

Landscapes of Worcestershire

Landscape Type Advice Sheet - *Land Management*

Principal Settled Farmlands

Landscape Type Description

A small- to medium-scale, settled agricultural landscape of scattered farms, relic commons and clusters of wayside dwellings. These built features 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



Current Concerns

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. 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.

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.

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Guidelines for Land Management

How to use this sheet

The aim of this information sheet is to provide *general guidelines* about the priorities for land management activities - focusing on relevant landscape features - within this Landscape Type. However, Landscape Types are generic descriptions of landscape character and any advice **must** be interpreted within the context of the site in question. Please also visit the Landscapes of Worcestershire mapping pages <http://gis.worcestershire.gov.uk/home/wcc-lca-maps> to click on your area and read the more specific ecological and landscape descriptions.

In the case of any habitat work, specialist advice should be sought from the County Ecologists and/or the appropriate agency (Natural England, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Defra) to ensure that the work is appropriate, is carried out at the right time of year, in the correct manner and in the best possible location. Surveys may need to be carried out to assess the sites for presence of protected species or existing habitat. With this in mind, please read on for opportunities for land/habitat management activities appropriate to this Landscape Type...

Hedgerows

The general guideline for hedgerows in Principal Settled Farmlands is to:

- **conserve** and **enhance** the pattern of hedgerows

There may be opportunities to plant new hedgerows, restore, strengthen or protect existing hedgerows and their patterns, and promote appropriate management – in terms of maintenance regimes and protection from stock. The species composition of existing long established hedgerows should be used to guide the composition of new hedgerow planting. Fencing and other uncharacteristic boundary treatments could be removed and replaced by hedgerows.

Trees

The general guidelines for trees in Principal Settled Farmlands are to:

- **conserve** and **enhance** tree cover along watercourses
- **enhance** patterns of tree cover associated with settlement

The tree cover of this Landscape Type is principally provided by trees alongside streams and around settlement. Woodlands are *not* characteristic and the introduction of such features tends to dilute the character of these landscapes. Opportunities for new tree planting are therefore 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.

Grassland

The general guideline for pasture in Principal Settled Farmlands is to:

- seek opportunities to **conserve** all remaining areas of permanent pasture

The small-scale 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.

For more information visit our website www.worcestershire.gov.uk/lca or contact the Worcestershire County Council Environmental Policy Team on 01905 766038