

## Landscapes of Worcestershire Landscape Type Information Sheet

# Timbered Plateau Farmlands

### Landscape Type Description

A varied, mixed farming landscape of hedged fields, scattered farms, woods and wooded valleys associated with upstanding areas of undulating relief. The landform conveys a sense of strength and dominance which tends to override the pattern of tree cover and fields. Variations in landform within this landscape create a changing sequence of visual perspectives, ranging from open vistas on plateau summits to more secluded scenes along valley bottoms.



### Key Characteristics

#### Primary

- Upstanding plateau of rolling topography dissected by broad valleys
- Filtered medium/long distance views
- Ancient wooded character
- Mixed hedges with scattered hedgerow oaks

#### Secondary

- Organic enclosure pattern of medium-to-large fields
- Linear tree cover pattern of wooded valleys often associated with streamside habitats
- Mixed farming land use

#### Tertiary

- Dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and hamlets



The key elements of the Timbered Plateau Farmlands are topography and woodland. These are landscapes that have developed from a mosaic of piecemeal clearance from woodland and relatively localised areas of open field, and retain a strong association with their woodland origins. The tree cover, consequently, is essentially of ancient semi-natural character, with oak as the dominant species. Unlike the Principal Timbered Farmlands, the lowland equivalent of this Landscape Type, the role of hedgerow trees and their influence in creating filtered views is less significant in the Timbered Plateau Farmlands. The more pronounced topography tends to bring the pattern of woodland and hedgerows into greater visual prominence. The woodland cover provides the major structure to the landscape, the hedgerow pattern defining the scale.

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These are landscapes containing woodlands of varying size, the dingles associated with the valley streams being a particular characteristic. A significant additional element of tree cover is provided by the specimen trees, often conifers, associated with the ornamental grounds and parkland of the frequent large country houses in these landscapes. The dispersed pattern of farms and hamlets conveys a human element to the landscape without indicating anything other than a sparse population.

The deterioration of the overall structure of tree cover tends to be the major issue in these landscapes with corresponding loss of landscape unity. Woodland cover is not always a prominent component of the landscape today, the streamside tree cover can often be fragmented and the hedgerow tree cover composed of primarily mature or veteran trees. The network of hedgerows can often be fragmented, severely so in places, resulting in the remaining woodlands becoming isolated from other areas of tree cover. The perception of this landscape changing from one of mixed agricultural land, to one becoming dominated by arable farming, suggests that the function of hedgerows will become increasingly reduced, rendering the whole linking structure of hedgerows and tree cover, upon which the landscape character depends, increasingly vulnerable.

It is important to conserve the existing elements of tree cover, placing particular emphasis upon the presence and pattern of woodland cover and streamside trees. It is also important to conserve the hedgerow pattern, identifying those of historical significance associated with woodland assarts, and giving priority to these, together with the primary hedgerow structure of parish, roadside and ownership boundaries. The distinctive tree cover associated with ornamental grounds and parks should also be perpetuated. The Timbered Plateau Farmlands are landscapes that could accommodate a considerable amount of new woodland planting. In some places a doubling of the woodland cover could be considered in order to retain and emphasise the woodland associations and origins of these areas, and to give greater structure to the landscape. New planting should aim to perpetuate the wide range of woodland size that is characteristic structure of hedged fields and tree cover, and seeking opportunities to enhance the landscape through a significant increase in woodland planting.

### Landscape Guidelines

- conserve and manage all ancient woodland sites, restocking with locally occurring native stock
- promote the coalescence of fragmented remnants of ancient woodland
- promote new woodland planting. New planting to favour native broadleaves with oak as the major species
- promote infilling of gaps in tree cover along watercourses and dingles
- conserve hedgerow oaks and promote the importance of veteran trees
- conserve and restore the pattern of hedgerows throughout the area, giving priority to primary boundaries and boundaries of assart origin
- conserve and restore existing parkland areas
- encourage new populations of hedgerow oaks, particularly through natural regeneration
- maintain the characteristic dispersed settlement pattern, avoiding the formation of pronounced settlement nuclei

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