

# Chapter 7

## Landscape Character Type Profiles



# LCT 1: River Floodplains



## Location and summary

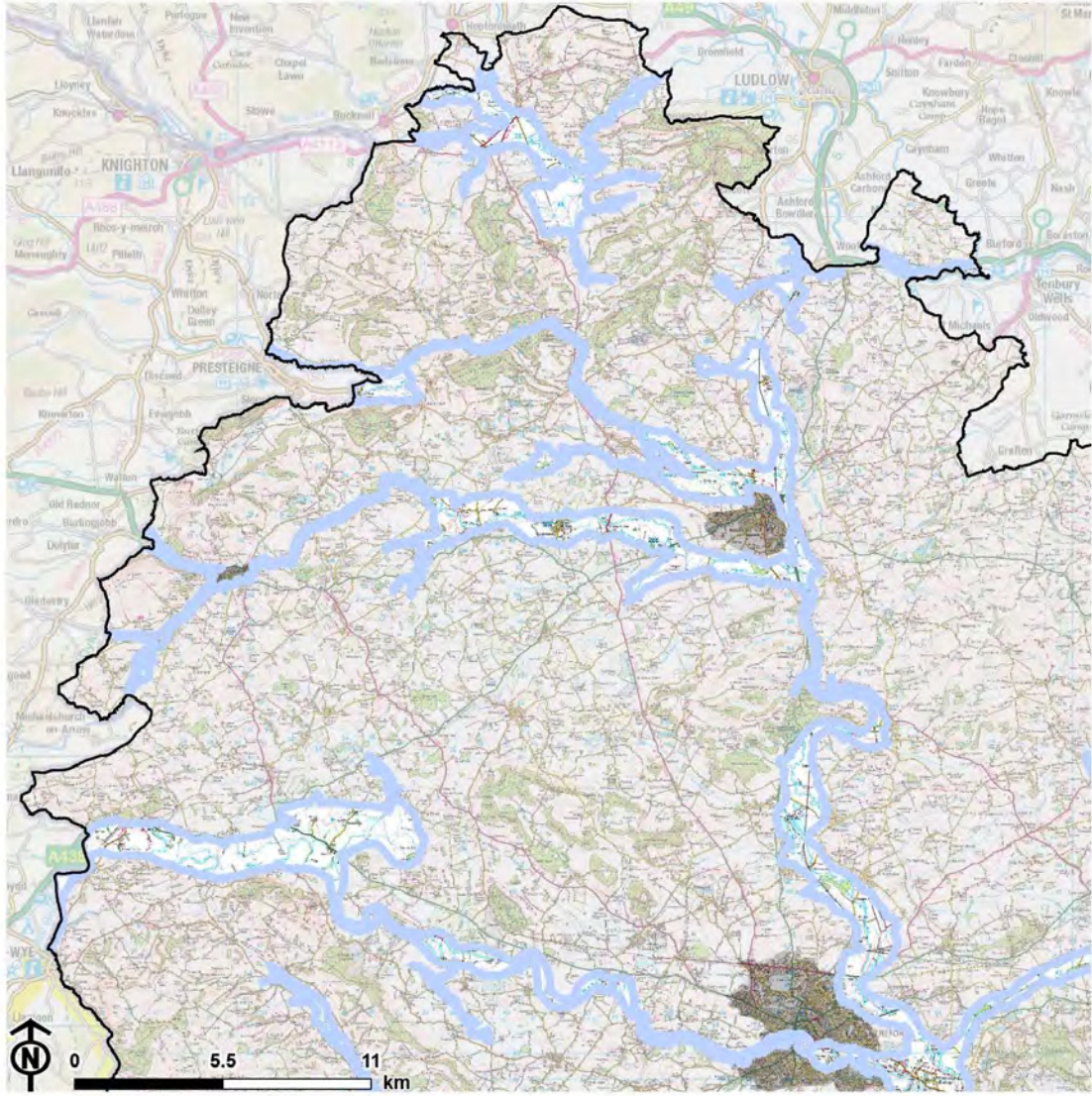
**7.1** The River Floodplains LCT contains the major rivers within the county and their floodplains including the Rivers Arrow, Clun, Dore, Frome, Leadon, Lugg, Monnow, Teme and Wye. The boundaries of the LCT are defined by the extent of Flood Zone 3 along the major rivers, the extent of alluvial deposits, and the extent of riverside meadows, particularly around the Lugg.

**7.2** The landscapes are generally flat, with the superficial geology of alluvium resulting in wide fertile agricultural plains. The flood plains are typically used for pasture, with tree cover along the watercourses. Development and settlement are generally absent. The Lower Wye is designated as part of the Wye Valley AONB

**Figure 7.1: Typical view of the LCT**



Figure 7.2: Location of River Floodplains North

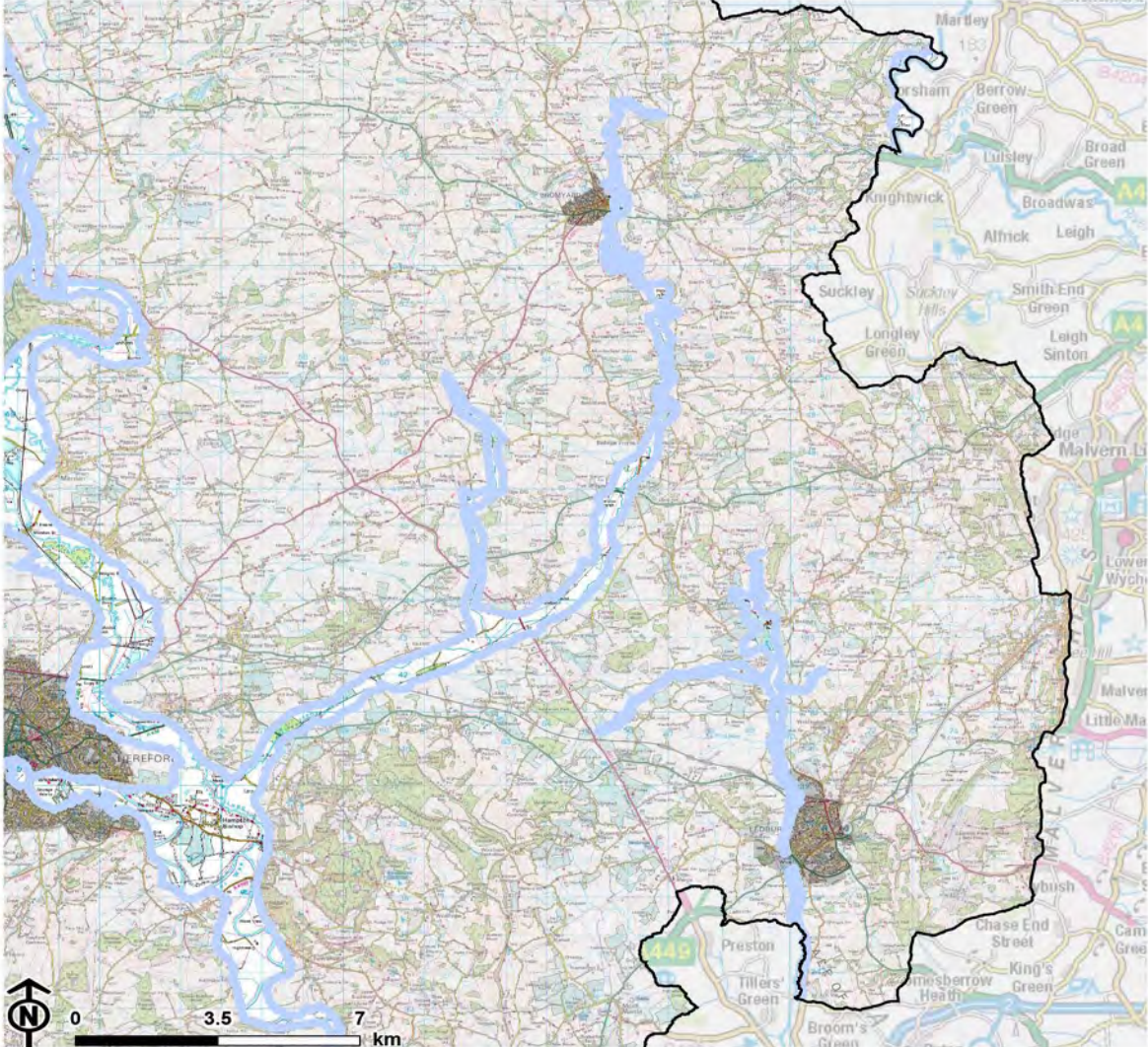


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- LCT 1. River Floodplains
- Herefordshire boundary
- Settlement



Figure 7.3: Location of River Floodplains East



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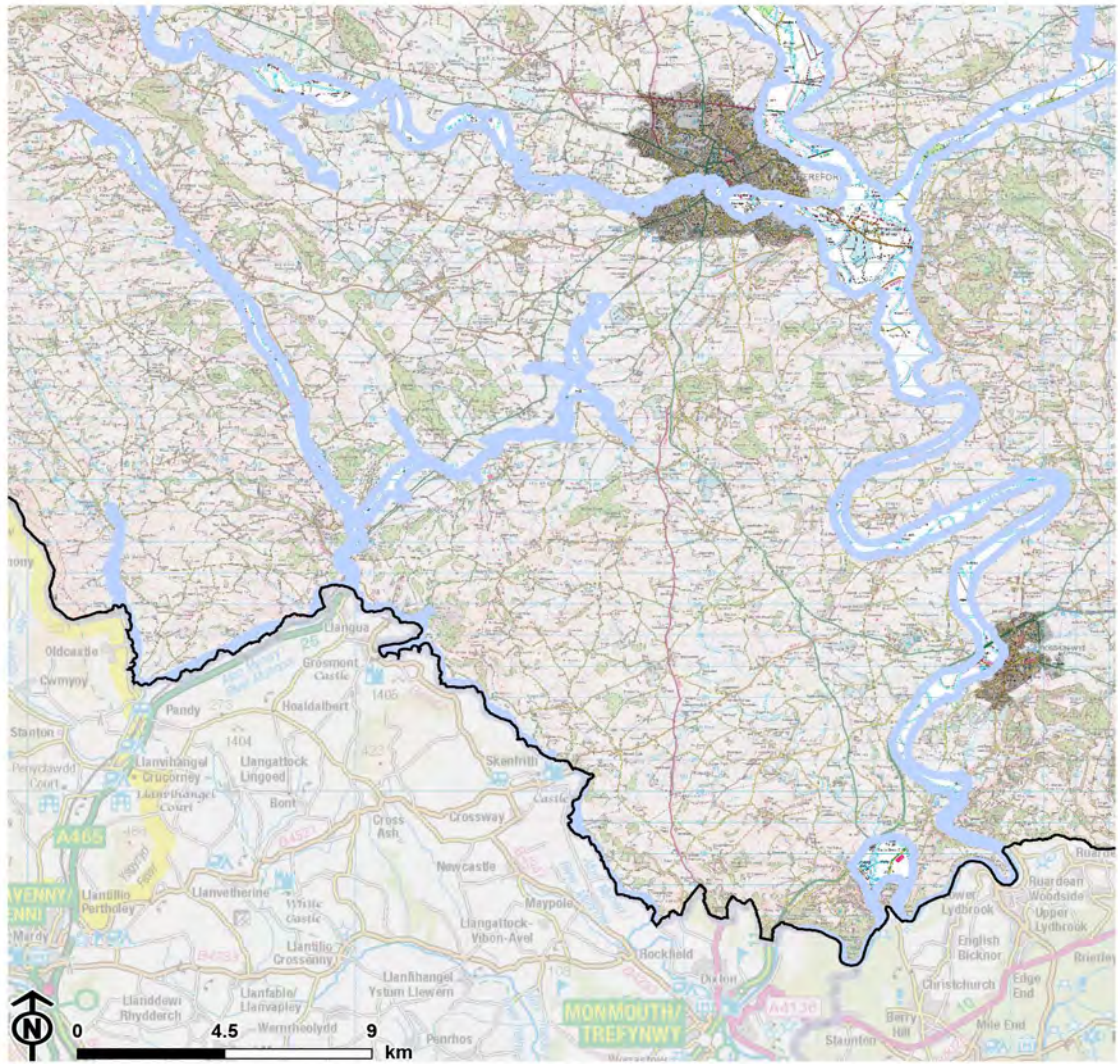
-  LCT 1. River Floodplains
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-  Settlement



Figure 7.4: Location of River Floodplains South



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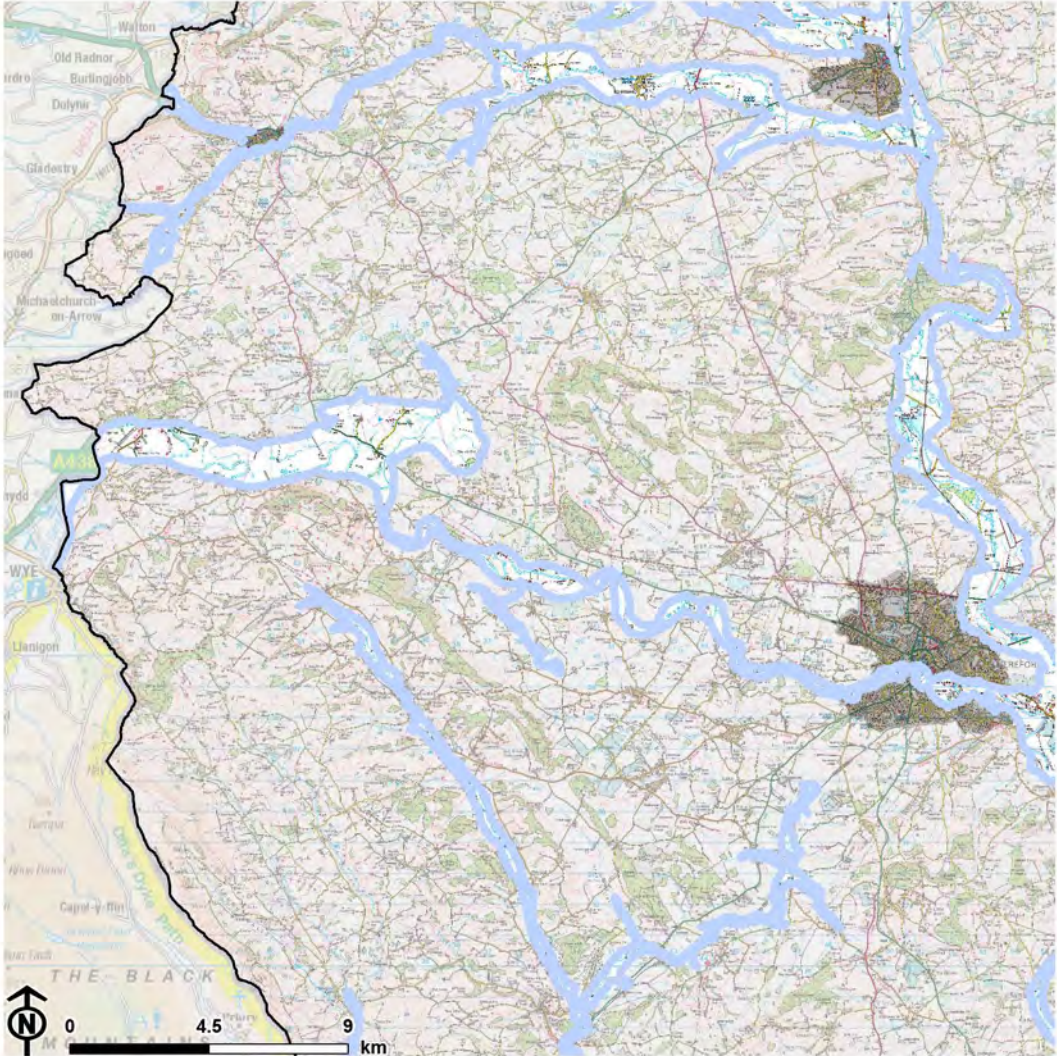



-  LCT 1. River Floodplains
-  Herefordshire boundary
-  Settlement

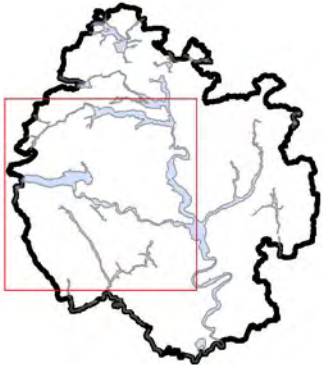


Figure 7.5: Location of River Floodplains Central



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-  LCT 1. River Floodplains
-  Herefordshire boundary
-  Settlement



## Key characteristics

### Topography, geology and drainage

- A flat riverine landscape of river channels and floodplains underlain by mudstone and sandstones, with superficial alluvial and glacial drift deposits.
- Meandering river channels provide visual interest, framed in places by the rising ground of old river terraces. The physical form of the floodplains varies; some are flat-bottomed and wide (e.g. Wye), while others are narrower (e.g. upper Teme).

### Agricultural land use and field patterns

- Seasonally inundated riverside meadows result in predominantly pastoral land use. Arable fields are found on the wider floodplains.
- A small-scale landscape with sinuous field patterns. Fields bound by ditches and intermittent hedgerows.

### Semi-natural habitats

- Internationally, nationally and locally designated wetland habitats are found throughout the landscape.
- Tree cover is represented by well-defined willow and alder along the river channels and as hedgerow trees.

### Settlement and road pattern

- An open, largely uninhabited, and undeveloped landscape. Sluices used to control water flow are some of the only structures within the landscape.



- Roads are infrequent, with a few crossings over the rivers on characterful, often stone, bridges.

#### **Cultural heritage**

- Some historic villages (designated as Conservation Areas) and designed landscapes extend into the floodplain including Bodenham, while historic bridges and water mills remain.

#### **Views and perceptual qualities**

- Views vary with the width of the floodplain, from enclosed landscapes in narrow valleys, and expansive views in wider floodplains e.g. lower reaches of the River Wye.
- Access to the river channels is often restricted, except for some long-distance footpaths which cross the floodplains, including the Wye Valley Walk and Herefordshire Trail.
- The Wye is very popular for water-based recreation including canoeing and paddleboarding.
- This is predominantly a highly tranquil, naturalistic landscape with dark night skies. The urban fringe influences the tranquillity of the landscape close to larger settlements (Leominster, Hereford and Ross-on-Wye).

## **Landscape character description**

### **Natural influences**

**7.3** The majority of the floodplains are underlain by rocks of the Old Red Sandstone from the Devonian and Silurian period that typify much of Herefordshire and give the soils their distinctive red colour. The bedrocks include mudstones and siltstones which are more susceptible to weathering than the higher surrounding hills. Where the bedrocks are formed of more resistant limestone, such as in the north-west and south, the floodplain narrows,

such as in the Wye Gorge. Superficial deposits of alluvium overlay the bedrocks, and there is some glacial till in the north and north-west.

**7.4** Brobury scar near Monnington has exposed cliffs where the river has cut through the red sandstone. The River Lugg meanders are designated as a geological Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI). A number of Local Geological Sites are designated on the Lugg and Wye, including Kinsham Gorge and Sned Wood, which were formed by glacial action, and Locksters Pool, Clifford.

**7.5** The typical drainage pattern in Herefordshire runs from north-west to south-east. In contrast to this, ancient fault lines which cut across the country from south-west to north-east provide more easily eroded paths at a right angle to the general drainage pattern, such as the River Wye at Hay-on-Wye, or the Monnow south of Pontrillas.

**7.6** Most of Herefordshire's rivers are internationally and nationally designated for their river habitats including the River Wye SAC and SSSI; River Clun SAC; River Lugg SSSI; River Teme SSSI. In recent years high phosphate levels have been recorded in the Wye and Lugg catchments. Phosphates can enter river catchments from sewage treatment works, residential development, and as runoff from agricultural fields, due to livestock manure and nutrients washing into rivers. Eutrophication causes algal blooms, which are unsightly in the landscape and can give off an unpleasant smell, particularly in warm weather.

**7.7** Seasonal flooding along the river floodplains has resulted in extensive wetland habitats. Priority habitats include deciduous woodland; lowland meadows; good quality semi-improved grassland, and floodplain grazing marsh. Designated areas include the Lugg and Hampton Meadows SSSI, Byton and Combe Moors SSSI on the site of a former glacial lake, and wet grassland, streams and ponds at The Sturts SSSI. Much of the floodplain area is designated locally as LWS for their wetland habitats.

**7.8** Land cover comprises wet pastures along the valley floors, which are in use for cattle and sheep grazing, and areas of arable cropping. Modern agricultural

practices have increased the extent of arable cultivation, particularly in the fertile floodplains of the Wye valley and the Dore. Agricultural Land Cover ratings vary, ranging from Grade 1 along the Dore valley to Grades 3 and 4 along the Lugg and Teme.

**7.9** Tree cover is limited to lines of alder and willow along the banks of the rivers and wet ditches, with the willows usually pollarded.

## Cultural influences

**7.10** The field patterns are mostly of pre-18<sup>th</sup> century origin and generally derived from the enclosure of open fields or common arable or grazing land. Hedges and ditches are common boundaries, which are sinuous in form. Historically the natural fertility of the meadows was maximised by using sluices to control and direct the silt-laden flood waters.

**7.11** Much of the floodplain remains in pastoral use, however traditionally managed meadows are rare. The Lugg Meadow on the edge of Hereford has one of the largest surviving Lammas Meadows in the country, where the historic pattern of cutting and grazing has continued for centuries. At Bartonsham Meadows, also near Hereford, a community group is transforming intensively farmed agricultural land to species-rich flood meadow.

**7.12** Historically the floodplains were uninhabited due to seasonal flooding and as a result there are only a small number of historic features. Evidence of early occupation includes the Rowe Ditch (Scheduled Monument), a defensive earthwork that straddles the River Arrow west of Pembridge, a number of prehistoric funerary bowl barrows and Wergins Stone, a standing stone on the Lugg floodplain; and medieval moated sites on the Lugg and Monnow floodplains.

**7.13** Most of the listed buildings on the floodplain are mills and bridges. Eardisland on the River Arrow is one of the few settlements located on the floodplain, and contains timber-framed houses (one of the 'Black and White

villages'), and a moated castle mound (Scheduled Monument), as well as more modern residential development on the village edge. Settlements and estates on slightly higher ground extend into the floodplain, including the historic villages of Bodenham, Leintwardine, Bosbury, Ross-on-Wye, and Hampton Bishop (all designated as Conservation Areas). The Registered Parks and Gardens of Downton Castle, Hampton Court and Kentchurch Court also extend into the riverine landscape.

**7.14** Major roads tend to skirt the edge of the floodplains, with infrequent crossings. The promoted routes the Herefordshire Trail and Wye Valley Walk cross the floodplains, but generally, there is limited access to the floodplain. Water-based recreation and tourism including fishing, camping, canoeing and paddleboarding is increasing in popularity, particularly on the Wye.

## Perceptual influences

**7.15** Levels of tranquillity and dark night skies are high across the River Floodplains LCT, creating a rural, and sometimes remote character. The valley landforms in the upper reaches of the rivers limit views and provide a sense of enclosure and intimacy, with longer views often restricted by the woodland along the river channels. In the Wye valley, the views are more open, with extensive views noted as a special quality of the Wye Valley AONB. The Wye is one of the nation's favourite rivers, and the characterful meanders of the lower Wye lie within the Wye Valley AONB. The importance of views of the Wye are also mentioned within the Hereford townscape appraisal.

**7.16** Modern influences on the landscape include road crossings, views to neighbouring settlements (although many of these are historic and therefore do not impact on the rural character), small tourism developments and noise from roads and the railway line to the east of Leominster.

