

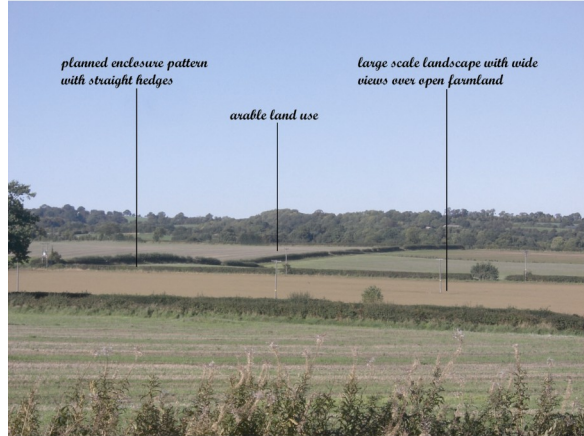
Landscapes of Worcestershire

Landscape Type Advice Sheet - *Planning and Development*

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.



Key Characteristics

Primary

- Arable land use
- Hedgerow boundaries to fields
- Planned enclosure pattern—straight roads and field boundaries

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



Current Concerns

These are landscapes of arable dominance in which the hedgerows have largely lost their function resulting in hedgerow loss and deterioration, to the detriment of landscape scale and character. The deterioration and reduced size of parklands is also 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.

There is capacity to accommodate considerable areas of new woodland planting. With the decline and fragmentation of the hedgerow pattern, woodland with a pronounced regular landscape pattern, would considerably help to retain a sense of unity and scale to the landscape. The conservation of hedgerows is a priority, with the focus on primary hedgerow patterns. 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.

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Opportunities for Landscape Gain

Land Us - Arable

There may be little opportunity to influence land use itself but the development of wide field margins for the benefit of wildlife should be encouraged.

Enclosure Pattern - Planned

There are likely to be many opportunities to introduce a regular pattern of boundaries – for example defining ownership boundaries to dwellings, providing new field boundaries, introducing areas of woodland or other planting for landscaping purposes, or defining roadside boundaries. Care must be taken to respect the scale of the landscape when augmenting, restoring or re-introducing the regular pattern of enclosure.

Woodland Pattern - Discrete Blocks

There may be opportunities to strengthen the pattern of discrete woodland blocks by planting new blocks, by re-planting and by restoring appropriate management to existing neglected woodland. Inappropriate small woodlands could be removed or enlarged as appropriate to best effect.

Heathy/Acid Grassland Ground Vegetation

Attempt to emulate the vegetation communities characteristic of such infertile, sandy free draining soils in any landscaping associated with new development. Consider birch as a dominant trees species together with hawthorn and, where appropriate, pine. Banks of gorse and broom could also be used where shrub planting is required, even in urban areas rather than using species of a more ornamental nature. Consider using the existing seedbank in the soil rather than seeding verges/open areas with proprietary grass seed mixes.

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 long established hedgerows should guide the composition of new hedgerow planting. Fencing and other uncharacteristic boundary treatments could be removed and replaced by hedgerows.

Woodland Character - Planned

These are landscapes that can generally accommodate new woodland planting, including commercial plantations and planting of non-indigenous species. So focus on introducing new blocks of woodland, and bringing derelict/unmanaged areas of woodland into appropriate management. There is great potential for imaginative landscape design together with a wide range of opportunities to enhance the biodiversity of the area. When creating new woodland it will be important to respect the strong woodland characteristics associated with the Sandstone Estatelands – particularly the regular boundary shape, and the scale – in order fully to achieve appropriate landscape gain.

Large-scale Landscape

Opportunities may arise to remove subdivisions of formerly larger fields or parcels of land. There may be opportunities for new woodland planting, and this, and any new landscaping associated with new development should reflect the particular scale of these landscapes. Landscape gain can probably be best achieved by simply respecting the large scale and avoiding dilution of this through the introduction of small-scale elements.

Settlement Pat- tern - Clustered

Opportunities may arise to achieve some degree of coalescence of existing scattered development by enabling infill development to bring about a degree of spatial unity, by reflecting details of existing estate buildings in new designs where appropriate. Care should be taken to avoiding individual new development of a dispersed nature.

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

