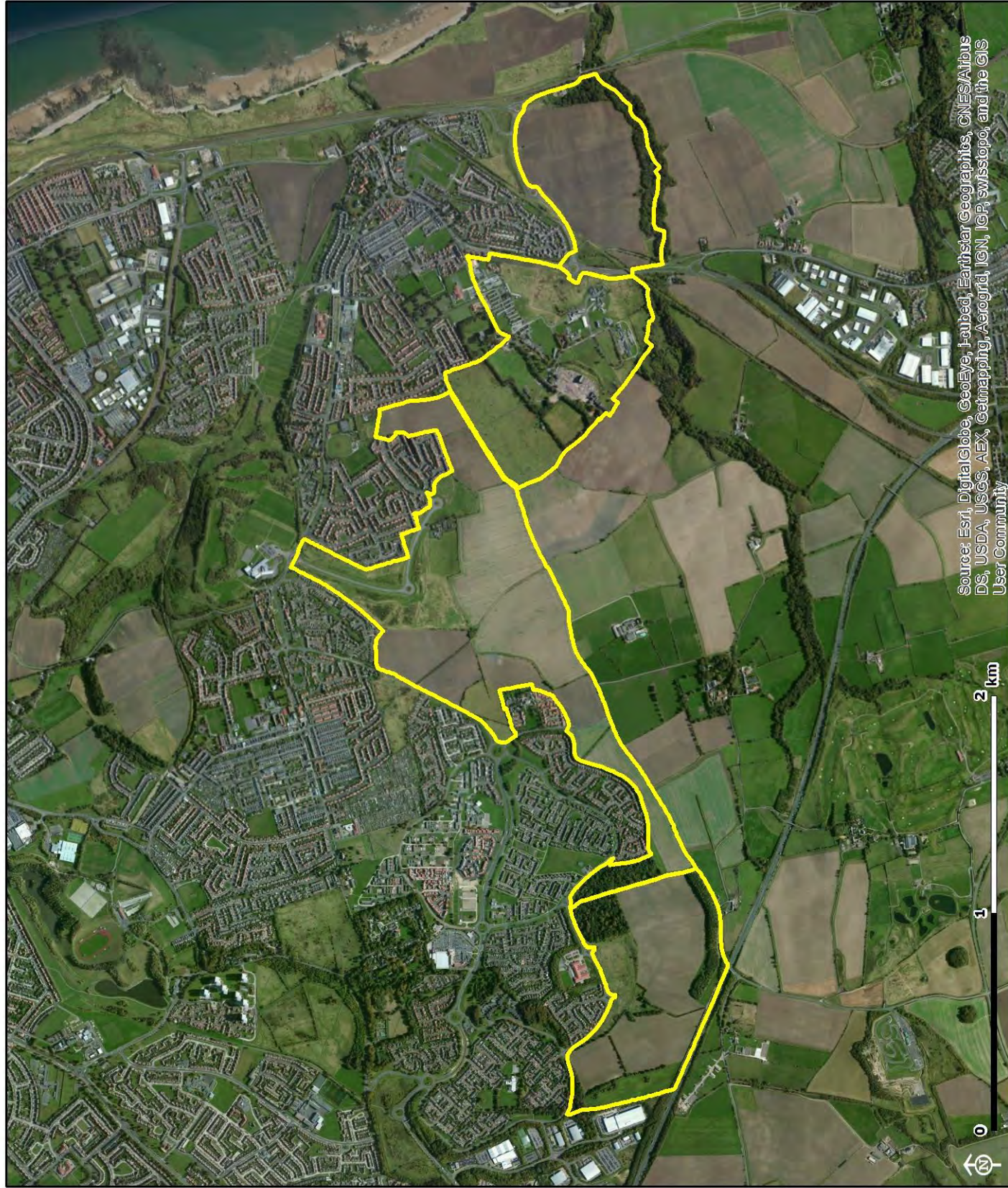
- 2.24 Road improvements in the area were proposed in the 1998 UDP. Of these, the Southern Radial Route (A1018) was constructed in 2007, providing a bypass around the south and east of Ryhope. The Ryhope to Doxford Park Link Road will continue this route westwards. Sections of the route have been built adjacent to the new hospital, and to the south of Tunstall Bank. Completion of this route is seen as integral to the development of the SSGA.

**Figure 3: Aerial Overview**

 SSGA boundary

Source: Sunderland City Council

Map Scale @ A4: 1:25,000



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

## Settlement context

- 2.25 The SSGA is bounded by existing settlement along its northern edge. These settlements developed from three villages of Silksworth, Tunstall and Ryhope, which are all recorded in medieval times. Medieval buildings are no longer present, though the conservation areas at Silksworth Hall and Ryhope contain buildings from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Major expansion of these rural villages took place during the coal-mining boom of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with new pit villages being established at New Silksworth and Ryhope. These areas remain as high-density rows of terrace houses, including the single-storey Sunderland Cottages which are unique to this locality.
- 2.26 The majority of the housing adjacent to the SSGA is more recent in origin. The Moorside and Hall Farm areas of Doxford Park, built in the 1960s and 1970s, comprise short terraces, semi-detached and detached houses, with some flats. Later estates, such as south of Hall Farm Road, are mainly detached. Doxford Park is subdivided by large distributor roads flanked by amenity space, though with relatively limited mature vegetation or trees. There is a contrast between the outward looking character of earlier planning, and later inward-looking layouts, clearly seen along Hall Farm Road. Further east is a small enclave of large houses around Tunstall Lodge.
- 2.27 Development around Tunstall in the 1960s and 1970s led to the coalescence of the village with New Silksworth, and these estates of detached and semi-detached houses and bungalows form the northern flank of the SSGA, with garden fences forming an abrupt settlement boundary. Across the new access road to the east is the Tunstall Bank estate, largely built in the 1950s and comprising semi-detached brick homes. The recent southern expansion consists of a dense layout of detached homes. Again garden fences form the only settlement boundary. To the south-east, on Burdon Lane, construction of the Stokesley Lodge development is underway at the time of writing. East of the hospital site, the southern edge of Ryhope comprises relatively recent housing in a variety of architectural styles.

## Biodiversity and geodiversity

- 2.28 As an area of farmland and institutional land use, the biodiversity value of the SSGA is not especially high, and there are no nationally protected sites within its boundaries. However, less than 500m to the east is the North Sea coast, which in this location is protected at an international level as a Ramsar site, Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA), and at a national level as a SSSI. These designations protect the vegetated Magnesian Limestone sea cliffs and the rocky foreshore and the species which are found there. Important bird populations include little tern, purple sandpiper and turnstone. To the north of the SSGA is the Tunstall Hills SSSI and Local Nature Reserve.
- 2.29 The ancient semi-natural woodlands along Ryhope Dene, and at Blakeney Wood in the Chapelgarth area, are listed as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) in the LDP. Also recognised as LWS, but further from the SSGA, are the wooded denes of Burdon Dene and Cherry Knowle Dene to the south-west, and Ryhope Denemouth to the south-east. The ecological value of the SSGA and its surroundings, in terms of protected and priority species, is examined further in a separate ecological assessment report.<sup>5</sup>
- 2.30 Local wildlife corridors have been defined around both these features, providing buffer areas through which species may move. The local corridor associated with Ryhope Dene covers the southern part of Cherry Knowle and the South Ryhope sub-area, while that associated with Blakeney Wood covers most of the Chapelgarth sub-area and some of the land west of Burdon Road. Another local wildlife corridor is defined to the north of Tunstall Bank, while the coastal landscape east of the SSGA is part of a regional wildlife corridor. There are no sites of established geodiversity significance within or adjacent to the SSGA.
- 2.31 Biodiversity designations are shown on **Figure 4**.

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<sup>5</sup> TNEI (2014) *Sunderland South Ecological Assessment, Management Plan and Design Strategy*. Sunderland City Council.

South Sunderland Growth Area: Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 4: Biodiversity

