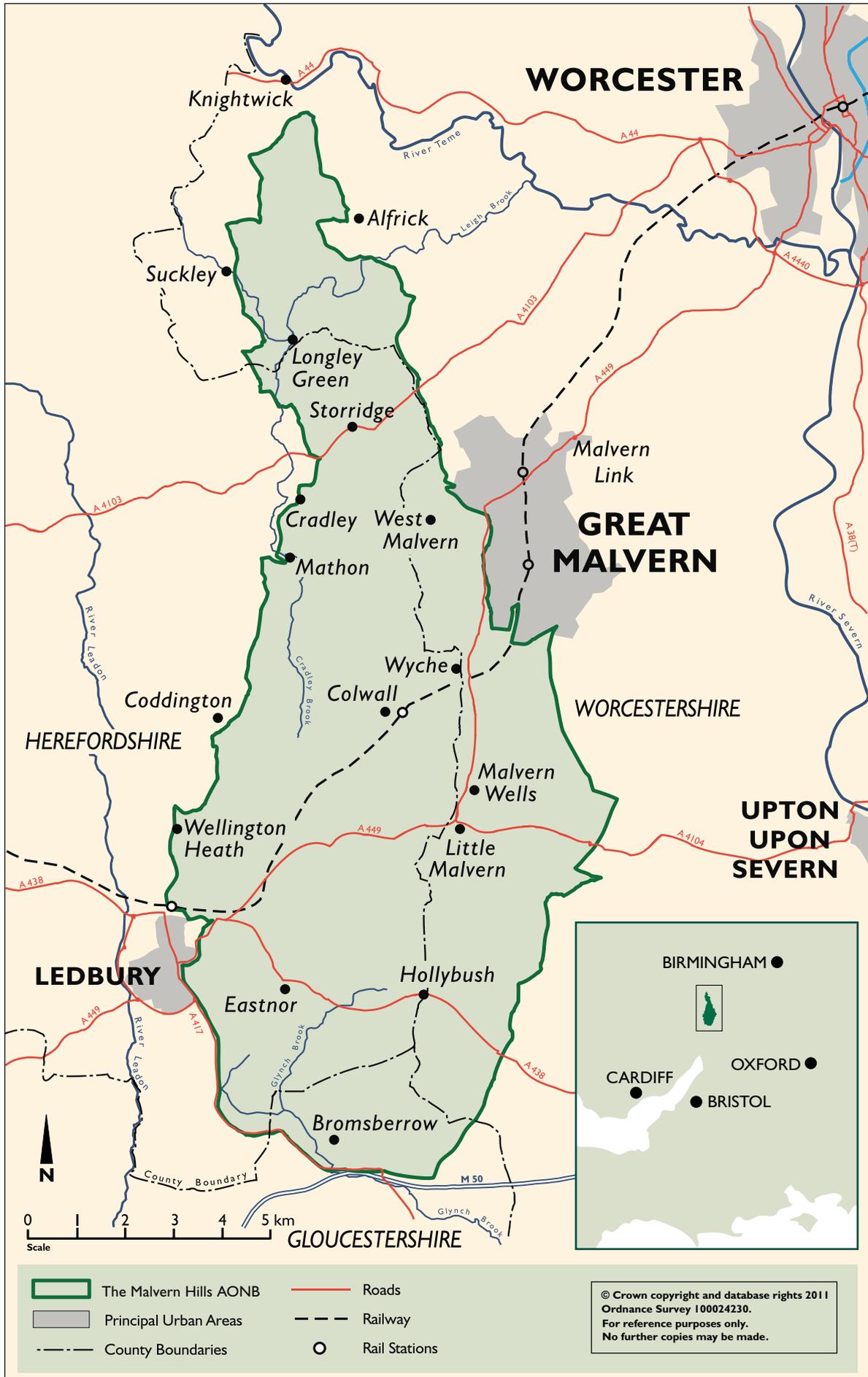


Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Landscape Strategy and Guidelines





Outline map of the Malvern Hills AONB

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Introduction

Landscapes and landscape change

The landscape of the Malvern Hills and surrounding areas have been designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) with the primary purpose of conserving and enhancing their natural beauty. 'Landscape' is a combination of natural habitats and cultural influences and is defined by the European Landscape Convention as

"... an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors."¹

Landscapes comprise a range of components:



Experience – landscapes are all around us and we perceive and value them in many different ways. This can often influence how we manage and care for landscapes.

History – landscapes illustrate time depth. Patterns established in the past, such as field shapes and boundaries, can help to illustrate how landscapes used to be managed and how humans have shaped the landscape.

Land use – current and past land uses help to shape and maintain landscapes, they include all human led processes such as farming, forestry, recreation and settlement.

Wildlife – the natural form of a landscape will affect the types of plants and animals it can support and these, in turn will help to shape the landscape.

Natural form – this includes geology, land form, soils and vegetation. The combination of these can influence how a landscape is used.

Because landscapes are the result of the interaction of many natural and cultural forces, they are, by nature, dynamic. Landscapes are constantly changing. Some changes related to natural processes are often imperceptible because they are relatively slow and gradual. Other types of change, such as the introduction of new buildings or farming practices, can have a more dramatic and sudden impact on the landscape. Landscape change is continuous and is influenced by a huge number of variables. Landscape change is inevitable and cannot be stopped.

¹ Council of Europe, 2000, *The European Landscape Convention*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing

The purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to provide direction and guidance on how the different landscapes of the Malvern Hills AONB can be managed in order to obtain optimum character, condition and sustainability. It seeks to ensure that the valued characteristics of the local landscapes – be it the field patterns, habitats, land uses or other elements – are maintained into the future, providing benefits for all.

This document has been assembled following a broad-based review of many different data sources and it seeks to present a joined-up and forward looking approach to the management of landscapes in the area. However, it is not exhaustive or definitive. The absence of information about a particular element or feature in a landscape should not necessarily be taken as proof that it is unimportant or uncharacteristic. Information about how this document was developed can be found in Appendix 1.

Who this document is for

This document is for everyone with an interest in the landscapes of the Malvern Hills AONB. However, it is aimed in particular at landowners, managers, developers and others who might be considering change in the area. It is also targeted at those with responsibility for setting the framework for change and for making the decisions which affect the landscapes of the AONB. This includes all planning staff and associated colleagues in local authorities and those who target and distribute relevant public monies in the area. It is intended that the document will help to inform the work of all these people and groups.

The status of this document

This document has been produced to help implement the Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan which 'formulates local authority policy for the management of the AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it' (Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000). Therefore, the AONB Management Plan is a material consideration in relation to development control and forward planning. This guidance amplifies the content of the Management Plan in relation to the landscape of the AONB. Using and adhering to the landscape guidelines within this document will also help public bodies to meet their statutory duties to have regard to the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect AONB land (Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000).

How to use this document

This document has been designed to enable easy use. The AONB landscape has been divided into distinctively different areas (called Landscape Character Types) and guidelines are presented which are specific to these different areas.

- The first step is to identify which Landscape Character Type is appropriate to your location or area of interest using the Landscape Character Type (LCT) map on page 7².
- Next, look at the section of the document which covers this Landscape Character Type (if the location covers two LCTs or is near to a boundary between LCTs then both need to be considered).

The guidelines for each Landscape Character Type are preceded by an overview which covers the following elements:

- a summary of the local landscape character and its key characteristics;
- the strength of character, this describes the state of the key characteristics and features within the LCT;
- the forces for change, these define some of the activities or processes which are causing changes to the landscape;
- future landscape opportunities, these are the ways in which change can be harnessed to strengthen the landscape and the goods and services which it provides; and
- an overall strategy for the future of each LCT, this encapsulates the essence of what the landscape guidelines are trying to achieve.

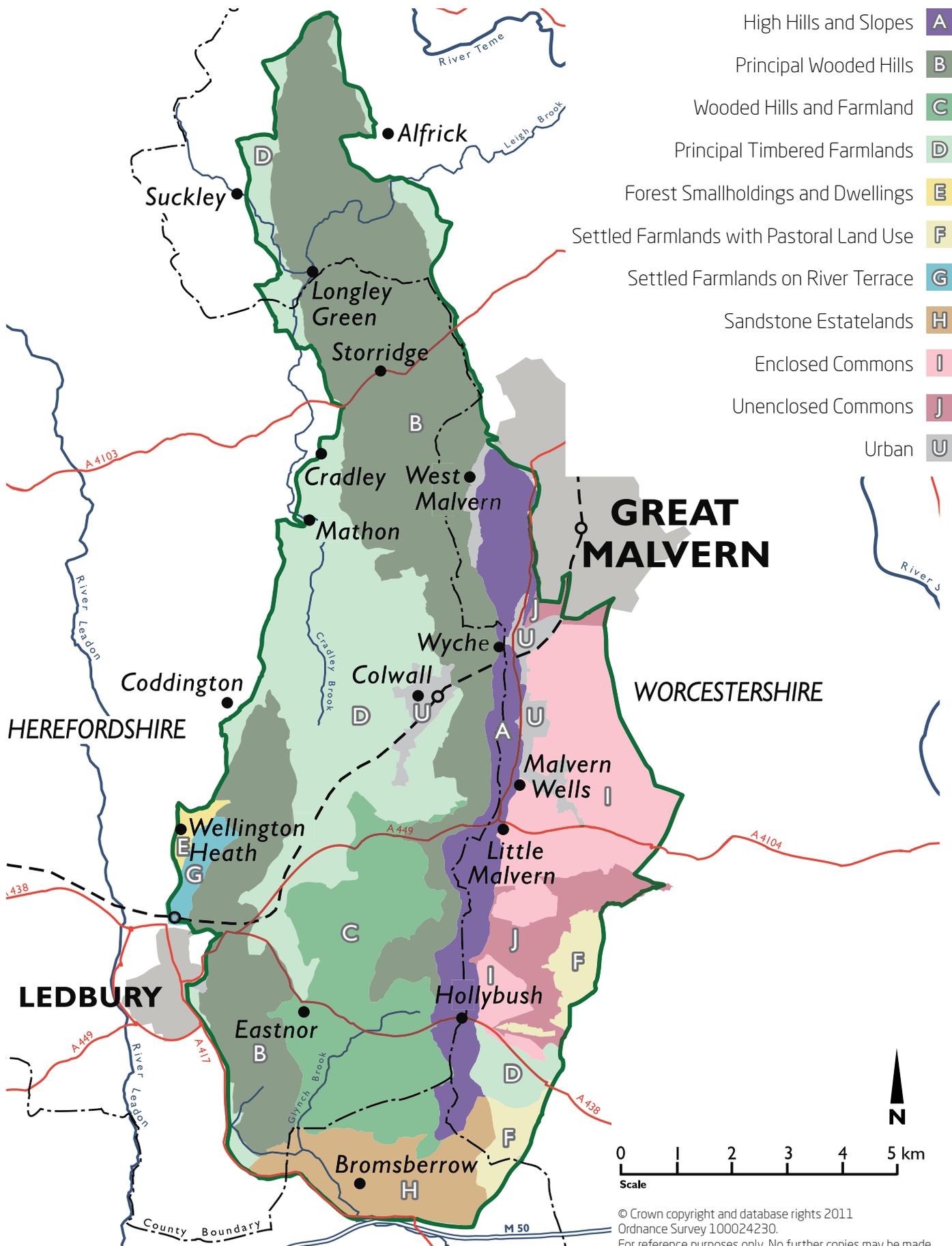
The guidelines themselves then describe how positive changes and management can strengthen and enhance character in each Landscape Character Type. The guidelines themselves are grouped into actions which either 'protect', 'manage' or 'plan' the landscape. The European Landscape Convention defines these three principles of landscape action as follows:

- **Protect:** action to conserve and maintain the significant characteristic features of a landscape, justified by their natural or cultural value;
- **Manage:** action to ensure the sustainable development and ongoing upkeep of a landscape, guiding changes arising from social, economic or environmental necessity;
- **Plan:** strong forward looking action to enhance, restore or create landscape.

²NB A more detailed version of this map is available as part of a web based tool which allows people to search the Landscape Strategy and Guidelines by postcode. This is available through the Malvern Hills AONB website:

www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/management/guidance

Landscape Character Map



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High Hills and Slopes



High Hills and Slopes

Character

The High Hills and Slopes landscape is a steeply sloping, unenclosed landscape associated with a high ridge of ancient igneous and metamorphic rocks. These hard rocks have been pushed up by earth movements along a line of weakness in the Earth's crust, which has produced the spectacular scenery we see today. This landscape is characterised by prominent summits, shallow mineral soils and extensive tracts of rough grassland/ heath graduating into a more heavily wooded land cover on the lower slopes. The exposed character, with its distant panoramic views, is heightened by the dramatic form of the topography creating a wild, invigorating quality. The steeply sloping topography means that roads and settlements are sparse. There are occasional settlement clusters and Victorian villas/ hotels constructed of light-coloured stucco, red brick or polychromatic local stone where highways cross the ridge, sometimes partially obscured within mixed ornamental woodlands. Path and trackways, mainly Victorian in creation, cross the slopes and reflect the cultural heritage of the area as a spa resort. The summit of the ridge, however, is marked by a series of prominent historic earthworks, including Iron Age Forts. The High Hills and Slopes is a simple, yet visually distinctive landscape, not least for the contrast that it provides with the surrounding settled and gentler, enclosed agricultural landscapes.

Key Characteristics

- Dominant, steeply sloping 'highland' topography
- Exposed character, with panoramic views over surrounding lower lying land
- Ancient precambrian hard rock geology with numerous accessible rock outcrops
- Water spouts and springs at the boundary between granite and impervious, sedimentary and volcanic rocks
- Shallow mineral soils supporting acid grassland and heath
- Unenclosed rough grazing land with few signs of human habitation
- Heavily wooded lower slopes

Strength of character

The steeping sloping topography, extensive areas of unenclosed land and panoramic views are dominant elements in this landscape, creating a strong strength of character. Although the landscape is generally in good condition, there has been a historic reduction in grazing which, although now reversing, has resulted in an increase of bracken, scrub and secondary woodland on the lower slopes of the ridge. In places, this has compromised the character of the landscape and needs to be managed in order to maintain a more open, grass/ heathland character and for the management of historical earthworks.

Forces for change

The character of the High Hills and Slopes landscape is dependent on the traditional management of open grazing on the unenclosed commons. There was, however, a gradual reduction in grazing which has resulted in the establishment of patches of bracken, scrub and secondary woodland, particularly on the lower slopes of the ridge and on some higher slopes. There was a consequent decrease in the area of open grassland. Grazing is now increasing again, thus reducing this problem; a trend which should be encouraged. In addition, increasing visitor pressure has contributed to grassland erosion along many of the more heavily used paths. Such changes in the type and structure of the vegetation can compromise the character of the landscape.

Future landscape opportunities

Encroachment of scrub and secondary woodland is affecting the open character of this landscape. Managing scrub growth on the lower slopes will help to provide visual continuity with the Principal Wooded Hills landscape, grading to a more open grassland character on the higher slopes and summits. To maintain the panoramic views and open character of the ridge, the management of bracken and scrub could be more rigorous on the higher slopes and summits. Opportunities to encourage higher stocking rates on the summits to manage the landscape in a traditional manner, rather than using manual cutting methods, should be sought.

Increasing visitor numbers has contributed to the erosion of grassland. There is an opportunity to develop an access strategy related to signage and other forms of media. This will help to manage and direct visitors to appropriate paths and tracks, limiting the damage to the grassland. This should be coupled with appropriate footpath management and maintenance.

Overall landscape strategy

The High Hills and Slopes have a strong character which is very much associated with the expanse of open land along the higher parts of the ridge. The decline of open land has become an issue and the priority for management should be to manage the bracken and scrub to conserve and expand the open character of the landscape. There is scope to retain some woodland cover on the lower slopes to maintain the visual continuity with other Landscape Character Types, such as the Principal Wooded Hills. The overall strategy for the High Hills and Slopes, therefore, should be to:

Conserve and restore a balance between the open character of the high ridge and the more wooded nature of the lower slopes.

Landscape Guidelines

Symbol Key



Biodiversity



Trees and Woodland



Recreation



Cultural Heritage



Water Management



Land Management



Settlement and Built Features



Geodiversity



Climate Change

The following guidelines reveal opportunities to protect, manage and plan the landscape. The suitability of each guideline for a particular site will depend upon the local characteristics of the landscape.

Protect

■ Conserve the open, semi-natural character of the landscape



The open, semi-natural character of the ridge summits of the High Hills and Slopes is a distinctive feature of this landscape type. It is important for ecological, historical and visual reasons, that the existing areas of open grassland on the High Hills and Slopes are retained. Ways should be sought for expanding grazing activities on the High Hills and Slopes to control the encroachment of scrub and secondary woodland. Steps should also be taken to enhance the biodiversity of the semi-natural vegetation cover and to retain the key indicator species, such as adders, slow worms and lizards that are associated with it.

■ Protect the heritage value of rock outcrops



There are many important geological exposures in this landscape. Many are identified as earth heritage units within the SSSI designation and as Local Geological Sites (LGS). It is important to conserve and maintain exposures so that they can be used for continued education and research and to enhance their biodiversity value. Opportunities to provide access to new exposures should be considered.

■ Conserve and maintain all remaining blocks of ancient woodland



Ancient woodland sites are those which have had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600. Following losses during the 20th century there is now a presumption against further clearance of ancient woodlands and conservation of these features should be given the highest priority, particularly where they support important wildlife species. Ancient woodlands have a restricted distribution in the High Hills and Slopes and mainly occur on the lower slopes of the ridge. These sites, where oak is normally the dominant tree species, usually have a very high nature conservation interest with a diverse flora and fauna. To maintain species diversity, management should favour small scale felling coupes and natural regeneration. Where replanting is necessary, this should favour oak, along with other native tree species. Where High Brown and other fritillary butterfly populations exist, woodland management should seek to ensure any remnant coppicing is not overgrown and that an understorey has developed to provide a suitably warm habitat for egg laying and larval development.

Manage

■ Maintain a balance between open land, scrub and woodland on the ridge slopes



A targeted approach should be taken to manage scrub and woodland encroachment on certain parts of the ridge slopes. A degree of scrub and woodland cover, particularly if this involves natural regeneration of native species on the lower slopes, is beneficial and should be accepted. More rigorous management, however, should be carried out on the higher slopes to control scrub encroachment and maintain the openness of the landscape. This could be achieved by increasing stock numbers for the purpose of better management of vegetation on the higher slopes and clearance of scrub where necessary. There is also a need to be sensitive to the Victorian planting which is important to the historical development of the picturesque in the Malvern Hills.



Open grassland

■ Manage bracken cover to maintain an open structure



The bracken/ acid grassland interface, where there is an understorey of sparse bracken litter and violets, provides an important habitat for fritillary butterflies. Successional changes in bracken from dense bracken with no understorey, to increasing encroachment of bramble and finally the colonisation by scrub and secondary woodland, reduce the conservation interest of this resource. Hence, management of the bracken areas will be needed to maintain conditions for fritillary butterflies and prevent encroachment onto valued grassland habitats. Appropriate management techniques include bracken cutting and rolling, grazing, and scrub control. Selective spraying can also be considered in some circumstances.

