

# Design Code Guidance Note Trees and Woodlands

July 2022



## Purpose of the Document

This Tree and Woodland guidance note has been produced Herefordshire Council with support from the Woodland Trust to assist parish councils and local communities preparing neighbourhood plans and local design codes within Herefordshire.

It forms one of a series of documents available for use and uses the ten criteria from the [National Model Design Code Guidance](#) to aid the integration of existing and new trees when producing locally distinctive design codes. The document signposts to other relevant documents, policies, and strategies. A list of relevant documents and resources is provided in the References and Further Information section at the end.

## How to Use

This guide poses a series of questions to consider when looking at how best to use trees in placemaking within villages and settlements to assist parishes in producing a local design code. The questions which make up most of this guide are followed by examples to assist and support your thinking and discussions.

Follow these steps to answer the questions in the guide to understand how trees feature in the area under consideration:

1. Before commencing, **read** this complete document.
2. **Conduct a desk study**, to understand the overarching characteristics and the background to the landscape and tree features already known for the area.
3. **Undertake a walking tour of your local area**, consider the questions in this guidance. There may be other questions or unique characteristics you wish to consider in addition to those here which may come to mind.
4. **Take a camera and measuring tape, notebook and pen with you.**
5. **Take pictures** of what you see and find. These can be useful for identification purposes and to provide examples for your code.
6. Discuss your finds as a group and **seek expert advice** to clarify any issues or queries.
7. **Develop your local design code** for how you wish to see trees used as part of the character of the village or settlement.

## The importance of Trees and Woodlands

Trees make an intrinsic contribution to nature, are a vital component of our fight against climate change and provide natural green architecture in public open spaces. Their longevity adds to the identity of a place, changing both with the seasons and as they grow over time. Woodlands and individual ancient and veteran trees provide a whole range of services, to the environment, people, and wildlife. They provide shade, are natural carbon stores and provide homes for wildlife. Research has shown that trees make a vital contribution to the health and wellbeing of people. Trees, shrubs, native flower rich grassland, scrub, ground flora, hedgerows and wetter areas all complement one another. Collectively they provide nature rich habitat in and around people's homes and villages. Achieving a mosaic of habitats is important and being aware of where to make space for these is also important in producing your design code. More formal gardens, allotments, flower beds, and community gardens all have their own importance and should be considered.

## Trees and Woodlands in Herefordshire

With around 15% canopy cover, Herefordshire is a more wooded county than average for the UK. Native, deciduous broadleaf trees, characterised by those that do not have needles, whilst not the only grouping of trees, will bring the best benefits of trees to Herefordshire for biodiversity as they will reflect best, the primary species and composition of trees from the local rural and wooded landscape.

Many conservation groups believe that the canopy cover of Herefordshire should be closer to 30%, for the full range of benefits and services of trees and woodland to be realised. The Woodland Trust and other conservation organisations are keen that the right trees are in the right places, are of local provenance, sourced from the UK and Ireland<sup>1</sup>, and contribute to the biodiversity and aesthetic of the places where they are. Given the ecological importance of trees, it is important that existing mature trees

<sup>1</sup> The Woodland Trust's UKISG scheme is a voluntary initiative for forest nurseries. It identifies the provenance of stock to buyers and assures that trees have been raised from seed sourced and grown solely within the UK and Ireland for its entire lifespan. See: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/we-plant-trees/uk-sourced-and-grown-scheme/> for further information.

are protected, given space to thrive, and succession plans are in place to ensure that the trees planted today, are given the room and time to become the mature and ancient trees of the future. The Woodland Trust is calling for 30% of our land and sea to be connected and protected for nature's recovery by 2030, in accordance with the UN's post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. To achieve this, existing woods and trees should be retained and protected wherever possible. Opportunities to expand canopy cover should be pursued, with new development meeting a target canopy cover of 30%.

