

# Landscapes of Worcestershire

## Landscape Type Information Sheet

### Village Farmlands with Orchards

#### Landscape Type Description

A distinctive planned low-land agricultural landscape with a notably dominant orchard land use. This is an intensively cultivated landscape characterised by a nucleated pattern of expanded villages surrounded by large cultivated fields.



#### Key Characteristics

##### Primary

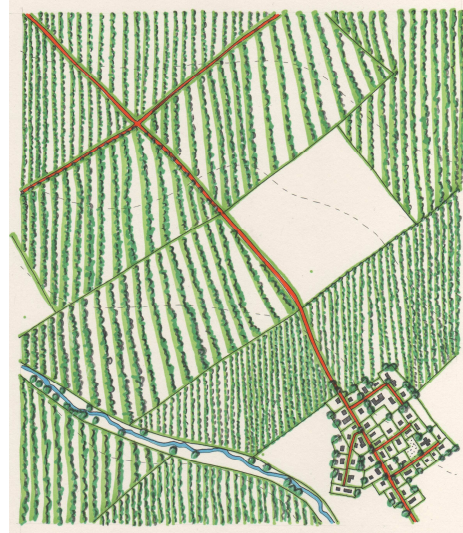
- Extensive apple and plum orchards on south facing slopes

##### Secondary

- Nucleated settlement pattern

##### Tertiary

- Gently undulating topography
- Planned enclosure pattern of medium- to large-scale fields
- Cereals and field vegetables



The Village Farmlands with Orchards are planned, lowland agricultural landscapes, sharing many of the characteristics of the Principal Village Farmlands, notably the strongly nucleated settlement pattern, having followed a similar evolution. The primary defining characteristic lies in its land use. These landscapes tend to be located in areas of very slightly more pronounced topography, where the south facing slopes prove ideal conditions for fruit growing. As the name suggests, orchards are a primary land use, apple, plum and gage being particularly notable, covering extensive areas of land.

As in the Principal Village Farmlands, the characteristic traditional orchards of standard trees are disappearing in certain areas, with many old traditional fruit tree varieties being lost as a result. The economic worth of certain types of orchard – such as damson and plum – appears to be in decline and could hamper prospects of replacement once the old trees have declined. New orchard planting/restoration, notably of apple, often uses bush stock, the smaller stature of which having an impact upon the scale of the landscape.

## Landscape Type Information Sheet

# Village Farmlands with Orchards

Fields are bounded by hedgerows, typically of a regular, planned pattern, although the pattern becomes subsidiary to the structure of orchard cover, and is less evident visually than in the Principal Village Farmlands. The functionality of many hedgerows has now declined and, whilst appreciating both the landscape and wildlife value of retaining the full hedgerow structure, it would appear most viable to give priority to the conservation and restoration of primary hedgerows.

Lines of hedgerow fruit trees, particularly damson, are distinctive local features. Scattered tree cover along water courses, together with the tree presence within the villages, provide the remaining tree cover character of these landscapes. Elm was formerly a dominant tree species and provided such a distinctive feature that replacement planting with other species is considered inappropriate at this stage and it is hoped that the elm population might recover in time and its characteristic contribution to these landscapes restored.

As with the Principal Village Farmlands, opportunities to improve the structure and wildlife potential of this landscape should focus on restoring good linear tree cover along watercourses and streams, encouraging new tree planting in and around villages, encouraging the establishment of wide field margins and the appropriate management of roadside verges and other non-productive land.

The management strategy for the Village Farmlands with Orchards is, therefore one of conservation, enhancement and restoration – conserving and restoring the dominant orchard land use, with particular focus on conserving old varieties of fruit tree, conserving and restoring the basic structure of hedgerows and conserving the distinctive settlement pattern.

### **Landscape Guidelines**

- conserve and restore traditional orchards, with emphasis placed upon the fruit type and varieties associated with different localities
- conserve and restore lines of hedgerow fruit trees
- retain pattern of strongly nucleated villages with associated low dispersal of settlement in between
- conserve and restore hedgerow structure with emphasis upon the primary hedgelines
- conserve and enhance tree cover along watercourses
- encourage opportunities for tree planting in and around villages
- promote development of wide field margins for wildlife benefit
- promote management of roadside verges for wildlife benefit

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