## Landscape Evaluation

### Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

- Important geological sites, including the nationally designated River Lugg Meanders SSSI, provide evidence of the processes which have shaped the landscape.
- The semi-natural habitats including floodplain grazing marsh, lowland meadows and deciduous riparian woodland which support biodiversity, and provide carbon capture.
- The river channels which provide water, and the underlying aquifers which maintain springs and base flows into the river. The floodplains also regulate water flows, and provide flood protection.
- The riverside meadows which provide a connection to historic land uses, and provide a highly scenic quality to the landscape.
- The historic features of the landscape, particularly the mills and bridges that provide a connection to history, cultural identity and aesthetic value.
- The largely undeveloped nature of the floodplain, which contributes to rural character.
- The small number of historic settlements that extend onto the floodplain, and contain buildings of a local vernacular which provide a sense of place.
- The river floodplains provide a valued location for recreation, both on riverside footpaths and on the rivers themselves.
- The sense of tranquillity, enclosure and intimacy, particularly in the upper valleys. The expansive open views in the lower Wye Valley, as referenced in the Wye Valley AONB.

## Forces for change

Escalating requirements of modern agriculture have led to an increase in arable cultivation and improved pasture, and the loss of traditionally managed water meadows and permanent pasture.

Physical modification of the river channels and their floodplains, (e.g. straightening and reprofiling riverbanks, excavation, and irrigation reservoirs), for flood alleviation or agriculture, has altered the natural flow of the rivers, and reduced the ecological and visual interest of the landscape. The construction of bunds, flood walls and flood relief channels associated with new developments outside of the floodplains is also uncharacteristic of this undeveloped landscape.

The decreasing water quality of the Arrow, Clun, Frome, Lugg and Wye and their catchments due to increasing concentrations of phosphate and nitrogen, has led to a decline in salmon and trout populations and increase in algal blooms. This is due to a number of factors, including changing agricultural practices within Herefordshire, Shropshire and Powys; physical modifications to the channels; run-off from sewage treatment works and residential developments; and increased rainfall and extreme temperatures due to climate change.

Increases in water-based recreation has caused an increase in development for launches, and motorised boats which can damage the riverbanks.

Figure 7.6: The River Wye lined by trees, with houses in Ross-on-Wye sitting above the floodplain



**Figure 7.7: Recreational access along the Wye, with Ross-on-Wye in the background**



## Landscape Guidelines

The overall aim for the River Floodplains LCT is to conserve and enhance the rural character of the landscape and sense of place created by the naturally meandering river corridors, pasture land use, wetland habitats, and the undeveloped and tranquil character. River water quality should be monitored and improved. Recreational uses that are sensitive and proportional to the setting, should be encouraged, while enhancing water quality and conserving the considerable areas of ecological importance.



## Landscape management

- Continue to monitor water quality in the rivers, and seek to reduce surface water flow off agricultural land. Draw on advice from the Environment Agency, Wye Valley AONB, Wye and Usk Foundation, Teme Catchment Partnership, and Wye Catchment Partnership.
- Encourage catchment-sensitive land management practices in the river floodplains and wider catchment areas, to improve soil quality and prevent run off into the local rivers and ensure they do not have an impact on water quality.
- Promote sustainable and wildlife-friendly land management practices that provide multiple landscape and biodiversity benefits.
- Restore and maintain natural riverbank and bed features, to restore traditional patterns and processes of natural flooding cycles.
- Consider opportunities for natural flood management and to restore the natural floodplain function of the rivers, such as restoring wetland habitats, introducing leaky dam structures, and multi-species cropping.
- Conserve and restore wetland habitats, including wet woodland and meadows, to enhance their contribution to landscape character. This will also maintain high water quality, reduce peak flows and enhance their nature conservation and biodiversity.
- Conserve and expand traditional riverside meadows. Encourage sustainable management of these meadows through sensitive grassland management, such as late hay cutting and low-density livestock grazing.
- Encourage appropriate hedgerow management to ensure their long-term good health and survival. Hedgerows should be dense along most of their length with frequent healthy stems.
- Conserve, restore and enhance continuous linear tree cover along ditches and watercourses, using native local species where appropriate. There may be some opportunity for wet woodland creation.

- Encourage an increase in sensitive and proportional recreational opportunities related to the riverine environment while protecting the riverbanks from damage.
- Improve public rights of way connections and signage on well-maintained linked riverside routes, identifying opportunities for green infrastructure improvements.
- Ensure the special qualities of the Wye Valley AONB are conserved and enhanced, having regard to the opportunities and strategies set out in the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan.

## Development management

- Discourage activities likely to increase the drainage or lower the water table of the floodplain.
- Promote the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) in appropriate schemes to provide mitigation where required.
- Conserve and enhance the area's archaeological earthworks, historic bridges and mills, and their landscape setting. Encourage further interpretation and understanding of this cultural heritage.
- Conserve the unsettled and undeveloped character of the landscape. Minimise the impact of any new development (including for agriculture or tourism) through careful design, in terms of siting, form, scale, massing and materials.
- Consider the visual impact on the floodplains from developments in adjacent landscapes.
- Protect expansive open views across the floodplains, particularly in the national landscape of the Wye Valley.

# LCT 2: Lowland Farmlands



## Location and summary

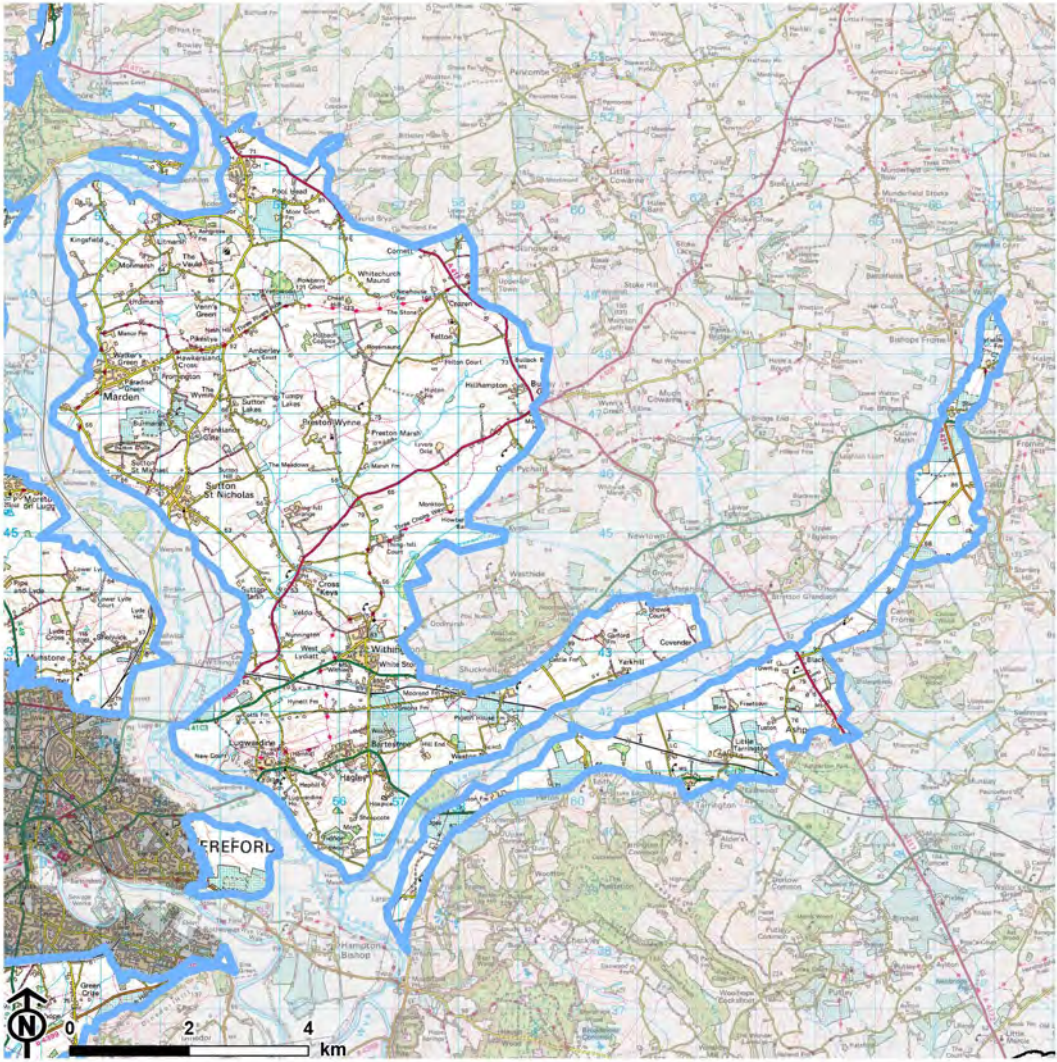
**7.17** The Lowland Farmlands LCT is defined by the extent of the open low-lying 'basin' in the centre of the county. Its boundaries are marked by the change to the more wooded landcover and undulating topography of the surrounding wooded farmland and hills. The LCT is interrupted by the wide River Floodplains (LCT 1) that cross the landscape and Wooded Sandstone Hills (LCT 12) that rise steeply above the central plain.

**7.18** This rural lowland landscape has dispersed historic villages and hamlets. The south and north of the landscape character type are influenced by proximity to Hereford City and Leominster. The landscape has a gently undulating landform where fertile soils support a variety of agricultural land uses.

**Figure 7.8: Typical view of the LCT**



Figure 7.9: Location of Lowland Farmlands East



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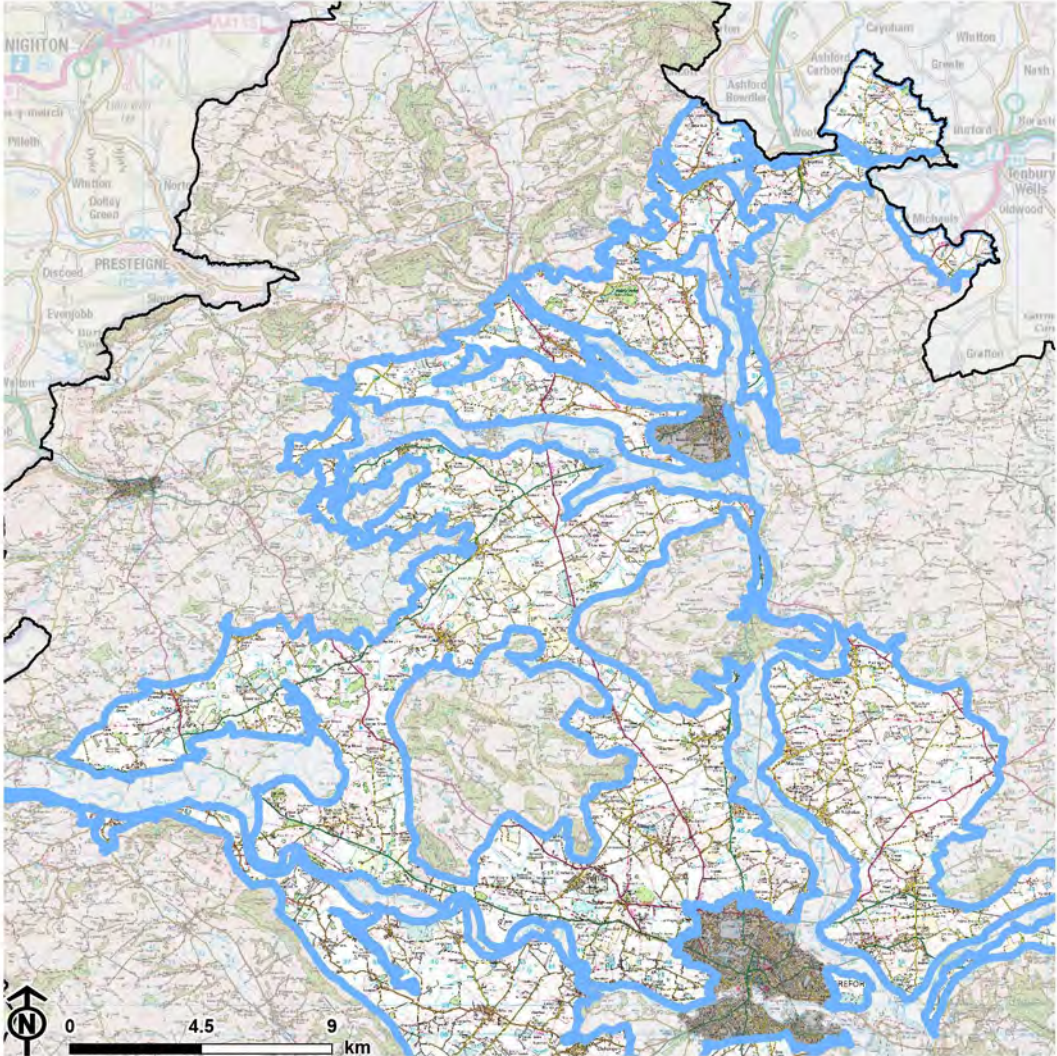
-  LCT 2. Lowland Farmlands
-  Herefordshire boundary
-  Settlement



Figure 7.10: Location of Lowland Farmlands North



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





-  LCT 2. Lowland Farmlands
-  Herefordshire boundary
-  Settlement



Figure 7.11: Location of Lowland Farmlands West



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-  LCT 2. Lowland Farmlands
-  Herefordshire boundary
-  Settlement



## Key characteristics

### Topography, geology and drainage

- The landscape is low-lying with a gently undulating landform underlain by Lower Old Red Sandstone.
- The area is drained by the River Wye which flows across the county, and its tributaries the Lugg, Arrow and Frome, and their associated tributaries and floodplains (LCT 1 River Floodplains).

### Agricultural land use and field patterns

- Fertile loamy soils support intensive mixed agricultural, including arable and horticultural land uses, with some sheep grazing to the north.
- Commercial bush orchards are characteristic along with soft fruit production under polytunnels and occasional hop fields.
- There is a historic field pattern of medium scale fields with larger fields resulting from recent modern amalgamation through loss of some original hedgerow boundaries.

### Semi-natural habitats

- Hedgerows along roadsides and field boundaries are a key habitat.
- Tree cover is limited, with small copses and few hedgerow trees. This is added to by traditional orchards and tree groups around farmsteads and settlements.
- Intensive agriculture has limited semi-natural habitats, except for small scattered areas of floodplain grazing marsh, lowland meadows and deciduous woodland.

### Settlement and road pattern



- The settlement pattern is dispersed with scattered farmsteads, hamlets and villages often located along radial routes into Hereford and at crossroads.
- Main roads out of Hereford are connected by narrow, winding, rural lanes.
- There is a high level of access by footpath and bridleway.

#### **Cultural heritage**

- Timber-framed (black-and-white) buildings are characteristic, with red sandstone also used as a building material. Red brick was commonly used from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Significant and dense time-depth is evident in the prevalence of Scheduled Monuments.

#### **Views and perceptual qualities**

- Longer-distance views are available across the open landscape to surrounding higher ground.
- The landscape has a rural character with a strong experience of dark skies and high levels of tranquillity, except along the busier trunk roads and on the outskirts of Hereford and Leominster.

## **Landscape character description**

### **Natural influences**

**7.19** A gently undulating landform which sits above the wide floodplains of the River Wye and its tributaries; the Lugg, Arrow and Frome rivers (LCT 1 River Floodplains). The landscape forms an important catchment area for these watercourses.

**7.20** The low-lying landscape is underlain by the lowest of the Old Red Sandstone rocks, a bedrock that typifies much of Herefordshire. It is composed of siltstones and mudstones of the Raglan Mudstone Formation, formed during the Silurian period. In the Wye Valley there are localised superficial deposits of glacial drift, with kettle holes at Kenchester.

**7.21** The Old Red Sandstone gives rise to rich red soils that are free draining, slightly acid and loamy. They form good quality agricultural land (predominantly Grade 2 with concentrations of Grade 1 towards the floodplains). As a result, the area is intensively farmed, supporting a range of agricultural land uses with arable and horticultural crops including large-scale soft fruit production grown in polytunnels, commercial 'bush' orchards and hopyards. A concentration of pastures is found to the north of the LCT where the farmland is more fragmented with floodplains.

**7.22** Intensive farming has limited ecological diversity. Hedges are one of the most significant features of the landscape although these are often over-trimmed and gappy with sparse hedgerow trees, and of limited species diversity. Priority habitats are limited to pockets of floodplain grazing marsh, lowland meadows and deciduous woodland (much of it ancient). There are many traditional orchards (priority habitat) across the LCT. Traditional orchards were once extensive in this area but are mostly found now at the edges of hamlets and farmsteads. Otherwise, tree cover is limited to thinly scattered hedgerow trees and grouped around dwellings. The LCT includes a Local Nature Reserve at Broadlands on the edge of Hereford.

## Cultural influences

**7.23** This is a highly productive agricultural landscape. The lowland farmlands were historically an arable-livestock region, with cattle and pigs kept in the cider orchards. Fields today vary considerably in size but are usually medium with larger fields becoming more common over time for agricultural purposes. These are typically of both pre-18<sup>th</sup> century origin and planned fieldscapes of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century origin although some have become degraded through recent boundary loss.

**7.24** There is extensive evidence of early occupation of the landscape, including the Iron Age Sutton Walls Camp, Roman Roads including Watling Street, Romano-British town of Magna at Kenchester and possibly 7<sup>th</sup> century North Herefordshire Rowe Ditch near Pembridge (Scheduled Monuments). Defended manor houses, mottes and moated sites, castles and churches with characteristic separated bell towers are found across the landscape, associated with the Marcher lordships.

**7.25** The productivity of the lowland landscape made it valuable and the agricultural wealth this generated is reflected in the establishment of numerous medieval villages. The old centres of these villages have many black and white timber-framed buildings. Fine examples are found in the ‘black and white’ villages of Pembridge, Eardisley, Weobley, Wellington and Dilwyn, all designated with Conservation Areas. Eardisland completes the ‘black and white’ village trail, but lies within LCT 1 River Floodplains. Red sandstone on a timber frame was also widely used, particularly for large 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> barns and stables, some with weatherboards and with tiled or slate roofs. Traditional cider houses (distinguished by wide doors) and hop barns from the 18<sup>th</sup> century are also a feature of this landscape. Red brick came into use as a building material in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly around Hereford.

**7.26** The settlement pattern is dispersed and comprises hamlets and small villages, often located at crossroads and on radial routes into Hereford. Many of the larger villages, such as Pembridge and Wellington, as well as the edges of the adjacent market towns of Hereford and Leominster, have expanded in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and are under pressure from on-going and further planned residential development and associated road improvements (including street lightening and road widening). The outskirts of these towns are often characterised by urban fringe developments, such as car showrooms, small industrial units and garden centres.

**7.27** Principal A roads form radial routes to Hereford from Worcester, Hay-on-Wye and Leominster. Rails links run through Hereford north to Ludlow and east to Worcester via Ledbury. Elsewhere the LCT is traversed by a network of narrow lanes. The LCT has an extensive network of PRow, which connect villages and hamlets although there are no national trails that run through the

LCT. The long-distance trails of the Three Choirs Way and Wye Valley Walk / Three Rivers Ride are locally important. The National Cycle Network route that runs south-west out of Hereford crosses the southern boundary of the LCT.

## Perceptual influences

**7.28** This is a rural landscape that retains much of its historic dispersed settlement pattern and a mixed farming character. The importance of views to the farmland surrounding Hereford, particularly around Broomy Hill, are mentioned in the Hereford townscape appraisal. Views across the lowland farmland are also mentioned in the Ross-on-Wye townscape appraisal.

**7.29** The gently undulating landform and limited tree cover give rise to an open landscape with long views. The uncluttered skylines make vertical features more prominent, such as telegraph poles. Hedgerows gives a sense of localised enclosure and shorten views from narrow rural lanes.

**7.30** The rural landscape has a sense of tranquillity and experience of dark skies, particularly away from larger villages and the busy transport routes which run through the LCT.

## Landscape Evaluation

### Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

- Remaining areas of traditional enclosure including medium scale fields bound by native hedgerows which provide landscape structure and a sense of history.
- The diversity of agricultural land use, with arable fields, commercial and traditional orchards, and sheep grazing, that provide visual interest within the landscape.

- The numerous traditional orchards that provide cultural and biodiversity value.
- The working agricultural landscape that forms a rural setting to historic buildings and villages (many designated as Conservation Areas).
- The dispersed settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and farmsteads linked by narrow winding lanes that provide a scenic quality to the landscape.
- The traditional local vernacular of black and white timber frame buildings, sandstone and red brick that provide strong a sense of place.
- The network of rights of way that provide access to the countryside and recreational value.
- The long views across the lowlands and to the surrounding wooded hills.
- The rural character of the landscape, with its strong sense of tranquillity and dark night skies.

## Forces for change

The Lowland Farmlands LCT is one of the most intensively farmed Landscape Types within Herefordshire. Generally, the landscape has become more open as farms increase in scale and agricultural practices industrialise. This had led to the removal of hedgerows and loss of hedgerow trees which has impacted traditional fields patterns. It has also resulted in the loss or fragmentation of other habitats such as semi-nature woodlands, a decline in traditional orchards and increased soil erosion.

Development pressure, particularly extending from Hereford and west of Leominster and associated traffic, is also resulting in visual intrusion from urban development. Conversion of traditional farm buildings to residential or holiday use can be unsympathetic. Large agricultural buildings, solar

panels, and polytunnels can be out of character within this open landscape, with their increased use having a cumulative impact.

**Figure 7.12: The characteristic 'black and white' village of Pembridge**



## Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for the Lowland Farmlands LCT is to conserve the productive agrarian and horticultural character of the landscape while integrating interconnected habitats of native hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodland copses, and extending meadows and wetland habitats.

Conserve the sense of place created by the combination of the low-lying tranquil agricultural landscape with historic villages, linked by rural lanes  
Integrate new development into the landscape by respecting the strong sense of place and local distinctiveness.

**Figure 7.13: Flat arable fields on narrow winding lanes, with mature hedgerow oak trees**



## Landscape management

- Promote sustainable and wildlife-friendly land management practices that provide multiple landscape and biodiversity benefits.
- Encourage catchment-sensitive land management practices to improve soil quality and reduce runoff into the local rivers.

- Conserve and enhance the traditional pattern and structure of the landscape. Improve the quality and continuity of existing field boundary and road hedgerows. Ensure that hedgerow and hedgerow tree species are native, dense, provide a diverse habitat, and are appropriate to the local character.
- Encourage appropriate hedgerow management to ensure their long-term good health and survival. Hedgerows should be dense along most of their length with frequent healthy stems.
- Protect and manage traditional apple orchards. Where possible, connect and extend small orchards, and involve local communities in management of these spaces.
- Protect, manage and enhance the fragmented native deciduous woodlands and tree cover across the landscape. Use locally occurring native species to extend or link woodland habitats.
- Conserve and manage semi-natural ancient woodlands, to improve landscape character and encourage biodiversity.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape on public rights of way. Improve connections and signage, aiming to enhance access and enjoyment through well-maintained linked routes through farmland.

## Development management

- Conserve the area's archaeological sites and defensive historic monuments and their landscape setting. Encourage further interpretation and understanding of these.
- Conserve the historic settlement pattern of small historic villages, hamlets and farmsteads.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their landscape settings.
- Ensure that new development considers the appropriate scale, mass, distinctive styling, colour, layout and materials to be in keeping with the



existing settlement character and landscape setting, to build on the strong sense of place. Refer to the Herefordshire Design Code.

- Consider the visual impact of roof, facades, glazing, pavements and other architectural detailing on the rural character of the landscape.
- Integrate existing and new development within the landscape by using native hedgerows, trees and woodlands.
- Consider the impact of commercial polytunnels, buildings and solar panels on the landscape and seek to integrate these structures through appropriate siting and mitigation.
- Protect the expansive views across the landscape, across the adjacent river floodplains and outwards to the surrounding wooded hills.
- Consider the visual impact of development, particularly large-scale urban expansions from Hereford and Leominster, on the open landscape of this lowland farmland.
- Conserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes ensuring that their character is not lost through unsympathetic highway works, unnecessary signage, lighting, street furniture, or removal of hedgerow and trees.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape. Improve public right of way connections, infrastructure and signage and identify opportunities for green infrastructure.
- Ensure new development and infrastructure does not detract from the rural tranquillity and dark night skies experienced within the landscape.

