

Landscapes of Worcestershire

Landscape Type Advice Sheet - Planning and Development

Principal Settled Farmlands

Landscape Type Description

A small- to medium-scale, settled agricultural landscape of scattered farms, relic commons and clusters of wayside dwellings. These built features are linked by a network of narrow, winding lanes which nestle within a matrix of hedged fields. Tree cover is largely restricted to thinly scattered hedgerow trees and groups of trees around dwellings. The land is primarily one of mixed farming.



Key Characteristics

Primary

- Hedgerow boundaries to fields
- Moderate-to-high density settlement pattern of farmsteads and rural dwellings dispersed throughout the area

Secondary

- Mixed farming land use
- Rolling lowland with occasional steep-sided hills and escarpments

Tertiary

- Irregular enclosure pattern of small and medium-sized fields
- Scattered hedgerow trees



Current Concerns

The pattern of small- to medium-sized hedged fields is vulnerable to change as the tendency towards arable dominance reduces the functional worth of hedgerow boundaries. Hedgerow loss and deterioration is already in evidence locally, with corresponding dilution of the essential scale of these landscapes. There are pressures for development in many of these areas and a danger that concentrations of new development could arise, resulting in the creation of a pattern approaching the nucleations of other Landscape Types.

Woodlands are not characteristic of these landscapes and the introduction of such features tends to dilute their identity. Opportunities for new tree planting are best concentrated along watercourses, strengthening the linear pattern of these features. It is desirable to encourage additional tree cover in the vicinity of farmsteads and other settlements, in so doing, emphasising the domestic scale of the landscape.

The small scale fields of permanent pasture found within these landscapes can often be of significant nature conservation interest, the increasing change in land use in favour of arable farming can threaten such sites and initiatives to safeguard remaining areas of permanent pasture should be strongly promoted in these areas.

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Opportunities for Landscape Gain

Hedgerows

Hedgerow boundaries are a primary characteristic of this landscape so it is important to secure their retention and protection by ensuring that any proposed development is designed and sited such that it will not require the removal of hedgerows or compromise the integrity of the hedgerow network (i.e. that hedgerows should link continuously across the landscape, not leaving isolated fragments of this important habitat).

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.

If boundary treatments are proposed in the development, these would be best in the form of hedgerows. Any existing fencing and other uncharacteristic boundary treatments could be removed and replaced by hedgerows. Funding support for such works should be promoted to landowners.

Settlement Pattern

In this Landscape Type there is a moderate to high density settlement pattern of farmsteads and rural dwellings dispersed throughout the area, a pattern that is historically associated with the construction of dwellings in an ah-hoc manner over time. Consequently, uniformity or standardisation of design would be damaging to the inherent character and should be avoided. Creating clustering or settlement nuclei through new development is inappropriate to the characteristic settlement pattern, while current planning guidance precludes dispersed settlement in the landscape in general. Significant amounts of new development will therefore generally be discouraged from these landscapes, being better sited in those landscapes where settlement clusters and nuclei *are* appropriate.

Land Use—Mixed Farming

Opportunities may arise, through Stewardship and other funding incentives to encourage an increase of pastoral land use, particularly if arable land uses appear to be dominating.

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