

Landscape Character Assessment

SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE



This Supplementary Guidance (SG) seeks to explain the modern concepts of landscape and landscape character and to offer guidance in the application of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA).

August 2012

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Supplementary Guidance

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CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 How to use this document.....	1
1.2 Who will use this document.....	2
1.3 How this document has been developed.....	3
1.4 Sustainability Appraisal.....	3
PART ONE - LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND ITS APPLICATION	5
2.0 WHY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER?	7
2.1 Status of this document.....	7
2.2 Aims and objectives.....	7
2.3 The concepts of landscape.....	8
3.0 POLICY CONTEXT	9
3.1 General.....	9
3.2 European guidance.....	9
3.3 National guidance.....	11
3.4 Local guidance.....	11
4.0 THE APPLICATION OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT	15
4.1 Applications.....	15
4.2 Local community involvement.....	16
4.3 Future built development.....	17
4.4 Green infrastructure.....	20
4.5 Climate change.....	21
5.0 THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT EXPLAINED	23
5.1 Background.....	23
5.2 Rationale.....	23
5.3 Change in the landscape.....	24
6.0 CLASSIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION	30
6.1 The processes and products of landscape character assessment.....	30
6.2 Method.....	31
7.0 ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION	37
7.1 Methodology.....	37
7.2 Significance.....	38
7.3 Vulnerability.....	38
7.4 Tolerance.....	39
7.5 Resilience.....	39
7.6 Sensitivity.....	40



8.0	LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION, RESTORATION AND ENHANCEMENT	43
9.0	MONITORING	47
9.1	Monitoring landscape change.....	47
9.2	State of the environment.....	48
 PART TWO - DESCRIPTIONS OF LANDSCAPE TYPES		53
10.0	LANDSCAPE TYPES	53
10.1	Enclosed Commons.....	54
10.2	Estate Farmlands.....	56
10.3	Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings.....	58
10.4	High Hills and Slopes.....	60
10.5	Limestone Estatelands.....	62
10.6	Principal Settled Farmlands.....	64
10.7	Principal Timbered Farmlands.....	66
10.8	Principal Village Farmlands.....	68
10.9	Principal Wooded Hills.....	70
10.10	Riverside Meadows.....	72
10.11	Sandstone Estatelands.....	74
10.12	Settled Farmlands on River Terraces.....	76
10.13	Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use.....	78
10.14	Timbered Pastures.....	80
10.15	Timbered Plateau Farmlands.....	82
10.16	Unenclosed Commons.....	84
10.17	Village Claylands.....	86
10.18	Village Farmlands with Orchards.....	88
10.19	Wet Pasture Meadows.....	90
10.20	Wooded Estatelands.....	92
10.21	Wooded Forest.....	94
10.22	Wooded Hills and Farmlands.....	96
 APPENDIX A		
	Historic Landscape Characterisation.....	98
 APPENDIX B		
	Glossary.....	99



1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

1.1.1 This Supplementary Guidance (SG) seeks to explain the modern concepts of landscape and landscape character and to offer guidance in the application of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) to professionals and lay persons alike. The advice offered is targeted at both planning and land management and will enable local communities to identify the landscape elements that contribute to local distinctiveness.

1.1.2 The LCA SG has been written as far as possible in non-technical language for ease of understanding and to make it accessible to any one who requires information about Worcestershire's policy and practice for the conservation, enhancement and regeneration of the rural landscape. Further factual information can be obtained from the Worcestershire County Council Landscape Website at www.worcestershire.gov.uk/lca.

1.1.3 A technical handbook has also been produced. This contains further descriptions as well as exhaustive raw data from the LCA database. A full range of definitions is included in the technical handbook but terms that are used throughout this SG are generally explained as they arise. The technical handbook provides useful analytical and background information but, of necessity is written in a less accessible style. A copy can be obtained by applying to the County Council's Strategic and Environmental Planning Unit at County Hall, Worcester. Tel 01905 766038.

1.1.4 The SG has been divided into two parts. Part 1 provides background information, sets landscape character within the planning framework and describes the processes of assessment and evaluation. Part 2 describes the Landscape Types which underlie landscape based planning, along with a brief analysis of changing character trends and guidance for future management and development.

1.1.5 In order to gain a full understanding of the LCA process the reader is encouraged to read the whole of Part One in the order it is written. However, for a quick résumé, the summary box at the beginning of each chapter paraphrases the salient points. In addition, the various figures have been designed to set out the fundamental tenets of LCA in a graphical format. A quick step-by-step guide for potential developers is included in section 4.3.1. This section could also be viewed as an indicative process for evaluating the suitability of other non-built development that will result in change in the landscape.



1.1.6 Part Two sets out the Landscape Types; each having a double page spread for ease of reference. The primary, secondary and tertiary characteristics have been derived from the detailed evaluation of "significance" which is explained in section 7.2. A thumbnail plan of Worcestershire indicates the distribution of the Landscape Type and the colours relate to those used in Fig. 11, p.49 - Map of the Distribution of Landscape Types. A second, hand-drawn, plan has been included to illustrate the typical patterns of settlement, enclosure and woodland or tree cover. For readers particularly interested in land management, the Landscape Guidelines demonstrate the broad-brush potential for conservation, restoration or enhancement of the natural landscape. Appropriate environmental gain linked to development control through the use of planning conditions should also be targeted through these guidelines.

1.2 WHO WILL USE THIS DOCUMENT

1.2.1 Increasingly it is acknowledged that landscape has the capacity to act as a unifying factor in planning for the future - providing as it does a spatial framework upon which we can map our ideas and aspirations. Landscape provides the backdrop against which we live and work, is a living record of our history and perhaps most significantly forms and is home to our natural resources and biodiversity. As a result, the range of potential uses of landscape character assessment data in planning is huge - extending through and beyond the statutory planning system to planning in other fields, as summarised in the table overleaf.

1.2.2 The widespread use of LCA is a requisite to ensure that the principles are embedded in decision-making and to protect and enhance the landscape. In order to achieve this it is important that landscape character data is fully accessible to as wide a range of people as possible. The Worcestershire County Council 'Landscapes of Worcestershire' webpages

(www.worcestershire.gov.uk/lca)

aim to do just that, making available documentation, maps and LCA data to all potential users. Please visit this site for the latest information on Worcestershire LCA with fully interactive mapping and planning advice relating to landscape character issues.



1.3 HOW THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN DEVELOPED

1.3.1 This SG sets out the latest thinking behind the Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment which was originally carried out between January 1997 and January 1999 and resulted in a first draft LCA Supplementary Planning Guidance published in May 1999. It is intended to review it on a five year basis in order to incorporate any policy or other changes and to update in the light of latest LCA development.

1.3.2 The original assessment was carried out with input from a number of other organisations, particularly the District Councils, Countryside Commission (now Natural England), Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, English Heritage and Council for the Protection of Rural England (C.P.R.E.). A targeted consultation on this document ran from the 10th June to the

22nd July 2011. Over 700 groups and individuals were consulted, reflecting those organisations with an interest in landscape issues in the county and included statutory consultees and Parish Councils.

1.4 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

1.4.1 This document has been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) to help ensure that it maximises social, economic and environmental benefits. An SA Scoping Report was produced in 2010 to determine the method by which this SG would be assessed. This enabled an SA framework to be developed, against which the sustainability of this draft SG could be assessed. This assessment was conducted in parallel with the SG development, and was consulted upon alongside the draft SG. The findings of the SA have been used to help shape the final adopted SG.

Table 1 Potential uses and users

Potential use	Potential user
¹ Development control planning including pre-application discussions	Development control planners, developers, agents
¹ Strategic planning	Strategic planners
¹ Forestry/woodland planting	FC, NE, Defra, landowners, Woodland Trust
¹ Habitat restoration, creation, enhancement	NE, Defra, FC, EnvAg, Wildlife Trusts, FWAG, landowners, consultants
¹ Geodiversity restoration, conservation and enhancement	Earth Heritage Trust, Local Authorities, NE, EnvAg Landowners
¹ Agri-environment scheme targeting	NE, Defra, FWAG, landowners
¹ Resource protection strategies	NE, EnvAg, Defra, landowners
¹ Climate change strategies and renewable energy	Local authorities, Defra, NE, EnvAg, developers, householders and landowners
¹ Green infrastructure and rural renaissance and blue infrastructure/flooding	NE, Defra, FC, EnvAg, local authorities, developers, service providers including transport, local businesses, landowners, local communities
¹ Tourism and countryside access	Local authorities, Defra, NE, local businesses and communities

PART ONE

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND ITS APPLICATION





2.0 WHY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER?

Summary

- An explanation of what the LCA will be used for
- A definition of landscape terms

2.1 STATUS OF THIS DOCUMENT

2.1.1 The Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Guidance (LCA SG) is a non-statutory document that will provide guidance on the application of landscape character principles to development. The LCA SG will ultimately be used to help guide and determine relevant planning applications in the county. It is intended that once adopted or endorsed, the guidance will be used at both county and district levels. Whilst it will not constitute a formal part of the Local Development Framework, it is intended that the final document will carry weight as a 'material consideration'.

2.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.2.1 There are a number of fundamental aims and objectives which the LCA has substantially already attained within Worcestershire. In addition, there are a growing number of applications for which the assessment is proving invaluable. These range from land use planning to land management, tourism and socio-economic initiatives and are set out in section 4.0.

The primary aims and objectives are:-

- a) to support the landscape policies within Worcestershire's County and District Plans and thus help guide development
- b) to enable an understanding and appreciation of the character and diversity of the Worcestershire landscape, both in its own right and as part of the national framework.
- c) to identify and describe the various Landscape Character Areas within Worcestershire.
- d) to identify the range of Landscape Types within the county through an understanding of their inherent characteristics.
- e) to inform and explain the process of Landscape Character Assessment to interested professionals and members of the public.
- f) to provide an analysis of inherent character and current landscape condition in order to enable future identification and development of landscape related strategies and priorities.
- g) to enable the analysis and evaluation of landscape character and so arrive at an understanding of the resilience of different landscapes to change.
- h) to enable detailed analysis of landscape character areas with a view to evaluating their sensitivity to change.



2.3 THE CONCEPTS OF LANDSCAPE

2.3.1 In order to begin to understand the concepts of landscape character assessment it is necessary to start by considering the meaning of landscape and landscape character.

The landscape can be defined as:-

'An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.' (European Landscape Convention)

Landscape character, on the other hand, can be described as: -

'An expression of pattern, resulting from particular combinations of natural and cultural factors that make one place different from another, rather than better or worse.'

(Countryside Agency LCA guidance)

2.3.2 The Worcestershire LCA fully recognises the concepts that lie behind these definitions. Namely that:

- a) in order to produce a meaningful assessment of the landscape, an analysis of those components that make up the landscape must be made at a scale which is commensurate with understanding the landscape as a whole. Thus individual features within the landscape may be of interest on a site-specific scale, and help to define local distinctiveness, but they do not contribute to the overall character of the wider landscape, unless they constitute a repeated element. **Character assessment is thus, in the first instant, a strategic**

decision support tool and becomes less relevant as the scale of the area in question declines. Nevertheless, the principles of landscape character assessment should inform the analysis of even small sites, considering the various attributes as seems appropriate. There are already a number of established approaches for assessing the other individual elements or features within a site, ranging from habitat/vegetation survey to the landscape and visual impact guidance advocated by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment.

- b) landscape character is not a purely visual phenomenon, but rather an expression of the way in which combinations of physical and cultural factors have interacted over time to produce a distinctive sense of place. Character assessment thus focuses on the nature of the land, rather than the response of the viewer, in order to convey an informed picture of the landscape without reflecting personal preference, or making subjective value judgements.



3.0 POLICY CONTEXT

Summary

- Requirements of European Landscape Convention
- Government guidance promotes the use of landscape character assessment in the planning process
- Structure Plan landscape policy
- District Council landscape policies
- Landscape policies relating to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)

3.1 GENERAL

3.1.1 This Supplementary Guidance is intended to take forward policy established at European and national, sub-regional and local levels. The guidance is intended to embody the principles of the **European Landscape Convention** and the government's planning objectives set out in **Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas**. At county level, the guidance expands upon the landscape character policy (CTC.1) contained in **Worcestershire's Structure Plan**. This policy is one of many which have been 'saved' until such time as they may be replaced through Local Development Plans. Generally, local level context for the guidance is provided through the District Councils' adopted Local Plan policies on landscape character, and through draft policies within emerging Development Plan Documents. However, Wyre Forest D.C. now have an Adopted Core Strategy (December 2010) which supersedes a number of policies within the Adopted Local Plan, including all of those policies relating to Landscape. Therefore, the Adopted Core Strategy sets out the strategic policy for Landscape Character within Wyre Forest District.

3.2 EUROPEAN GUIDANCE

3.2.1 The requirements of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) became binding in the UK in March 2007. It emphasises not only the importance of all landscapes, whether designated or not, but also our shared responsibility in guiding future landscape change. Perceiving landscape as an integrating framework for social and economic as well as environmental well being, it seeks to encourage groups, organisations and authorities to establish policies that protect, manage and plan landscapes.

3.2.2 The ELC is rooted in a democratic approach to landscapes and their management. It places a strong emphasis on the importance of all sectors of society not just central government, having the opportunity and responsibility to guide landscape change. But its overarching message is that **'all landscapes matter'**. The main purpose of the ELC is delivered in Articles 5 and 6 (general and specific measures). The four **general** measures are:

- to recognise landscape in law
- to establish and implement landscape policies aimed at protection, management and planning of landscapes
- to establish procedures for the participation of the general public, local and regional authorities and other stakeholders in the definition and implementation of landscape policies
- to integrate landscape into all relevant policies: regional and town planning, cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic.



The **specific** measures go into more detail about how the general measures may be achieved. They may be accessed from the ELC resources section of the Landscape Character Network website at www.landscapecharacter.org.uk/elc/resources

3.2.3 The Government considers that the UK is already compliant in delivering the ELC requirements but seeks to strengthen both policy and performance across all sectors. To this end, Defra has tasked Natural England with leading the implementation of the ELC in England, working closely with English Heritage and the Forestry Commission. To date, Natural England has:

- developed the first UK ELC Action Plan (which has since been joined by action plans of both English Heritage and the National Forest Company)
- established Regional Landscape Partnerships.

Worcestershire County Council sits on the West Midlands Regional Landscape Partnership alongside other local authorities from the West Midlands. The statutory agencies noted above and voluntary organisations, including the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), are also represented.

Organisations at all levels are being encouraged to produce ELC action plans and the official UK guidelines were published by Natural England in 2009.

Fig.1 'Making a reality of the ELC' diagram developed by the Landscape Character Network and Natural England after work by Michael Dower





3.3 NATIONAL GUIDANCE

3.3.1 Government guidance within Planning Policy Statement 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (PPS 7), published in 2004, sets out how objectives for rural areas should be reflected in land use planning. The Government advocates the use of Landscape Character Assessment in land use planning at every level and promotes its use to understand, safeguard and enrich the quality of the whole landscape for its own sake, whilst still accommodating appropriate development. The following extracts from PPS7 indicate how government guidance is encouraging the application of LCA principles and practice in a way that has already been demonstrated by Worcestershire County Council:

- The first of the Government's objectives for rural areas, on page 6 of PPS 7 is:
 - (i) *To raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas through the promotion of:*
 - *good quality, sustainable development that respects and, where possible, enhances local distinctiveness and the intrinsic qualities of the countryside.*
- PPS7 includes a key principle of national planning policy which states that:
 - (vi) *All development in rural areas should be well designed, in keeping and scale with its location, and sensitive to the character of the countryside and local distinctiveness.*
- Under the heading of Local Landscape Designations, PPS 7 states at section 24 that:
 - The Government recognises and accepts that there are areas of landscape outside nationally designated areas that are particularly highly valued locally. The Government*

believes that carefully drafted, criteria-based policies in LDDs, utilising tools such as landscape character assessment, should provide sufficient protection for these areas, without the need for rigid local designations that may unduly restrict acceptable, sustainable development

- In addition, PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment includes 'historic landscapes' that extends to Registered Parks and Gardens as well as the wider landscape.

3.3.2 This advice has encouraged many Local Authorities to carry out county-based LCAs. In the West Midlands several Local Authorities have undertaken their assessments using the same methodology as Worcestershire. This is resulting in a progressively unified system of LCA applied across the whole of the West Midlands area.

3.4 LOCAL GUIDANCE

3.4.1 Worcestershire County Structure Plan (1996-2011) stresses the need to identify the factors that contribute to the landscape character of a particular place and that measures to conserve or enhance landscape character should be an integral element of decision making relating to land use. New development should have regard to the opportunities to contribute to these objectives, avoiding elements of visual intrusion, and seeking ways to integrate with the local landscape character of the area. A positive landscape identity benefits the economy of an area, attracts investment and tourism, and creates a sought after place in which to live and work. It can also promote pride of place and a sense of stewardship towards its well-being amongst those who live there.



3.4.2 The County Structure Plan Policy CTC.1 Landscape Character is a 'saved' policy. It states: *Proposals for development, and associated land use change or land management, must demonstrate that they are informed by, and sympathetic to, the landscape character of the area in which they are proposed to take place. In considering development proposals, the Local Planning Authority shall take every opportunity to safeguard, restore or enhance, as appropriate, the landscape character of the area in which they are proposed.*

The implications of development proposals relating to the landscape will be assessed having regard to the degree to which they would:

- (i) be appropriate to, and integrate with, the landscape character of the area;*
- (ii) safeguard or strengthen the features and patterns that contribute to the landscape character and local distinctiveness of the area with particular attention being paid to both the scale, layout, design and detailing of existing buildings and other man made features; and to the semi-natural vegetation characteristic of that area; and*

Table 2 Local Authority Policies

Local Authority	Local Plan Policy	Core Strategy Policy
Bromsgrove District Council	(Jan 2004), Policy C1 Designation of Landscape Protection Areas, now refer to PPS7 section 24 Policy C4 Criteria for Assessing Development Proposals Policy C5 Submission of Landscaping Schemes. Policy C6 Sites for Environmental Improvements	Draft Core Strategy 2, CP17: Natural Environment
Redditch Borough Council	Local Plan No. 3 (May 2006), Policy B(NE)1 Overarching Policy of Intent, Policy CS2 Care for the Environment, Policy CS8 Landscape Character	Preferred Draft Core Strategy, Policy BE.3, Landscape Character, Policy BE5 Trees, Policy SC7 Infrastructure
Wyre Forest District Council	Local Plan (Jan 2004), No relevant policies saved	Core Strategy, (Adopted December 2010), Core Policy 12 Landscape Character, Core Policy 14 Providing Opportunities for Biodiversity and Geodiversity
Malvern Hills District Council	(July 2006), Policy DS1 The Location of Development, Policy DS3 General Development Requirements, Policy QL1 The Design of New Buildings and Related Development, Policy QL21 Landscaping, Policy QL24 Landscape Character	South Worcestershire Development Plan, SWDP1 Development Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy SWDP3 Overarching Sustainable Development Requirements SWDP5 Strategic Green Infrastructure SWDP22 Rural Employment SWDP26 Design SWDP33 Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SWDP34 Replacement Dwellings in the Open Countryside and Re-use of Agricultural Buildings SWDP35 Dwellings for Rural Workers SWDP36 Tourist Development SWDP37 Visitor Accommodation SWDP38 Static and Touring Caravans, Chalets and Camping Sites SWDP39 Waterfronts SWDP40 Marinas and Moorings
Worcester City Council	(October 2004), Policy NE5 Landscape Protection	
Wychavon District Council	(June 2006), Policy ENV1 Landscape Character Policy ENV2 Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Policy ENV4 Sites of Special Scientific Interest Policy ENV7 Protection of Wider Biodiversity Policy ENV11 Historic Parks and Gardens	



(iii) relate to the sensitivity of the particular landscape, and location, and to accommodate change. Development, or associated land use change or land management, which would adversely affect the landscape character of an area will not normally be allowed.

3.4.3 District Local Plans all contain policies that seek to protect, preserve and enhance landscape character. Wyre Forest District Council adopted its Core Strategy in December 2010 and as a result all of the adopted Local Plan policies relating to landscape character have now been superseded. At the time of writing the rest of the District Councils within Worcestershire are in the process of preparing their Core Strategies. The policies shown in Table 2 illustrate how landscape protection and enhancement has been addressed at District level.

3.4.4 The Management Plans for Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Cotswolds AONB address the need to conserve and enhance landscape character at a local scale. The AONB designation is a national landscape designation, based on the notion of natural beauty and designed to protect the natural landscape. The County Structure Plan and the Local Plans of districts whose areas fall wholly or partly within the AONBs include policies relating specifically to the AONBs, giving them added protection and restricting development. The AONB Management Plans provide an overriding vision for the future of the AONBs and provide more detailed guidance on achieving the aspirations of the respective Partnerships. The landscape element of the Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan is based on the County LCA but provides greater detail at a local scale.

The Cotswolds AONB have produced their own LCA which is compatible with the relevant County LCAs. In all cases the management prescriptions seek to conserve and strengthen the key characteristics of the landscape.

3.4.5 The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2008-13 sets out: Policy

***LP1:** To conserve and enhance the character, diversity and distinctiveness of the Cotswolds landscape and ensure rigorous assessment of the impact of all major proposals based on appropriate landscape character assessments.*

***LP8:** To ensure that inappropriate development does not take place which would individually or cumulatively diminish the special landscape character of the AONB.....*

***LP9:** To monitor the effects of landscape change throughout the AONB and its surroundings.*

3.4.6 The Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan 2009-14 sets out:

Guiding principles

***LP1** Change is inevitable in the landscape - it has been changing for thousands of years. However, change should be managed in a way that maintains and enhances the core elements of landscape character.*

***LP2** Landscape Character Assessments and Historic Landscape Characterisation should be used to improve understanding of the landscape and the processes of change within the landscape, and to inform decision-making and strategic planning.*



Strategic objectives

LO1 Conserve and enhance the distinctive landscape elements and features identified in Landscape Character Assessments and Historic Landscape Characterisations, particularly those that are most sensitive or have little capacity for change.

LO2 Restore distinctive landscapes and landscape features that have been significantly degraded.

LO3 Identify and promote opportunities for positive landscape change to landowners, managers, government and all those with an influence over land.

LO4 Undertake survey and research to better understand and monitor the condition, and rate of change, of landscape character within the framework of the Landscape Character Assessments and Historic Landscape Characterisation.

LO5 Seek resources to promote landscape management and improvements.

LO6 Promote greater awareness and appreciation of the landscape attributes and character of the AONB among residents and visitors, providing opportunities for them to be involved in identifying and conserving locally distinctive features, views and landscapes.



4.0 THE APPLICATION OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Summary

- Community involvement and opportunities to use the LCA
- Step by step guidance for those considering new development proposals
- The role in Green Infrastructure
- Climate change

4.1 APPLICATIONS

4.1.1 The Landscape Character Assessment is not an end in itself. Rather, it is a powerful tool which can direct land use change in ways that will prevent the destruction of the inherent landscape character or take advantage of opportunities to strengthen the character and thus enhance local distinctiveness. It is complementary to Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) which English Heritage describes as being the legibility of the past in the present landscape. (see Appendix A)

The potential applications for the LCA tool are many and varied. A representative summary is set out below:

i) Planning

- use to assess whether potential development or change is appropriate to a particular landscape, or to indicate which landscapes would be appropriate for a particular development or change to be directed to
- together with landscape sensitivity mapping, use during the strategic planning process to help inform development allocations
- provide an evidence base to inform Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal
- contribute to landscape capacity studies relating to land allocation at county level
- inform and underpin development policies
- contribute to the county or regional scale initiatives such as green infrastructure and climate change studies
- use to prepare design guidance for new built development
- inform development control decisions
- use to inform development at the pre-application stage, including the preparation of Environmental Impact Assessments
- contribute to the local evidence base informing and justifying changes to (or maintaining existing) designation boundaries such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- use to justify and enable landscape mitigation, environmental planning gain, landscape, biodiversity or geodiversity enhancement during the development control process



ii) **Landscape Conservation, Management and Enhancement**

- help to guide appropriate and sustainable land use change, e.g. opportunities for biomass planting
- contribute to the appraisals of other organisations, e.g. the Forestry Commission's English Woodland Grant Scheme
- use to prepare landscape management plans
- enable sustainable and targeted grant aid
- inform the targeting of agri-environmental initiatives
- inform and support geodiversity management and conservation
- inform the production of climate change adaptation and mitigation strategy
- contribute to allied studies and initiatives such as Historic Landscape Characterisations, Parish Plans, Village Design Statements
- inform the local Biodiversity Action Plan and subsequent initiatives
- provide a framework for landscape-scale nature conservation vision mapping and habitat management initiatives
- contribute to wider initiatives which address other aspects of sustainability such as tourism and green infrastructure
- inform monitoring through the annual State of the Environment report

4.2 LOCAL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

4.2.1 The Landscape Character Assessment has a heavy emphasis at the level of the Landscape Type. This is the scale at which most strategic planning is undertaken and is directly relevant to the work of the County Council. However, the LCA is also a powerful tool when considering the landscape at a smaller, site-specific scale, where development control decisions are made by the District Councils.

4.2.2 For strategic planning, the LCA analysis enables an overview of the 'robustness' of the landscape to be gauged. Landscape sensitivity mapping is the vehicle resulting from this analysis that identifies those landscapes where proposals for change are most likely to coincide with the potential for the greatest detrimental impact upon the character of those landscapes. LCA therefore provides a sound basis for the preparation of strategic guidance for the future of the landscape of Worcestershire, defining a clear vision for each Landscape Type, together with clear priorities, objectives and actions. The assessment can have a positive role in guiding landscape change in situations as diverse as influencing the landscaping conditions for reinstatement of mineral workings, or informing decision making with regard to the routes of new highway schemes.

4.2.3 At the level of Landscape Description Units (LDUs) or Land Cover Parcels (LCPs) the supporting database contains useful detailed information. Landscape evaluation of individual sites or small tracts of land may however require more detailed survey information, particularly of unique features that may



not be picked up in the database. It is at this stage that additional information, taking into account the site's history, people's memories, cultural associations, special site features and so on can be included. Local community involvement is therefore vital, as much of the supporting 'evidence' for the area's distinctiveness will be locked into local people's memories and folk lore. This is too detailed to be covered by the county LCA and provides a level of information that can only be achieved on a site by site basis.

4.2.4 During the preparation of studies such as Neighbourhood Plans, Parish Plans or Village Design Statements, the Landscape Type descriptions can be used as the basis for understanding the landscape character, with additional information from the LCA database. However, this must be considered to be an over-view to which the local community will need to add the finer grain of detail in order to produce a meaningful and useful document. This additional detail would include all the local landscape features that are not picked up by the County assessment. These may include individual trees or woodlands, special views, local landmarks or areas valued for their wildlife, flora, historical context or design.

4.2.5 Depending on the weight accorded to specific documents, development control planning at the District level can make use of community-based plans and statements as well as using the full range of landscape character analysis techniques within the county LCA (as described in section 7).

A web-based analysis tool has been developed by the County Council to aid planning officers in the use of these techniques, as it is recognised that LCA is a specialist subject that may be daunting if not used regularly. Further information about this is available from the County Council's Strategic and Environmental Planning Unit at County Hall, Worcester. Tel 01905 763763.

4.3 FUTURE BUILT DEVELOPMENT

4.3.1 Aspects for Planning Officers to address

In order to reflect the findings of the LCA, potential development should be assessed against the steps set out below. This will enable both planning officers and developers to assess the landscape character potential for development and the most appropriate design treatment. Discussion at pre-application stage may usefully centre on these steps. Fig 2, p.22 shows this process in more detail.

- Identify the Landscape Type in which the site is located (see Fig.11, p.49 - *Map of the Distribution of Landscape Types*).
- Assess whether this is an **unsettled landscape** (see Fig.4, p.32 - Settlement Pattern). If the proposal is for built development within an unsettled landscape there would be, in landscape terms, a **high presumption against** new development.



- If the site is not located within an unsettled landscape, assess whether the proposals conform to the Landscape Type's settlement pattern. (see Fig.4, p.33 - Settlement Pattern). Ideally, built development, particularly housing, should respect the inherent settlement pattern and avoid imposing an inappropriate pattern on the landscape.
- Assess whether the site specific character of the landscape conforms to the generic Landscape Types used in LCA. The Landscape Description Unit descriptions and the Land Cover Parcel data (see Chapter 6), available on line can aid in this assessment. If it is clear that the site in question is untypical a different analysis should be made. (see paragraph 5.3.9 Untypical Sites)
- Other planning applications that do not constitute built development should consult the description of the relevant Landscape Type (see Part Two), in order to ensure that they are consistent with the relevant key characteristics.
- Ensure that detailed proposals fully take into account all site features and that mitigation and enhancement measures, such as green infrastructure, conform to and strengthen the key characteristics of the landscape.

4.3.2 Examples

- a) A developer has purchased a plot of land on the edge of a village with the intention of developing it for residential use. The land is within the Landscape Type Principal Timbered Farmlands. This is a settled landscape and therefore potentially acceptable for development.

This Landscape Type has a wayside settlement pattern but the plot of land, being made up of three fields, is roughly triangular in shape and therefore not conducive to a linear pattern. The developer's architect researches the historic settlement pattern of the village and designs a layout that generally accords with this and is an acceptable compromise.

The key characteristics of this Landscape Type are the thick hedgerows, densely scattered hedgerow oaks and small areas of woodland. The site has excellent thick boundary hedges, another thick internal hedge and a second internal hedge which has not been properly maintained and is thin and gappy. There is also a small field pond in one corner and a strong row of hedgerow oaks along one boundary.

The architect's layout provides public open space and links this up with a network of footpaths through green infrastructure based on the existing hedgerow pattern, so preserving the organic enclosure pattern.

The field pond becomes the focus of a large area of green open space with an awkward corner of the site planted up as a small copse.

The landscape planting of the green infrastructure concentrates on gapping up and thickening the poor hedge and planting many more oak trees along the hedges.



The planting associated with the housing concentrates on hedges along roadsides, with oak trees wherever there is room and locally sourced native planting wherever there are opportunities for it. In this way, although the site has become an extension of the existing village, the underlying characteristics of the landscape have been preserved and strengthened and the development will relate more sympathetically to its surrounding rural setting.

- b) A house-owner who lives in a small cottage with an orchard and two paddocks wishes to build another house on one of the paddocks. The Landscape Type involved is Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings whose character relies on its small scale and random layout of small cottages interspersed with domestic orchards and paddocks. The proposed dwelling is a substantial 5 bedroom house with integral double garage and paved forecourt, accessed directly from the lane.

Planners and the local community are concerned that the proposed house is out of scale and will detract from the distinctive character of the area. The applicant is persuaded to revise his proposal to a smaller house, built of brick to match the existing dwellings and of a similar exterior design. The new cottage is re-located at an angle to the lane and the fore-court is re-designed as a smaller gravel access that is less intrusive. The garage is re-designed as a separate, brick building, looking very much like one of the outhouses or small barns that are already present in the area. The new house is surrounded by a

densely planted hedge and fruit trees are planted in the garden. The applicant also agrees to restore his ancient orchard and to plant some more hedgerow trees around his untouched paddock.