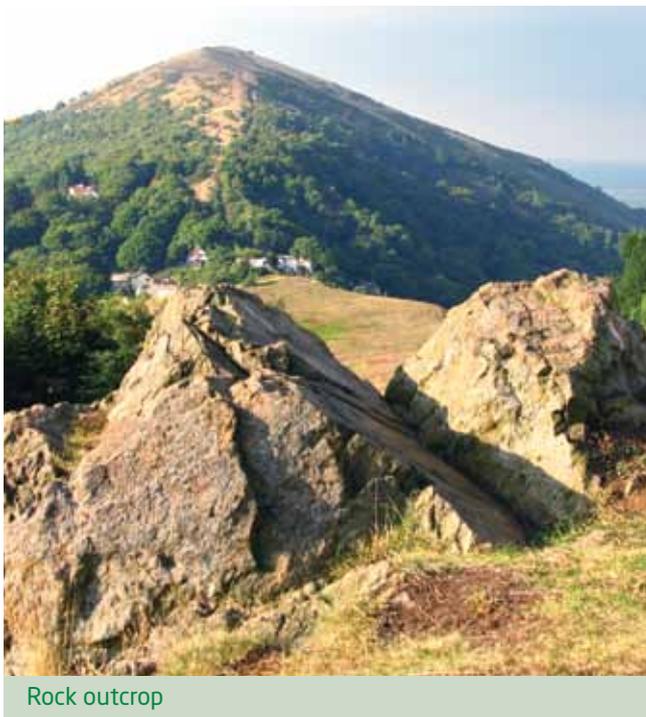


Bracken

■ **Manage the balance of woodland, scrub and open land to ensure key views of outcrops and the protection of archaeological earthworks**



The rocky outcrops of the High Hills and Slopes are important landscape features which display an interesting and important geological resource. Efforts should be made to ensure that some rocky outcrops remain prominent and clear from scrub to enable viewing and where appropriate, safe access to the outcrops for education and interpretation should be enabled. Similarly, where archaeological features and earthworks exist, efforts should ensure they are protected and managed through the control of soils, bracken, saplings and scrub and recreation pressures.



Rock outcrop

■ **Maintain and manage all woodlands using sustainable forestry management practices**



Some woodlands within the High Hills and Slopes contain a mix of broadleaved and coniferous trees. Traditional forestry techniques, such as coppicing or pollarding, can be associated with enhanced ecological value in woodlands and can have lower impacts on the stand structure. Where possible, therefore, more traditional approaches to management, including coppicing and pollarding, should be encouraged and enabled in existing woodlands in order to gain additional biodiversity value. Mature trees should continue to be managed where necessary for safety reasons. Natural regeneration should continue to be encouraged to achieve a more diverse woodland.

■ **Manage/ restore all remaining patches of semi-natural vegetation**



Semi-natural, heathy/ acid grassland vegetation is a characteristic feature of the High Hills and Slopes, not only because it provides sustainable forage production, but also because it provides an important visual resource that illustrates the time depth of a landscape through continuous land use over a significant period of time. Initiatives to safeguard all remaining areas of acid grassland and heath should be continued and where possible steps should be taken to extend these habitats in a way that maintains them as a traditional low input resource.



Harebells

Plan

■ Promote opportunities for grazing on commons



The traditional open, semi-natural character of the higher ground in the High Hills and Slopes has been the result of continued rough grazing by commoners' livestock over a long period of time. In the past the areas of common land would have been grazed with sheep owned by local residents who had common grazing rights. Unfortunately, the use of commons by local farmers went into decline after the war, resulting in the loss of much open grassland. This trend is now being successfully reversed and livestock grazing is once again taking place in this landscape. Continued efforts should be made to enable grazing to develop to optimum levels, linked to raising awareness/ promotion of common grazing rights.



Shepherd on the Malvern Hills

■ Develop an access strategy to reduce erosion along the ridge footpaths



Increasing visitor numbers have contributed to the erosion both of footpaths and the adjoining grassland vegetation. In places, informal desire line paths have also been created, increasing the vulnerability of soils to further erosion and damage, which in turn can reduce the perceived natural beauty of the landscape. An access strategy which includes the restoration of the existing discrete and visually sensitive signage would help to direct visitors to appropriate footpaths. The siting of attracting features and vegetation management could also be undertaken in order to influence the routes used by visitors and to obstruct desire lines. This would prevent further grassland erosion and help both to reduce visual impact and enhance visitor experience and enjoyment of the countryside. Promotion of the use of contour paths around the hills would also help to distribute access pressure.



Hikers, Pinnacle Hill

Principal Wooded Hills



Principal Wooded Hills

Character

The Principal Wooded Hills is a densely wooded landscape, associated with bands of Silurian sandstones and limestones which form escarpments. The ridges enclose vales eroded in softer shales and mudstones. There is an undulating, in places steeply sloping topography rising locally towards the adjoining ridge of the Malvern Hills. The character of the landscape is derived from the pronounced relief and the dominant, interlocking woodland cover, often located on the ridges, which together provide a strong sense of visual unity. This landscape has a significant cover of ancient semi-natural woodland with large, irregularly shaped woodlands and wooded streamlines, often forming an interlocking pattern with the surrounding thickly hedged fields and traditional orchards. Where there has been historic clearance of the woodland, the presence of strong, often species-rich hedge lines with many mature hedgerow oak trees contribute strongly to the character of the landscape. The upstanding topography means that long distance views into and out of this landscape are frequent and often framed by woodlands. Overall this is a sparsely settled landscape, characterised by historic farmsteads, with occasional outfarms and smallholdings, dispersed throughout the area. These consist of a variety of farm plans dominated by regular courtyards with some loose courtyard types.

Key Characteristics

- Varied, often steeply sloping, topography
- Ancient mixed hard rock geology with narrow bands of harder limestone
- Frequent, narrow wooded valleys, or dingles
- Large, interconnecting, irregularly shaped blocks of ancient broadleaved woodland
- Organic pattern of thickly hedged pastoral fields
- Patches of rough grassland and scrub
- Sparsely settled pattern of farmsteads and wayside dwellings
- Small limestone quarries
- Long distance views framed by woodland

Strength of character

The steeply sloping topography and frequent, interlocking blocks of ancient woodland are prominent features throughout this landscape. The undulating topography, comprising a series of narrow limestone ridges and localised sandstone hills, provides a particularly important unifying feature. The interlocking ancient woodland is linked to areas of historic clearance by thick hedgerow field boundaries, creating a visually integrated landscape. These features create a strong strength of character and need to be conserved. Opportunities for enhancing biodiversity should also be sought if the local distinctiveness of this landscape is to be maintained.

Forces for change

The distinctive character of the Principal Wooded Hills relies heavily upon the extensive irregularly shaped woodland cover, which creates a strong visual unity. Due to previous forestry practices, however, planting has in places created single-species compartments with geometric shapes, which compromise the visual integrity of the landscape. In addition, the introduction of a high proportion of conifers has in places reduced the ecological value of the woodland.

Hedgerow and streamside trees play a vital role in maintaining a link between the areas of historic woodland clearance and those areas still wooded today. Past woodland clearance and the loss of hedgerow and streamside trees have had a localised impact on this landscape and have led to a loss of biodiversity. Many hedgerows are also dominated by mature and veteran 'standard' hedgerow trees and lack the younger trees required to sustain this feature in the landscape.

Horse pasturing and the keeping of horses constitutes a significant land use in certain parts of the Principal Wooded Hills. This activity can make an important contribution to the local economy and, if well managed, can also contribute positively to the local landscape.



Whitman's Hill Farm

Future landscape opportunities

Ancient woodlands are of high nature conservation value and usually have a diverse flora and fauna. The introduction of conifers has, on balance, reduced the ecological value of these landscape features. Opportunities should be sought to replace conifers with locally occurring native tree species found in adjoining ancient woodlands. There are also some opportunities to plant new woodlands and traditional orchards to enhance degraded areas. The new woodlands and orchards should be designed to fit into and enhance the irregular pattern of woodlands and hedgerows.

There has been some loss of hedgerow trees in the past, often associated with removal of internal hedged field boundaries. The ecological and landscape value of these trees should be restored, for example through the planting of native hedgerow species to complement the existing hedgerow network.

Within the Principal Wooded Hills landscape there are some remaining areas of grassland that are no longer adequately grazed, resulting in the encroachment of scrub and secondary woodland. There is a need to re-establish grazing in these areas.

Overall landscape strategy

This is a landscape with a strong character that is generally in good condition. In places, however, there have been past changes in the pattern and species composition of both the woodlands and connecting hedgerows, which has impacted on the visual integrity of the landscape. The overall strategy for the Principal Wooded Hills, therefore, should be to:

Conserve the overall unity and linked, ancient wooded character of the landscape and seek opportunities for enhancing biodiversity.



High Wood

Landscape Guidelines

Symbol Key



Biodiversity



Trees and Woodland



Recreation



Cultural Heritage



Water Management



Land Management



Settlement and Built Features



Geodiversity



Climate Change

The following guidelines reveal opportunities to protect, manage and plan the landscape. The suitability of each guideline for a particular site will depend upon the local characteristics of the landscape.

Protect

■ Conserve the historic enclosure pattern



Hedgerows play a vital role in maintaining a link between the remaining areas of ancient woodland and streamside corridors and in creating a strong sense of enclosure. The hedgerow network generally forms an irregular and organic pattern of thickly hedged pastoral fields, often created from assarting, which reinforces the historic and settled character of this landscape. These fields are typically bounded by thick, mixed species hedgerows, which form key heritage features in this landscape. In places, however, there has been a loss of some hedgerows, for example, as a result of agricultural intensification. Where possible, emphasis should be placed on recreating appropriate hedged boundaries.

■ Conserve all older permanent pastures



Permanent pasture is a characteristic feature of this landscape. Some of these pastures are unimproved and floristically very rich, supporting a variety of plants and animals, as well as adding colour and visual diversity to rural scenes. Equally, they are important historical resources, illustrating the time depth of the landscape by providing an ongoing and continuous land use over a significant period of time. Initiatives to safeguard remaining areas of permanent pasture should be strongly promoted and where possible these pastures should be managed as traditional low input grassland. Reseeding, ploughing, or addition of nitrates should be avoided.



Enclosure pattern, Suckley Hills

■ Conserve and maintain all remaining blocks of ancient woodland



Areas of ancient woodland are those which have been continuously wooded since 1600. These sites, where oak is normally the dominant tree species, usually have a very high nature conservation interest with a diverse flora and fauna. Following losses during the 20th century there is now a presumption against further clearance of ancient woodlands and conservation of these features should be given the highest priority, particularly where they support important species (e.g. Dormice and Pearl-Bordered fritillary butterflies). To maintain species diversity, management should favour smaller scale felling coupes and natural regeneration. Any replanting that is necessary should favour oak, along with other native tree species. Where populations of fritillary butterflies exist, woodland management should seek to ensure any remnant coppicing is not overgrown and that an understorey has developed to provide a suitably warm habitat for egg laying and larval development. Larger, more connected woodlands are more resilient to climate change, and where replanting is necessary, this should favour oak, along with other native tree species. Climate change, which may bring drier and warmer summers, may result in an increased fire risk to ancient woodlands requiring enhanced protection through education and provision of fire fighting resources, e.g. beaters, where appropriate.



High Wood

■ Conserve all mature and veteran trees



Mature and veteran trees, including those in hedgerows, are vulnerable to a lack of management, disease or loss due to the impact of modern development and changes to the management of field boundaries. These are important ecological and heritage features and their conservation should be a priority. This will involve working with landowners to maintain mature and veteran trees and to ensure that there are younger trees growing which will eventually replace the existing veterans. Work could also be carried out with planners and developers to ensure that mature and veteran trees are conserved within all new development. The way in which trees have historically been managed can affect their ecological value and where coppicing or pollarding has taken place efforts should be made to ensure the continuity of these management techniques. Some dead and decaying wood, such as fallen branches, can provide valuable habitats for fungi and invertebrates. However, work may be needed to make safe dangerous trees in areas of high public access.



Lime Pollard, Alfrick

■ Conserve the network of narrow rural lanes



The cultural pattern of rural lanes, often running through narrow wooded valleys and dingles, are a recurring feature throughout this landscape and need to be conserved. These lanes are nearly always bounded by fairly substantial mixed species hedgerows which should be managed, restored, or coppiced and replanted dependent on condition. The ecological value of these hedgerows and any associated roadside verges and ditches should be conserved. The small scale nature and rural character of the highway network should be conserved.

■ Conserve the historic pattern of settlement



The dispersed settlement pattern of the Principal Wooded Hills, characterised by brick and timber farmsteads, often with limestone farm buildings and occasional roadside dwellings, contributes strongly to the sparsely settled rural character of this landscape. This pattern should be conserved and all future development should take great care when considering siting and design to ensure that it respects and maintains the existing pattern of settlement. Due to the sparsely settled nature of this landscape there is only very limited opportunity for new development without impacting upon landscape character.



Farm, Crews Hill

■ Conserve remaining traditional orchards



Small traditional orchards are a feature associated with the Principal Wooded Hills. Orchards are often near to semi-natural woodland, which may enhance their ecological value. They have an important cultural association with this part of the country, but there has been a significant decline in the number of these orchards, both in this landscape and in the wider regional setting. Efforts should be made to protect the remaining traditional orchards in this landscape both for their fruit producing role, their ecological and cultural value and for their contribution to the character of the wider landscape.

■ Protect the heritage value of small quarries



Small limestone quarries, formerly used to provide local building stone and fertiliser for fields, are a characteristic feature within many of the parishes in the Principal Wooded Hills. Many of these quarries have become overgrown and are not immediately obvious to the passer by. However, they are important features within this landscape, both for their heritage value and as a habitat for plants and animals, therefore they should be conserved. There is a need to conserve the important geological exposures in the area so that they can be used for continued study. Key exposures are often designated as Local (Geological) Sites (LGS).



Redundant quarry, Longley Green

Manage

■ Manage/ restore all remaining patches of semi-natural vegetation



Patches of semi-natural grassland vegetation, particularly those associated with the limestone ridges, are a characteristic feature of this landscape and should be conserved. Larger patches of acid grassland also occur, often associated with discrete relic commons on sandstone hills. The biodiversity of many of these patches, however, has been reduced due to the abandonment of grazing and a consequent increase in the cover of bracken. Initiatives to safeguard and manage remaining areas of semi-natural habitat should be promoted.

■ Maintain and manage hedgerow trees, ensuring a diverse age structure



Many hedgerows in the Principal Wooded Hills are dominated by mature and veteran trees and lack younger trees. Past woodland clearance and the loss of hedgerow and streamside trees have also had a localised impact on this landscape and have led to a loss of biodiversity. Planting or natural regeneration of younger trees is necessary to ensure the sustainability of this feature in the landscape. Hedgerow trees are a valuable landscape resource and can provide shade for animals during warmer summer temperatures.



Hedgerow tree, Batchcombe Lane

■ Enhance landscape character through sensitive pasture management



Characteristic landscape elements in the Principal Wooded Hills can provide a range of benefits for grazing animals including cattle, sheep and horses. For example, well maintained hedgerows can provide both wind shelter and a food source whilst well managed grasslands can help to reduce the cost of feed. It is important to ensure that opportunities to use these elements are maximized in relation to grazing activities and any equestrian related developments. Pasturing and associated development should enhance the landscape and not compromise its character through the introduction of extraneous and visually insensitive elements.

■ Manage/ restore hedgerow boundaries



Hedgerows provide valuable habitats within the landscape and movement corridors for certain species. They can also help reduce soil erosion associated with increased rainfall, and provide wind protection to growing crops as well as shelter and shade to stock and horses. Some hedgerows are in poor condition due to limited or inappropriate management. Management by flail cutting is appropriate for robust hedgerows, but where a hedge is thin or gappy it should be first renewed by layering. In places, hedgerow boundaries have been removed in the past to enable arable farming, often creating a more open landscape pattern. Where possible, hedgerow planting should be encouraged in a way that complements the shape, scale and pattern of the established landscape. Hedges should be planted with a mixture of locally occurring native species, such as hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple and wild privet.



Hedgerow boundaries, Storridge

■ Manage gamebirds to support sustainable woodland and hedgerow management



Gamebird woodlands should be managed in order to help sustain ground flora which can be adversely affected by excessive ground feeding of game birds through increased nutrification, disturbance and the introduction of non-woodland species. Bird pens should not exceed one third of the woodland area and in areas of ancient woodland, the number of pheasants should not exceed 700 birds per hectare of pen, as a maximum. It may be desirable for the area covered by bird pens and the number of birds per hectare to be much less. Shoots should encourage hedgerow retention and management. During releases, game birds should not be encouraged to spread into hedgerows, as pheasants and partridges can cause damage to hedgerows.

■ Maintain and manage all woodlands using traditional forestry management practices



Although it is an ancient wooded landscape, some of the individual woodlands within the Principal Wooded Hills are managed as commercial timber plantations or for pheasant shooting. Some woodlands comprise of uniform and even aged blocks of broadleaved and coniferous trees. Opportunities should be sought for replacing such plantations with a more irregular and varied pattern of felling coupes comprising native tree species, such as oak, or for initiating more traditional forestry or woodland management techniques. Where possible, such techniques, including coppicing and pollarding, should be encouraged and supported in order to gain additional biodiversity value on all ancient woodland sites. This is particularly important in woodlands on the limestone ridges where species such as yew and wild service tree could be encouraged.



Coppice management, Parkwood

■ Encourage sensitive restoration of historic farmsteads and buildings



Historic farmsteads and clusters of wayside dwellings are scattered throughout the Principal Wooded Hills, where they contribute to the sparsely settled character of this landscape. There is little opportunity for new development, but some of these farmsteads have been converted into residential dwellings, often resulting in an impact on built character through change of use and the introduction of new features/ building materials. Where possible, old farmsteads should be retained for their agricultural function. Where this is not possible, conversion should ensure that any redevelopment respects both the agricultural character of the building and the wider pattern of rural settlement. Where direct physical change to existing properties or changes to their settings occur, attention should be given to retaining the simple form and appearance of the buildings, particularly when a change of use occurs as part of the redevelopment. It is particularly important to use building materials that reflect locally occurring brick/ timber, red brick, or stone built dwellings. Attention should also be given to the sympathetic management of boundaries around the development, with a preference for native species hedgerows and trees. Where possible, building upgrades and new buildings should also seek to minimise carbon use and maximise the appropriate use of renewable energy and local materials.



Vinesend Farm

■ Maintain/ enhance tree cover and wetland vegetation along watercourses



Streamlines form important landscape features, especially where they are fringed by scattered trees and scrub. They are valuable as ecological corridors, particularly where they pass through more open intensively farmed areas. When streamline habitats are in good condition they can help maintain water flow, reduce run off and pollution into the watercourse and reduce future flood risk associated with increased storm events. Tree cover along watercourses can also help to regulate water temperature through shading if summers become warmer. Natural regeneration of streamside trees should be encouraged. Although planting of new trees may be appropriate in places, care should be taken to avoid areas of unimproved grassland and marsh which are ecologically important habitats and which provide locations for water storage. Planting should also aim to keep one bank side clear to maintain a variety of wildlife habitats along stream sides.