# LCT 3: Shallow Vales



## Location and Summary

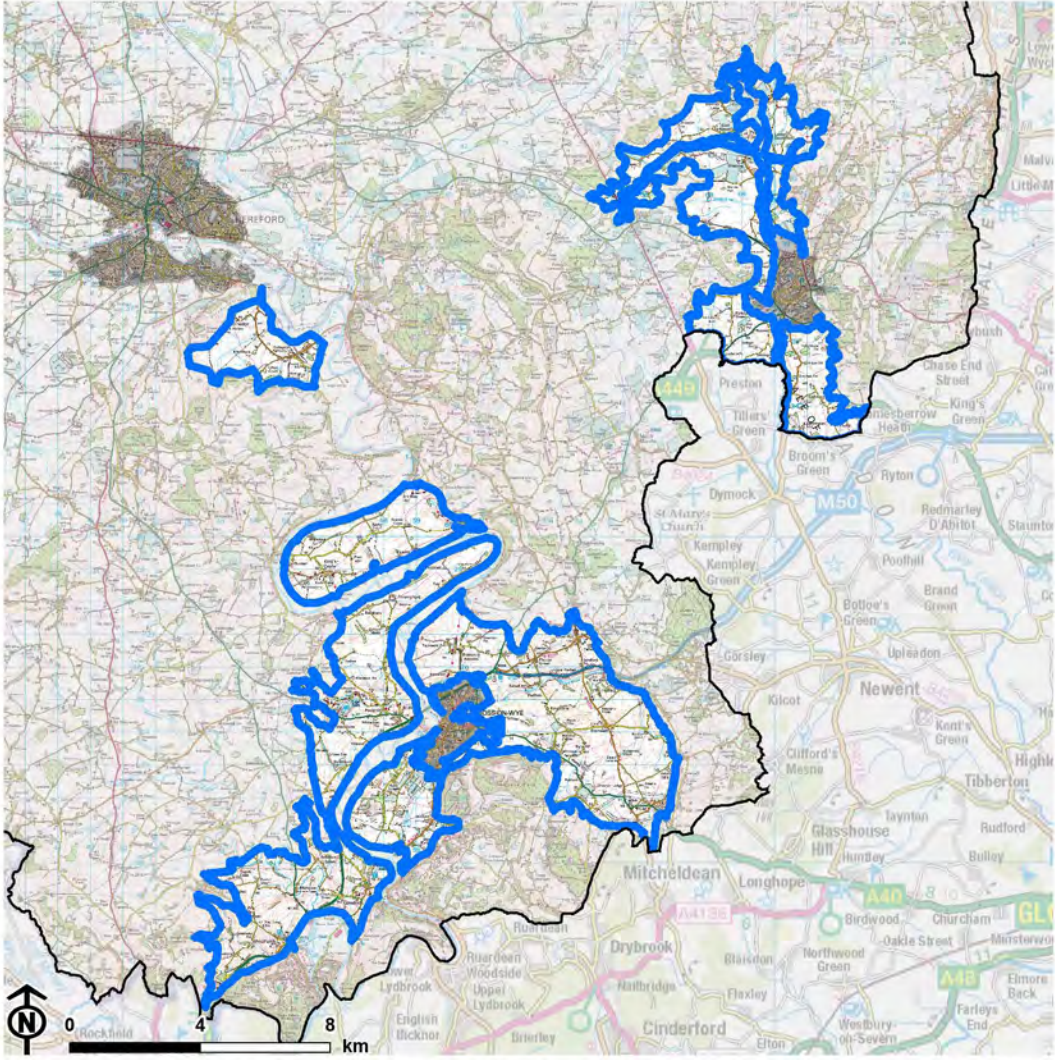
**7.31** The Shallow Vales LCT contains the rolling, lowland farmland of the Vale of Leadon, surrounding Ledbury and lower Wye Valley, surrounding Ross-on-Wye. The boundaries follow the extent of the lower ground associated with the River Floodplains (LCT 1) and the rise in topography to the surrounding wooded hills of the Undulating Wooded Farmland and Estates (LCT 5) or adjacent Plateau Farmland and Estates (LCT 13).

**7.32** A rolling open landscape where fertile soils support a variety of agricultural and horticultural uses, including fruit and vegetable production, orchards and arable cropping. The lower Wye Valley which stretches from Hereford south to the county border forms 46% of the Wye Valley AONB and the Leadon Vale provides a rural setting for the Malvern Hills AONB




**Figure 7.14: Typical view of the LCT**



Figure 7.15: Location of Shallow Vales



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-  LCT 3. Shallow Vales
-  Herefordshire boundary
-  Settlement



## Key Characteristics

### Topography, geology and drainage

- Rolling lowland landscape rising from the narrow floodplains of the River Wye and River Leadon.
- The characteristic red soils are underlain by Lower Old Red Sandstone.

### Agricultural land use and field patterns

- The fertile soils support intensive mixed agriculture. Although mostly arable and grass leys, there are a variety of other uses including horticulture, orchards, as well as pig and poultry rearing, and dairying.
- Traditional apple orchards around farmsteads and hamlets and commercial bush orchards are found throughout the area.
- Generally, medium size fields bound by hedgerows. Some larger size fields due to modern field amalgamation.

### Semi-natural habitats

- Woodland is sparse in this fertile landscape in contrast to the surrounding wooded slopes.
- Limited tree cover, restricted to small copses around farmsteads and hamlets (many priority habitat), scattered hedgerow trees and trees along watercourses.

### Cultural heritage

- Medieval castles were built to defend crossings over the River Wye, including Goodrich and Wilton.
- Grade II listed buildings include manor houses, farmhouses and cottages.

- A varied field pattern of medium to large rectangular fields resulting from modern field amalgamation and 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century planned enclosure, as well as smaller fields dating from before the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **Settlement and road pattern**

- A dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads and hamlets linked by small winding lanes and a network of footpaths.
- Traditional building material include timber framed buildings, sandstone, and brick. Large timber framed farmhouses and stone outbuildings are distinctive features in the open landscape.
- There are few large villages and little modern development except for polytunnels which are often well concealed within the landscape.
- The key transport routes run north-south and east-west linking larger settlements including the adjacent market towns of Ross-on-Wye and Ledbury.

#### **Views and perceptual qualities**

- An attractive lowland rural landscape. The scenic quality and natural beauty of the Wye Valley landscape is nationally recognised as part of the AONB. Leadon Vale provides a setting for the Malvern Hills AONB.
- The landscape and its network of paths provide a recreational resource for residents and visitors.
- The open character of the landscape results in wide views across the rolling landscape with church spires forming key landmarks.
- A rural landscape with a strong experience of dark skies, except in proximity to the market towns and along the major trunk roads.

## Description

### Natural Influences

**7.33** The rolling lowland farmland rises from floodplains dissected by the river channels of the lower Wye and Leadon. Within Leadon Vale and along the Wye west of Walford, there are terraces representing a former floodplain into which the river has cut down to its present course.

**7.34** The landscape is underlain by the Lower Old Red Sandstone rocks which are found across much of the county and give rise to the characteristic red Herefordshire soils. This includes Raglan Mudstone from the Silurian period (the lowest of the Old Red Sandstone rocks) and Brownstones from the Devonian period.

**7.35** The geology and drainage have resulted in a fertile landscape of good agricultural quality (mostly a mix of Agricultural Land Classification Grade 1 and 2). The fertile, slightly acid, loamy soils are deeper along the valley floor. The sandy brown soils of the river terraces around Ledbury are highly fertile. The majority of the land is farmed intensively, primarily for arable cropping and improved grassland but there is a wide variety of other uses, including livestock raising (pigs, poultry and dairying) vegetable and fruit production. There is wide coverage of soft fruit under polytunnels, for example around Hom Green in the Wye Valley and north of Ledbury. Fields have often been enlarged with hedgerows removed creating a sense of openness with some smaller more enclosed pasture fields.

**7.36** Traditional orchards with a wide range of fruiting trees are becoming fragmented. These old orchards have a high conservation value (often notified as priority habitat), particularly for birds, lichens and saprophytic invertebrates such as noble chafer. Modern commercial orchards with dwarf varieties of trees occur widely but are of little conservation value except in relation to pollinators.

**7.37** Tree cover is sparse in the fertile landscapes of the lower Wye and Leadon, in contrast to the concentrated woodland cover on the steep slopes of the river bends and surrounding hillsides. Trees are largely restricted to thinly scattered hedgerow trees, and riparian trees along watercourses, including ash, oak, alder and willow. Small deciduous woodlands and traditional orchards (many notified as priority habitats) are often associated with farmsteads and settlements.

**7.38** Other priority habitats are limited to lowland meadows, pockets of marsh habitats (purple moor grass and rush pastures as well as floodplain grazing marsh) and semi-improved grassland.

## Cultural Influences

**7.39** Evidence of Roman occupation of the Welsh Marches in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD includes the small Roman town of Ariconium, near Weston Under Penyard, which was previously an Iron Age fort, associated with the iron industry. The well-preserved medieval castle at Goodrich stands above the Wye (Scheduled Monument) was built to defend the crossing point on the river, a major route between England and Wales. Another ruined castle lies on rising ground above the river at Wilton. Hill Court, Walford (Grade II) has a garden from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century set in parkland (Registered Park and Garden).

**7.40** The field pattern varies considerably. Medium to large rectangular fields dominate the intensive farming on lower ground, resulting from modern field amalgamation with consequent hedgerow loss. Some small fields are the result of strip field agricultural practices from the late medieval period. Their retention indicates land ownership, tenure and traditional historical farming practices. Elsewhere, the field pattern is derived from planned enclosure in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century of former common lands.

**7.41** These agricultural landscapes have a traditional dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farms and hamlets formed around a manor house and church. There is a local vernacular of timber-framed buildings, local red



sandstone (sometimes whitewashed), and brick. Traditional farmsteads with sandstone outbuildings (including traditional cider houses and barns) are characteristic. These farmsteads date mainly from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century although many have been enlarged with large modern farm buildings. Tall church spires are prominent in the open landscape such as the spire at St Mary's in Ross-on-Wye.

**7.42** In the 20<sup>th</sup> century villages have grown or extended along the major road network, for example Weston under Penyard and Whitchurch. 20<sup>th</sup> century development also extends from the market towns of Ledbury and Ross-on-Wye. The landscape on the outskirts of these towns is often characterised by large scale developments located along the surrounding road network such as auction centres, industrial units or shopping centres, particularly north of Ross and north and west of Ledbury, which has an urbanising influence on the surrounding landscape. This urban fringe landscape is also under pressure from additional residential development and associated road improvements.

**7.43** Key transport routes cross the LCT, running north-south and east-west linking the larger settlements including the market towns of Ledbury and Ross-on-Wye. Elsewhere a network of lanes links the smaller settlements, winding within a matrix of hedged fields.

## Perceptual Influences

**7.44** This is an attractive rolling lowland landscape whose landscape character is defined by the nature and low density of its villages and hamlets and its varied agricultural land uses with well-managed hedgerows, small copses, orchards and farmsteads.

**7.45** The scenic quality and natural beauty of the Wye landscape is nationally recognised, and the special qualities of the AONB include the orchards, hedgerows, vernacular architecture of farmsteads and estate houses, historic parks and gardens, tranquillity and rural character of the landscape. In the east of the LCT, the Leadon Vale provides a setting for the Malvern Hills AONB.

**7.46** The LCT provides a range of tourist attractions, including an increasing number of glamping/camping sites, as well as the network of public rights of way and long-distance footpaths such as the Herefordshire Trail and Wye Valley Walk.

**7.47** The open character of the landscape, due to the limited tree cover, allows expansive and attractive views to the surrounding hills. There is more enclosure around villages and in minor valleys. Tall church spires provide landmarks, such as the spires of St Mary's Church, Ross-on-Wye and St Michael and All's Church in Ledbury. The coverage of land by polytunnels is increasingly visible within the landscape.

**7.48** The landscape is largely tranquil and rural in character with a strong experience of dark skies, except in proximity to the market towns and along the major trunk roads. Key transport corridors run east-west and north-south, including the M50/A40 from Ross-on-Wye, and A438 and A417 from Ledbury which provide key links between principal towns in neighbouring counties and the main routes between England and South Wales.

## Landscape Evaluation

### Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

- The rolling lowland landscape which provides a contrast to the flat floodplains of the Rivers Wye and Leadon.
- The high-quality soils supporting a wide range of crops and remaining species-rich grasslands which create visual diversity in the farmed landscape.
- The species rich hedgerows that provide a strong landscape pattern and connecting habitats.
- The small deciduous woodlands (many ancient in origin) which provide visual diversity in the open landscape.

- The remaining traditional orchards that are a key landscape feature and of high ecological value.
- The historic dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets and farmsteads linked by narrow winding lanes.
- Medieval defensive sites and their associated landscapes which provide a sense of history.
- Historic churches, farm buildings and houses with their varied local vernacular, many of which are Grade II listed.
- The open character of the landscape with extensive views across the winding river and floodplain to the surrounding wooded slopes and hills.
- The recreational opportunities offered by the landscape, including long distance paths such as the Herefordshire Trail and Wye Valley Walk.
- The rural character of the landscape, with a sense of rural tranquillity and experience of dark night skies.

## Forces for Change

Agricultural intensification and associated new practices in the Shallow Vales LCT are resulting in visual uniformity of the landscape in places, and consequent loss of species diversity and soil erosion. This includes the loss or fragmentation of species-rich grassland and meadow due to arable expansion or pasture 'improvement' and the decline or replacement of traditional orchards with bush varieties. Field amalgamation is resulting in the loss of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and small woodlands: and consequently of traditional field patterns. Large scale farm buildings and practices, such as polytunnels, can be out of character and scale in the landscape. Conversely an increase in small-scale 'hobby' farming is also changing the farmed landscape.

Development pressure and associated traffic, particularly extending from the adjacent market towns of Ledbury and Ross-on-Wye is resulting in visual intrusion from new development in the open vales.

Increased visitor numbers with pressure for recreational facilities is leading to disruption from increased car use and erosion of footpaths, particularly in more popular 'honey pot' sites.

**Figure 7.16: Winding lane at Goodrich, with views to wooded hills beyond**



**Figure 7.17: Small deciduous woodlands provide a backdrop to horse grazing in fields with gappy hedgerows reinforced by post and wire**



## Landscape Guidelines

The landscape strategy for the Shallow Vales LCT is to conserve and enhance the unity of the mixed farmland landscape, while enhancing the interconnected habitats of native hedgerows, woodland copses and permanent pasture.

Conserve the strong sense of place and local distinctiveness created by the dispersed settlement pattern of historic farmsteads and hamlets in a tranquil rural setting. Long-reaching views across the undulating rural landscape should be respected.

## Landscape Management

- Promote sustainable and wildlife-friendly land management practices that provide multiple landscape and biodiversity benefits. Conserve and enhance key landscape features including grassland, hedgerows and woodland copses.
- Encourage traditional management techniques to conserve and enhance areas of permanent pasture. This will strengthen the mixed agricultural character of the landscape.
- Conserve and enhance the historic field pattern and structure of the landscape. Improve the quality and continuity of existing hedgerows and increase hedgerow tree numbers. Ensure that hedgerow and hedgerow tree species are native, dense, provide a diverse habitat, and are appropriate to the local character.
- Encourage appropriate hedgerow management to ensure their long-term good health and survival. Hedgerows should be dense along most of their length with frequent healthy stems.
- Retain the distinctive hedgerow oaks and enhance their age structure through new planting or encouraging the growth of existing plants to tree size.
- Encourage a robust mosaic of interconnected semi-natural habitats, particularly grassland, wetland and woodland.
- Manage and enhance the native deciduous woodland and tree cover, particularly along watercourses and the mixed species around settlements. Use locally occurring native species to link woodland habitats including small deciduous woodlands, orchards and the hedgerow network.
- Conserve and restore wetland habitats to enhance their contribution to landscape character. This will also maintain high water quality, reduce peak flows and enhance their nature conservation and biodiversity.
- Protect and manage traditional apple orchards. Where possible, connect and extend small orchards, and involve local communities in management of these spaces.

- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape on public rights of way, enhancing access and enjoyment through well-maintained linked routes through farmland.

## Development Management

- Conserve the dispersed settlement pattern of small hamlets and farmsteads.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their rural settings.
- Ensure that new development considers the appropriate scale, mass, styling, layout and materials to be in keeping with the existing low-density settlement character and landscape setting.
- Encourage the use of traditional and locally distinctive styles, colours and materials, that are in keeping with the local landscape, such as sandstone, brick or timber frame, to build on the strong sense of place.
- Ensure the scale, building materials, layout and lighting of any conversions of historic farmhouses and agricultural buildings are sympathetic to and in keeping with the local landscape and enhance local distinctiveness. Refer to the Herefordshire Design Code.
- Consider the visual impact of roofs, facades, glazing, pavements, and other architectural detailing on the rural character of the landscape.
- Integrate existing and new development within the wider landscape by using native hedgerows, trees and woodlands.
- Protect wide views over the landscape and to landmark features such as church spires.
- Consider the visual impact of development, particularly large-scale urban expansion from Ross-on-Wye or Ledbury, on views over the open landscape and adjacent river floodplain.
- Consider the impact of commercial polytunnels, buildings and solar panels on the landscape, assess the appropriateness of their location and where

suitable locations are identified seek to integrate these structures through appropriate siting and mitigation.

- Consider the role of this area as the rural setting of the Rivers Wye and Leadon, and of the adjacent Malvern Hills AONB.
- Conserve the pattern of hedgerow-lined rural lanes and species-rich verges, ensuring their character is not lost through unsympathetic highway works, unnecessary signage, lighting, street furniture, or removal of hedgerows and trees.
- Encourage sustainable recreational use of the landscape, particularly within the National Landscape of the Wye Valley AONB, while protecting and enhancing the rural tranquillity experienced within the landscape.
- Improve public rights of way connections and signage and identify opportunities for green infrastructure enhancements.
- Ensure new development and infrastructure does not detract from the tranquillity and dark night skies experienced within the landscape.



# LCT 4: Enclosed River Valleys



## Location and summary

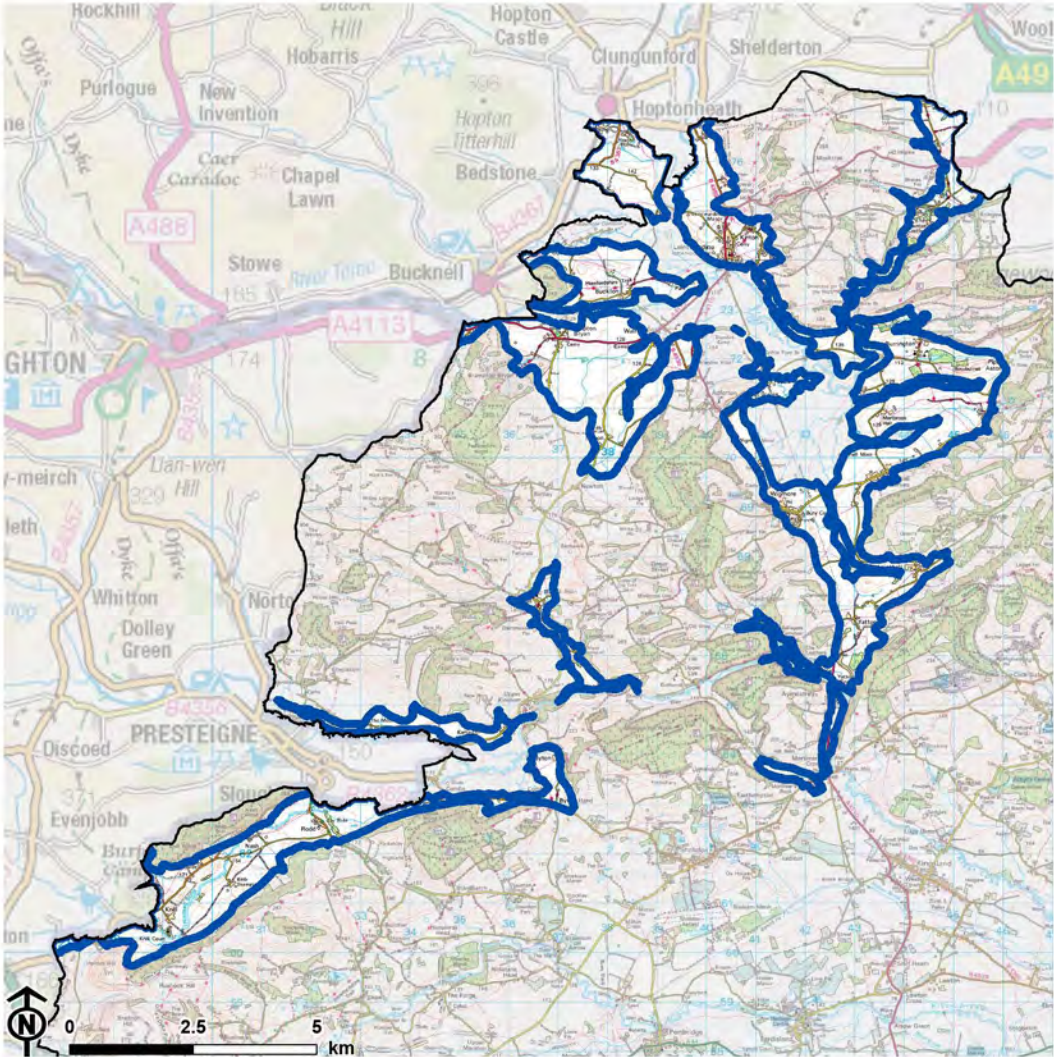
**7.49** The LCT is located in the enclosed river valleys of the Teme and Lugg in the north-west and the Dore and Monnow in the south-west of Herefordshire. The boundaries of the LCT are defined by the moderate to gently undulating valley landform, sitting above the River Floodplains (LCT 1) and enclosed by steep-sided wooded hills.

**7.50** The area is rural in character with dispersed small villages and hamlets. It has an undulating landform where fertile soils support a variety of agricultural land uses.