By preserving and restoring the orchard and one of the paddocks and re-siting the proposed dwelling, the low density, random nature of the original settlement pattern has been retained. The character of the area is also preserved and strengthened by the additional planting and the use of vernacular building materials.

- c) A farmer owns a badly drained field and has applied to the Forestry Commission for grant aid to plant it with a crop of poplar trees. The field lies within the Landscape Type, Wet Pasture Meadows and is readily visible from a number of public vantage points.

Wet Pasture Meadows are unwooded landscapes where the tree cover is represented by linear patterns of trees along watercourses and ditches. The poorly drained nature of the soil often leads to a botanically interesting wetland grass sward.

A plantation of poplar trees would therefore be totally contrary to the character of the landscape and, since the site is so visible, would be visibly intrusive. The Forestry Commission therefore decline the application to grant aid the work.



4.4 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

4.4.1 Natural England defines green infrastructure as *'a strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering those ecological services and quality of life benefits required by the communities it serves and needed to underpin sustainability. Its design and management should also respect and enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area with regard to habitats and landscape types.'*

Green infrastructure includes established green spaces and new sites and should thread through and surround the built environment and connect the urban area to its wider rural hinterland. Consequently it needs to be delivered at all spatial scales from sub-regional to local neighbourhood levels, accommodating both accessible natural green spaces within local communities and often much larger sites in the urban fringe and wider countryside.'

4.4.2 Current concerns about the consequences of climate change and environmental sustainability underlie the emphasis on providing green infrastructure throughout new development schemes. The protection and enhancement of natural habitats and features has always been a primary consideration of landscape design, and Landscape Architects strive to incorporate linked up green amenity spaces through the masterplanning process. The consideration of green infrastructure is now a generally accepted intrinsic element of the design process, providing

amenity open space, based as far as possible on natural site features such as streams, mature trees, hedges and woodland.

4.4.3 Within Worcestershire, green infrastructure strategy is being developed by the Sub-regional Green Infrastructure Partnership. This is a partnership between the County Council, District Councils, Natural England, Environment Agency and the voluntary sector, including Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. The Partnership is working towards producing a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the county, and is currently producing a series of Green Infrastructure Framework Reports. These compile a review of the existing evidence bases and information sources for green infrastructure, landscape character being one of the principal elements. The Strategy will be published in 2012. Landscape character, biodiversity and the historic environment also form the basis for the Green Infrastructure Environmental Character Areas. These identify and categorise green infrastructure within the county (as poor, medium or high) according to overarching Green Infrastructure indicators and, based on the quality, determine the appropriate type of interventions; create, restore or protect. Full details of the development of Green Infrastructure within the county can be found at:

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/environment-and-planning/strategic-planning/planning-green-infrastructure.aspxSub-regional>



4.4.4 At the strategic scale the analysis of condition, and the resulting sensitivity of those indicators that are directly relevant to green infrastructure can inform the planning process, directing new built development and its associated green infrastructure to those areas where there will be at least environmental harm and most potential environmental gain.

4.4.5 At the site scale, the siting and design of green infrastructure should be informed by the local landscape character as well as the natural site elements. For example: an area of Landscape Type Principal Timbered Farmlands might be identified for housing development. The site could be in poor condition with remnants of derelict woodland, a few remaining hedges, a small, litter-infested stream and the occasional over-mature hedgerow tree. Green infrastructure provision could:

- encompass the protection, re-planting and future management of the woods thereby also providing climate change mitigation through carbon storage.
- provide a buffering corridor of species-rich grassland and new woodland planting along the litter picked stream. This can also aid flood prevention by providing water storage areas that could encompass a sustainable urban drainage scheme (SUDS)
- re-instate the original enclosure pattern by planting new hedges and linking them to the surrounding landscape in order to achieve ecological connectivity
- gap up the existing hedges and plant a new generation of hedgerow trees to enhance and sustain landscape character and ecological habitats
- do all this in a manner that will reflect the inherent character of Principal Timbered farmlands, while providing the linked up amenity spaces required by the local community.

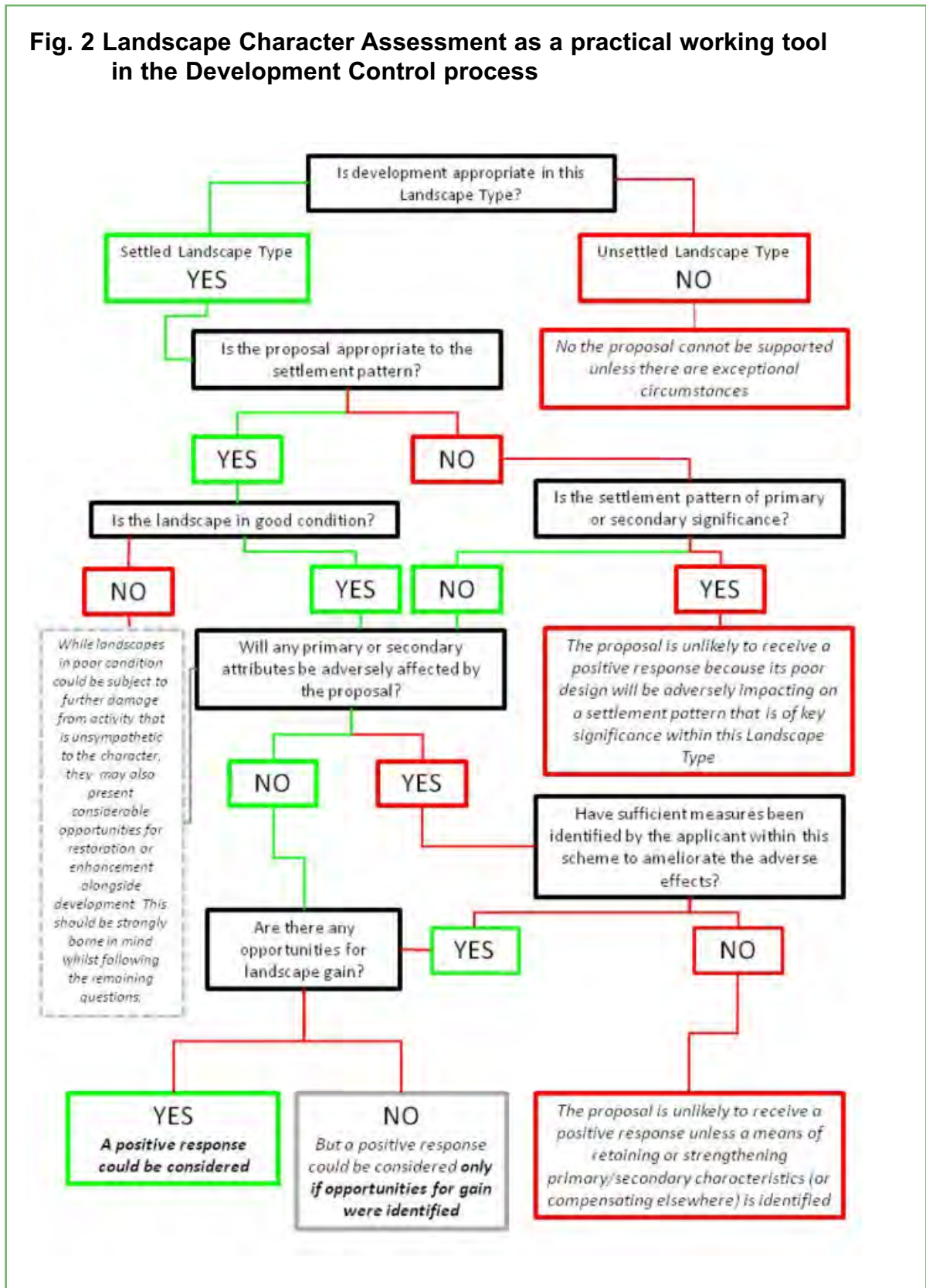
4.5 CLIMATE CHANGE

4.5.1 The UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP) has been supporting organisations to adapt to climate change since 1997. UKCIP has been the main channel for providing modelling of potential change. Current concerns indicate that the UK is likely to experience more extreme weather conditions and that the distribution patterns of flora at the limit of their natural extent may be noticeably reduced.

4.5.2 The resulting impact on the landscape is likely to be one of loss of characteristic features, such as the beech hangers in Limestone Estatelands, become less prominent. Although this will result in a loss of species diversity, the impact on the overall landscape character is unlikely to be profound because it is dependent on a range of characteristics. Notwithstanding this, if one of the tree diseases currently affecting various species populations were to become as virulent as Dutch Elm Disease, the resulting adverse impact on the landscape would be significant.



Fig. 2 Landscape Character Assessment as a practical working tool in the Development Control process





5.0 THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT EXPLAINED

Summary

- The background to the LCA and its links to national work carried out by the Countryside Agency
- The nature of historical and ongoing land use change in relation to landscape character
- The twin concepts of appropriateness and resilience at both the strategic and detailed scales
- Examples of the impact of land use change on the elements of landscape character

5.1 BACKGROUND

5.1.1 The Landscape Character Assessment of Worcestershire was begun in 1997 by the then Hereford and Worcester County Council, and was informed by:

- "Countryside Character" undertaken by the Countryside Agency.
- "Natural Areas" carried out by English Nature.
- "Character of England" map prepared by English Heritage (1996)

5.1.2 Guidance published in April 2002 by The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage provides the latest updated advice on LCA. This is not a prescriptive document as it acknowledges that there are various approaches to the subject, all of equal merit. Later topic papers were produced by The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage to support their landscape character assessment guidance.

Topic Paper 6: "Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity" was published in final draft form in January 2004 with contributions from Worcestershire County Council. The Worcestershire LCA is quoted in the Topic Paper as one of a number of examples of practitioner best practice.

5.1.3 Although now complete, the Worcestershire LCA is capable of accommodating further data as this becomes available. The robustness of its methodology will allow continual updating of the supporting database without compromising the outcome of the assessment and hence this guidance.

5.2 RATIONALE

5.2.1 For many years, the concept of landscape conservation, particularly with regard to its association with development plans, has been largely based upon the notion of defining, and protecting, landscapes on the basis of their 'quality'. This led to the need to identify those areas or landscapes deemed to be the most attractive, and consequently affording them some form of protection. A hierarchy of landscape designations was developed, the most important being those of national importance, followed by those of regional, and then those of local, importance.



Of the areas of national importance, Worcestershire contains parts of two landscapes defined as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These are the Malvern Hills AONB which extends into Herefordshire and a small part of Gloucestershire and the western extremity of the extensive Cotswolds AONB across Bredon Hill and the Cotswold scarp beyond Broadway. Historically, beneath national designations came those landscapes of regional importance, defined by the Local Authority - in Worcestershire, these were termed Areas of Great Landscape Value - followed by those of local significance, defined in District Local Plans.

As a result, the consideration given to landscape, when dealing with planning issues, has largely been related to location - focused on whether a proposal lies within an area of landscape designation or not. Proposals for development or change within a given area of landscape designation would be guided by policies indicating that the character, or special quality, of the area should be protected. Until recently however, it was rare for the character of such areas to be described, leaving it up to the individual to define these parameters. Areas outside such landscape designations invariably lacked such policy guidance. These 'undesignated' areas, often forming the greater part of a county, were invariably the lowland, developed areas where, it could be argued, the pressures for change are most acute and the need for policies to protect the landscape are equally desirable.

5.2.2 Previous Structure Plans sought to recognise the importance of the wider landscape by identifying, and seeking to protect, a range of features throughout the county that were considered to be significant to the make up of its character. These features included skylines and hill features, mixed and broadleaved woodlands, dense hedgerow patterns and linear features. This approach, however, identified such features for their own sake and failed to relate to their spatial distribution, physical nature and association with one another and so make the link to the cultural evolution of the landscape.

5.2.3 LCA makes such a link, placing the features of a particular landscape in context, providing not just a description of the different landscapes within the county, but an understanding as to why those differences, and different landscapes, are there and what they represent. It puts local decision making in the context of a strategic, character based framework that is capable of linking national policy objectives with county/district wide planning and land management activities.

5.3 CHANGE IN THE LANDSCAPE

5.3.1 The landscape is the visual manifestation of the inter-relationship between man's activities and the natural environment. These are dynamic forces, forever changing the character of the landscape. The LCA seeks to understand the inherent character of the present day landscape. There is no intention to halt these processes of change or to fossilise the landscape as it is now or to try to return it to some previous supposed perfection.



5.3.2 The landscape has evolved over time as a result of two basic influences. The first is the physical structure of the landscape, represented by its geology, topography and soils. These are permanent physiographic elements and provide fundamentally stable basic patterns to the landscape. The second influence is the result of man's endeavours to live within the constraints of these different physical conditions, producing a range of cultural patterns that are superimposed upon the basic physiographic patterns. The cultural patterns result from differences in land use, and have been heavily influenced by:

- the nature of the soil and its fertility, the slope gradient and local climate, all of which affect farming patterns.
- the relative presence or absence of tree cover.
- population densities and social organisation.
- physical restraints such as the occurrence of seasonal flooding, or social restrictions such as the presence of forest laws or other aspects of land tenure and ownership.

These patterns, based upon physiographic parameters, and the cultural responses to them, define what is called the inherent character of the landscape.

The process of landscape character assessment is to identify and describe the areas of different inherent character within the landscape.

5.3.3 It is often stated that landscapes are constantly changing. The landscape is certainly not static, but the changes most often perceived are those that are site-specific rather than those affecting large areas of comparable landscape character. In retrospect it is obvious that the pace of change has been faster at certain times of recorded history than at others. Certainly in the last 60 years, the acceleration of change in rural areas has dramatically increased. Worcestershire's Historic Landscape Characterisation, produced by the Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, has recognised that while some of the Worcestershire landscape is extremely ancient in character, much of it has been significantly altered over previous centuries and the landscape that we see now may have been changed several times (see Appendix A).

Nevertheless, the patterns of rural landscape have usually respected the physiographic nature of the land and through this have perpetuated an underlying constancy to the landscape. Modern change, due to increased mechanisation, advanced agricultural technology and the demand for development, is no longer so restrained by the demands of physical landscape characteristics. Consequently, modern change has generally resulted in dilution of character and an acceleration of the process of uniformity across the county. The underlying, inherent character of the landscape that we see today relies on the established elements of constancy, while the condition of that landscape may be strengthened, or more usually weakened, by modern change.



5.3.4 Landscape Uniformity

The twin concepts of appropriateness and resilience underpin the approach to character-based planning both at the strategic scale and at the detailed scale. Concerns about the increasing uniformity of the landscape are well-founded and LCA can provide a tool to reduce this trend.

Landscape uniformity is the result of three key influences:

- i. reduced dependency upon physical and cultural constraints, which formerly 'shaped' the character of the landscape
- ii. the loss of features that are distinctive to a particular area
- iii. the dilution and compromise of those features that remain by the addition of the commonplace or the inappropriate

This latter aspect can be compounded by the introduction of landscaping conditions, associated with planning permission, which are standardised solutions rather than tailored to reflect the character of the particular area. A similar impact results from advocating environmental principles that are 'generally beneficial' rather than 'locally specific' in such fields as forestry and countryside management. LCA provides a clear indication of those features that define the character of a particular area, together with the relative importance of those features. This provides a strong direction towards a vision or focus for the landscape of that area, which in turn can influence how the tools available in the planning and decision making processes can be best used to achieve such goals.

5.3.5 Shaping Landscape Change

A strategic awareness and understanding vision is needed in order to make rational decisions about how best to accommodate change in the countryside.

Historic patterns of settlement and woodland cover, for instance, are key determinants of landscape character and it is important that land use change should, where possible, respect these patterns (i.e. change should be appropriate to its setting and not be allowed to overwhelm and destroy the inherent character of the landscape). In landscapes that are least resilient to change the elements of landscape character are particularly sensitive and the impact of land use change, particularly new development, should be subjected to rigorous examination and resisted where that impact is seen to be unacceptable.

5.3.6 Adoption of the concept of LCA does not equate with halting future landscape change. The underlying doctrine of LCA is to understand the process of landscape evolution, taking as read that landscapes will continue to evolve, reflecting changing economic, social and environmental forces in the process. LCA does not seek to embalm the landscape as a museum piece, set at a particular period of time. Instead it seeks to raise awareness of those aspects of landscape evolution that are pertinent to the identity of particular landscapes today, in other words, that contribute to its inherent character. The challenge lies in finding ways to guide and control change and to be able to best accommodate change, whilst recognising and respecting the inherent character of the landscape.



5.3.7 Landscape Character and Local Distinctiveness

The degree to which landscape character is influenced by change depends upon the magnitude of that change, in other words, the scale at which that change is occurring. To help understand this, it is helpful to bear in mind the difference between landscape character and local distinctiveness. Landscape character is defined by particular combinations of characteristics occurring in repeated patterns over a particular area, as opposed to the presence of individual, often unique, features, which contribute to what we regard as local distinctiveness. Landscape character defines the broad brush, generic, characteristics of areas that have shared a similar landscape evolution. For the character of a particular Landscape Type to be affected by change, that change should be evident or predictable across the Landscape Type as a whole.

5.3.8 Taking as an example a Landscape Type with the characteristics of a mixed farming land use and an absence of any woodland cover, should a landowner choose to plant an area of woodland, perhaps for shooting, or for nature conservation reasons, the eventual woodland would change the appearance of that specific locality: it would create a feature out of kilter with the general character of that (unwooded) Landscape Type. Such a change, in terms of landscape character, would not be encouraged, although it is recognised that there may be no control over such individual actions. If, on the other hand, the future of mixed farming generally ceased to be viable economically in that particular Landscape Type, and a change to a land use based on forestry appeared

to be the most feasible, such a change, affecting the Landscape Type as a whole, would be recognised and accepted as part of the inevitable evolution of that landscape. The presence of woodland cover would then become part of the evolving inherent character of that Landscape Type.

5.3.9 Untypical Sites

Throughout the landscape there are examples of sites that are not typical of the Landscape Type in which they are found. Often this is due to a site specific feature such as a medieval deer park or ornamental parkland, an historic garden, a large body of water or an historic artefact such as a hill fort or ridge and furrow land form. Sometimes the area is too small to be singled out as a different Landscape Type. This is particularly true of the many commons throughout the county. In these situations a detailed analysis of the unique character of the area should serve to guide appropriate development. **There should be no attempt to return the area to the character of the Landscape Type in which it sits as to do so would be to destroy its own distinctiveness. Decisions on siting, scale, detailing and the use of construction materials relating to built development should be made with this detailed analysis of the unique local character in mind.** The settlement pattern, on the other hand, will be informed by the characteristic attribute of the relevant Landscape Type.



5.3.10 Sometimes the site may appear to be different because its poor condition has robbed it of many of the characteristics that would have originally identified it as belonging to the Landscape Type in which it is found. **In this situation the development should seek to strengthen the inherent landscape character through appropriate mitigation. Developers should be aware that if the site in question does not appear to conform to the inherent character of its Landscape Type through loss of features or addition of inappropriate features (i.e. it is in poor condition), proposals that would exacerbate this poor condition will not be considered favourably from a landscape perspective.**

5.3.11 New Future Landscapes

There are certain types of development which, because of their scale and nature, will fundamentally alter the inherent character of the rural landscape. In Worcestershire, developments of this kind are most noticeably represented by mineral extraction. Major housing and industrial sites, while they can also overwhelm inherent character, are more often than not sited in proximity to existing urban development and thus viewed as an extension of the town or city. Renewable energy technologies may also transform the landscape but are often of a more transitory nature, although, due to their size, wind farms can be highly intrusive. There is also the potential for impacts to arise from biomass plants and solar farms, as well as other land-use changes to support renewable energy, including the growing of energy crops and the installation of transmission lines, transformers and access roads. The impact of each of these on landscape

character would need to be considered on a case by case basis. While it is not possible for this document to provide detailed advice on renewable energy, these issues are being considered through other plans and policies at county and district levels. Mineral extraction however, can result in the profound transformation of landscape character and can only take place where economically viable deposits occur. Modern quarries are inevitably sited in rural areas where hard rock is usually to be found on elevated hilly land and sand and gravel deposits along the river valleys. Additionally, there is potential for small locally sustainable building stone quarries and delves throughout the county. In those situations the opportunity occurs to create new landscapes that may be radically different from the original. Decisions on the long term restoration of these sites should be taken with landscape character in mind as well as taking into account future opportunities to provide new facilities such as geodiversity features or lakes which could benefit tourism, public recreation and wildlife. The character of the surrounding landscape should be assessed and the long term restoration proposals should seek to integrate the site into the existing surrounding landscape. The decision may be to restore the site to agriculture, in which case the land should be enclosed with a pattern of hedgerows that link to the existing hedges and create fields of an appropriate scale and pattern. Where the long term proposals seek to create an entirely new landscape it should fit comfortably within the existing landscape, with hedges and streams linked up and no perceived conflict between introduced and existing features and habitats.



5.3.12 The emphasis on the appropriateness of a development in a landscape, and the landscape's resilience to change (or ability to accept that development without undue harm) can only be partially assessed through the LCA. Site visits and the need for detailed visual assessment are also a vital part of both strategic land use planning and development control. (Guidance on Visual Impact Assessment has been published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment in their *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Second Edition*.) Additional tools such as Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment may also play an important part in this process.

Nevertheless, both strategic planning and the development control process should be guided by the LCA which is able to inform them at every stage. Fig.2, p.22 shows how the LCA can guide the development control decision-making process from initial strategic feasibility through to detailed design of individual development. It must be emphasised, however, that the impact of development on the landscape is only one aspect among many that are considered at both strategic planning and development control stages. Decisions are informed by the relevant Development Plan and any other material consideration and are a balance between social, economic and environmental concerns. Where a decision goes against the landscape character advice, the findings of the LCA can then be utilised to develop appropriate mitigation measures.



6.0 CLASSIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION

Summary

- The first stage of landscape character assessment setting out the physical, tangible aspects of characterisation and its methodology
- Landscape character areas and landscape character types are explained
- Attributes and their indicators are set out

6.1 THE PROCESSES AND PRODUCTS OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

6.1.1 The process of Landscape Character Assessment involves the description and classification of areas where distinctive features occur in repeated patterns. It seeks to describe what makes one area different from another, avoiding personal preferences or judgemental values.

6.1.2 There are two stages in the process of LCA and it is important that these are recognised as quite distinct. The first phase of classification and description sets out the physical, tangible aspects of characterisation and is described in this section of the SG. The second phase is an analysis of this character and forms the basis of judgements and decisions taken with landscape character in mind. This is described in section 7.0.

6.1.3 The process of characterisation identifies two types of unit:

- Firstly, there are landscape character areas at a variety of scales, which in the Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment are called Regional Character Areas, and Landscape Description Units (LDU). The larger areas are at a county scale while the smaller LDUs are at a local scale and are further divided into the smallest units known as Land Cover Parcels (LCP). These are all individual, unique areas with their own identity and character. These areas are identified by description and given appropriate local names such as the Vale of Evesham Regional Character Area, with Fladbury Principal Village Farmlands LDU being one of a number of LDUs found within it. Their individual descriptions are held in the Technical Handbook.
- Secondly, there are landscape character types. These have been identified through assessing the characteristics that make up landscape character. Thus, different combinations of these characteristics will result in different landscape character types (called Landscape Types in the Worcestershire LCA). Since this is a generic classification, the same combination of characteristics will always result in the same Landscape Type wherever it is found in the country.



Fig. 3 Hierarchy of landscape character units

Regional Character Areas
 Landscape Types
 Landscape Description Units
 Land Cover Parcels

6.2 METHOD

6.2.1 The LCA was carried out through a combination of desk study and field survey, backed up by consultation with specialists such as ecologists and historical geographers.

6.2.2 Identifying Landscape Description Units (LDUs)

Initially, a desk-based study systematically divided the countryside into discrete and relatively homogenous units of land within which the constituent physical and cultural elements occurred in repeated patterns and shared certain visual characteristics. These units of land are the Landscape Description Units (LDUs) and are the building blocks of landscape character. They form the basis on which all subsequent classification and evaluation takes place.

6.2.3 The LDUs were defined by a combination of three earth science and three cultural indicators, known as 'definitive indicators' because they defined the boundaries of the LDUs. The three earth science indicators of geology, topography and soils were identified through reference to specialist maps. These are known as 'permanent definitive indicators' since they are not generally subject to change through man's influence. They are jointly the most influential factors that contribute to the character of the landscape.

Three cultural definitive indicators were identified as providing base-line descriptive information. These are tree cover character, land use and settlement pattern. They are not permanent definitive indicators as they are subject to change, being a reflection of man's influence on the landscape, but they are always applicable to the landscape.

The desk study relied heavily on map analysis to arrive at a simple broad brush indication of the range of ways in which each indicator could be expressed in the Worcestershire landscape. The analysis of historical maps played a particularly important role in analysing the patterns of settlement, tree cover and land use.

Simplified map overlays were prepared for each indicator, which, when related to one another, enabled patterns to be distinguished. These, in turn, made it possible to begin to understand the relationship between the different indicators. This greatly assists in the understanding of how a particular landscape has developed and is the key to assessing landscape character.



6.2.4 Each indicator is broken down into its constituent attributes. Thus, for example, settlement pattern in Worcestershire can be described as:

- Nucleated - discrete, usually large villages with a low level of dispersal. There is little settlement beyond the village boundary and the farmsteads are contained within the fabric of the village. Buildings beyond the village boundary are usually restricted to 'new' farmsteads created at the time that the former open fields were enclosed.
- Clustered - discrete settlement nuclei (small villages and/or hamlets) associated with a moderate to high level of dispersal. Dwellings are centred around an inner core, often the church, but farmsteads are situated outside the village in open countryside.
- Wayside - small clusters or strings of roadside dwellings associated with a moderate to high level of dispersal.
- Dispersed - scattered farmsteads and rural dwellings associated with a low to moderate density of dispersal.
- Scattered - a very low dispersal of individual farmsteads and rural dwellings.
- Unsettled - landscapes lacking human habitation

6.2.5 Once the LDUs had been defined, additional descriptive information about the landscape, especially what it looks like on the ground, was gathered from a combination of further desk study and field survey. An additional six descriptive indicators were thus added to the original six definitive indicators. These address spatial character, indicative ground vegetation, field boundaries, enclosure pattern, tree cover pattern and other distinctive special characteristic features such as building style. Each of these indicators is also broken down into a number of attributes. Field boundaries for example, could be walls, fences, hedges, or hedge/ditches. In other parts of the country there will be other local characteristic boundary features. Unlike the definitive indicators, the descriptive indicators are not relevant in all areas and therefore not always applied. For example, tree cover pattern is not applicable on the higher slopes of the Malvern Hills as these have an unwooded character.



Fig. 4 Settlement pattern

There are five unsettled Landscape Types in Worcestershire, the remainder are settled.

UNSETTLED LANDSCAPE TYPES

- High Hills and Slopes
- Riverside Meadows
- Unenclosed Commons
- Wet Pasture Meadows
- Wooded Forest

SETTLED LANDSCAPE TYPES

Scattered settlement pattern

- Limestone Estatelands
- Principal Wooded Hills
- Settled Farmlands on River Terraces

Dispersed settlement pattern

- Enclosed Commons
- Principal Settled Farmlands
- Principal Timbered Farmlands
- Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use
- Timbered Plateau Farmlands

Wayside settlement pattern

- Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings
- Timbered Pastures

Clustered settlement pattern

- Estate Farmlands
- Sandstone Estatelands
- Wooded Estatelands
- Wooded Hills and Farmlands

Nucleated settlement pattern

- Principal Village Farmlands
- Village Claylands
- Village Farmlands with Orchards

6.2.6 Identifying Land Cover Parcels (LCPs)

During the process of field survey it was apparent that there was often a minor variation of attributes within a LDU. This was particularly true of land use and the historic patterns of field enclosure. The LDUs were therefore subdivided as necessary into smaller sub-landscape units called Land Cover Parcels (LCPs). The field survey provided additional detail that could not be derived from mapped sources. Such details included those of hedgerow species composition, woodland structure and the presence of trees along hedgerows or watercourses. It also enabled the degree of visual unity to be assessed. If two adjacent LCPs possessed no visual differences on the ground, they would be merged together to form one.

The field survey also provided an opportunity to gather information about the condition of the landscape, which is regularly updated, for example - whether hedgerows are well-maintained, overgrown or deteriorating and gappy, or whether hedgerow tree populations exhibit a healthy variation in age structure or primarily consist of over-mature specimens.

The data from both the desk study and the field survey is held in a database at the LCP scale. Thus each LCP is a totally homogeneous unit within which there are no variations of attribute and within which the landscape is a visual entirety.



6.2.7 Since the LDUs and LCPs are individual, site specific areas, it is possible to produce written descriptions of the landscape character for each. This enables the identification of special site features such as orchards, ponds or traditional hay meadows which are not picked up by the definitive or descriptive indicators. These are landscape features which contribute to the local landscape character and may be extremely important in defining local distinctiveness. However, they are not consistent throughout the landscape and therefore do not contribute to the definition of Landscape Types.

Fig. 5 Unwooded landscapes

There are two Landscape Types where trees and woodland are not characteristic
High Hills and Slopes
Unenclosed Commons

There are eight Landscape Types where woodland is not characteristic although there are individual trees.
Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings
Principal Settled Farmlands
Principal Village Farmlands
Riverside Meadows
Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use
Settled Farmlands on River Terraces
Village Claylands
Village Farmlands with Orchards

6.2.8 Identifying Landscape Types

Having completed both the field survey and desk study, it was then possible to group the LDUs into visually coherent Landscape Types, based on the visual prominence of the indicators that defined each LDU. Prominent indicators are those that have an immediate visual impact when viewed from the LDU and

can be described as the primary characteristics of the Landscape Type. Thus the primary characteristics of Landscape Type "Wooded Forest" are:

- Tree cover character is ancient broadleaved woodland.
- Tree cover pattern is of continuous tree cover.
- This is an unsettled landscape.
- There is an intimate spatial character with views restricted by the close proximity of trees.

6.2.9 Twenty two rural Landscape Types have been identified in Worcestershire:

- Enclosed Commons
- Estate Farmlands
- Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings
- High Hills and Slopes
- Limestone Estatelands
- Principal Settled Farmlands
- Principal Timbered Farmlands
- Principal Village Farmlands
- Principal Wooded Hills
- Riverside Meadows
- Sandstone Estatelands
- Settled Farmlands on River Terraces
- Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use
- Timbered Pastures
- Timbered Plateau Farmlands
- Unenclosed Commons
- Village Claylands
- Village Farmlands with Orchards
- Wet Pasture Meadows
- Wooded Estatelands
- Wooded Forest
- Wooded Hills and Farmlands



It should be noted that an assessment of urban landscape character has yet to be undertaken and for the moment all urban landscapes are grouped together. The Landscape Types are described in more detail in Part Two of this document but their distribution throughout the county is shown in Fig.11 p.49 - Map of the Distribution of Landscape Types.