The landscape and rolling hills of Herefordshire are characterised by trees in fields, hedgerows, lowland woodlands and orchards and veteran trees. The gorge of the Wye Valley is covered in mixes of oak, beech, ash, lime and other native species. In the less wooded landscape of the south of the county, woods cling to the slopes of the Wye. In the middle of the county, farmland is characterised by small fields with a concentration of hedgerows (Herefordshire BAP). Herefordshire is home to some of the oldest trees in the British Isles, including the Linton Yew with a girth of over 9 metres which is thought to be well over 800 years old, and the Brockhampton Oaks thought to have been planted in the time of Henry VIII.

Herefordshire's countryside is particularly rich in ancient hedgerows which are a key component of the landscape. Ancient hedgerows, which tend to be those which support the greatest diversity of plants and animals, may be defined as those which were in existence before the Enclosure Acts, passed mainly between 1720 and 1840. Much of the ancient woodland in Herefordshire, defined as that which has existed continuously since 1600, remains only where conditions are too steep, too infertile or too wet for conversion to agriculture (Herefordshire BAP).

Herefordshire is rich in ancient and veteran trees and has a strong legacy of remnants of parkland and hunting forest from its strong history of Norman estates. Therefore, ensuring that these are recorded on the Ancient Tree Inventory is an important method of ensuring that these trees are known about and their loss can be prevented. The Ancient Tree Inventory is incomplete and new records can be added by anyone. Links are in the references.

## Context

Trees make their place in landscapes in many forms and not just within woodland. Trees outside woodland are to be found with lone trees within fields, lines of trees in hedgerows, clumps of trees in scrub areas, trees following the banks of rivers and hedge banks along highways. Herefordshire is famous for its orchards, park lands and woodlands of various sizes and compositions of species. Where land use has changed over centuries, a standing ancient tree or group of trees is valuable as a visible relic of former field and land use patterns.

Tree corridors are essential for biodiversity, as they facilitate links between woodlands for wildlife to move between. Water ways, rivers as well as more open spaces, such as cemeteries, school fields and playing fields together with vacant spaces are key green and blue infrastructure for connecting habitats within landscapes.

**The focus of using this guide is trees within the public domain. However, trees and vegetation within private spaces such as gardens can be considered to inform an overall picture of the streetscape of the settlement.**

**The questions here will not give you all the answers and users should enter this process with an open mind as to how trees could be used within a settlement. Don't be limited to traditional constraints, or only to what you see. You may have unique and innovative ideas about using trees to change the feel or dynamic of a space within a village or promote a new use of a place. They could be used to calm traffic or be included in a new pedestrian area. They could be used to create a new relaxation area complimented by seating.**

**Discussions, while doing this assessment, could lead to the emergence of an overall vision for woods and trees in the village or parish. This vision may describe a picture of what the present people of the settlement see as the outcome and what can be achieved by using the design code.**



## Step 1 Desk Study:

Prior to your walking tour please consider the following:

1. Does the settlement/village lie within a protected landscape, e.g. an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)?
2. Does the village have any conservation areas?
3. Are there any trees with Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) within the village/settlement?
4. Are there any trees recorded on the Ancient Woodland or Ancient Tree inventories?
5. What is the local landscape character assessment type? Is there a Local Character Area description?

## Step 2 Walking tour:

A walking tour is a great way for the local community to stop and look at the environment that they probably see every day but not necessarily noticed all its component parts. These can be undertaken either on foot or by car.

Below, are a set of questions for you to give some consideration to and assist you in structuring your walking tour. As you move around the village consider what is characteristic and uncharacteristic of the place. What do you want more or less of? What else could be included?

1. How would you describe the arrival experience to the village? How do trees and hedgerows influence the character and identity of the village/settlement at this point.
  - a. Are there walls, hedges, verges, banks, fences or a mix, and are these features established, old, traditional, modern or contemporary
  - b. Does vegetation front the road directly, or are there pavements?
  - c. Are the buildings old or new?
  - d. Are any of the features at the village entrance made from trees or other bushy vegetation?
  - e. Do any of these features provide spaces for trees or hedgerows?
  - f. Consider how the character these features provide continues through the village.



Example 1: Wide verges on both sides with walls set back from the road. The wall on the left is modern but constructed from materials reflecting traditional methods. A traditional wall on the right has a narrow verge between it and the road.



