

Landscapes of Worcestershire

Landscape Type Advice Sheet - *Land Management*

Wooded Forest

Landscape Type Description

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 assart 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.



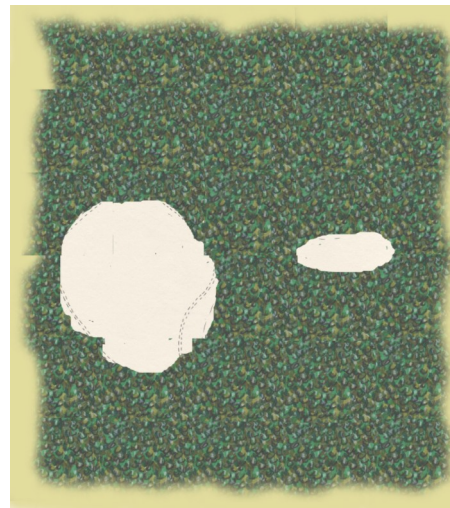
Key Characteristics

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



Current Concerns

The overriding characteristic of this landscape is the dominance of woodland cover of ancient character. These are areas that were probably cleared for agricultural purposes only briefly, if at all, at the height of agricultural expansion in the late 13th/early 14th centuries. Any clearance would be likely to have been only of a piecemeal nature with woodland recolonisation following the contraction of the area of land cultivated associated with 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. This whole woodland landscape is one of notable nature conservation interest.

There has been some diversification of the woodland character due to past forestry initiatives. 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 ancient wooded character is already a priority, and that further deterioration of the woodland character is unlikely. The character and integrity of the few wayside dwellings 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.

Landscape Type Advice Sheet - *Land Management*

Wooded Forest

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 Management

The Wooded Forest Landscape Type - in Worcestershire represented by the Wyre Forest itself - is dominated by its dense tree cover, predominantly woodland of ancient character. The major management objectives therefore relate to managing and enhancing the woodland resource:

- **conserve** all ancient woodland sites through appropriate management and re-stocking (with appropriate locally occurring broadleaves, favouring oak as the major species)
- **enhance** woodland through new planting to strengthen the overall pattern of cover, particularly to secure linkage with isolated patches
- **conserve** and **enhance** the intimate spatial character through tree planting and re-creating lost woodland, the absence of which may have served to open up views
- **conserve** the unsettled woodland character, avoiding any urban influences
- encourage economic viability of woodland - e.g. promoting use of local woodland products

There is an increasing drive now to recognise the tremendous value of ancient woodland, as a rich biodiversity resource and historic link, and as a 'natural green space' for recreation (with obvious health benefits). But woodland is also an important contributor to the local economy, through traditional management practices producing sustainable local products. Conservation and enhancement of woodland in this landscape strengthens these functions as well as serving to perpetuate the intimate, small-scale character and closed views which most strongly characterise the Type.

There may be opportunities to create new woodland where it has been lost. Whilst it is recognised from an ecological perspective, that ancient woodland itself cannot simply be created, from the landscape perspective, new woodland can reflect ancient characteristics in terms of shape/outline and species composition and so integrate into the landscape and strengthen its character. There may be opportunities to restore areas of ancient woodland through the introduction of appropriate management, or the removal of alien species and appropriate replanting. Traditional management cycles such as coppice rotation enable the cyclical perpetuation of a range of valuable habitat types (as land is cyclically subjected to changing light levels, which allows the regeneration of natural ground flora - particularly the heathy/acid grassland ground vegetation supported by the characteristic impoverished soils of this Landscape Type).

The Worcestershire Woodland Guidelines and the agencies mentioned above offer advice on management issues, appropriate siting for (re)planting and timing for management work etc. Funding opportunities may also be available.

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