Leigh Brook, Knapp and Papermill Nature Reserve

Plan

■ Seek ways to better integrate large buildings/ structures into the landscape



New agricultural buildings are often built with modern materials at a larger scale than older historic farm buildings and as a consequence they can appear visually intrusive in a more intimate landscape like the Principal Wooded Hills. Where possible, very large structures should be avoided. Where the principal of development is acceptable and larger buildings cannot be avoided their impacts should be reduced through a number of measures which aim to better assimilate such structures into the landscape. These include better siting, such as locating near to existing building groups and in less prominent locations, such as below hill and tree lines, using colours and materials which reflect existing historic buildings or the colours of the surrounding landscape and planting appropriate native boundary hedgerows and trees. Materials which do not reflect sunlight should also be favoured, especially on roofs.

■ Seek opportunities to create new woodlands



There are some opportunities for the creation of new woodlands in this landscape. The location, size and shape of these new woodlands should complement the surrounding landscape pattern. Emphasis should also be placed on linking woodlands, and linking woodlands and hedgerows together. Where woodlands are created, it is important to consider the species mix and its resilience to climate change. Species already at their driest extent should be avoided, as summers are predicted to become drier. Species susceptible to significant plant diseases should also be avoided. Seeds sourced from ancient semi-natural woodland should be used where possible. When new woodlands are created, opportunities should be considered for developing woodfuel or wood craft schemes to enhance the local economy.

■ Promote opportunities for grazing on commons



In the past, areas of common land in the Principal Wooded Hills would have been grazed with stock owned by local residents who had common grazing rights, maintaining a more open wood pasture landscape in places. Most of the remaining areas of common land, however, are no longer adequately grazed, resulting in the encroachment of scrub and secondary woodland. This has often resulted from changes in the local communities, leading to the abandonment of traditional grazing rights. Opportunities should be sought to reintroduce grazing on these old commons, linked to raising awareness/ promotion of common grazing rights.

■ Seek opportunities to restore/ create new orchards



There has been a significant decline in the number of traditional orchards, both in this landscape and in the wider regional setting. Efforts should be made to encourage and support the sustainable restoration of orchards, both for their fruit producing role and for their contribution to biodiversity and the character of the wider landscape. Where appropriate, the creation of new orchards should be considered to ensure the continuation of this locally distinctive feature into the future.



Old orchard, Storridge Farm

■ Seek opportunities to restore/ enhance the biodiversity of agricultural land



Some of the pastures in this landscape are unimproved and floristically very rich and support a wide variety of plant and animal species. Permanent grasslands are also not subject to ploughing so can also help to protect against soil erosion, which may become a problem with predicted increased rainfall intensity due to climate change. Initiatives to safeguard remaining areas of older pasture should be strongly promoted but opportunities should also be sought for enhancing the biodiversity of improved grasslands, or creating new grasslands. Where possible these should be managed as traditional low input swards and reseeded, ploughing, or the addition of nitrates should be avoided.

■ Replace conifer plantations in ancient woods



The ancient woodlands in the Principal Wooded Hills are characterised by native deciduous species, often dominated by oak. These woodlands are of high nature conservation interest. The introduction of conifer plantations, however, has changed the character and biodiversity value of some of these woodlands. Where possible, conifers should largely be replaced with locally occurring native tree species, particularly oak.



High Wood, from Old Hollow

Wooded Hills and Farmland



Wooded Hills and Farmland

Character

A wooded landscape with a varied undulating, in places steeply sloping, topography, associated with an outcrop of ancient, mixed sedimentary rocks, comprising limestones and sandstones separated by softer mudstones and siltstones. This is a landscape of discrete, irregularly shaped ancient woods framing larger areas of enclosed farmland. The hedgerow structure and streamside tree cover is particularly important in providing visual unity to the area, linking the woodland blocks and integrating them with the areas of farmland. These features help to create an important ecological resource with moderate to strong interconnection of habitats and good ecological networks. Sparse settlement is usually associated with these areas, often in the form of small estate villages with older properties constructed from limestone, or clusters of settlement around former commons. Large, isolated historic farmsteads, most of which have a regular courtyard plan, are scattered throughout the area.

Key Characteristics

- Prominent undulating topography
- Ancient mixed hard rock geology, including areas of harder limestone and sandstone
- Large, discrete woodland blocks of ancient woodland
- Network of primary hedge lines often derived from woodland assarting
- Medium distance framed views
- Mixed farming land use
- Sparsely settled pattern of farmsteads and small estate villages

Strength of character

The ancient wooded character of this estate landscape is reflected in the occurrence of ancient woodlands linked by wooded streamlines and primary hedge lines, all of which are emphasised by the undulating topography. These elements create a landscape with a moderate strength of character. All of these features, in particular the surviving ancient woodland sites and primary field boundaries, need to be conserved and strengthened if the local distinctiveness and rich biodiversity of this landscape are to be retained.

Forces for change

Parts of this landscape lack a strong sense of visual cohesion due to the variable amount of woodland cover and a decline in the structure of the enclosure pattern, which has occurred largely as a result of past agricultural intensification. Past forestry management regimes, which included the replanting of ancient woodlands with uniform, even aged blocks of trees, in places comprising conifers, have also led to a dilution of the ancient wooded character of this landscape. This has reduced the inter-connectedness of habitats and thus the ecological value of this landscape. The impact of changing woodland management on landscape character is further exacerbated by the introduction of some new smaller, regularly shaped plantations.

Past changes in agricultural management, resulting in an increase in field size due to agricultural intensification, has also led to a disruption of the primary hedgerow network (along roads, farm and parish boundaries). In places this has been associated with a loss of the secondary hedgerow network (internal field boundaries). Together, these past changes have reduced the ecological value of areas of agricultural land within this landscape.

Future landscape opportunities

There are opportunities to increase individual tree and woodland cover in this landscape, both as a sustainable energy source and to help to reduce atmospheric carbon. Similarly, where woodland occurs along water courses, it can help to regulate water flow, reducing run off and alleviating flood risk. Managing some plantation woodlands for local woodfuel schemes may provide a purpose and economic benefit for woodland management, whilst helping to reduce reliance on traditional carbon based energy. This may create a force for change in terms of the amount of woodland and types of woodlands within this landscape. Opportunities should be sought to enhance the ecological value of agricultural land and to reinforce local distinctiveness and strength of character, for example, through the continued management of historic parkland.

Overall landscape strategy

This is a landscape where both the agricultural land and the woodlands are managed at a fairly high level of intensity. The overall structure and ecological diversity of parts of the landscape are in relatively poor condition. However, this landscape also contains habitats, species and landscape features which are of great importance. The overall strategy for the Wooded Hills and Farmland, therefore, should be to:

Conserve the overall unity of this estate landscape and seek opportunities to enhance the ancient wooded character.

Landscape Guidelines

Symbol Key



Biodiversity



Trees and Woodland



Recreation



Cultural Heritage



Water Management



Land Management



Settlement and Built Features



Geodiversity



Climate Change

The following guidelines reveal opportunities to protect, manage and plan the landscape. The suitability of each guideline for a particular site will depend upon the local characteristics of the landscape.

Protect

■ Conserve and maintain all remaining blocks of ancient woodland



Ancient woodland sites are those which have had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600. Following losses during the 20th century there is now a presumption against further clearance of ancient woodlands and conservation of these cultural heritage features should be given the highest priority, particularly where they support important species (e.g. High Brown and Pearl-Bordered fritillary butterflies). These sites, where oak is normally the dominant tree species, usually have a very high nature conservation interest with a diverse flora and fauna. To maintain species diversity, management should favour smaller scale felling coupes and natural regeneration, while any replanting that is necessary should favour oak, along with other native tree species. Where fritillary butterfly populations exist, woodland management should seek to ensure any remnant coppicing is not overgrown and that an understorey has developed to provide a suitably warm habitat for egg laying and larval development.



Woodland, Howler's Coppice

■ Conserve all mature and veteran trees



Mature and veteran trees, both in hedgerows and relics from ancient deer parks, are vulnerable to a lack of management, disease or loss due to neglect and changes in the management of field boundaries. There is a particular concentration of mature and veteran trees in the old Eastnor Deer Park area around Bronsil. All of these trees are important ecological and heritage features and their conservation should be a priority. This will involve working with private landowners to maintain mature and veteran trees and to ensure that there are younger trees coming on that will eventually replace the existing veterans. Work could also be carried out with planners and developers to ensure that mature and veteran trees are conserved within all new development. The way in which trees have historically been managed can affect their ecological value and where coppicing or pollarding has taken place efforts should be made to ensure the continuity of these management techniques. Some dead and decaying wood, such as fallen logs, provide important habitats for fungi and invertebrates. However, work may be needed to make safe dangerous trees in areas of high public access.



Woodland, Eastnor

■ Conserve all older permanent pastures



Patches of older unimproved pasture are floristically very rich, supporting a variety of plants and animals, as well as adding colour and visual diversity to rural scenes. Equally, they are important historical resources, illustrating the time depth of landscape by providing an ongoing and continuous land use over a significant period of time. In places this floristic diversity has been reduced, or lost completely, through intensification of farming. Initiatives to safeguard remaining areas of older pasture should be strongly promoted and where possible these pastures should be managed as traditional low input grassland. Reseeding, ploughing or addition of nitrates should be avoided.

■ Conserve the historic enclosure pattern



For the most part, this landscape is characterised by a large scale hedged enclosure pattern which creates structure and pattern in the landscape. In some places within the Wooded Hills and Farmland landscape this pattern has become fragmented. It is particularly important to conserve primary hedgerows which give definition to roadsides, footpaths and parish and farm boundaries. Primary hedgerows often include many of the remaining hedgerow trees. Primary hedge lines should be allowed to grow thicker and taller and where they have been removed, consideration should be given to replacement planting with a range of native species.

■ Conserve the network of narrow rural lanes



Narrow rural lanes are a localised but important feature within this landscape and need to be conserved. These lanes are nearly always bounded by fairly substantial mixed species hedgerows. The ecological value of these hedgerows and any associated roadside verges should be conserved, along with the small scale, informal, uncluttered and rural character of the highway network. Where they have been removed, or become gappy, opportunities should be sought to restore/ replace roadside hedgerows through management and replanting incentives.



Clencher's Mill Lane



Large scale hedged enclosure pattern

■ **Conserve remaining traditional orchards**



Small traditional orchards are sometimes found in the Wooded Hills and Farmlands landscape. Orchards can be located near to semi-natural woodland, which may enhance their ecological value. They have an important cultural association with this part of the country. Efforts should be made to protect the remaining traditional orchards in this landscape both for their fruit producing role, their ecological and cultural value and for their contribution to the character of the wider landscape.

■ **Conserve the historic pattern of settlement**



The dispersed pattern of farmsteads and small estate villages, where many of the older buildings are constructed of limestone, is an important characteristic of this landscape. This pattern should be conserved and all future redevelopment should take great care when considering siting and design to ensure that it respects and maintains the existing pattern of settlement, preferably being located within existing villages or farmsteads. Due to the sparsely settled nature of this landscape there is only very limited opportunity for new development without impacting upon landscape character.



White House Farm

Manage

■ **Maintain and manage all woodlands using traditional forestry management practices**



Although it is an ancient wooded landscape, many of the individual woodlands within the Wooded Hills and Farmland are now managed for commercial timber or for pheasant shooting. Some woodlands comprise of mainly uniform and even aged blocks of broadleaved and coniferous trees. Opportunities should be sought for creating a more varied pattern of felling coupes comprising native tree species, such as oak and to encourage the development of forest rides to provide both visual and habitat diversity. Where possible traditional approaches to woodland management, including coppicing or pollarding, should be encouraged and enabled in order to gain additional biodiversity value.

■ **Manage/ restore all remaining patches of semi-natural vegetation**



Patches of semi-natural grassland vegetation, particularly those associated with the limestone ridges, are a characteristic feature of this landscape and should be conserved. Patches of acid grassland also occur, sometimes associated with discrete relic commons on sandstone hills.

The biodiversity of some of these patches, however, has been reduced due to the abandonment of grazing and a consequent increase in the cover of bracken. Initiatives to safeguard and manage remaining areas of semi-natural habitat should be promoted and bracken should be reduced or controlled.



Semi-natural grassland, Hollybush

■ Maintain/ enhance tree cover and wetland habitat along watercourses



Streamlines form important landscape features, especially where they are fringed by scattered trees and scrub. They are valuable as ecological corridors, particularly where they pass through more open intensively farmed areas. When streamline habitats are in good condition they can help maintain water flow, reduce run off and pollution into the watercourse and reduce future flood risk associated with increased storm events. Tree cover along streamlines can also help to regulate water temperature through shading if summers become warmer. Natural regeneration of streamside trees should be encouraged. Although planting of new trees may be appropriate in places, care should be taken to avoid areas of unimproved grassland and marsh which are ecologically important habitats and can provide locations for water storage. Planting should also aim to keep one bank side clear to maintain a variety of wildlife habitats along stream sides.



Alder coppice and stream, Clencher's Mill

■ Encourage sensitive restoration of historical farmsteads and buildings



The Wooded Hills and Farmland are characterised by a sparsely settled pattern of farmsteads and small estate villages, with many older estate buildings constructed from the local limestone. These buildings play a vital role in defining the rural character of the landscape and maintenance of this pattern should be a priority. Where direct physical change to existing properties or changes to their settings occur, attention should be given to retaining the simple form and appearance of the buildings, particularly when a change of use occurs as part of the redevelopment. Every effort should be made to ensure retention of the existing character of buildings during redevelopment: if it is an agricultural building, this character should be retained; if the building is a cottage dwelling, this character should inform the subsequent redevelopment. Attention should be given to the sympathetic management of boundaries around the development, for example, with a preference for native species hedgerows reflecting the species composition of surrounding hedgerows. Where possible, building upgrades and new buildings should seek to minimise carbon use and maximise the appropriate use of renewable energy and local materials.



Peacock Villa under restoration

■ Manage/ restore hedgerow boundaries



Hedgerows provide valuable habitats within farmed landscapes and they can act as movement corridors for some species. They can also help reduce soil erosion associated with increased rainfall, and provide wind protection to growing crops. Management by flail cutting is appropriate for robust hedgerows but where a hedge is thin or gappy it should be first re-established by laying. Field pattern in the Wooded Hills and Farmland is defined largely by primary hedgelines along roadsides, footpaths and parish/ farm boundaries. In places these have been removed in the past to enable more intensive farming, creating a more open landscape pattern. Replacement hedgerow planting should be encouraged in such areas, in a way that complements the shape and scale of existing fields. Hedges should be planted with a mixture of locally occurring native species, including hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple and wild privet. Opportunities should also be sought for encouraging the regeneration of hedgerow trees, especially hedgerow oaks.

■ Manage gamebirds to support sustainable woodland and hedgerow management



Gamebird woodlands should be managed in order to help sustain ground flora which can be adversely affected by excessive ground feeding of game birds through increased nitrification, disturbance and the introduction of non-woodland species. Bird pens should not exceed over one third of the woodland area and in areas of ancient woodland, the number of pheasants should not exceed 700 birds per hectare of pen, as a maximum. It may be desirable for the area covered by bird pens and the number of birds per hectare to be less. Shoots should encourage hedgerow retention and management. During releases, gamebirds should not be encouraged to spread into hedgerows, as pheasants and partridges can cause damage to hedges.

Plan

■ Seek opportunities to create new woodlands



There are opportunities for the creation of new woodlands in this landscape, particularly for replanting in areas of more recent clearance. Where possible the location, size and shape of these new woodlands should complement the surrounding landscape pattern. Larger, better connected woodlands are more resilient to climate change and priority should be given to retaining the corridors that link the woodlands together. It is important to consider the species mix to be planted and their resilience to climate change. When new woodlands are created, opportunities should be considered for developing woodfuel or wood craft schemes to enhance the local economy.

■ Replace conifer plantations in ancient woods



The ancient woodlands in the Wooded Hills and Farmland are characterised by native deciduous species, often dominated by oak. These woodlands are of high nature conservation and cultural heritage interest. The introduction of conifer plantations, however, has changed the character and biodiversity value of some of these woodlands. Where possible, conifer plantations should be replaced with locally occurring native tree species, particularly oak. It is important to consider the species mix and its resilience to climate change. Species already at their driest extent should be avoided. Seeds from locally occurring ancient semi-natural woodland should be used where possible.



Deciduous woodland with conifers

■ Seek opportunities to restore/ enhance the biodiversity of agricultural land



Some of the unimproved pastures in this landscape are floristically very rich and support a wide variety of plant and animal species. Although initiatives to safeguard remaining areas of older pasture should be strongly promoted, opportunities should be sought for enhancing the biodiversity of improved grasslands, or creating new grasslands in areas that have been converted to arable production. Where possible these grasslands should be managed as traditional low input pasture and reseeded, ploughing or the addition of nitrates should be avoided. Such grasslands would help to protect against soil erosion because they are not subject to ploughing. Soil erosion may become a problem with increased rainfall intensity due to climate change.

■ Seek opportunities to restore / create new orchards



Efforts should be made to encourage and support the sustainable restoration of orchards, both for their fruit producing role and for their contribution to biodiversity and the character of the wider landscape. Where appropriate, the creation of new orchards should be considered to ensure the continuation of this locally distinctive feature into the future.



Orchard, Mitchell's Farm

■ Seek opportunities to restore former parkland



Deer parks were once an important land use within this landscape extending into the surrounding higher hills. Remnants of these deer parks still survive, especially individual and groups of relic veteran trees, which provide an important cultural heritage resource, as well as providing valuable habitats. Opportunities should be sought to restore and manage deer parks, or to continue this work where it is already in hand. Opportunities should be explored particularly where restoration could be combined with increased appropriate recreation provision or the enhancement of wildlife habitats, including unimproved grassland and wood pasture.



Deer, Eastnor Park

Principal Timbered Farmlands



Principal Timbered Farmlands

Character

The Principal Timbered Farmlands is a low-lying rolling, wooded agricultural landscape. It is characterised by irregularly shaped ancient woodlands set within an organic pattern of small to medium sized fields, bounded by mixed species hedgerows. A key element in this landscape is the strongly unifying presence of the tree cover, created by a mixture of woodlands, mature hedgerow oaks, linear trees associated with watercourses and, in places, orchards. These features create a strong sense of enclosure and views are filtered through densely scattered hedgerow trees. The sense of enclosure and intimacy is reinforced by the network of narrow winding lanes, bounded by thick hedgerows, which connect wayside dwellings and farmsteads. Regular and loose courtyard farm types are both common; materials include red brick, as well as brick and timber framing.