**Figure 7.18: Typical view of the LCT**



Figure 7.19: Location of Enclosed River Valleys North



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-  LCT 4. Enclosed River Valleys
-  Herefordshire boundary
-  Settlement

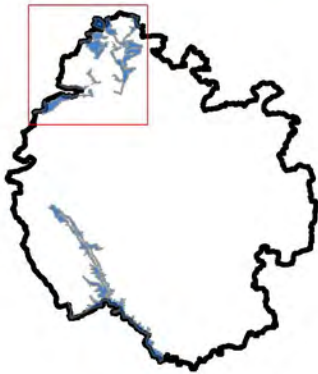
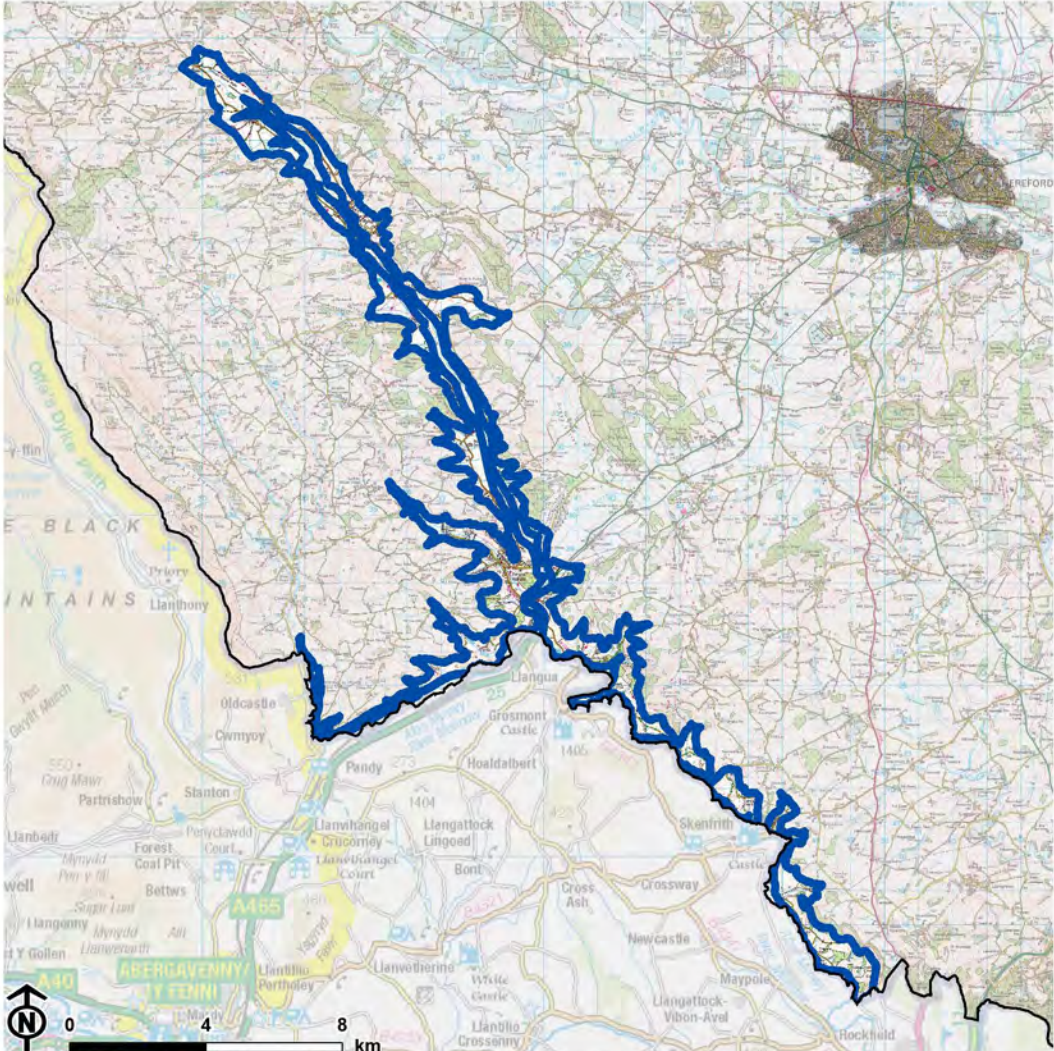


Figure 7.20: Location of Enclosed River Valleys South



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- LCT 4. Enclosed River Valleys
- Herefordshire boundary
- Settlement



## Key characteristics

### Topography, geology and drainage

- A moderate to gently undulating valley landform, sitting above river floodplains and enclosed by steep-sided wooded hills.
- Upper valleys are narrow and deeply incised but broaden to farmed lower valleys.
- Numerous small brooks drain the landscape into the River Teme and Lugg in the north-west, the River Monnow and its tributary the Dore in the south-west.

### Agricultural land use and field patterns

- Fertile sandy soils form high-grade agricultural land supporting both intensive arable and pastoral land uses.
- A regular pattern of medium to large scale open fields bound by low cut hedgerows derived from planned enclosure in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### Semi-natural habitats

- Limited semi-natural habitats, including hedgerows, small deciduous woodlands, traditional orchards and pockets of semi-improved grassland.
- Tree cover is limited to scattered woodlands, farm copses, hedgerow trees and drifts of streamside woodland.

### Settlement and road pattern

- A sparsely populated landscape with a dispersed settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and farms. Larger villages are often sited close to river crossings.

- Settlements are linked by hedge-lined rural lanes with a few trunk roads running through the LCT.

#### **Cultural heritage**

- Roman occupation of the landscape is evident in the archaeological remains of Roman roads, forts and camps, particularly around Leintwardine.
- Several motte and bailey castles reflect the importance of the landscape for cross-border defence in the Norman period.
- Historic buildings are constructed from the local stone (including variously coloured sandstones and limestones) with occasional timber-frame structures. Later buildings are mainly built of brick.

#### **Views and perceptual qualities**

- Long vistas are available down the valleys and up to the surrounding wooded hills. Lower valleys are more open due to the sparser tree cover and medium to large-scale fields.
- Rural and tranquil with a strong experience of dark skies, except along the busier trunk roads.

## **Landscape character description**

### **Natural influences**

**7.51** The bedrock geology is varied. In the north-west the Teme and Lugg are underlain by the siltstones and mudstones from the Silurian period (Coalbrookdale Formation). The Monnow and Dore valleys are underlain by the Old Red Sandstone rock which underlies much of Herefordshire. Easily eroded formations typify the lower-lying ground in the valleys including Late Silurian Raglan Mudstone Formation along the Dore and Early Devonian St Maughans Formation along the Monnow.

**7.52** The moderate to gently undulating valley landform sits above the river floodplains and is enclosed by steep-sided wooded hills. Upper valleys are narrow and deeply incised but broaden to farmed lower valleys. Numerous fast-flowing brooks drain the landscape into the Rivers Teme and Lugg in the north, and the Rivers Monnow and Dore in the west. Many of these watercourses are designated as Local Wildlife Sites, including Lime Brook, Hindwell Brook and Dulas Brook.

**7.53** The slightly acid and loamy soils are free draining (except along the upper Monnow where drainage is more impeded). These fertile soils result in high-grade agricultural land (predominantly Grade 2 and 3). As a result, the area supports mixed commercial agricultural land uses, with more intensive arable and horticultural crops in the broader valleys and sheep grazing on improved pasture.

**7.54** The extent of semi-natural habitats is limited to small traditional orchards and scattered deciduous woodland (both priority habitats) including linear streamside woodland particularly in the narrower valleys. These are occasionally of ancient origin such as at Downton Gorge SSSI. Otherwise, tree cover is limited to scattered hedgerow trees on low hedgerows, and group of trees around farms. There are pockets of semi-improved grassland, including a small area of marshy permanent pasture, scrub and neutral grassland at Burrington Meadow, designated as SSSI. Hedgerows are an important feature, and often species-rich with flower-rich verges.

## Cultural influences

**7.55** Fields vary in size, but are usually medium to large, regular shaped fields separated by low cut hedges. These are typically derived from planned enclosure in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, sometimes of communal open fields that lay around the larger settlements. Earlier irregular enclosures (pre-18<sup>th</sup> century) are more common in the narrow valley of the Lugg.

**7.56** This is a sparsely populated landscape, with a dispersed settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and farms. The larger villages, such as Leintwardine, Aymestry in the north or Peterchurch and Ewyas Harold in the south, are located on lower ground on the valley bottoms, often sited close to river crossings. The outskirts of these larger villages are characterised by modern residential development and small industrial units, with pressure to expand.

**7.57** Buildings are often constructed in local stone (red sandstone or grey Silurian limestone), with occasional timber-frame structures. The buildings materials used provide a link to the difference in geology in the different valleys. Later 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings are mainly of brick.

**7.58** The area exhibits extensive evidence of Neolithic activity (e.g. flint finds), and was widely occupied prior to the Roman invasion. Roman archaeological remains include a section of road along the Golden Valley and several Roman camps and forts in the Teme Valley around the Roman settlement of Branogenium at Leintwardine. The numerous motte and bailey castles reflect the military and political importance of the area to the Normans in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century. Ewyas Harold Castle is believed to have been constructed prior to the Norman Conquest, and could therefore be one of the earliest motte castles built in England. During the Norman period, several religious houses were established, including Limebrook Priory above the Lugg, Wigmore Abbey above the Teme (both Scheduled Monuments), and Dore Abbey in the Golden Valley. The monks of Abbey Dore had a strong influence on the prosperity of the Golden Valley, and the present rural settlement pattern. There are many small historic manor houses such as the timber-framed late medieval Wellbrook Manor at Peterchurch.

**7.59** Settlements are mostly linked by narrow lanes and minor roads with species-rich verges and hedgerows. A few trunk roads run through the LCT including the A4110/4113 to the north and the A465 which crosses the LCT at Pontrillas.



**7.60** Public rights of way connect farmsteads to the villages, although the public right of way network is stronger in the Golden Valley. The promoted Herefordshire Trail runs through the LCT.

## Perceptual influences

**7.61** This is a landscape with a remote agricultural character, with limited transport infrastructure. The rural landscape has a strong sense of tranquillity and experience of dark skies, with some disruption along the trunk roads.

**7.62** Long vistas are available down the valleys and up to the surrounding wooded hills.

## Landscape Evaluation

### Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

- The gently undulating landform enclosed by steep wooded slopes and hills which give a strong sense of place.
- The numerous small brooks and riverside habitats which are ecologically important and have potential for wider biodiversity enhancement.
- The small blocks of deciduous woodland and traditional orchards within the open landscape provide visual variety.
- The diversity of agricultural land use with arable fields and grazing which provide visual interest.
- The historic dispersed settlement pattern of villages, manor houses and farmhouses linked by rural lanes with species-rich hedgerows and flower-rich verges.
- The strong sense of history evident in the numerous motte-and-bailey castles and remains of religious houses.

- The churches, manor houses, cottages and farm buildings built in local materials, many of which are Grade II listed.
- Long views along the valley contained by steep wooded hills.
- The remote rural character of the landscape, with a strong sense of tranquillity and dark night skies.

## Forces for change

Much of the Enclosed River Valleys LCT is intensively farmed and the landscape is becoming more open as farms increase in scale and agricultural practices industrialise.

This has led to the loss or fragmentation of hedgerows, habitats and increased soil erosion. This includes the decline in species-rich grassland due to pasture 'improvement' and the fragmentation of small semi-natural woodlands. A decline in hedgerow density and loss of hedgerow trees has impacts on traditional field patterns. Large scale modern agricultural buildings can be out of character with the landscape.

Development pressure, particularly new residential developments, extending from the larger villages is resulting in visual intrusion on the surrounding landscape. Conversion of former farmsteads to residential use can be unsympathetic.

Increased visitor numbers with pressure for recreational facilities is leading to disruption from increased car use and erosion of footpaths, particularly in more popular 'honey pot' sites.

Figure 7.21: Pipe Aston church



## Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for the Enclosed River Valleys LCT is to conserve the remote, rural character and tranquillity of the landscape and sense of place created by the combination of undulating farmland with hedged fields with a network of interconnected habitats of hedgerows, woodland copses and streamside habitats. Conserve the scattered villages and traditionally built farmsteads and cottages linked by rural lanes, and with views along and across the valleys to the wooded hills above.

**Figure 7.22: Regular sized arable fields bound by low-cut hedgerows**



## Landscape management

- Encourage sustainable and wildlife-friendly land management practices to conserve and enhance key landscape features and the natural beauty of the landscape, its biodiversity value and connectivity.
- Encourage catchment-sensitive land management practices to improve soil quality and prevent run off into the streams and local rivers.
- Conserve and manage hedgerows with native species to enhance the traditional pattern and structure of the landscape. Improve the quality and continuity of existing field boundary and road hedgerows and increase hedgerow tree numbers. Ensure that hedgerow and hedgerow tree species are native, dense, provide a diverse habitat, and are appropriate to the local character.

- Retain and reinstate the distinctive hedgerow trees, and enhance their age structure through new planting or encouraging the growth of existing plants to tree size.
- Encourage appropriate hedgerow management to ensure their long-term good health and survival. Hedgerows should be dense along most of their length with frequent healthy stems.
- Encourage a robust mosaic of interconnected semi-natural habitats particularly of permanent pasture, hedgerows, trees and woodland.
- Protect, manage and enhance the native deciduous woodland/tree cover, within the landscape and around settlements. Use locally occurring species to link woodland habitats, including small deciduous woodland, traditional orchards and hedgerows.
- Protect and manage traditional apple orchards using local varieties to maintain this important landscape feature and priority habitat. Where possible, connect and extend small orchards, and involve local communities in management of these spaces.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape on public rights of way. Improve public right of way connections and signage, for well-maintained linked routes through farmland.

## Development management

- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their rural settings.
- Minimise the impacts of new development through careful design, in terms of siting, scale and massing.
- Encourage the use of traditional materials that are in keeping with the local landscape, such as sandstone, brick or timber frame to build on the strong sense of place.
- Ensure the scale, building materials, layout and lighting of any conversions of historic farmhouses and agricultural buildings are sympathetic to and in

keeping with the local landscape and enhance local distinctiveness. Refer to the Herefordshire Design Code.

- Conserve the dispersed settlement pattern. New development should remain at a low density and associated with existing hamlets and villages.
- Integrate existing and new development within the wider landscape using native hedgerows, trees and woodlands.
- Consider the visual impact of incongruous or large-scale developments on the views over the open landscape and adjacent river floodplain.
- Consider the visual impact of residential and other development, particularly from the larger villages such as Peterchurch and Ewyas Harold in the south and Leintwardine and Aymestry in the north.
- Conserve the pattern of rural lanes bounded by hedgerows and species-rich verges, ensuring their character is not lost through unsympathetic highway works, unnecessary signage, lighting, street furniture, or removal of hedgerows and trees.

# LCT 5: Undulating Wooded Farmland and Estates



## Location and summary

**7.63** The Undulating Wooded Farmland and Estates LCT is found across Herefordshire, with a greater concentration in the centre and east of the county. It is defined by its transitional character, lying between the more open lowlands and higher ground.

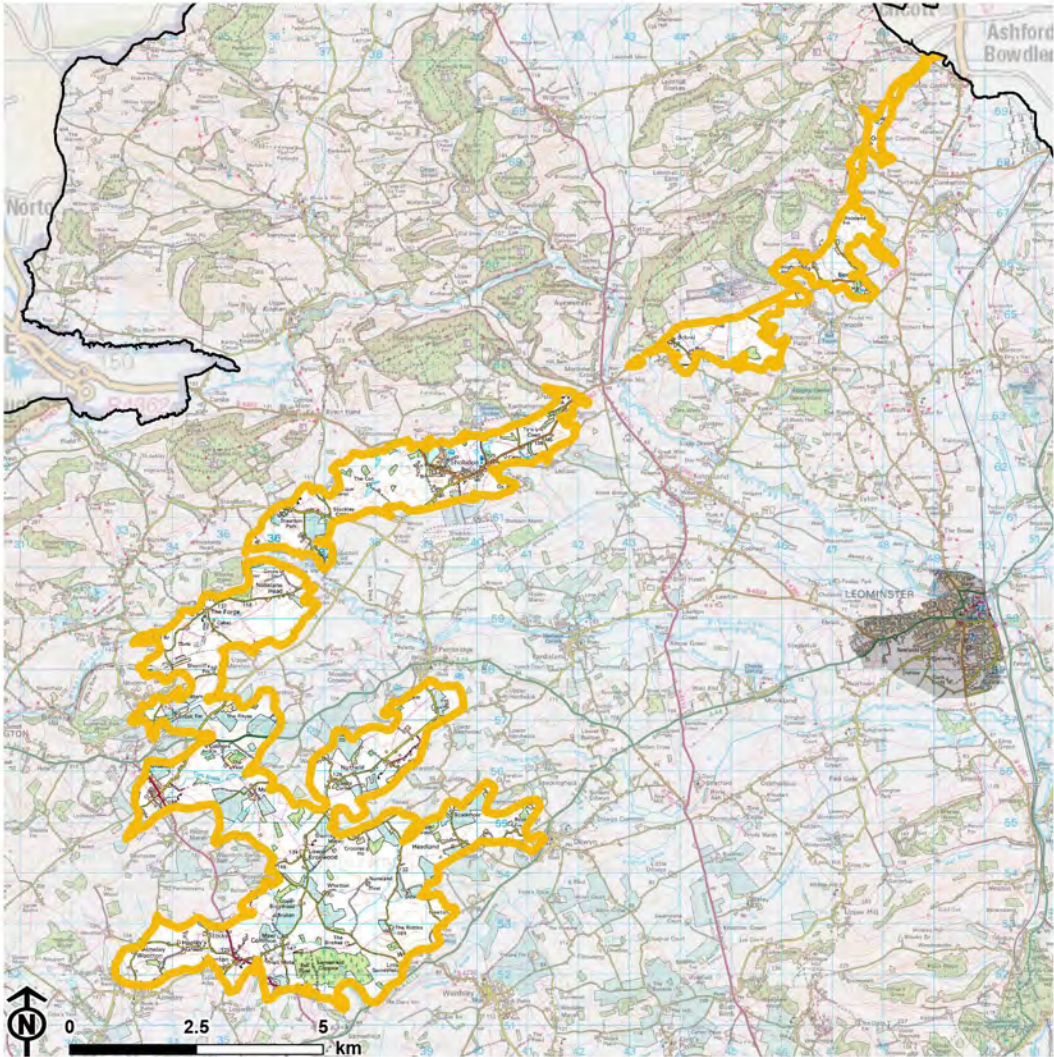
**7.64** The landscape is undulating, of mixed agricultural land use with a higher concentration of woodland coverage than the adjacent lowlands. Large estates with designed parklands are found across the LCT. The Malvern Hills AONB extends into the east of the LCT, and the Wye Valley AONB to the south.

**Figure 7.23: Typical view of the LCT**





Figure 7.24: Location of Undulating Wooded Farmland and Estates North



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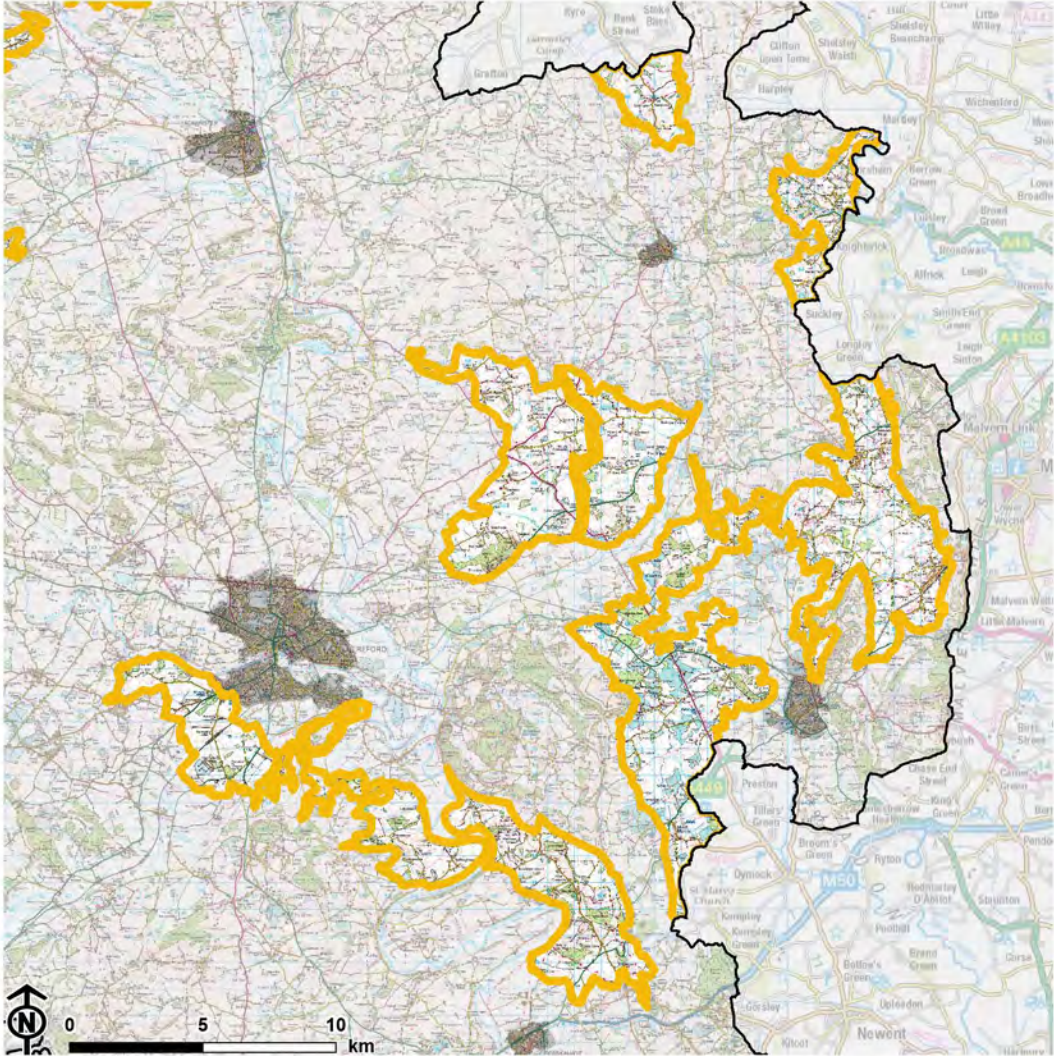



-  LCT 5. Undulating Wooded Farmland and Estates
-  Herefordshire boundary
-  Settlement



Figure 7.25: Location of Undulating Wooded Farmland and Estates East



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-  LCT 5. Undulating Wooded Farmland and Estates
-  Herefordshire boundary
-  Settlement



## Key characteristics

### Topography, geology and drainage

- Rolling lowland topography, underlain by Lower Old Red sandstones typical of much of Herefordshire.
- Small streams and brooks run through the landscape, draining from higher ground towards the main river valleys.

### Agricultural land use and field patterns

- Good quality soils give rise to a predominantly arable agricultural landscape.
- Small-scale fields are defined by hedgerow boundaries, with densely scattered hedgerow oaks.
- Field patterns are generally derived from planned enclosure of open or common fields in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### Semi-natural habitats

- Deciduous woodlands are common, many of ancient character. Some conifer plantations also present, often planted on ancient woodland sites.
- Traditional orchards are scattered across the landscape, contributing to the wooded character.

### Settlement and road pattern

- A scattered settlement pattern of hamlets and small clustered villages, linked by narrow lanes. Small estate villages are concentrated in the east.

- Large country houses set in parkland and ornamental grounds are features of this landscape.
- Trunk roads cut through the landscape linking the main market towns, with a railway corridor to the east.
- Public rights of way including promoted routes connect the settlements and allow recreational access through the landscape.

#### **Cultural heritage**

- Scattered Grade II listed farmhouses and cottages, with some isolated historic churches built from local materials, mostly the local sandstone. Many villages are designated as Conservation Areas.

#### **Views and perceptual qualities**

- A contrast between views filtered through woodlands and hedgerows, and more open views across adjacent lowlands.
- A rural character with an experience of dark skies and high levels of tranquillity, except along the busy trunk roads and on the outskirts of Hereford.

## **Landscape character description**

### **Natural influences**

**7.65** A gently undulating landscape, marking the transition between the lowlands and river valleys (LCTs 2 Lowland Farmland and LCT3 Shallow Vales), and the steeper sandstone and limestone uplands. The majority of the landscape is underlain by the lowest of the Old Red Sandstone rocks (Raglan Mudstone Formation), formed in the Silurian period, a bedrock that typifies much of Herefordshire. There are small areas of other Old Red Sandstones, including Downton Castle Formation in the north-west and St Maughan's Formation south-west of Hereford.

**Chapter 7** Landscape Character Type Profiles  
**LCT 5** Undulating Wooded Farmland and Estates

**7.66** The landscape has considerable coverage of superficial deposits associated with glaciation, including hummocky moraine, till and glaciofluvial sheet deposits, for example the Shobdon drumlins which are designated as an LGS. Alluvium and Head deposits are found along the small streams and brooks, and significant sub-aerial deposits west of the Malvern Hills. Some small former quarries are now designated as LGS for their geological exposures such as Warners Farm Pit, Mathon.

**7.67** The Old Red Sandstone gives rise to rich red soils that are free draining, slightly acid and loamy. They form good quality agricultural land, predominantly Agricultural Land Classification Grade 2, although there are lower quality soils on higher slopes, particularly in the east close to the Malvern Hills.

**7.68** Small streams run through the landscape, connecting the watercourses in the uplands above this LCT with the rivers in the lowlands. Some of these streams are designated as LWS, for example Cradley Brook, Sapey Brook and Tippet's Brook.

**7.69** The landscape has considerable woodland coverage, generally priority habitat deciduous woodland in relatively small blocks and linearly along stream valleys. Many of the woodlands are of ancient origin, and several are nationally designated as SSSI. These include Hall Wood, which is one of the earliest documented woods in Britain, with records dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Many of the ancient woodlands have been replanted with conifers (PAWS), which can be visually prominent. Scattered traditional orchards are found across the LCT, and add to the wooded character of the landscape.

**7.70** Grassland habitats are rare, however there are some pockets of priority habitat good quality semi-improved grassland and a number of LWS are designated for their meadow habitat.

