

Landscapes of Worcestershire

Landscape Type Information Sheet

Settled Farmlands on River Terraces

Landscape Type Description

A medium-scale, settled agricultural landscape where horticulture and cropping is the dominant land use, reflecting the fertile, free draining soils. The settlement pattern is represented by scattered farms and clusters of wayside dwellings, linked by a matrix of winding lanes. Fields are bounded by hedgerows, with tree cover largely concentrated in groups associated with dwellings.



Key Characteristics

Primary

- Cropping/horticultural land use
- Landscape of medium scale
- Gently rolling lowland topography
- Sandy brown soils

Secondary

- Hedgerow boundaries to fields
- Dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and clusters of wayside dwellings
- Tree groups associated with settlement

Tertiary

- Sub-regular enclosure pattern



This landscape is very similar to the Principal Settled Farmlands and shares many of the characteristics of the latter, in terms of the absence of woodland, the pattern of dispersed settlement, and hedged fields. The topography too is similar, but typically of a more gently rolling nature. The field pattern tends to be sub-regular, suggesting early enclosure from areas of open field.

The defining characteristic lies in its land use – this landscape is primarily found on the river terraces, where free-draining, highly fertile sandy brown soils support an arable land use dominated by cash crops and market gardening. In Worcestershire, this Landscape Type is located on the river terraces of the Severn.

Landscape Type Information Sheet

Settled Farmlands on River Terraces

These landscapes are of medium-scale with an open nature, tree cover being most strongly represented along watercourses and in association with settlement. Woodland is not characteristic of the Settled Farmlands on River Terraces, these areas have always been amongst the most fertile and productive agricultural land and were consequently probably cleared early and maintained under cultivation, and as a result have been devoid of woodland for a substantial period of time.

Settlement tends to be sparsely distributed, comprising wayside dwellings and small clusters. The same dense network of interlinking lanes, as found in the Principal Settled Farmlands, is usually present.

The pattern of hedged fields is very vulnerable to change as the functional worth of these boundaries becomes reduced, coupled with the increasing demands of modern horticulture. There is a consequent increase in openness and scale of the landscape as these features become fragmented. Several areas already have a notably depleted hedgerow pattern. The cropping/horticultural land use currently appears to be fairly stable.

Hedgerow trees have become reduced in number, again due to their incompatibility with modern arable farming, and tree cover is now largely concentrated in the vicinity of settlement and in association with watercourses. This is not a landscape where woodland is characteristic and opportunities for new tree planting are best focused on strengthening the linear pattern of cover along watercourses, together with augmenting the tree cover associated with farmsteads and other settlements

The overall strategy for the Settled Farmlands on River Terraces is therefore to conserve and enhance the scale, tree cover and hedged character of the landscape together with its distinctive land uses.

Landscape Guidelines

- retain the integrity of the dispersed settlement pattern
- conserve and enhance tree cover along watercourses
- seek to maintain cropping/horticultural land uses
- enhance patterns of tree cover associated with settlement
- conserve and enhance patterns of hedgerows

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