

Landscapes of Worcestershire

Landscape Type Information Sheet

Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings

Landscape Type Description

An intimate, densely settled landscape characterised by strings of wayside cottages and associated smallholdings. These nestle within a small-scale matrix of pastoral fields and narrow lanes, often defined by overgrown hedges. This is a landscape of human scale, with a strong sense of unity and purpose.



Key Characteristics

Primary

- Hedgerow boundaries to fields
- Scattered hedgerow and garden trees
- Intimate spatial character
- Intricate network of narrow, winding lanes
- Densely settled pattern of wayside dwellings
- Distinctive building style—small cottages of brick or stone

Secondary

- Pastoral land use
- Variable enclosure pattern of small fields
- Heathy/acid grassland ground vegetation—widespread bracken and gorse



These distinctive landscapes owe their character to the enclosure and subsequent settlement of areas of former commonland. The settlement pattern has developed in a random, opportunistic manner, the corresponding density, scale and ad hoc pattern of both dwellings and lanes being key elements today. The associated, usually small, parcels of pasture and pockets of rough ground are also important, reinforcing the scale and functional background of these landscapes.

The hedgerows often have significant associated tree cover and provide an important structural element to the landscape.

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The pattern and character of the individual dwellings are vulnerable to expansion, amalgamation and modification to an urban character. The potential of the small scale plots and pastures provide considerable scope for infilling, adding further pressures to these landscapes, the pastures possessing further attraction as suitable paddocks for ponies and horses, a change of use that can be accompanied by degradation and loss of hedgerows.

The pastures themselves can often be of considerable nature conservation interest yet this can be easily lost through inappropriate management. These landscapes possess a unique element of rustic charm which is destroyed by excessive "tidiness".

The conservation of the character, particularly the scale and detailing, of the cottages and smallholdings, and their pattern and setting should be a priority, through the enforcement of appropriate planning controls and design guidance. The retention and appropriate management of open spaces within the settlement matrix should be encouraged, paying particular attention to the areas of permanent pasture and hedgerow structure.

The overall management strategy should be based on the conservation of the distinctive, small scale, settled, rural character of the landscape.

Landscape Guidelines

- conserve the pattern, scale and detailing of settlements, including the open spaces within them
- conserve the small scale enclosure pattern of hedged fields through appropriate management
- encourage the retention and appropriate management of permanent pasture
- conserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes
- conserve and enhance the tree cover within the landscape, giving particular attention to hedgerow trees

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