## Cultural influences

**7.71** The good quality soils result in a predominantly arable land use across the LCT, although there is greater prevalence of pasture fields on higher slopes, particularly in the east adjacent to the Malvern Hills, where soils are lower quality. The historic field patterns date from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, often a result of planned enclosure of former common arable or grazing land, resulting in small to medium size fields. In the north and east of the LCT the most common field pattern is earlier in date, often pre-18<sup>th</sup> century enclosure of common fields. There has been some loss of hedgerows and consequent degradation and enlargement of the field pattern in recent times due to agricultural intensification. The resulting field pattern is small-medium in scale, with a mix of both sinuous and straight boundaries. In contrast, there are large-scale commercial orchards and polytunnels around Pixley.

**7.72** There is little evidence of prehistoric activity in this LCT, and one confirmed Roman villa near Putley (Scheduled Monument). Norman motte and bailey castles and medieval moated sites are found scattered across the landscape, including Hell Moat, Sarnesfield, Ashperton Castle and Mortimer's Castle (all Scheduled Monuments).

**7.73** A large number of historic cottages, farmhouses and associated farm buildings (often Grade II listed) are located within the LCT, often in small, isolated clusters, sometimes with a church for example at Belmont and How Caple. Historic hamlets and villages are often associated with a manor house and estate, such as Stretton Grandison, Stoke Lacy, Much Marcle or Ocle Pychard. Many of these villages have historic cores designated as Conservation Areas. The larger villages, such as Colwall and Shobdon, and the edges of the adjacent city of Hereford and Ledbury market town are under pressure from additional residential development.

**7.74** Parkland estates and associated large country houses are found across the LCT, most dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries with some early 19<sup>th</sup> century examples. The parklands were often set out in the grounds of former

medieval deer parks. Examples of Registered Parks and Gardens include Nieuport House in Almeley, Holme Lacy, and Homme House in Much Marcle.

**7.75** Transport routes are generally narrow, winding lanes, often lined by hedgerows and occasional hedgerow trees. In contrast, busy trunk roads form radial routes through the LCT, providing connections between the market towns. The railway runs through Colwall and runs to the south of Hereford.

**7.76** The LCT has an extensive network of public rights of way, which connect the villages and hamlets. The long-distance trails of Three Choirs Way, Three Rivers Ride and Herefordshire Trail are locally important. The National Cycle Network route that heads south-west from Hereford crosses the LCT.

## Perceptual influences

**7.77** This is a lowland landscape with a notably rural character, defined chiefly by the scale of its field pattern and its agricultural land uses, its historic small-scale settlements and large estates.

**7.78** The considerable woodland cover and substantial hedgerow network with mature hedgerow trees, provide an enclosed character, with some views filtered through the tree cover. In contrast, there are open views from the higher ground across the adjacent valleys and lowlands.

**7.79** The landscape has a strong sense of tranquillity and experience of dark night skies, away from the larger villages, urban edges of Ledbury and Hereford, and the busy transport routes. A few solar farms have been built in the LCT; however these are generally small-scale and are often screened by hedgerows.

**7.80** The Malvern Hills AONB extends into the east of the LCT, and the Wye Valley AONB to the south. This LCT covers the western slopes of the Malvern Hills AONB, including the larger characterful village of Colwall Stone. The lower ground provides a rural setting and enhances the contrast with the Wooded

Limestone Ridges (LCT 8). The Wye Valley AONB within this LCT covers higher and more wooded ground than the Shallow Vales (LCT 3). At the northern end of the AONB this includes the steeper banks of the River Wye at Fownhope, Capler Camp and Ballingham Hill.

## Landscape Evaluation

### Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

- Small-scale historic field pattern bound by native hedgerows and hedgerow trees provide landscape structure and a sense of history.
- The diversity of the landscape with arable and pastoral fields, orchards, woodlands and streams that provide visual interest and is noted as a special quality of the Malvern Hills and Wye Valley AONBs.
- The traditional orchards that provide cultural and biodiversity value, and are noted as a special quality of the Malvern Hills and Wye Valley AONBs.
- Nationally and locally designated woodlands, many of ancient origin, are a distinctive feature of the landscape and provide valuable habitats.
- The settlement pattern of historic farmsteads, clustered hamlets and villages (many associated with estates) linked by winding lanes that provide a scenic quality, and is noted as a special quality of the Malvern Hills and Wye Valley AONBs.
- Large country houses set in parkland provide a formal element to the landscape as well as time depth.
- The network of rights of way that provide access to the countryside and recreational value, and is noted as a special quality of the Malvern Hills and Wye Valley AONBs.
- The contrast between views filtered through woodlands and hedgerows, and open views across adjacent lowlands provides a sense of place.



- The rural character of the landscape, with its strong experience of dark skies and high levels of tranquillity.

## Forces for change

The Undulating Wooded Farmland and Estates LCT is impacted by the escalating requirements of modern agriculture. This has reduced the number of traditional orchards, and caused hedgerows and hedgerow trees to deteriorate which has impacted traditional field patterns. Ancient woodlands were replanted with a high proportion of conifers, which visually disrupts the visual unity of the landscape.

Development pressure, particularly extending from Hereford and Ledbury, and associated traffic is also encroaching on this landscape. Large agricultural buildings, polytunnels and solar panels can be out of character within the rural landscape, and their increased use will have a cumulative impact.

**Figure 7.26: Regular sized arable fields bound by low-cut hedgerows**



## Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for the Undulating Wooded Farmland and Estates LCT is to conserve the productive agricultural character of the landscape, while integrating interconnected habitats of woodlands, native hedgerows, and hedgerow oaks Wetland habitats associated with stream valleys and meadows should be extended. The parkland landscapes should be protected and enhanced, including protection of veteran trees and management for the future.

Conserve the sense of place created by the combination of the rolling agricultural landscape with historic villages, linked by rural lanes. Integrate new development into the landscape by respecting the strong sense of place and local distinctiveness.

**Figure 7.27: Narrow winding lanes link arable fields with mature hedgerow trees**



## Landscape management

- Promote sustainable and wildlife-friendly land management practices that provide multiple landscape and biodiversity benefits. Conserve and enhance key landscape features including hedgerows, hedgerow oaks and woodlands.
- Encourage catchment-sensitive land management practices to improve soil quality and prevent run off into the local streams.
- Improve the quality and continuity of existing field boundary and road hedgerows. Ensure that hedgerow and hedgerow tree species are native, dense, provide a diverse habitat, and are appropriate to the local character.
- Retain the distinctive hedgerow oaks and enhance their age structure through new planting or encouraging the growth of existing plants to tree size.

**Chapter 7** Landscape Character Type Profiles  
**LCT 5** Undulating Wooded Farmland and Estates

- Encourage appropriate hedgerow management to ensure their long-term good health and survival. Hedgerows should be dense along most of their length with frequent healthy stems.
- Protect, manage and enhance the native deciduous woodlands. Use locally occurring native species to extend or link woodland habitats, including orchards and the hedgerow network,
- Conserve and manage the ancient woodland sites to improve landscape character and encourage biodiversity. Where possible, replace conifer plantations with locally occurring native species, particularly on replanted ancient woodland sites (PAWS).
- Consider opportunities to strengthen the landscape character through new woodland creation, using a mixed age structure and irregular outlines, in line with the aims of the Severn Treescape project. This will strengthen landscape character (as well as bring benefits for biodiversity, soil quality and a reduction in soil erosion).
- Forestry practices should respect the character of the landscape, promote traditional management techniques (e.g. coppicing), and take particular care when assessing the visual impact of new planting and felling.
- Conserve and manage historic parklands within the landscape, with their ancient wood pasture and veteran trees. Replant key ornamental tree species to retain the parkland character.
- Protect and manage traditional apple orchards. Where possible, connect and extend small orchards, and involve local communities in management of these spaces.
- Protect existing grassland areas, and encourage creation of semi-natural grassland to improve connectivity where possible.
- Ensure the special qualities of the Malvern Hills and Wye Valley AONBs are conserved and enhanced, having regard for the opportunities and strategies set out in the Malvern Hills and Wye Valley AONB Management Plans.

## Development management

- Conserve the scattered settlement pattern. Minimise the impact of new development through careful design, in terms of siting, scale, style, layout and materials to be in keeping with the existing settlement character and landscape setting.
- Encourage the use of traditional and locally distinctive styles and materials that are in keeping, such as locally sourced sandstones and timber-framed houses, to build on the strong sense of place. Refer to the Herefordshire Design Code.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic monuments and buildings, and their landscape settings. Encourage further interpretation and understanding of these.
- Conserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes, ensuring that their character is not lost through unsympathetic highway works, unnecessary signage, lighting, street furniture, or removal of hedgerows and trees.
- Protect and manage the value recreational use of the landscape, particularly along promoted routes. Improve public right of way connections, infrastructure and signage, and identify opportunities for green infrastructure.
- Consider the impact of commercial polytunnels, buildings and solar panels on the landscape and seek to integrate these structures through appropriate siting and mitigation.
- Ensure new development and infrastructure does not detract from the high levels of rural tranquillity and dark night skies experienced within the landscape.

# LCT 6: Exposed Sandstone Uplands



## Location and summary

**7.81** The Exposed Sandstone Uplands LCT is located on the south western edge of Herefordshire and its character extends west into the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park in Wales. The eastern boundary is marked by the transition to the enclosed pastoral valleys of the Sandstone Upland Hills and Valleys (LCT 7). The southern boundary is marked by the course of the River Monnow which turns abruptly eastwards along the Neath Disturbance fault line.

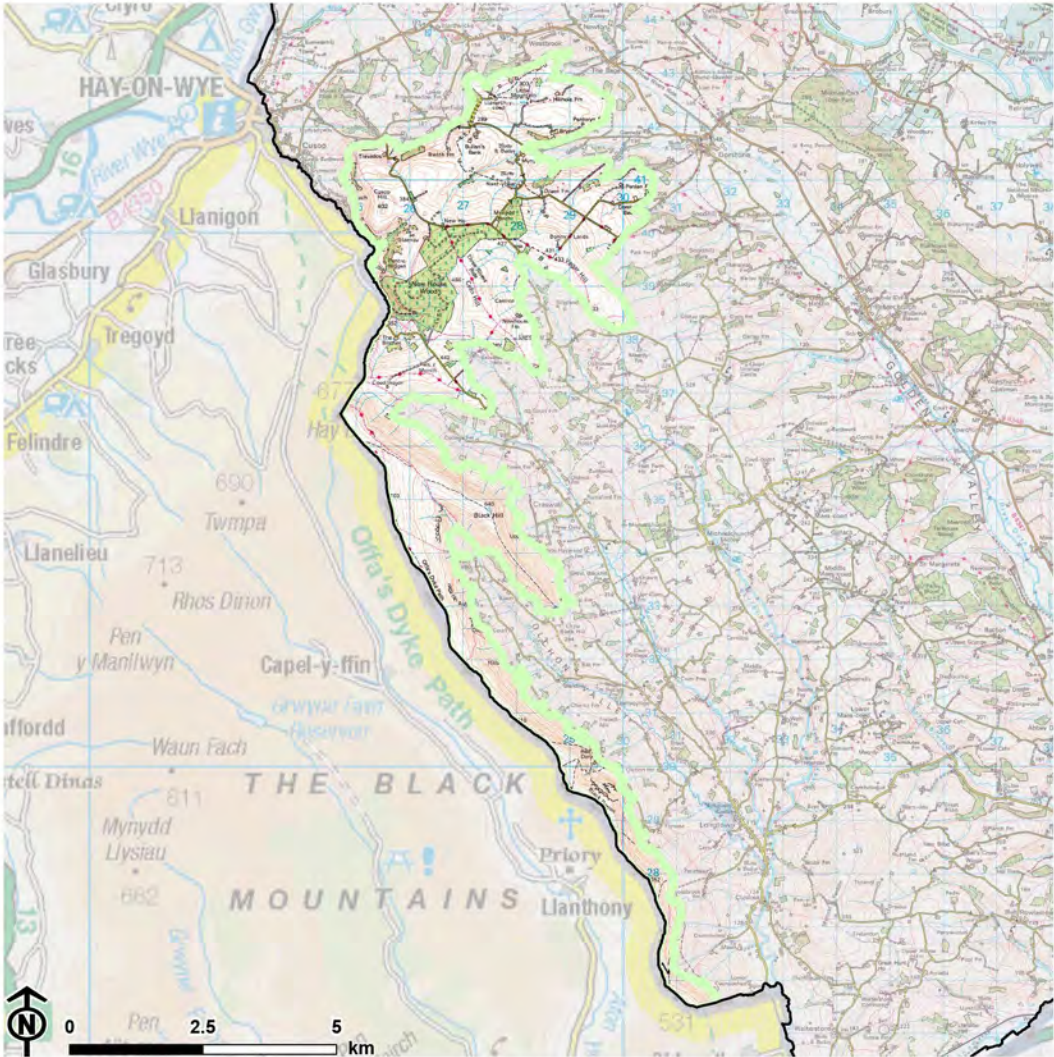
**7.82** This LCT includes the highest land within Herefordshire and reaches 703 metres above sea level at Black Mountain (Twynn Llech). The high open moorlands are empty and remote, with long panoramic views over Wales and England

**Figure 7.28: Typical view of the LCT**






**7.83 .**

Figure 7.29: Location of Exposed Sandstone Uplands



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-  LCT 6. Exposed Sandstone Uplands
-  Herefordshire boundary
-  Settlement





## Key characteristics

### Topography, geology and drainage

- Dramatic ridged landform with flat tops running north west to south east, rising to a high point of 703 metres.
- The uplands are formed from resistant Old Red Sandstone rocks (Senni and Brownstone Formations) overlain by thin poor soils.

### Agricultural land use and field patterns

- Uplands are associated with traditional open sheep and pony grazing on unenclosed common land.
- Some pastoral farming is found on lower slopes in fields with a semi-regular small-scale pattern.

### Semi-natural habitats

- A largely unwooded landscape except for linear woodlands along narrow dingles and a small conifer plantation.
- Extensive upland habitats, including heather moorland and acid grassland. Much of the landscape falls within the Black Mountains Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI).

### Settlement and road pattern

- A largely uninhabited landscape except for isolated stone-built farmsteads.
- Narrow roads cross the uplands between Hay-on-Wye and the valleys to the south.

### Cultural heritage

- Surviving archaeological evidence of the use of the landscape for ritual and defence, with bowl barrows and motte castles.
- Extensive areas of remote and relatively wild landscape enable enjoyment of the landscape, including a section of the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail.

#### **Views and perceptual qualities**

- A wild windswept landscape on the edge of the Black Mountains with a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Wide open vistas across Herefordshire to the east and west to the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park.
- The mountain forms the dramatic western horizon from large parts of the county, including long distance views from the Malvern Hills on the eastern edge of the county.

## **Landscape character description**

### **Natural influences**

**7.84** The distinctive ridged landform runs north-west to south-east, rising to a high point of 703 metres AOD on the Black Hill. An exposed rock face at Black Darren on Hatteral Hill, forms a prominent feature on the east-facing escarpment.

**7.85** The uplands are formed from resistant red sandstone rocks of the Senni and Brownstone Formations. The sedimentary rocks were laid down 300 million years ago in the Devonian period. Tributary streams sourced in upland bogs drain down the steep slopes into the Olchon Brook, River Monnow and Escley Brook. The bedrock is overlain by thin acid loamy soils, with peaty soils along the highest ridges.

**7.86** The steep landform and poor soil (mostly Agricultural Land Classification Grades 4 and 5) have resulted in traditional land management, where higher land is used for grazing of sheep and ponies on unenclosed commons. Some pastoral farming is present on lower slopes, with hawthorn hedges enclosing semi-regular fields, but many hedgerows are grown out with hedgerow trees.

**7.87** A combination of exposure, thin soils and rough grazing have discouraged tree and scrub growth. Trees are restricted to narrow dingles or wind-blown trees around scattered farmsteads and a small conifer plantation at New House Wood.

**7.88** Much of the landscape falls within the Black Mountains SSSI, with extensive upland habitats, including heather moorland and acid grassland, with wet flushes and blanket bog (priority habitats). Characteristic upland species such as raven, peregrine falcon, merlin and red grouse are present near the southerly limits of their range.

## Cultural influences

**7.89** A few prehistoric sites survive in the landscape including a pair of Bronze Age bowl barrows at Llanerch-y-coed and another west of Llan Oleu. The elevated position of these barrows near the crest of the ridge would have been a clearly visible landmark for the population of the area and remain notable landmarks in the landscape.

**7.90** The uplands were probably under Welsh control until the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century. A section of Offa's Dyke runs through the landscape. This linear earthwork dates from the 8<sup>th</sup> century and was a defensive structure marking the edge of Offa's lands.

**7.91** Motte castles at Mynydd-Brith and Nant-y-bar, are located in a strategic position overlooking the Dore Valley above Dorstone. They date from the 11<sup>th</sup> century and are Scheduled Monuments. They are among many medieval

defensive monuments in the wider area and are evidence of the disputed land ownership in this landscape.

**7.92** The current character of the landscape evolved from traditional hill farming and summer grazing on unenclosed commons. The hillsides are scattered with abandoned quarries used to extract limestone which was burnt in kilns to produce lime for fertiliser or as a building material. Settlement is very limited except for isolated farmsteads. Traditional farmhouses, barns and cowsheds, mostly from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries are constructed of local stone with rubble construction. A few narrow lanes cross the uplands between Hay-on-Wye and the narrow valleys to the south.

**7.93** The LCT is popular for a range of recreational activities, including walking, mountain biking and hang gliding (on Hatterall Hill). Offa's Dyke Path National Trail runs roughly along the LCT boundary with Wales and the Three Rivers Ridge crosses Cefn Hill. Much of the landscape is open access common.

## Perceptual influences

**7.94** The exposed upland areas are large in scale, appearing empty and wild. In poor weather, the landscape is bleak and exposed. This is a distinctive landscape, not least for the contrast it provides with the gentler enclosed valley landscapes that surround it.

**7.95** Panoramic views are obtained from high land over the surrounding valleys both east into England and west over the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park. The east-facing escarpment of the Black Mountains forms a distinctive unbroken horizon in views from a considerable distance away, including from large areas of the county to the east, and long-distance views out from the Malvern Hills and the Wye Valley. Views towards the Hay Bluff and further to the Welsh hills are mentioned within the Hereford townscape appraisal.

## Landscape Evaluation

### Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

- A large-scale landscape with a strong sense of openness and expansiveness that provides a highly scenic quality to the landscape.
- The unenclosed commons that depend on traditional hill farming practices including summer grazing and provide a highly scenic quality to the landscape.
- The largely undeveloped character of the landscape, with limited settlement and few roads, that result in a tranquil rural environment.
- Important upland habitats, much of which is designated as SSSI, which support biodiversity.
- A rich archaeological landscape, with several Scheduled Monuments including barrows, cairns and hillforts that provide landmarks in the landscape as well as a connection to history and cultural identity.
- A high recreational value with opportunities to access extensive areas of remote and relatively wild landscape, including open access land and Offa's Dyke Path.
- A strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity resulting from the dramatic landform, wild open character and panoramic views.
- Views to the unbroken horizons of the Black Mountains from many areas within Herefordshire which provide a strong sense of place.

### Forces for change

This is a relatively stable upland landscape. Its exposure and remote location ensure that development pressure is minimal. The only exception to this is the introduction of incongruous features on the ridgelines, such as the wind turbine at Pentwyn. Development in surrounding areas is also affecting panoramic views, particularly from summits.

The decline in traditional hill farming and grazing patterns is affecting the appearance of the landscape. This includes changes in common grazing practices, affecting the diversity/composition of moorland vegetation due to increases in bracken, scrub and secondary woodland. Upland habitats are also sensitive to climate change.

Loss or deterioration of hedgerows due to a lack of maintenance, has left top heavy hawthorn or blackthorn, altering the scale of the enclosure pattern on the slopes.

Economic pressures for farm amalgamation and expansion can result in the loss or conversion of agricultural buildings.

Increasing visitor pressure is affecting paths and habitats, particularly on popular paths (e.g. Offa's Dyke), and also reducing levels of tranquillity. This can also lead to loss or damage to the remaining archaeological due to damage by visitors or natural erosion.

Damage to hedgebanks along narrow lanes by passing vehicles and insensitive signage is affecting the traditional character of the lanes.

**Figure 7.30: Panoramic views over Wye Valley**



**Figure 7.31: View of the Black Mountains from rolling farmlands below**



## Landscape Guidelines

The strategy for the Exposed Sandstone Uplands LCT is to retain and strengthen its special qualities, protecting the tranquillity, relative remoteness, and distinctive open ridges. The landscape's valuable upland habitats are well managed and traditional agricultural methods (such as common grazing) are supported. Archaeological features are protected and managed. Good visitor management minimises damage to paths, habitats and archaeological features. The area's long views are protected from visually intrusive development.

## Landscape management

- Manage land through the encouragement of a viable farming community, farming the land in a sustainable traditional way which enables the upland landscape to be retained and enhanced.
- Protect and enhance the extent, diversity and condition of valuable upland habitats such as heather moorland. Where possible, create links between fragmented upland habitats.
- Explore opportunities for returning areas of bracken or scrub to unimproved grassland, and positive moorland management schemes.
- Manage areas of upland common through the encouragement of appropriate levels of livestock grazing to enhance biodiversity.
- Manage upland wetland sites, such as blanket bog, to increase carbon sequestration and water storage capacity and slow water flow.
- Improve the quality and continuity of existing hedgerows, to enhance the ancient field pattern, strengthen the landscape structure and improve habitat connectivity. Ensure that hedgerow and hedgerow tree species are native, dense, provide a diverse habitat, and are appropriate to the local character.
- Encourage appropriate hedgerow management to ensure their long-term good health and survival. Hedgerows should be dense along most of their length with frequent healthy stems.
- Protect, manage and enhance linear broadleaved woodland along upland dingles. Use locally occurring native species to extend or link these woodland habitats.
- Manage plantations to encourage biodiversity, and where possible replace conifers with locally occurring native species.



## Development management

- Conserve the area's archaeological sites and their landscape settings, in particular the prehistoric upland sites. Encourage further interpretation and understanding of these.
- Conserve the sparsely settled character. Minimise the impact of new development through careful design, in terms of siting, scale, style and layout.
- Encourage the use of traditional and locally distinctive styles, colours and materials that are in keeping with the local landscape, such as the local sandstone, to build on the strong sense of place. Refer to the Herefordshire Design Code.
- Ensure the scale, building materials, layout and lighting of any conversions of historic barns are sympathetic to and in keeping with the local landscape and enhance local distinctiveness.
- Consider the visual impact of large-scale glazing in domestic and commercial buildings on the rural character of the landscape and the integrity of a dark landscape.
- Conserve the pattern of quiet lanes enclosed by species-rich hedgebanks, ensuring their character is not lost through unsympathetic highway works, unnecessary signage, lighting, street furniture, or removal of hedgerows and trees.
- Consider the visual impact of tall development, in particular radio masts and turbines on the unbroken skylines of the landscape.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, particularly on popular walking routes such as Offa's Dyke.
- Minimise localised path erosion and associated habitat loss and damage to archaeological features, and potential for uncontrolled fires.
- Ensure new development and infrastructure does not detract from the high levels of rural tranquillity, sense of remoteness, relative wildness, and dark night skies experienced within the landscape.

