

## Landscapes of Worcestershire Landscape Type Information Sheet

# Principal Timbered Farmlands

### Landscape Type Description

A small- to medium-scale wooded, agricultural landscape characterised by filtered views through densely scattered hedgerow trees. This is a complex, in places intimate, landscape of irregularly shaped woodlands, winding lanes and frequent wayside dwellings and farmsteads. It is a landscape of great interest and exception, yet also one of balance.



### Key Characteristics

#### Primary

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

#### Secondary

- Organic enclosure pattern
- Small-scale landscape, hedgerow trees creating filtered views
- Brick and timber building style of old properties

#### Tertiary

- Mixed farming land use
- Dispersed settlement pattern



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 the dispersed pattern of farmsteads and wayside cottages and lack of strong settlement nuclei.

The key element of these landscapes is the strong unifying presence of tree cover in the guise of woodlands, hedgerow trees, and linear tree cover associated with streams and watercourses, the combined presence of these tree cover components providing the essential sense of scale and enclosure, and creating 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.

## Landscape Type Information Sheet

# Principal Timbered Farmlands

In Principal Timbered Farmlands, 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.

The basic concern for the retention of the character of this landscape is the loss of scale and structure that is already evident, and likely to accelerate. This is due to the decline and fragmentation of the elements of tree cover, most notably of the smaller scale elements, particularly the hedgerow trees. The age distribution of hedgerow oak is extremely unbalanced, with the majority of specimens classed as mature or veteran, with little evidence of new stock being planted, or natural regeneration being encouraged, to replenish these. This is an acute problem requiring priority attention. The distribution of woodlands is uneven throughout these landscapes and the streamside cover is also fragmented in places. Though traditionally a landscape of mixed farming, a gradual increase in arable land uses is evident locally, which can, in turn, be associated with loss of function, and eventual demise, of the hedgerow structure. Once this happens, the tree cover structure becomes fragmented, the scope for hedgerow trees become restricted and the sense of scale and enclosure lost. Although there is pressure for development in some of these landscapes, any concentrations of new development in particular localities would disrupt the inherent pattern of settlement dispersal.

It has to be recognised that the function of hedgerow trees in the landscape today, is primarily for environmental or visual enhancement. The lack of impetus to replenish stocks of hedgerow trees can, therefore, be attributed partly to a lack of motivation, but also for reasons of expense; the cost of establishment can be high - even trees arising through natural regeneration needing to be protected from stock in many instances-, the success rate of planted trees is often low, and the presence of hedgerow trees can reduce the efficiency of modern hedge trimming operations. Nevertheless the hedgerow oaks are considered to be perhaps the crucial element of the Timbered Farmland Landscapes, and appropriate initiatives need to be developed if the character of these landscapes is considered important enough to be perpetuated. These are landscapes where existing initiatives for woodland planting should be particularly focused. Opportunities for planting on non-farmed land should also be explored with tremendous scope existing along roadsides. Initiatives to protect, and to restore hedgerows should also be focused on these landscapes.

The overall strategy for the Principal Timbered Farmlands should, therefore, be one of both conservation and restoration, conserving the existing tree cover and hedgerow pattern together with the network of hedgerows, aiming to conserve and restore the historic, well wooded character of the landscape.

### 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

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