Example 2: Existing hedges with a narrow verge abruptly end to make way for a recent development. There is a pavement between the frontages and the road. The road narrows in front of the houses.



Example 3: Established and traditional buildings fronting up to the roadside. A newly planted hedge is pushing through on the right hand side next to the fence.



Example 4: Pavements with narrow verges and some walls. Fencing reflecting rural materials and approaches with some open ground.

2. What forms the backdrop to the village or settlement by way of woodlands, fields and hedgerows?

When considering trees in the landscape look at why they are there. How does the wider landscape influence the trees in the village / settlement? Larger trees in a line may have once formed a hedgerow. Trees in a group, now forming a copse, may be a remnant of a larger wooded area giving clues to the landscape of the past and how you may like to use trees for the future. You may notice lines of damson trees or other fruit trees, hinting at orchards of the past.

This question could be considered at a vantage point overlooking the village. Can you get to a high point to look over the settlement, or arrange to climb a church tower, or get to the top floor of a tall building with a good view over the place?

- a. Are there open fields and winding hedges with some individual trees?
- b. Do the houses mingle with denser trees as they move down wooded hillsides?
- c. Are properties separate from the wooded areas or interspersed with trees?



Example 5: The back drop is largely agricultural with lines of established and sometimes ancient hedgerows and trees



Example 6: Dense trees and woodland form the backdrop to the settlement, cloaking the houses in the lower areas.





Example 7: A wooded hill forms much of the backdrop with the settlement at the bottom of the slope. There is space between the houses and the trees.



Example 8: Houses go up wooded slopes, with trees forming a close back drop. There appears to be little space between the properties and the trees.

### Things to consider as you move around the main areas of the settlement:

Trees and bushes often form boundaries between different types of spaces. These can often be the first use and most common uses of these kinds of vegetation you will see.

3. What are boundaries made from?
  - a. Hedges
  - b. Tree lined banks
  - c. Walls
  - d. Fences
  - e. Verges
  - f. Are these found in combinations?



Example 9: An established stonewall with a tree behind



Example 10: A tree lined bank



Example 11: A fence with a hedge behind.



Example 12: Wide verges with established trees

4. What do trees and hedges contribute to how the village or settlement looks?
  - a. Are residential gardens formal or informal?
  - b. Are residential gardens composed of mainly lawns, flowers, or trees?
  - c. How do trees in private gardens blend with the public facing parts of the village or settlement?
  - d. How do trees in private gardens contribute to the natural environment of the village?
  
5. Do these features look like they have always been there, or arrived more recently? Are they:
  - a. Established
  - b. Modern
  - c. Traditional
  - d. Contemporary
  
6. Thinking about the abundance of these boundaries:
  - Which type of boundary is the most common?
  - Which type of boundary is the least common?
  - Which type of boundary could there be more of?
  - Which type of boundary could there be less of?
  - Which type of boundary is the most appealing, or fits best into the character of the settlement?
  
7. Which types of these features would you like to see more or less of in the settlement and how do you want them to look?
  
8. Where are there existing trees in public spaces within the village?
  - a. Can you make an estimate of the following pieces of information about the tree/s? (answer as many of these as you can).
  - b. Take photos of the trees and the area they are in.
  - c. Try to identify the species of tree if you are able. If not, take photos of the bark, leaves, buds, flowers, branches and twigs for identification purposes.

As you find existing trees in the village it may be useful to record features about them as follows:

## Existing Trees Recording Sheet

Grid reference/What 3 words position	Is the tree/Are the trees deciduous (loses its leaves in winter)/conifer (ever green and likely to have needles)
How many trees make up the feature?	How would you describe the feature? Is it a verge, a public square, a small meeting place, a pavement or path?
Roughly what is the area of the public space?	How much of this space is taken up by the tree/trees?
Does the tree have space around the base from hard landscaping features such as tarmac or walls? If so, how much space?	What would people be able to use this tree for? E.g. walk/drive past, landmark, meet at it, sit under it?
Girth at 1 metre height	An estimate of the size of canopy – radius in metres?
Distance to neighbouring properties/road	Is there enough room for the tree / trees? Are limbs spreading over boundaries into neighbouring properties?
Are all the trees in the feature the same species, size, age?	Are these existing trees thriving/doing well?
Is this a feature which could be repeated in other areas around the village?	Should this be a unique feature within the village?
<p>What could be done to improve this feature?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Replace the tree</li> <li>- Plant flowers</li> <li>- Improve paths</li> <li>- Create seating</li> <li>- Improve signage</li> <li>- Plant more trees</li> <li>- More space given around the roots?</li> </ul>	