## LCT 7: Sandstone Upland Hills and Valleys



## Location and summary

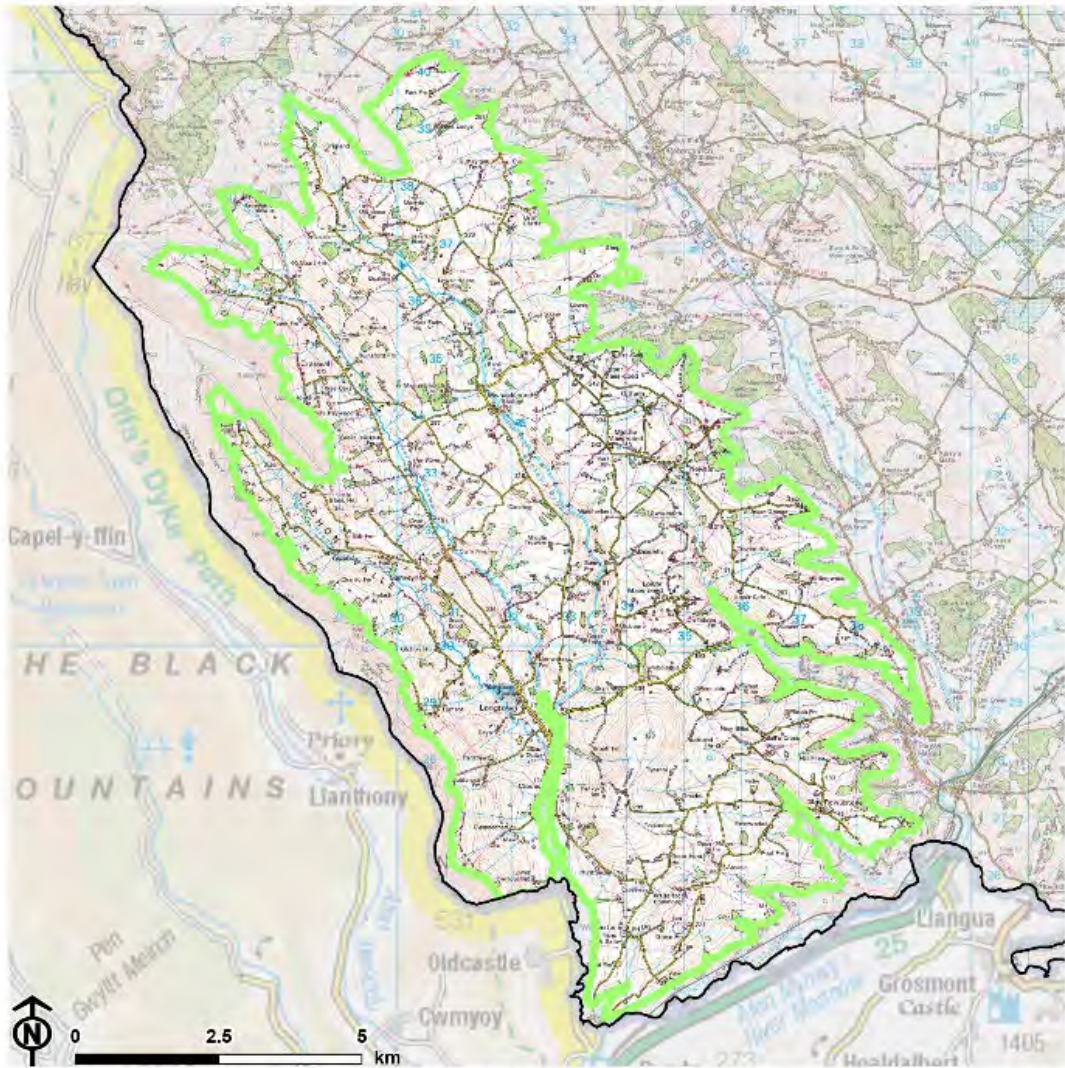
**7.96** The Sandstone Upland Hills and Valleys LCT is found in the south-west corner of Herefordshire. It is bounded by the Black Mountains (LCT 6 Exposed Sandstone Uplands) which extend across the Welsh border to the west and north, the Golden Valley to the east (LCT 10 Border Sandstone Hills) and the River Monnow and Worm Brook to the south (LCTs 1 River Floodplain and 4 Enclosed River Valleys).

**7.97** The character type encompasses the deep narrow valleys of the River Monnow, Olchon and Escley Brooks. It is a remote, intimate, pastoral landscape with a dramatically rolling topography and a distinctive small-scale ancient field pattern, but often with dramatic views to the Black Mountains to the west.




**Figure 7.32: Typical view of LCT**



Figure 7.33: Location of Sandstone Upland Hills and Valleys



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-  LCT 7. Sandstone Upland Hills and Valleys
-  Herefordshire boundary
-  Settlement



## Key characteristics

### Topography, geology and drainage

- An upland landscape, with a strong pattern of parallel ridges and deep narrow valleys running north-west to south-east.
- The type is underlain by Devonian Old Red Sandstone rocks (St Maughans Formation) with poor soils.
- The River Monnow, Escley and Olchon Brooks rise in the uplands to the north and drain south-east to the River Monnow

### Agricultural land use and field patterns

- A traditional pastoral landscape used for livestock grazing and hay cuts.
- A distinctive medieval field pattern of small, irregular, often rounded shaped fields, one of the most ancient field patterns in the county.

### Semi-natural habitats

- Tree cover is mostly provided by the many scattered hedgerow trees (usually oaks), which together with the thick, species-rich hedges and flower rich hedgebanks are a notable landscape feature.
- Small woodlands, often ancient semi-natural woods, line the fast-flowing brooks and steeply incised dingles.
- Designated habitats are few but lowland meadows or semi-improved grassland are notified as priority habitats.

### Settlement and road pattern

- The settlement pattern consists of sparsely scattered attractive hamlets and small livestock farms and wayside dwellings linked by narrow winding lanes.

- A distinctive building style is evident, particularly in relation to the agricultural barns of narrowly coursed local grey sandstone with tight dry joints and stone slate roofs.

#### **Cultural heritage**

- The landscape has a border character, providing the transition to the uplands of the Black Mountains to the west.
- An important area for recreation, with a strong rights of way network, popular for walking and camping.

#### **Views and perceptual qualities**

- One of the most undisturbed parts of England, with strong sense of tranquillity and dark night skies.
- Few settlements and relatively little new development or transport infrastructure result in a remote character.
- A small-scale enclosed character in the valleys with long views to the Black Mountains.

## **Landscape character description**

### **Natural influences**

**7.98** The topography is a defining characteristic of the type, with a strong pattern of parallel ridges and valleys following a north-west to south-east orientation. The deep 'v'-shaped valleys are drained by the River Monnow, the Escley Brook, and Olchon Brook. This is an upland area, with much of the type over 200 metres, reaching approximately 700 metres AOD on the ridges.

**7.99** Slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage overlie the Old Red Sandstone rocks laid down in the Devonian period (St Maughans Formation). Sandstones, conglomerates and limestones are found on the ridges, with mudstones on lower lying ground. The thin poor soils (mostly

Agricultural Land Classification Grade 4, with Grade 3 on the valley floors) have resulted in almost exclusively pastoral land uses, mostly for grazing cattle and sheep. Some traditional farm orchards of irregular shape, which are sparsely scattered towards the south of the area.

**7.100** A verdant landscape with tree cover provided by the abundant mature hedgerow oaks, which together with the thick, species rich hedgerows and flower-rich hedgebanks are a notable landscape feature of the valley sides. Broadleaved woodlands (priority habitat), with a high proportion of small ancient semi-natural woods, line the streams and deep dingles. As the land rises to the open moorland, fields become larger with lower hedgerows and fewer hedgerow trees.

**7.101** Designated habitats are few but the traditional pasture fields, include extensive lowland meadows and semi-improved grassland (priority habitats), which add to the biodiversity within the landscape.

**7.102** The tree lined fast flowing watercourses provide habitats for invertebrates, as well as otters, colonies of sand martin, grey wagtail, dipper, kingfishers and heron.

## Cultural influences

**7.103** An Iron Age hill fort at Walterstone, Bronze Age cairn at Olchon Court and a monastic site in Crasswall, which is one of only three Gradmontine priories in England, provide evidence of early occupation of the area.

**7.104** The valleys were probably under Welsh control until the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century and English culture was not pervasive even in the High Middle Ages. The many fortifications, including the motte and bailey at Whitehouse Camp on Cefn Ridge and Walterstone, and a ruined castle and motte and bailey at Longtown (all Scheduled Monuments) are evidence of the conflicted landownership in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Longtown is the best example of a Medieval planted settlement in Herefordshire.

**7.105** Apart from the enclosure of upland grazing in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the ancient pattern of small irregular, often rounded fields, has continued to the present day and is unique to this part of the county. The Welsh inheritance system (gavelkind) is evident in the land holding size, field patterns and building sizes. The size of the buildings is representative of the political, economic and architectural history of the area and contributes greatly to its character. The organic, small scale enclosure pattern is particularly evident in the Olchon Valley where the steeply sloping topography throws it into sharp relief.

**7.106** The sparse settlement pattern is typically Welsh, one of dispersed farmsteads and small scattered hamlets on the valley bottoms and sides with access to extensive upland grazing. Slightly larger settlements are located on river crossings. Locally the pattern changes to more closely grouped clusters where there has been settlement on former commons. The hamlets and farmsteads are linked by narrow lanes running along valley bottoms or ridges, emphasising the valley orientation.

**7.107** Few buildings are higher than two stories. Older buildings, including 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>-century farmhouses with traditional outbuildings, cottages and early medieval churches are mostly built of sandstone. Traditionally, stone slates were used for roofing but these have now been largely replaced by Welsh slate. The farmhouses and cottages within hamlets are often quite low, of rubble construction and sometimes whitewashed, giving them a Welsh appearance.

**7.108** Recreational opportunities, include the network of footpaths linking to the uplands to the west, and the traditional pastoral landscape, make this a popular destination for visitors for walking, cycling and horse riding.

## Perceptual influences

**7.109** With high levels of tranquillity and dark skies, the sense of remoteness is one of the area's most important assets. The area remains largely unaffected by development and is remote from larger settlement and transport routes.



**7.110** The narrow valleys have a small-scale enclosed character. On the steep valley sides and ridgetops, there are expansive views to the Black Mountains along the Welsh border. The mix of English and Welsh placenames adds to the strong sense of a border landscape.

**Figure 7.34: Steep, narrow lanes bordered by hedgerows and mature hedgerow oak trees**



## Landscape Evaluation

### Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

- Distinctive ridge and valley topography which offers a contrast between the open ridges and enclosed valleys.
- Traditional pastoral landscape with a strong sense of place.

- Historic importance of the ancient organic pattern of small irregular fields.
- Species rich hedgerows and hedgebanks with mature hedgerow oaks which are a distinctive feature of the landscape.
- Dingles and fast flowing streams lined by ancient semi-natural woodlands which provide valuable habitats.
- Ecologically important mosaic of habitats including lowland meadows, unimproved pasture, orchards and broadleaved woodlands (much of which is ancient in origin).
- Border character evident in the mix of Welsh and English settlement names and traditional building styles.
- The strong sense of history from settlement and defensive structures such as mottes and castles.
- The recreational value of the public rights of way which provide access to the tranquil valleys, open ridges and west to the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park.
- The strong sense of rural remoteness, tranquillity, and dark skies.
- Expansive views across the valleys to the Black Mountains.

## Forces for change

The Sandstone Upland Hills and Valleys LCT is a relatively stable landscape, however the decline in traditional hill farming and consequent agricultural change is leading to the loss of traditional land uses such as grazing pastures, hay meadows and traditional orchards.

There is an ongoing deterioration of species-rich hedgerows and associated mature hedgerow trees due to a lack of maintenance and resulting in the loss of the ancient field pattern. Lack of woodland

management and climate change is leading to a deterioration in broadleaved woodlands, including ancient woodlands.

Changes to rainfall patterns due to climate change, and overgrazing are increasing soil erosion and sedimentation of the fast-flowing watercourses.

Increasing modern development around small settlements is impacting the sparse settlement pattern. Conversion of traditional buildings to residential use, particularly redundant buildings on historic farmsteads, can be unsympathetic.

Recreational pressure on this remote area, including the development of tourist facilities, such as glamping/camping sites can impact landscape character by reducing levels of tranquillity and the sense of remoteness.

**Figure 7.35: Lowland meadows with mature hedgerow trees, enclosed by the Black Mountains**



## Landscape Guidelines

The strategy for the Sandstone Upland Hills and Valleys LCT is to strengthen its distinctive landscape character by conserving the tranquil pastoral landscape, enhancing the ancient field pattern defined by hedgerows, maintaining the mosaic of habitats including meadows, trees and woodland, and conserving the small-scale built form, sparse settlement pattern and historic monuments and their settings.

### Landscape management

- Encourage catchment-sensitive land management practices to improve soil quality and prevent run off into the local rivers.
- Manage and restore the fast-flowing watercourses and associated wetland habitats (including wet woodland and meadows) to enhance their contribution to landscape character. This will also help to maintain high water quality, reduce peak flows and enhance their nature conservation interest.
- Promote the retention of traditional pastures and meadows (i.e. livestock grazing and hay cuts) to strengthen the distinctive pastoral character of the hills and valleys and to conserve and enhance their biodiversity interest.
- Promote sustainable and wildlife-friendly land management practices that provide multiple landscape and biodiversity benefits. Conserve and enhance key landscape features including orchards, woodlands, trees, hedgerows and grasslands.
- Conserve and enhance the ancient field pattern and strengthen the structure of the landscape. Improve the quality and continuity of field boundary/road hedgerows. Ensure that hedgerow and hedgerow tree species are native, dense, provide a diverse habitat, and are appropriate to the local character.

- Encourage appropriate hedgerow management to ensure their long-term good health and survival. Hedgerows should be dense along most of their length with frequent healthy stems.
- Protect, manage and enhance the existing broadleaved woodlands and tree cover. Use locally occurring native species to extend or link existing woodland habitats. This will strengthen landscape character (as well as reduce soil erosion and improve water quality).
- Protect the expansive views across the valleys and to the uplands of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park.

## Development management

- Ensure that new development is in keeping with the small-scale historic settlement character and landscape setting. Retain the ancient pattern of small irregular fields.
- Conserve heritage features and their landscape setting including the numerous medieval fortifications.
- Encourage the use of traditional and locally distinctive styles, colours and materials that are in keeping with the local landscape, such as locally sourced sandstone, to build on the strong sense of place. Refer to the Herefordshire Design Code.
- Ensure scale, building materials, layout and lighting of any sympathetic conversions of historic farmhouses and agricultural buildings are in keeping with the local landscape and enhance local distinctiveness.
- Consider the visual impact of large-scale glazing or other reflective materials in domestic and commercial buildings on the rural character of the landscape and the integrity of the dark skies.
- Resist proposals for highway upgrading, including unnecessary signage, to retain the rural character of the winding lanes and their species-rich verges.

**Chapter 7** Landscape Character Type Profiles  
**LCT 7** Sandstone Upland Hills and Valleys

- Ensure new development and infrastructure does not detract from the high levels of rural tranquillity, dark skies and sense of remoteness experienced within the landscape.
- Encourage sustainable tourism while protecting and enhancing the rural tranquillity and remoteness associated with the area.

# LCT 8: Wooded Limestone Ridges



## Location and summary

**7.111** The Wooded Limestone Ridges LCT is found in two areas within Herefordshire. The north-south ridge of the Malvern Hills along the county's eastern boundary and the north-west to south-east ridge of Woolhope Dome and Marcle Ridge, which extends across the county border to May Hill in Gloucestershire. This landscape type is defined by the extent of the underlying bedrock of Silurian limestone and sandstone, its elevated topography rising from the lowlands.

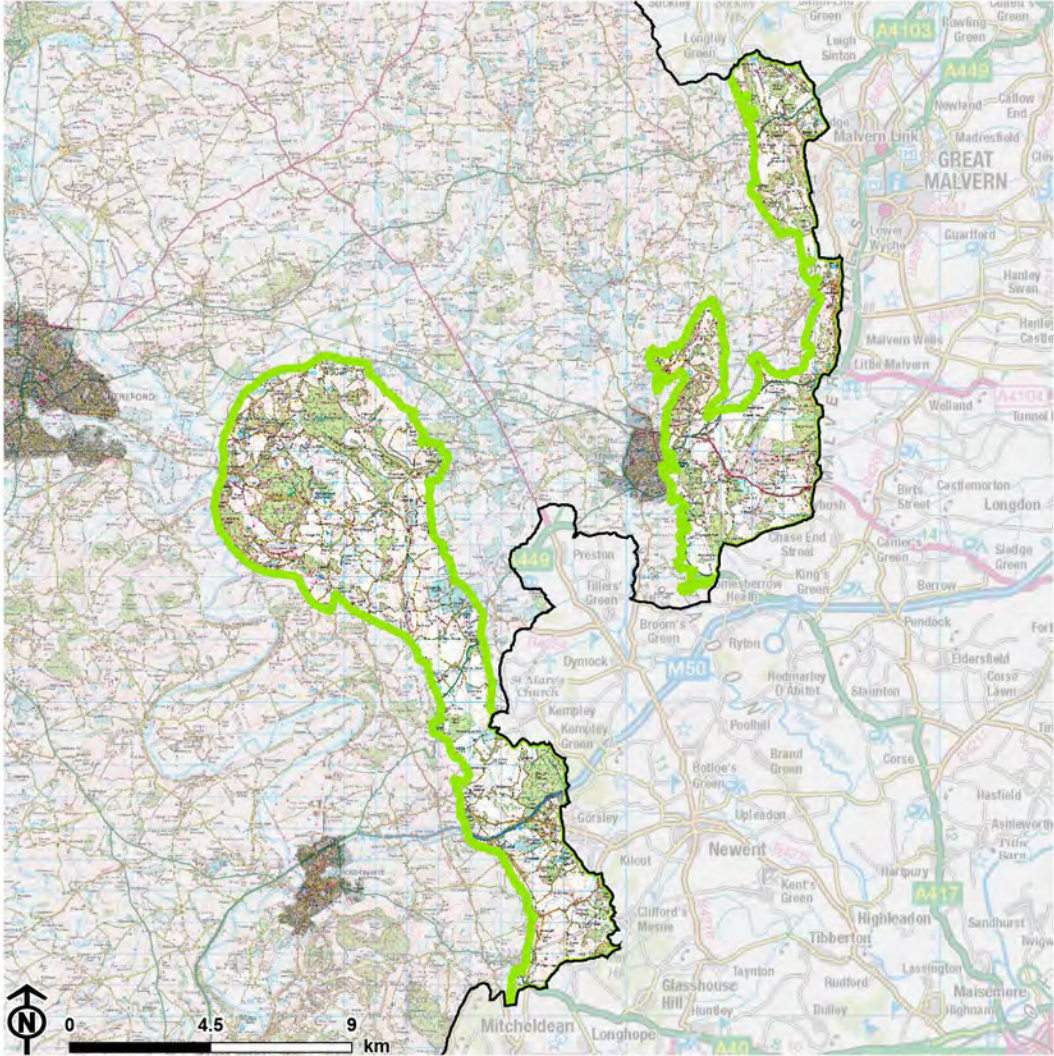
**7.112** The landscape includes distinctive ridge summits with open grassland and heath which contrast with the well-wooded ridge slopes and hills. Much of the landscape type is designated as part of a National Landscape – the Malvern Hills AONB in the east and Wye Valley AONB in the west.

**Figure 7.36: Typical view of LCT**








Figure 7.37: Location of Wooded Limestone Ridges



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-  LCT 8. Wooded Limestone Ridges
-  Herefordshire boundary
-  Settlement



## Key characteristics

### Topography, geology and drainage

- Prominent limestone ridges of the Malvern Hills, Marcle Ridge and Woolhope Dome, contrast with the adjacent lowland vales.
- Small streams run off from the ridges, with occasional ponds.

### Agricultural land use and field patterns

- Land use reflects the poor soils and steep topography, with rough grazing on remnant commons along the ridges, woodland on the steep slopes and arable on lower slopes.
- Small-scale irregular field pattern, typically of 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century origin, with hedgerows defining field boundaries.

### Semi-natural habitats

- Well wooded character created by large broadleaved woodlands which are often ancient in origin, as well as conifer plantations. Hedgerow trees and scattered traditional orchards increase the wooded character.
- Extensive semi-natural habitats including acid grassland and heath along the summits and abundant mixed broadleaved woodland on steeper slopes. Some lowland meadows and semi-improved grassland are found on lower slopes.

### Settlement and road pattern

- A largely unsettled landscape, with scattered hamlets and wayside cottages linked by hedge lined narrow winding lanes.
- Trunk roads and a railway corridor have been cut through the ridges, linking adjacent market towns.

### **Cultural heritage**

- Hilltop defensive Iron Age hill forts, medieval moated sites and 19<sup>th</sup> century country houses are scattered throughout the area.
- Historic landscaped parklands are associated with country houses (some now demolished).

### **Views and perceptual qualities**

- A dramatic and attractive rural landscape. The scenic quality and natural beauty of the Malvern Hills landscape is nationally recognised as part of the AONB. Parts of Woolhope Dome are within the Wye Valley AONB and the ridge provides the setting for the eastern edge of the AONB.
- Panoramic and spectacular views from the open grassland and heath ridges, contrast with the enclosed character of the wooded lower slopes.
- A tranquil landscape with a good experience of dark night skies, with local disturbances from the A roads, railway, the M50 and Ledbury.
- Long history of recreation associated with the landscape, with extensive access on public rights of way and areas of open access land.

## **Landscape character description**

### **Natural influences**

**7.113** This landscape type is strongly influenced by its limestone geology, rising abruptly out of the Herefordshire lowlands. It is underlain by a varied geology of older rocks pushed up during a mountain building phase, forming upfolded Silurian limestones, fossil shaley mudstone and siltstone. The harder limestones are less susceptible to erosion, and form the distinctive ridges seen today. Two geological SSSIs at Perton Roadside Section and Quarry and Little Hill demonstrate the national importance of this geology along with small historic quarries designated as Local Geological Sites. The Malvern Hills are

considerably higher, at 338 metres AOD, than the Marcle Ridge, which is 269 metres AOD at its highest point.

**7.114** Small streams drain radially to the Rivers Wye and Leadon. In the Malvern Hills the local springs were promoted by the Victorians for their purity and healing properties, and the watercourses are a special quality of the Malvern Hills AONB. There are a number of field ponds, particularly on Marcle Ridge, and in former quarry sites.

**7.115** The soils vary, depending on the underlying geology – but are typified by poor grey soils over the limestones with gravels on the ridge tops (graded as 3 or 4 in the Agricultural Land Classification). The land use within the type reflects the less productive soils and steep topography with extensive woodland and pasture, and arable fields found on richer soils on lower slopes.

**7.116** Remnants of common land, acidic, neutral and calcareous grassland form a highly valuable ecological resource on the ridge tops and steep slopes. Many areas are designated as SSSI, including the Malvern Hills and Common Hill SSSI, while Broadmoor Common is a LNR.

**7.117** The landscape is characterised by extensive woodland, a mix of broadleaves and conifers. The slopes contain significant cover of ancient semi-natural woodland, and planting of ancient woodland sites with non-native conifers (PAWS). Many sites are designated as SSSI including Haugh Wood and Ridgeway Wood, Sharpnage Wood, Cherry Hill Woods, Lea and Paget's Wood. Oak and ash are the main canopy species. Traditional orchards and hedgerow trees add to the wooded character.

## Cultural influences

**7.118** This is a historic landscape with Iron Age hill forts along the ridges in commanding positions above the river valleys, Bronze Age burial grounds and medieval moated sites. Beacon Camp (also known as British Camp) lies on the boundary between Herefordshire and Worcestershire, and is a large Iron Age

defensive hillfort. The substantial earthworks, now a Scheduled Monument, are still clearly visible, and command panoramic views. Smaller Iron Age hillforts are found on the Woolhope Dome. The Shire ditch in the Malvern Hills is a medieval boundary dyke linear earthwork, originally built in the Bronze Age and extended in 1287 to delineate between the extent of lands of the Bishop of Hereford and Gilbert de Claire.

**7.119** Traditionally, the ridges were largely unenclosed commons used for rough grazing. Stocking levels would have been sufficient to keep extensive scrub encroachment at bay, maintaining the distinctive exposed character. Today, the reduction in grazing, particularly on the Malvern Hills, has resulted in a much greater diversity of vegetation, as bracken, scrub and secondary woodland are gradually encroaching the lower slopes.