6.2.10 Thus LDUs and LCPs are site specific units within which the elements that make up the character of the landscape have been identified by predetermined indicators and their accompanying attributes. They are referenced to their location e.g .LDU MH 07 Ankerdine Principal Wooded Hills. Landscape Types on the other hand, represent the various combinations of those visually prominent attributes. They

are therefore not site specific since the same combination of attributes can occur in a number of places. In fact many of the Landscape Types found in Worcestershire are also found throughout the rest of the country. Using a common nomenclature for Landscape Types, together with a common methodology for their definition, a compatible landscape character analysis at regional and national levels can, in theory, be achieved. In practise this has not yet happened.

Fig. 6 Landscape indicators

Definitive Indicators

- Topography
- Geology } Earth Science
- Soils
- Land Use (farm type)
- Settlement Pattern } Cultural
- Tree Cover Character

Descriptive Indicators

- Characteristic Features
- Enclosure Pattern
- Field Boundaries
- Indicative Ground Vegetation
- Spatial Character
- Tree Cover pattern

Fig. 7 Landscape attributes

LAND USE (FARM TYPE)	FIELD BOUNDARIES
Rough	Hedges
Pastoral	Hedge/ditch
Mixed	Walls
Woodland	ENCLOSURE PATTERN
Cropping	Unenclosed
Arable	Organic
SETTLEMENT PATTERN	Variable
Unsettled	Sub-regular
Scattered	Planned
Dispersed	TREE COVER CHARACTER
Wayside	Unwooded
Clustered	Ancient
Nucleated	Planned
SPATIAL CHARACTER	Trees
Exposed	TREE COVER PATTERN
Large	Continuous
Medium-open	Linked
Medium-framed	Discrete
Small	Linear
Intimate	Tree groups
Variable	Scattered trees
INDICATIVE GROUND VEGETATION	CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Heathy/acid grassland	Building style
Wetland	River
	Parks



6.2.11 Identifying Regional Character Areas

At a larger scale, LDUs may also be grouped together in areas that reflect a perceived common cultural unity. These are primarily identified by the earth science indicators of geology, topography and soils, although the other three definitive indicators of tree cover character, land use and settlement pattern also play a role. These broad brush areas are defined only by description. They have been called Regional Character Areas (aka National Character Areas) and generally equate with those identified in the national programme of Countryside Character undertaken by the Countryside Agency (now Natural England). The greater degree of detail that can be gained from a county as opposed to a national character assessment enables the boundaries of these Areas to be defined more accurately, and, where appropriate, to further subdivide them. Regional Character Areas define areas of physiographic and cultural identity at a very broad brush level of detail, invariably transcending the administrative boundaries of local authorities and so creating a regional and national framework within which the finer scale of evaluation at county level can take place. Regional Character Areas in this study are used primarily to provide a simple geographical framework within which to present the range and distribution of Landscape Types in a comprehensive manner.

6.2.12 The Vale of Evesham is an example of a Regional Character Area. The public relate to this generic area and have certain perceptions about its landscape, particularly pertaining to its cultural attributes, notably its land use, and, to a lesser extent, to its topography. The Vale of Evesham actually comprises a range of Landscape Types:

- *Principal Village Farmlands*, representing the core areas of horticulture and cropping.
- *Village Farmlands with Orchards*, representing those areas where orchards and soft fruit growing are dominant.
- *Riverside Meadows*, flanking the River Avon.
- *Village Claylands*, representing the areas of heavier clay soils where arable land uses are less dominant.

6.2.13 The location and list of Regional Character Areas is shown in Fig. 12, p.51 - Map of the Distribution of Regional Character Areas. The descriptions of both these and the LDUs are available in the Technical Handbook which accompanies this SG. Since they are site specific descriptive areas they are not considered directly pertinent to this planning guidance but they do provide valuable additional information which will be vital in the future preparation of documents such as management plans and design guides.



7.0 ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

Summary

- The second stage of landscape character assessment setting out the evaluation methodology to enable the development of landscape strategies and priorities for action
- Indicators are explained in terms of their significance to landscape character and their vulnerability, tolerance and resilience to change
- The concepts of condition and sensitivity are explained

7.1 METHODOLOGY

7.1.1 Having completed the classification and description of the landscape, it is essential to direct this understanding in ways that will achieve the principles of sustainability and sense of place promoted in PPS 7. The classification and descriptions alone still place a great onus on individual interpretation. Therefore, an evaluation methodology has been formulated to enable the development of landscape strategies and priorities for action. This methodology is also essential when making development control decisions based on Landscape Character Assessment (LCA). The fundamental maxim of all decisions based on LCA is:

- to identify those attributes of landscape character about which we should be most concerned. In other words, in each Landscape Type, would the loss of certain attributes be more damaging to landscape character than others?

- to assess whether some landscapes have a greater capacity to accept change than others. In other words, should we be more concerned about proposals for change in some landscapes than in others?
- to anticipate likely changes in landscape character and take a proactive approach to the strategic development of such areas, in order to guide change for multi-purpose benefit.

The principles of analysis and evaluation are set out briefly within the main text of this SG. The Technical Handbook contains further explanation.

7.1.2 Of the six definitive indicators of landscape character, the three relating to physiography (soils, topography and geology) are considered to be stable, permanent components. They are less likely to be significantly affected as a result of proposals for development or other forms of change. By way of contrast, the nature of the three cultural indicators could alter due to damage or loss, or by dilution as a result of the introduction of inappropriate replacement or additional characteristics. Changes to some of the descriptive indicators are similarly possible. The process of analysis therefore concentrates on the following cultural and descriptive indicators that are readily subject to alteration:

- Land Use
- Tree Cover Character
- Tree Cover Pattern
- Enclosure Pattern
- Boundary Type
- Settlement Pattern



7.1.3 The descriptive indicator of 'Spatial Character' was excluded from the analysis as the various components that together contribute to spatial character - tree cover, enclosure etc. were already being assessed individually. The descriptive indicators of 'Indicative Vegetation' and 'Additional Characteristic Features' were also excluded from the analysis as the presence or absence of these tended to be of a more inconsistent nature and therefore not necessarily a pertinent contribution to the assessment of resilience or condition.

7.1.4 It was recognised that by analysing and evaluating the six chosen indicators, an understanding can be achieved of their significance, vulnerability, tolerance and resilience to change. This ability to systematically define the key characteristics that distinguish the various Landscape Types makes it possible to carry out comparative analyses of these landscapes. The analysis and evaluation described below was all carried out at the scale of the Landscape Types. At a more local scale, the information on condition held in the landscape database enables an analysis of sensitivity to change at the Land Cover Parcel (LCP) scale.

7.2 SIGNIFICANCE

7.2.1 Within each Landscape Type certain attributes may play a more **significant** role than others in defining the character of that landscape. The contribution that a particular indicator makes to the character of the landscape is dependent on the extent or consistency of its relevant attribute and its visual prominence. This analysis was carried out in the field and enabled the grouping of Landscape Description Units (LDUs) into Landscape Types.

7.2.2 The various combinations of the consistency and visual prominence defined each indicator of each Landscape Type as a primary, secondary or tertiary characteristic.

The primary and secondary characteristics of each Landscape Type are clearly set out in the descriptions contained in Part Two of this SG.

7.3 VULNERABILITY

7.3.1 Within each Landscape Type, certain attributes may be more vulnerable to change than others. On the basis of the field survey information, together with subsequent analysis, an assessment was made of the relevance or function of each attribute and the likelihood of change, expressed as the trend. Vulnerability is assessed by analysing the combination of function, trend and significance of each attribute. It can be defined as the likelihood of change to an attribute, or the landscape as a whole, as expressed by the significance of predicted trends in relation to function.

7.3.2 When assessing function, each attribute within the relevant indicators for each Landscape Type was considered in relation to the combination of circumstances that originally gave rise to that attribute. The resulting analysis graded attributes into three categories.

- still functional in today's landscape in its traditional form
- only functional in today's landscape in a modified form or only likely to be maintained in its traditional form with support



- cosmetic, since the original or historic function is now redundant. In other words these attributes are a relic of the past preserved only for their non-practical aesthetic, sentimental or historic value

7.3.3 The attributes were then considered with regard to their trends - certain attributes may be declining, others may be considered to be stable or improving. An informed judgement was made regarding the likelihood of future change, based on knowledge of current and past change.

7.4 TOLERANCE

7.4.1 Tolerance can be defined as the degree to which change is likely to cause irreparable damage to the essential components that contribute to landscape character.

7.4.2 Tolerance can be assessed by considering the replaceability of individual attributes in relation to their significance in the landscape as a whole. Within each Landscape Type, the degree to which different attributes are **replaceable** may vary - both in terms of timescales for the replacement to be considered achieved and in terms of the replacements being sufficiently comparable to the original. Replaceability addresses the potential for re-creating an attribute should it be damaged or destroyed as a result of land use change

7.5 RESILIENCE

7.5.1 Resilience is a measure of the endurance of landscape character, defined by the likelihood of change in relation to the degree to which the landscape is able to tolerate that change.

It is assessed by considering vulnerability (which includes significance) and tolerance together. The resilience assessment is generic for a given Landscape Type.

7.5.2 A comparative scale of resilience can be created to illustrate the ability of the different Landscape Types to tolerate change. This final analysis of the Landscape Types proves valuable when assessing the potential for, and the landscape impacts of, new built development, forestry, mineral extraction, transport routes etc. within the strategic planning process.

7.5.3 This map-based analysis can also be carried out for individual indicators so that, for example, the potential for large-scale forestry creation can be assessed on a landscape character basis. In this case the resilience of the attributes for tree cover character and tree cover pattern would be assessed and then the condition of the LCP would be taken into account. This would enable the capacity of the landscape to accept new woodland without compromising its character to be assessed. So, for example, the ancient wooded character and the discrete woodland pattern of an LCP of the Landscape Type Wooded Hills and Farmlands would be seen as resilient and therefore, in theory, new woodland planting would be acceptable. However, if the LCP were in good woodland condition, already containing large discrete blocks of woodland, it may not have the capacity to accept more woodland without detriment to its character. Similarly, if the LCP were in poor condition through lack of woodland then woodland may be welcome, although with large-scale elements the whole LDU would need to be assessed in order to maintain the optimum proportion of woodland to mixed farming.



7.5.4 It is therefore apparent that landscape character analysis enables the individual attributes that determine the low resilience of a particular landscape to be identified. It may well be possible therefore, even in landscapes of least resilience, to enable some change or development to take place providing the low overall resilience of that landscape is recognised and respected, and that the attributes that determine its low resilience are safeguarded.

Similarly, even landscapes that are highly resilient still have their weaknesses, in the sense that individual attributes may be of low resilience (i.e. of high significance, high vulnerability, low tolerance, or in decline). **High overall resilience does not give 'carte blanche' to ignore the impact of land use change on the landscape. Development or other change in these landscapes should still take note of the attributes that define them in order to respect and reflect them, and particularly to safeguard those attributes that are of low resilience within them.**

7.5.5 For the first time, this approach presents a breakdown of the character of all landscapes. It does not dictate a given conclusion, but simply provides a structure enabling a planning officer, or other user, to make an informed decision. The process is flexible in that it can accommodate changing perceptions of the landscape. For example, should it be felt that a previously functional attribute has ceased to be so, and may even now veer towards the cosmetic, the vulnerability analysis can be readily revised to accommodate such a changing status.

As stated above, resilience analysis (which takes account of significance, trend, vulnerability and tolerance) has been applied at the Landscape Type level. Landscape Type is therefore assessed by analysis of its constituent elements. Such a process also enables comparisons between different Landscape Types to be made. Fig. 9, p.42 - Overall resilience of each Landscape Type, illustrates the range of resilience between different Landscape Types, but also indicates the differing resilience of attributes within a given Landscape Type, and also comparison of the resilience of a particular attribute across the range of Landscape Types.

7.6 SENSITIVITY

7.6.1 In order to assist the considerations of development control and to allow informed choice, a more detailed level of information, often at a site specific level is usually required. This can be achieved by analysis of the smaller and more detailed LCPs, at which scale information on the condition of the landscape is held. The condition of the landscape - the degree to which the described character of a particular Landscape Type is actually evident today - will vary from LCP to LCP, or even within the LCP. Based on the assumption that within a landscape of high resilience (taken from the Landscape Type analysis), those parts of that landscape which are deemed to be in good condition (i.e. the inherent character is strongly represented) are more susceptible to change than those where the inherent character is already diluted or poorly represented, a more prescriptive approach to guiding land use change or development can be achieved.



7.6.2 The assessment of condition involves two fundamental components:

- i. **Representation** - which considers how well the landscape attributes are represented today and if there has been any loss or deterioration
- ii. **Modification** - which considers how the landscape may have been modified e.g. with incongruous, uncharacteristic additions

7.6.3 Once the condition of the landscape can be measured, the final piece of the jigsaw fits into place, the **sensitivity** of the landscape can be identified. **Sensitivity is the measure, or reflection, of the inherent resilience of a Landscape Type that is represented in the landscape today.**

Obviously, an area of landscape within a Landscape Type of high resilience, in which the attributes are well represented, is going to be more sensitive than an area within the same Landscape Type where the same attributes are in decline, damaged or lost. Such an indication of actual sensitivity, as opposed to the theoretical sensitivity of a landscape, is the tool that is most relevant to the more area-specific (as opposed to strategic) aspects of the planning process.

7.6.4 Whilst the measures of vulnerability and tolerance, and therefore resilience, are likely to be subject to only a slow change over time, and therefore can be regarded as 'constant', the condition of an LCP can be subject to rapid change. Condition can be measured and integrated with resilience at any time. Such flexibility is particularly beneficial as it enables an accurate analysis of the current situation i.e. the condition of the

landscape can be taken into account at the time that a decision about it needs to be made. It is desirable, however, to have, at an early stage, an overall analysis of the condition of the landscape of the whole county. Such a baseline level of information is necessary in order to:

- place the sensitivity of a particular LCP in context
- enable monitoring of landscape change.

A condition assessment of all the county LCPs has now been completed and the variation in condition of each of them is reflected in a range of sensitivity 'scores'. The sensitivity of a particular LCP will be most meaningful if it can be related to this range, therefore enabling its relevance in a county, district or more local context to be established. It must, however, be stressed that the condition of an LCP should always be checked on site before any decision is made as changes can rapidly take place.



Fig. 8 Flow chart illustrating the relationships between calculations in the analysis and evaluation phase of LCA.

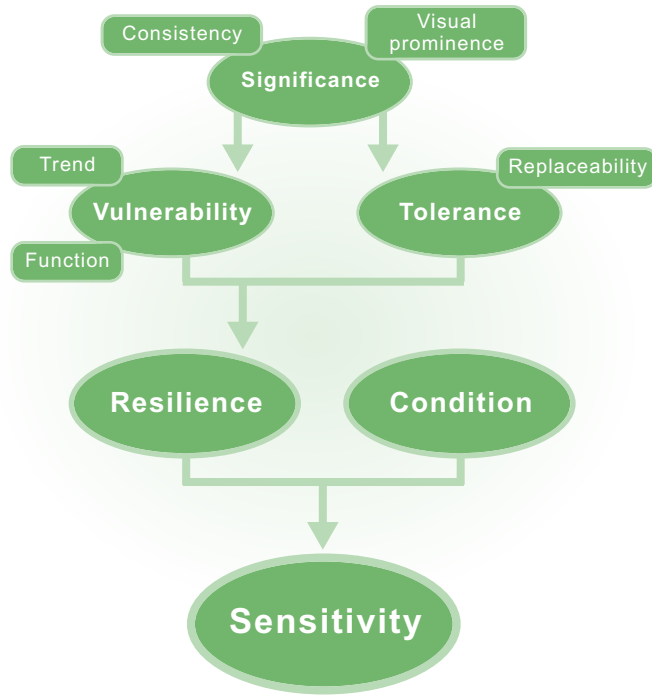
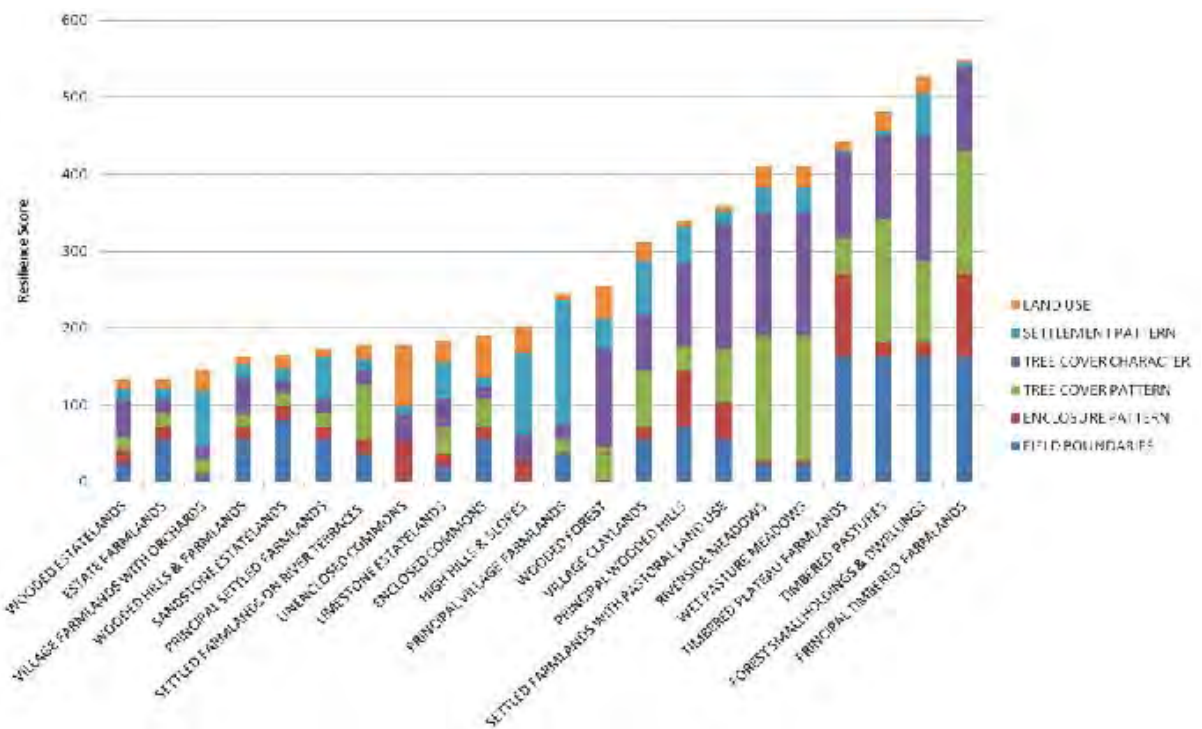


Fig. 9 Overall resilience of each Landscape Type in ranked order from most resilient (lower scoring) to least resilient (higher scoring). The chart also illustrates how the resilience scores of each individual indicator contributes to the overall score.





8.0 LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION, RESTORATION AND ENHANCEMENT

Summary

- The role of the LCA in influencing land management is explored and the concepts of conservation, restoration and enhancement are explained

8.1 Farmers and other land managers play a vital role in maintaining the health and character of the landscape. Future land management can help to direct change so that the character of the landscape is not compromised. The descriptions of the Landscape Types in Part Two of this SG include a brief analysis of the way in which the landscape is changing in the 21st century. Unfortunately, this often leads to a weakening of landscape character and loss of local distinctiveness but it is possible to strengthen the character of the landscape by appropriate management. Again, it is the twin principles of appropriateness and resilience which underpin both acceptable land management and development.

8.2 Opportunities for future beneficial land management can be considered under the three banners of conservation, restoration and enhancement. Where an attribute provides a significant contribution to landscape character (i.e. is a primary or secondary key characteristic) and is well represented the priority should be to **conserve**. An example of this might be the ancient wooded character in Landscape Type Principal Wooded Hills or well-represented hedgerow tree cover where this is a primary indicator of character. Where the significant attribute is in poor condition, such as few remaining hedgerow trees, or if the tree

population comprises virtually all over-mature specimens, an incentive to generate an interest in reviving and **restoring** the hedgerow tree population is needed. Any means to secure such benefits through planning controls or conditions should be sought. In some cases the conservation of existing features and their restoration is inappropriate or insufficient to noticeably strengthen the landscape character. In these cases the opportunity to **enhance** the landscape character should be pursued. This may be achieved by removing inappropriate features or introducing or strengthening lost or weak key characteristics in order to optimise the inherent landscape character, or a combination of both. An example might be in Landscape Type Unenclosed Commons where ornamental tree planting is removed, previously ploughed arable land is returned to rough grazing and a small pond is created for the benefit of grazing animals and wildlife.

8.3 These concepts of conservation, restoration and enhancement have been set out as a broad-brush approach relating to the Landscape Types. However, they are even more relevant when considering the management of individual sites where the local landscape character may be dependant on unique features or may be untypical of the Landscape Type. The detailed description of the LDU could be a useful tool in this situation, as are the standard processes of landscape survey, analysis and evaluation. New built development should also address this threefold



approach. **There are often opportunities on development sites for mitigation measures to conserve landscape features such as trees, to restore features such as boundary hedges and to enhance the landscape character by other means such as off-site planting and the use of local native plant species. The preparation of management plans, whether allied to development sites or not, should address these three aspects in relation to the local landscape character and the relevant Landscape Type.**

8.4 The further analysis of vulnerability, tolerance and resilience *together* enables a greater refinement of this broad guidance. Priorities can be fine-tuned specifically to target those attributes which are either unlikely to be replaced without particular encouragement (those that have lost, or are losing, their function), together with those that can be replaced only with difficulty over a long period of time. Such analysis can be influential in the assessment and review of available initiatives in order to see if they actually provide sufficient incentive to achieve the required results on the ground. If they fail to do this, some new form of incentive will be urgently required.

8.5 The concept of vulnerability, in particular, enables future trends to be discerned, and this opportunity to be predictive enables planning control, and landscape management in general, to become more pro-active rather than re-active. Instead of waiting for landscapes to deteriorate and then responding to that situation, the key declining influences can be determined and measures put into place to try to remedy such decline before it actually manifests itself in the landscape.

Taking the vulnerability (v), tolerance (t) and resilience (r) summary for a particular Landscape Type, for example Principal Timbered Farmlands:

The significance analysis indicates that the primary cultural attributes that define the character of the Timbered Farmlands are:

- Hedgerow boundaries to the fields
- Ancient character of the woodlands/tree cover
- Dominant representation of tree cover in the pattern of scattered trees (the detailed descriptions indicate that hedgerow trees define the primary patterns and those along water courses also having relevance)
- Organic enclosure pattern

The v.t.r. analysis shows that of these, the scattered (hedgerow) tree populations are of greatest concern as these display high vulnerability, low tolerance and low overall resilience. The key priority in these landscapes should therefore be to safeguard this attribute and encourage its **restoration**.

The v.t.r. analysis also indicates many other attributes that give cause for concern. The Principal Timbered Farmlands Landscape Type, it must be remembered, is one of the ancient landscapes and, broadly speaking, the ancient landscapes are far less resilient to change than the more recent planned landscapes. In the Principal Timbered Farmlands, it is evident that the future of the organic pattern of enclosure is also of prime concern. Bearing in mind the fact that the conditions relating to the evolution of the organic pattern no longer apply, efforts to safeguard the existing attribute will be particularly important.



The ancient character of the woodlands/tree cover is also highlighted - whilst there may be initiatives (through the Forestry Commission) that may enable these woodlands to remain economically viable (and therefore moderately functional), should the ancient character be lost, the impact on landscape character can take a long time to repair - hence the low replaceability rating of this characteristic. The need to retain hedgerows as the characteristic field boundaries, together with respect for aspects of the characteristic brick and timber building style often associated with the settlements in these landscapes, is also relevant.

8.6 Guidance for restoration and conservation priorities can therefore be gauged relatively easily from the processes of landscape character analysis. The notion of enhancement of landscape character is a little more difficult to embrace. 'Enhancement' has been interpreted in different ways in other landscape studies, and in the process is often confused with restoration. If elements of landscape character are in poor condition and are being reinstated or repaired to improve the inherent character, the process is considered to be that of restoration. To enhance something implies that it is being made better or different in some way. To 'improve' the landscape may be charting difficult waters as there would need to be sound reasons to explain:

- why the landscape was deemed to be in need of improvement as opposed to restoration
- the nature of the guiding principles that define the manner in which a landscape is 'enhanced'.

Fig. 10 Principal Timbered Farmlands attribute analysis

Principal Timbered Farmlands		Significance	v	t	r
Land Use	Mixed	Tertiary	M	H	H
Field Boundaries	Hedges	Primary	M	M	M
Tree Cover Character	Ancient	Primary	M	L	L
Tree Cover Pattern	Scattered	Primary	H	L	L
Enclosure	Organic	Secondary	H	L	L
Settlement	Dispersed	Tertiary	H	M	H



8.7 To expand the latter point, the process of landscape character assessment is to identify similarities in landscapes, to recognise repeating patterns of attributes that reflect commonalities of evolution and justify their grouping into Landscape Types. To allow a free hand to develop a new palette of characteristics for a particular area could well go against such principles and point towards change on a random, or chance, basis. Furthermore, it is likely that it would be those landscapes which had deteriorated beyond the 'point of no return', those which had been devastated, with their primary attributes destroyed, which would be the prime candidates for enhancement. This raises concern about the message this conveys about commitment to perpetuating landscape character. It might well appear that the benefits to be gained from doing little to look after the character of the landscape outweigh those for seeking to perpetuate it. Certainly, working within the confines of landscape character, particularly in landscapes of ancient character, is likely to impose far greater constraints, than working in a 'new', custom-designed, functional landscape.

The promotion of landscape enhancement is therefore treated with caution, although the relevance of the concept is recognised and appreciated in *certain situations*.

There will be cases where change occurs within Landscape Types that coincide with opportunities to influence change to the character of those landscapes. It must be stressed that change in this context is something that manifests itself, or has the potential to manifest itself, throughout the area covered by a particular Landscape Type (as opposed to a change that occurs at one particular site). An example

of such a change might be that related to sand and gravel extraction in the Landscape Type 'Settled Farmlands on River Terraces'. In Worcestershire, such extraction is occurring at several locations within this Landscape Type and in such instances large bodies of open water are invariably introduced into the landscape as a result of the extraction and restoration processes. Large bodies of open water are not a characteristic of any Landscape Type within Worcestershire, with the exception of the lakes created for aesthetic reasons in the parklands associated with country houses and their estates, which can sometime reach considerable proportions e.g. Westwood Pool.

In recognising and accepting the water bodies as part of the 20th/21st century evolution of these landscapes, opportunities to introduce or modify other attributes, perhaps tree cover, or to encourage an expression of natural vegetation associated with these features, arise primarily as a means to help integrate the water bodies within the wider landscape. Whilst such opportunities for enhancement are accepted, it is desirable that such enhancement accords with landscape guidance for that particular situation, in that particular character area. This will help ensure that such enhancement translates into patterns that are repeated, and can be recognised within the landscape, so conforming to landscape character principles. Landowners, and others with appropriate interest in the land, may, however, still be able to introduce expressions of individuality and, in so doing, contribute to the local distinctiveness of an area.



9.0 MONITORING

Summary

- Aspects of monitoring the landscape are explored
- The relationship with the State of the Environment report

9.1 MONITORING LANDSCAPE CHANGE

9.1.1 The evaluation of landscape character provides a very effective mechanism for monitoring landscape change. The definition and analysis of key attributes of landscape character provides a ready data base for which further data collection on a regular basis can be undertaken. The attributes are clearly defined and the approaches to measuring the relevant aspects associated with them, such as resilience and condition, have been identified. These attributes should be regarded as the critical indicators associated with the landscape and, as such, act as a barometer to reflect the wider state of the environment and can be used to indicate, and to predict, changes to that state.

9.1.2 Monitoring landscape change is a particularly pertinent issue as it provides a means to gauge the effectiveness of landscape policies and the means by which they are interpreted and implemented, so contributing to policy review. Monitoring will also enable wider landscape change to be detected and predicted and will help gain an understanding of the factors that are influencing landscape change, the spatial differences relating to such changes and the rate at which change is taking place. Such information will, in turn, contribute to guiding the effective targeting and prioritisation of resources in such fields as countryside management and forestry.

9.1.3 Climate change, while currently resulting predominantly in localised damage e.g. storm damage to trees, will inevitably impact more widely on the character of the landscape. Already, the traditional length of the winter planting season has been dramatically shortened as autumns stay warmer and springs arrive early. The works carried out to contain unpredictable flash flooding and, conversely, to provide irrigation during summer droughts, will impact on the landscape; at a local level initially, but at a more general level as these features become more widespread. When considering woodland it is likely that large woodland blocks, which can create their own micro-climate, will be more resilient to extreme weather than smaller, more fragmented woodlands. Similarly, the species composition of both woodland and grassland may alter as species at the limit of their range find the more frequent extreme weather events too challenging. Landscape monitoring can provide a county-wide overview of the impact of climate change and inform the debate regarding mitigation and damage limitation.



9.1.4 Monitoring methodology

The methodology is applied to an established sample of Land Cover Parcels within each Landscape Type to produce an indication of how far landscape condition has improved or declined. Landscape change is measured by re-assessing the landscape character condition scores for a sample of 6 Land Cover Parcels within each Landscape Type and comparing them with their baseline condition scores. This amounts to 132 LCPs in all; selected from urban fringe and rural locations across the county. The baseline assessment was undertaken for the whole county (912 LCPs) using the 2005 aerial photographs and updated in 2010/11.