Sunderland City boundary

SSGA boundary

Special Area of Conservation

Special Protection Area

SSSI

Local Nature Reserve

Local Wildlife Site

Proposed Local Wildlife Site

Regional Wildlife Corridor

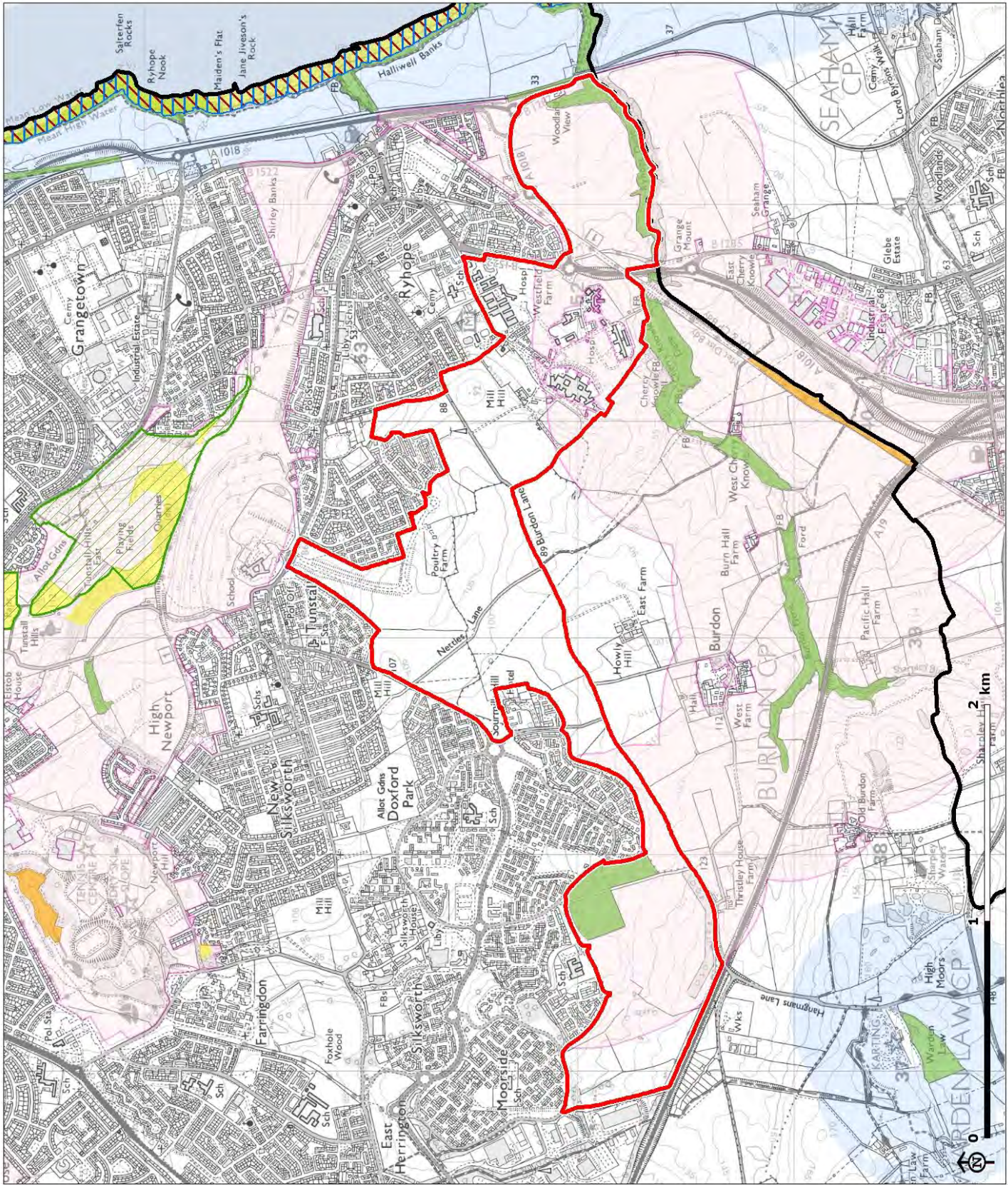
Local Wildlife Corridor

Source: Sunderland City Council

Map Scale @ A4: 1:25,000

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Sunderland City Council



## Cultural heritage

- 2.32 The most visible symbol of the area's past is the Ryhope Pumping Station, just outside the SSGA boundary. The Gothic engine house and its associated chimney, reservoirs, and ancillary buildings are protected as Grade II\* listed buildings, and set within landscaped grounds. The engines remain in working order and the site is now operated as a museum with regular 'steaming days'. Tunstall Lodge and Burdon Hall are both listed at grade II. There are conservation areas covering the village cores at Silksworth Hall and Ryhope. The Tyne & Wear Historic Environment Record (HER) **notes that Tunstall, Burdon and Old Burdon are 'historic villages'**. Village greens survive in both Ryhope and Tunstall.
- 2.33 Within the SSGA, other features have not survived. The Tyne and Wear HER records the presence of a windmill, a lime kiln, and several limestone quarries within the site boundary, but there is little above-ground evidence of these. The Victorian buildings of Cherry Knowle Hospital have also been demolished, though the structure of the hospital landscape can still be seen. The two former railway lines now serve as cycle routes, with little overt evidence of their former use. A footbridge survives at the former West Ryhope Station to the north of the SSGA. The locations of cultural heritage features are shown on **Figure 5**.

## Access and recreation

- 2.34 The SSGA is crossed by two national cycle routes. National Cycle Network Route 1, which runs from Dover to Shetland, follows the former railway line from Murton in County Durham through the eastern area of the SSGA, continuing through Ryhope to central Sunderland. The Walney to Wear route (W2W) is a coast-to-coast route linking Walney Island with Wearmouth. It makes use of the former railway line on the west side of the SSGA to **link Hangman's Lane in the south with Farringdon to the north**.
- 2.35 There are no public rights of way which cross the SSGA. Within the SSGA, both Nettles Lane and the stopped-up road in Blakeney Wood are used as paths, and informal access is taken across areas of open ground. Beyond the SSGA, there is a bridle path to the south of Burdon Lane, leading to East Cherry Knowle, and a public footpath links the B1287 with the coast via Ryhope Dene to the east. The Great North Forest Trail long-distance walking route passes close to the **site, making use of a section of Hangman's Lane to the south**.
- 2.36 The Sunderland Greenspace Audit identifies that, of the four neighbourhoods which contain part of the SSGA, only Hall Farm and Chapel Garth has a below average quantity of amenity greenspace.<sup>6</sup> The **quality of greenspace in this same neighbourhood is classed as 'very low'** compared to the city average. The level of woodland, on the other hand, in Hall Farm and Chapel Garth is 'high', while for Tunstall and Burdon and Ryhope it is below average.
- 2.37 The Greenspace Audit also sets out district-level green corridors within the SSGA, linking with the **'inter-district' green corridor along the coast**. The district level corridors run east-west between Ryhope Dene and Warden Law, with north-south connections along the disused railway line to the west of the SSGA, and through the centre of the SSGA linking to Doxford Park and Tunstall Hills. The Welfare Park at Ryhope provides the closest formal recreation. Green corridors and open spaces are shown on **Figure 6**.

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<sup>6</sup> Sunderland City Council (2013) Sunderland Greenspace Audit and Report.

South Sunderland Growth Area: Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 5: Cultural Heritage

Sunderland City boundary

SSGA boundary

Durham Heritage Coast

Conservation Area

Scheduled Monument

Listed Building

Tyne & Wear archaeological site

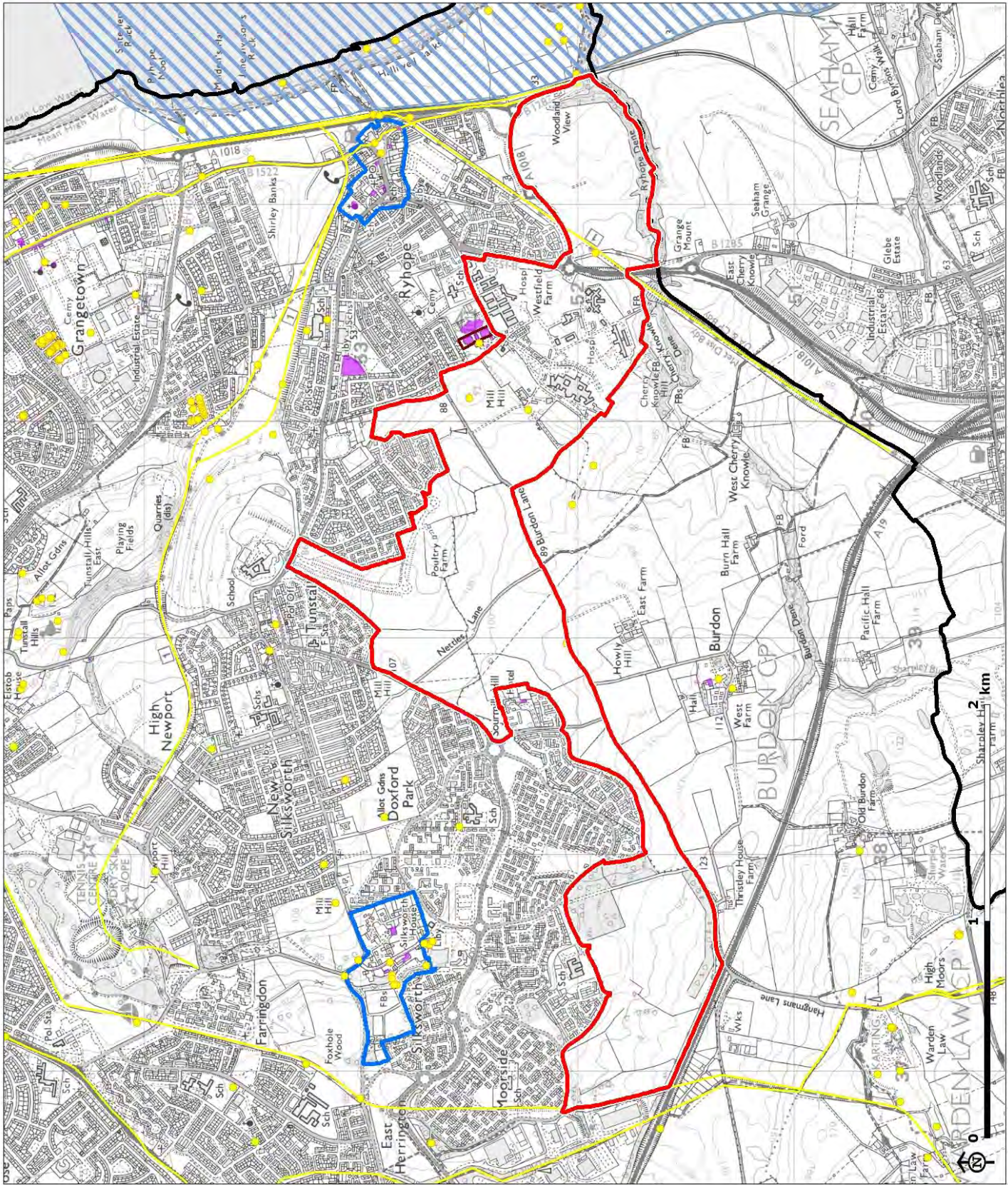
Tyne & Wear archaeological site (linear)

Source: Sunderland City Council

Map Scale @ A4: 1:25,000

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South Sunderland Growth Area: Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 6: Open Space