Key Characteristics

- Low lying rolling topography with occasional steep sided hills
- Organic pattern of small-medium sized fields bounded by mixed species hedgerows
- Irregularly shaped woodlands of ancient character
- Filtered views through scattered mature, hedgerow trees
- Irregular network of winding lanes with thick roadside hedges
- Clustered pattern of farmsteads, rural dwellings and occasional small villages and hamlets
- Mainly brick/ timber dwellings with some stone built and large brick built farm buildings
- Traditional and commercial orchards

Strength of character

The dense network of hedgerows and hedgerow trees interlinking with irregularly shaped ancient woodlands, are prominent features in this landscape. These features combined with the network of winding roads and clustered pattern of farmsteads and rural dwellings, create a strong character and need to be protected.

Forces for change

The character of this landscape is heavily dependent on the network of hedgerows which enclose fields and characterise the winding road network. In places, conversion of agricultural land from pasture to more intensive arable production has led to the rationalisation of field boundaries creating larger fields. This has impacted significantly upon the character of the Principal Timbered Farmlands in some parts, reducing both the intimacy and small scale character of this landscape. Also associated with changing agricultural practices in the past is the loss or degradation of established local orchards. However, recently, significant new bush orchards have been planted in the area.

Newer development is limited in this landscape, thus reinforcing the older settlement patterns and styles which are important to the character of the Principal Timbered Farmlands. There is a rich resource of historical buildings which should be maintained and restored. In places, some newer developments, associated with settlements such as Colwall and Alfrick, have introduced more sub-urban architectural styles and features and this has impacted on the overall rural character of the landscape. Opportunities exist to limit similar impacts in the future and to better integrate the existing newer developments into the landscape. The survival of farmsteads in the Principal Timbered Farmlands is variable, with many surviving unaltered, or altered by less than 50%. A significant number also exist with over 50% alterations, whilst a few have been lost entirely, or converted to residential properties.

Horse pasturing and the keeping of horses constitutes a significant land use in certain parts of the Principal Timbered Farmlands. This activity can make an important contribution to the local economy and, if well managed, can also contribute positively to the local landscape.



Towards the Malvern Hills, from Mathon

Future landscape opportunities

The hedgerow network, hedgerow trees and small irregular blocks of ancient woodland are key to the character of this landscape. They also provide significant habitat resources and have high nature conservation value. Opportunities should be sought, not only to maintain and enhance these features, but to restore them where they have been lost or degraded. Opportunities should also be sought for enhancing the diversity of the age structure of woodland and hedgerow trees.

Pastures can be valuable resources for biodiversity, supporting a mixture of sward types and flowering species. Such species have sometimes been lost through improvement and replacement with uniform agricultural grasslands. There are opportunities to diversify this resource and to enhance the biodiversity value of individual grasslands. Other features, such as small orchards, have been lost, or become degraded. There are opportunities to restore, or re-create these features to reinforce the character of the landscape.

Overall landscape strategy

This is a landscape with a strong character that is generally in good condition. In places, however, there have been changes to the pattern of the landscape, particularly associated with the agricultural regime, the hedgerow network and the style of new development. The overall strategy for the Principal Timbered Farmlands, therefore, should be to:

Conserve and restore the structure and ancient character of this landscape and seek opportunities to enhance the sense of enclosure created by hedgerow trees.



Mathon Church

Landscape Guidelines

Symbol Key



Biodiversity



Trees and Woodland



Recreation



Cultural Heritage



Water Management



Land Management



Settlement and Built Features



Geodiversity



Climate Change

The following guidelines reveal opportunities to protect, manage and plan the landscape. The suitability of each guideline for a particular site will depend upon the local characteristics of the landscape.

Protect

■ Conserve and maintain all remaining blocks of ancient woodland



Areas of ancient woodland are those which have been continuously wooded since 1600. These sites, where oak is normally the dominant tree species, usually have a very high nature conservation interest with a diverse flora and fauna. Following losses during the 20th century there is now a presumption against further clearance of ancient woodlands and conservation of these features should be given the highest priority, particularly where they support important species such as dormouse. To maintain species diversity, management should favour smaller scale felling coupes and natural regeneration. Connected woodlands are more resilient to climate change, and where replanting is necessary, this should favour oak, along with other native tree species. Climate change, with drier and warmer summers, may result in an increased fire risk to ancient woodlands requiring enhanced protection through education and provision of fire fighting resources.



Oak woodland, Coddington Cross

■ Conserve all mature and veteran trees



Mature and veteran trees, in hedgerows, parkland, around the boundaries of ancient woodlands and in traditional orchards, are vulnerable to a lack of management, disease or loss due to the impact of modern development and changes to the management of field boundaries. These are important ecological and heritage features and their conservation should be a priority. This will involve working with private landowners to maintain mature and veteran trees and to ensure that there are younger trees growing which will eventually replace the existing veterans. Work could also be carried out with planners and developers to ensure that mature and veteran trees are conserved within all new development. The way in which trees have historically been managed can affect their ecological value and where coppicing, or pollarding has taken place efforts should be made to ensure the continuity of these management techniques. Some dead and decaying wood, such as fallen logs, can provide habitats for fungi and invertebrates. However, work may be needed to make safe dangerous trees in areas of high public access.



Horses in Colwall Park

■ **Conserve the historic pattern of settlement**



The clustered settlement pattern of the Principal Timbered Farmlands, characterised by brick and timber farmsteads, rural dwellings and occasional small villages and hamlets, contributes strongly to the overall rural character of the landscape.

This complex pattern should be conserved and all future development must take great care when considering siting and design to ensure that it respects and maintains the existing pattern of settlement.

■ **Conserve the historic enclosure pattern**



The sub-regular pattern of small to medium sized fields enclosed by hedgerows is the key element that defines the structure and scale of the Principal Timbered Farmlands. These fields are typically bounded by thick, mixed species hedgerows, which form key heritage features in this landscape. In places, however, there has been a loss of hedgerows, usually as a result of agricultural intensification. Where possible, all such changes should be restricted to maintain the character of the Principal Timbered Farmlands. It is particularly important to conserve primary hedgelines as these give definition to roadsides, footpaths and parish/ farm boundaries.

■ **Conserve remaining traditional orchards**



Traditional orchards are a feature associated with the Principal Timbered Farmlands. They have an important cultural association with this part of the country, but there has been a significant decline in the number of these orchards, both in this landscape and in the wider regional setting. Efforts should be made to protect the remaining traditional orchards in this landscape both for their fruit producing role, their ecological and cultural value and for their contribution to the character of the wider landscape.



Traditional orchard, Mathon



Enclosure pattern, Coombe Hill

■ Conserve all older permanent pastures



Permanent pastures are floristically very rich and support a variety of plants and animals, as well as adding colour and visual diversity to rural scenes. Equally, they are important historical resources, illustrating the time depth of landscape by providing an ongoing and continuous land use over a significant period of time. Initiatives to safeguard remaining areas of unimproved permanent pasture should be strongly promoted and where possible these pastures should be managed as traditional low input grassland. Reseeding, ploughing or addition of nitrates should be avoided.

■ Conserve the network of narrow rural lanes



Rural lanes, often narrow and in places appearing 'sunken', are recurring features throughout this landscape and need to be conserved. These lanes are nearly always bounded by fairly substantial mixed species hedgerows. The ecological value of these hedgerows and any associated roadside verges should be conserved. Where they have been removed, or become gappy, opportunities should be sought to restore/ replace boundary hedgerows. Landowners should be encouraged to protect their roadside hedgerows through management and replanting incentives and any new signage or road markings should not adversely affect the informal character of the lanes.



Rural lane, Mathon

Manage

■ Maintain and manage all woodlands using traditional forestry management practices



Although it is an ancient wooded landscape, some of the individual woodlands within the Principal Timbered Farmlands are managed as commercial timber plantations. These woodlands comprise of uniform and even aged blocks of broadleaved and coniferous trees. Opportunities should be sought for creating a more varied pattern of felling coupes comprising native tree species, such as oak, and to encourage the development of forest rides and more open areas to provide both visual and habitat diversity. Where possible traditional approaches to woodland management, including coppicing or pollarding, should be encouraged and enabled in order to gain additional biodiversity value, particularly on all ancient woodland sites.

■ Maintain and manage hedgerow trees, ensuring a diverse age structure



One of the key characteristics of the Principal Timbered Farmlands is the strong sense of enclosure and filtered views through densely scattered hedgerow trees. These trees provide shade for farm animals during warmer summer temperatures. Many of these hedgerows are dominated by mature or veteran oak trees. Steps should be taken to set up a programme of tree planting, or to promote the natural regeneration of younger trees, to ensure the future of this feature in the landscape.



Hedgerow trees, Colwall

■ **Manage/ restore hedgerow boundaries**



Hedgerows are an important visual element in this landscape, linked to the small irregular blocks of ancient woodland. Hedgerows provide valuable habitats within farmed landscapes and can act as movement corridors for some species. They can also help reduce soil erosion associated with increased rainfall, and provide wind protection to growing crops. The hedgerows in the Principal Timbered Farmlands are often old and thick with a mix of native species. Although management by flail cutting is appropriate for existing robust hedgerows, where a hedge is thin, or gappy it should first be renewed by layering to re-establish the thickness of the hedge. In places, hedgerow boundaries have been removed in the past and some newer boundaries may be fenced rather than hedged, often creating a more open and less cohesive landscape pattern. Where appropriate, replacement hedgerow planting should be encouraged ensuring that the irregular pattern of field boundaries is maintained. New hedgerows should be planted with a mixture of locally occurring native species, including hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple and privet.



Established hedgerow, Colwall

■ **Enhance landscape character through sensitive pasture management**



Characteristic landscape elements in the Principal Timbered Farmlands can provide a range of benefits for grazing animals such as horses. For example, well maintained hedgerows can provide both wind shelter and a food source whilst well managed grasslands can help to reduce the cost of feed. It is important to ensure that opportunities to use these elements are maximized in relation to grazing activities and any equestrian related developments. Pasturing and associated development should enhance the landscape and not compromise its character through the introduction of extraneous and visually insensitive elements.

■ **Manage standing water bodies to enhance landscape character and biodiversity**



There are several small water bodies in the Principal Timbered Farmlands. These are sometimes ‘natural’ features and sometimes the result of human activity, for example, resulting from past minerals extraction. They often provide valuable wildlife habitats. Views of established water bodies, for example, from the Malvern Hills, are often filtered through fringing vegetation, including mature trees. Consequently their visual impact, arising from their reflective properties, can be much reduced. Existing ponds and other water bodies should be managed to provide a balance of open and wooded banks to give a diversity of habitats and to mitigate their visual appearance locally and in views from higher ground. Careful attention should be paid to the siting of any proposed new water bodies and efforts should be made to ensure that visual impacts are minimised.



Disused Sandpit, Mathon

■ Encourage sensitive restoration of historic farmsteads and buildings



Historic farmsteads and clusters of wayside dwellings make a significant contribution to the character of this landscape. When possible, old farmsteads should be retained for their agricultural function. When this is not possible, future alterations to properties should take great care to ensure that any redevelopment respects both the agricultural character of the building and the wider pattern of rural settlement. Where direct physical change to existing properties or changes to their settings occur, attention should be given to retaining the simple form and appearance of the buildings, particularly when a change of use occurs. It is particularly important to use building materials that reflect the locally occurring brick and timber, red brick, or stone built dwellings. Attention should be given to the sympathetic management of boundaries around the development. Where possible, building upgrades and new buildings should seek to minimise carbon use and maximise the use of renewable energy and local materials.



Park Farm, Colwall

Plan

■ Replace conifer plantations in ancient woods



The ancient woodlands in the Principal Timbered Farmlands are characterised by native deciduous species, often dominated by oak. These woodlands are of high nature conservation interest. The introduction of conifer plantations, however, has changed the character and biodiversity value of some of these woodlands. Where possible, conifer plantations should be replaced with locally occurring native tree species, particularly oak. It is important to consider the species mix and its resilience to future climate change: species already at their driest extent should be avoided. Seeds from locally occurring ancient semi-natural woodland should be used to enhance the resource of such species.



Conifers, Mathon

■ Seek opportunities to restore/ enhance the biodiversity of agricultural land



Some of the pastures in this landscape are floristically very rich and support a wide variety of plant and animal species. Although initiatives to safeguard remaining areas of older pasture should be strongly promoted, opportunities should also be sought for enhancing the biodiversity of improved grasslands, or creating new grasslands in areas that have been converted to arable production. Where possible these should be managed as traditional low input grassland and reseeded, or ploughing should be avoided.

■ Seek opportunities to create new woodlands



Woodland is a significant element in the Principal Timbered Farmlands, creating enclosure, intimacy and scale. There are some opportunities for the creation of new woodlands, particularly replanting in areas of recent clearance. Emphasis should be placed on perpetuating the corridors that link the woodlands together. The location, size and shape of new woodlands should complement the surrounding landscape pattern. Where woodlands are created, it is important to consider the species mix and its resilience to climate change. Species already at their driest extent should be avoided, as summers are predicted to become drier. Seeds sourced from ancient semi-natural woodland should be used where possible. Opportunities should be considered for developing woodfuel or wood craft schemes to enhance the local economy.

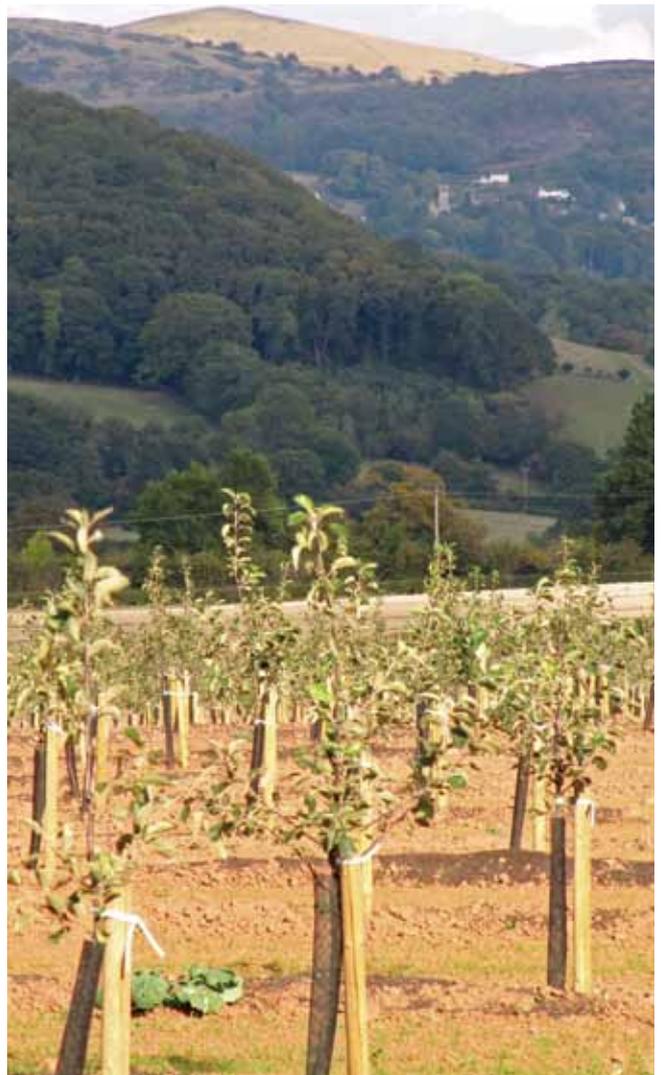


New tree planting, Mathon

■ Seek opportunities to restore/ create new orchards



Traditional orchards are a feature in parts of the Principal Timbered Farmlands, especially immediately to the west of the Malvern Hills and they make a contribution to the small scale, intimate character of this landscape. They also have an important cultural association with this landscape. There has been a significant decline in the number of traditional orchards, both in this landscape and in the wider regional setting. Efforts should be made to encourage and support the sustainable restoration of orchards, both for their fruit producing role and for their contribution to biodiversity and the character of the wider landscape. Where appropriate, the creation of new traditional orchards should be considered to ensure the continuation of this locally distinctive feature into the future.



Newly planted orchard, Mathon

■ Seek opportunities to restore former parkland

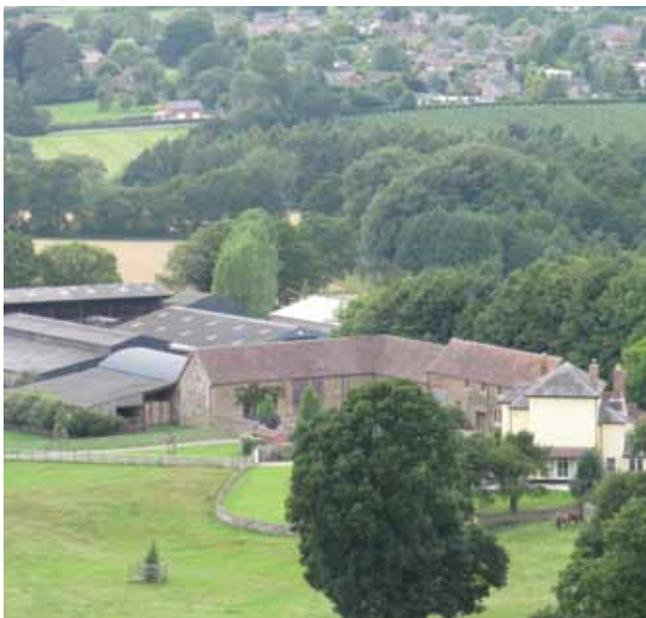


Remnants of former deer parks still survive such as individual and groups of relic veteran trees, which provide an important cultural heritage resource and valuable wildlife habitats. Opportunities should be sought to restore parkland features, particularly where restoration could be combined with increased appropriate recreation provision or the enhancement of wildlife habitats, including unimproved grassland and wood pasture.

■ Seek ways to better integrate large buildings/ structures into the landscape



Modern agricultural buildings are often built at a larger scale than their historical counterparts and as a consequence, can often appear out of scale with the wider landscape. This impact can be reduced through a number of measures aimed at better assimilating such structures into the landscape. These include better siting, such as locating near to existing building groups, in less prominent locations, including in hollows or below hill lines, using colours and materials which can reflect existing historic buildings or the colours of the surrounding landscape and planting appropriate native boundary hedgerows and trees.



Agricultural buildings, Mathon

■ Reinforce vernacular character with appropriate siting, design and materials in new development



This is a landscape that is characterised by a dispersed pattern of historic farmsteads and rural dwellings, with occasional hamlets. There may be opportunities for limited new development which follows the existing settlement pattern. All new development and any alterations to existing properties should take great care when considering siting and design to ensure that they respect and maintain the existing dispersed and rural pattern of settlement. Care should be taken around the boundaries of new development to ensure that any changes reinforce and link with the surrounding agricultural landscape.

■ Promote the uptake of renewable energy



As the Principal Timbered Farmlands are associated with a significant amount of settlement, opportunities should be sought to conserve energy and to utilise buildings for the generation of renewable energy. This could include measures such as introducing solar panels to roofs and walls to supply the building with energy. Care should be taken in the siting of such panels.



