

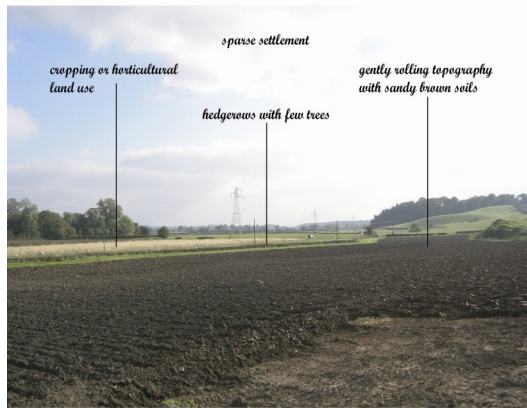
Landscapes of Worcestershire

Landscape Type Advice Sheet - *Planning and Development*

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



Current Concerns

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

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Opportunities for Landscape Gain

Land Use - Market Gardening/ Cropping

Loss of dominance of the cropping/arable land use could be detrimental to this landscape, although much of this Landscape Type is favoured by fertile soils, and it is likely this land use will continue as long as it remains economically viable. Enterprises associated with poly tunnels/greenhouses can be a part of these landscapes although the latter are frequently becoming neglected and falling into disrepair in some areas. There may be little opportunity to influence land use itself but it may be possible to restore/encourage appropriate usage of redundant commercial greenhouses.

Hedgerows

The removal or fragmentation of hedgerows, introducing fencing or other 'non-hedgerow' boundaries, will be damaging to this Landscape Type. Building, excavations or other works close to hedgerows may have a later adverse impact on their well-being. Bear in mind that Settled Farmlands on River Terraces may well have ancient hedges, particularly those defining parish or ownership boundaries, together with patterns of internal hedgerows, that may well be protected under the Hedgerow Regulations.

With this in mind, 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. Funding support for such works should be promoted to landowners.

Tree Groups Associated with Settlement

The population of trees associated with settlement should be safeguarded and augmented as required with additional planting in order to perpetuate and strengthen the visual impact of this characteristic. New development should be designed to allow space for substantial tree planting (and the planting of forest scale trees – trees that are likely to make a visual impact in the landscape as opposed to trees of small stature which are so often used in the landscaping of new development). Avoid substantial off-site planting (away from settlement), although the strengthening of tree cover along streams and other water courses would be beneficial.

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