9.1.5 Landscape condition is assessed by a combination of site visits and viewing the most up to date aerial photographs to assign scores to each LCP for each of the 6 landscape indicators of:

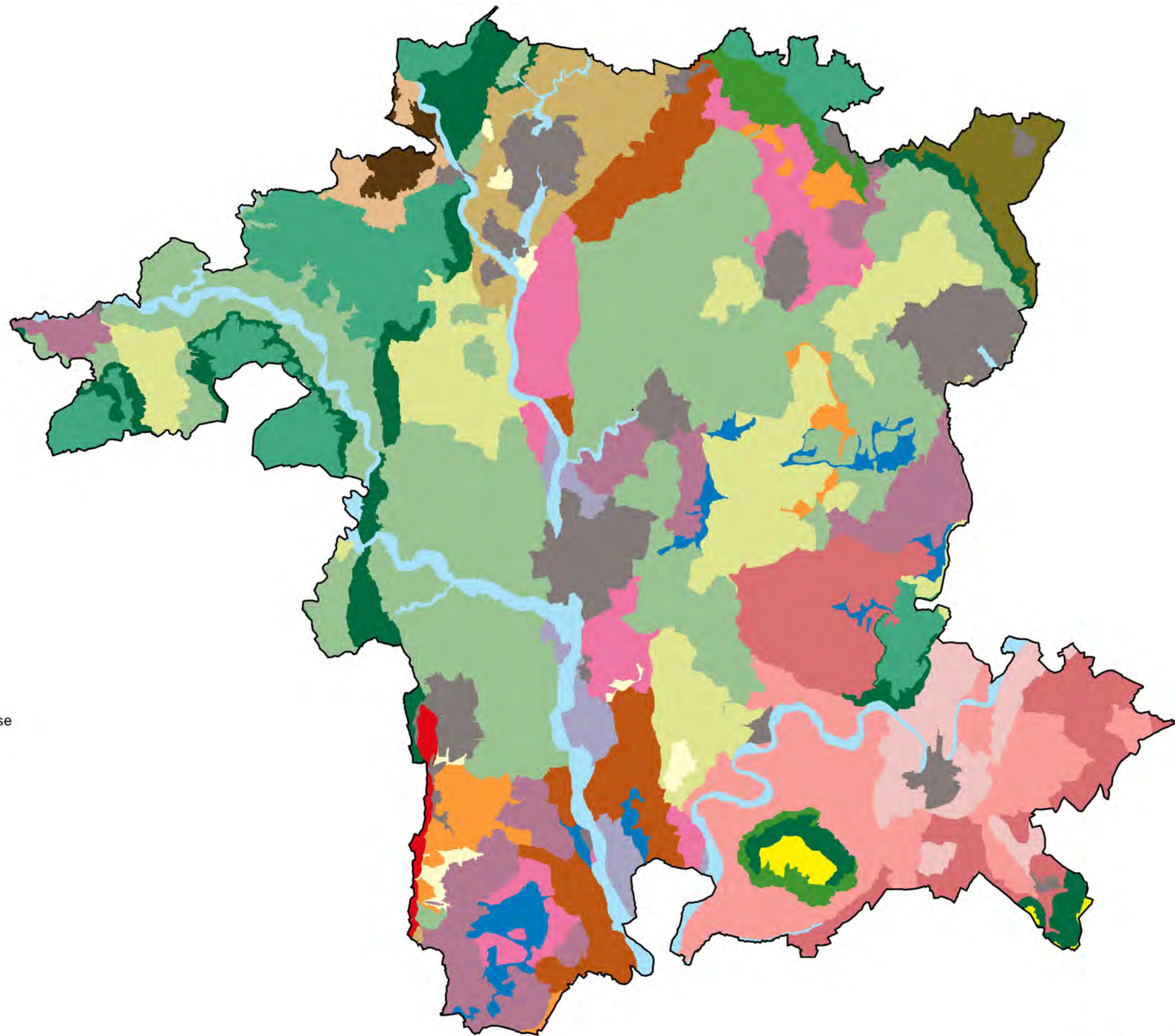
- field boundaries
- enclosure pattern
- tree cover pattern
- tree cover character
- land use
- settlement pattern

Based on these total scores, parcels are then assigned to high, medium or low condition categories. During the reporting process, the selected parcels are reassessed and it is noted if their score changes sufficiently to move them up or down a condition category (e.g. high to medium, low to medium, medium to high, medium to low etc.).

9.2 STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

9.2.1 The results of the Landscape Character Assessment's monitoring of landscape change is used to inform the Worcestershire Partnership's State of the Environment (SoE) report. The research forms part of a suite of indicators within the SoE report, the relevant indicator for landscape being 'The number of landscape units (Land Cover Parcels) in which the condition has changed.' Re-assessment is undertaken as and when updated aerial photography becomes available and will normally be within a 5 year period. Further information on the SoE report is available at:

<http://www.worcestershirepartnership.org.uk/cms/theme-groups/environment-group/state-of-the-env-report.aspx>

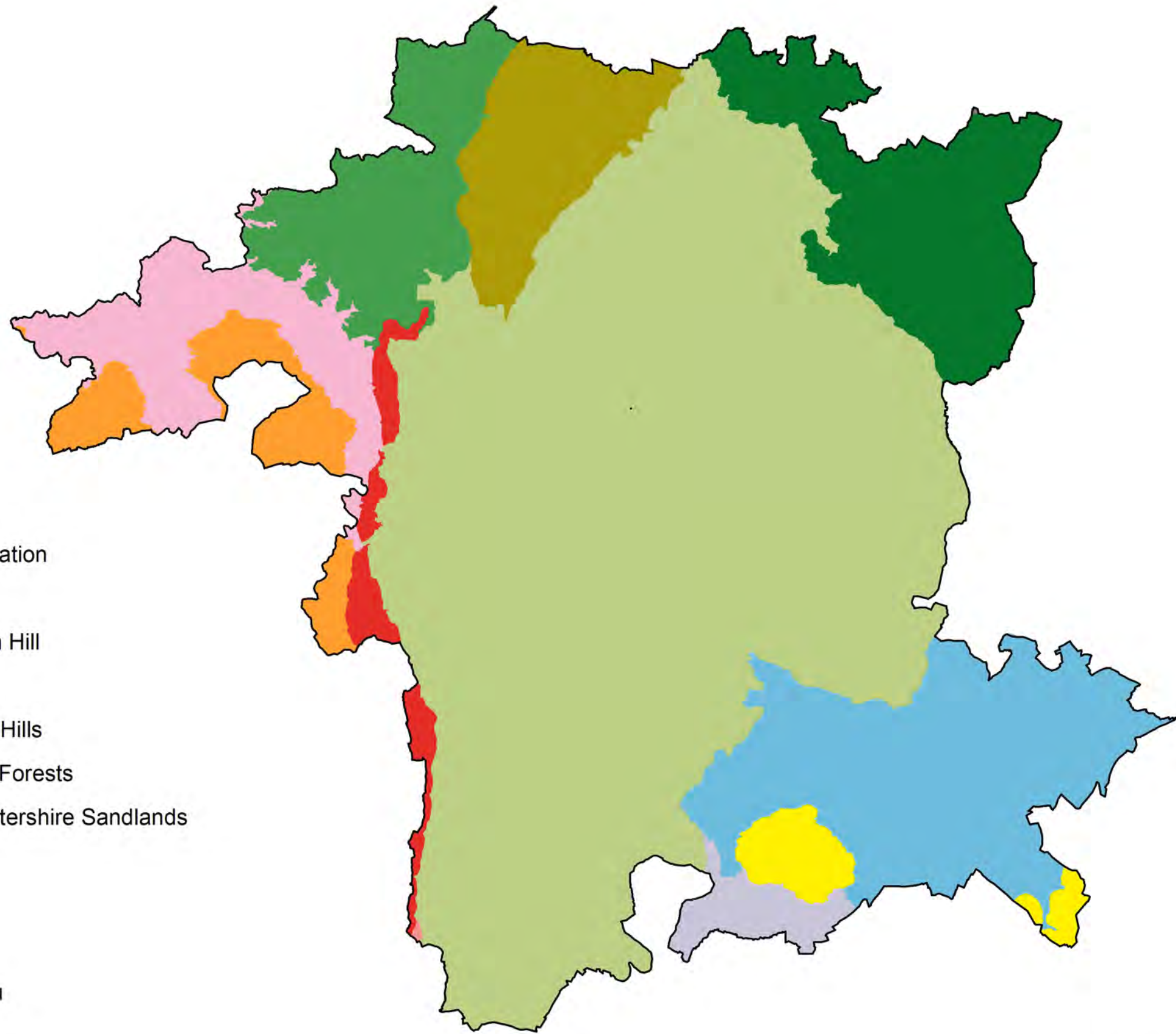


2.5 2.5 2.5 Kilometers

Fig. 11 Map of the distribution of Landscape Types



-  Arden
-  Birmingham Conurbation
-  Bromyard Plateau
-  Cotswolds & Bredon Hill
-  Kinver Sandlands
-  Malvern & Abberley Hills
-  Mid Worcestershire Forests
-  North West Gloucestershire Sandlands
-  Vale of Gloucester
-  Teme Valley
-  Vale of Evesham
-  Wyre Forest Plateau



2.5 250 2.5 Kilometers



Fig. 12 Map of the distribution of Regional Character Areas

PART TWO

DESCRIPTION OF LANDSCAPE TYPES

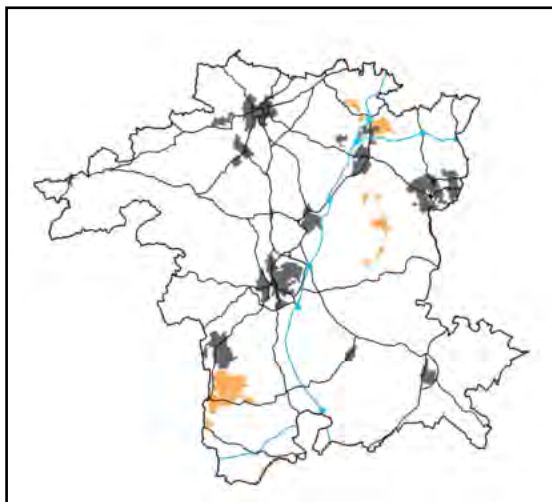




10.1 ENCLOSED COMMONS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

This is a landscape of very similar character to the Sandstone Estatelands, with the same ordered pattern of large fields of regular outline, straight roads and estate plantations. It is an open, formal landscape with a visual clarity primarily defined by the straightness of the field boundaries. These are patterns that the Historic Landscape Characterisation shows have arisen as a result of late enclosure from former commons and wasteland.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

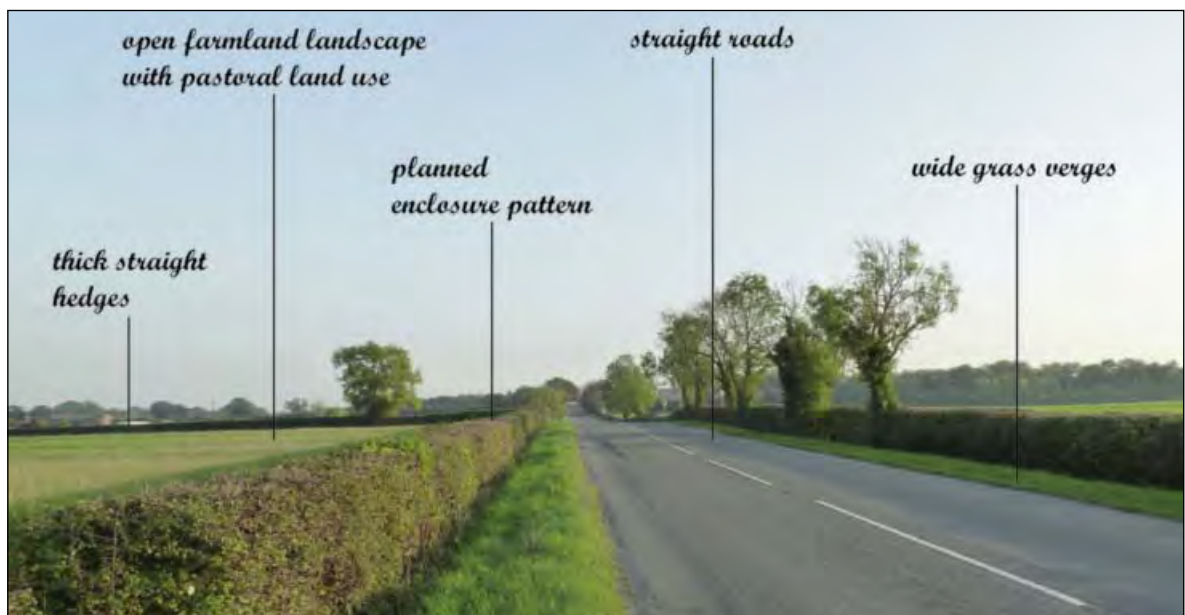
- Hedgerow boundaries to fields
- Planned enclosure pattern of straight boundaries and roads with wide verges

Secondary:

- Pastoral land use
- Planned woodland character
- Woodland pattern of discrete blocks (estate plantations)

Tertiary:

- Gently rolling topography
- Open farmland landscape
- Impoverished soils
- Dispersed pattern of isolated farmsteads and scattered wayside dwellings





DETAIL

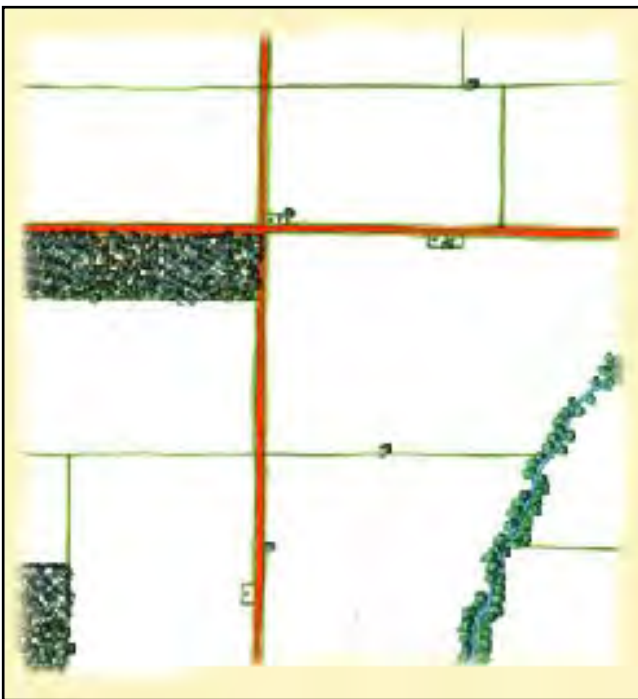
This is a planned landscape with a notably regular pattern, defined by the straightness of its hedge lines and roads and the outlines of its woodlands. This regularity is strongly expressed visually, the wide roadside verges emphasising the general openness of the landscape enabling the pattern to be clearly evident.

Tree cover along watercourses can contribute significantly to the landscape structure but hedgerow tree cover is generally far less significant.

The presence of wayside dwellings corresponds to the historic evolution of these landscapes from areas of former waste and common land. Scattered farmsteads can also be a characteristic feature today.

These landscapes are often located adjacent, or close, to areas which remain today as unenclosed common land.

These are farmed landscapes with an inherent land use of mixed agriculture, although recent increases in arable dominance may be evident. If such a trend continues, the functional value of hedgerows could be significantly reduced. Any loss or deterioration in the hedgerow structure could dilute the visual clarity of these landscapes.



MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Settlement Pattern:

The low density wayside settlement pattern of small cottages and occasional farmsteads is gradually being altered as cottages are enlarged and new dwellings built. In principal, these landscapes can accept additional wayside dwellings if the proposals are in accordance with policy, but the density should remain low and any new building must respect the style, materials and the small scale of the traditional cottages.

Enclosure Pattern:

The former common land was enclosed in a planned manner to create a geometric pattern. The removal of hedgerows has led, in some places, to a change in landscape scale and disruption of pattern.

Tree Cover Pattern:

This is a sparsely wooded landscape where trees are restricted to occasional hedgerow trees, discrete plantations and tree cover along watercourses. Efforts to introduce more hedgerow trees would be misguided here.

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

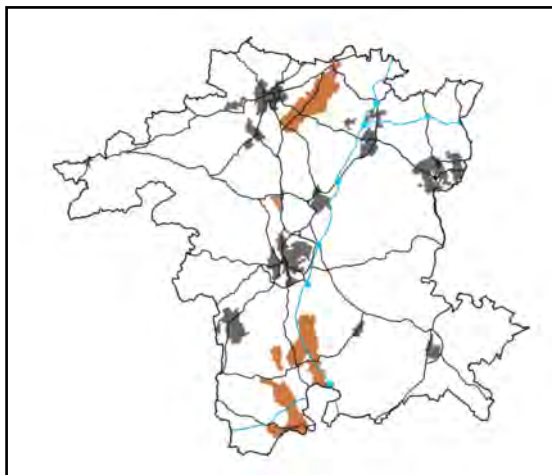
- Conserve and restore the distinctive hedgerow pattern with priority given to primary hedgerows.
- Conserve and enhance the tree cover along water courses.
- Conserve the scale, spatial patterns and specific character of wayside dwellings.
- Promote the creation and appropriate management of natural vegetation communities on non-farmed areas and along highways.
- Conserve and enhance the spatial pattern and scale of the landscape.
- Promote the development of wide field margins for wildlife benefit.



10.2 ESTATE FARMLANDS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

This is an ordered agricultural landscape characterised by a sub-regular pattern of medium to large sized fields, small geometric plantations and groups of ornamental trees associated with large country houses. Settlement is largely restricted to discrete clusters of dwellings and occasional small estate villages.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

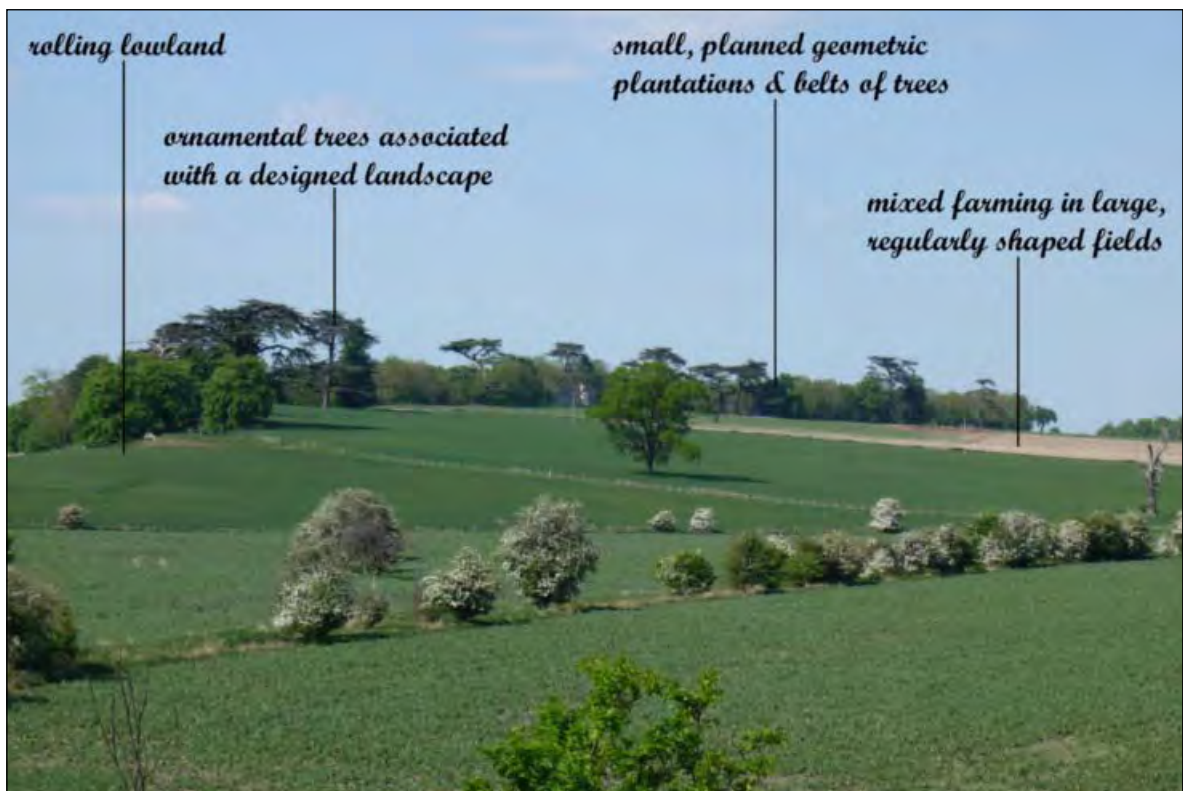
- Hedgerow boundaries to fields
- Planned woodland character

Secondary:

- Mixed farming land use
- Discrete settlement clusters and small estate villages
- Medium-framed views

Tertiary:

- Semi-regular pattern of medium to large fields
- Small geometric plantations and belts of trees
- Large country houses set in mature grounds
- Rolling lowland with occasional steep-sided hills and escarpments

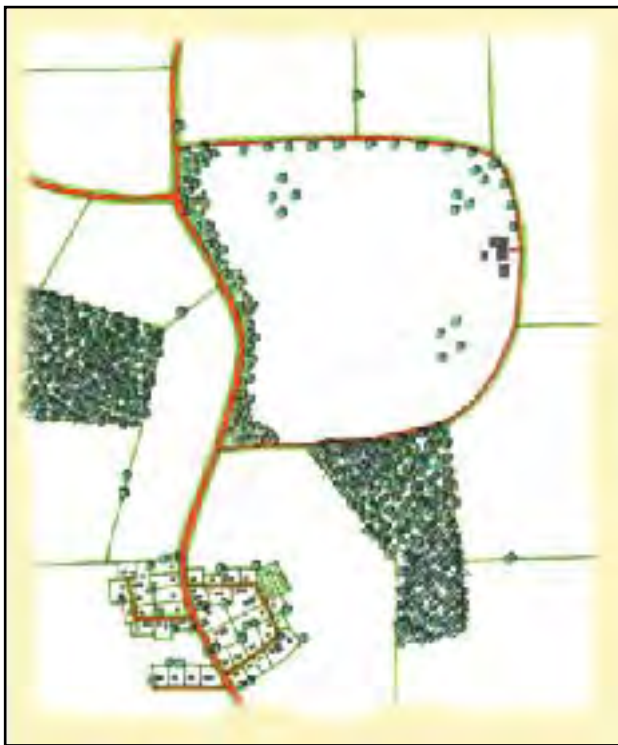




DETAIL

This is a landscape depending upon tree cover and field pattern to provide its structure and scale. The character is based upon the small plantation woodlands and tree features associated with large country house estates and ornamental parklands, and relates to a field pattern that lacks the strong geometric framework of some other Landscape Types. The eighteenth and nineteenth century enthusiasm for landscape design is often evident in this Landscape Type where tree planting has been designed specifically to enhance, frame or screen designed views. Croome Park is a particularly striking example.

This is a landscape of increasingly dominant arable land use where hedgerow loss and deterioration is apparent and accelerating. In some localities, such as Croome and Pirton, the relics of extensive parkland plantings still remain, now often located amidst arable land. Estate villages with distinctive architectural styles and detailing are often associated with such areas but face dilution of their distinctive character by modification and new development. These are landscapes that have restricted opportunities for wildlife but have the potential to accommodate considerable new woodland planting which would be of benefit in strengthening the overall landscape structure as well as increasing their ecological interest. The restoration of tree cover associated with parkland and ornamental grounds together with improving the tree cover along watercourses should also be encouraged.



MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Settlement Pattern:

The settlement pattern of clustered groups of dwellings, often estate villages, could theoretically accept new development if in accordance with policy. However, the siting of new development should be undertaken with extreme care in order to avoid compromising the visual integrity of distinctive estate villages.

Enclosure Pattern:

The tendency towards arable conversion is gradually changing the character of this Landscape Type. Hedgerow loss and deterioration are very often associated with an arable land use change, as hedgerows are no longer required for their primary function of stock containment.

Tree Cover Pattern:

The specimen tree planting and small plantations associated with large country houses and ornamental parkland is generally over a century old now and inevitably in decline, although it should be borne in mind that old or veteran trees can be of considerable wildlife and historical interest.

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

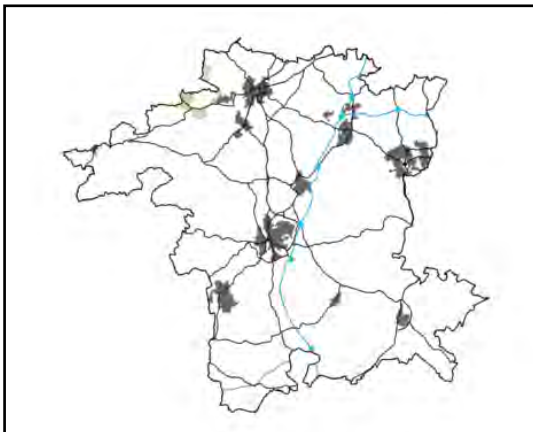
- Enhance tree cover through further planting of small scale plantations and tree belts.
- Conserve the pattern of hedged fields, with priority given to primary hedgelines.
- Conserve and restore parkland and the tree cover associated with large ornamental grounds.
- Conserve and enhance the tree cover along water courses.
- Promote the development of wide field margins for wildlife benefit.
- Conserve the integrity of estate villages.



10.3 FOREST SMALLHOLDINGS AND DWELLINGS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

Occurring in Worcestershire solely around the fringes of the Wyre Forest, this is an intimate, densely settled landscape characterised by strings of wayside cottages and associated smallholdings. These nestle within a complex, matrix of pastoral fields and narrow interlocking lanes, usually defined by prominent dense hedges with hedgerow trees. The consistency of human activity in these distinctive, small scale landscapes has resulted in a unified, palpably domestic character.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

- Hedgerow boundaries to fields
- Scattered hedgerow and garden trees
- Intimate spatial character
- Intricate network of narrow, interlocking lanes
- Densely settled pattern of wayside dwellings
- Distinctive building style - small cottages of brick or stone

Secondary:

- Variable enclosure pattern of small fields
- Heathy/acid grassland ground vegetation - widespread bracken and gorse
- Pastoral land use





DETAIL

These distinctive landscapes owe their character to the incremental assarting and subsequent settlement of areas of former woodland and waste. The settlement pattern has developed in a random, opportunistic manner, the corresponding density, scale and ad hoc pattern of both dwellings and lanes being distinctive characteristics today. The associated, usually small, parcels of pasture, orchard and pockets of rough ground with heathy/acid grassland are also important, reinforcing the scale and providing reminders of the origin of these landscapes. The hedgerows usually have significant associated tree cover and provide an important structural element to the landscape. The pastures are often of considerable nature conservation interest yet this can be easily lost through inappropriate management. This is especially true where they are used as paddocks for ponies and horses, a change of use that can be accompanied by degradation and loss of hedgerows. These landscapes possess a unique element of rustic charm which is destroyed by excessive "tidiness". The overall management strategy should be based on the conservation of the distinctive, small scale, settled, rural character of the landscape.



MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Settlement Pattern:

The settlement pattern and the character of individual dwellings are vulnerable to expansion and modification to an urban character. The small scale plots and pastures provide considerable scope for infilling which in turn changes the character of these landscapes.

Enclosure Pattern:

The varied, small scale enclosure pattern is under threat from amalgamation of pastures and orchards as hedges are allowed to fall into disrepair.

Tree Cover Pattern:

The verdant quality of this landscape depends on the mature hedges, hedgerow trees, traditional small orchards and garden plantings. As orchards and hedgerow trees age they are not being adequately replaced so that a tidy sub-urban character is gradually encroaching.

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

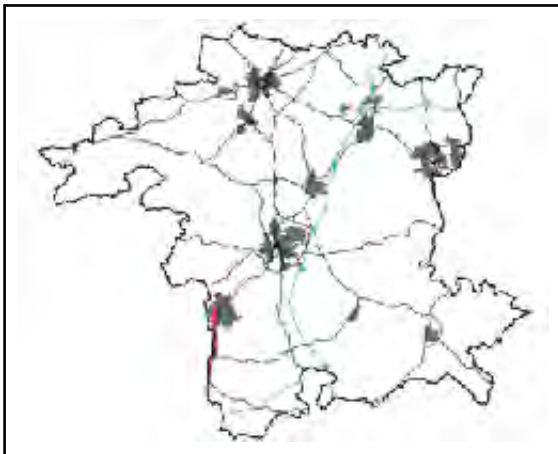
- Conserve the pattern, scale and detailing of settlements, including the open spaces within them.
- Conserve the small scale enclosure pattern of hedged fields through appropriate management.
- Encourage the retention and appropriate management of permanent pasture.
- Conserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes.
- Conserve and enhance the tree cover within the landscape, giving particular attention to hedgerow trees.



10.4 HIGH HILLS AND SLOPES

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

This is an unenclosed "highland" landscape characterised by its steeply sloping topography, shallow mineral soils and extensive tracts of rough grassland and heath. The large scale and open, exposed character is heightened by the dramatic form of the topography creating a wild and invigorating quality of place. This is a simple, yet visually distinctive landscape, not least for the contrast which it provides with the surrounding, less dramatic, enclosed agricultural landscapes.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

- Prominent, steeply sloping highland topography
- Hard rock geology with localised prominent rocky outcrops
- Unsettled landscape with few signs of human habitation
- Wide views over surrounding, lower lying farmland
- Shallow mineral soils supporting extensive areas of acid grassland and heath
- Unenclosed landscape

Secondary:

- Rough grazing land use
- Absence of woodland, though there may be localised patches of secondary woodland and scrub



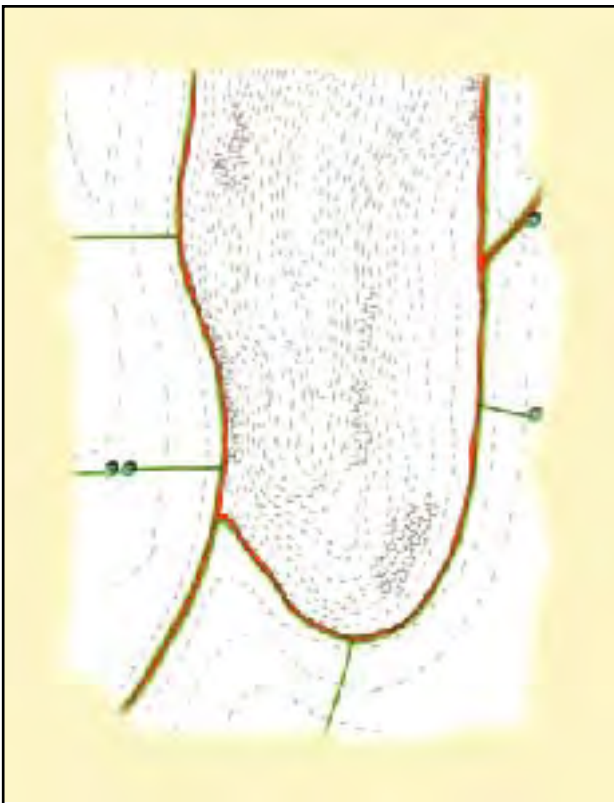


DETAIL

This is a landscape that owes its character to a combination of past management and physical structure. In Worcestershire, this Landscape Type is restricted to the summits and upper slopes of the Malvern Hills. Here the ridge of hard Precambrian schists and gneisses is one of the country's most striking landforms, while the Iron age hillforts built along the ridge provide an even more distinctive silhouette. This is an area that, in the past, has been an unenclosed expanse of commons and rough grazing. The stocking levels would have been sufficient to keep scrub encroachment at bay and so maintain its distinctive open character, producing a close, botanically valuable sward in the process. It is an area that has a much greater diversity of vegetation today, with significant areas of bracken together with scrub and secondary woodland, particularly on the lower slopes. It is an area that tends to be bordered by roads, rather than crossed by them, the sparse settlement that exists being associated with the few roads.

In order to facilitate the maintenance and possible expansion of the open grassland area, the long term sustainable management of the central ridge should be a priority. The notable ecological status of the area, particularly the habitat requirements of certain rare species must strongly influence the eventual management strategy of the area, but a degree of consultation to appreciate public perceptions of this particular landscape should also be included.

The future management of areas of scrub and woodland should be led by biodiversity priorities where a compromise approach, accepting a degree of woodland and scrub cover and endeavouring to maximise habitat diversity within the matrix of habitats present will be most appropriate.



MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Settlement Pattern:

Modern planning controls should safeguard the unsettled character but where dwellings already exist there is a tendency towards suburbanisation.

Enclosure Pattern:

The enlightened management guidelines provided by the Malvern Hills AONB discourage any further enclosure.

Tree Cover Pattern:

It is important for ecological, historical and visual reasons that the existing areas of open grassland are retained. A severe reduction in stocking levels over the years has led to the advance of bracken and scrub, and the character of the landscape is likely to change enormously if this encroachment is allowed to continue. Allowing the establishment of woodland cover would have the effect of wiping out the historical record of the landscape, destroying the essential scale and openness in the process.