Solar panels at The Lighthouse, Mathon

Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings



Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings

Character

The Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings is an intimate, densely settled landscape, characterised by strings of wayside cottages and associated smallholdings. The settlement comprises a mixture of different styles, mostly post-war in age, but also including some older brick/timber and stone built dwellings. These nestle within a complex matrix of small pastoral fields, historic orchards and a network of narrow winding lanes, often defined by tall hedges with hedgerow trees. The ad hoc pattern of settlement and fields is a distinctive feature, which owes its character to the clearance and enclosure of areas of former wood pasture and common. The associated small fields and pockets of rough ground, with semi-natural heathy / acid grassland vegetation, are a recurring feature and provide constant reminders of the origin of this landscape.

Key Characteristics

- Densely settled pattern of small holdings and wayside cottages
- Settlement plots and gardens separated by small orchards and pasture fields
- Network of narrow winding lanes
- Hedged field boundaries with hedgerow trees
- Patches of heathy / acid grassland vegetation
- Mixture of older and more modern building styles
- Nonconformist chapels
- An intimate landscape with a strong sense of enclosure

Strength of character

Human activity in this complex, small scale landscape has resulted in a unified and distinctive small scale character. The landscape owes its character to the clearance, enclosure and settlement of areas of former wood pasture and common, which has resulted in the development of a random, opportunistic settlement pattern. The density, scale and pattern of both dwellings and lanes create a distinctive and intimate character.

Forces for change

This landscape is affected by a degree of recent urbanisation, with much post-war development, of both new, larger dwellings and alteration of older dwellings. This has resulted in the infill of open spaces between older dwellings and within former smallholdings to create a more settled 'urban fringe' character. The distinctive built character of some older buildings has also become degraded and continues to be vulnerable to change through the expansion and modification of existing properties. Changes and an intensification of land use, for example, as a result of creeping urbanisation, have also led to the degradation or loss of hedgerows. This change in land use has altered the traditional pattern of settlement and introduced unusual features into the landscape, including fencing normally associated with residential developments. Such changes have had a significant impact on the overall character and unity of this landscape.

Future landscape opportunities

There are opportunities to consider how built development could be planned and managed in a manner which would reinforce, rather than degrade, the traditional pastoral character of this landscape. There are also opportunities to reinforce landscape pattern through the protection and management of hedgerows.

Overall landscape strategy

This is a landscape where sub-urbanisation of the style and pattern of settlement are evident and where changes to land management are reinforcing this changing character. The result is a reduction in the strength of character and a decline in appropriate management of characteristic landscape elements. The overall strategy is therefore to:

Enhance the overall unity and historic character of this small scale, settled pastoral landscape.



Wellington Heath

Landscape Guidelines

Symbol Key



Biodiversity



Trees and Woodland



Recreation



Cultural Heritage



Water Management



Land Management



Settlement and Built Features



Geodiversity



Climate Change

The following guidelines reveal opportunities to protect, manage and plan the landscape. The suitability of each guideline for a particular site will depend upon the local characteristics of the landscape.

Protect

■ Conserve the historic enclosure pattern



The occurrence and historic pattern of small, regular fields is a key visual element of the Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings and needs to be conserved. The hedgerow network forms an intimate structure that reinforces the historic, settled character of the landscape. The small pastoral fields are typically bounded by hedgerows, but where these have become gappy they have often been made stock proof with wire fencing. Efforts should focus on conserving existing hedged field boundaries and replacing those which have been lost, or damaged.

■ Conserve all older permanent pastures



Patches of older pasture are floristically very rich but this floristic diversity is easily reduced through intensified grassland management. Semi-natural, or traditionally managed unimproved, grasslands are valuable landscape features; adding colour and visual diversity to the landscape and supporting species diversity. Equally, they are important historical resources, illustrating the time depth of landscape by providing an ongoing and continuous land use over a significant period of time. Initiatives to safeguard remaining areas of older pasture should be strongly promoted and, where possible, these pastures should be managed as traditional low input grassland. Reseeding, ploughing or addition of nitrate should be avoided.

■ Conserve the network of narrow winding rural lanes



The network of, often narrow, lanes are a recurring feature throughout this landscape and need to be conserved. These lanes are nearly always bounded by fairly substantial, mixed species, hedgerows. The ecological value of these hedgerows and any associated roadside verges should be conserved along with the small scale, varied character of the highway network. Landowners should be encouraged to protect their roadside hedgerows through management and re-planting incentives and any new signage and markings should not adversely affect the informal character of the lanes.



Narrow lane with hedge border

Manage

■ Maintain/ restore hedgerow boundaries



Hedged enclosures play an important role in defining the structure of this landscape as well as providing valuable corridors for the movement of wildlife. Hedgerows provide valuable habitats within the landscape and provide movement corridors for certain species. They can also help reduce soil erosion associated with increased rainfall, and provide wind protection to growing crops. Many hedgerows are in poor condition due to limited or inappropriate management. Management by flail cutting is appropriate for robust hedgerows, but where a hedge is thin or gappy it should first be renewed by layering. Management should focus on maintaining the height and continuity of existing hedges through the use of traditional hedgerow management techniques. Where necessary, replacement hedgerow planting should be encouraged in a way that complements the shape and scale of existing fields. Hedges should be planted with a mixture of locally occurring native species, such as hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple and wild privet.

■ Maintain and manage hedgerow trees, ensuring a diverse age structure



Scale and enclosure in this landscape are controlled by field pattern, settlement and the density of tree cover. Hedgerow trees tend to be ash or oak and where they are present they give filtered views through the landscape. Hedgerow and other groups of trees should be conserved, whilst steps should also be taken to promote the natural regeneration of younger trees, to ensure the future of this feature in the landscape. Hedgerow trees are a valuable landscape resource and can provide shade for animals during warmer summer temperatures



Hedgerow trees, Wellington Heath



Hedge boundary, edge of Wellington Heath

■ Manage/ restore all remaining patches of semi-natural vegetation



Small patches of semi-natural heathy/ acid grassland vegetation still survive within the Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings. The biodiversity of these patches, however, has been reduced due to neglect as a result of sub-urban encroachment and changing management practices. The semi-natural character and ecological value of these patches should be enhanced through appropriate management, whilst opportunities should also be sought for habitat expansion through restoration of semi-natural vegetation.



Grassland and trees, Loxter

■ Encourage sensitive restoration of historic farmsteads and buildings



Historic farmsteads, the strings of wayside cottages and associated smallholdings play a vital role in establishing the distinctive character of this landscape. New development, however, has often been associated with the introduction of new or urbanising features which have eroded this character. Where direct physical change to existing properties or changes to their settings occur, attention should be given to retaining the simple form and appearance of the buildings, particularly when a change of use occurs as part of the redevelopment. Every effort should be made to ensure retention of the existing character during redevelopment: if it is an agricultural building, this character should be retained; if the building is a wayside cottage, this character should inform any subsequent redevelopment. It is particularly important to use building materials that reflect locally occurring brick/ timber, red brick, or rendered dwellings. Attention should be given to the sympathetic management of boundaries around the development which should include locally occurring hedgerow species. Where possible, building upgrades and new buildings should seek to minimise carbon use and maximise the use of renewable energy and local materials.



Converted chapel, Wellington Heath

Plan

■ Promote the uptake of renewable, particularly solar, energy



Opportunities should be sought to utilise buildings for the generation of renewable energy, including solar energy. This could include introducing solar panels to roofs and walls to supply heat/ energy to local buildings. Siting should be informed by the pattern of roofscapes within the settlement. Care should be taken in the design and positioning of such panels to blend with roofs where possible and to minimise distant glare.

■ Seek opportunities to restore/ create orchards



Small traditional orchards and fruit trees are a feature associated with wayside dwellings in this landscape. This area was formerly characterised by more extensive orchards which were planted to supply the local cider industry but there has been a significant decline in the number of orchards over the years. Efforts should be made to encourage and support the sustainable restoration of traditional orchards, both for their fruit producing role and for their contribution to the character of the wider landscape in terms of both their cultural and natural values. Where possible, locally distinctive varieties of apple, or those indigenous to the area, should be used to restock or replant orchards. Orchards are most commonly surrounded by mixed, often tall, hedges, planted to shelter the fruit trees.



New orchard planting, Loxter

■ Reinforce vernacular character in new development through appropriate siting, design, scale and materials



This is an intimate, densely settled landscape, characterised by strings of small wayside cottages, associated smallholdings and open spaces. There may be opportunities for additional individual dwellings where the pattern of the original, vernacular settlement and the nature and scale of existing historic properties would not be compromised. The planning of all new development should take great care when considering size, siting and design to ensure that it respects, and does not overwhelm, the mixed pattern of built space and open ground within this landscape. Care should be taken around the boundaries of new development to ensure that they reinforce and link with the surrounding rural landscape, maintaining the rhythm of buildings and open spaces.



Development pattern, Wellington Heath

Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use



Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use

Character

The Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use is a small to medium scale settled agricultural landscape characterised by scattered farms, relic commons and clusters of wayside dwellings. The clustered settlement is linked by a network of narrow winding lanes, nestling within a matrix of small hedged fields where the heavy/ poorly drained soils support a predominantly pastoral land use. Tree cover is largely restricted to scattered hedgerow trees, groups of trees around dwellings and lines of trees along stream sides. This is a landscape with a notably domestic character, defined chiefly by the scale of its field pattern, the nature and density of its settlement and its traditional land uses, which include grazed pastures, orchards and some arable fields. A large number of the historic farmsteads in this landscape, dating mainly from the 19th century, are clustered around the common edge. Older farmsteads, dating from the 14th to 18th century, are more often located in hamlets, villages, or scattered throughout the landscape.

Key Characteristics

- Small-scale landscape defined by a prominent pattern of hedged fields
- Pastoral land use on heavy clay soils
- Clustered settlement pattern of farmsteads and wayside dwellings
- Filtered views through scattered trees within hedgerows and along watercourses
- Rolling lowland with occasional steep sided hills and valleys

Strength of character

The historic, small scale, settled nature of this landscape imparts a strong strength of character. This is due in part to the undulating topography but also to the pastoral character, the small to medium scale field pattern and the occurrence of scattered hedgerow and streamside trees. Similarly, the clustered pattern of settlement, with its small groups of roadside dwellings and the associated network of lanes and trackways provide further interest. All of these features need to be conserved and, where necessary, strengthened if the local distinctiveness of this landscape is to be retained.

Forces for change

The pastoral character of this landscape is vulnerable to change as a result of agricultural intensification. Rural development may also threaten the character of the existing settlement pattern, eroding both the small scale and pastoral character of the landscape.

Although generally intact, the pastoral character and pattern of small to medium sized fields is vulnerable to change as a result of the general shift towards arable cultivation and the rationalisation of traditional farming landscapes. In places, particularly just outside the AONB, this has had an impact on the integrity of the small scale enclosure pattern, where hedgerows lose their function and either become neglected, or have been removed, resulting in larger fields and a change in the scale of the landscape. The loss and deterioration of hedgerows in turn threatens the survival of hedgerow trees.

Intensification of farming practices is resulting in the development of a more simplistic visual uniformity across this landscape as the diversity of the traditional rural character is eroded. Examples of this include the remaining areas of permanent pasture, which can often be of significant biodiversity interest but which are threatened by changes in land use that favour more uniform grassland swards. There is evidence of a loss of function/management of traditional orchards.

There are pressures for rural development in this landscape, which in places has resulted in clusters of more sub-urban style new settlement and redevelopment of older properties. The dispersed pattern of hamlets, however, may be capable of accommodating limited new development, provided individual new dwellings are designed to reflect the local, vernacular style. Attention should be given to traditional styles of property boundary and to the location of new dwellings, which should not be sited close enough that settlements begin to coalesce.



Orchard, Chandler's Cross

Future landscape opportunities

Agricultural landscapes may change as a result of many factors, particularly the economy. Changing markets and the introduction of new crop types, such as energy crops, could impact upon the character of this landscape, creating new textures and altering the visual character. However, such crops may provide opportunities to enhance the economic strength of the sector. These two factors may require balancing.

Tree planting or natural regeneration along watercourses can enhance the habitat value of this landscape. This may also enhance sustainable flood risk management, by helping to regulate flow and reduce run off, thus alleviating flood risk.

Renewable energy and changing energy infrastructure may be required for settlement within this landscape. New structures or features to support energy generation should be retained within existing parcels of development, close to existing buildings in order to respect and maintain the existing rural character of the landscape.

Overall landscape strategy

This is a landscape that is relatively intact and generally in good condition, although in places there is evidence of change and degradation of the cultural pattern. The overall strategy for the Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use, therefore, should be:

Conserve the diversity and function of this small scale, settled agricultural landscape and seek opportunities to restore/ enhance the character of degraded areas.



Barn, Chase End Street

Landscape Guidelines

Symbol Key



Biodiversity



Trees and Woodland



Recreation



Cultural Heritage



Water Management



Land Management



Settlement and Built Features



Geodiversity



Climate Change

The following guidelines reveal opportunities to protect, manage and plan the landscape. The suitability of each guideline for a particular site will depend upon the local characteristics of the landscape.

Protect

■ Conserve the historic enclosure pattern



Field pattern is a key visual element to the character of the Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use. The hedgerow network forms a small scale landscape structure defined by a prominent pattern of hedged fields. This pattern reinforces the historic and settled character of the landscape and should therefore be conserved. The pastoral character and pattern of small to medium sized fields have been rationalised in places in order to enable larger scale arable cultivation, resulting in a degradation of landscape character. Where possible, such changes should be restricted to maintain the character of the Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use and replacement hedgerows planted if possible.

■ Conserve all older permanent pastures



Permanent pasture is a characteristic feature on the heavy clay soils which are found in this landscape. Some of these unimproved pastures are floristically rich and support a variety of plants and animals. Equally, they are important historical resources, illustrating the time depth of landscape by providing an ongoing and continuous land use over a significant period of time. Initiatives to safeguard remaining areas of permanent pasture should be strongly promoted and where possible these pastures should be managed as traditional unimproved grassland. Reseeding, ploughing or the addition of nitrates should be avoided.



Enclosure pattern, Newlands Grange

■ Retain and manage field ponds



Field ponds are a characteristic feature in areas of permanent pasture where historically they were used for watering livestock. They represent a significant cultural heritage resource and they may be of use to store water if summer rainfall decreases. If left unmanaged, ponds are at risk from silting up, becoming overgrown and shaded out, or simply drying out. Management is needed to ensure their retention and to improve their wildlife and landscape interests. Allowing livestock to access some parts of field ponds can add diversity to the wetland habitat.

■ Conserve the network of narrow rural lanes



The network of often narrow rural lanes is a recurring feature throughout this landscape and needs to be conserved. These lanes are nearly always bounded by fairly substantial mixed species hedgerows. The ecological value of these hedgerows and any associated roadside verges should be conserved along with the small scale, uncluttered and rural character of the highway network. Landowners should be encouraged to protect their roadside hedgerows through management and replanting incentives.

■ Conserve the historic pattern of settlement



The clustered settlement pattern, characterised by red brick and rendered farmsteads, clusters of roadside dwellings and occasional hamlets, contributes strongly to the rural character of this landscape. This pattern should be conserved and all future development should take great care when considering siting and design to ensure that it respects and maintains the existing rural pattern of settlement.



Roadside settlement



Gate House, Berrow

Manage

■ Maintain / enhance tree cover and wetland vegetation along watercourses



Streamlines form important landscape features, especially where they are fringed by scattered trees and scrub. They are valuable as ecological corridors, particularly where they pass through more open intensively farmed areas. When streamline habitats are in good condition they can help maintain water flow, reduce run off and pollution into the watercourse and reduce future flood risk associated with storm events. Natural regeneration of streamside trees should be encouraged. Although planting of new trees may be appropriate in places, care should be taken to avoid areas of unimproved grassland and marsh which are ecologically important habitats and provide locations for water storage. Planting should aim to keep one bank side clear to maintain a variety of wildlife habitats along stream margins.

■ Maintain and manage hedgerow trees, ensuring a diverse age structure



Scale and enclosure in this landscape are controlled by field pattern and the density of tree cover. Hedgerow trees tend to be ash and oak and where they are present they give filtered views through the landscape. This area is quite rich in medium-old age hedgerow pollards which should be protected and managed as part of hedgerow regeneration schemes. These trees provide shade for farm animals during warmer summer temperatures. Many of these hedgerow pollards are mature or veteran oak trees. Steps should be taken to set up a programme of tree planting, or to promote the natural regeneration of younger trees, to ensure the future of this feature in the landscape.



Hedgerow trees, Newlands Grange

■ Maintain/ restore hedgerow boundaries including hedgerow trees



Hedgerows are a very important visual element in this landscape providing valuable habitats and corridors for the movement of wildlife within the farmed landscape. Management of existing hedgerows should focus on maintaining the thickness of older hedges through the use of traditional hedgerow management techniques. Management by flail cutting is appropriate for robust hedgerows, but where a hedge is in poor condition, or has become gappy it should first be renewed by layering. Replacement hedgerow planting should be encouraged in areas where internal boundaries have previously been removed to enlarge field size. Such planting should ensure that the irregular pattern of field boundaries is maintained. New hedgerows should be planted with a mixture of locally occurring native species, including hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple and privet. The planting of species such as leylandii and laurel is not appropriate and should be avoided.



Hedgerow tree, Eight Oaks Farm

■ Encourage sensitive restoration of historic farmsteads and buildings



Historic farmsteads and wayside dwellings play an important role in defining the rural character of this landscape. New development, however, can often be associated with the introduction of new or urbanising features which can erode rural character. Where physical changes to existing properties or their settings take place, attention should be given to retaining the simple form and appearance of the buildings, particularly when a change of use occurs as part of the redevelopment. Every effort should be made to ensure retention of the existing character during redevelopment: if it is an agricultural building, this character should be retained; if the building is a wayside cottage, this character should inform any subsequent redevelopment. It is particularly important to use building materials and techniques that reflect locally occurring brick/ timber, red brick, or rendered dwellings. Attention should also be given to the sympathetic management of boundaries around the development which should include locally occurring hedgerow species. Where possible, building upgrades and new buildings should also seek to minimise carbon use and maximise the appropriate use of renewable energy.



Country house, Chase End Street

Plan

■ Seek opportunities to restore wetlands to enhance ecological diversity



This is an agricultural landscape with limited semi-natural habitats. Opportunities should be sought to identify suitable sites where semi-natural wetland habitats could be created. Wetlands can assist in the reduction of flood risk because they help to store water, and may also be beneficial if summer rainfall decreases.

■ Seek opportunities to restore / enhance the biodiversity of agricultural land



Some of the unimproved pastures in this landscape are floristically very rich and support a wide variety of plant and animal species. Although initiatives to safeguard remaining areas of older pasture should be strongly promoted, opportunities should also be sought for enhancing the biodiversity of improved grasslands, or creating new grasslands in areas that have been converted to arable production. Where possible these grasslands should be managed as traditional low input pasture and reseeded, ploughing or the addition of nitrates should be avoided.

■ Reinforce vernacular character in new development through appropriate siting, design and materials



This is a landscape that is characterised by a clustered pattern of historic farmsteads and wayside dwellings. There may be limited opportunities for new development which follows the existing settlement pattern. All new development and any alterations to existing properties should take great care when considering scale, siting and design to ensure that they respect and maintain this existing clustered pattern of settlement. Care should be taken around the boundaries of new development to ensure that they reinforce and link with the surrounding rural landscape..