Sunderland City boundary

SSGA boundary

National Cycle Network

Park

Allotment

Amenity greenspace

Strategic Green Corridor

Local Green Corridor

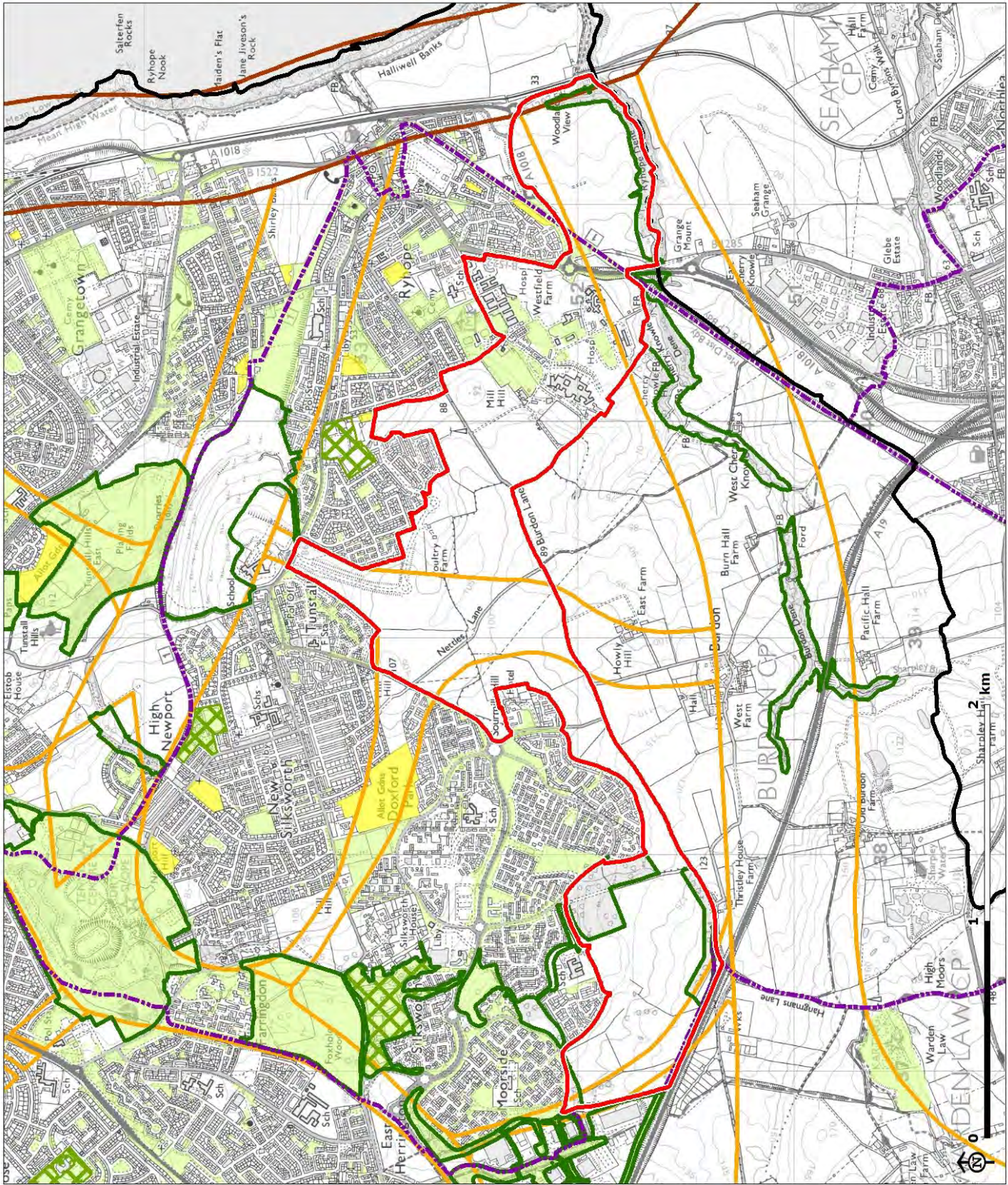
Woodland site (over 2ha)

Source: Sunderland City Council

Map Scale @ A4: 1:25,000

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## 3 Landscape context

### Regional context

- 3.1 The SSGA lies within the area classified by Natural England as the Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau.<sup>7</sup> This area extends along the North Sea coast from South Tyneside to Hartlepool. A unique landscape, this is the only area worldwide where the Magnesian Limestone occurs in a coastal location, creating habitats which are not found elsewhere. The Magnesian Limestone grasslands, though fragmented, support combinations of species which occur here at the northern or southern extents of their geographical ranges.
- 3.2 The limestone landscape forms an open, undulating plateau, generally under arable cultivation though with much evidence of past coal mining and ongoing quarrying of limestone. The underlying geology is most clearly expressed in the coastal edge and along the escarpment to the west.

### Local context

- 3.3 The classification of the city-wide landscape is presented in the City of Sunderland Landscape Character Assessment report.<sup>8</sup> This defines a series of local landscape character types (LCT) and character areas which lie within the Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau national character area. Broadly these LCTs divide the Limestone Plateau into four linear zones. From west to east these are:
- The steep **Limestone Escarpment**, which marks the western extent of the limestone landscape, and is clearly expressed as a series of hills and limestone outcrops;
  - The **Clay Plateau**, where the limestone is largely obscured by later glacial deposits;
  - The **Coastal Limestone Plateau**, where the limestone is more clearly expressed, and the coast has an influence on character; and
  - The **Limestone Coast**, forming the seaward strip of limestone cliffs and the hinterland of coastal grassland.
- 3.4 Overlaid onto these four zones is the **Urban Limestone**, where development has taken place across the limestone plateau.
- 3.5 **Figure 7** presents these LCTs and the more detailed character areas, overlaid with the SSGA boundary and the sub-area boundaries, illustrating how the SSGA sits within its landscape context. The following LCTs and character areas are within or adjacent to the SSGA:
- West of Burdon Road the SSGA falls into the **Clay Plateau** LCT, and is within the **Warden Law and Eppleton Moor** character area, as does the landscape to the south and west;
  - The SSGA between Burdon Road and Mill Hill, and south of Ryhope, and extending to the south, is within the **Limestone Coastal Plateau** LCT, and falls into the **Burdon to Ryhope** character area;
  - The present and former hospital site is within the **Urban Limestone Plateau** LCT, and is part of the **Ryhope** character area, as is the built-up area to the north-east of the SSGA;
  - The existing developed area to the north-west is also within the **Urban Limestone Plateau** LCT, and is part of the **Silksworth and Tunstall** character area; and

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<sup>7</sup> Natural England (2013) National Character Area Profile 15: Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau.

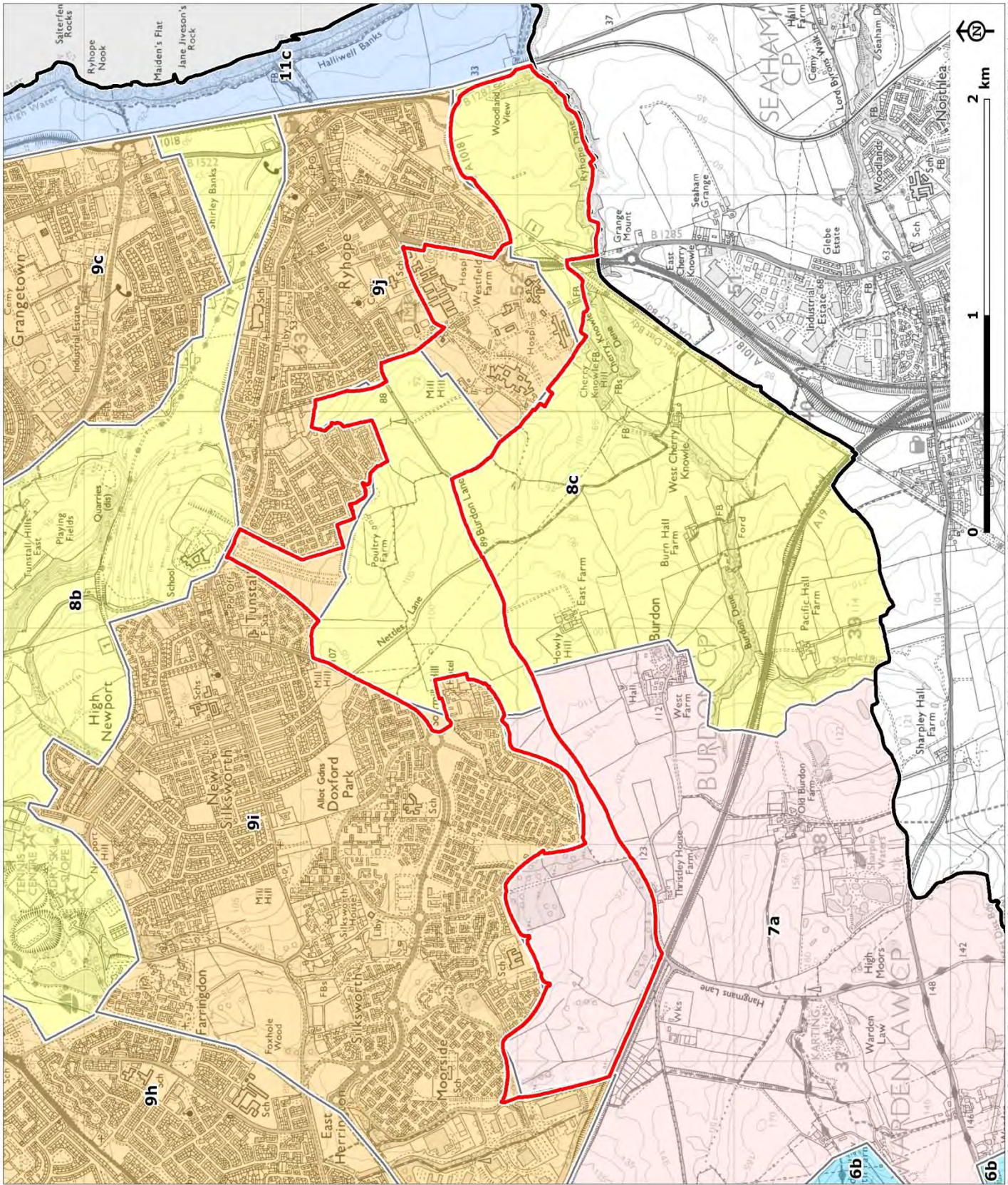
<sup>8</sup> LUC (2014) City of Sunderland Landscape Character Assessment. Sunderland City Council.