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

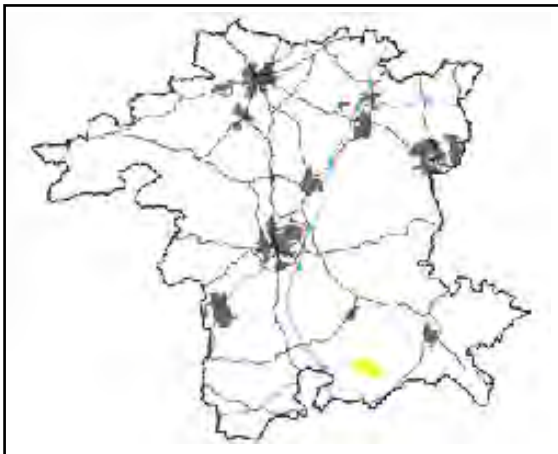
- Conserve all remaining areas of semi-natural grassland.
- Restore areas of former grassland whilst acknowledging the need to retain other habitats of importance for endangered species.
- Enhance the nature conservation interest of the whole area through appropriate sustainable management, with particular emphasis placed on restoring grazing at the necessary stocking densities.
- Conserve the simple unity of the area, avoiding enclosure, built development and urban influences.



10.5 LIMESTONE ESTATELANDS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

This is a sparsely populated "upland" landscape characterised by thin limestone soils, estate plantations and large rectilinear fields defined by drystone walls. Although still retaining a remote character, the stone walls convey a sense of human presence and the reddish soils a sense of warmth to this landscape. Closely associated with the higher parts of the Cotswold escarpment, this is a well ordered landscape of large open spaces framed for the most part by woodland edges and belts of trees.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

- Upstanding rolling plateau, capped by oolitic limestone
- Thin, stony soils with characteristic orange colouring
- Large rectilinear fields defined by drystone walling
- Dominant use of local stone for building
- Woodland of planned character - estate plantations and belts of trees

Secondary:

- Scattered settlement, largely restricted to isolated stone farmsteads
- Discrete woodlands with dominance of beech in woodland composition





DETAIL

The key factors that define this landscape are its topography, its large scale and open character and the estate like influence of large regular fields, plantations and belts of trees. The undulating form of the plateau is emphasised by the openness and long distance views. This is a landscape formerly associated with extensive sheep walks, although much of the permanent pasture has now been lost to arable uses. It is a landscape that was probably cleared of its tree cover by Roman times, and with its favoured light and easily cultivated soils, has been farmed ever since, with little opportunity for the natural re-establishment of woodland except along the steeper valleys. The tree cover today comprises plantation woodlands and tree belts, the shape of which emphasise the regular pattern of fields. It is an area of intensive agriculture with settlement tending to be confined to the valleys and lower ground, with the exception of occasional farmsteads. The dominance of local stone as a building material for buildings and field boundary walls provides further unity and distinction to the landscape. This is a landscape where priority should be given to ensuring that the large scale, open pattern of regular fields is retained. The essence of these landscapes is their large scale and spaciousness which could become fragmented and diluted by land use changes. Reinforcement and expansion of the characteristic belts of trees could usefully strengthen the structure and scale of the landscape. The planting of further large plantations should be considered, in order to enhance the estate character of the landscape, providing care is taken to recognise and conserve the dominance of large open spaces. Initiatives to secure the ongoing repair and maintenance of the network of stone walls with appropriate local stone should be encouraged.



MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Enclosure Pattern:

Ongoing deterioration of the field boundary walls gives cause for concern for the long term perpetuation of this distinctive characteristic.

Tree Cover Pattern:

Whilst these areas can accommodate considerable amounts of new woodland planting, the siting and scale of such woodland will be a critical factor in order to ensure that the dominance of the landform and the open visual expanse of the landscape is not compromised. This is a landscape where plantation woodlands are a feature, rather than being a landscape that is classed as wooded. The introduction of too much new woodland planting on the plateau area could easily result in closing down the views and creating a sense of enclosure which is uncharacteristic of this landscape.

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

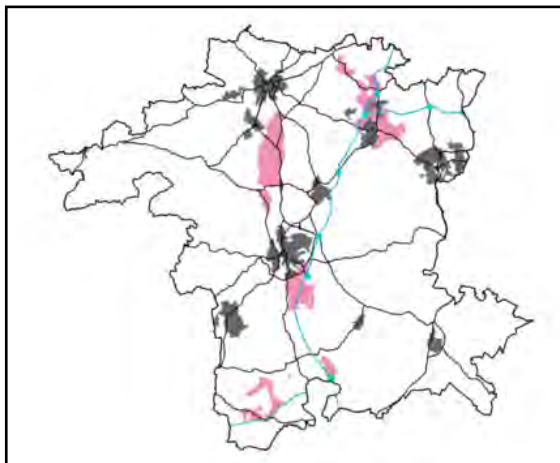
- Maintain the large scale estateland character of the farmed land by conserving the strong rectilinear field pattern.
- Enhance the structure of the landscape by encouraging new woodland planting whilst retaining the long distance views and open character of the plateau.
- Conserve and restore field boundary walls especially along roadsides, using locally sourced stone.
- New, or replacement, tree planting should be predominantly broadleaved, favouring beech, together with oak and ash, as the major species.
- Strengthen and expand the linear pattern of tree belts.



10.6 PRINCIPAL SETTLED FARMLANDS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

These are small to medium scale, settled agricultural landscapes of scattered farms, relic commons and clusters of wayside dwellings. These buildings are linked by a network of narrow, winding lanes which nestle within a matrix of hedged fields. Tree cover is largely restricted to thinly scattered hedgerow trees and groups of trees around dwellings. The land use is primarily one of mixed farming.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

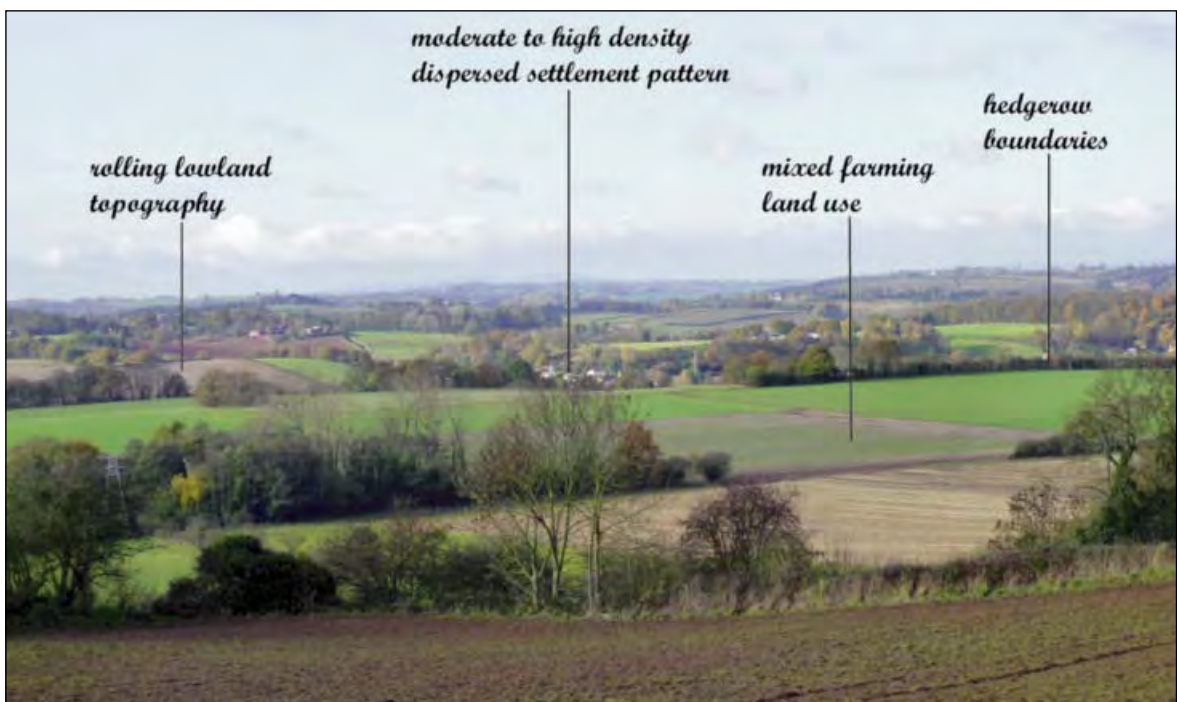
- Hedgerow boundaries to fields
- Moderate-to-high density settlement pattern of farmsteads and rural dwellings dispersed throughout the area

Secondary:

- Mixed farming land use
- Rolling lowland with occasional steep sided hills and escarpments

Tertiary:

- Irregular enclosure pattern of small and medium-sized fields
- Scattered hedgerow trees

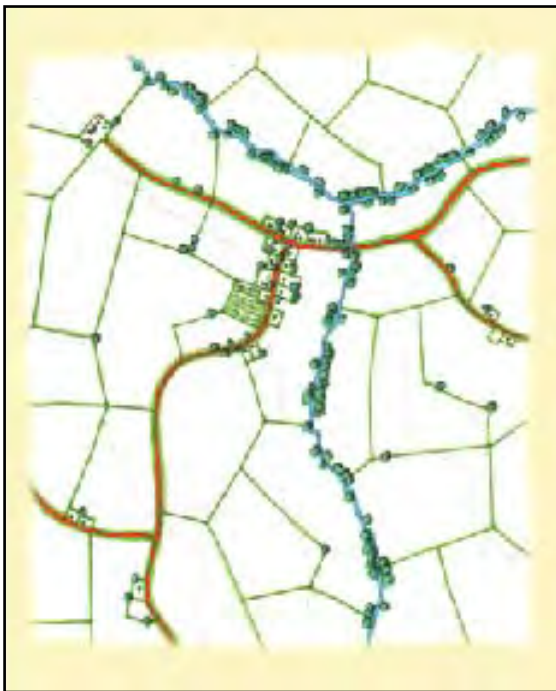




DETAIL

In Worcestershire, these landscapes are located in areas of former Royal Forest and their 'hybrid' characteristics, between Timbered Farmlands and Village Farmlands, may be the result of the late clearance of these forest areas following contraction of the Royal Forest boundaries. The subsequent withdrawal of the associated Forest Laws, which had previously influenced and restricted their land use would have enabled a wider farming remit leading to mixed farming which now characterises the land use. These are landscapes with a notably domestic character, defined chiefly by the scale of the field pattern, and the moderate to high density dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and hamlets. Principal Settled Farmlands are thought to have developed from areas of extensive open field that were established from cleared forest later than the open fields associated with Village Farmlands. The field pattern tends to be of a sub-regular nature, supporting the suggestion of early enclosure of areas of open field.

Woodlands are not characteristic of these landscapes and the introduction of such features tends to dilute their identity. Opportunities for new tree planting are best concentrated along watercourses, strengthening the linear pattern of these features. It is desirable to encourage additional tree cover in the vicinity of farmsteads and other settlements, in so doing, emphasising the domestic scale of the landscape. The small fields of permanent pasture found within these landscapes can often be of significant nature conservation interest, the increasing change in land use in favour of arable farming can threaten such sites and initiatives to safeguard remaining areas of permanent pasture should be strongly promoted in these areas.



MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Settlement Pattern:

There are pressures for development in many of these areas and a danger that concentrations of new development could arise, resulting in the creation of a pattern approaching the nucleations of other Landscape Types. However, the dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and hamlets is capable of accommodating limited low densities of new development if it is in accordance with policy.

Enclosure Pattern:

The pattern of small to medium sized hedged fields is vulnerable to change as the tendency towards arable dominance reduces the functional worth of hedgerow boundaries. Hedgerow loss and deterioration is already in evidence locally, with corresponding dilution of the essential scale of these landscapes.

Tree Cover Pattern:

Tree cover is most notable along stream sides, with only scattered tree cover along hedgerows. Groups of trees and orchards are often associated with settlements. Woodland is not a characteristic feature of this Landscape Type and its introduction in many places has weakened the landscape character.

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

- Conserve and enhance the pattern of hedgerows.
- Retain the integrity of the dispersed pattern of settlement.
- Conserve and enhance tree cover along watercourses.
- Enhance patterns of tree cover associated with settlement.
- Seek opportunities to conserve all remaining areas of permanent pasture.

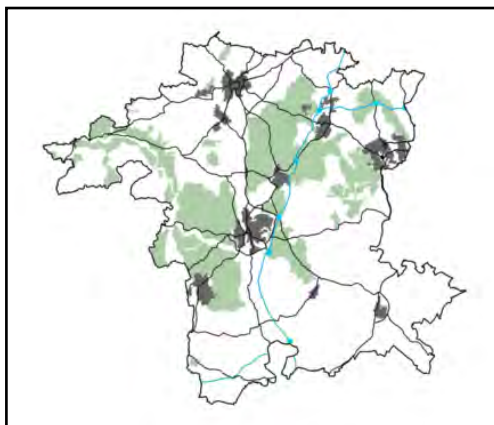


10.7 PRINCIPAL TIMBERED FARMLANDS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

Principal Timbered Farmlands are rolling lowland landscapes with occasional steep sided hills and low escarpments. They have a small scale, wooded, agricultural appearance characterised by filtered views through densely scattered hedgerow trees. These are complex, in places intimate, landscapes of irregularly shaped woodlands, winding lanes and frequent wayside dwellings and farmsteads.

The Principal Timbered Farmlands are characterised by a mosaic of agricultural land cleared directly from woodland, on a piecemeal basis, together with land enclosed from former localised areas of open fields, resulting in their dispersed pattern of farmsteads and wayside cottages and lack of strong settlement nuclei.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

- Notable pattern of hedgerow trees, predominantly oak
- Hedgerow boundaries to fields
- Ancient wooded character

Secondary:

- Organic enclosure pattern
- Small-scale landscape with hedgerow trees creating filtered views
- Brick and timber building style of older properties
- Rolling lowland with occasional steep sided hills and low escarpments

Tertiary:

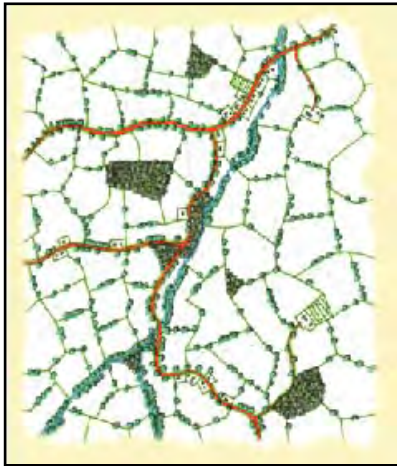
- Mixed farming land use
- Dispersed settlement pattern





DETAIL

The key element of these landscapes is the strongly unifying presence of tree cover in the guise of woodlands, hedgerow trees, and linear, stream side tree cover. The combined presence of these tree cover components creates the underlying sense of scale and enclosure, together with the filtered views that are distinctive in this landscape. The resulting woodland character is essentially that of mixed native broadleaves, with oak the dominant species, lines of mature oak being a particular feature of the hedgerows as befits a landscape with strong links to its woodland origins. The scale and shape of the woodlands is also important, the woodlands ranging in size from small field corner copses to those of a size exceeding that of the surrounding fields. The pattern of hedgerows is also important, not only in providing the basic fabric for the hedgerow tree populations, but also in emphasising scale and enclosure, the hedgerow composition being complex and rich in places where the links to woodland origins are strongest. The irregular outline of many of the woodlands, together with the pattern of hedgerows and winding lanes, contributes to the overall organic character of this landscape. A densely dispersed pattern of farmsteads and wayside cottages is typical with a notable number of buildings constructed out of brick and timber.



LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

- Maintain the tree cover character of hedgerow oaks, and enhance the age structure of the hedgerow oak population.
- Conserve all ancient woodland sites and restock with locally occurring native species.
- Seek to bring about coalescence of fragmented relic ancient woodlands.
- Encourage the planting of new woodlands, reflecting the scale, shape and composition of the existing ancient woodland character, favouring oak as the major species.
- Conserve and restore tree cover along water courses and streamlines.
- Seek opportunities to enhance tree cover along highways and other non-farmed locations.
- Conserve and restore the pattern and composition of the hedgerow structure through appropriate management, and replanting.
- Conserve the organic pattern and character of the lane networks.
- Maintain the historic dispersed settlement pattern.

MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Settlement Pattern:

Additional individual dwellings could be accommodated within the dispersed settlement pattern as long as they do not occur in sufficient density to convert the pattern to wayside or clustered status. Modern development favouring groups or clusters of new houses would not be appropriate in this landscape.

Enclosure Pattern:

Though traditionally a landscape of mixed farming, a gradual increase in arable land use is leading to the demise of the hedgerow structure. It is vital for the retention of landscape character that the organic pattern of enclosure is preserved and that a geometric pattern is not superimposed by subdividing fields or enlarging others and employing straight fence or hedgelines.

Tree Cover Pattern:

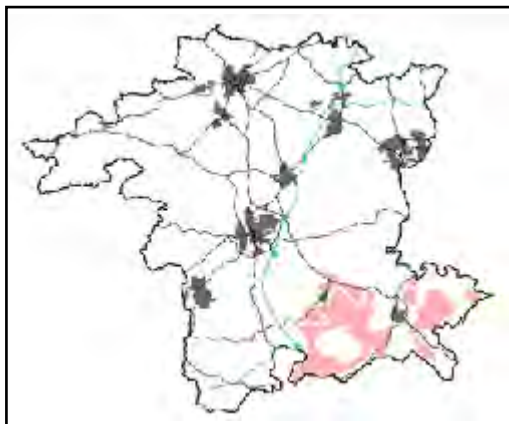
The accelerating loss of scale and structure in the landscape is due mainly to the decline and fragmentation of the elements of tree cover, particularly the hedgerow trees. The age distribution of hedgerow oak is unbalanced, with the majority classed as mature or veteran. The distribution of woodlands is also uneven and the streamside cover fragmented in places. There is scope for additional small-scale woodland planting but large scale planting or linking up existing fragmented woodlands to form large blocks would not be appropriate.



10.8 PRINCIPAL VILLAGE FARMLANDS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

Principal Village Farmlands are open, rolling landscapes characterised by a nucleated pattern of expanded rural villages, surrounded by large arable fields, often sub-divided into a series of smaller plots. This is an intensively farmed landscape associated with fertile, free draining soils which give rise to high quality farmland used for growing a wide variety of cash crops. This is a landscape of contrasts, the intensely functional, yet often very open and empty character of the farmland and the focused, communal density of the villages.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

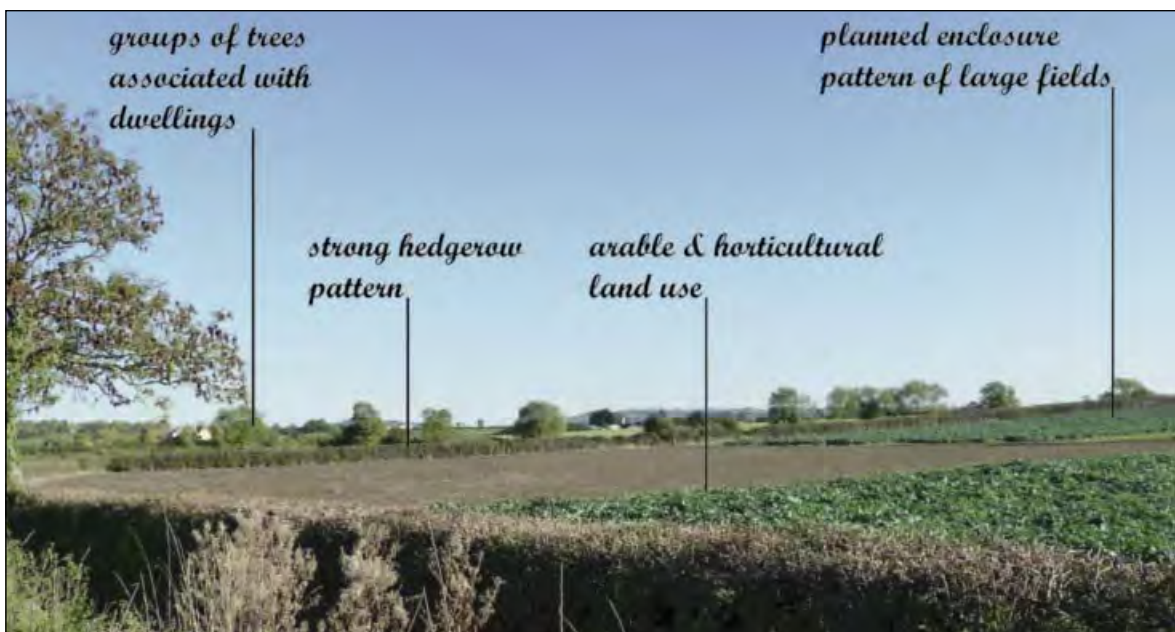
- Nucleated pattern of expanded rural villages
- Arable/cropping land use - cereals and field vegetables on fertile, free-draining soils

Secondary:

- Hedgerows define field boundaries
- Rolling lowland topography

Tertiary:

- Planned enclosure pattern of medium-to-large scale fields
- Groups of trees associated with dwellings





DETAIL

These are landscapes which the Historic Landscape Characterisation (see Appendix A) shows are derived from vast expanses of former open field, which have remained under intensive cultivation following their enclosure and within which the regeneration of woodland and tree cover has never re-established to any significant degree. The exception being elm, which was formerly a dominant hedgerow tree, now almost completely lost to Dutch Elm Disease. These are relatively open, large scale landscapes, where the key elements are the settlement pattern and land use. It is important to try to retain the notable contrast between the concentrations of dwellings and farmsteads in the villages and the relatively unsettled land between them. The land use in these areas is very strongly based on cropping and horticulture, with characteristic concentrations of tunnels and greenhouses associated with such uses. Orchards are a distinctive feature, occurring throughout the area on a domestic scale, with lines of fruit trees, usually damson, growing in the hedges. The characteristic traditional orchards of standard trees are gradually disappearing in certain areas, being replaced by bush stock. Associated with this is the loss of many of the old fruit tree varieties, many with close links to the County.



MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Settlement Pattern:
The nucleated settlement pattern lends itself to modern housing development where dwellings are constructed in clusters within the existing village envelope.

Enclosure Pattern:
The hedgerow network provides structure in places but has often largely lost its function, and the resulting scale is derived from the patterns of cropping rather than the boundaries between them. Although it is desirable to try to retain the full hedgerow structure for visual and wildlife reasons, it is most viable to focus on the primary hedges in these landscapes where the hedgerow function is generally in decline.

Tree Cover Pattern:
Woodland cover is not a characteristic of the Village Farmlands and the prospect of new woodland planting in these areas would dilute their distinctive character. The regeneration of elm continues in the hedgerows but still eventually succumbs to disease at a certain size. After much consideration, it has been decided to promote the planting of oak and ash substitutes for the original densely planted hedgerow elms.

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

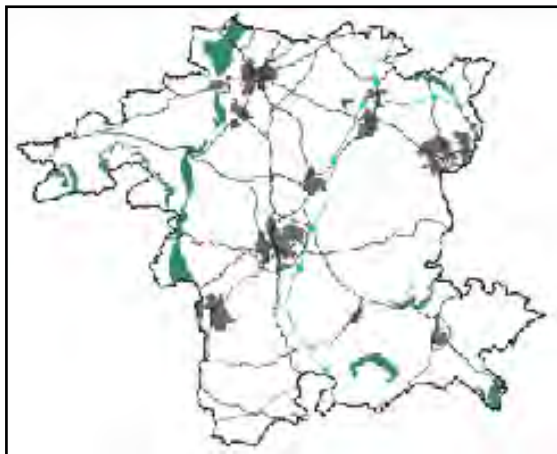
- Retain the pattern of strongly nucleated villages with associated low dispersal of settlement between.
- Conserve and enhance the hedgerow structure, with emphasis on the primary hedgelines.
- Conserve and enhance tree cover along watercourses and hedges.
- Encourage opportunities for tree planting in and around villages.
- Conserve and restore old orchards around villages, with an emphasis placed upon the fruit type and varieties associated with different localities.
- Conserve and restore lines of hedgerow fruit trees.
- Promote the development of wide field margins for wildlife benefit.
- Promote the management of roadside verges for wildlife benefit.



10.9 PRINCIPAL WOODED HILLS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

These are upstanding, wooded landscapes with a sloping, in places steeply undulating topography, often on the edge of higher ground. These are landscapes of large, irregularly shaped ancient woodlands and wooded streamlines, typically forming an interlocking pattern with surrounding hedged fields. The flowing woodland cover is a key visual element within the landscape, resulting in a strong sense of unity and visual integration.



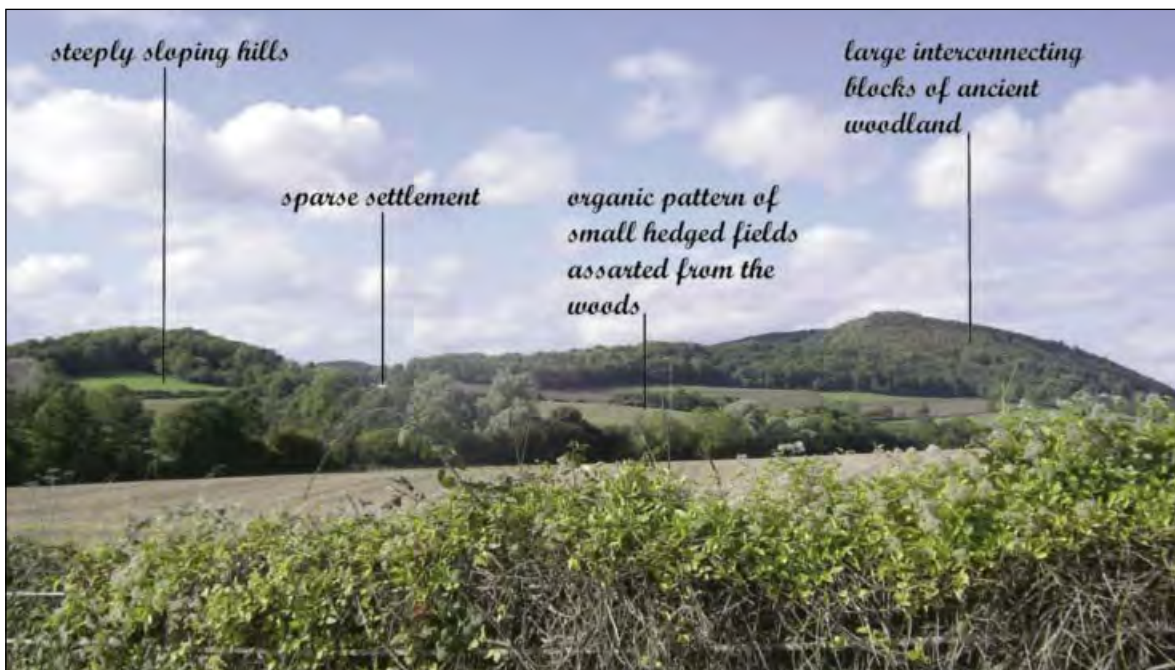
KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

- Varied, often steeply sloping, topography
- Large, often interconnecting, blocks of ancient woodland

Secondary:

- Organic pattern of hedged fields, derived from assarting the adjacent woodland
- Frequent, narrow, wooded valleys or dingles
- Medium-framed views
- Patches of rough grassland and scrub
- Sparsely settled pattern of farmsteads and wayside dwellings

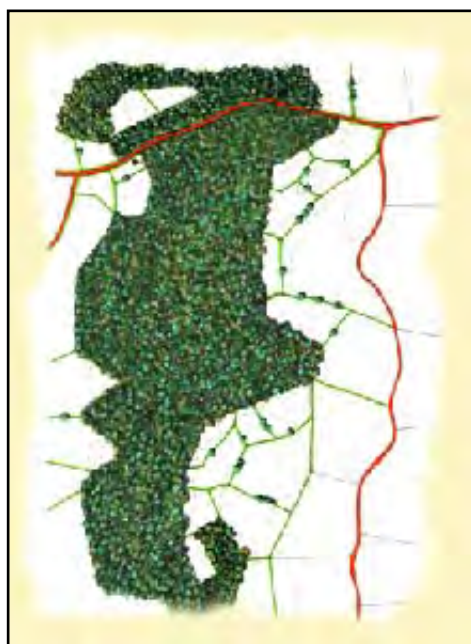




DETAIL

In these landscapes the nature and steepness of slope has inhibited clearance for agricultural use in the past. Consequently, they have retained a significant proportion of ancient semi-natural woodland into which only slight clearances, usually of an assarted nature, have taken place. Woodland cover usually occurs in extensive interlocking belts and is the dominant land use, typically extending to 60 - 70%, although a lower proportion might be more appropriate in the Cotswold Wooded Hills where a greater amount of historical piecemeal clearance took place and where many of the grasslands are of significant nature conservation interest. Where clearance has taken place in the past, the presence of strong hedge lines with good a representation of hedgerow tree cover contributes to the visual integration of the landscape. The ancient semi-natural status of these woodlands confirms their nature conservation value.

The visual cohesion of these landscapes is critical. They are very visible landscapes, tending to frame long distance views, and as such their composition and unity is particularly important. Hedgerow trees and wooded streambanks are a vital component in achieving visual integration between the areas of historic clearance and the denser woodland. In these areas, the hedgerow tree stock tends to be dominated by mature and veteran trees, and the visual integration will become diluted if tree populations are not perpetuated.



LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

- Conserve and restore the ancient broadleaved character of all woodlands.
- Seek to restore the wooded character of the area through large scale woodland planting in areas where the interlocking pattern has become diluted.
- Conserve and restore the irregular pattern of assarted fields.
- Strengthen the wooded character of hedgelines and streamlines through replanting or natural regeneration.
- New woodland planting and felling coupes should be carefully designed to take particular account of their visual impact.

MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Settlement Pattern:

The sparsely scattered settlement pattern consists of occasional dwellings which were traditionally small forestry workers cottages. An occasional additional dwelling could be assimilated if it is in accordance with policy, but the density should remain extremely low.

Enclosure Pattern:

The organic enclosure pattern is made up of irregularly shaped pastoral fields bounded by hedges, often cleared from the adjoining woodland. Any changes to woodland cover, either through felling or new planting, should respect the historical significance of the old patterns of woodland clearance and ensure the conservation of these patterns along with boundary hedges of assarted origin.

Tree Cover Pattern:

The woodland component has become fragmented in places by recent clearances which damage the unity of the landscape.

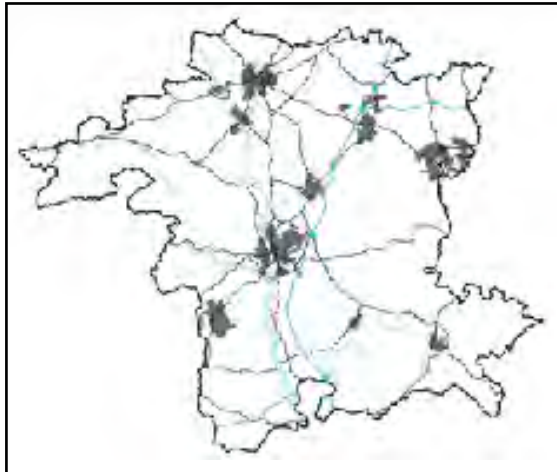
The development of woodland shapes that are unsympathetic to the topography, together with the modification of the mixed broad leaf composition of the woodlands, most notably through the introduction of conifer blocks, can severely interrupt the unity of the landscape. The presence of conifer dominated skylines is particularly damaging. The nature conservation value of the woodlands is also significantly reduced by deviations from their inherent species composition.