■ Promote the uptake of renewable energy



As the Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use are a settled landscape, opportunities should be sought to utilise buildings for the generation of renewable energy, including solar energy. This could include introducing solar panels to roofs and walls to supply heat/ energy to local buildings. Care should be taken in the siting of such panels to minimise distant glare.

■ Seek opportunities to restore / create new orchards



Small traditional orchards are a feature associated with wayside dwellings throughout the Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use. They have an important cultural association with this part of the country but there has been a significant decline in the number of orchards, both in this landscape and in the wider regional setting. Efforts should be made to encourage and support the sustainable restoration of orchards, both for their fruit producing role, their ecological and cultural value and for their contribution to the character of the wider landscape. Where appropriate, the creation of new orchards should be considered to ensure the continuation of this locally distinctive feature into the future and encourage the continuation of species of interest.



Traditional orchard, Chandler's Cross

Settled Farmlands on River Terrace



Settled Farmlands on River Terrace

Character

This is an open, intensively cultivated, settled agricultural landscape, associated with fertile, free draining river terrace soils. These soils give rise to a productive, horticultural land use, where intensive commercial orchards are a recurring and visually prominent feature of the landscape. Overall this is a medium scale landscape with a rolling lowland topography, characterised by medium sized fields, often with sinuous boundaries and tall hedgerows. Woodland and hedgerow trees are often absent, allowing open views. Settlement is sparsely dispersed and tends to be found in discrete clusters of farmsteads and roadside dwellings. Oast houses are a feature in places and most buildings are of timber frame construction with clay tiling.

Key Characteristics

- Free draining, sandy brown soils
- Intensive horticultural production
- Large commercially managed orchards
- Medium scale, sub-regular field pattern
- Sparse hedgerow tree cover
- Open views
- Clusters of roadside settlement

Strength of character

The agricultural land use, the sub-regular pattern of fields with commercial orchards and the open views define the character of this landscape. The area is also characterised by a dispersed pattern of farmsteads and clusters of roadside dwellings. These features need to be conserved and, enhancements are needed if the local distinctiveness and wider value of this landscape is to be retained.

Forces for change

The pressure on the land from intensive agricultural/horticultural practices and the consequent rationalisation of traditional patterns has resulted in a decline in the structure of this landscape as hedgerows lose their function, become neglected and deteriorate. It is likely that the value of the land for biodiversity has also declined in the past. As a consequence of the changing field pattern, the survival of hedgerow trees is threatened. Growing demand for apples has led to more commercial orchard planting in this landscape type while growing pressure to increase productivity of soft fruits has seen large-scale polytunnel development in adjacent areas, which is visually intrusive and impacts on the tranquillity and beauty of the landscape.

The density of settlement in this area is low because the land is highly valued for intensive agriculture. Currently there is localised ribbon development with red-brick inter-war housing, while recent roadside development is also evident. Development in adjacent areas is likely to increase with proposals for residential and commercial development on the outskirts of Ledbury. The location and design of such development needs to be carefully managed, so as not to impact on the existing rural settlement pattern of farmsteads and small clusters of dwellings which characterise this landscape.

Future landscape opportunities

The agricultural landscape of the Settled Farmlands on River Terrace is liable to change from many factors, particularly the economy. Changing markets and the introduction of commercial orchards have had an impact on rural character, leading to the creation of new textures and alteration of the visual character of this landscape. The restoration and enhancement of characteristic landscape features such as open, uncluttered views and traditional orchards should be a priority alongside careful management of farm practices and built development.

Overall landscape strategy

This is an intensively farmed agricultural landscape where there is much evidence of change, resulting in a consequent degradation of the cultural pattern. The overall strategy for the Settled Farmlands on River Terrace should be:

Conserve the traditional rural character of this open, agricultural landscape, whilst seeking ways to enhance both the structure of the cultural pattern and its associated biodiversity.

Landscape Guidelines

Symbol Key



Biodiversity



Trees and Woodland



Recreation



Cultural Heritage



Water Management



Land Management



Settlement and Built Features



Geodiversity



Climate Change

The following guidelines reveal opportunities to protect, manage and plan the landscape. The suitability of each guideline for a particular site will depend upon the local characteristics of the landscape.

Protect

■ Conserve remaining traditional orchards



Small traditional orchards are a feature associated with the Settled Farmlands on River Terrace. They have an important cultural association with this part of the country, but there has been a significant decline in the number of traditional orchards, both in this landscape and in the wider regional setting. Efforts should be made to protect the remaining traditional orchards in this landscape both for their fruit producing role, their ecological and cultural value and for their contribution to the character of the wider landscape.



Mature fruit tree, Beggars Ash

■ Maintain/enhance tree cover and wetland vegetation along watercourses



Tree cover consisting of alder and willow along watercourses can help to regulate water temperature through shading, this could be valuable if summers become warmer and average temperatures increase. Natural regeneration of streamside trees should be encouraged. Appropriate streamside willows and alders should be protected for their ecological and biodiversity value.

■ Conserve archaeological evidence of field pattern in the southern part of the area



This landscape consists of a field pattern dating from the medieval open field system with associated archaeological indicators such as ridge and furrow and banks alongside individual strip fields. The medieval pattern and features should be conserved. Further field boundary removal and adaptation to a modern day field pattern should be carefully restricted.

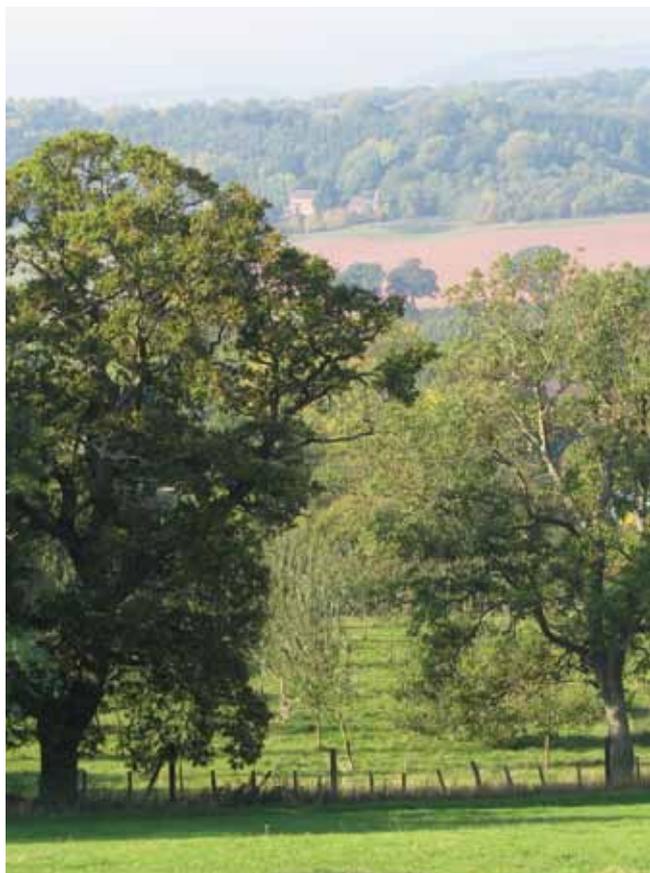


Hedgerow tree, near Ochre Hill

■ Conserve all mature and veteran trees



Mature and veteran trees, mainly in hedgerows but also around the boundaries of ancient woodlands, are vulnerable to a lack of management, disease or loss due to the impact of modern development and changes to the management of field boundaries. These are important ecological and heritage features and their conservation should be a priority. This will involve working with private landowners to maintain mature and veteran trees and to ensure that there are younger trees growing which will eventually replace the existing veterans. Work could also be carried out with planners and developers to ensure that mature and veteran trees are conserved within all new development. The way in which trees have historically been managed can affect their ecological value and where coppicing or pollarding has taken place, efforts should be made to ensure the continuity of these management techniques. Some dead and decaying wood, such as fallen logs, can provide valuable habitats for fungi and invertebrates. However, work may be needed to make safe dangerous trees in areas of high public access.



Mature trees, from Frith Wood

Manage

■ Manage field pattern and hedgerows to provide good ecological habitats and good visual screening around orchards



The network of hedgerows provides valuable habitats, supports biodiversity and provides good visual screening around extensive commercial orchards. Management of hedgerows by flail cutting is appropriate for robust hedgerows but where a hedge is thin, or gappy it should first be renewed by layering. Where necessary, replacement hedgerow planting should be encouraged in a way that complements the shape and scale of existing fields. Hedges should be planted with a mixture of locally occurring native species, such as hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple and wild privet.



Commercial orchard and boundary, near Frith Farm

■ **Create/ maintain a minimum 4m buffer strip around arable/horticultural field margins**



Maintaining a significant strip of grassland along the base of hedgerows would provide a buffer between the adjoining arable field and the hedgerow, thus protecting field boundaries from intensive farming practices and drift from agricultural chemicals. Field margins can enhance the biodiversity value of arable land and should be managed to maximise the diversity of plants. Such field margins provide strips of more stable soil that can help to reduce erosion associated with rainfall and wind. This would be of particular benefit along the route of footpaths and bridleways.



Field margins near Frith Farm

■ **Maintain and manage hedgerow trees, ensuring a diverse age structure**



Scale and enclosure in this landscape are controlled by field pattern and the density of tree cover. Hedgerow trees tend to be oak, ash and hazel. Where they are present they give filtered views through the landscape. Hedgerow trees may be useful for providing shelter to stock during warmer summers associated with predicted climate change.



Hedgerow tree, near Ochre Hill



Hedge boundary, Beggars Ash

Plan

■ Seek opportunities to restore/ enhance the biodiversity of agricultural land



Unimproved pastures in this landscape can be floristically rich and support a wide variety of plant and animal species. Although initiatives to safeguard remaining areas of older pasture should be strongly promoted, opportunities should also be sought for enhancing the biodiversity of improved grasslands, or creating new grasslands in areas that have been converted to arable production. Where possible these grasslands should be managed as traditional low input pasture and reseeded, ploughing or the addition of nitrates should be avoided.



Mixed use land, near Ochre Hill

■ Seek opportunities to restore/ create orchards



Small traditional orchards are a feature associated with Settled Farmlands on River Terrace. They have an important cultural association with this part of the country, but there has been a significant decline in the number of these orchards, both in this landscape and in the wider regional setting. Efforts should be made to encourage and support the sustainable restoration of orchards for their fruit producing role, their ecological and cultural values and for their contribution to the character of the wider landscape. Where appropriate, the creation of new traditional orchards should be considered to ensure the continuation of this locally distinctive feature into the future and encourage the continuation of species of interest.



New orchard planting, The Old Kennels

Sandstone Estatelands



Sandstone Estatelands

Character

The Sandstone Estatelands is an open rolling landscape characterised by red, sandy soils which developed on the underlying Permian sandstone, and a regular pattern of large arable fields with localised blocks of woodland. Isolated hummocks are remnants of glacial boulder clay and fluvioglacial sand and gravel. On these hillocks, there are patches of relic heathy vegetation. Elsewhere the presence of gorse and bracken in verges reflects the sandy nature of the underlying soils. Overall, this is a planned landscape with a strong estate character, reflected in the isolated brick farmsteads and clusters of wayside dwellings with accompanying country houses. Parkland and its associated ornamental planting, together with stone built estate dwellings, contribute to the diversity of this landscape. The irregular pattern of narrow, rural lanes is a key feature and, together with the strong field layout, plays a dominant structural role in this landscape. Field boundaries are often defined by thorn/ elm hedges, with taller, mixed species hedges along rural lanes. Mature hedgerow oak trees are only sparsely scattered and rather than blocking views, or creating a sense of enclosure, the tree cover generally frames wide, open views.

Key Characteristics

- Planned landscape of large arable fields
- Sandy soils with patches of relic heathy vegetation
- Discrete estate plantations and groups of trees
- Hedgerow field boundaries with scattered mature trees
- Dispersed pattern of brick and stone farmsteads and clusters of wayside dwellings
- Parklands with associated ornamental planting

Strength of character

The Sandstone Estatelands is a planned agricultural landscape with a distinct pattern of settlement, field enclosure and rural lanes. The resulting pattern provides a strong visual unity with a moderate strength of character.

Forces for change

Arable intensification in the past led to a deterioration of hedgerows which in turn reduced the visual unity and ecological value of the landscape. Whilst such threats still exist, in recent years much has been done to restore and replant hedgerows in the Sandstone Estatelands.

A modern form of intensified land use involves the erection of significant numbers of polytunnels which are in evidence locally within this landscape. This is creating a significant visual impact and has the potential to put pressure on water resources.

Since the early 1990s considerable effort has been put into the planting of new trees and the management of established specimen trees in ornamental parkland areas. Such work needs to be sustained in the long term.

Future landscape opportunities

In places, opportunities still exist to restore, or create new field boundaries, to provide valuable wildlife habitats and to help sustain the visual unity of the landscape. Elsewhere the focus should be on maintaining management of field boundaries to the benefit of landscape and wildlife.

Opportunities should be sought to re-create patches of heathland vegetation, particularly on sandy knolls/ hillocks outside of established parkland areas. Opportunities may also exist to encourage multi-age planting and a greater variety of native species in any woodlands which are of plantation origin. This would increase their ecological value. Much replacement planting for old and veteran specimen trees has been undertaken in the last 20 years and this should continue as appropriate.

Historic buildings should be managed to ensure that any redevelopment complements the existing settlement character of the Sandstone Estatelands and enhances the social and economic opportunities of the landscape.

Overall landscape strategy

The Sandstone Estatelands have a moderately strong cultural character with a variable condition. In many places the landscape has benefitted significantly from recent management practices. In some other areas past changes, such as a decline in hedgerow pattern, remain evident. There is potential to continue to enhance the landscape through positive management, especially in those areas which have not been a focus for recent activity. The overall strategy for the Sandstone Estatelands, therefore, should be:

Strengthen and maintain the overall structure of the landscape by conserving and enhancing the network of lanes, field boundaries and other primary features, such as the hedgerow trees and ornamental planting associated with parkland.

Landscape Guidelines

Symbol Key



Biodiversity



Trees and Woodland



Recreation



Cultural Heritage



Water Management



Land Management



Settlement and Built Features



Geodiversity



Climate Change

The following guidelines reveal opportunities to protect, manage and plan the landscape. The suitability of each guideline for a particular site will depend upon the local characteristics of the landscape.

Protect

■ Conserve all mature and veteran trees



Specimen tree planting, particularly where associated with ornamental parkland, is an important feature in this landscape. As well as their historical importance, parklands provide diversity and interest in the wider landscape. Wherever possible it is important to retain the pastoral character of traditional parklands, conserve mature and veteran trees and encourage new planting to replace older trees. This may involve historical research and the drawing up a restoration plan. It is important to consider the species mix and its resilience to climate change. The way in which trees have historically been managed can affect their ecological value and where coppicing or pollarding has taken place efforts should be made to ensure the continuity of these management techniques. Some dead and decaying wood, such as fallen logs, can provide habitats for fungi and invertebrates. However, work may be needed to make safe dangerous trees in areas of high public access.



Pollarded Oak, Bromesberrow

■ Conserve the network of narrow rural lanes



The network of often narrow rural lanes is a recurring feature throughout this landscape and needs to be conserved. These lanes are nearly always bounded by fairly substantial mixed hedgerows. The ecological value of these hedgerows and any associated roadside verges should be conserved along with the small scale, informal, uncluttered and rural character of the highway network. Where hedgerows have been removed, or become gappy, opportunities should be sought to restore/ replace roadside hedgerows. Landowners should be encouraged to protect their roadside hedgerows through management and replanting incentives.



Rural Lane, Berrow

■ Conserve the historic enclosure pattern



The historic enclosure pattern in the Sandstone Estatelands is characterised by large sized, regular fields typically bounded by elm and thorn hedgerows. Although some internal field boundaries have previously been removed to enlarge fields for arable cultivation, the primary structure of roadside, parish and farm boundary hedgerows is still relatively intact. There is evidence of ancient field enclosures in this landscape, which suggest it has long been an enclosed landscape. Where possible, changes should be restricted to maintain the character of the Sandstone Estatelands and replacement hedgerows planted if possible.

■ Conserve the historic pattern of settlement



A settlement pattern of isolated stone or brick built farmsteads and clusters of wayside dwellings, with associated country houses characterise this landscape. This pattern should be conserved and all future development should take great care when considering siting and design to ensure that it respects and maintains the existing pattern of settlement whilst supporting opportunities for sustainable development.



Country house, Bromesberrow

Manage

■ Manage/ restore hedgerow boundaries including hedgerow trees



Hedgerows provide valuable habitats within farmed landscapes and can act as movement corridors for some species. They can also help reduce soil erosion associated with predicted increased rainfall and provide wind protection to growing crops. Field pattern in the Sandstone Estatelands is defined largely by primary hedgelines along roadsides, footpaths and parish/ farm boundaries. Where these hedgelines are defined by robust hedgerows, management by flail cutting is appropriate, but where a hedge is thin, or gappy it should first be renewed by laying or coppicing. In places, where primary hedgelines have been removed to enable more intensive arable farming, replacement planting should be encouraged in a way that complements the pattern of the wider landscape. Hedges should be planted with a mixture of locally occurring native species, including hawthorn and blackthorn. Hedgerow trees are an important feature in this area and efforts should be made to ensure that younger trees are allowed to come through and eventually replace those which are currently mature and veteran. Certain species may be more appropriate in some areas than in others, depending on local character and liability issues in relation to roadside trees and highways.



Mixed species hedge, Bromesberrow

■ Encourage sensitive restoration of historic farmsteads and buildings



Historic farmsteads and clusters of estate dwellings play a key role in defining the rural character of this landscape. The continuation of these features is essential in maintaining the existing character of this estate landscape. Where direct physical change to existing properties or changes to their settings occur, attention should be given to retaining the simple form and appearance of the buildings, particularly when a change of use occurs as part of the redevelopment. Every effort should be made to ensure retention of the character of buildings during redevelopment, whether it is a farmstead, or an estate dwelling. It is particularly important to use building materials that reflect locally occurring limestone or brick built dwellings. Where possible, building upgrades and new buildings should also seek to minimise carbon use and maximise the use of renewable energy. Attention should also be given to the sympathetic management of boundaries around the development.

■ Maintain and manage all woodlands using appropriate forestry management practices



Most woodlands within the Sandstone Estatelands are managed for timber and/or a variety of commercial uses. Occasionally, woodlands comprise of uniform and even aged blocks of trees. Opportunities should be sought for creating a more varied pattern of felling coupes comprising native tree species, such as oak, and to encourage the development of forest rides and more open heaths to provide both visual and habitat diversity. Where possible, traditional approaches to woodland management, including coppicing or pollarding, should be encouraged and enabled in order to gain additional biodiversity value.

■ Create/ maintain a minimum 4m buffer strip around field margins



Maintaining a significant strip of grassland along the base of hedgerows would provide a buffer between the adjoining arable field and the hedgerow, thus protecting field boundaries from intensive farming practices and drift from agricultural chemicals. Field margins can enhance the biodiversity value of arable land and should be managed to maximise the diversity of plants. Such field margins provide strips of more stable soil that can help to reduce erosion associated with rainfall and wind. This may be of particular benefit along the route of footpaths.