- East of the SSGA boundary, the landscape is part of the **Limestone Coast** LCT, and is within the **South Sunderland Coast** character area .

3.6 Full details of all LCTs and character areas are provided in the City of Sunderland Landscape Character Assessment report.

## General principles for development

- 3.7 Based on an analysis of landscape context, combined with accepted good practice, some general principles have been developed, aimed at providing high-level guidance and applicable to development in all parts of the SSGA.
- Retain undeveloped corridors across the area, providing for biodiversity, green space and recreation, in line with the green infrastructure strategy for the wider area.
  - Maintain connectivity of walking/cycling routes through these corridors, providing access links within the various parts of the SSGA, as well as links beyond the area to settlements and facilities (schools, medical centres etc) to the north, and to the open countryside to the south.
  - Retain and enhance all existing woodland, hedges and other vegetation, using this to provide structure and enclosure for new development.
  - Establish new woodlands, hedges and lines of trees to enhance and develop wildlife corridors.
  - Work within framework of existing field boundaries to maintain legibility of historic landscapes.
  - Retain undeveloped areas at the highest points of the site, to make best use of long views both north and south along the coast. Ensure accessibility of high points and connectivity to wider recreational networks.
  - Refer to the more distinctive elements of local context in developing palettes of building materials and styles. Local vernacular is expressed to an extent in the nearby conservation areas, farms and village cores.
  - Boundary features in the area comprise deciduous hedges in rural areas, and walls of limestone, brick, or both in settlements. Cues should be taken from these features in designing development boundaries.
  - Retain views to existing landmarks, locally the Ryhope Pumping Station chimney, and in the wider landscape the Tunstall Hills, Penshaw Monument, city centre and docks, and the Cleadon Hills.
  - Ensure development proposals also accord with recommendations made within the ecological assessment of the site (TNEI, 2014).



South Sunderland Growth  
Area: Landscape  
Character Assessment

Figure 7: Landscape  
Character Types and Areas

- Sunderland City boundary
- SSGA boundary

Landscape Character Type

- Clay Plateau
- Coastal Limestone Plateau
- Limestone Coast
- Limestone Escarpment
- Urban Limestone Plateau

Landscape Character  
Area

- 6b. Hastings Hill and Copt Hill
- 7a. Warden Law and Eppleton Moor
- 8b. Tunstall Hills
- 8c. Burdon to Ryhope
- 9c. Hillview and Grangeview
- 9h. Thorney Close, Herringdon and Grindon
- 9i. Silksworth and Tunstall
- 9j. Ryhope
- 11c. South Sunderland Coast

Note

Character types and areas shown are based on the draft City of Sunderland Landscape Character Assessment (September 2014).

Source: Sunderland City Council and LUC

Map Scale @ A4: 1:25,000



Sunderland  
City Council

## 4 Landscape of the SSGA

### Introduction

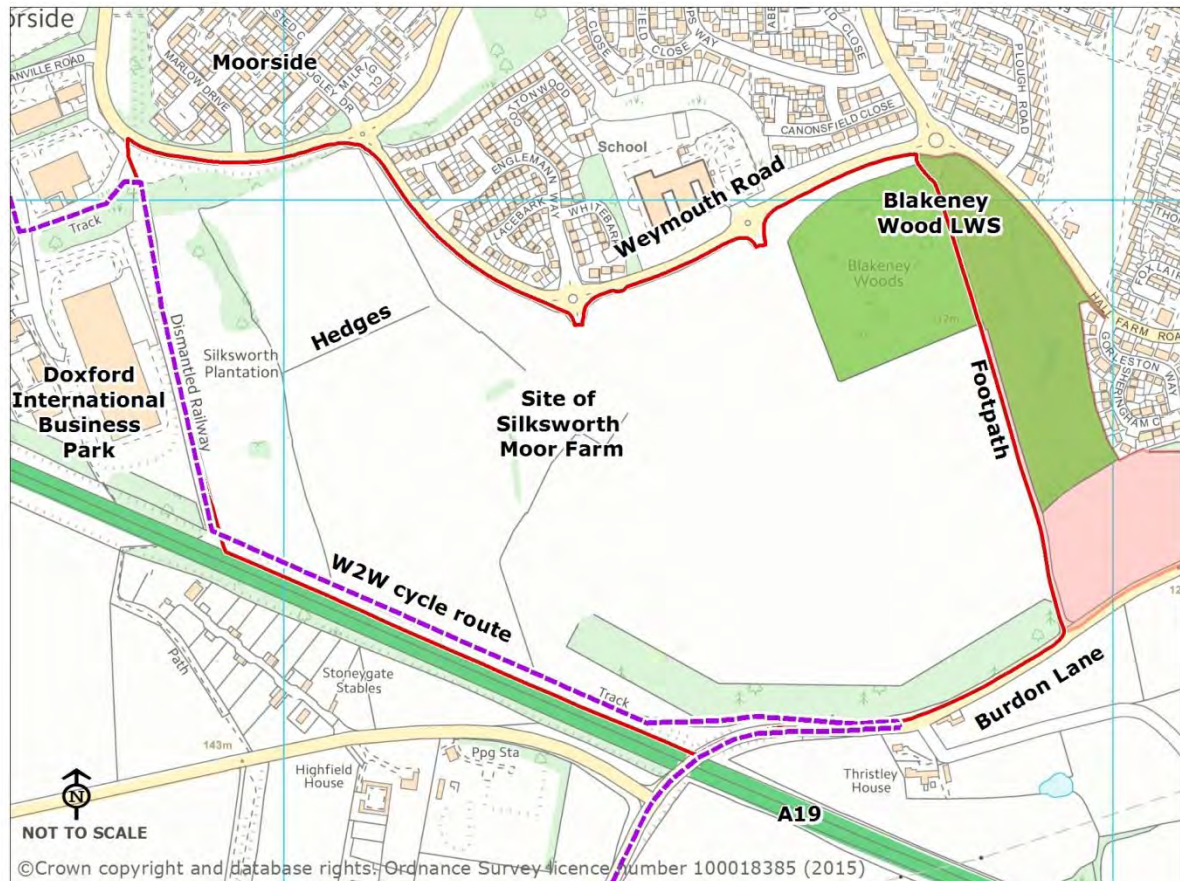
- 4.1 This section presents detailed description and analysis of the landscape of the SSGA and its immediate context. This examination is set out in relation to the four sub-areas defined by the Council, as shown on **Figure 1**.
- 4.2 For each sub-area, a detailed description of the landscape features and character of each sub-**area has been developed, followed by a summary of the 'key features'** of the landscape, arranged into positive factors which contribute to the landscape character, and negative features which are detractive.
- 4.3 A series of recommendations has been derived from these key features. It is intended that, by applying these recommendations to development proposals for the area, the positive features of the local landscape can be retained and enhanced, while the negative features can be remediated or removed altogether.

## Chapelgarth

### Location

- 4.4 Chapelgarth is the western-most sub-area of the SSGA, and is shown on **Figure 8**. It comprises a group of fields, bounded by Doxford International Business Park to the west, the A19 to the south-west, Burdon Lane to the south, a former lane (now footpath) through Blakeney Wood to the east, and the Moorside residential area to the north.

**Figure 8 Detailed map of the Chapelgarth sub-area**



### Topography and views

- 4.5 This is the highest part of the SSGA, rising to around 135m along the south-west edge, and sloping down to around 100m at the north-east. The lower part of the Chapelgarth sub-area has a small-scale, enclosed character due to the surrounding mature trees. However, at the southern edges there are open views out to the north-east, taking in Tunstall Hills and Cleadon Hills to the north, and the sea beyond the city centre. These views are also available from the central part of the site, though less open due to mature trees and hedges.

### Boundaries and context

- 4.6 This area is bounded by mature tree belts on some of its boundaries. To the north-west there is dense woodland along Moorside Road. The western boundary is formed by a tree-lined lane, following the line of the former Hetton Colliery Railway, and separating the area from the adjacent business park. To the south-west the A19 is within a cutting, again separated from the site by roadside planting though the noise from the road is considerable. A dense mixed shelterbelt runs along the southern boundary of the site. To the north-east is Blakeney Woods, an area of ancient semi-natural woodland which forms a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). Only the northern boundary, along Weymouth Road, is more open.

### Land use and land cover

- 4.7 The land is largely under arable cultivation (see **Figure 9**), and the field structure to the west is intact, comprising mature hedges and field boundary trees. These define medium-sized fields, as well as a narrow area of grassland (improved pasture) to the west, enclosed by trees. There are also some distinct clumps of mature trees, including the area around the site of Silksworth Moor farm in the centre of the sub-area. Blakeney Woods occupies the north-east corner of the sub-area, comprising dense mixed woodland.
- 4.8 South of Weymouth Road is an open area of rough grassland. Combined with the incomplete access points from the two roundabouts, this creates an unfinished, underused character along this boundary. Across the road garden boundaries, and the defensive boundary of the school, add to this impression of an indistinct suburban area.

