

Landscapes of Worcestershire

Landscape Type Information Sheet

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

Key Characteristics

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 with occasional low escarpments



This is an ordered landscape in which strong, regular patterns - in terms of field layout, road networks and woodland shape - play a dominant structural role. Large plantation woodlands provide a notable structural component to the landscape, although it is the field pattern that provides the overall unity.

Further structure is provided by tree belts and linear tree cover along watercourses, although this is essentially a fairly open landscape, the tree cover providing a framework to views rather than producing a sense of enclosure and blocking them.

Parkland features and associated ornamental planting, together with estate villages, can all contribute to the diversity of these landscapes.

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These are landscapes of arable dominance in which the hedgerows have largely lost their function. Hedgerow loss and deterioration is already apparent in places to the detriment of landscape scale and character. The deterioration and reduced size of parklands is 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 is seldom expressed, being too often suppressed by management, particularly in such non-farmed locations as roadside verges.

The Sandstone Estatelands have the capacity to accommodate considerable areas of new woodland planting. With the decline and fragmentation of the hedgerow pattern, the development of a cohesive woodland structure, with woodland shape reflecting the pronounced regular landscape pattern, would considerably help to retain a sense of unity and scale to the landscape. The conservation of hedgerows remains a priority but, bearing in mind the overall loss of hedgerow function, focus should be placed on primary hedgerow patterns.

The opportunities for wildlife can be restricted in large scale arable landscapes such as these, and 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.

The overall management strategy for the Sandstone Estatelands is, therefore, one of enhancement and conservation, - to conserve and enhance the overall structure and wooded character of the landscape.

Landscape Guidelines

- conserve and restore the distinctive hedgerow pattern with priority given to primary hedgerows
- identify opportunities for further large scale planting of woodlands and tree belts to strengthen the regular patterns of the landscape
- conserve and restore parklands
- conserve and enhance tree cover along watercourses
- conserve the integrity of estate villages
- promote the creation and appropriate management of natural vegetation communities along highways and other non-farmed areas
- promote the development of wide field margins for wildlife benefit

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