

# Landscapes of Worcestershire

## Landscape Type Advice Sheet - Planning and Development

### Principal Wooded Hills

#### Landscape Type Description

An upstanding, wooded landscape with a sloping, in places steeply undulating topography, often on the edge of higher ground. This is a landscape of large, irregularly shaped ancient woodlands and wooded streamlines, typically forming an interlocking pattern with surrounding hedged fields. The woodlands are a key visual element within the landscape.



#### Key Characteristics

##### Primary

- Varied, often steeply sloping, topography
- Large, often interconnecting, blocks of ancient woodland

##### Secondary

- Organic pattern of hedged fields, derived from assarting
- Frequent, narrow wooded valleys or dingles
- Medium-framed views
- Patches of rough grassland and scrub
- Sparsely settled pattern of farmsteads and wayside dwellings



#### Current Concerns

These are very visible landscapes which frame long distance views; as such their composition and unity is particularly important. Woodland shapes that are unsympathetic to the topography, together with the modification of the mixed broadleaf composition of these woodlands can severely interrupt that unity. The presence of conifer dominated skylines is particularly damaging. The nature conservation value of these woodlands is also reduced by deviation away from native species. Hedgerow trees and wooded streamlines give visual integration between the areas of historic clearance and the overall wooded character but are now dominated by mature and veteran trees. Recent clearances have fragmented the woodland component, which again tends to damage landscape unity.

Emphasis should be placed upon both restoring the ancient semi-natural character of the woodland cover and to maintaining an overall interlocking pattern of woodland, uniting fragmented sections of woodland. The historical significance of the old patterns of woodland clearance need to be recognised and protected when considering new planting. The perpetuation of hedgerow and streamside tree cover should be encouraged, aiming to secure tree populations of even age distribution.

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### Opportunities for Landscape Gain

#### Woodland Character - Ancient

There may be opportunities to create new woodlands. Whilst ancient woodland itself cannot simply be created, from the landscape perspective new woodland can at least reflect ancient characteristics in terms of shape/outline and species composition. 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.

Development sites themselves may not always offer the best location to accommodate new woodland planting and to achieve its full potential. These opportunities cited above may be best realised on land elsewhere in the vicinity, by private agreement between the developer and landowner.

#### Woodland Pattern - Large Interconnecting Blocks

This landscape is characterised by frequent woodland blocks and/or wooded corridors forming physically and visually linking patterns, creating the impression of a heavily wooded landscape. Woodlands are typically irregular or semi-regular in outline. The linking of woodland blocks may have been lost in this landscape, often due to felling or hedgerow removal. Opportunities should be sought to redress this through the creation of new areas of linking woodland (by planting or natural regeneration) and interconnecting hedgerows.

#### 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.

#### Enclosure Pattern

Opportunities to reflect the organic field pattern may materialise through the shape of newly planted hedgerows, the outline of new woodland planting, the definition of roadside boundaries and verges, the spatial distribution and orientation of new buildings, avoiding uniformity of pattern in all cases.

#### Medium-scale, Framed Views

The scale of this Landscape Type could be damaged by the introduction of small scale features, particularly new woodlands and the reduction in size of existing woodlands. The characteristic framing of views would be diluted by loss of woodlands cover. There may be opportunities to create new woodland (by planting or natural regeneration) and this, and any landscaping associated with new development, should reflect the particular scale of these landscapes. Opportunities may arise to restore woodland and hedgerows in poor condition. There may be opportunities to reinforce the woodland structure to frame views through new planting.

#### Settlement Pattern - Dispersed

By creating settlement clusters or nuclei as a result of new development, the dispersed pattern of dwellings throughout the landscape would be lost. Current planning guidance encourages modern housing development relating to a clustered pattern, which is not appropriate in these landscapes. Therefore, significant amounts of new development will generally be discouraged from these landscapes, being better sited in those landscapes where settlement clusters and nuclei *are* appropriate.

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