### Access and recreation

- 4.9 The grassland areas, particularly the western area named Silksworth Plantation on **Figure 8**, and the edges of the adjacent fields, provide an informal but well-used footpath network. More formal access is provided along the western and southern edges of the area, where the Walney to Wear (W2W) cycle route follows an off-road route along the boundary. This route follows the line of the **Hetton Company's Railway**, though there is no signage to indicate this, and the access to the north onto Moorside Road is poor. There is evidence of equestrian use of these routes.
- 4.10 Pedestrian and cycle access is also available along the lane within Blakeney Woods, linking Hall Farm Road with Burdon Lane. Blakeney Woods has been provided with some interpretation boards, describing the species present in woodland and grassland habitats.

**Figure 9 Aerial photo of the Chapelgarth sub-area, showing photo locations**



### Positive features of this sub-area

- Mature trees, shelterbelts and woodland provide enclosure, shelter and strong boundary features, as well as wildlife habitat;
- Well-established native woodland at Blakeney Woods LWS, defined as ancient semi-natural woodland, with existing interpretation;
- Intact pattern of mature hedges and field boundary trees in the west of the area, providing ready-made structure and enclosure, and legibility of past land use;
- Locally important habitats supporting bat species and breeding birds (refer to Ecological Assessment report);
- Former road preserved as a footpath through the area, providing access to Blakeney Woods;
- Well-established recreational use, with good access to wider networks of footpaths and cycleways, including the former railway line, and potential for better links north into the city and south to the Great North Forest trail; and
- Attractive and expansive northward views over the city to the coast.



*Clockwise from top left: 1) mature field boundary trees; 2) open views towards the city; 3) open grassland at Silksworth Plantation in the west of the sub-area; 4) the former Hetton Company's Railway. Photo locations are shown on Figure 9.*

### Negative features of this sub-area

- Settlement fringe character of northern area, particularly the incomplete roundabout access points;
- Inadequate connectivity with adjacent areas, despite well-used informal access, e.g. at Moorside Road;
- Lack of appropriate management of the ancient semi-natural woodland at Blakeney Woods;
- Lack of interpretation of important historic rail route;
- Intrusive road noise from the A19 along the south-west boundary, despite mature vegetation providing a visual screen;
- More open, unstructured nature of the landscape in the eastern part of the sub-area; and
- Poor condition of the footpath through Blakeney Woods, with evidence of fly-tipping at the Burdon Lane end.



*Clockwise from top left: 5) poor northern end of the cycleway along the former Hetton Company's Railway; 6) suburban fringe at Weymouth Road; 7) open fields in the east of the sub-area; 8) path into Blakeney Woods. Photo locations are shown on Figure 9.*

## Recommendations for the Chapelgarth sub-area

4.11 In planning the development of this sub-area of the SSGA, the following recommendations are aimed at retaining or enhancing the positive features listed above, while removing or remediating the negative features.

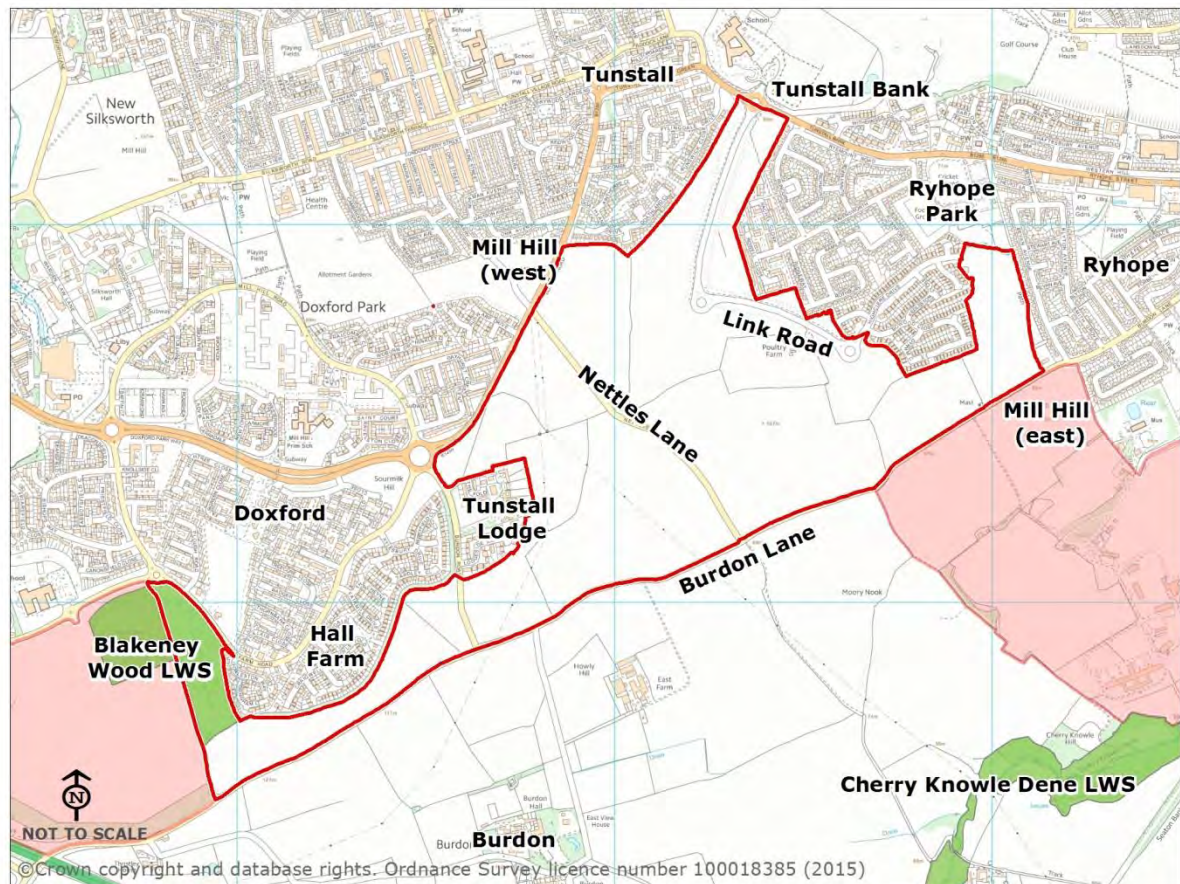
- a. Retain as much as possible of the intact landscape structure (woodland, hedges, mature trees) around the site boundaries and across the western part of the sub-area, and establish buffers for habitat protection. Use existing mature hedges and field boundary trees to provide the framework for new development, maintaining legibility. Ensure long-term maintenance of existing landscape is provided for, including replacement of any trees felled and enhancement of hedgerows. Make use of existing gaps in these hedges to provide for access, avoiding the need for vegetation removal.
- b. Extend this landscape framework through the eastern part of the sub-area, providing green corridors across the more open landscape to serve biodiversity and recreation, as well as providing shelter. Add to the provision of woodland and mature trees, using native species to complement the mix at Blakeney Wood LWS, and adding to the relatively species-poor woodland along Burdon Lane.
- c. Retain and protect Blakeney Woods LWS and build on community-led enhancement to **encourage 'ownership', with benefits for access and biodiversity**. Maintain a 100m buffer around Blakeney Woods, in line with the recommendations of the ecological assessment. Develop additional woodland and open space links to connect Blakeney Woods into wider green network. Provide a range of habitats within open space, complementing existing woodland and grassland spaces.
- d. Provide an open and welcoming northern boundary to the development along Weymouth Road, avoiding placement of rear garden fences along this edge.
- e. Retain and upgrade existing access links, formalising existing desire lines from Weymouth Road and around the site. Ensure that walking and cycle routes through the new development connect with currently used routes, and with the urban areas to the north. Provide new links to nearby rights of way, including the Great North Forest Trail on **Hangman's Lane to the south, and along Burdon Lane to the bridle path to Cherry Knowle**.
- f. Provide interpretation for the **Hetton Company's Railway** – a significant historic line which is older than the much better-known Stockton & Darlington Railway – and enhance access onto Moorside Road.
- g. Seek to retain the western area of grassland (Silksworth Plantation) **as a 'ready-made' open space** within new development, serving both the SSGA and the areas to the north, with improved connectivity via the former railway line. This area also provides a buffer between the housing site and the business park to the west, and will serve as useable green space for employees.
- h. Create additional open space around the south-west of the sub-area to avoid developing the skyline, and to ensure that the open views from this area remain available from the cycle route and from public open space. Consider approaches to noise abatement, including creative use of acoustic barriers, to alleviate the traffic noise in this area.

## Land north of Burdon Lane

### Location

- 4.12 This is the largest of the four sub-areas, and extends from the lane within Blakeney Woods in the west, to Ryhope in the east. It is bounded to the south by Burdon Lane, as shown on **Figure 10**. The area is narrow in the west, including part of Blakeney Woods and a narrow field to the south of Doxford. East of Burdon Road the SSGA broadens northward, taking in the fields either side of Nettles Lane.

**Figure 10 Detailed map of the Land north of Burdon Lane sub-area**



### Topography and views

- 4.13 The topography of this sub-area is varied. From the southern corner of the sub-area, at an elevation of around 125m, the north-eastward slope continues to a low point near Tunstall Lodge, then begins to rise again to a low ridge which runs between the two Mill Hills: from Mill Hill (west) at the north-western corner of the area (107m); to Mill Hill (east) on the south side of Burdon Lane (92m). To the south and west of this ridge is a relatively enclosed landscape. North of the ridge the seaward slope resumes, with more open views across to Tunstall Hills and the city centre, with Cleadon Hills in the distance.
- 4.14 South of Burdon Lane the land is relatively flat, dropping away beyond the SSGA boundary towards Cherry Knowle Dene. To the north, views of the Penshaw Monument are glimpsed from Burdon Lane. Travelling eastward on Burdon Lane, there are views to the sea from Nettles Lane onwards. Approaching the edge of Ryhope these open out northwards, taking in the built-up part of the city and the docks, as well as south-east towards the North York Moors in the distance. To the south-west there are views to the wooded village of Burdon and the wind turbines on Eppleton Moor.