Field margin, Bromesberrow



Semi-natural woodland, Bromesberrow

Plan

■ Seek opportunities to restore former parkland



Historic parklands are an important land use within this landscape containing individual and groups of relic veteran trees. These are an important cultural heritage resource, as well as providing valuable habitats. Veteran trees within parkland may be at risk from increased stress, for example, associated with climatic changes, causing a risk to their associated habitats. Opportunities should be sought for the continued restoration and management of parklands, particularly where this could be combined with increased recreation provision, or the enhancement of wildlife habitats, depending on which of these would be most appropriate to the individual site.



Parkland, Bromesberrow Place

■ Seek ways to better integrate large buildings/ structures into the landscape



Modern agricultural buildings and other structures such as polytunnels or farm reservoirs are often built at a larger scale than their historical counterparts and as a consequence, can appear out of scale or out of character with the wider landscape. This impact should be avoided but where this is not possible should be reduced through a number of measures which aim to better assimilate such structures and buildings into the landscape where the principle of development is acceptable. These include better siting as part of existing farmsteads or in less prominent locations, planting appropriate native hedgerows as boundaries and using colours and materials to match existing historic buildings or the colours of the surrounding landscape.

■ Seek opportunities to restore/ recreate acid grass/ heath



The Sandstone Estatelands is characterised by localised, steep sided knolls, which may support relic heathy vegetation. Areas of heathland within the Sandstone Estatelands have declined, due to past intensive agricultural management, while a lack of grazing has resulted in some areas reverting to scrub and woodland, particularly in areas of non-productive land. Where heathy vegetation still survives the scrub should be cleared and grazing reintroduced as a priority. Opportunities should be sought to re-create acid grassland and heath on suitable sites.



Grassland, near Hill Farm

Enclosed Commons



Enclosed Commons

Character

The Enclosed Commons is a planned landscape characterised by an ordered pattern of medium to large geometric fields, straight roads and scattered red brick farmsteads. Fields are typically defined by straight thorn hedges, reflecting the late enclosure of this landscape from former woodland and waste on poor soils. Further structure is provided by scattered hedgerow trees, localised plantation woodlands and linear tree cover along watercourses which provide a framework to views rather than producing a sense of enclosure and blocking them. The historic land use pattern is also reflected in the pattern of settlement, which includes isolated, red brick farmsteads and clusters of wayside dwellings. Most of the farmsteads have regular courtyard plans and date from the 19th century, while the presence of wayside dwellings reflects the origin of this landscape from areas of former common land. Scattered farmsteads are often located opposite, or close to areas which remain today as unenclosed common.

Key Characteristics

- Gently rolling, lowland landform
- Impoverished, poorly draining soils derived from fan gravels
- A planned enclosure pattern with straight hedgerows and roads
- Pastoral land use with some arable farming
- An open landscape with views through scattered hedgerow trees
- Strips of linear tree cover along watercourses
- Wayside dwellings and scattered 19th century farmsteads

Strength of character

Overall, the Enclosed Commons have a moderately strong strength of character defined by the consistently planned nature of the landscape which is reflected in the distinctive straight lines of the hedgerows, roads and woodland edges. Tree cover along watercourses is also a contributory factor, providing a degree of enclosure in what is otherwise a rather open landscape, where the pattern of fields and lanes is clearly evident.

Forces for change

The recent trend towards increased arable farming in the Enclosed Commons threatens to change the character of this formerly pastoral landscape. Through arable farming, the need and function of the hedgerows is significantly reduced, with a consequent loss of the distinctive visual character of this landscape. The removal of hedgerows has created larger fields, making the sowing and harvesting of crops easier, faster and cheaper. Gaps can be observed in hedgerows and, in places, trees show the location of past hedgerows, which have been removed.

Urban development and the creation of modern agricultural/ industrial structures have caused localised visual impacts and a degree of clutter in this open landscape. One example is the Three Counties Showground where large numbers of parked cars also contribute to visual impacts at various times throughout the year. The removal of 19th century hedgerows and their replacement with fences along different boundaries has also caused localised disturbance to the historic field pattern.

Future landscape opportunities

Changing markets and the introduction of new crop types, such as energy crops, could impact upon the character of this landscape, creating new textures and altering the visual character. Such crops, however, may also provide opportunities to enhance the economic strength of the area. It may be possible to balance these two factors in the Enclosed Commons, provided steps are taken to maintain and strengthen the distinctive structure of this planned landscape. Opportunities could be sought to enhance the ecological diversity of the landscape through the re-creation of semi-natural habitats along roadside verges and watercourses. An example of successful habitat re-creation is the St Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve: a woodland, scrub and grassland site on formally developed land.

Modern development and urban elements can be found within and around much of the Enclosed Commons landscape and threatens the open, rural character of the area. Opportunities should be sought to integrate the Three Counties Showground and nearby industrial sites more effectively into the surrounding landscape.

Overall landscape strategy

The Enclosed Commons have a simple, yet distinctive character. This is under pressure from agricultural intensification and the introduction of new features and structures which are starting to erode the character within and around the edges of this landscape. The overall strategy, therefore, should be to:

Conserve and strengthen the simple, planned structure of the landscape and seek opportunities to enhance the underlying ecological character.

Landscape Guidelines

Symbol Key

 Biodiversity	 Trees and Woodland	 Recreation	 Cultural Heritage	 Water Management
 Land Management	 Settlement and Built Features	 Geodiversity	 Climate Change	

The following guidelines reveal opportunities to protect, manage and plan the landscape. The suitability of each guideline for a particular site will depend upon the local characteristics of the landscape.

Protect

■ Conserve all mature and veteran trees



There is a scatter of mature and veteran trees, mainly hedgerow oaks, in places within this landscape. These trees are vulnerable to a lack of management, disease or loss due to the impact of modern development and changes to the management of field boundaries. They are important ecological and heritage features and their conservation should be a priority. This will involve working with private landowners within and around the outskirts of the Enclosed Commons to maintain mature and veteran trees and to ensure that there are younger trees coming on that will eventually replace the existing veterans. Work could also be carried out with planners and developers to ensure that mature and veteran trees are conserved in all new development. The way in which trees have historically been managed can affect their ecological value and where coppicing or pollarding has taken place efforts should be made to ensure the continuity of these management techniques. Some dead and decaying wood, such as fallen logs, can provide valuable habitats for fungi and invertebrates. However, work may be needed to make safe dangerous trees in areas of high public access.



Geometric enclosure pattern

■ Conserve the historic enclosure pattern



The geometric enclosure pattern is a key visual element in the Enclosed Commons, reinforcing the planned, late enclosure character of the landscape. Many of the straight thorn hedgerows have been removed to enable more intensive arable farming practices in larger fields. In places this has resulted in a decline in the overall structure of the landscape. The geometric pattern should be conserved and where necessary repaired in order to maintain the character of this landscape. It is particularly important to conserve primary hedge lines as these give definition to roadsides, footpaths and parish and farm boundaries. New hedgerow planting should seek to follow historical patterns of enclosure. The sub-division of fields can erode the historical enclosure pattern and the scale of this landscape and should be avoided.

■ Conserve all older permanent pastures



All permanent pastures are valuable landscape features; providing colour and visual diversity to the landscape. They are also an important historical resource, illustrating the time depth of landscape by providing an ongoing and continuous land use over a significant period of time. Initiatives to safeguard remaining areas of older unimproved pasture should be strongly promoted and where possible these pastures should be managed as traditional low input grassland for grazing. Reseeding, ploughing or application of nitrates should be avoided.

Manage

■ Maintain and manage all woodlands using traditional forestry management practices



Although not heavily wooded, some of the individual woodlands within the Enclosed Commons are managed as commercial timber plantations. These woodlands can comprise uniform and even aged blocks of broadleaved and coniferous trees. Opportunities should be sought for creating a more varied pattern of felling coupes comprising native tree species, such as oak. The development of forest rides and more open heaths to provide both visual and habitat diversity should be encouraged. Where possible traditional approaches to woodland management, including coppicing or pollarding, should be encouraged and enabled in order to gain additional biodiversity value.



Trees in Langdale Wood

■ Maintain/ enhance tree cover and wetland vegetation along watercourses



Streamlines form important landscape features, especially where they are fringed by scattered trees and scrub. They are valuable as ecological corridors, particularly where they pass through more open intensively farmed areas. Tree cover along watercourses can help to regulate water temperature through shading if summers become warmer and average temperatures increase. Natural regeneration of streamside trees should be encouraged. Although planting of new trees may be appropriate in places, care should be taken to avoid areas of unimproved grassland and marsh which are ecologically important habitats and which provide locations for water storage. Planting should aim to keep one bank side clear to maintain a variety of wildlife habitats along stream margins.



Overgrown water course

■ Maintain and manage hedgerow trees, ensuring a diverse age structure



This landscape is characterised by scattered hedgerow trees but their presence is threatened by a gradual loss of trees and a lack of management, leading to a fairly uniform age structure. Hedgerow trees may be useful for providing shelter to stock during warmer summers associated with potential climate change. Maintaining and managing a diverse age structure of hedgerow trees will ensure their continuity as a landscape feature.

■ Manage / restore hedgerow boundaries including hedgerow trees



Hedgerows are an important visual element in this landscape and provide corridors for the movement of wildlife within the farmed landscape. Management by flail cutting is appropriate for robust hedgerows, particularly those containing elm. Where a hedge is in poor condition or has become gappy, it should first be renewed by replanting and layering. In areas where internal boundaries have been removed to enlarge field size, replacement hedgerow planting should be encouraged in a way that complements the shape and scale of the existing enclosure pattern. New hedgerows should be planted with a mixture of locally occurring native species, including hawthorn, blackthorn, and elm. The planting of species such as leylandii and laurel is not appropriate and should be avoided.



Hedgerow trees, Blackmore Park Road

■ Manage/ enhance roadside verges



Roadside verges, along with the adjoining hedgerows, are a distinctive landscape feature in the Enclosed Commons and they provide important ecological corridors connecting different areas of habitat, assisting the spread of plant species. They occur throughout this landscape, resulting from the late enclosure of common and waste, although many have been reduced in width, or removed due to road widening and the placement of footpaths next to roads. Except where visibility is restricted causing safety issues, the optimum cutting of roadside vegetation and removal of clippings should be promoted to allow all remaining verges to function more effectively as ecological corridors. Reducing the frequency of mowing is likely to favour wildflowers and removing clippings will help to reduce associated soil enrichment.



Road to Little Malvern Court

■ Encourage sensitive restoration of historical farmsteads and buildings



Historic buildings, particularly the wayside dwellings and red brick farmsteads, are a distinctive feature of this landscape. Old farmsteads should be retained for their agricultural function. Where this is not possible and direct physical change to existing properties, or changes to their settings occur, attention should be given to retaining the simple form and appearance of the buildings, particularly when a change of use occurs as part of the redevelopment. Future alterations to properties should take great care to ensure that any redevelopment respects the wider pattern of rural settlement including the scale, design and materials of vernacular and older properties. It is particularly important to use building materials that reflect locally occurring red brick built dwellings. Attention should be given to the sympathetic management of boundaries around the development. Where possible, building upgrades and new buildings should seek to minimise carbon use and maximise the use of renewable energy and local materials.



Redundant building conversions, Fair Oaks Farm

Plan

■ Seek opportunities to restore wetlands to enhance ecological diversity



Due to the late enclosure of this landscape, there are limited semi-natural habitats such as wetlands in damp hollows and along streamlines. Opportunities should be sought to identify suitable sites where wetland can be restored or created. Wetlands can assist in the reduction of flood risk because they help to store water, and may also be beneficial if summer rainfall decreases.

■ Seek opportunities to restore/ enhance the biodiversity of agricultural land



Some of the pastures in this landscape are floristically very rich and support a wide variety of plant and animal species. While initiatives to safeguard all remaining areas of older pasture should be strongly promoted, opportunities should also be sought for enhancing the biodiversity of improved grasslands, or creating new grasslands in areas that have been converted to arable production. Where possible, these should be managed as traditional low input grassland and reseeding should be avoided.



Pasture land, off Hancocks Lane

■ Seek ways to better integrate large buildings/ structures into the landscape



New agricultural buildings are often built with modern materials and at a larger scale than older historic farm buildings. Consequently, they can appear visually intrusive in the wider landscape. The impact of such buildings, however, can often be reduced through a number of measures which aim to better assimilate such structures into the landscape where the principle of development is acceptable. These include better siting as part of existing farmsteads or in less prominent locations, using colours and materials which can reflect existing historic buildings or the colours of the surrounding landscape, and planting appropriate native boundary hedgerows and trees.



Agricultural building, near Upper Welland

■ **Create a master plan to better integrate the Three Counties Showground into the landscape**



The Three Counties Showground encompasses a large area and consequently has a landscape impact which is mainly associated with its extent and layout. This impact could be minimised through a greater use of characteristic landscape features. This could include hedgerows, hedgerow trees and potentially small/linear orchards, both within the site and along the site boundaries, including the car parking areas. This would help the Showground to capitalise on its landscape setting while making a more positive contribution to the appearance and local character of the landscape.

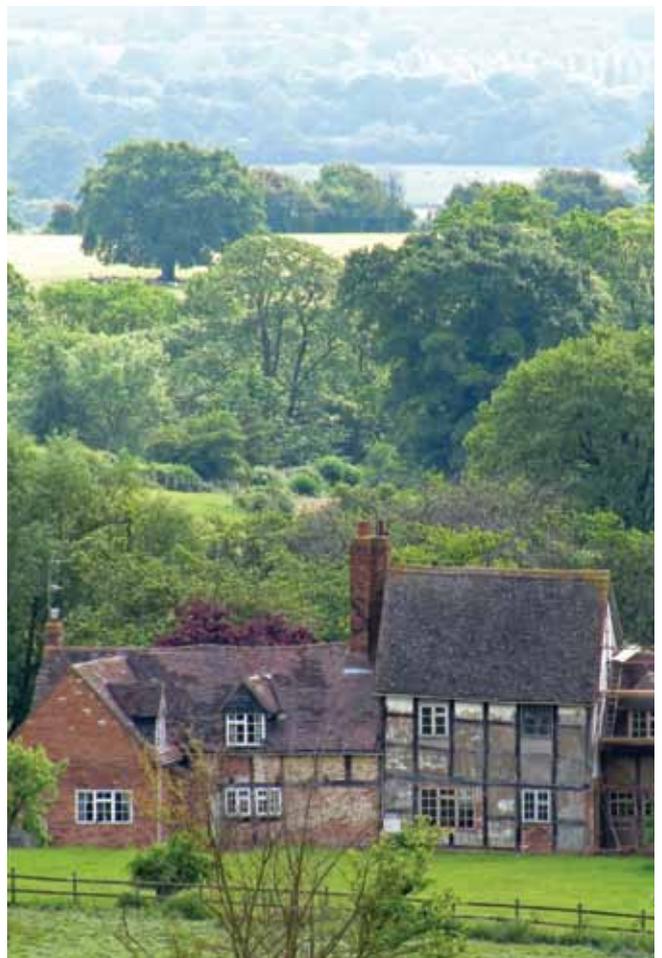


Autumn show, Three Counties Showground

■ **Reinforce vernacular character in new development through appropriate siting, design and materials**



This is a planned landscape with a settlement pattern of scattered, red brick farmsteads and clusters of wayside dwellings. There may be some limited opportunities for new development which upholds the existing settlement pattern. Alterations or additions to the existing settlements should respect and consider the landscape in terms of the appropriateness of new development, siting in relation to existing buildings and the materials used. New dwellings should be modest in size and seek to use materials, designs, rhythms and traditions which reflect the character of existing buildings. Traditional building materials in the Enclosed Commons include red brick and clay tiled roofs. Care should be taken around the boundaries of new development to ensure that they reinforce and link with the surrounding rural landscape. Where possible new buildings should seek to minimise carbon use and maximise the use of renewable energy.



Traditional farm house

Unenclosed Commons



Unenclosed Commons

Character

The Unenclosed Commons is a 'wild', semi-natural landscape characterised by interlinked, irregular tracts of shrubby acid grassland, with patches of gorse, bracken and other scrub. The soils are of poor quality having developed on areas underlain by deposits known as Malvern Gravels. These are composed of unsorted, frost shattered fragments of angular rock and finer sediment, which moved down from the Malvern Hills and spread over the lower land when the ground was permanently frozen during the Ice Age. This is a landscape with a gently rolling topography that becomes more undulating along the eastern edge of the ridge of the Malvern Hills. A key feature is the lack of enclosure and sense of wildness which contrasts strongly with the surrounding enclosed farmlands. Tree cover is restricted to scattered patches of secondary trees (mainly birch and oak) and groups of trees associated with settlement plots and gardens. Settlement is sparse, situated mainly within farm clusters, along roads around the edge of the unenclosed land, or occasionally as small 'islands' within the commons.

Key Characteristics

- Unenclosed rough grazing land
- Impoverished, poorly draining soils derived from fan gravels
- Extensive areas of shrubby acid grassland
- Patches of scrub and secondary woodland
- Wayside dwellings, often red brick, located around the perimeter of the commons
- Small plots associated with dwellings

Strength of character

The Unenclosed Commons have an open, semi-natural character with a distinct sense of wildness and high nature conservation value, in an otherwise enclosed, agricultural setting. The pattern of dwellings around the edge of the commons and the small settlement plots within are also a distinctive feature of this landscape. Overall, therefore, this is a landscape with an inherently strong character.

Forces for change

A past decline in rough grazing on the commons has resulted in the encroachment of scrub in many places within this unenclosed landscape. This decline was due to a general lack of activity amongst those with common grazing rights. Factors contributing to this trend included disturbance and danger to grazing stock from busy roads, dogs and people, together with increased regulations associated with animal husbandry. Recently there has been a reversal of this trend. Active support for grazing needs to continue.

There has been much redevelopment of the older dwellings within and around the edge of the commons, due to a change in the ownership of these properties. In places, this has introduced sub-urban characteristics to the historic built character of the landscape. It is important that the integrity of the historic settlement pattern is retained and conserved and that the smaller scale nature of common dwellings is preserved.

Future landscape opportunities

Grazing is key to maintaining the Unenclosed Commons, enhancing ecological diversity and preserving the open character of this landscape. The optimal means to achieving this is through the use of long term sustainable management initiatives aimed at supporting sustainable levels of rough grazing.

The redevelopment of settlement within and around the Unenclosed Commons threatens the traditional character of this landscape. Further new development should be limited and all redevelopment work should help to reinforce and enhance the historic rural character of the landscape.

Overall landscape strategy

This is an open, semi-natural landscape with a strong strength of character. Traditional commoners' rights have enabled the activity of rough grazing to maintain a valued rough grassland habitat. Due to the decline in rough grazing during the late 20th century and the consequent encroachment of scrub, there has been a past decline in habitat diversity. The structure and ecological diversity of this landscape is now improving. The overall strategy for the Unenclosed Commons should be to:

Conserve and restore the biodiversity and historic settled character of this semi-natural landscape.