10.10 RIVERSIDE MEADOWS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

Riverside Meadows are linear riverine landscapes associated with a flat, generally well-defined alluvial floodplain, in places framed by steeply rising ground. These are secluded pastoral landscapes, characterised by meandering, tree-lined rivers, flanked by alluvial meadows which are defined by hedge and ditch boundaries. Settlement is typically absent.



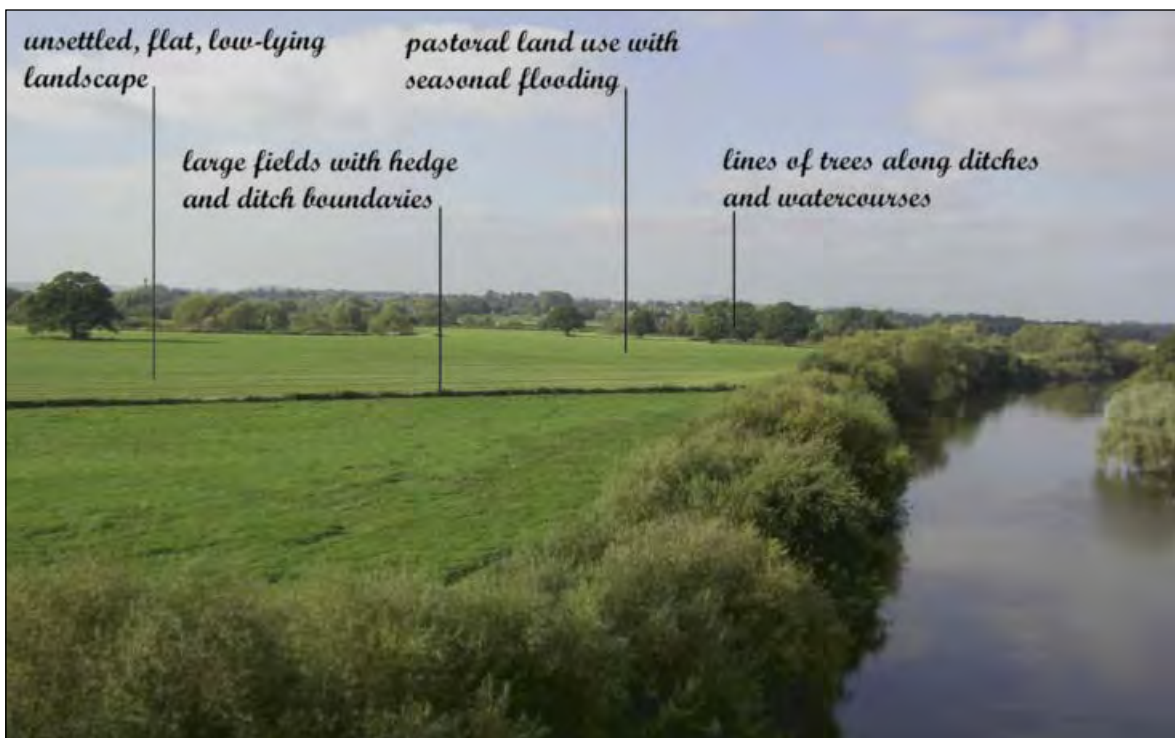
KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

- Flat, low-lying topography
- Pastoral land use, including seasonal grazing meadows
- Tree cover character of individual trees rather than woodland
- Tree cover pattern of linear tree belts along ditches, watercourses and in hedgerows

Secondary:

- Unsettled with few roads
- Seasonally flooded alluvial floodplain
- Meandering river channel
- Medium-to-large fields with hedge and ditch boundaries
- Rushes, reeds and other wetland vegetation





DETAIL

Throughout these landscapes, the presence of extensive areas of waterside meadows, used for seasonal grazing, has in the past provided a strong sense of visual and ecological unity. These are landscapes that accommodated a degree of annual flooding, a factor which was reflected in the patterns of land use, the lack of settlement and development (except for the occasional water mill), and the representation of species and habitats tolerant of such waterlogged conditions. Tree cover is a notable element of Riverside Meadows, usually in a linear pattern along the hedge and ditch lines and along the banks of watercourses. Typical species are alder and willow, the latter often pollarded.



LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

- Seek to retain the unity of the linear form of these landscapes.
- Conserve all existing areas of permanent pasture.
- Seek opportunities to encourage the conversion of arable land back to pasture.
- Conserve and enhance continuous tree cover along hedgelines, ditches and watercourses.
- Conserve existing wetland habitats and seek opportunities for further wetland habitat creation.
- Avoid building or road construction works.
- Avoid further drainage of waterside meadows.
- Explore opportunities to return to patterns and processes of natural flooding cycles.

MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Land Use:

The strong unity derived from the presence of watermeadows and pasture is becoming fragmented by the encroachment of arable land uses. The decline in the traditional practices of seasonal grazing and haymaking have diminished the nature conservation interest of the remaining areas of pasture. Similarly, modification of the natural shape and profile of water courses and drainage channels has reduced their wildlife value and produced a functional, somewhat urban appearance. These are essentially linear landscapes, relying on extensive views along the length of river corridors. New roads have been constructed on embankments directly across the flood plain, notably in the vicinity of Worcester, fragmenting the visual unity of the riverside meadow corridors as a result.

These are landscapes where the remaining areas of pasture should be conserved and opportunities sought to convert areas of arable land back to pasture. Wetland habitats are nationally scarce today and opportunities to restore or re-create them should be encouraged and in areas where property would not be at risk, a return to annual flooding cycles could be considered in order to achieve this.

Tree Cover Pattern:

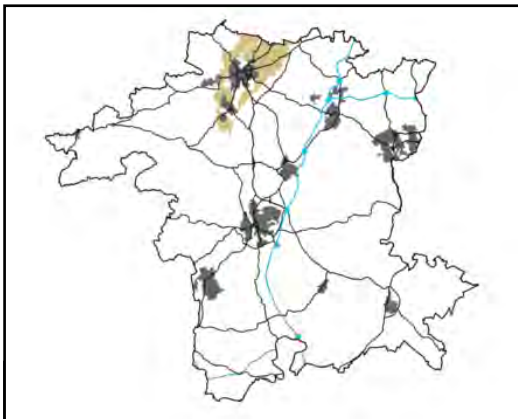
There is little to indicate that woodlands have been a characteristic feature of these landscapes since their use as grazing meadows evolved. Therefore, opportunities to introduce new tree planting should respect the inherent linear patterns of tree cover, although there may be some limited opportunity for wet woodland creation.



10.11 SANDSTONE ESTATELANDS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

These are open, rolling landscapes characterised by an ordered pattern of large, arable fields, straight roads and estate plantations. Fields are typically defined by straight thorn hedges, reflecting the late enclosure of much of this landscape from woodland and waste. This historic land use pattern is also reflected in the occurrence of isolated brick farmsteads and clusters of wayside dwellings, interspersed with occasional small villages. Despite the fact that this is a functional landscape, the consistent geometric pattern can convey a strong sense of visual unity.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

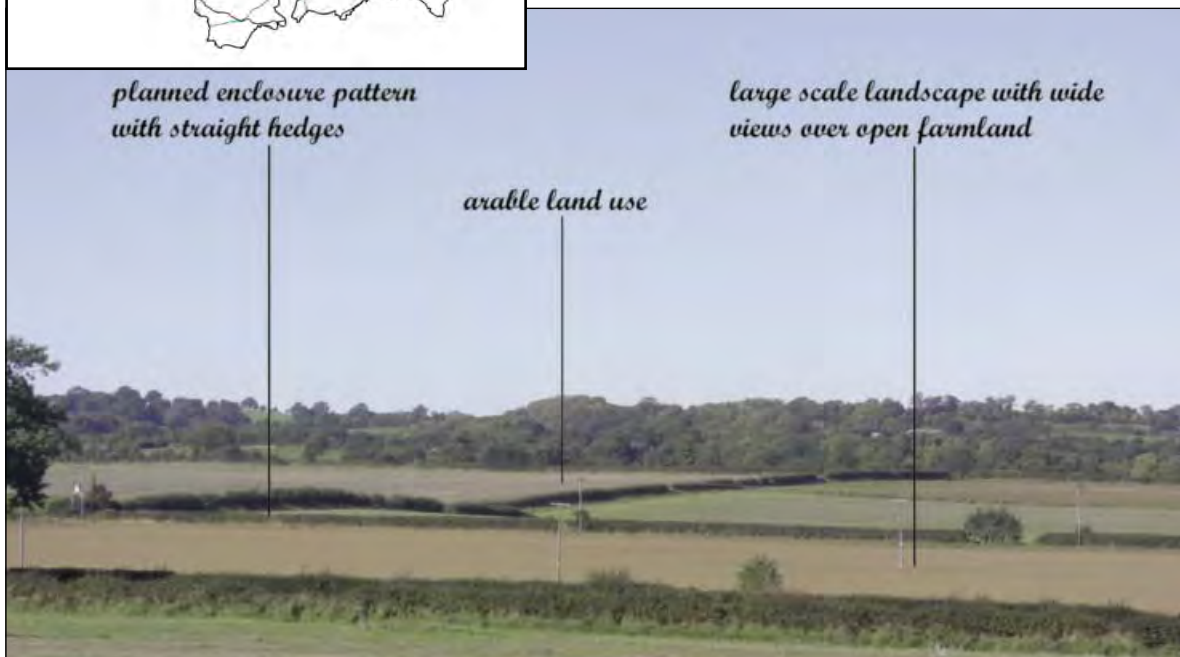
- Arable land use
- Hedgerow boundaries to fields
- Planned enclosure pattern - straight roads and field boundaries

Secondary:

- Woodland pattern of discrete blocks
- Planned woodland character - estate plantations and groups of trees
- Large-scale landscape with wide views over open farmland
- Impoverished sandy soils with relic heathy vegetation
- Dispersed pattern of isolated farmsteads and scattered wayside dwellings
- Discrete settlement clusters often in the form of small estate villages

Tertiary:

- Rolling topography with occasional low escarpments





DETAIL

This is an ordered landscape in which strong, regular patterns - in terms of field layout, road networks and woodland shape - play a dominant structural role. Large plantation woodlands provide a notable structural component to the landscape, although it is the field pattern that provides the overall unity. Further structure is provided by tree belts and linear tree cover along watercourses, although this is essentially a fairly open landscape, the tree cover providing a framework to views rather than producing a sense of enclosure and blocking them. Parkland features and associated ornamental planting, together with estate villages, can all contribute to the diversity of these landscapes.

These are landscapes of arable dominance in which the hedgerows have largely lost their function. Hedgerow loss and deterioration is already apparent in places to the detriment of landscape scale and character. The deterioration and reduced size of parklands is often evident, with parkland trees now located in areas of arable cultivation. These are landscapes that have a particularly distinctive natural vegetation, resulting from sandy soils, of heathy/gorse communities that are seldom expressed, being too often suppressed by management, particularly in such non-farmed locations as the wide roadside verges.



LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

- Conserve and restore the distinctive hedgerow pattern with priority given to primary hedgerows.
- Identify opportunities for further large scale planting of woodlands and tree belts to strengthen the regular patterns of the landscape.
- Conserve and restore parklands.
- Conserve and enhance tree cover along watercourses.
- Conserve the integrity of estate villages.
- Promote the creation and appropriate management of natural vegetation communities along highways and other non-farmed areas.
- Promote the development of wide field margins for wildlife benefit.

MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Settlement Pattern:

The settlement pattern varies between isolated brick farmsteads, clusters of wayside dwellings and occasional estate villages. There may be limited opportunities for new development that conforms to policy and local character.

Enclosure Pattern:

The conservation of hedgerows remains a priority but, bearing in mind the overall loss of hedgerow function, focus should be placed on primary hedgerow patterns. The opportunities for wildlife can be restricted in large scale arable landscapes such as these, and scope for improving wildlife habitats and corridors, particularly the development of wide field margins and the continuous tree cover along watercourses should be encouraged.

Tree Cover Pattern:

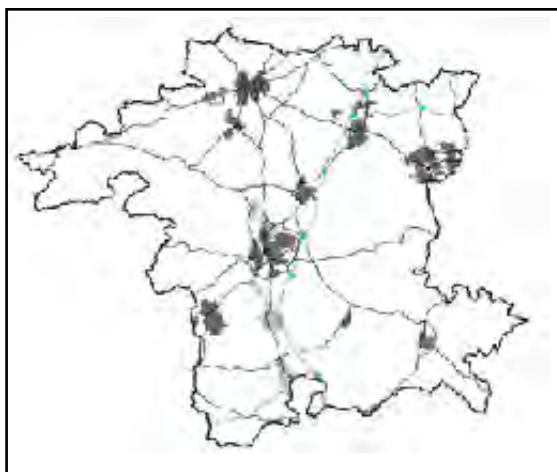
Tree cover is predominantly provided by large, discrete plantation woodlands and tree belts. These are often planted with conifers, poplars or other quick cropping species. The Sandstone Estatelands have the capacity to accommodate considerable areas of new woodland planting. With the decline and fragmentation of the hedgerow pattern, the development of a cohesive woodland structure, with woodland shape reflecting the pronounced regular landscape pattern, would considerably help to retain a sense of unity and scale to the landscape.



10.12 SETTLED FARMLANDS ON RIVER TERRACES

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

This is a medium scale, settled agricultural landscape where horticulture and cropping is the dominant land use, reflecting the fertile free draining soils. The settlement pattern is represented by scattered farms and clusters of wayside dwellings, linked by a matrix of winding lanes. Fields are bounded by hedgerows, with tree cover largely concentrated in groups associated with dwellings.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

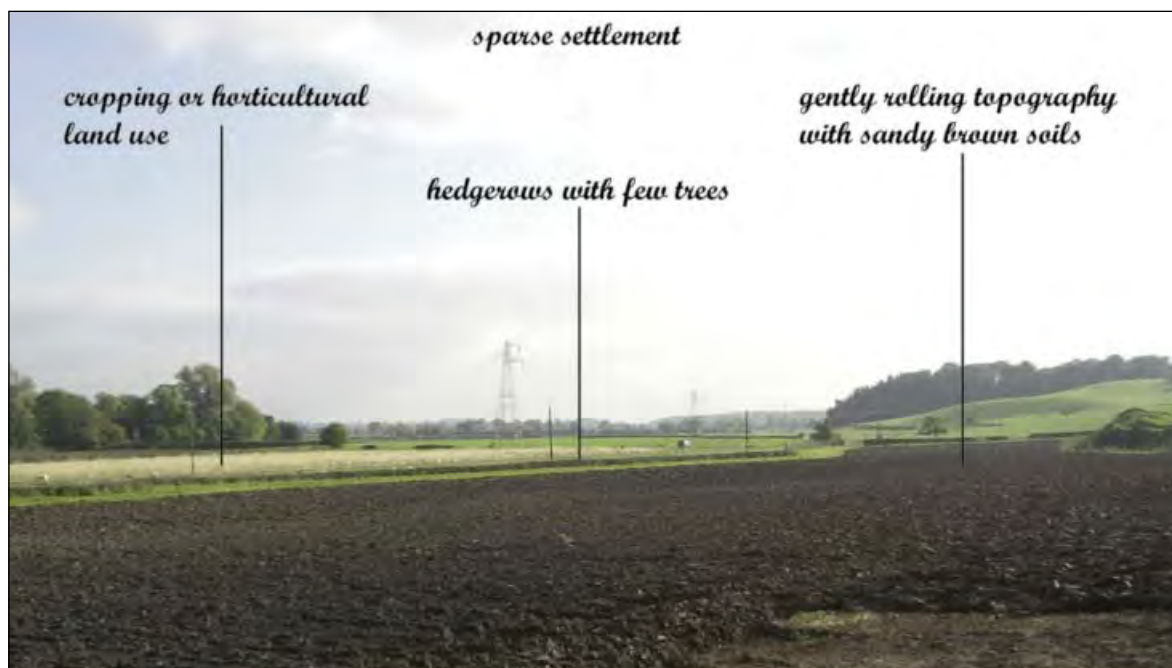
- Cropping/horticultural land use
- Landscape of medium scale
- Gently rolling lowland topography
- Sandy brown soils

Secondary:

- Hedgerow boundaries to fields
- Dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and clusters of wayside dwellings
- Tree groups associated with settlement

Tertiary:

- Sub-regular enclosure pattern





DETAIL

This landscape is similar to Principal Settled Farmlands and shares many of the characteristics of the latter, in terms of the absence of woodland, the pattern of dispersed settlement, and hedged fields. The topography too is similar, but typically of a more gently rolling nature. The field pattern tends to be sub-regular, suggesting early enclosure from areas of open field.

The defining characteristic lies in its land use - this landscape is primarily found on the river terraces, where free-draining, highly fertile sandy brown soils support an arable land use dominated by cash crops and market gardening. In Worcestershire, this Landscape Type is located on the river terraces of the Severn.

These landscapes are of medium scale with an open nature, tree cover being most strongly represented along watercourses and in association with settlement. Woodland is not characteristic of the Settled Farmlands on River Terraces. These areas have always been amongst the most fertile and productive agricultural land and were consequently probably cleared early and maintained under cultivation, and as a result have been devoid of woodland for a substantial period of time.



MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Settlement Pattern:

Settlement tends to be sparsely distributed, comprising wayside dwellings and small clusters. The same dense network of interlinking lanes, as found in the Principal Settled Farmlands, is usually present.

Enclosure Pattern:

The pattern of hedged fields is very vulnerable to change as the functional worth of these boundaries becomes reduced, coupled with the increasing demands of modern horticulture. There is a consequent increase in openness and scale of the landscape as these features become fragmented. Several areas already have a notably depleted hedgerow pattern.

Tree Cover Pattern:

Hedgerow trees have become reduced in number, due to their incompatibility with modern arable farming, and tree cover is now largely concentrated in the vicinity of settlement and in association with watercourses. This is not a landscape where woodland is characteristic and opportunities for new tree planting are best focused on strengthening the linear pattern of cover along watercourses, together with augmenting the tree cover associated with farmsteads and other settlements.

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

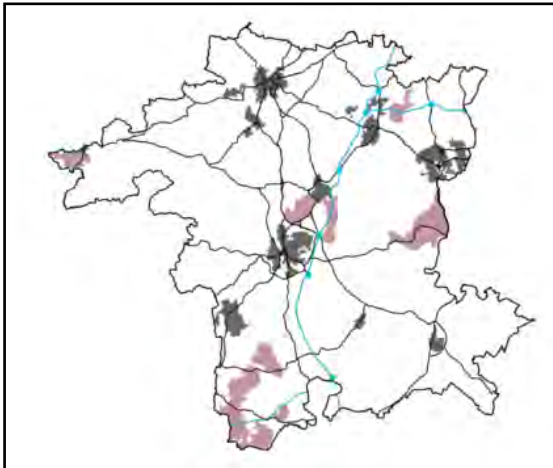
- Retain the integrity of the dispersed settlement pattern.
- Conserve and enhance tree cover along watercourses.
- Seek to maintain cropping/horticultural land uses.
- Enhance patterns of tree cover associated with settlement.
- Conserve and enhance patterns of hedgerows.



10.13 SETTLED FARMLANDS WITH PASTORAL LAND USE

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

These are small-scale rolling lowland, settled agricultural landscapes with a dominant pastoral land use, defined by their hedged fields. Hedgerow and streamside trees, together with those associated with settlement provide tree cover in a landscape with a notable network of winding lanes, scattered farms and clusters of wayside settlements.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

- Pastoral land use
- Small-scale landscape defined by prominent pattern of hedged fields
- Tree cover character of individual trees rather than woodland

Secondary:

- Tree cover pattern of scattered trees along hedgerows and watercourses
- Dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and groups of wayside dwellings
- Sub-regular enclosure pattern, with small and medium sized fields
- Rolling lowland with occasional steep sided hills and escarpments

Tertiary:

- Gleyed soils

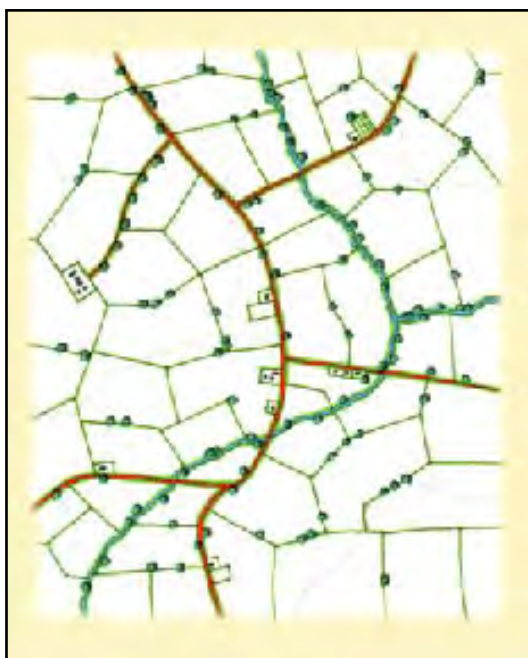




DETAIL

The Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use share many characteristics of the Principal Settled Farmlands. They are both lowland agricultural landscapes, with hedged fields, and a dispersed settlement pattern but the primary defining characteristic relates to soils and to the subsequent land use. These are landscapes of heavy or poorly drained soils associated with a predominantly pastoral land use. The field pattern follows that of the other Settled Farmlands, tending to be sub-regular, suggesting early enclosure from areas of open field, but the size of the fields tends to be smaller, and the pattern more prominent.

Tree cover is primarily represented by hedgerow trees and by trees along watercourses. In both instances these can be notable in their numbers and, combined with the field size, results in a landscape of much smaller, more intimate, scale than the other Settled Farmlands categories. The same pattern of dispersed farmsteads and wayside dwellings occurs in association with a dense network of lanes.



LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

- Conserve and enhance the pattern of hedgerows.
- Maintain overall pastoral land use.
- Seek opportunities to conserve all remaining areas of permanent pasture.
- Conserve and enhance tree cover along watercourses.
- Conserve hedgerow tree populations and promote new hedgerow tree planting.
- Retain the integrity of the dispersed pattern of settlement.

MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Land Use:

The defining pastoral land use is becoming diluted due to increased arable cultivation, which in turn has an impact upon the scale and enclosure pattern of these landscapes. The remaining areas of permanent pasture can often be of significant biodiversity interest, and this can be threatened by the increasing change in land use in favour of arable farming. Initiatives to safeguard remaining areas of permanent pasture should be strongly promoted.

Enclosure Pattern:

Over the past years hedgerows have been removed, resulting in larger fields and a change in the scale of the landscape and, although the Hedgerow Regulations should now reduce such direct damage, deteriorating management is likely to continue.

Tree Cover Pattern:

Woodlands are not characteristic of these landscapes and hedgerow trees, together with linear tree cover associated with watercourses, are particularly important, providing the defining tree cover element. The existing patterns of tree cover should be conserved, and opportunities for new tree planting should be focused on strengthening and restoring hedgerow tree populations and the tree cover associated with watercourses.



10.14 TIMBERED PASTURES

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

Timbered Pastures are small-scale, settled, pastoral landscapes characterised by filtered views through densely scattered hedgerow trees. The oak trees convey a sense of scale and stature combined with a feeling of maturity and history. This is a complex landscape of relic commons and former wood pasture, reflected today by an intermixed pattern of irregular fields and scattered farms occurring next to areas of geometric enclosure, straight roads and strings of wayside dwellings.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

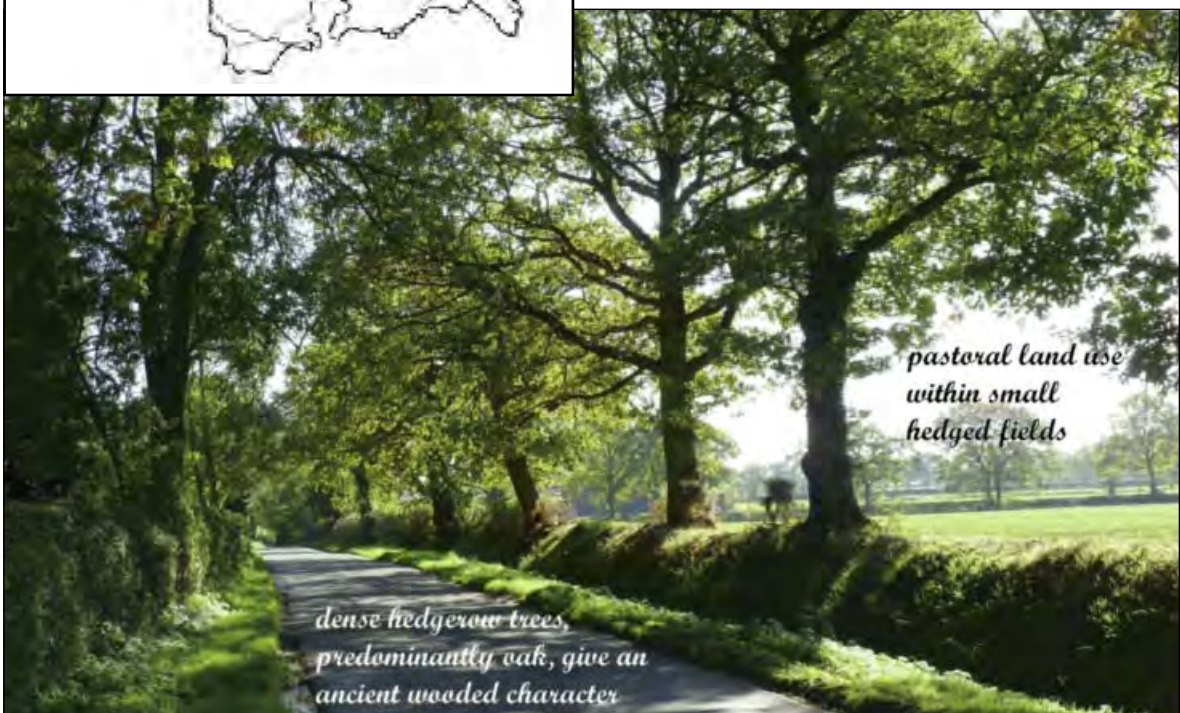
- Notable tree cover pattern of mature hedgerow oaks
- Ancient wooded character
- Small-scale landscape with well-defined pattern of small, hedged fields

Secondary:

- Pastoral land use
- Dense network of minor lanes

Tertiary:

- Impoverished, poorly draining soils with wet heathy vegetation
- Variable enclosure pattern
- Dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and strings of wayside cottages



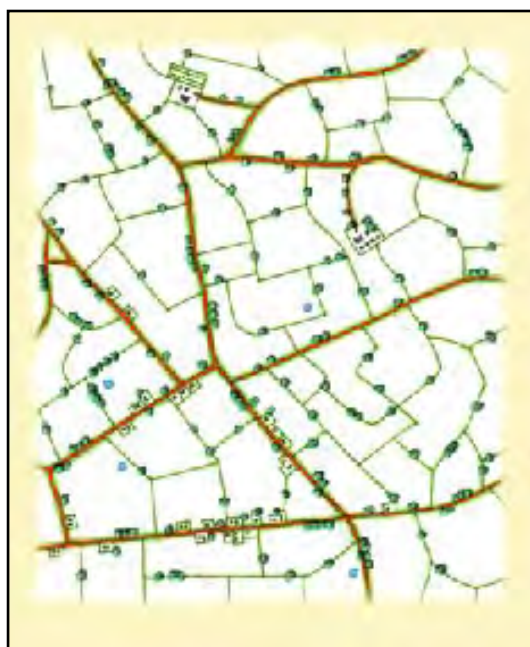
dense hedgerow trees, predominantly oak, give an ancient wooded character

pastoral land use within small hedged fields



DETAIL

This is a landscape of considerable ecological and historical interest, comprising a matrix of former areas of commonland and areas of woodland assarted origins. The key feature, providing its character and structure, is the dominant presence of dense lines of mature hedgerow oaks, which in turn rely upon the presence of hedgelines for their continued existence. The tree cover emphasises the small scale pattern of enclosure, overriding local differences in hedgerow pattern, regular where the fields are derived from the late enclosure of commonland, irregular where associated with fields of assarted origin. The dominant pastoral land use is also a notable feature. This is a landscape that can contain considerable nature conservation interest, the presence of areas of unimproved permanent pasture together with the high densities of small field ponds associated with former marl pits, being particularly relevant.



LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

- Conserve the dominant presence and density of hedgerow oak trees.
- Conserve and restore the small-scale pattern of hedged fields, through appropriate management.
- Conserve the pastoral land use character.
- Conserve the distinctive pattern and character of wayside dwellings.
- Maintain the distinctive density of ponds.
- Seek opportunities to reintroduce the character of unenclosed commons through creative design.
- Conserve the distinctive pattern and character of narrow, winding lanes.
- Seek opportunities to enhance tree cover along highways and other non-farmed locations.

MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Land Use:

Change over to arable farming and an increase in the grazing of horses are becoming evident, both of which can have a detrimental effect upon the hedgerow structure, and in turn on the perpetuation of hedgerow trees.

The decline in the dominance of permanent pasture dilutes the unity of this landscape and opportunities to both conserve and restore this land use should be sought. This is a landscape which formerly included a distinctive concentration of unenclosed commons, the essential character of which could be integrated into any new development proposals for the area, in order to facilitate opportunities for recreation

Significant numbers of field ponds are being lost due to infilling. This landscape is subject to many pressures due to the proximity of the conurbation of Birmingham, not least through the modification of the characteristic wayside dwellings as a result of modernisation and enlargement. Pressures to modify the narrow winding complex of lanes could become a priority as traffic volumes increase.

Tree Cover Pattern:

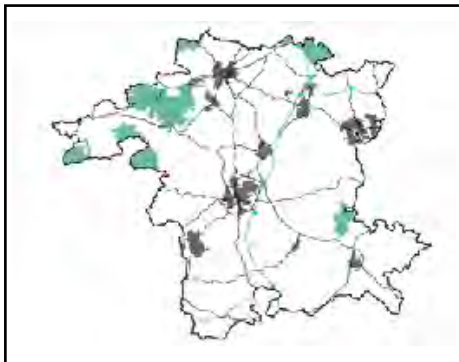
Emphasis needs to be placed upon promoting the importance of hedgerow oaks to this landscape, developing appropriate new incentives to encourage the initiation of new populations. Alternative opportunities to introduce tree cover within farmland, such as field corner plantings, are unlikely to achieve the distinctive density and consequent sense of enclosure created by the existing oaks.