**7.120** It is possible that woodland may previously have been partially cleared for agricultural purposes at the height of agricultural expansion in the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Any clearance would have been likely to be only of a piecemeal nature, with woodland re-colonisation following the contraction of the area of cultivated land after the Black Death. The historic field pattern shows that the woodlands and fieldscapes were typically formed pre-18<sup>th</sup> century, especially in the Malvern Hills. Other fields were enclosed in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, with some created from earlier field systems. There are small areas of recent field pattern reorganisation. Strong hedgerows with hedgerow trees contribute to the visual structure of the landscape.

**7.121** The relative lack of settlement across the landscape type reflects the absence of a prolonged period of agricultural activity, with occasional cottages probably relating to woodland occupations. The interdependence of the woodland and the charcoal and smelting industries has been a major factor in the survival of large concentrations of forest.

**7.122** Small hamlets and villages are historic, with Fownhope, Woolhope, Linton and Eastnor designated as Conservation Areas. The use of the word 'hope' in place names refers to the local dialogue word for blind valleys. There is a varied vernacular with older buildings constructed of the local grey Silurian limestone,

black and white timber-framed buildings and brick. Enclosed, winding lanes link the small settlements. The outskirts of Fownhope and Prior's Frome are characterised by modern residential development. Although there is on-going pressure for urban expansion from the adjacent market town of Ledbury, the sharply rising topography and wooded character of the landscape, has reduced pressure for development to extend east of the town into the LCT.

**7.123** The attractive landforms of this landscape type and views available lent themselves to the development of landscape parks and substantial houses from wealth generated by agriculture. Estates with remodelled farmhouses and country houses surrounded by landscaped grounds emerged between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, and some are now recorded as Registered Parks and Gardens, such as Sufton Court and Hope End. Eastnor Castle began as a medieval deer park, with additional 19<sup>th</sup> century gardens and pinetum, while at Stoke Edith the landscape park and grounds remain despite the destruction of the country house.

**7.124** The limestone ridges have always been a popular place of hill walking, which increased in the Victorian era when Malvern (within Worcestershire) had a reputation as a health resort. This popularity is reflected in the number of public rights of way running through the landscape. The Wye Valley Walk, Three Choirs Way, Herefordshire Trail and Geopark Way are all promoted routes through the landscape. There is also open access land at Haugh Wood, Queen's Wood (leading into Forest of Dean), along Malvern ridge and at Frith Wood. A number of accessible 'Miles without Stiles' routes have been put in place, which increase access for all.

## Perceptual influences

**7.125** The landscape has unique qualities that are recognised through their designation as part of National Landscapes. The open and exposed character of the dramatic ridges contrast with the more enclosed wooded slopes. The lack of human habitation results in a sense of relative remoteness.

**7.126** There are high levels of tranquillity, dark night skies and limited noise and disturbance. The few intrusions in the landscape include electricity pylons, railway, A roads and a small section of the M50.

**7.127** There are highly expansive and long views from the open ridges, whereas the wooded areas provide more restricted framed views. Views from the Malvern Hills extend west to Wales and east across the Severn Vale towards the Cotswold Scarp. The limestone ridges are distinctive features in distant views both from within Herefordshire and beyond; views to the Woolhope Dome are mentioned in the Hereford, Ledbury and Ross-on-Wye townscape appraisals.

**Figure 7.38: Panoramic views from British Camp Hill Fort**



## Landscape Evaluation

### Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

- Distinctive topography of the high dramatic ridges, containing nationally important geological sites, a special quality of the Malvern Hills and Wye Valley AONBs.
- Contrast between open grassland on the ridge tops and extensive irregular woodlands. These ecologically important habitats are nationally and locally designated, and noted as special qualities of the Malvern Hills and Wye Valley AONBs.
- A rich historic environment with Iron Age hillforts, Bronze Age burials, medieval earthworks and designed parklands, creating a deep sense of history.
- A sparsely dispersed settlement pattern. Where present, historic villages and hamlets are small, and designated as Conservation Areas.
- Hedgerows define field boundaries and line roadsides, creating a sense of place.
- Strong sense of tranquillity and rural character, with areas of relative remoteness.
- Contrast between expansive views on the ridge tops and enclosed or framed views within the woodlands.

### Forces for change

The reduction of grazing on the ridgetops, combined with increased visitor pressures have eroded key grassland habitats. Ancient woodlands have previously been replanted with a high proportion of conifers, which can disrupt the visual unity of the landscape. The escalating requirements of modern agriculture have reduced the number of traditional orchards, and



many have been replaced by bush orchards. Hedgerows and hedgerow trees are deteriorating, and there is also a loss of in-field trees. There has also been an increase in horse keeping, where the associated infrastructure can be visually detracting.

Pressure for residential development, especially in the designated areas, is high. The cumulative incremental effect of small developments collectively encroach on and erode the landscape features and special qualities of the AONBs. Modern development in the adjacent lowlands can be incongruous, drawing the eye as a negative feature in the panoramic views.

**Figure 7.39: Traditional orchards on slopes outside Woolhope**



## Landscape Guidelines

The overall aim for the Wooded Limestone Ridges LCT is to conserve and manage the rural character of the landscape and distinctive sense of place created by the combination of the expansive grassland ridges, large irregular woodlands and small hedgerow-bound pasture fields.

### Landscape management

- Protect and maintain rock exposures and encourage access agreements to key geodiversity sites. Increase awareness and interpretation where possible.
- Manage and enhance the extent, diversity and condition of existing upland grassland habitats, including the restoration of a suitable and sustainable grazing regime. Where possible, create links between fragmented upland habitats.
- Ensure the special qualities of the Malvern Hills and Wye Valley AONBs are conserved and enhanced. As appropriate, look at opportunities and strategies set out in the Malvern Hills and Wye Valley AONB Management Plans.
- Protect, manage and enhance the wooded character of the slopes. Consider opportunities to strengthen the landscape character through new woodland creation to link existing small woodlands, in line with the aims of the Severn Treescape project.
- Conserve and manage the ancient woodland sites to encourage biodiversity. Where possible, replace conifer plantations with locally occurring native species, particularly on replanted ancient woodland sites (PAWS).
- Conserve and enhance the traditional pattern and structure of the landscape. Retain the small-scale organic enclosure pattern, and improve the quality and continuity of existing field boundary hedgerows. Ensure

that hedgerow and hedgerow tree species are native, dense, provide a diverse habitat, and are appropriate to the local character.

- Encourage appropriate hedgerow management to ensure their long-term good health and survival. Hedgerows should be dense along most of their length with frequent healthy stems.
- Conserve and manage historic parklands within the landscape, with their ancient wood pasture and veteran trees. Replant key ornamental tree species to retain the parkland character.
- Protect and manage traditional apple orchards. Connect and extend small areas of orchard where possible, and involve local communities in the management of these spaces.
- Conserve the area's archaeological earthworks and their landscape setting. Encourage further interpretation and understanding of these.

## Development management

- Conserve the pattern of rural winding lanes, with associated hedgerows and verges, ensuring their character is not lost through unsympathetic highway works, unnecessary signage, street furniture, or lighting clutter.
- Conserve the unsettled woodland character. Minimise the impact of any new developments through careful design in terms of siting, scale, style, layout and materials to be in keeping with the landscape setting. Refer to the Herefordshire Design Code.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape. Improve public right of way connections and signage. Use visually sensitive, appropriate methods in order to control visitor pressure and protect adjacent grassland.
- Encourage geo-tourism to increase understanding of nationally important geology.
- Conserve the expansive and long-reaching views from the limestone ridges when planning development in adjacent landscapes.

**Chapter 7** Landscape Character Type Profiles  
**LCT 8** Wooded Limestone Ridges

- Ensure new development and infrastructure does not detract from the high levels of rural tranquillity, sense of remoteness and dark night skies experienced within the landscape.

# LCT 9: Limestone Uplands



## Location and summary

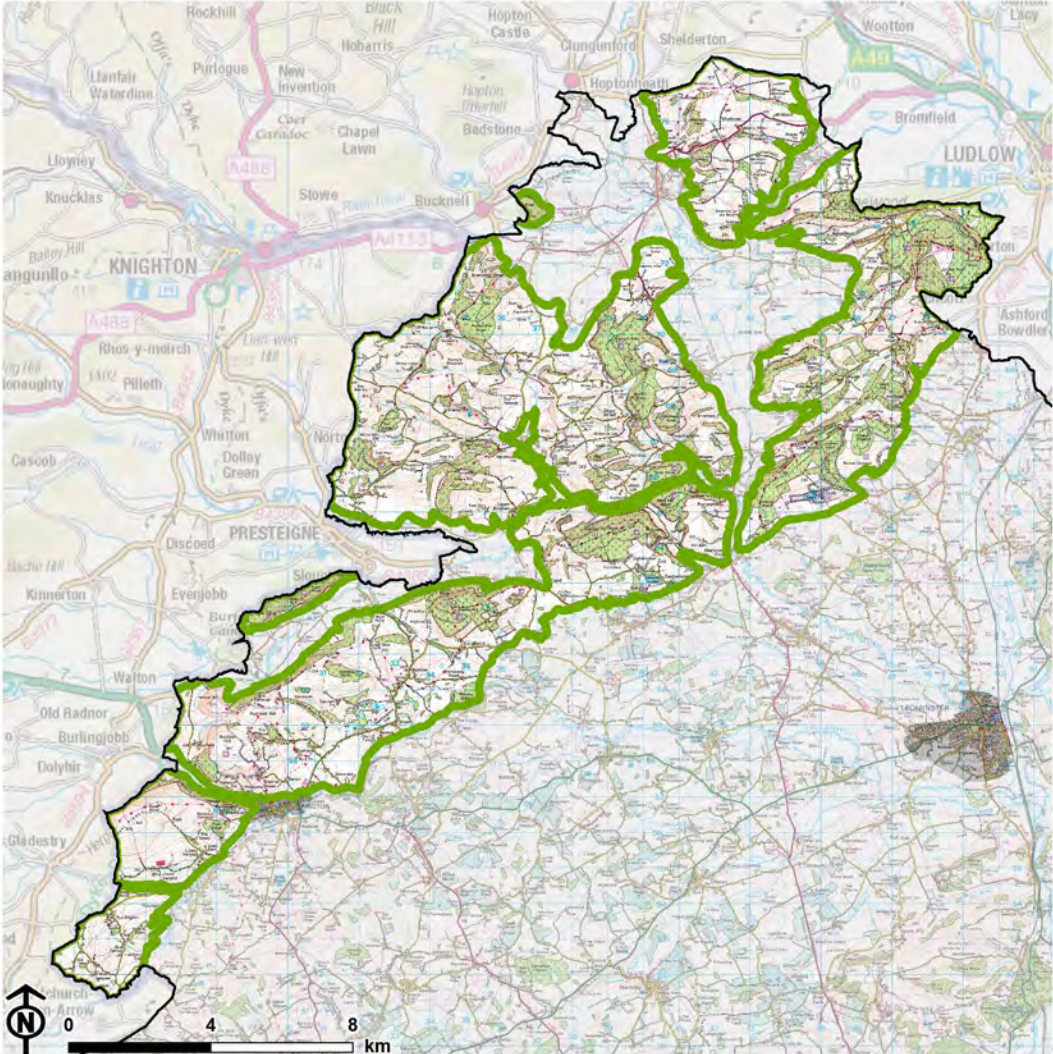
**7.128** The Limestone Uplands LCT is located in the north-west of Herefordshire. Its boundaries are defined by its underlying bedrock geology of limestone and shales and its elevation (above 150 metres AOD). It rises above the valleys of the River Teme and Lugg to the east, and the River Arrow and Kington to the south. It is bounded by the county boundary with Shropshire to the north and Wales to the west.

**7.129** The type is characterised by sparsely populated upland hills. Extensive mixed woodlands and conifer plantations are interspersed with irregular hedged fields which give way to open windswept hilltops offering panoramic views.

**Figure 7.40: Typical View of LCT**

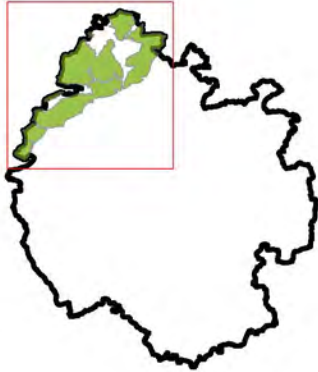


Figure 7.41: Location of Limestone Uplands



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- LCT 9. Limestone Uplands
- Herefordshire boundary
- Settlement



## Key characteristics

### Topography, geology and drainage

- High rounded hills resulting from the dip and scarp topography of a fault that runs diagonally south west to Kington.
- The type is mostly underlain by limestone and siltstone bedrock geology, which result in poor soils.
- Small streams rise in the uplands and drain into the river valleys below.

### Agricultural land use and field patterns

- Mixed farming that retains a pastoral character, with rough grazing on the exposed hilltops.
- A distinctive field pattern of small irregular fields bound by hedgerows.

### Semi-natural habitats

- Well wooded with large broadleaved woodlands (much of which is ancient in origin) and conifer plantations that often extend over hilltops. Hedgerows and riparian woodlands link the woodland blocks.
- Designated habitats include the Downton Gorge, Special Area of Conservation (SAC), a lime woodland that extends up into the LCT from the River Teme.
- The uplands support semi-natural moorland and heathland habitats, often on common land.

### Settlement and road pattern

- A sparsely populated landscape with isolated farms and cottages built with a variety of local materials and linked by narrow lanes.



### **Cultural heritage**

- Long associations with defence are reflected in the number of Iron Age hill forts visible on many hills tops and the earthworks of Offa's Dyke.
- Parklands with veteran trees, often developed from former medieval deer parks, are distinctive features of the lower slopes.
- Popular for walking and camping with a strong network of footpaths and open access land.
- An organic enclosure pattern of small-scale fields often cleared from the adjoining woodland.

### **Views and perceptual qualities**

- Panoramic views from the hilltops, often framed by woodland.
- A tranquil landscape with a strong sense of place provided by the rounded upland hills and extensive woodland cover.
- The lack of modern development results in a strong experience of dark skies.

## **Landscape character description**

### **Natural influences**

**7.130** A series of rounded upland hills, mostly underlain by limestones and siltstones from the Silurian period. The dip-and-scarp topography of this area of north-west Herefordshire resulted from earth movement along the Church Stretton Fault, which runs diagonally south west across the LCT to Kington. The dip slope faces south towards the Herefordshire lowlands. On the western border of the LCT with Wales, the hills rise to high moorland ridges extending into Wales. The landscape was under ice during the last glaciation, and superficial deposits of hummocky moraine and glacial till are found.

**7.131** The limestone-based acidic soils result in land of poor agricultural quality (mostly Agricultural Land Classification Grade 4 and Grade 3 on lower slopes). Land use is predominantly woodland and pasture, with rough grazing on the hilltops and some arable cropping on lower slopes where the soils are silty but still free draining.

**7.132** The landscape is heavily wooded with extensive irregular-shaped semi-natural woodland, much of which is ancient woodland. This includes upland oak woodland with birch and beech and wet woodland, especially on the steeper slopes. These woodland habitats are important for bird species, including wood warbler, pied flycatcher, redstart and tree pipit.

**7.133** There are substantial conifer plantations, often extending over hilltops. The plantations are often on ancient woodland sites (PAWS), planted in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to address the national timber shortage. The straight lines of plantations contrast with the irregular semi-natural woodland with its mixed age structure. The well-treed hedgerows and riparian woodlands along streams link the woodland blocks to each other and the frequent copses in the surrounding landscape.

**7.134** The LCT forms the catchment for the River Teme. Small streams rise in these uplands and drain to rivers in the valleys below, including the Teme, Lugg and its tributary the Arrow. The streams are ecologically diverse and noted for their associated riparian habitats, including wet woodland. There are also a number of naturally formed lakes and ponds from Ice Age debris, such as Flintsham and Titley Pools, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which are a refuge for wildfowl. The Downton Gorge (designated as a SAC and National Nature Reserve) extends up into the LCT from the River Teme, designed because of its scarce semi-natural lime woodland. Mortimer Forest SSSI is notified for its geological importance.

**7.135** Acid soils and high rainfall result in moorland vegetation on the exposed uplands. Semi-natural habitats including grass moorland and upland heathland, are often on common land, such as Hergest Ridge. These areas support important populations of uplands birds.

**7.136** Parklands and wood pasture with veteran trees are scattered throughout the lower slopes of the area, with Brampton Bryan Park SSSI designated for its rare lichens and rich invertebrate fauna as well as for its areas of heathland dominated by heather and gorse.

## Cultural influences

**7.137** This is a sparsely populated landscape with a pattern of isolated farmhouses and cottages linked by narrow lanes. The density of settlement is very low, with most villages and the market towns of Kington, located outside the LCT, on the lowlands in the river valleys below. The edges of Kington are characterised by modern urban fringe development, such as the small-scale industrial units along the A44 and on Barton Lane, resulting in visual intrusion on the landscape of the LCT. Traditional buildings are often constructed in local grey sandstone, with occasional brick and timber-frame buildings.

**7.138** The area has a long history of conflict, reflected in the high concentration of defensive heritage features, from Offa's Dyke which formed a defence and boundary with Powys to the west, Roman camps such as Croft Ambrey and several Iron Age hill forts.

**7.139** Extensive land holdings owned by Marcher Lords development as a result of the Norman Conquest. By the Medieval period this area was the stronghold of the Mortimers, whose castles, deer park and abbey were almost its own kingdom, reflecting their status and usefulness to the crown. The history and architecture of the Mortimers is now a considerable tourist attraction - the 30 mile Mortimer Trail runs from Ludlow to Kington, through the heartlands of the Mortimer family.

**7.140** The LCT is characterised by frequent manor houses of Medieval and later date. Some manor houses replaced earlier castles with designed parklands, such as Brampton Bryan, Gatley and Croft which developed from former medieval deer parks. Other landscape parks survive around the sites of former houses, such as Shobdon and Eywood. These parklands, with scattered

veteran trees such as the sweet chestnut avenue at Croft Castle are a distinctive feature of the lower slopes of the landscape. The influential 18<sup>th</sup>-century landscape designers, Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price took inspiration for their 'picturesque' aesthetic from the local landscape, included Downton Gorge.

**7.141** The enclosure pattern is an organic composition of small-scale irregular shaped fields of pre-18<sup>th</sup> century origin and often cleared from the adjoining woodland (assarts). This contrasts with larger rectilinear fields resulting from 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century planned enclosure on the higher ground and on some lower slopes. There is evidence for coaxial field patterns in north-west Herefordshire, retained in the later field enclosure pattern. The fields are bound by hedges.

**7.142** The area offers an extensive network of rights of way and open access land, as well as the Offa's Dyke National Trail. There are a number of other local trails including the Herefordshire Trail and Mortimer Trail.

## Perceptual influences

**7.143** The LCT is sparsely populated, relatively undeveloped area with little modern influence. The rural character has been maintained with a strong experience of tranquillity and dark skies. A strong sense of place is provided by the rounded upland hills and dominant woodland cover.

**7.144** The rounded hills, many with open hilltops, allow wide views over the surrounding valleys, with panoramic views from open ridges such as Hergest Ridge. Views are often framed by woodland blocks. These open or wooded skylines are highly visible from the surrounding valleys. Narrow rural roads provide enclosure locally.

## Landscape Evaluation

### Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

- The distinctive topography of rounded upland hills which forms a skyline feature for areas outside the LCT.
- Extensive native broadleaved woodlands, much of which is ancient, are a distinctive feature of the landscape and provide valuable habitats.
- The open hilltops and commons with their ecologically important upland habitats.
- The pastoral character of the farmed landscape with a strong landscape pattern of irregular hedged fields, which provides a strong sense of place.
- Fast flowing streams lined by ancient semi-natural woodlands which provide valuable habitats.
- The sparsely settled character of the landscape with isolated farms and cottages built with local materials which provide a sense of place.
- The historic association of the landscape with defence reflected in the number of hill forts and earthworks which provide a connection with history.
- The extensive parklands developed on former deer parks and association with the 'Picturesque' landscape movement which provide a sense of time-depth.
- Recreational value of the strong network of pathways and open access land which provide access to the upland hills.
- The wooded hills, farmland, parklands and open hilltops which provide a strong sense of place and rural remoteness.
- The expansive views from open hilltops and uncluttered skylines.

## Forces for change

Forestry practices in the last century changed the character of the landscape, with geometrically shaped plantations jarring with the rolling landform of the landscape. Lack of ongoing woodland management and climate change is leading to a deterioration in broadleaved woodlands, including ancient woodlands.

Semi-natural habitats are deteriorating due to changing land management practices/ownership. The ongoing deterioration of species-rich hedgerows and associated mature hedgerow trees due to lack of maintenance is altering the historic field pattern.

Changes to rainfall patterns due to climate change, and overgrazing are increasing soil erosion and sedimentation of the fast-flowing watercourses.

As a relatively remote area, development pressure is low, although conversions of traditional buildings, particularly redundant farm buildings can be unsympathetic. Development pressure, particularly extending to the north of Kington and along the A44, is resulting in visual intrusion from urban development.

There are recreational pressures on this remote area, including the development of tourist facilities, such as glamping/camping sites which can impact landscape character by reducing levels of tranquillity and the sense of remoteness.

Figure 7.42: Local grey sandstone and brick are common materials



## Landscape Guidelines

The strategy for the Limestone Uplands LCT is to retain the strong sense of place created by the combination of rolling hills with extensive woodland interspersed with irregularly shaped pastoral fields and parklands.

Emphasis should be placed upon both restoring the ancient semi-natural character of the woodland and maintaining an interlocking pattern of woodland and species-rich grazed fields with a high proportion of hedgerow and streamside trees. The sparse settlement pattern should be conserved and the rural landscape retained as a setting to the numerous historic features.

Figure 7.43: Offas Dyke Path with panoramic views from hilltops



## Landscape management

- Promote sustainable and wildlife-friendly land management practices that provide multiple landscape and biodiversity benefits. Conserve and enhance key landscape features on the farmed landscape.
- Encourage catchment-sensitive land management practices to improve soil quality and prevent run off into the local rivers.
- Manage and restore the fast-flowing watercourses and associated wetland habitats (including wet woodland and riparian trees) to enhance their contribution to landscape character.
- Manage and enhance the extent, diversity and condition of existing upland habitats, with their sense of remoteness and panoramic views. Manage and enhance links between fragmented upland habitats.



- Protect and manage existing broadleaved woodland through active woodland management to strengthen the distinctive landscape character, and retain biodiversity interest.
- Consider opportunities to strengthen landscape character by expanding and linking existing woodland through natural regeneration or small-scale planting.
- Conserve and manage the ancient woodland sites to encourage biodiversity. Where possible, replace conifers with locally occurring native species, particularly on replanted ancient woodland sites (PAWS).
- Planting should reflect the scale, shape, pattern and composition of the existing woodland character and favouring oak as the dominant species.
- Forestry practices should respect the character of the landscape, promote traditional management techniques (e.g. coppicing) and assess the visual impact of new planting and felling on the landscape.
- Conserve and enhance the historic pattern and structure of the landscape. Improve the quality and continuity of existing field boundary hedgerows and increase hedgerow tree numbers. Ensure that hedgerow and hedgerow tree species are native, dense, provide a diverse habitat, and are appropriate to the local character.
- Encourage appropriate hedgerow management to ensure their long-term good health and survival. Hedgerows should be dense along most of their length with frequent healthy stems.
- Conserve historic parklands within the landscape, with their ancient wood pasture and veteran trees. Replant ornamental tree species to retain parkland character.

## Development management

- Conserve the area's historic features that contribute to the sense of time depth in the landscape, including the numerous hills forts, and earthworks.