### Boundaries and context

- 4.15 The southern boundary of the area is formed by Burdon Lane, lined by very sparse hedges, which are often missing altogether, resulting in a weak boundary and an open aspect across the arable land to the south. To the west, the boundary follows the former lane, now a footpath, through Blakeney Wood. A dense belt of trees, established as an urban edge when the housing south of Hall Farm Road was built, provides the boundary between Blakeney Wood and Burdon Road. Private garden boundaries along the north of the area provide unsubtle boundaries, often comprising a close-boarded fence though with occasional mature trees. The footpath along the eastern site boundary provides access via derelict land to Ryhope Park on Tunstall Bank.

### Land use and land cover

- 4.16 The area comprises medium to large fields, mostly arable though with some areas of pastoral grassland (see **Figure 11**). These are divided by gappy or overgrown hedges with few field boundary trees, creating an open, exposed landscape. Similar hedges follow Nettles Lane, a narrow and apparently little-used road cutting across the area. Burdon Road is lined by a metal rail fence to the south, and by a more intact hedge to the north. Blakeney Wood LWS, in the far west of the sub-area, is the only mature woodland, though there is new native tree planting along the recently built access road, part of the planned Ryhope to Doxford Park Link Road.

**Figure 11 Aerial photo of the Land north of Burdon Lane sub-area, showing photo locations**



*Note that this aerial photo does not show the housing development currently under construction at the east end of the sub-area.*

- 4.17 A new housing development is under construction at the eastern end of this sub-area, accessed from Burdon Lane. Otherwise, built development within the area is limited: a poultry farm is located in the northern area, and a communications mast stands beside Burdon Lane. East of Burdon Road, but outside the SSGA, a small development of large houses is set among mature parkland trees around the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Tunstall Lodge. To the north, the section of the Ryhope to

Doxford Park Link Road has roundabouts which appear oversized in the current context. These are surrounded by new earthworks with grassland and young trees. The site is crossed by several low-voltage power lines on wooden poles.

### Access and recreation

- 4.18 The only public access to the area is a footpath along the eastern edge of the SSGA, to the rear of houses on Bevan Avenue. This allows open seaward views over the houses to the north-east, but has been hemmed in by recent development within the SSGA boundary. To the north of this is a small area of derelict land separating the SSGA from Ryhope Park. A bridle path follows Nettles Lane southward from Burdon Lane, towards West Cherry Knowle.

### Positive features of this sub-area

- Well-established ancient semi-natural woodland at Blakeney Woods LWS;
- Elevated position of the main ridge in relation to the surrounding land, with views in all directions: to the city; the coast; the Penshaw Monument; and to the North York Moors – particularly from the eastern area (south of Bowood Close);
- Open views from Burdon Lane, particularly when travelling eastward;
- Enclosed sheltered land away from the open ridges;
- Green links from Doxford Park and Tunstall Bank, via Nettles Lane, to the countryside south of Burdon Lane;
- Newly established woodland and grassland associated with the new link road;
- Habitats supporting bats and bird species (refer to separate ecological assessment); and
- Adjacent to existing open space in Doxford Park to the north-west and Ryhope Park in the north-east.



*Clockwise from top left: 1) views over Bowood Close towards the city; 2) lower-lying ground and new planting by the link road; 3) eastward sea view, including the pumping station chimney; 4) Nettles Lane. Photo locations are shown on **Figure 11**.*

### Negative features of this sub-area

- Lack of landscape structure, including poor condition of hedges and lack of mature trees, creates an exposed character lacking shelter and human scale;
- Weak or overly harsh boundary features, including high rear-garden fences;
- Adjacent to derelict/underused land e.g. to rear of Bevan Avenue;
- Incomplete character of new link road access from Tunstall Bank;
- Limited formal recreational access into or through the area;
- Narrow yet heavily trafficked nature of Burdon Lane limits usability for cyclists and walkers; and
- Imposition of rear garden fences makes the footpath along the eastern boundary unappealing, despite coastal views.



*Clockwise from top left: 5) lack of field boundaries along Burdon Lane; 6) footpath at east boundary, between rear gardens; 7) poultry farm and unfinished link road; 8) open, exposed landscape without tree cover. Photo locations are shown on **Figure 11**.*

### Recommendations for the land north of Burdon Lane sub-area

4.19 In planning the development of this sub-area of the SSGA, the following recommendations are aimed at retaining or enhancing the positive features listed above, while removing or remediating the negative features.

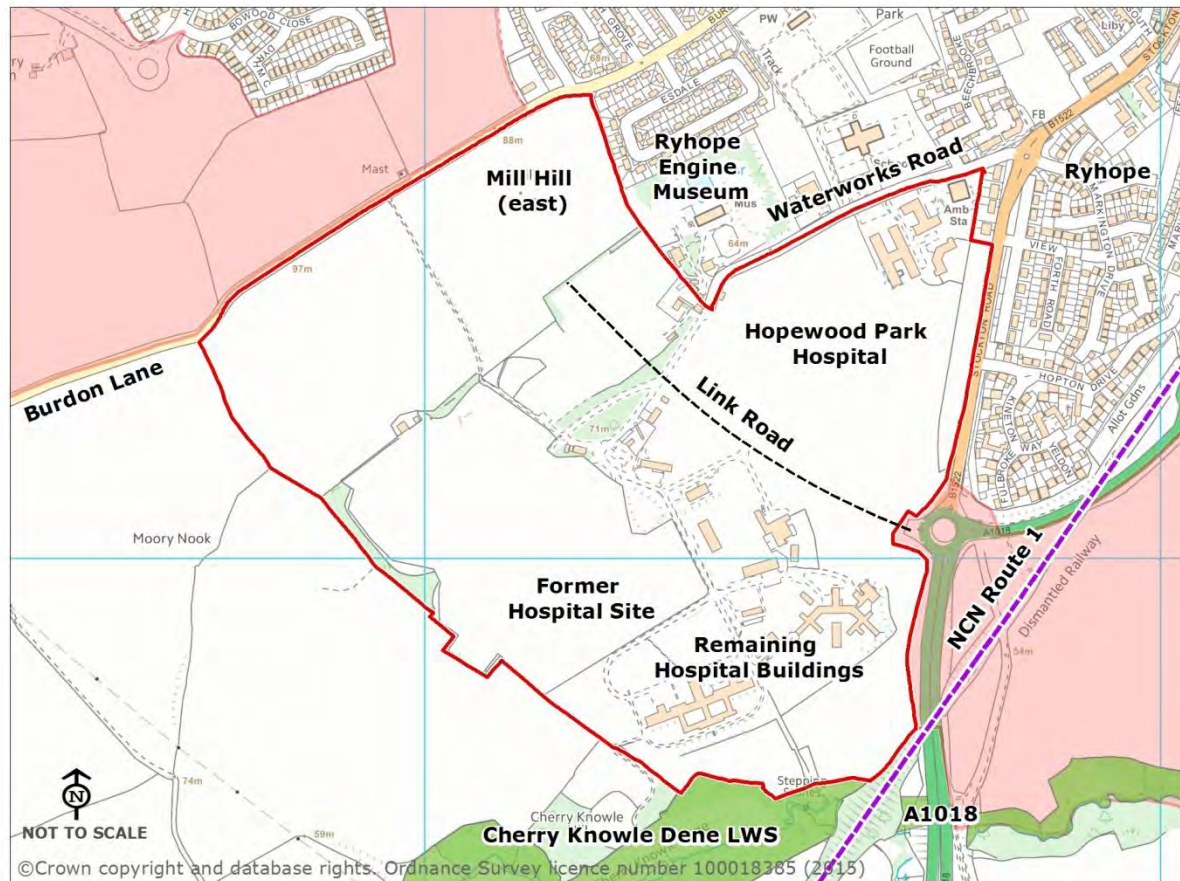
- a. A landscape structure will need to be introduced into this area, including structural woodland planting to frame and shelter new development and associated open space. Existing poor field boundaries, e.g. along Burdon Lane, and abrupt settlement boundaries, should be reinforced with new hedge and tree planting.
- b. Blakeney Wood LWS and the tree belt south of Hall Farm form the core of a green network, which should be widened through the introduction of additional woodlands into this area, bringing biodiversity and recreational benefits. Integrate the newer planting along the link road into this network, but avoid siting trees in such a way as to screen off wider views. Maintain a 100m buffer around Blakeney Woods, in line with recommendations set out in the ecological assessment, and secure long-term management and enhancement of non-protected woodland, both new and existing.
- c. Retain some open space as grassland, particularly on high ground in the east of the site where there is more evidence of the underlying limestone geology. Site open areas to make best use of open views from high ground. Creation of limestone meadows should be undertaken in consultation with local authority ecologists. Encourage community-led **'ownership' of new woodlands and open spaces**.
- d. New open space/habitat created should be designed to tie into wider green networks as a **'stepping stone'** site, which will help to improve connectivity between Burdon Lane and the existing corridors to the north and north-west of the sub-area. Open space should be capable of meeting the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt), and should enable integration of sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) into the landscape.
- e. Maintain Nettles Lane as a traffic-free north-south route through the SSGA for recreational users. This route provides connectivity between New Silksworth to the north and the bridle path to the south, and reflects the green corridor identified in the Greenspace Audit (see paragraph 2.36). This key green corridor should also extend north-east to Tunstall Bank and the Tunstall Hills beyond.
- f. Create green links incorporating circular routes, linking this key corridor to other open spaces in the SSGA, as well as to the countryside and the wider recreational network.
- g. Completion of the Doxford Park to Ryhope link road will provide opportunities to enhance landscape structure, and should form a key part of the green network, intersecting with the north-south route along Nettles Lane. The link road will also enable access between this sub-area and the Cherry Knowle sub-area, and will require cuttings which may offer opportunity for exposure and interpretation of Magnesian Limestone geology.
- h. Avoid developing the highest ground within the sub-area, to retain an open skyline in views from the north, and to retain the wide views available from this area, e.g. views from Burdon Lane towards Tunstall Hills. Key locations to avoid development are the field south of Bowood Close, and the ridge running westward to Mill Hill (west).
- i. There are opportunities to develop the lower-lying parts of the sub-area, including the land south of the main ridge and west of Nettles Lane, and the land alongside the link road. Development of the latter area will provide completion and context to the link road.

