

Landscapes of Worcestershire

Landscape Type Advice Sheet - Land Management

Principal Wooded Hills

Landscape Type Description

An upstanding, wooded landscape with a sloping, in places steeply undulating topography, often on the edge of higher ground. This is a landscape of large, irregularly shaped ancient woodlands and wooded streamlines, typically forming an interlocking pattern with surrounding hedged fields. The woodlands are a key visual element within the landscape.



Key Characteristics

Primary

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

Secondary

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



Current Concerns

These are very visible landscapes which frame long distance views; as such their composition and unity is particularly important. Woodland shapes that are unsympathetic to the topography, together with the modification of the mixed broadleaf composition of these woodlands can severely interrupt that unity. The presence of conifer dominated skylines is particularly damaging. The nature conservation value of these woodlands is also reduced by deviation away from native species. Hedgerow trees and wooded streamlines give visual integration between the areas of historic clearance and the overall wooded character but are now dominated by mature and veteran trees. Recent clearances have fragmented the woodland component, which again tends to damage landscape unity.

Emphasis should be placed upon both restoring the ancient semi-natural character of the woodland cover and upon maintaining an overall interlocking pattern of woodland, uniting fragmented sections of woodland. The historical significance of the old patterns of woodland clearance need to be recognised and protected when considering new planting. The perpetuation of hedgerow and streamside tree cover should be encouraged, aiming to secure tree populations of even age distribution.

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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...

Woodland and Trees

The general guidelines for woodland in Principal Wooded Hills are to:

- **conserve** and **restore** the ancient broadleaved character of all woodlands
- **restore** the wooded character of the area through large-scale woodland planting in areas where the interlocking pattern has become diluted
- **conserve** and **restore** tree cover along water courses and streamlines through replanting or natural regeneration
- **create** new areas of linking woodland

Whilst it is recognised from an ecological perspective, that 'new' ancient woodland can't simply be created, new woodland can - from the landscape perspective - reflect ancient characteristics in terms of shape/outline and species composition and so integrate into the landscape and strengthen its character. There may also be opportunities to restore areas of ancient woodland through the introduction of appropriate management, or the removal of alien species and appropriate replanting. The characteristic linking of woodland blocks may have been lost in this landscape, often due to felling or hedgerow removal. Opportunities should be sought to redress this through the creation of new areas of linking woodland (by planting or natural regeneration) and interconnecting hedgerows. There may also be opportunities to reinforce the woodland structure to frame views through new planting. New woodland planting and felling coupes should be carefully designed to take particular account of their visual impact.

Hedgerows & Enclosure Pattern

The general guideline for hedgerows (field boundaries) in Principal Wooded Hills is to:

- **conserve** and **restore** the irregular pattern of assarted fields

Opportunities to reflect the organic field pattern may materialise through the shape of newly planted hedgerows, the outline of new woodland planting, the definition of roadside boundaries and verges, the spatial distribution and orientation of new buildings, avoiding uniformity of pattern in all cases.

There may also be opportunities to 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. There may also be opportunities to plant new hedgerow trees, extend the life of existing hedgerow trees through such means as tree surgery, protective measures, or protection of the setting (i.e. the hedgerow).

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