Example 13. Trees in a line along a verge. These are native willow trees. The tree nearest seems to have succumbed to stress as it does not show any signs of regrowth, unlike its neighbour. Natural dead wood is an important ecological resource and, in some places, could be used to great effect.



Example 14. A large tree at the edge of an open grassed area. Would this space be improved with more smaller trees? Could features like this be replicated elsewhere in the village?





Example 15. Smaller fruit trees and hawthorn bushes along a verge. These species are lower growing, reflecting the height of the neighbouring buildings.



Example 16. The branches of trees in private gardens form a canopy over this verge. The boundaries of the gardens are hedges and appear to be well maintained and thriving.



Example 17: To reduce the pressure from the public in compacting the soil around this tree, the area underneath has been planted to ensure that the roots are not damaged. A sign has also been erected to explain.



Example 18: Trees can sometimes outgrow their space. Solutions can be found to reduce this pressure by reprofiling the surrounding ground and the tree can be retained. A wall could be reprofiled, and soft landscaping expanded to allow for the tree as it matures.

9. Linking back to the desk research, is there a tree type or character that is dominant or forms a primary characteristic? Does this link to the Landscape Character Assessment for the area?
10. How do footpaths link to woodlands and greenspaces?
  - a. Are they wide enough?
  - b. What are they bounded by? Hedges, walls, fences?
  - c. What is most characteristic and uncharacteristic?
  - d. What is the surface made of?
    - i. Compacted ground
    - ii. Hard paving / tarmac
    - iii. Stone
    - iv. Concrete
  - e. Is the surface in good condition or poor condition?
  - f. What kind of surfaces would you like to see more of?
  - g. How does the footpath blend with the houses in the settlement?
11. What open or vacant public spaces are there?

New trees can focus on species diversity, create seasonal variations, and connect open spaces within settlements to their wider landscapes. Nature-rich settlements designed around environmental

sensitivity can provide easy access to nature and deliver a range of social, environmental and economic benefits. Consider how these link with other habitats and spaces, and how these links could be improved. If there are gaps could these be filled with trees?

- a. Can you make an estimate of the following pieces of information about the areas? (answer as many of these as you can).
- b. Take photos of the spaces.

### Potential tree planting sites in vacant spaces

Is there a village green?	Are there open verges which could accommodate trees?
What 3 Words/Grid reference	
Are there places where more trees could be added, e.g. gaps?	Are there places that are not suitable for trees?
What is the size of the area?	What is the surface made of? Is it soft, e.g. grass surface or hard e.g. concrete/tarmac?
Would this space be suitable for one large tree or a group of smaller trees?	How would you arrange the trees? In a line, or in a group?
Are there walls or other hard landscaping features?	How close is the area to highways/footpaths/roads?
Do footpaths/walkways cross the area? What surfaces do these have?	What uses do you think this area would have?
Is this a feature which could be repeated in other areas around the village?	Should this be a unique feature within the village which should not be replicated?
Is there a space large enough for a community orchard?	
Is this space connected to any corridors or linear features which wildlife could use such as hedgerows or a watercourse? If not how could this be done?	
Are there any opportunities to use trees to change or improve how easy it is to move around the settlement for walking? Could a tree be added to a pavement to widen it and slow down traffic? Could one be used to provide shade for a seat?	





Example 19: An open village green in a traditional area of a village



Example 20: An open green in a recently developed area. Would trees add interest, shade and improve views from the houses?



Example 21: A large verge with no trees with a pavement away from the road. A dense hedgerow is nearby and a garden bounded by a hedge is opposite.



Example 22: A wide open verge with a pavement next to the road and bounded by a wall. Opposite, a traditional hedgerow and mature trees.