10.15 TIMBERED PLATEAU FARMLANDS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

The Timbered Plateau Farmlands are varied, mixed farming landscapes of hedged fields, scattered farms, woods and wooded valleys associated with upstanding areas of undulating relief. The landform conveys a sense of strength and dominance which tends to override the pattern of tree cover and fields. Variations in landform within this landscape create a changing sequence of visual perspectives, ranging from open vistas on plateau summits to more secluded scenes along valley bottoms.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

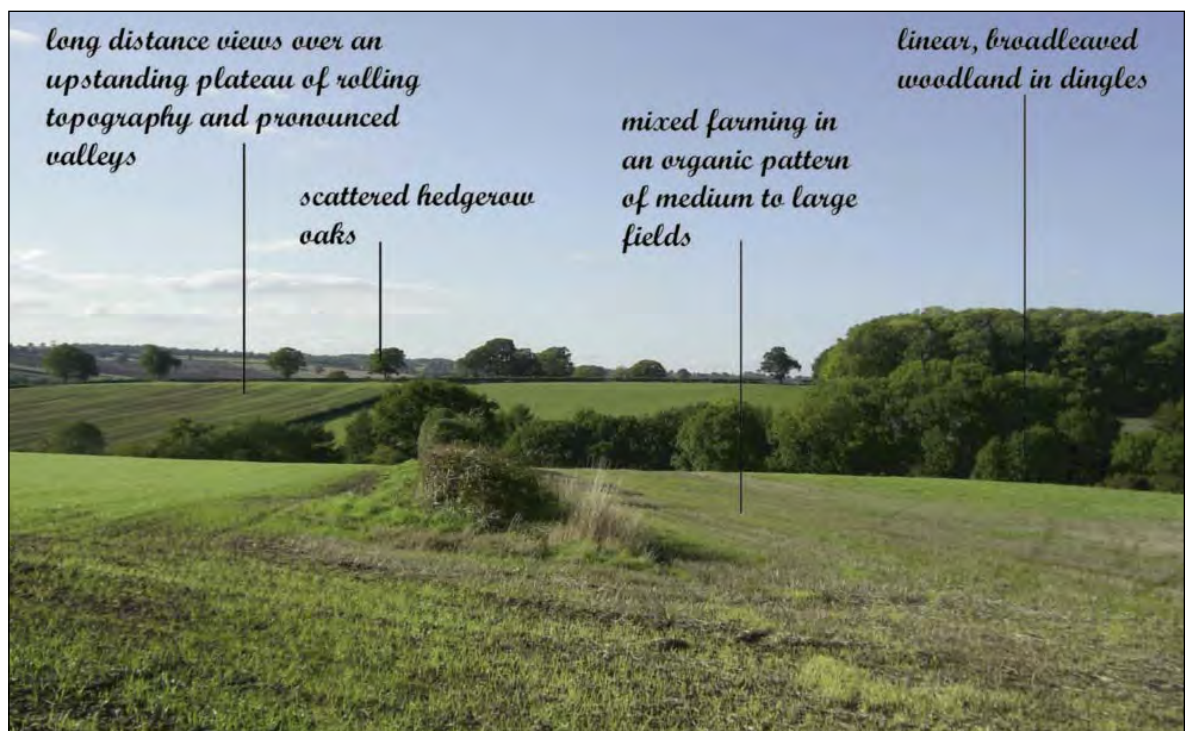
- Upstanding plateau of rolling topography dissected by broad valleys
- Filtered medium/long distance views
- Woodland of ancient character
- Mixed hedges with scattered hedgerow oaks

Secondary:

- Organic enclosure pattern of medium-to-large fields
- Linear tree cover pattern of wooded valleys often associated with streamside habitats
- Mixed farming land use

Tertiary:

- Dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and hamlets





DETAIL

The key elements of the Timbered Plateau Farmlands are topography and woodland. These are landscapes that have developed from a mosaic of piecemeal clearance of woodland and localised areas of open field, and retain a strong association with their woodland origins. The tree cover, consequently, is essentially of ancient semi-natural character, with oak as the dominant species. Unlike the Principal Timbered Farmlands, the lowland equivalent of this Landscape Type, the role of hedgerow trees and their influence in creating filtered views is less significant in the Timbered Plateau Farmlands. The more pronounced topography tends to throw the pattern of woodland and hedgerows into greater visual prominence. The woodland cover provides the major structure to the landscape, the hedgerow pattern defining the scale. These are landscapes containing woodlands of varying size, the dingles associated with the valley streams being a particular characteristic. The settlement pattern is a variable one of dispersed farms and hamlets with occasional villages or wayside cottages. The land use tends to be a patchwork of mixed farming with pasture often dominating the areas where topography limits intensive cultivation.



MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Tree Cover Pattern:

The deterioration of the overall structure of tree cover tends to be the major issue in these landscapes with corresponding loss of landscape unity. Woodland cover is not always a prominent component of the landscape today, the streamside tree cover can often be fragmented and the hedgerow tree cover composed of primarily mature or veteran trees. The fragmentation of hedgerows can result in the remaining woodlands becoming isolated from other areas of tree cover. The gradual change from a landscape of mixed agriculture to one dominated by arable farming, suggests that the function of hedgerows will become increasingly reduced, rendering the whole linking structure of hedgerows and tree cover, upon which the landscape character depends, increasingly vulnerable. The Timbered Plateau Farmlands are landscapes that could accommodate a considerable amount of new woodland planting. In some places a doubling of the woodland cover could be considered in order to retain and emphasise the woodland associations and origins of these areas, and to give greater structure to the landscape. New planting should aim to perpetuate the characteristic wide range of woodland size.

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

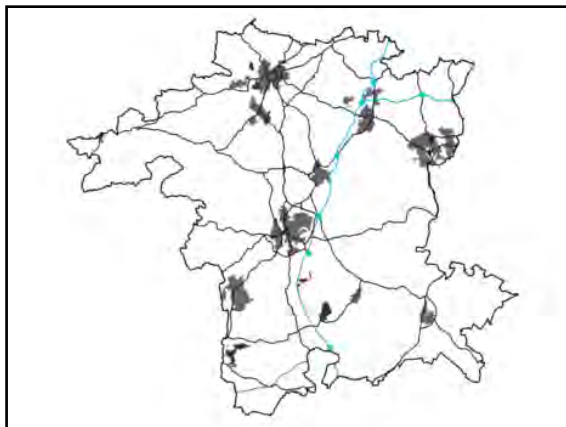
- Conserve and manage all ancient woodland sites, restocking with locally occurring native stock.
- Promote the coalescence of fragmented remnants of ancient woodland.
- Promote new woodland planting, favouring native broadleaves with oak as the major species.
- Promote infilling of gaps in tree cover along watercourses and dingles.
- Conserve hedgerow oaks and promote the importance of veteran trees.
- Conserve and restore the pattern of hedgerows throughout the area, giving priority to primary boundaries and boundaries of assorted origin.
- Conserve and restore existing parkland areas.
- Encourage new populations of hedgerow oaks, particularly through natural regeneration.
- Maintain the characteristic dispersed settlement pattern, avoiding the formation of pronounced settlement nuclei.



10.16 UNENCLOSED COMMONS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

This is a category of landscape that offers tremendous variety of scale and size, the overriding characteristics being the lack of enclosure and, usually, a land use of rough grazing. The smaller unenclosed commons are ranked as features within other Landscape Types but a few are considered to be of sufficient extent to warrant separate classification. Settlement, where present, is usually restricted to wayside dwellings situated around the perimeter of the common.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

- Unenclosed land
- Rough grazing land use

Secondary:

- Unsettled, but with wayside dwellings of distinctive scale and style, located on the perimeter of commons
- Unwooded, but small plots associated with dwellings often afford scattered tree cover
- Acid grassland/heath very often associated with these landscapes

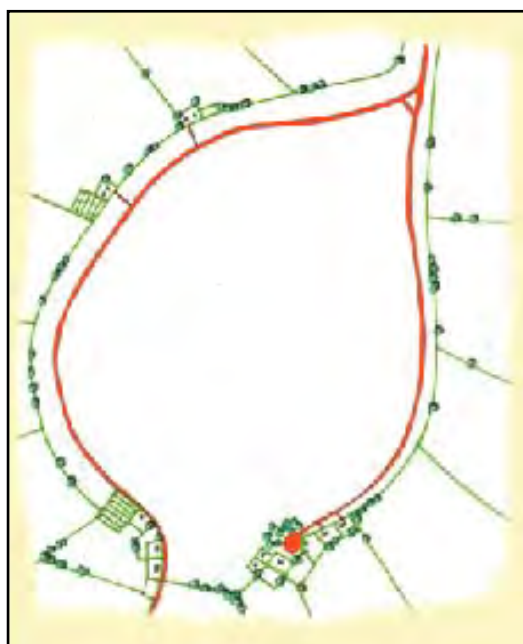




DETAIL

The character of these landscapes has, in the past, developed as a result of the activities of local people with commoners' rights. Different activities have resulted in rather differing identities. They are, as a group, notable for their lack of enclosure and their overall sense of wilderness. There is frequently an element of settlement associated with these commons, the style, scale and pattern of which is particularly distinctive, typically being small, wayside cottages, often white-washed, set in small plots of irregular shape. In many cases, tree cover is largely restricted to the plots and gardens associated with these cottages. The traditionally grazed commons are invariably associated with a high nature conservation value due to their unimproved status.

There would appear to continue to be a general lack of motivation to restore active pursuance of rights of common today, factors of economic benefit, disturbance and danger to grazing stock from busy roads, dogs and people together with increased regulations associated with animal husbandry perhaps contributing to such reluctance. The demise in the exercising of commoners' rights has resulted in reversion to scrub in many places. Elsewhere commons are valued for their recreation potential and managed in a municipal fashion, with regular cutting of the sward and sometimes associated planting of ornamental trees. There have, however, been successful instances of community approaches to restoring grazing stock on commonland, Monkwood Green being an example. Long term sustainable management initiatives are clearly needed for these landscapes and the success of such existing schemes should be widely promoted and encouraged elsewhere.



LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

- Conserve and enhance the unenclosed visual distinctiveness of open common areas.
- Conserve and enhance the spatial pattern, scale and specific character of wayside dwellings associated with commons.
- Recognising that each common will have a different historical profile, seek to define management objectives to integrate wildlife benefit, current recreational interests and other uses, together with the historical interest.
- Seek to avoid municipal/tidy approaches to management.

MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Settlement Pattern:

These are fundamentally unsettled landscapes, but over the years an element of settlement has built up. The degree of settlement varies but is usually of small wayside cottages dotted around the periphery of the common. The cottages are often whitewashed and set in small, irregularly shaped gardens with occasional paddocks. Modern enlargement and remodelling has often resulted in an uncharacteristic sub-urban character.

Enclosure Pattern:

All methods of enclosure are inappropriate although peripheral temporary stock fencing may sometimes be necessary

Tree Cover Pattern:

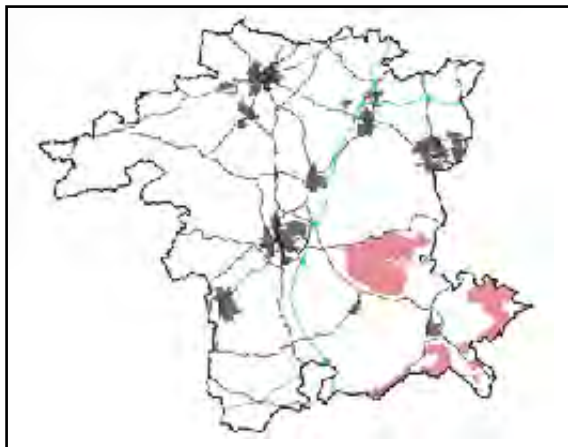
Tree cover is typically restricted to the gardens and small orchards associated with the surrounding cottages. However, the character of these commons varies widely and some have a significant number of trees, either as individual specimens, groups, or areas of grazed woodland. In addition, those commons that are no longer adequately grazed have a problem of encroaching scrub and secondary woodland. Generally, additional tree planting is not appropriate on Unenclosed Commons.



10.17 VILLAGE CLAYLANDS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

These are open, gently rolling agricultural landscapes characterised by an ordered pattern of hedged fields and discrete rural villages connected by a network of minor roads. These are landscapes of heavy, poorly drained soils, typically associated with broad clay vales backed by steeply sloping escarpments. Ridge and furrow, a relic of medieval farming practice is often distinctive. The field pattern tends to define the scale of the landscape.



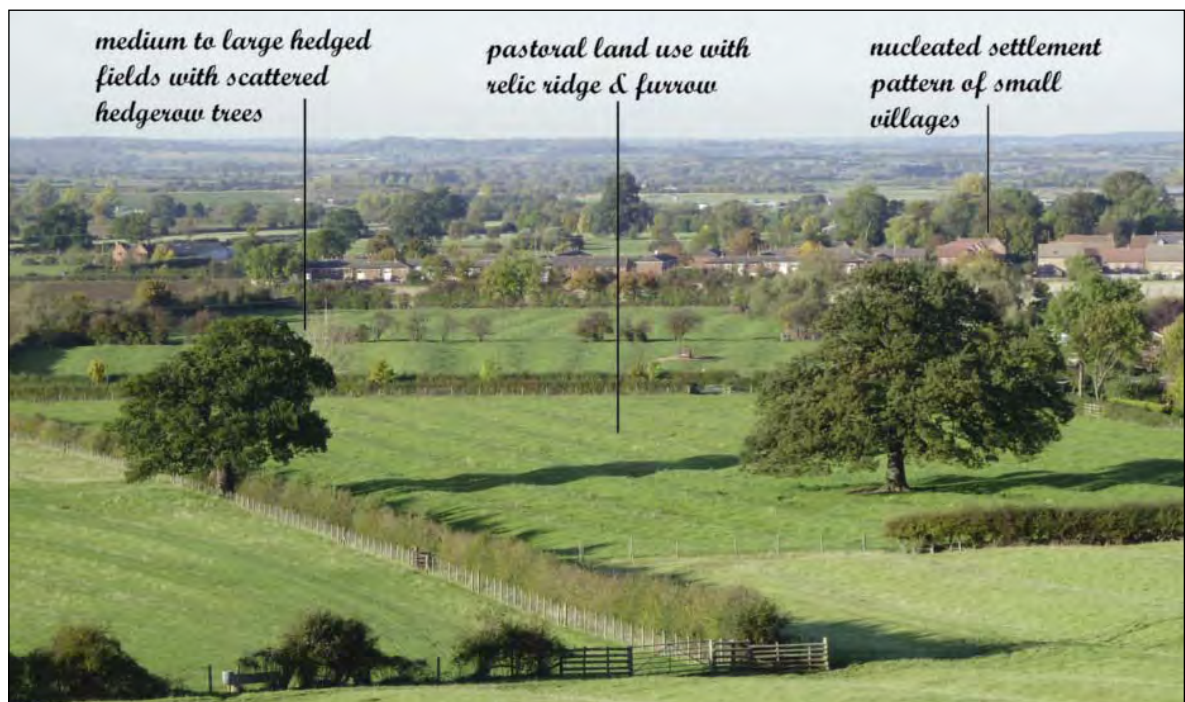
KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

- Hedgerow boundaries to fields

Secondary:

- Pastoral land use with relic ridge and furrow
- Gently rolling lowland topography
- Heavy, poorly drained soils
- Medium-to-large scale field pattern
- Rural lanes with uniform grass verges
- Scattered hedgerow and streamline trees
- Nucleated settlement pattern, usually of small, rural villages



medium to large hedged fields with scattered hedgerow trees

pastoral land use with relic ridge & furrow

nucleated settlement pattern of small villages



DETAIL

The pastoral land use is one of the key elements of this landscape, together with the pattern of settlement and hedged fields. These are landscapes derived from former extensive areas of open fields, but, because of their heavy soil, were less favoured for continued arable cultivation becoming predominantly converted to pasture at the time of enclosure. There are still significant areas of permanent pasture in some localities, often with notable representation of ridge and furrow. The pattern of hedged fields defines the scale of the landscape which until recently would have conveyed a more pronounced sense of structure and enclosure. These landscapes were often bastions of hedgerow elm tree cover in the past, and the composition of many hedges is still dominated by this species. The impact of Dutch Elm Disease has left them significantly lacking in tree cover. Originally, it was thought that rather than use an alternative species to restore the distinctively dense tree cover associated with the elm it would be left for a degree of natural resistance to emerge that would enable regeneration of this species to arise from the remaining hedgerow stock. However, after 40 years there is no evidence of any emergence of natural resistance. The decision has therefore been taken to attempt to replicate the originally heavily treed landscape by promoting the planting of oak and ash hedgerow trees.



LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

- Conserve the pattern of hedgerow boundaries.
- Conserve all remaining areas of permanent pasture and distinctive ridge and furrow.
- Conserve and enhance tree cover along water courses.
- Conserve and enhance the scattered populations of hedgerow trees.
- Seek to retain the integrity of the distinctive settlement pattern of small villages.
- Encourage the planting of tree groups in association with settlements.
- Opportunities for conversion of arable land back to pasture should be given consideration.

MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Settlement Pattern:

The nucleated settlement pattern reflects the organised community structure associated with open field culture of long standing where farmsteads were located within the village, not in the open countryside. However, the villages have often declined in size or even become abandoned, reflecting the decline in status of the areas for farming.

Enclosure Pattern:

An increase in the proportion of arable land is evident which dilutes the distinctive land use and results in damage to the nature conservation and archaeological interest if areas of unimproved meadow are destroyed in the process. The increase in arable land uses also reduces the functionality of hedgerows, with consequent dilution of landscape scale and structure as hedges become lost or fragmented.

Tree Cover Pattern:

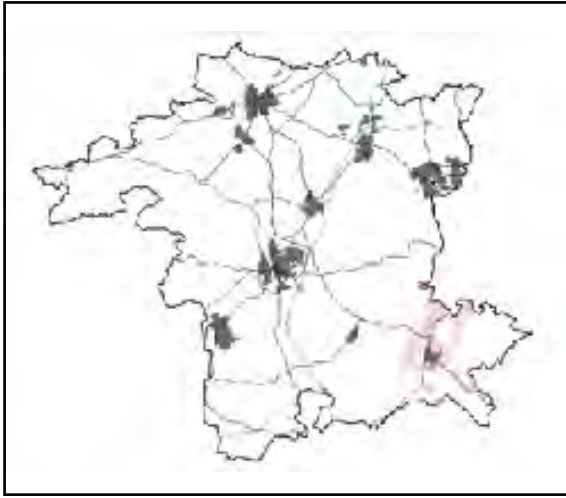
Woodland is not a characteristic of these 'planned' landscapes. Trees are now primarily represented by watercourse lines of willow and alder with limited hedgerow ash. The restoration of tree cover along the watercourses is to be encouraged along with the planting of tree groups in and around settlement to enhance the character and to help emphasise the distinctive settlement pattern



10.18 VILLAGE FARMLANDS WITH ORCHARDS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

This is a distinctive planned lowland agricultural landscape with a notably dominant orchard land use. It is an intensively cultivated landscape characterised by a nucleated pattern of expanded villages surrounded by large cultivated fields.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

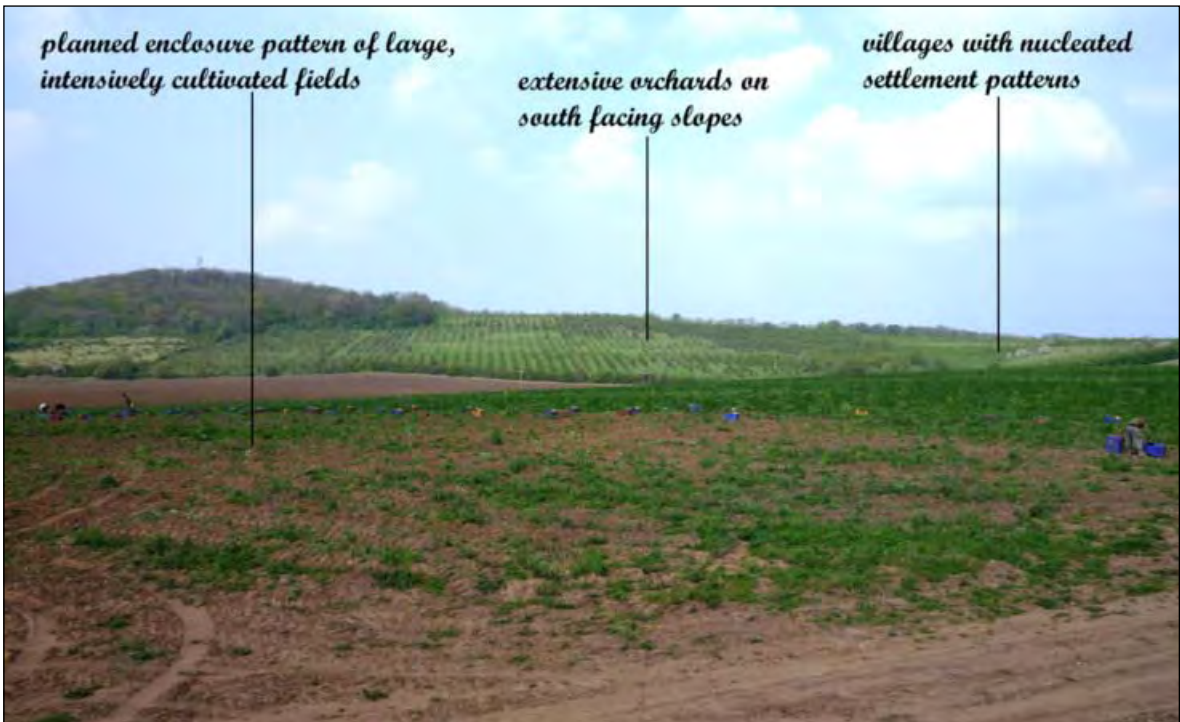
- Extensive apple and plum orchards on south facing slopes

Secondary:

- Nucleated settlement pattern

Tertiary:

- Gently undulating topography
- Planned enclosure pattern of medium- to large-scale fields
- Crops of cereals and field vegetables



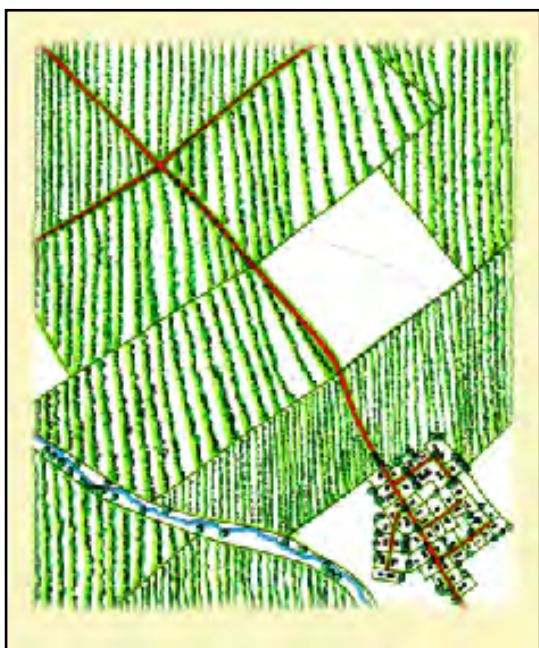


DETAIL

The Village Farmlands with Orchards are planned, lowland agricultural landscapes with a strongly nucleated settlement pattern, sharing many of the characteristics of the Principal Village Farmlands with which they have a similar evolution. The primary defining characteristic lies in the land use. These landscapes tend to be located in areas of slightly more pronounced topography, where the south facing slopes are ideal for fruit growing. Orchards are a primary land use, apple, plum and gage being particularly notable. Unfortunately, the characteristic traditional orchards of standard trees are disappearing in some areas, with many old traditional fruit tree varieties being lost as a result. The economic worth of certain types of orchard - such as damson and plum - appears to be in decline and could hamper prospects of replacement once the old trees have declined. New orchard planting/restoration, notably of apple, often uses bush stock, the smaller stature of which has an impact upon the scale of the landscape.

Fields are bounded by hedgerows, typically of a regular, planned pattern, although the pattern becomes subsidiary to the structure of orchard cover, and is less evident visually than in the Principal Village Farmlands.

Lines of hedgerow fruit trees, particularly damson, are a distinctive local feature. Scattered tree cover along water courses, together with tree presence within the villages, provides the remaining tree cover character of these landscapes.



MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Enclosure Pattern:
The functionality of many hedgerows has now declined and, whilst appreciating both the landscape and wildlife value of retaining the full hedgerow structure, it would appear most viable to give priority to the conservation and restoration of primary hedgerows.

Tree Cover Pattern:
Woodland is not characteristic of any of the Village Farmlands and new woodland planting in these areas would dilute their distinctive character. Elm was formerly a dominant tree species, providing a distinctive landscape feature. The regeneration of elm continues in the hedgerows but still eventually succumbs to disease at a certain size. After much consideration, it has been decided to promote the planting of oak and ash substitutes for the original densely planted hedgerow elms.

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

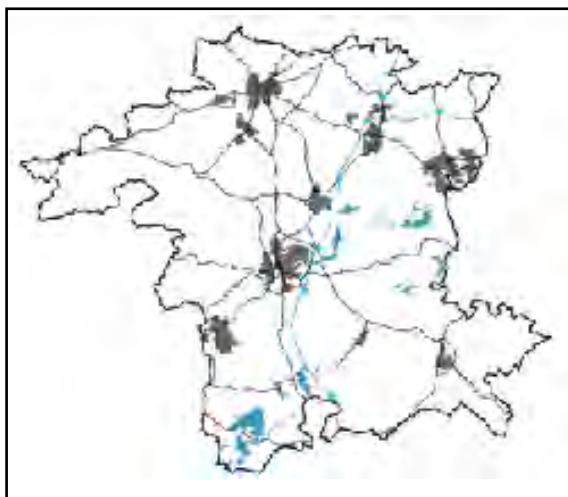
- Conserve and restore traditional orchards, with emphasis placed upon the fruit type and varieties associated with different localities.
- Conserve and restore lines of hedgerow fruit trees.
- Retain pattern of strongly nucleated villages with associated low dispersal of settlement between.
- Conserve and restore hedgerow structure with emphasis upon the primary hedge lines.
- Conserve and enhance tree cover along watercourses.
- Encourage opportunities for tree planting in and around villages.
- Promote development of wide field margins for wildlife benefit.
- Promote management of roadside verges for wildlife benefit.



10.19 WET PASTURE MEADOWS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

A flat, low-lying, largely uninhabited landscape associated with irregularly shaped, poorly draining basins fringed by low hills or scarps. This is a secluded pastoral landscape characterised by a regular pattern of hedged fields and ditches fringed by lines of willow and alder. Pollarded willows are often a distinctive feature.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

- Flat low-lying topography
- Pastoral land use with patches of wet grassland
- Tree cover character of individual trees as opposed to woodland
- Tree cover pattern of linear tree belts along ditches and watercourses - particularly lines of alder and willow

Secondary:

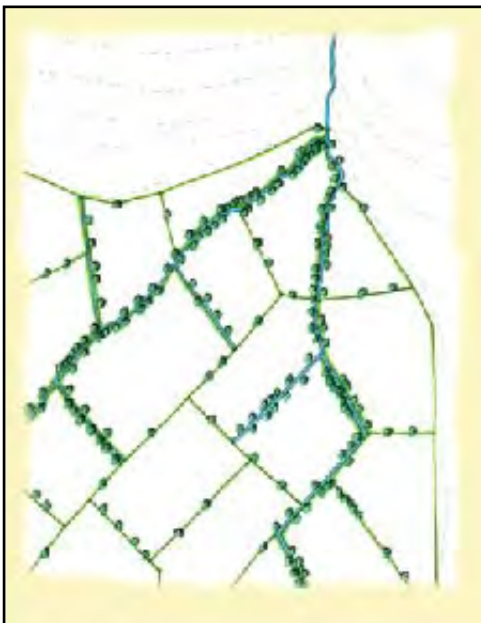
- Regular pattern of hedged fields with ditches
- Rushes, reeds and other marginal/aquatic vegetation
- Unsettled with few roads





DETAIL

These are flat, low lying and largely uninhabited landscapes. They are found where the land form has naturally created poorly drained, low lying basins collecting water from the surrounding low hills or scarps. These are landscapes which, in the past, have been protected from change by the difficulty of cultivating soils with such poor drainage. They have consequently been avoided as sites for settlement and roads, and have often not been considered economically viable for agricultural improvement. This, together with the widespread pastoral land use, and associated traditional methods of management, has favoured the retention of wetland habitats of considerable wildlife interest and a certain wilderness quality. The patterns of hedged fields provide structure to the landscape, the hedge lines invariably associated with ditches. Further structure is provided by linear tree cover along the ditches. These are usually alder and willow, with pollarded willows being a distinctive feature in places. The sustainable land use for these areas would appear to be pastoral, which in turn is compatible with the great ecological potential these landscapes possess and the exciting opportunities they offer for wetland creation or restoration.



LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

- Conserve all permanent pasture.
- Conserve and restore linear tree cover along watercourses, ditches and hedgelines.
- Seek opportunities to encourage the conversion of arable land back to pasture.
- Encourage the retention and appropriate management of existing wetland habitats.
- Encourage the creation of new wetland habitats.
- Discourage activities likely to increase the drainage, or lower the water table of these areas.
- Discourage any building or construction works in these landscapes.

MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Settlement Pattern:

These are unsettled landscapes where development is not appropriate in landscape terms. They should be regarded primarily as areas of conservation and the unsettled, undeveloped character perpetuated.

Land Use:

These landscapes are particularly vulnerable to changing agricultural practices. Many Wet Pasture Meadows have been drained in order to increase their productivity. This has led to agricultural improvement of the sward, changes from hay making to silage production, or arable conversion. All such changes result in a significant impoverishment of landscape character and ecological value. Similarly, the transformation of some of these areas to deeper water by excavating features such as lakes and irrigation reservoirs will have inevitably destroyed wetland habitats of greater ecological interest.

Tree Cover Pattern:

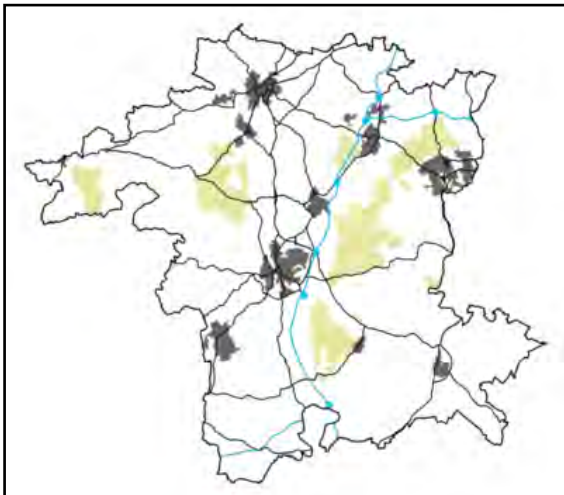
Unfortunately, the traditional management of pollarding willows is often neglected, leading to deterioration and loss of the linear tree cover. Woodland is not appropriate in Wet Pasture Meadows.