## Cherry Knowle

### Location

- 4.20 This sub-area of the SSGA lies to the south-east of Ryhope and includes the site of Cherry Knowle Hospital and its grounds. The extent of the sub-area is shown in **Figure 12**. The main hospital building was demolished some years ago, and redevelopment of the area is ongoing, with the Hopewood Park hospital and St Benedict's Hospice completed in 2014.

**Figure 12 Detailed map of the Cherry Knowle sub-area**



*Note that the map does not depict recent changes, including construction of a section of the new link road, and development of new hospital buildings.*

### Topography and views

- 4.21 In the north-west, there are two open pastoral fields to the south of Burdon Lane, which are continuous in character with the land north of Burdon Lane. This area is relatively flat in the east, rising up to 92m at Mill Hill (east) which marks the eastern end of the ridge that crosses the SSGA to Mill Hill (west). The land to the west of Mill Hill (east) is slightly higher. To the south of Mill Hill, a steep slope marks the edge of the hospital site, dropping to an elevation of around 70m in a series of distinct steps. Across the rest of the area the slope is more gentle, but shelves gradually south and east to around 50m. There are open views from Mill Hill both north towards the city and the Tunstall Hills, and south along the coast to the North York Moors. Seaward views open out from several more low-lying locations.

### Boundaries and context

- 4.22 The area is bounded to the south-east by the A1018, within a cutting and flanked by mature roadside planting. The B1533 Stockton Road has more limited hedge to the east, with housing across the road. The northern boundary follows Waterworks Road, where a range of land uses include a school and a nursery with prominent defensive boundaries. The SSGA wraps around the

land of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ryhope Pumping Station, lined with decorative railings and well provided with mature trees. The pumping station chimney is a major landmark both locally and in the wider area. Now containing a museum centred on the working beam engines, the pumping station and chimney are listed at Grade II\*.

- 4.23 The boundary then follows a hedge garden boundary to the rear of houses on Esdale, to Burdon Lane, which forms the boundary between this sub-area and the previous. The south-western boundary runs along field edges, alternately wooded and wide open, with large arable fields to the west and the ancient semi-natural woodland of Cherry Knowle Dene LWS to the south.

### Land use and land cover

- 4.24 This sub-area is bisected by the broad new road from the A1018, which forms a part of the planned Ryhope to Doxford Park Link Road. The road currently terminates at a roundabout at the foot of the steep slope, with a section of the tree belt having been removed to accommodate this. To the north-east of the link road the sub-area is now occupied by the newly-built **St Benedict's** Hospice and Hopewood Park hospital, with associated landscaping and parking. The close-boarded fence between the hospice and the link road creates an unwelcoming entrance.

**Figure 13 Aerial photo of the Cherry Knowle sub-area, showing photo locations**



*Note that this aerial photo does not show recent changes, including construction of a section of the new link road, and redevelopment of the former Ryhope General Hospital area.*

- 4.25 On the former hospital site, the locations of demolished buildings are still evident within the landscape. In the southern part of the sub-area the remaining single-storey brick-built hospital buildings stand amid amenity grassland, instilling a run-down character. Isolated hospital buildings, turning circles, signs, lighting and other features attest to a formerly more intensive use of the area. South of these buildings a retention pond has been constructed.
- 4.26 The mature structure planting associated with the hospital site remains, and frames this part of the SSGA. There are mature woodlands along slopes which cross the sub-area, creating strong separation between the hospital site and the open fields at Mill Hill, beside Burdon Lane. These

trees are an important feature in views from the east, where they are seen on the skyline in conjunction with the pumping station chimney. As well as Victorian plantings, there are also more recent avenue trees and tree belts, of more variable landscape value. Along the southern boundary the SSGA is bordered by ancient semi-natural woodland within Cherry Knowle Dene, though the western boundary is more open.

### Access and recreation

- 4.27 Due to the former institutional use of the area, there are no footpaths or rights of way across this area, though the National Cycle Network Route 1 follows the disused railway to the immediate south-west, crossing the A1018 on a former railway bridge. This bridge provides the only traffic-free link between this sub-area and South Ryhope to the east. There is no formal access between this route and the Cherry Knowle sub-area, though it is clear that informal access is taken from the bridge, through the south of this sub-area, and into Cherry Knowle Dene. The sub-area is readily accessible from residential areas of Ryhope, with potential to provide better access to open space.

### Positive features of this sub-area

- Mature landscape structure arising from shelterbelts and specimen trees associated with the hospital;
- Close to secluded landscape of Cherry Knowle Dene with its ancient semi natural woodland cover and biodiversity value;
- Interesting architectural context, including the ornate pumping station and landmark chimney, and high-quality new healthcare buildings and landscape;
- Panoramic views are available from Mill Hill, looking north, east and south; and
- Potential to link to National Cycle Network as well as to local access networks around Ryhope.



*Clockwise from top left: 1) mature structure planting on steep slopes; 2) Ryhope Pumping Station provides important and attractive context; 3) secluded woodland at Cherry Knowle Dene; 4) frequent sea views. Photo locations are shown on **Figure 13**.*

### Negative features of this sub-area

- Semi-derelict character associated with demolition sites, 'left-over' features from the hospital, and variable maintenance regimes;
- The Ryhope to Doxford Park Link Road is a relatively unwelcoming entrance into the area, harshly engineered and lacking planting to soften it;
- The link road will be continued to the north-west, cutting across the higher ground in the north of the sub-area and potentially resulting in further tree loss;
- Lack of formal recreational access into the area, including severance associated with the A1018; and
- Informal access into the dene which has caused erosion of the banks.



*Clockwise from top left: 5) informal access causing erosion in Cherry Knowle Dene; 6) remnant institutional landscape features; 7) bland character of new link road; 8) potential for further loss of mature trees and new planting. Photo locations are shown on **Figure 13**.*

### Recommendations for the Cherry Knowle sub-area

4.28 In planning the development of this sub-area of the SSGA, the following recommendations are aimed at retaining or enhancing the positive features listed above, while removing or remediating the negative features.

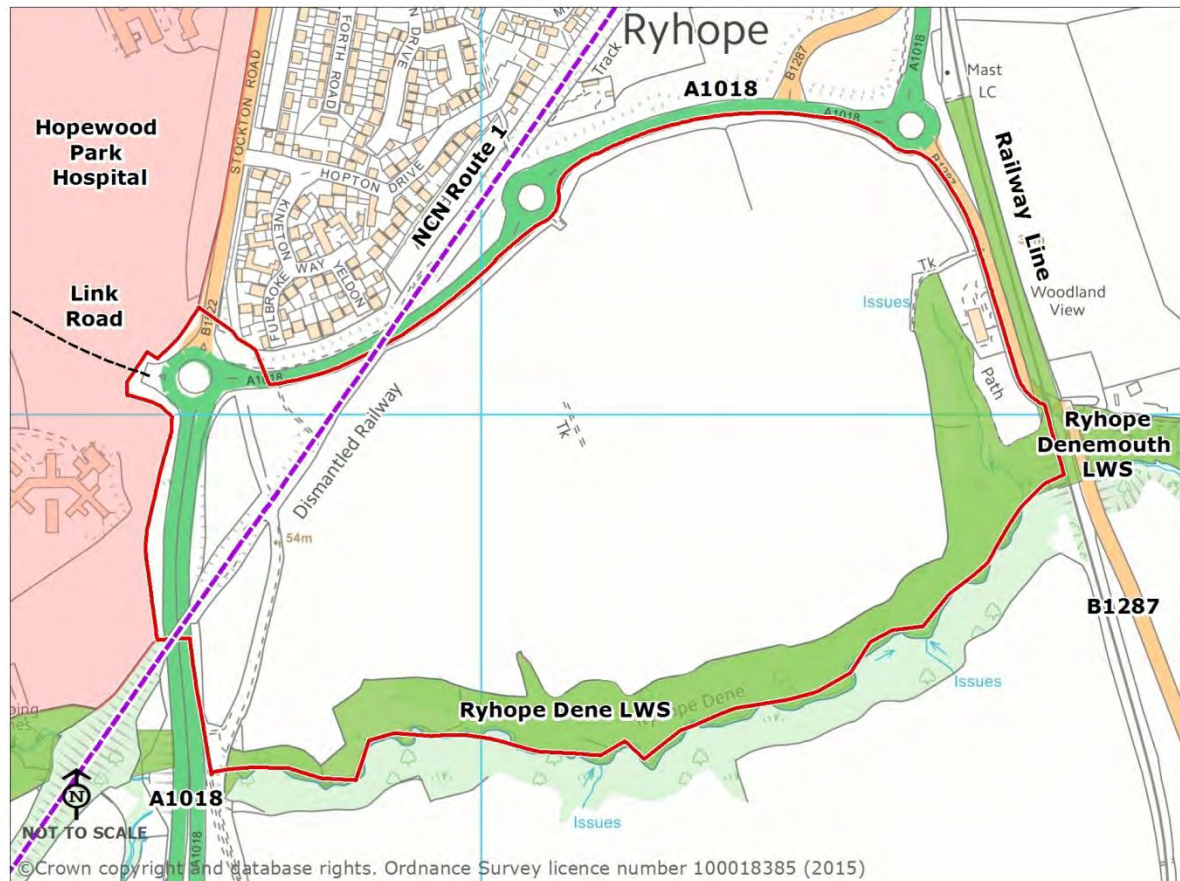
- a. Carefully integrate the Ryhope to Doxford Park Link Road into the landscape, introducing planting to soften the embankments and fences. The proposed section, cutting through Mill Hill, should avoid further tree loss, and compensate any felling with new woodland planting. Opportunities to expose and interpret Magnesian Limestone geology should be maximised within road cuttings.
- b. Maintain as much of the hospital landscape structure as can be practically retained, including woodland belts and specimen trees, to provide enclosure and shelter to new development. Assess the value of more recent avenue planting on a case-by-case basis.
- c. Introduce new woodland, hedges and tree belts to connect up the hospital structure planting and the ancient semi-natural woodland at Cherry Knowle Dene. Create a buffer between development and the LWS to minimise the impact on the woodland. Strengthen the western boundary of the sub-area where the development site abuts open farmland. Secure long-term management and enhancement of non-protected woodland, both new and existing.
- d. Discourage siting of development on the open fields south of Burdon Lane. This high ground offers the broadest views over the surrounding landscape, and has the greatest potential to be restored as species-rich limestone grassland. Creation of limestone meadows should be undertaken in consultation with local authority ecologists.
- e. Focus development on the lower-lying land, including the sites of demolished buildings and the open, level steps between the woodland belts. Development must respect and contribute to the setting of the listed pumping station and chimney at the north of the site, including taking cues from architecture, materials, landscape and boundary treatments. The chimney should remain the key visual landmark in this area.
- f. Secure enhancements to the approach along Waterworks Lane, for example restoration of railings around the Ryhope Pumping Station.
- g. Enhance access through the site, providing a network of linked routes from Ryhope in the north through to the National Cycle Network in the south. Retain sea views from access routes where available from within the sub-area. Integrate access along woodland belts and other features to create a multi-function green network serving recreation and biodiversity. Provide links between this network within the site and circular routes into the adjacent countryside.
- h. Seek to ensure restoration of eroded paths within Cherry Knowle Dene LWS, working with landowners to discourage inappropriate and damaging access. Ensure any intervention is compatible with the tranquillity and high biodiversity value of the dene, and with recommendations in the ecological assessment.