Example 23: A small green space in a more established area which could take a tree. There are other rural features around such as the stone wall and the mature hedging.



Example 24: A place less suited for trees. Narrow pavements and little room between buildings and the road. There is little space for trees to grow and trees here would compromise safety for road users.



12. Are there any special trees that should be protected or retained?

In your desktop study, the [Ancient Tree Inventory](#) (ATI) or Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI), and information on trees with Tree Preservation Orders (TPO), may have highlighted trees or areas of woodland of interest. With particular emphasis on individual trees, as you move around the village make a note of whether the trees on the ATI and any TPO records you identified correlate or not. Look for other remarkable trees within the settlement as you move around it that are not recorded in the information. Are there any trees that catch your eye, which may be worth considering for inclusion on these data sets? You may not be able to conduct a full survey of the tree, to record it, but make as many notes as you can and add this to your information on the settlement for passing on for fully recording later.

**Documenting remarkable, notable and ancient trees**

Are there any notable trees on the ATI/AWI/TPO records?	Are there any notable/remarkable trees that are not on the ATI/AWI/TPO records?
What three words/grid reference	Girth of the tree at 1m height
What caught your eye about the tree? What distinctive features does it have?	What is the approximate diameter of the canopy?
What is the proximity of the tree to buildings?	How close is the tree to the highway/footpath?
What is the tree growing in? A grass verge, forest litter – e.g twigs/flower/fruit and other natural tree droppings or an impervious surface such as a pavement, concrete, asphalt or bare impacted soil?	Are there multiple stems/trunks?
Has the tree had any management in the past such as pollarding. (See example 17).	Other comments



Example 25: A rare and notable Black Poplar (*Populus nigra*) tree in Ewyas Harold. This imposing tree was once a staple of the British Landscape but these days, are few and far between. Mature trees can grow to 30m and can live for 200 years.

The tree pictured is recorded on the Woodland Trust’s Ancient Tree Inventory. It has been pollarded in the past – the branches have been reduced back to the trunk and allowed to re-grow. It is very close to the building it is next to and also to the road.

### Step 3: Seek expert advice if required

If there is anything that you are unsure about or would like some more information, then either your local tree warden or the Council's Tree Officer may be able to assist.

### Step 4: Use your survey work to prepare this section of your design code

Your design code will contain many different elements as highlighted within '[Design Code Guidance Note – What Is a Design Code?](#)'

The survey work and background within this guidance notes is pertinent to a number of the 10 characteristics including 'nature, public spaces and identity'

Please also refer to the 'Nature and Open Space' [Information Guide](#) and [Worksheet](#)'

### References and further information:

Collins Tree Guide: The most complete field guide to the trees of Britain and Europe; (2006), Johnson, O and More, D HarperCollins: London ISBN: 978 0 00 720771 8

Oldham & Roberts: Tree name trail (1999) Field Studies Council. ISBN: 9781851538614

[Woodland Trust Woodland Creation Guide](#)

[Tree Species Handbook](#)

[Woodland Trust State of Woods and Trees Report](#)

[Woodland Trust Emergency Tree Plan](#)

[Woodland Trust's position on Climate Change](#)

[Woodland Trust – Where do our trees come from? \(UKISG\)](#)

[Woodland Trust – Local Authority Tree Strategies](#)

[Living with beauty: Report of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission](#)

[Woodland Trust - Residential developments and trees: a guide for planners and developers](#)

[Woodland Trust – Impacts of nearby development on ancient woodland](#)

[Ancient tree guide 3: Trees and Development](#)

[Ancient tree guide 4: Trees of Special Interest](#)

[Woodland Trust – Ancient Tree Inventory](#)

[Herefordshire Biodiversity Action Plan](#)

[TDAG](#) – have a number of relevant resources to support the role of urban trees, which contain a lot of comprehensive information.

[Trees, Planning and Development: A Guide for Delivery](#)

[Tree Species Selection for Green Infrastructure: A Guide for Specifiers](#)

[Landscape and seascape Character assessments](#)

[National Character Areas](#) have been described for several areas in Herefordshire, including [the lowlands](#) and [the plateau](#).