

Landscapes of Worcestershire

Landscape Type Advice Sheet - *Land Management*

Sandstone Estatelands

Landscape Type Description

An open, rolling landscape 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.



Primary

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

Secondary

- Discrete pattern of woodland blocks
- Planned woodland character—estate plantations and groups of trees
- Large-scale landscape with wide views over open farmland
- Impoverished 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

Key Characteristics



Current Concerns

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

There is capacity to accommodate considerable areas of new woodland planting. With the decline and fragmentation of the hedgerow pattern, woodland with a pronounced regular landscape pattern, would considerably help to retain a sense of unity and scale to the landscape. The conservation of hedgerows is a priority, with the focus on primary hedgerow patterns. Scope for improving wildlife habitats and corridors, particularly the development of wide field margins and the continuous tree cover along watercourses should be encouraged. Opportunities to modify the management of non-farmed locations to encourage the expression of the natural vegetation communities should be sought.

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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 and trees in Sandstone Estatelands are to:

- **enhance** the regular patterns of the landscape by identifying opportunities for further large scale planting of woodlands and tree belts
- **conserve** and **enhance** tree cover along watercourses

These are landscapes that can generally accommodate new woodland planting, including commercial plantations and planting of non-indigenous species. New woodland should respect characteristic scale and regular boundary shape. There may be opportunities to strengthen the pattern of discrete woodland blocks by planting new blocks, by replanting and by restoring appropriate management to existing neglected woodland. For parkland trees see below.

Hedgerows

The general guideline for hedgerows in Sandstone Estatelands is to:

- **conserve** and **restore** the distinctive hedgerow pattern with priority given to primary 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 primary (long established) hedgerows should be noted and used to guide the composition of new hedgerow planting. Fencing and other uncharacteristic boundary treatments could be removed and replaced by hedgerows.

Heath/Acid Grassland

The general guideline for heathy/acid grassland in Sandstone Estatelands is to:

- promote the **creation** and appropriate management of distinctive natural vegetation communities - heath/gorse - along highways and other non-farmed areas

Efforts should be made to encourage the vegetation communities characteristic of such infertile, sandy free draining soils, through, for example, modifying the management of non-farmed locations. Banks of gorse and broom could also be used where shrub planting is required, even in urban areas, rather than using species of a more ornamental nature. Consideration should be given to the use of the existing seedbank in the soil rather than seeding verges and other open areas with proprietary grass seed mixes.

Parkland

The general guideline for parkland in Sandstone Estatelands is to:

- **conserve** and **restore** parklands

New generations of tree planting can be encouraged together with the restoration of other ornamental plantings and water features - specialist advice (English Heritage/Hereford and Worcester Gardens Trust) should be sought for such restoration work.

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