## South Ryhope

### Location

- 4.29 This is the eastern-most sub-area of the SSGA, as shown on **Figure 14**. It includes the land bounded by the A1018 to the west and north, the B1287 to the east, and by the wooded Ryhope Dene to the south and south-east. The sub-area is separated from the rest of the SSGA by the A1018 dual carriageway.

**Figure 14 Detailed map of the South Ryhope sub-area**



### Topography and views

- 4.30 This area is the lowest-lying part of the SSGA, with a gentle slope from around 55m in the west to just over 30m in the east. The denes to the south and south-east are sharply incised across this plateau landform. Wider views are generally limited. From the higher ground to the west there are views across to the sea, though the eastern area is more enclosed. The Ryhope Pumping Station chimney is a constant feature in views to the north-west, even from the lowest parts of the site, seen alongside the wooded skyline of Mill Hill.

### Boundaries and context

- 4.31 The southern boundary of the area is formed by the dense deciduous woodland (ancient semi-natural woodland) within Ryhope Dene, and the tributary dene to the south-east, both of which are part of a LWS and link to Ryhope Denemouth LWS to the east. The eastern boundary is open to the B1287, though the railway embankment forms a barrier to the coast. To the north the A1018, part of the recently completed Southern Radial Route, has little boundary treatment: a young hedge lines the south side while the north is framed by earthworks with rough grassland. The lighting columns around the A1018 are a prominent feature in the open landscape, and lighting will be a significant presence at night. There is some scrubby woodland along the former

railway line to the north. In the west of the site the older section of the A1018 is lined by an embankment and maturing woodland scrub, forming a more solid boundary.

### Land use and land cover

- 4.32 There is no built development within this part of the SSGA. Almost the whole of this area is occupied by a single large featureless arable field, as shown in **Figure 15**. In the west of the area, the line of the former roadway, and the disused railway line, criss-cross to subdivide small parcels of land which comprise rough grassland. These are separated by substantial hedges and occasional trees.
- 4.33 Along the south of the area, Ryhope Dene is characteristic of the incised glacial channels draining the coastal plateau of County Durham. The steep-sided dene encloses a small, fast-flowing stream between densely-wooded banks. The dene offers strong relative tranquillity in contrast to the surrounding open farmland and urban fringe.

### Access and recreation

- 4.34 National Cycle Network Route 1 follows the disused railway through the area, linking north into Ryhope and south across a bridge over the A1018. The former roadway is identified as an off-road cycle route though it is in poor physical condition.
- 4.35 There is no formal access into the rest of the area or along the dene. The dene is clearly used by off-road vehicles and motorcycles, with substantial erosion of dene sides and damage to vegetation. Footpaths access the coast from the B1287 to the south-east of the SSGA, though there is no direct access towards the coast from within the sub-area.

**Figure 15 Aerial photo of the South Ryhope sub-area, showing photo locations**



### Positive features of this sub-area

- Special character of Ryhope Dene LWS, a deeply incised gully lined with ancient woodland forming the southern boundary;
- Proximity to the Durham Heritage Coast, which is also designated for its habitats and birds at an international and national level, with coastal views from much of the sub-area;
- Proximity to areas of nationally and internationally important habitat along the coast;
- Wooded skyline of Mill Hill provides a backdrop to the north-west; and
- Immediate access to the National Cycle Network linking to wider recreational networks.



*Clockwise from top left: 1) feature bench on the National Cycle Network; 2) sea views from the west of the sub-area; 3) ancient woodland at Ryhope Dene forms the southern boundary; 4) wooded skyline of Mill Hill punctuated by Ryhope Pumping Station chimney (right). Photo locations are shown on **Figure 15**.*

### Negative features of this sub-area

- Barriers to access, including the railway line to the east, busy roads to the north and west, and limited access into Ryhope Dene;
- General lack of landscape structure except to the south, particularly apparent around the recently completed sections of the A1018;
- Inappropriate motorcycle access in the dene has caused erosion of the dene sides;
- Dominant character of road infrastructure along the A1018 corridor; and
- Underused, undeveloped character of the western part of the sub-area, where fly-tipping is an issue.



*Clockwise from top left: 5) underused landscape in the west of the sub-area; 6) lack of landscape structure; 7) damage to Ryhope Dene caused by motorbikes; 8) dominant road infrastructure. Photo locations are shown on **Figure 15**.*

### Recommendations for the South Ryhope sub-area

4.36 In planning the development of this part of the SSGA, the following recommendations are aimed at retaining or enhancing the positive features listed above, while removing or remediating the negative features.

- a. Buffers will be required to both the coastal SPA and the Ryhope Dene LWS, as set out in the ecological assessment. Ensure links westward over the A1018 bridge into the Cherry Knowle sub-area, and on to the rest of the SSGA.
- b. Introduce landscape structure to frame and enclose development in the remaining area, particularly along the open edge to the north. This will improve the aspect from the A1018 along what is the most visible part of the SSGA from the road network. This will also limit the noise and visual influence of the road from within the site.
- c. Ensure new structure planting is compatible with and connected to the established woodland along the southern boundary, and serves to enhance biodiversity of this sub-area. Ensure proposals tie into recommendations set out in the ecological assessment.
- d. Maintain the cycleway access through the west of the site, making physical enhancements to the lanes and seeking to retain the seaward views from this area. Retain the smaller land parcels and intact hedges in this western area as open spaces serving the development. Seek to enhance limestone grassland areas in consultation with local authority ecologists.
- e. Restore eroded dene sides within Ryhope Dene, and discourage inappropriate and damaging access. Any intervention must be compatible with the tranquillity and high biodiversity value of the dene.
- f. Orientate residential development to make best use of views, both seaward from the western part of the sub-area, and inland to the wooded skyline and pumping station from lower-lying areas.
- g. The A1018 is a key gateway into the City of Sunderland from the south. Opportunities should be taken to upgrade the appearance of this road corridor through landscape enhancements to road cuttings, vegetation, verges and signs.

## 5 References

- Limestone Landscapes Partnership (2010) *Limestone Landscapes Landscape Conservation Action Plan*.
- Natural England (2013) *National Character Area Profile 15: Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau*.
- Lawrence, D J D. (2009) *Limestone Landscapes - a geodiversity audit and action plan for the Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau*. British Geological Survey Open Report OR/09/007.
- Sunderland City Council (2009) *Draft Sunderland Landscape Character Assessment*.
- Sunderland City Council (2012) *Sunderland Greenspace Audit and Report*.
- Sunderland City Council (2013) *Draft Settlement Break Review*.
- Sunderland City Council (2010) *Ryhope Village Conservation Area: Character Appraisal and Management Strategy*.
- Sunderland City Council (2010) *Silksworth Hall Conservation Area: Character Appraisal and Management Strategy*.
- Sunderland City Council (2014) *Ecological Evidence Base for Sunderland's Local Development Framework Final Report*.
- TNEI (2014) *Sunderland South Ecological Assessment, Management Plan and Design Strategy*.

The Sunderland Local Plan has been a key reference, comprising the Core Strategy and a number of supporting documents, particularly the Sunderland South Sub Area Paper.

The following websites have been used for reference purposes:

- Durham in Time [[www.durhamintime.org.uk](http://www.durhamintime.org.uk)]
- Durham Mining Museum [[www.dmm.org.uk](http://www.dmm.org.uk)]
- Sitelines: Tyne and Wear's Historic Environment Record [<http://www.twositelines.info/>]
- Victoria County History of Durham [<http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/counties/durham>]