Landscape Guidelines

Symbol Key



Biodiversity



Trees and Woodland



Recreation



Cultural Heritage



Water Management



Land Management



Settlement and Built Features



Geodiversity



Climate Change

The following guidelines reveal opportunities to protect, manage and plan the landscape. The suitability of each guideline for a particular site will depend upon the local characteristics of the landscape.

Protect

- **Conserve the open, semi-natural character of the landscape**



The Unenclosed Commons have traditionally been an open, grazed landscape with an associated high nature conservation value. Management by grazing is required to maintain the open grassland character of the commons. A sustainable level of grazing maintains habitat diversity by reducing the encroachment of woody species. It appears that the declining trend in rough grazing is now being successfully reversed. It is important that this move to re-establish appropriate levels of grazing with domestic stock, such as sheep and cattle, is continued. This, in turn, will help to restore characteristic acid grassland species which have been suppressed due to the lack of grazing.

- **Conserve the underlying gravels on which the area's poor soils have developed**



The underlying gravels developed during the Ice Age account for the poor soils that help to define the landscape today. The gravels and soils in this area have never been disturbed, for example, by ploughing, and must continue to be conserved in order to protect this important landscape.

Manage

- **Manage / restore all remaining patches of semi-natural vegetation**



Patches of semi-natural, heathy/ acid grassland vegetation are a characteristic feature of the Unenclosed Commons. The biodiversity of these patches, however, has been reduced in the past due to lack of grazing. The sub-urban encroachment, resulting from the presence of features such as lighting and security fencing, is also having an impact on the 'wild' character of the landscape in places. Semi-natural, or traditionally managed grasslands, are valuable landscape features. They not only provide sustainable forage production but they also provide an important visual resource that illustrates the time depth of a landscape through continuous land use over a significant period of time. Initiatives to safeguard all remaining areas of semi-natural habitat should be continued and extended and where possible these should be managed as traditional low input grassland.



Redbrick cottage, Castlemorton Common

■ Encourage sensitive management of historic farmsteads and buildings



Historic buildings, particularly the red brick and white washed wayside dwellings, play a key role in defining the distinctive character of the Unenclosed Commons. New development, however, can often be associated with the introduction of new or urbanising features which can erode rural character. Where direct physical change to existing properties or changes to their settings occur, attention should be given to retaining the simple form and appearance of the buildings, particularly when a change of use occurs as part of the redevelopment. It is particularly important to use building materials that reflect locally occurring red brick, or rendered dwellings. There is a need to protect the smaller scale of common dwellings. Attention should be given to the sympathetic management of boundaries around the settlement plots, which might include locally occurring hedgerow species. Where possible, building upgrades and new buildings should seek to minimise carbon use and incorporate the use of renewable energy and local materials.

■ Manage wetland and water features to maximise ecological value



There are a number of wetland and water features associated with the Unenclosed Commons landscape, including marshy grasslands and ponds which should be managed to maximise their ecological value. In damper pastures and marshy grassland, regular maintenance of surface drainage can help prevent changes in species composition. Deepening surface drainage should be avoided. Removal of each year's growth of vegetation further helps to ensure a species rich sward. Ponds can require periodic management to prevent siltation and a build up of nutrients. Where several ponds exist it can be useful to maintain these at various stages of succession. Where pond management is required, silt and plant material should only be removed from a portion of the pond at any one time, allowing sufficient time for recovery before other areas are dredged. Any fen areas may benefit from intermittent grazing to maintain the diversity of species present and to prevent the encroachment of scrub.

Plan

■ Promote opportunities for grazing on commons



A key characteristic of the Unenclosed Commons is the unenclosed, semi-natural spaces that define the essence of this landscape. In the past the areas of common land would have been grazed with stock owned by local residents who had common grazing rights. The use of commons by local farmers went into decline after the war, resulting in the loss of much open grassland. This trend is now being successfully reversed and grazing is once again taking place in this landscape. Continued efforts should be made to enable grazing to develop to optimum levels, linked to raising awareness/promotion of common grazing rights. Horse pasturing involving the enclosure of patches of land would usually be at odds with the scale and openness of this landscape. Horse pasturing would not be an appropriate form of grazing on the Unenclosed Commons unless such impacts can be avoided.



Cattle, Castlemorton Common

Glossary

Ancient semi-natural woodland

Land with continuous woodland cover since 1600 AD current woodland is of native woodland.

Assarting

The clearing of wooded land for agricultural purposes. Landscapes associated with historical assarting often have thick hedgerows containing a diverse mix of woodland species.

Climate change

A significant and lasting change in the patterns of weather, particularly temperature, over long periods of time (from decades to millennia).

Clustered settlement

Rural landscapes characterised by multiple settlement nuclei (hamlets and/or discrete small villages) associated with a moderate/high scattering of farms and outlying dwellings.

Common land

An area of land on which people with rights but not necessarily ownership can carry out activities such as stock grazing and fuel collection .

Coppicing

A traditional method of woodland management in which broadleaved trees are cut near the ground to encourage the production of long, straight shoots. These shoots can be harvested for forage or fuel.

Cultural pattern

The pattern of field enclosure, woodland and settlement that has arisen from the way that people have managed the landscape.

Desire line

Pathways created informally through erosion associated with frequent use. Often taking the most direct line between points.

Dispersed settlement

Rural landscapes characterised by scattered farmsteads and loose clusters of wayside dwellings with no obvious settlement nuclei.

Enclosed

Former open land that has been partitioned, usually into a regular pattern of fields and brought into more intensive agricultural production.

Enclosure pattern

The resulting pattern of boundaries – hedgerows, fences or ditches, which serve the purpose of defining agricultural fields. Organic and small scale enclosure patterns can signify older, more ancient enclosures, whereas larger, or geometric enclosure patterns are often associated with late enclosure as a result of the Enclosure Acts.

Energy crop

An energy crop is a plant grown as a low cost and low maintenance harvest used to make biofuels, or combusted for its energy content to generate electricity.

Hedge laying

A traditional practice of creating and maintaining hedgerows through the partial cutting of shrub stems which are then bent over to create stock proof barriers or to provide weather protection for crops whilst rejuvenating hedgerows and promoting new growth.

Hedgerow tree

A 'standard' tree which occurs along a hedgerow either through planting or self regeneration.

Horse pasturing

The grazing of horses upon agricultural or marginal land. Often associated with elements including fencing to provide secure enclosure for the horses.

Improved grassland

These can be permanent (uncultivated) or part of an arable rotation. Short-term improved grasslands are sown with cultivated grasses which are then cut for hay or silage, or used for grazing.

Internal/ secondary boundaries

Boundaries within a field system planted to separate, or divide different fields rather than extending as primary boundaries along roads/ paths.

Landscape description units

These are the building blocks of the landscape and are determined by analysing maps of geology, topography, soils, land use, tree cover and settlement pattern.

Landscape character type

Landscape character types are a generic classification for landscape character and may occur anywhere in the country where the same combinations of physical and cultural landscape attributes are found.

Loose courtyard type

A farmyard, simple in form which can be as minimal as a farm house with one barn to the side. They can be more complex with buildings on all three sides of the yard and tend to be characterised by buildings which are not joined together.

Local geological site

Non-statutory sites that have been identified by local geoconservation groups as being of importance (formerly known as Regionally Important Geological Sites – or RIGS).

Mature tree

A mature tree has reached at least 75% of its final height and spread.

Nucleated settlement

Rural landscapes characterised by discrete settlement nuclei (usually large single villages) associated with a low level of dispersal - there is a strong association between this type and the former extent of medieval common field systems.

Orchard

An area of fruit / nut trees or shrubs planted for food production. Traditional orchards often contain full size trees planted at lower intensities and are managed less intensively. Bush orchards tend to be commercial in character being more intensively managed, with trees grafted onto stock to ensure bushier and more productive growth. Smaller bushes tend to aid mechanical rather than manual cropping.

Organic pattern

A landscape that is characterised by an irregular pattern of fields and lanes derived from early piecemeal enclosure of the land over a long period of time.

Outfarm

A farm, usually of more recent origin, that is outlying from the main village, or centre of settlement in a parish.

Parkland

A landscape which has been planned for its ornamental and recreation value, usually characterised by open pastoral land with scattered trees, avenues and woodlands.

Pastoral

Land used for the grazing of cattle and sheep.

Permanent pasture

Land kept permanently as pasture for the grazing of cattle and sheep i.e. not ploughed. Permanent pasture tends to be more species rich than re-seeded grassland

Planned settlement

Sparsely settled rural landscapes characterised by a surveyor enclosed pattern of rectilinear fields and isolated farmsteads.

Pollarding

A traditional method of woodland management in which branches are cut back every few years to encourage long, straight shoots for harvest. The tree is cut off above the reach of grazing stock giving a distinctive shape.

Primary boundaries

Continuous boundaries along roads, paths and parish boundaries that extend well beyond single fields.

Primary hedgerow

Continuous hedgerows along roads, paths and parish boundaries that extend well beyond single fields.

Relic

A landscape element which survives as a remnant in an environment/ landscape which is much changed from that in which it originated.

Regular courtyard farm type

A farmyard where the placement of buildings has been planned and designed to minimise labour, energy and to conserve manure. These can have different forms depending on the arrangement of buildings and were first evident on estate farms before becoming more widespread.

Rough grazing

The grazing of stock on land which is uncultivated – unimproved and not intensively managed. Often referring to uplands, bogs or other habitats which may have limited drainage, making it inappropriate for a more intensive agricultural management regime.

Scrub

A scattering of immature woody vegetation that develops during the early phase of woodland regeneration before the shrub vegetation develops into larger trees.

Secondary hedgerow

Hedgerows within a field system planted to separate, or divide different fields rather than extending as primary hedgerows along roads/ paths.

Secondary woodland

Secondary woodland is the term given to woodlands that have regrown on abandoned or neglected ground that had previously been used for agriculture, grazing or development of towns, villages, industry and roads. Some secondary woodlands have been planted, but the majority have come about through the natural processes of colonisation and succession.

Smallholding

A farm below 50 acres (20.2 hectares) in size.

Sub-urbanisation

The introduction of elements including lighting, kerbing, tall fencing, leylandii trees, block paving etc which are characteristic of residential or sub-urban landscapes and not characteristic of rural landscapes.

Time depth

The visible evidence in the landscape of change and continuity over time.

Traditional forestry management

Techniques including coppicing, thinning and ride management that can help to increase woodland biodiversity and amenity value.

Unimproved grassland

These are permanent grasslands that have either never been subject to agricultural improvement, or where the improvement was insignificant and the effects have now disappeared. They are usually managed with either no fertilizer, or low inputs of natural fertilizers such as farmyard manure.

Vernacular

A distinctive and local building style which developed in response to local conditions, opportunities and locally available materials.

Veteran tree

The definition of a veteran tree is flexible. A tree may be regarded as a veteran due to great age; great age relative to others of the same species, existing in an ancient stage of life or due to its biological, aesthetic or cultural interest. Size alone is a poor indicator of veteran status, as different species may have different rates of growth or natural life spans.

Waste

An area of uncultivated wild land that was often used for rough grazing by commoners.

Wood pasture

An historic land use aimed at providing land for both stock grazing and timber production. It combines the maintenance of grasslands with a very open woodland structure, where the trees are managed by pollarding, reflecting the past use of woodland for fuel and timber.

Appendix 1 - Methodology

Stage 1: Updating the Landscape Description Unit (LDU) framework

The first stage in preparing the Landscape Strategy was to review and update the Landscape Description Unit framework which underlies landscape understanding for the AONB. Landscape characterisation involves both desk and field survey work to divide landscape into discrete and relatively homogenous units of land. These units of land, termed Landscape Description Units, are the building blocks of the landscape and they form a coherent framework for assessing landscape change and for mapping differences in the inherent cultural, ecological and visual sensitivity of the landscape. They underlie the Landscape Character Types (LCTs) which are used in this document to understand the variations in the AONB landscape.

The original Landscape Description Unit framework was developed for Hereford and Worcester County Council in the mid 1990s. Since this time the framework has been updated on a number of occasions, particularly following the split of the county in 1998. The result of this updating programme has been the creation of several different versions of the Landscape Description Unit framework. These were collated, reviewed and updated. Similarly, the recent preparation of a Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) in Worcestershire has identified historic patterns which needed to be reflected in the LDU framework.

The main changes to the LDU framework associated with this review included alterations linked to the extra historical detail provided by the Historic Landscape Characterisation, enabling a better understanding of the settlement pattern. Further edits were also carried out to define a better topographic boundary between the lower edge of the steeply sloping Malvern ridge and the dissected undulating land surrounding it (both on its eastern and western side); and also between this undulating zone and the more gently rolling lowland vale to the east. At the southern extremity of the Malvern Hills AONB, the Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) covers a small section of the landscape. This study, along with the corresponding Forest of Dean Landscape Character Assessment was also considered and analysed as part of this updating.

Stage 2: Review of existing data

A wealth of data and documents were available to the project team to aid understanding of landscape character throughout the AONB. Further detail is recorded in the data sources section of this document in Appendix 3. These existing information sources were used to understand how the landscape in the Malvern Hills AONB has changed over the last fifty years. In particular, the drivers which are causing change were considered, in order to gain an insight into the likely impact of future change. The first land utilisation survey, together with more recent land use or environmental studies have been utilised and important concentrations of ecological or archaeological features have been identified in relation to particular types of landscape.

The updated Landscape Description Unit Framework was used to analyse the distribution of ecological and heritage features within each of the Landscape Character types in the Malvern Hills AONB. The aim of this process was to identify correlations between any of these ecological and heritage features and particular Landscape Character Types. A number of datasets covering a range of possible natural and cultural characteristics were assessed.

Other datasets were used to provide a contextual understanding of the landscape and how it is changing. Understanding the character of a landscape; the direction of landscape change; the pressures leading to changes; and how resilient or vulnerable a landscape's character may be to change is essential to developing effective guidelines.

Along with the analysis of features at the Landscape Description Unit scale, other features were analysed at the Landscape Character Type scale. This included datasets such as those associated with environmental stewardship, historical farmstead mapping and habitat creation opportunity mapping. This information was collated in order to aid understanding of the landscape both during the field survey and to assist the preparation of the guidelines.

Stage 3: Field survey

A field survey was undertaken during the spring and summer of 2010. Information gained through the survey was used to enhance the GIS analysis by providing essential information about the visual dimension of the landscape that cannot easily be gained from the desk study alone. The primary function of the field survey was to verify the key characteristics that contribute to local distinctiveness and to gather information about the condition of the landscape; particularly the impact of recent change and the forces which drive these changes.

Stage 4: Developing the Landscape Strategy

The collated information of both desk and field studies were sorted using a Geographic Information System database, to produce an informed analysis of:

- the strength of character and condition of each landscape (i.e. how far removed it is from its optimum state);
- the forces that are driving change; and
- the key issues that need to be addressed in order to conserve / enhance landscape character.

This detailed analysis enabled an understanding of how the landscape was changing and what direction change should take to ensure distinctive and sustainable landscapes. The analysis was used to develop practical future visions (the Overall Landscape Strategy) for each Landscape Character Type. The vision includes a short statement that encapsulates the essence of what the strategy is trying to achieve, supported by a set of guidelines that establish how the vision can be practically achieved.

Stage 5: Consulting on the Landscape Strategy

The Landscape Strategy was tested at a workshop that was held in collaboration with Natural England. The workshop had two purposes – to review the draft AONB Landscape Strategy and to test draft National Character Area objectives, which are being developed by Natural England to provide a strategic framework for enhancing the character and quality of England’s landscape. This collaborative approach ensured that there was unity between the Landscape Strategy and national initiatives. A formal public consultation was carried out during Spring 2011 and the Strategy was redrafted in light of the comments received during this consultation. A consultation summary for this work can be viewed at www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/management/guidance

Appendix 2 - The European Landscape Convention

The European Landscape Convention (ELC), which came into force in 2007 in the UK, promotes the protection, management and planning of all landscapes. It establishes the need to recognise landscape in law; develop policies dedicated to the protection, management and planning of landscapes; and to establish procedures to enable participation of the general public, and other stakeholders, in the creation and implementation of landscape policies. The Convention also encourages landscape to be integrated into all relevant areas of policy, e.g. cultural, economic and social policies. This landscape strategy for the Malvern Hills AONB follows the principles of the European Landscape Convention.

Appendix 3 - Data sources

English Heritage, **National Character Area 103 – Malvern Hills**, Historic Farmstead Characterisation Project, English Heritage.

English Heritage, 2010, **Summary report: West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project**, English Heritage.

Forestry Commission England, 2010, **Managing ancient and native woodland in England**, Forestry Commission, Bristol.

Gloucestershire County Council, 2006, **Landscape Character Assessment**, Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucester.

Herefordshire County Council supported by English Heritage, 2002, **Historic Landscape Characterisation – Herefordshire**, Herefordshire County Council, Hereford.

Herefordshire County Council, 2004 (updated 2009), **Landscape Character Assessment**, Herefordshire County Council, Hereford.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust, 2009, **Geodiversity Action Plan – Herefordshire**, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust, 2009, **Geodiversity Action Plan – Worcestershire**, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust for Malvern Hills AONB, **Local Geodiversity Action Plan – Castlemorton Common, Hollybed Common, Coombegreen Common**, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust.

Landscape Design Associates, 2002, **Landscape Character Assessment: Forest of Dean – Final Draft Report**, Forest of Dean District Council.

Malvern Hills AONB, **Management Plan 2009-2014**, Malvern Hills AONB, Malvern.

The Game Conservancy Trust, 2003, **Woodland Conservation and Pheasants – a practical guide produced by the Game Conservancy Trust for game managers and woodland owners**, The Game Conservancy Trust.

Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, 2009, **Worcestershire Historic Landscape Characterisation project: Malvern Hills AONB**, Worcestershire County Council, Worcester.

Worcestershire County Council, **Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Guidance**, Worcestershire County Council, Worcester.

A wide range of GIS datasets were used in preparing these guidelines. Biodiversity data comprised county scale and local data regarding the BAP, opportunity mapping, priority habitat and species data, statutory nature conservation designations and habitat survey data. Cultural pattern data included Historic Landscape Characterisation, boundary types and historic parks and gardens. Settlement and development data included historic farmsteads, building materials, planning applications and surveys of buildings of local and national importance. Trees and woodland datasets included the National Forest Inventory, the Ancient Woodland Inventory, veteran trees and regional woodland opportunity maps. Agricultural data included Environmental Stewardship schemes and the Agricultural Land Classification. Landscape data comprised county and local Landscape Character Assessments, data regarding landscape sensitivity and condition; and landscape and habitat opportunity mapping. Not all of these datasets covered the entire AONB landscape.

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Open grassland - Malvern Hills Conservators

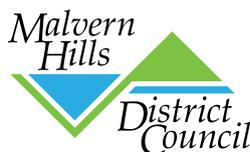
Bracken - Malvern Hills Conservators

Harebells - Malvern Hills Conservators

Peacock Villa under restoration - Eastnor Castle Estates Company

Leigh Brook, Knapp and Papermill Nature Reserve - Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust

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