10.20 WOODDED ESTATELANDS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

This is a large scale, wooded agricultural landscape of isolated brick farmsteads, clusters of wayside dwellings and occasional small estate villages. The key visual element in this landscape is the frequent large, irregularly shaped ancient woodlands, often prominently situated on low crests. It is a landscape that, due to its scale, lacks intimacy and can appear rather functional.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

- Large discrete blocks of irregularly shaped woodland
- Mixed farming land use

Secondary:

- Rolling topography with occasional steep-sided hills and low escarpments
- Semi-regular pattern of large, hedged fields
- Woodland of ancient character
- Discrete settlement clusters often in the form of small estate villages
- Medium distance framed views
- Large country houses set in parkland and ornamental grounds





DETAIL

These are wooded agricultural landscapes of isolated farmsteads, clusters of wayside dwellings and occasional small estate villages. Mixed farming is the dominant land use, with woodland comprising about 30-40% of the land cover. This Landscape Type relies heavily upon its woodland component as the critical element in defining its character. The size, shape and composition of the woodlands are all important, being generally large, discrete woods of ancient semi-natural character and irregular or semi-regular outline. They frame the views and are often prominently situated on low crests. The prominent hedgerows are also important in defining the scale and providing the structure to the landscape. Ornamental grounds and parkland associated with large estates can be a noticeable feature in these landscapes. Groups of mature ornamental trees planted in parks or gardens are often significant visual landmarks. Similarly, medieval parkland and its associated ancient woodland is often a feature. Estate villages may also be associated with these areas, and invariably possess a strong character as a result of their style, layout and detailing. It is not an intimate landscape and, due to its fairly large scale, can sometimes appear rather functional.

The landscape character is dependant on a small number of strongly defined characteristics. It could easily lose its integrity and become muddled and confusing if the range of features associated with it were to be increased. The introduction of small scale elements would do as much harm to the character as the loss of the inherent features.



MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Settlement Pattern:

These landscapes generally have a clustered settlement pattern of wayside dwellings or estate villages. Isolated farmsteads are also a feature. New development would be appropriate if it is in accordance with policy but it must be carefully sited in order to protect the visual integrity of the estate villages.

Land Use:

Hedgerows provide a unifying presence in this landscape by linking the large blocks of woodland. The intensification of arable farming has resulted in the loss and deterioration of many of the hedgerows and thus the fragmentation of landscape character.

Tree Cover Pattern:

The introduction of conifers to the woodlands has weakened the inherent character of the landscape. The many parklands often originating from medieval deer parks have been significantly reduced in size, frequently leaving the former parkland trees marooned amongst arable cropping.

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

- Conserve all ancient woodland sites and restock with locally occurring native species.
- Promote new large scale woodland planting.
- New woodland planting should be of native broadleaved species, favouring oak as the dominant species and relate to the scale and spatial pattern of the Landscape Type.
- Conserve and restore the hedgerow pattern, particularly primary hedgerows and hedgerow tree cover.
- Seek to ensure hedgerow linkage to all woodland blocks, for visual cohesion and wildlife benefit.
- Conserve and restore parkland including historically correct ornamental planting and with an emphasis on arable reversion.
- Conserve the integrity of estate villages and their associated tree cover.



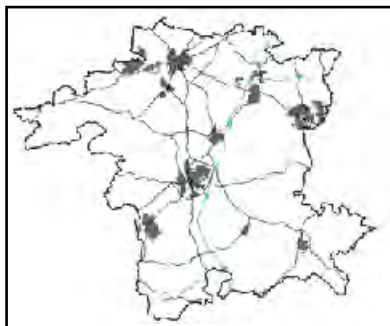
10.21 WOODED FOREST

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

In Worcestershire this Landscape Type is only represented in Wyre Forest.

This is a landscape dominated by dense tree cover, predominately woodland of ancient character, effectively blocking all but immediate short distance views. It is essentially unsettled although occasional wayside cottages occur, often with adjacent small fields of assorted origin.

This is an uncomplicated landscape where the unrelenting mass of woodland and restricted views creates a strong character which can feel overwhelmingly remote and confined.



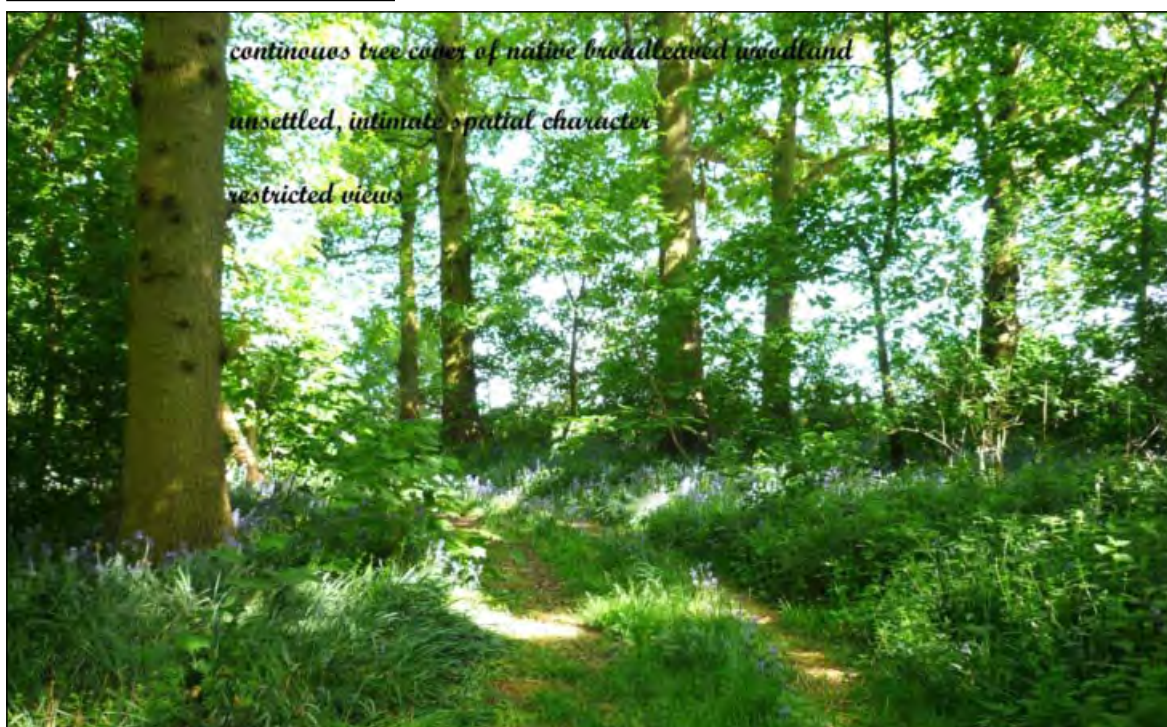
KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

- Continuous woodland cover of ancient character, woodland being the dominant land use
- Intimate spatial character

Secondary:

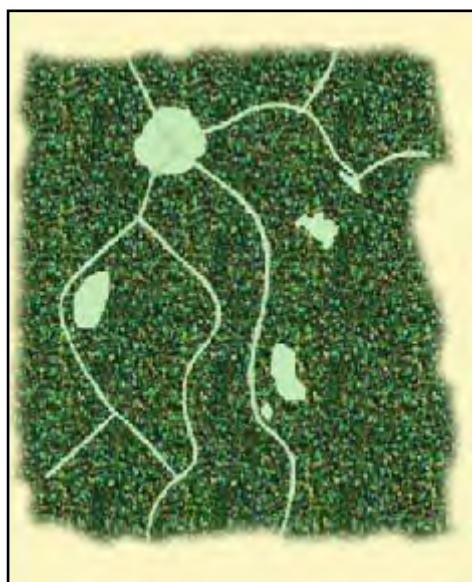
- Generally an unsettled landscape, except for occasional wayside cottages
- Infrequent roads, access generally poor
- Occasional clearings of small fields associated with cottages





DETAIL

The overriding characteristic of this landscape is the dominance of woodland cover. These are areas that may have been briefly cleared for agricultural purposes at the height of agricultural expansion in the late 13th/early 14th centuries. Any clearance would have been likely to be of a piecemeal nature with woodland re-colonisation following the contraction of the area of cultivated land after the Black Death. The relative lack of settlement relates to the absence of a prolonged period of agricultural activity, the scattered cottages probably relating to occupations linked to the woodland. The interdependence of woodland and the charcoal and smelting industries has been a major factor in the survival of such a large concentration of forest. The woodlands are of ancient character and the whole woodland landscape is one of notable nature conservation value. The underlying impoverished sandy soils give rise to a heathy/acid grassland ground vegetation, which is of considerable botanical interest in its own right.



MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Settlement Pattern:

This is fundamentally an unsettled landscape but one that accommodates the occasional small scale wayside dwelling. The character and integrity of these cottages and their associated land parcels is important to the integrity of the landscape and should be conserved; any increase to the size, appearance or scale of such properties should be avoided. Additional settlement is not appropriate in this landscape.

Enclosure Pattern:

This is an unenclosed landscape of continuous woodland. Additional clearance or enclosure should be resisted.

Tree Cover Pattern:

Previous conifer plantings have resulted in some dilution of woodland character. However, the acknowledged importance of the nature conservation interest and the increasingly sympathetic approach towards landscape and wildlife interests promoted in current national woodland management guidance suggests that the restoration of the ancient wooded character is already a priority, and that further deterioration of the woodland character is unlikely. The existing guidance for the management of ancient woodland sites should be strongly promoted and supported in this area, coupled with priorities identified for nature conservation.

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

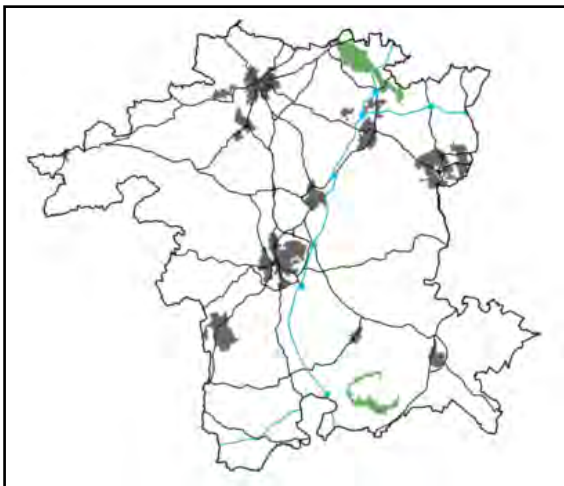
- Conserve all ancient woodland sites and restock with appropriate locally occurring broadleaved trees, favouring oak as the major species.
- Conserve the unsettled woodland character, avoiding any urban influences.



10.22 WOODED HILLS AND FARMLANDS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

These are medium to large scale upstanding, wooded landscapes with a sloping topography and well defined character. They are similar to the Principal Wooded Hills, but with more of an emphasis on farmland. The woods tend to occur as discrete blocks framing larger areas of enclosed fields. The latter are often associated with a small village or hamlet. There is a sense of balance, with a character that is less extreme than the Principal Wooded Hills.



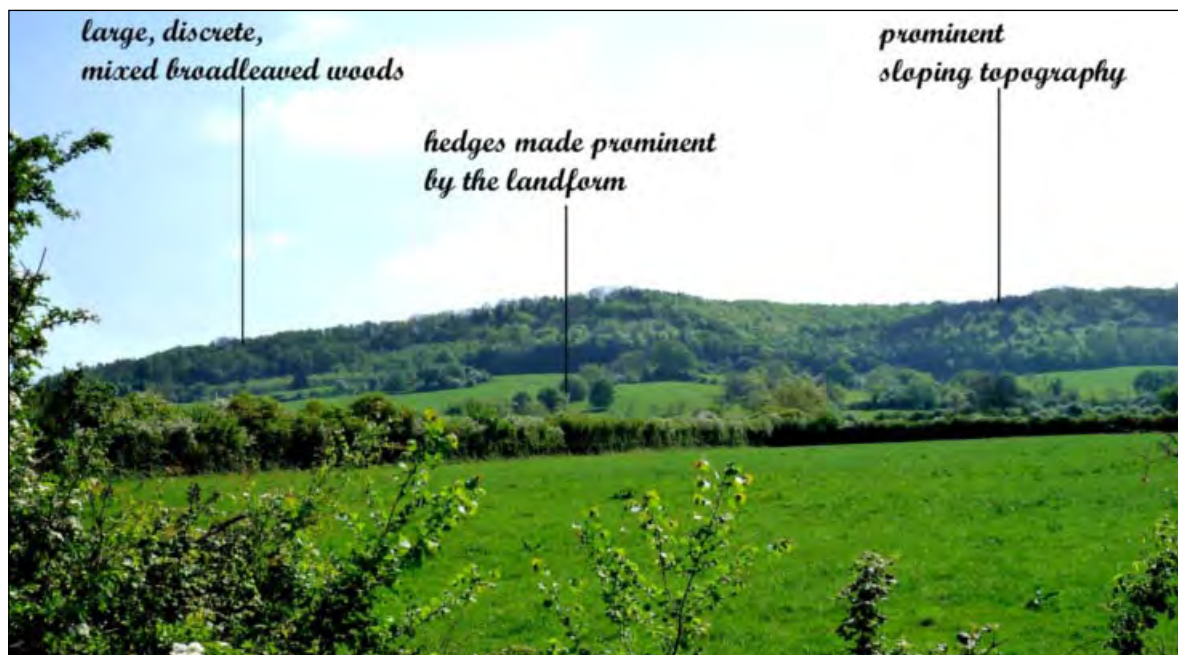
KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary:

- Prominent sloping topography
- Hedgerow field boundaries are an important element in defining landscape scale
- Tree cover pattern of large, discrete woodland blocks

Secondary:

- Woodland of ancient character
- Mixed farming land use
- Medium-framed views
- Sparsely clustered settlement pattern associated with areas of former open fields

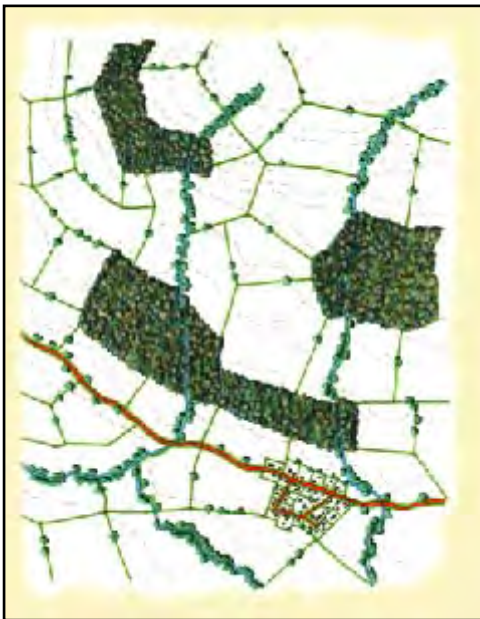




DETAIL

These are landscapes with an inherently large scale and strength due to their patterns of substantial woodland blocks and large hedged fields. The steepness of slope is generally less severe than the Principal Wooded Hills and therefore has been less of a constraint for agriculture. They contain a significant proportion of farmland, considered to be derived from former areas of open field, and which is usually associated with settlement clusters. The historic origins of these areas should be recognised and their visual cohesion conserved. The dominant land use is of mixed farming, interspersed with large, ancient semi-natural woods that frame the views. The hedgerow structure and streamside tree cover is particularly important in providing visual unity to these areas, linking the woodland blocks and integrating them with the areas of farmland. Within the farmed areas, the upper slopes may include areas of permanent pasture of botanical interest.

These are landscapes that often lack a strong sense of visual cohesion today, due to the variable amount of woodland cover and the decline in both hedgerow pattern and fabric. The mixed broadleaf composition may also have been diluted by the presence of conifer planting. The strength and scale of the landscape becomes diluted if the large woodland blocks become fragmented if the structure of hedgerow and streamlines is broken, or if features of an inappropriately small scale are introduced.



MODERN IMPACTS ON CHARACTER

Settlement Pattern:

Settlement in these landscapes is usually clustered dwellings associated with the areas of open fields. Small villages and hamlets are therefore typical but are sparsely dispersed through a landscape that does not feel well populated. Opportunities for additional housing should be in accordance with policies and should respect the settlement pattern and be concentrated on the existing clustered communities in order to maintain the low settlement density.

Enclosure Pattern:

The sub-regular enclosure pattern reflects the scale of woodland clearance and historical land enclosure. Loss of hedges will disrupt this pattern, as will the addition of hedges or fences seeking to subdivide fields.

Tree Cover Pattern:

There are considerable opportunities for planting new large woodland blocks particularly in areas of recent clearance. At the same time, the importance of the patterns of historical land clearance should be recognised and conserved. Emphasis should also be placed on perpetuating the corridors that link the woodlands together.

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

- Conserve existing blocks of woodland.
- Seek opportunities to restore the balance of woodland cover throughout these landscapes.
- Conserve and restore the ancient woodland character of all woodlands.
- Conserve the historic pattern of large hedged fields, with priority being given to strengthening and restoring primary hedge lines.
- Enhance tree cover along watercourses and dingles.
- Conserve all remaining areas of permanent pasture.



APPENDIX A: HISTORIC LANDSCAPES

A.1 Historic Landscape Characterisation

Additional data sets that support LCA: Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC), Historic Environment Assessment (HEA) and The Farmsteads Project.

A.1.1 Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is a process that is reciprocal to Landscape Character Assessment (LCA). English Heritage describes the HLC in terms of time-depth, this being the legibility of the past in the present landscape.

A.1.2 Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service (WHEAS) are currently undertaking an HLC of Worcestershire as part of English Heritage's national programme of HLC. The Worcestershire HLC project aims to improve the understanding of the County's landscape, and provide a context for its archaeological sites and monuments. HLC will also provide a framework for informed landscape management strategies, spatial planning, development control and conservation issues at a local, regional and national level. It will underpin historic environment advice given to district councils and other environmental or conservation agencies, enabling future changes within the historic environment to be monitored. The Worcestershire HLC project is split into four stages:

- **Stage 1.** Pilot study. The purpose of this stage is familiarisation with sources and assessment of the project methodology;

- **Stage 2.** Data collection through HLC mapping for the remainder of the county using a refined project methodology;
- **Stage 3.** Review, analysis and interpretation of the data. Secondary sources will be used to assess and inform emerging patterns and trends within the Stage 2 data;
- **Stage 4.** Preparation of a report, archive and dissemination of the results.

A.1.3 The Historic Landscape Characterisation is complementary to the Landscape Character Assessment. The two studies have different perspectives, the former being concerned with the underlying historical anthropogenic processes influencing landscape while the latter is primarily concerned with the combination of physical and cultural factors that are expressed visually in the landscape. However, these factors include historic landscape attributes such as the historic patterns of enclosure. It was originally thought that the two studies could share the same Land Cover Parcel boundaries but this has proved to be impractical. The historic study addresses the element of time-depth, this being the way that earlier landscapes and change can still be seen in the present-day landscape, while the landscape study encompasses a broader range of character-defining factors. This fundamental difference has led to the two studies being unique in their boundary definitions. The HLC has given us a much greater understanding of the derivation and evolution of the landscape that we see today.



APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY

Ancient Woodland Character	Wooded landscapes characterised by mixed broadleaved woodlands with a varied age structure, often of ancient origin (as defined on the ancient woodland inventory). This pattern often displays clear signs of piecemeal woodland clearance, such as irregular woodland outlines, woodland place names etc.
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	A statutory designation intended to conserve the natural scenic beauty of an area. Identified by the Countryside Commission and administered by Local Authorities.
Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV)	A regional planning designation, identifying those areas that are considered to be of special landscape quality and meriting special protection. These areas are shown in County Structure Plans and Local District Plans.
Attributes	The individual qualities that make up an indicator, eg. settlement pattern may be unsettled, clustered, wayside, dispersed or scattered.
Biodiversity	The total variety of life on earth or within any given part of it.
Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)	A plan setting out the current status, issues and threats for a species or habitat and a programme of specific and timed actions with identified responsible agencies to restore, maintain and enhance the biodiversity interest.
Buffer Zone	An area or zone that helps to protect a habitat from damage, disturbance or pollution.
Characteristic Features	The presence of natural or heritage features that recur with sufficient frequency to be considered an integral part of a particular landscape.
Conservation	The wise use, protection and thus continuance of a valued resource.
Consistency	The degree to which an attribute is recognisable and consistently represented throughout the landscape c - Consistent - clearly recognisable and consistently represented. v - Variable - not clearly recognisable and/or variably represented.
Corridor	A strip of a particular type that differs from the adjacent land on both sides (corridors have several important functions, including conduit, barrier and habitat).



Cropping	Dominance of arable farming characterised by field vegetables and/or market gardening.
Discrete Woods	Separate and clearly defined blocks of woodland. Some linkage may be afforded by hedgerows.
Ecology	The science of the inter-relationships between living organisms and their environment.
Enclosure Pattern	The form of the cultural dimension of the landscape as defined by the inherited pattern of fields and lanes.
Environment	The external surroundings (ie. physical and chemical conditions) that impact on every aspect of life on earth.
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	A statutory procedure requiring the application of a full assessment of environmental impacts for certain major categories of development proposal.
Exposed Spatial Character	Extensive areas, often unenclosed, where the lack of three dimensional elements allows wide, distant views which give a strong impression of sky and space.
Farmland	Areas occurring on a wide variety of soil types which have been under main-stream cultivation for a long time and which lack the distinct relic plant communities which would have a significant contribution to landscape character.
Farm Type (landuse)	The dominant type of farming enterprise that reflects the inherent capability of the land.
Field Boundaries	The physical boundaries defining the perimeter of agricultural fields.
Function	<p>Is the combination of factors which gave rise to the attribute still relevant in today's landscape, in other words, does the attribute have a function today in the landscape?</p> <p>e - Economically and practically functional, potentially maintained without financial support.</p> <p>s - Functional but only maintained with support.</p> <p>c - Cosmetic, no practical or economic function but may have an aesthetic value.</p>
Geodiversity	The variety of rocks, fossils, minerals and natural processes.
Geographic Information System (GIS)	A computer facility that enables the layering of map based information.
Green Infrastructure	A strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high quality green spaces and other environment features.



Groups	Areas where the pattern of tree cover is solely characterised by discrete groups and/or small assemblages of trees, usually associated with farmsteads and or rural settlements.
Habitat	A place in which a particular plant or animal lives. Often used in a wider sense, referring to major assemblages of plants and animals found together, such as woodlands or grasslands.
Heath/acid grassland	Plant communities typically developed on free draining, nutrient poor soils. Indicator species may include gorse (<i>Ulex</i>), bracken(<i>Pteridium</i>), ling (<i>Calluna</i>), Purple heather (<i>Erica cinerea</i>). Localised areas of poor drainage may be present. Indicator species may include cross leaved heath (<i>Erica tetralix</i>) and rush (<i>Juncus</i> sp).
Heathy/acid grassland relic	Remnants of former plant communities developed on free draining nutrient poor soils, now represented by a restricted range of indicator species - gorse or bracken usually found along roadsides or woodland edges.
Hedges	A general category embracing hedgerows of single and mixed species composition.
Hedge and ditch	As above, with associated man made dry or wet drainage channels.
Indicative Ground Vegetation	Semi-natural plant communities (excluding woodland, scrub and hedges) that visually contribute to the interpretation of the landscape character.
Indicators	Individual aspects that make up landscape character. These are geology, topography, soils, tree cover character, tree cover pattern, landuse, enclosure pattern, settlement pattern, indicative ground vegetation, field boundaries, spatial character and special characteristics features.
Intimate Spatial Character	A landscape of restricted views where there is a consistently small field pattern (less than 4 hectares) and the close proximity of other elements creates a strong sense of enclosure.
Key Characteristics	Those attributes that prominently and consistently define the landscape character.



Land Cover Parcel (LCP)	These are the sub-landscape units arising from the subdivision of the Landscape Description Units based on variations in modern land use and the historic patterns of field enclosure. They are totally homogenous units within which there are no variations of attribute.
Landscape	The human perception of the land at a scale that is smaller than the global environment but larger than the individual site.
Landscape Character	An expression of pattern, resulting from particular combinations of natural (physical and biological) and cultural factors that make one place different from another.
Landscape Character Assessment	An analysis of the character of the landscape based on predetermined objective criteria and characteristics.
Landscape Description Unit (LDU)	<p>A Landscape Description Unit is a representation of a Landscape Type in a specific location. These are the basic building blocks of the landscape and are defined by a combination of six key characteristics relating to geology, topography, soils, tree cover character, land use and historic settlement pattern.</p> <p>LDU's are identified by description and those with similar visual characteristics are grouped into Landscape Types.</p>
Landscape Management Plan	A document that sets down the tasks that are necessary to achieve and sustain long term objectives for a site or area of landscape in order to maintain, enhance and strengthen its landscape character, natural habitats and design criteria.
Landscape Type (LT)	These are identified by certain combinations of the twelve characteristics, which define landscape character. Landscape types are areas that are visually different from one another, those differences being defined by particularly dominant key characteristics.
Large Spatial Character	Open areas usually with a large scale enclosure pattern (field size consistently greater than 8 hectares). The pattern defined by field boundaries and/ or other three dimensional elements such as woodland.
Linear	Areas where the tree cover is characterised by lines of trees or narrow bands of woodland normally associated with streams, ditches or other linear water features.



Linked	Frequent woodland blocks and/or wooded corridors forming physically or visually linking patterns, creating the impression of a heavily wooded landscape.
Meadow	Land, usually level and low lying, devoted to grasses and short herbs, which is mown annually for hay.
Medium-framed Spatial Character	Areas with medium to large sized fields, (consistently greater than 4 hectares), where views are typically framed by discrete blocks of woodland or lines of trees.
Medium-open Spatial Character	Open landscapes with a medium scale enclosure pattern (field size consistently greater than 4 hectares) defined by field boundaries and/or other three dimensional elements.
Mitigation	Measures taken to reduce adverse impacts, e.g., the provision of suitable planting to screen a development.
Mixed Landuse	Farming enterprises that have both a mix of arable and pasture land uses.
Moorland	Plant communities associated with peaty soils and impeded drainage in highland areas. Indicator species may include cotton grass (<i>Eriophorum</i>) or purple moor grass (<i>Molinia</i>).
Native Species	A species that occurs naturally in an area, not having been introduced by humans either accidentally or intentionally.
Organic Enclosure Pattern	A piece-meal enclosure pattern associated with an irregular network of winding lanes.
Parks	An area of land characterised by groups and/or individual mature trees usually associated with a castle or large country house. Ornamental planting, lodges, lakes etc are usually a feature.
Pastoral	Grassland landscapes characterised by grazing animals associated with dairying and/or stock rearing.
Pasture	An area of land dominated by grass, which is used only for grazing, as distinct from a meadow that is mown.
Planned Enclosure Pattern	An ordered pattern of lanes and rectilinear fields with mainly straight boundaries.



Planned Woodland Character	Wooded landscapes characterised by estate plantations and/or belts of trees with regular outlines, a predominately even age structure and a limited range of non-ornamental native or exotic species.
Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG)	Central Government guidance on all aspects of planning law and policy.
Regional Character Areas	Individual, unique areas at a broadbrush, regional scale which are identified by description.
Replaceability	<p>The degree to which it is possible to replace an element in its original form.</p> <p>l - Possible to replace in its original form over the medium to long term (15-50 years).</p> <p>m -Only possible to replace in a modified form. This modification may reflect the lack of time depth association with the attribute.</p> <p>s - Possible to replace in its original form in the short term (up to 15 years).</p>
Resilience	<p>Vulnerability x Tolerance (at Landscape Type level)</p> <p>A measure of the endurance of landscape character, defined by the likelihood of change in relation to the degree to which the landscape is able to tolerate that change.</p>
Rough Grazing	Landscapes characterised by low intensity grazing of rough pasture associated with poor soils.
Scattered Tree Cover Pattern	Pattern defined by densely or thinly scattered trees most often associated with hedgerows, sometimes in association with woodlands.
Scattered Settlement Pattern	A very low dispersal of individual farmsteads and rural dwellings.
Sensitivity	<p>Resilience x Condition (at Land Cover Parcel level)</p> <p>The degree to which the Resilience of a landscape is influenced by its current condition.</p>



Significance	<p>Consistency x Visual Prominence (Then Converted To Primary, Secondary Or Tertiary)</p> <p>The degree to which an attribute contributes to the overall character of a landscape as defined by its consistency and visual prominence.</p> <p>P - Primary - both consistent and prominent.</p> <p>S - Secondary - either consistent and apparent or variable and prominent.</p> <p>T - Tertiary - either has insignificant prominence or a variable pattern that is apparent.</p>
Small Spatial Character	<p>A landscape of small to medium sized fields (field size consistently less than 4 hectares) where scattered trees and/or small woods and copses create filtered views.</p>
Spatial Character	<p>The visual perception of spatial character as defined by the combination of open spaces, views and elements that make up the landscape.</p>
Sub-regular Enclosure Pattern	<p>An interlocking, regular pattern of fields and lanes with curving boundaries.</p>
Supplementary Planning Guidance	<p>Additional planning guidance on individual topics to enable a greater understanding of Local Authority policies and strategies.</p>
Sustainable Development	<p>Defined by the Brundtland Report (1989) as development that meets the needs of present generations without compromising its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations.</p>
Tolerance	<p>Replaceability X Trend X Significance</p> <p>The degree to which change is likely to cause irreparable damage to the essential components that contribute to landscape character.</p>
Tree Cover	<p>Relates to the overall cover of individual trees or woodland of the area.</p>
Tree Cover Character	<p>Relates to the origin and overall composition of tree and woodland cover.</p>
Tree Cover Pattern	<p>Relates to the spatial juxtaposition of individual trees and woodland cover and the shapes of woodlands.</p>
Trees	<p>Landscapes in which trees rather than woodland comprise the dominant visual element of cover.</p>



Trend	<p>The likelihood of future change to the inherent character of the landscape based on an analysis of recent and present day change.</p> <p>< - An improvement in the quantity or quality of a particular attribute. st - Attribute is stable. > - A decline in the quantity or quality of a particular attribute.</p>
Unenclosed	<p>Open, usually rough mountain , marsh or common grazing land. Includes rough land sub divided into very large enclosures.</p>
Unwooded	<p>Areas where tree cover is virtually absent. These are areas in which past and present management practices have generally precluded the establishment of tree cover. The regeneration of tree cover may be evident if management practices are removed or reduced. Elsewhere poor soil depth or accumulations of peat may inhibit tree growth today.</p>
Veteran Tree	<p>A tree which is of interest biologically, aesthetically or culturally because of its age.</p>
Visual Impact Assessment	<p>A procedure designed to identify the visual impact on short, medium and long distance views of any particular development proposal.</p>
Visual Prominence	<p>The degree to which the defined attribute is visually prominent in the landscape.</p> <p>p - Prominent - having an immediate visual impact. a - Apparent - making a moderate contribution to the visual character of the landscape. i - Insignificant - making little or no contribution to visual character.</p>
Vulnerability	<p>Function X Trend X Significance</p> <p>The likelihood of change to an attribute or the landscape as a whole as expressed by the significance of predicted trends in relation to function.</p>
Water Meadow	<p>A riverside meadow laid out in such a way that the river water could be used to regularly irrigate the land.</p>
Wetland	<p>Plant communities associated with seasonally or permanently waterlogged soils. Indicators species may include rush or common reed (Phragmites).</p>
Woodland	<p>Land covered by trees that supports other physical, biological and cultural resources.</p>

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