

Landscapes of Worcestershire

Landscape Type Advice Sheet - *Planning and Development*

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 interlocking lanes, usually defined by prominent dense hedges with hedgerow trees. The consistency of human activity in these distinctive, small scale landscapes has resulted in a unified, palpably domestic character



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



Current Concerns

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 possess 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.

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Opportunities for Landscape Gain

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 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.

Hedgerow/Garden Trees

There may be opportunities to plant new hedgerow and field trees (native trees and/or fruit trees where the latter is appropriate), retain and extend the life of existing hedgerow and field trees through such means as tree surgery, protective measures, or protection of the setting (i.e. the hedgerow). The use of protective designations such as TPOs might be relevant. Retain existing garden trees and encourage the new planting of appropriate garden trees.

The removal of inappropriate trees – such as belts of poplar may on occasion be appropriate, combined with new planting of a more appropriate nature in terms of species and location.

Intimate Spatial Character

Opportunities may arise to restore the pattern of small fields. Retain hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and orchards. Retain the relationship between cottages and associated parcels of land. The location and orientation of new buildings can create intimate areas, particularly if regular patterns are avoided. The planting of trees of appropriate scale, and hedgerows can increase the intimacy of scale.

Building Style - Small Brick or Stone Cottages

Whilst not necessarily slavishly copying the design of existing buildings, development should respect traditional materials, scale and design details of the area – for example the proportions and design of windows, use of roofing materials and external wall treatments, overall size of dwellings, and height of roof-line; detailing of associated buildings and size of associated grounds/land holding.

Settlement Pattern - Wayside (Dense)

New development must respect the historical ad-hoc development of the settlement pattern of these landscapes and avoiding standardisation of design and layout. Additional individual dwellings *may* be accommodated in some circumstances where the scale of the original settlement would not be compromised. Clustered groups of new housing however would not be appropriate. The retention of small pastures/orchards between houses is important.

Intricate Linking Lane Network

Verges and roadside hedges should be protected and where possible strengthened. Where feasible retain and restore irregular pattern of lanes. Avoid regularity in new designs or improvements to lane networks. Visibility requirements for access points to new or 'improved' dwellings will require particular attention to ensure that, whilst ensuring road safety, the scale and character of existing lane networks and associated roadside hedgerows are not unnecessarily damaged.

Heathy/acid Grassland Ground Vegetation

There may be opportunities to influence the management of grassland through e.g. Section 106 Agreements. Grassland intended to be conserved should be protected from disturbance during construction. Attempt to emulate the characteristic vegetation communities in any landscaping associated with 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 require. Consider using the existing seedbank in the soil.

Land Use - Pastoral

Opportunities may arise to promote Stewardship and other agri-environment funding incentives, in order to encourage pastoral land uses in the wider landscape, although such areas of land are likely to be outside those to which the development proposals relate.

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