- Minimise the impact of new development through careful design in terms of siting, scale, and layout in keeping with the existing settlement character and landscape setting.
- Encourage the use of traditional and locally distinctive styles, colour and materials that are in keeping with the local landscape, such as locally sourced stones, to build on the strong sense of place. Refer to the Herefordshire Design Code.
- Ensure the scale, building materials, layout and lighting of any conversions of historic farmhouses and agricultural buildings are sympathetic to, and in keeping with, the local landscape and enhance local distinctiveness.
- Conserve the pattern of narrow sunken lanes, ensuring their character is not lost through unsympathetic highway works, unnecessary signage, lighting, street furniture, or removal of hedgerows and trees.
- Protect and manage the recreational use of the landscape, retaining opportunities for access by maintaining paths on popular walking routes and preventing soil erosion. Improve connectivity and signage.
- Encourage sustainable tourism while protecting and enhancing the rural tranquillity and remoteness associated with the area.
- Consider the visual impact of development, particularly pylons and masts, on the uncluttered skyline of the upland hills, and urban expansion from Kington on the rural landscape of the LCT.
- Protect panoramic views from the open hilltops, and consider the impact of development in adjacent landscape.
- Ensure new development and infrastructure does not detract from the sense of remoteness, tranquillity and the dark night skies within the landscape.

# LCT 10: Border Sandstone Hills



## Location and summary

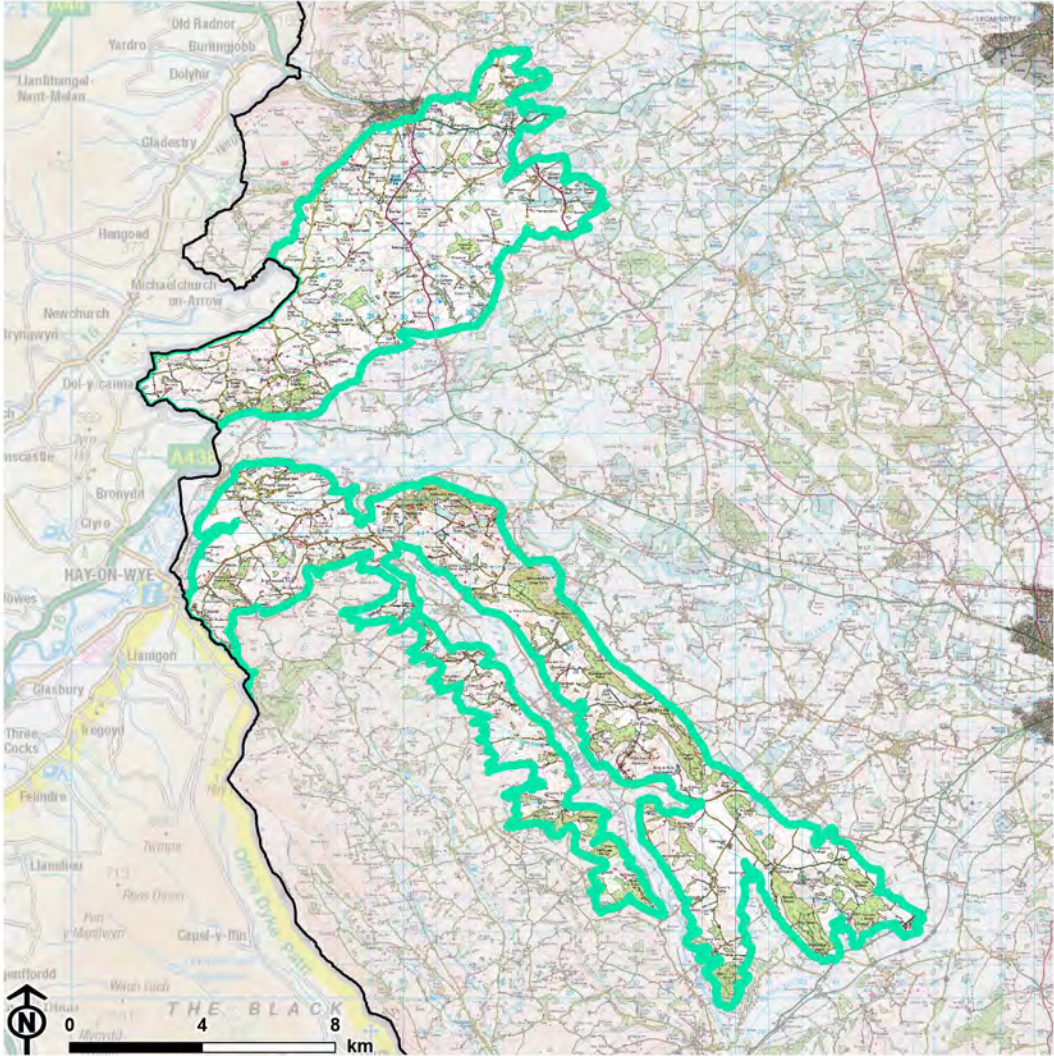
**7.145** The Border Sandstone Hills LCT is located in the west of the county and defined by its elevated topography above the lower ground of the Golden Valley to the south and River Arrow to the north. This LCT is a transitional landscape between the lowlands of Central Herefordshire and the uplands to the north (LCT 9 Limestone Uplands) and west (LCT 7 Sandstone Upland Hills and Valleys).

**7.146** The area is agricultural and wooded in character with scattered hamlets and farmsteads. It has a rolling landform where poor to moderately fertile soils support a variety of pasture and woodland land uses.




**Figure 7.44: Typical view of LCT**



Figure 7.45: Location of Border Sandstone Hills



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-  LCT 10. Border Sandstone Hills
-  Herefordshire boundary
-  Settlement



## Key characteristics

### Topography, geology and drainage

- An elevated landscape of rolling farmland and woodland sloping to the river valleys below.

### Agricultural land use and field patterns

- Poor to moderate quality soils support a mix of agricultural land uses, predominantly pasture with arable cropping on lower slopes.
- A small-scale landscape with an organic field pattern of small to medium-scale fields mostly of pre-18<sup>th</sup> century origin.

### Semi-natural habitats

- Irregular-shaped mixed woodlands and linear tree-cover along brooks characterise the landscape, with larger mixed woodlands and plantations concentrated on the upper slopes of the Golden Valley.
- Thick hedgerows with mature hedgerow oaks, together with tree groups around farmsteads, add to the wooded character.

### Settlement and road pattern

- Scattered historic farmsteads, wayside cottages and occasional hamlets linked by narrow and often sunken rural lanes which run along the slope contours.
- Trunk roads cross the north of the LCT linking Kington to Hereford and Leominster.

### Cultural heritage

- The defensive history of the area is evident in the many structures including prehistoric forts and medieval motte and bailey castles.

- Large country houses and surrounding parklands, built to take advantage of views of the surrounding lowlands, are a feature of this landscape.
- Local vernacular of sandstone and timber-framed farmhouses and farm buildings.

#### **Views and perceptual qualities**

- The valley slopes and hills have a small-scale enclosed character, but far-reaching views are available from higher ground across the valleys and west to the Welsh mountains.
- Rural and remote from larger settlements with a strong experience of dark skies, except along the busier trunk roads.

## **Landscape character description**

### **Natural influences**

**7.147** The Border Sandstone Hills LCT is an elevated agricultural and wooded landscape with a rolling landform, falling to the lower ground of the River Arrow, Wye and Dore. Numerous springs and brooks rise in the hills and drain down the valley sides to the rivers below.

**7.148** The landscape is underlain by less resistant Old Red Sandstone rocks laid down in the late Silurian and early Devonian period. The Raglan and St Maughans Formation rocks are geological features that are shared with much of Herefordshire and result in its typical red soils. The Golden Valley slopes also have bands of limestone (Bishops Frome Formation).

**7.149** The soils are free draining, slightly acid and loamy, although higher slopes in the Golden Valley have loamy and clayey soils with more impeded drainage. Poorer soils on higher slopes along the Welsh Border and in the Golden Valley form moderate to poor quality agricultural land (predominantly

Agricultural Land Classification Grade 4) that support pasture, woodland and heathy commons. Better quality soils on lower slopes (Agricultural Land Classification Grade 3 with some areas of Grade 2), particularly along the Wye and lower Golden Valley support a mixture of pasture and arable land uses.

**7.150** There is a considerable level of tree cover with small to medium irregular-shaped woodlands, groups of trees around farms and linear tree cover associated with water courses (mostly priority habitat). Mature field trees and hedgerow oaks add to the wooded character. The hills above the Golden Valley have considerable coverage of broadleaved woodland and mixed plantations, mostly concentrated on the upper slopes of the hills. Much of the woodland is recorded as of ancient origin, including areas of conifers (PAWs). Chanstone Wood is designated as a SSSI for its extensive ancient woodland, on markedly calcareous soils.

**7.151** Fragmented patches of good quality semi-improved grassland and lowland meadows (priority habitat) are scattered throughout the LCT, with a number of sites designated as SSSI in the northern Brilley to Lyonshall area, including Birches SSSI, which is one of the largest areas of species-rich unimproved neutral grassland in Herefordshire.

## Cultural influences

**7.152** Evidence of early occupation of the landscape is provided by a number of Neolithic burial monuments, including Arthur's Stone, a tomb made of great stone slabs. Iron Age hills forts and camps are located in prominent positions which were easily defended because of their commanding views in all directions. These include an Iron Age defended settlement at Pen-Twyn, overlooking the valleys of Millhalf Brook and a tributary of the Wye, and a promontory fort on Dorstone Hill, which is also the site of a large Neolithic complex.

**7.153** This land ownership between the Marcher lords was highly contested, resulting in many 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century fortifications. This includes many motte



and bailey castles, including examples at Monnington Straddle, Cusop Castle and Snodhill Castle, which has upstanding remains. Castles were often in close proximity to each other reflecting different founders of land acquisitions. Visibility between castles was also significant for defence, and the relationship and landscape between the castles is as significant as the structures themselves.

**7.154** Large country houses and their surrounding parklands are a feature of the landscape. The houses were mostly built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, often on the site of earlier manor houses, while the surrounding landscaped parks were developed from former deer parks. This includes the famous landmark Moccas Park which overlooks the Wye and was laid out by Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton. Moccas Park is a Registered Park and Garden, and also designated as a NNR and SSSI as the largest and most diverse example of wood pasture remaining in Britain. Whitfield and Nieuport House are also Registered Parks and Gardens. Broxwood Court was built in the gothic style with a large parkland created in the 1860s.

**7.155** Apart from some planned enclosure of former common land and woodlands in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, the landscape retains an organic field pattern consisting of small to medium-sized irregularly shaped fields, which are pre-18<sup>th</sup> century in origin. Fields are bound by species-rich hedgerows, many of considerable age.

**7.156** The settlement pattern comprises scattered farmsteads, wayside cottages and occasional small hamlets. Larger villages are generally located in the valleys outside this landscape type, with some modern development extending up the slopes from the small towns of Kington and Hay-on-Wye. Buildings are often constructed in the local red sandstone, or timber-framed with brick or stone infill. Farmsteads include stone and timber framed outbuildings which are partly weatherboarded.

**7.157** The principal roads within the LCT are the A44 and A4111 linking Kington to Leominster to the east and Hereford to the south. Elsewhere hamlets and

farmsteads are linked by winding narrow lanes, often sunken, hedgerow lined and usually running along the slope contours.

**7.158** The LCT has many public rights of way, which connect farmsteads and hamlets including the promoted Offa's Dyke National Trail, which runs through the west of the LCT.

## Perceptual influences

**7.159** This is a landscape that remains largely unaffected by development and is remote from larger settlements. It has high levels of tranquillity and dark skies and a relatively remote character, particularly away from the busy trunk roads that cross the LCT to the north.

**7.160** The valley slopes and hills, with their frequent woods and copses, have a small-scale enclosed character, but with far-reaching views from higher slopes across the open valleys to the east and Welsh mountains to the west.

**7.161** **Figure 7.46: Hedgerow-lined winding lanes run along the contours**



## Landscape Evaluation

### Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

- Distinctive elevated topography of rolling farmland and woodland sloping to the river valleys below.
- Wooded upper slopes and linear tree-cover along brooks, many of ancient origin and nationally designated.
- Thick hedgerows with mature hedgerow oaks, together with tree groups around farmsteads and in parkland, add to the wooded character.
- The diversity of land use with arable fields, grazing on higher slopes, and woodland providing visual interest.
- A rich historic environment with Iron Age hillforts and medieval motte and bailey castles echoing the defensive character of the landscape.
- Historic settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, cottages and hamlets, with a distinctive sandstone and timber-framed vernacular.
- Large country parks with surrounding parklands provide a sense of time depth.
- Contrast between the small-scale enclosed character of the vegetated slopes, and far-reaching views from higher ground.
- Rural, tranquil and remote character, with a strong experience of dark skies.

### Forces for change

Ancient woodlands have previously been replanted with a high proportion of conifers, which can disrupt the visual unity of the landscape, particularly on the highest ground.

Modern agricultural practices have led to a loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and there has been a decline in the traditional management of these features.

Development pressure has resulted in new dwellings which do not respect the characteristic settlement pattern, building type or local vernacular style.

**Figure 7.47: Thick hedgerows with mature hedgerow oaks along small-scale fields**



## Landscape Guidelines

The overall aim for the Border Sandstone Hills LCT is to conserve the rural character of the landscape created by hilltops, slopes and valley sides with native woodlands and a mixed agricultural land use enclosed by strong hedgerows. Small historic settlements with a strong local vernacular are linked by narrow winding lanes. There are occasional views from the highest land across Herefordshire to the east and to the Welsh mountains to the west.

### Landscape management

- Conserve and enhance the traditional pattern and structure of the landscape. Improve the quality and continuity of existing field boundary hedgerows. Ensure that hedgerow and hedgerow tree species are native, dense, provide a diverse habitat, and are appropriate to the local character.
- Encourage appropriate hedgerow management to ensure their long-term good health and survival. Hedgerows should be dense along most of their length with frequent healthy stems.
- Conserve the small-scale organic enclosure pattern of hedged fields through appropriate management.
- Protect, manage and enhance the native deciduous woodland cover, particularly above the Golden Valley. Use locally occurring native species to extend or link woodland habitats, including small deciduous woodlands and the hedgerow network.
- Conserve and manage the ancient woodland sites to improve landscape character and encourage biodiversity.
- Where possible, replace conifers with locally occurring native species, particularly on replanted ancient woodland sites (PAWS).

- Forestry practices should respect the character of the landscape, promote traditional management techniques (e.g. coppicing), and take particular care when assessing the visual impact of new planting and felling.
- Conserve, restore and enhance continuous linear tree cover along ditches and watercourses, using native local species where appropriate. There may be some limited opportunity for wet woodland creation.
- Encourage sustainable and wildlife friendly management of traditional pastures and meadows (including through late hay cutting and low-density livestock grazing). Create new grasslands where possible to improve connectivity. This will strengthen the distinctive pastoral character of the landscape, and enhance their biodiversity interest.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, particularly along promoted routes. Improve public rights of way connections, infrastructure and signage, and identify opportunities for green infrastructure.

## Development management

- Conserve the defensive prehistoric and medieval monuments and their landscape setting. Encourage further interpretation and understanding of these and the landscape's history.
- Conserve and manage historic parklands within the landscape, with their ancient wood pasture and veteran trees. Replant key ornamental tree species to retain the parkland character.
- Conserve the pattern of narrow widening lanes, ensuring that their character is not lost through unsympathetic highway works, unnecessary signage, lighting, street furniture, or removal of hedgerows and trees.
- Conserve the scattered settlement pattern. Minimise the impact of new development through careful design, in terms of siting, scale, style, layout and materials to be in keeping with the existing settlement character and landscape setting. Refer to the Herefordshire Design Code.

- Encourage the use of traditional and locally distinctive styles, colours and materials that are in keeping with the local landscape, such as sandstone and timber-frames to build on the strong sense of place.
- Ensure scale, building materials, layout and lighting of any sympathetic conversions of historic farmhouses and agricultural buildings are in keeping with the local landscape and enhance local distinctiveness.
- Consider the visual impact of roofs, facades, glazing, pavements and other architectural detailing on the rural character of the landscape.
- Consider the visual impact of development within the LCT and in adjoining landscapes on the long views from the highest ground.
- Ensure new development and infrastructure does not detract from the high levels of rural tranquillity, sense of remoteness and dark night skies experienced within the landscape

# LCT 11: Wooded Brownstone Hills





## Location and summary

**7.162** The Wooded Brownstone Hills LCT is located in the south of the county, and consists of a group of rounded hills lining the River Monnow on the Welsh border (LCT 4 Enclosed River Valleys), and stretching northwards to the Dinedor Ridge near Hereford.

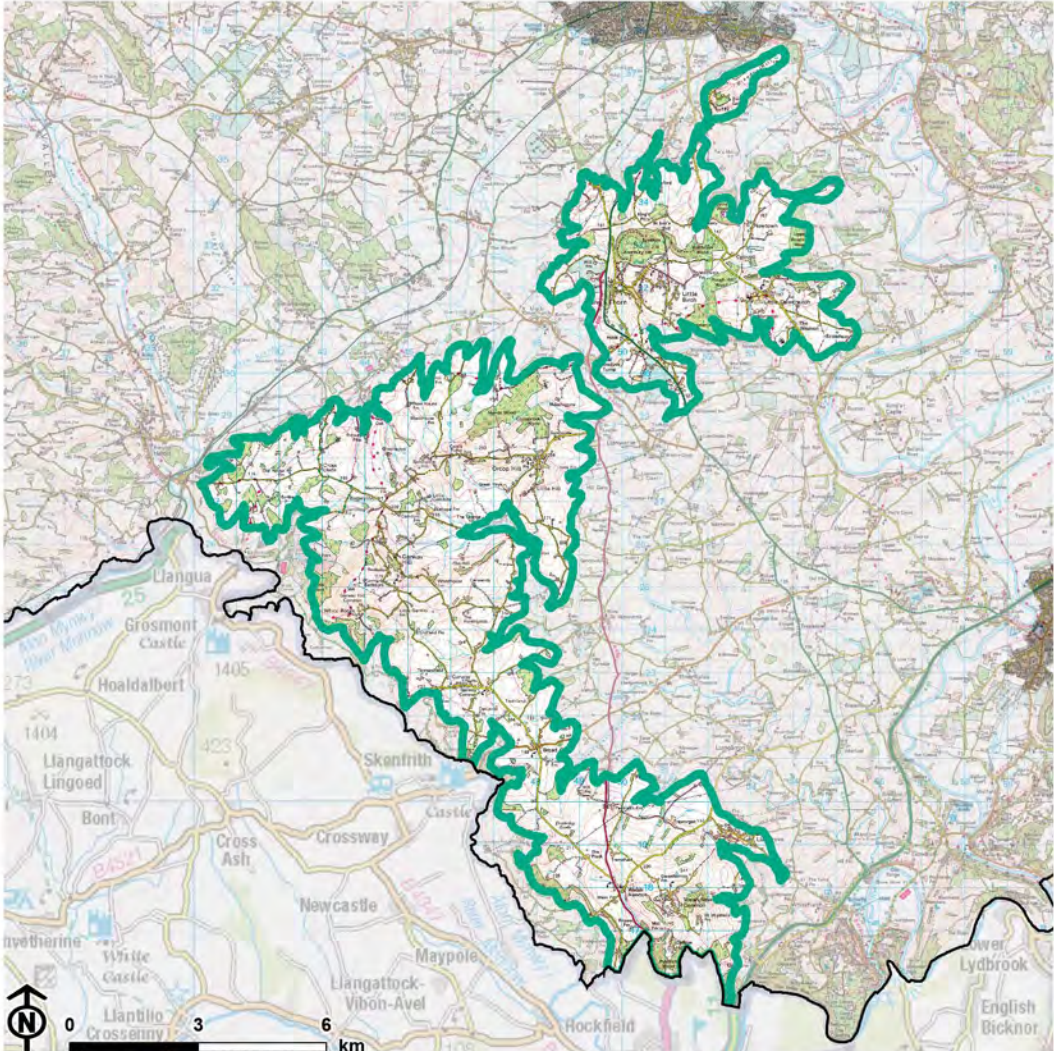
**7.163** The LCT is defined by the underlying sandstone geology of Brownstone Sandstones, and its distinctive topography of rounded hills that sit above the 120-metre contour line.

**7.164** A landscape of rolling hills with remnant commons and wooded stream valleys. The southern part of the LCT has a Welsh Borders character with a small-scale field pattern and scattered farmsteads and hamlets linked by winding narrow lanes. The northern part is raised ground, transitioning towards the lower edge of Hereford city, influenced by the major A49 trunk road and larger villages at King's Thorn and Little Dewchurch.




**Figure 7.48: Typical View of LCT**



Figure 7.49: Location of Wooded Brownstone Hills



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-  LCT 11. Wooded Brownstone Hills
-  Herefordshire boundary
-  Settlement



## Key characteristics

### Topography, geology and drainage

- A distinctive group of small rounded hills linked by stream valleys, underlain by Brownstone sandstones.
- Numerous small springs rise on the hills and drain to the River Monnow in the south, and the Wye to the east (crossing LCT 14 Rolling Brownstone Plateau Farmlands).

### Agricultural land use and field patterns

- Between the woodlands, fertile sandy soils support a mixture of arable and pasture land uses.
- Field boundaries are defined by prominent, dense hedgerows, with frequent hedgerow trees, predominantly oak.
- Small-scale landscape with an organic enclosure pattern of medium size fields.

### Semi-natural habitats

- A well-wooded character created by large, discrete woodlands concentrated on steeper hill slopes, with considerable coverage of ancient woodland.
- Open hilltop commons have ecologically important grassland habitats.

### Settlement and road pattern

- Dispersed individual houses and wayside cottages interspersed with several loose settlements, some formed around commons.
- Complex, intimate network of narrow intersecting lanes contrast with the major transport corridor of the A49 in the north.

- Limited access by public right of way, although there are significant areas of Open Access land on commons.

#### **Cultural heritage**

- Iron Age hillforts, castles and historic farmsteads provide time depth within the landscape, and a reminder of the landscape's defensive history.
- Listed buildings include farmhouses and churches utilise traditional building materials such as local sandstones.

#### **Views and perceptual qualities**

- Expansive views from hilltops over Herefordshire, and across to Wales contrast with enclosed woodlands and lanes.
- A tranquil rural landscape with a sense of remoteness due to the limited access and a good experience of dark night skies.

## **Landscape character description**

### **Natural influences**

**7.165** The bedrock geology is characterised by outcrops of the higher beds of the Lower Old Red Sandstone, known as Brownstones (Brownstone Formation). Brownstones is a pebbly sandstone formed during the Devonian period, which is more resistant to erosion than the Old Red Sandstones that typify much of Herefordshire. This has resulted in the distinctive small, rounded hills topography that characterise the Wooded Brownstone Hills LCT. These hill tops are most obvious at Dinedor Hill (182 metres AOD) and Aconbury Hill (276 metres AOD) in the north, with Orcop Hill (260 metres AOD), Garway Hill Common (366 metres AOD) and Welsh Newton Common (264 metres AOD) in the south.

**7.166** Superficial geology is limited to small areas of alluvium along stream courses, and occasional areas of Quaternary head deposits. There is a single LGS at Garway Hill Common Thurfurs, which is a good example of the local geology. Small streams run down the wooded slopes, and there are a number of springs and ponds.

**7.167** There is considerable woodland coverage on the hilltops and sides, a mix of broadleaves and conifers. Much of the woodland is ancient although some areas have been replanted. Woodlands are generally large and discrete, with irregular boundaries, except for Linear woodlands which line the stream valleys. Many ancient woodlands are found along the valley of the River Monnow and in the vicinity of King's Thorn, such as at Mynde Wood and Nether Wood on Aconbury Hill. Scattered remnant traditional orchards and intact hedgerows with hedgerow trees, often oak, add to the wooded character of the landscape.

**7.168** The soils vary across the landscape, although are predominantly good quality (Grades 2 and 3) which results in a mix of arable and pasture land use.

**7.169** Many of the hilltops are open with grassland, bracken and remnants of formerly extensive commons. They support priority habitat grassland, including grassland moorland on Garway Hill Common (designated as a LWS) and small areas of lowland dry acid grassland on Welsh Newton Common. .

## Cultural influences

**7.170** The natural topography of the landscape, with rounded hills rising above major river valleys (the Monnow, Wye and tributaries) has lent itself to a long history of being used as defensive sites. Iron Age hillforts are located at Dinedor Camp and Aconbury Camp, and there are remains of post-Conquest castles at New Buildings Farm and Pembridge Castle.

**7.171** This area was part of the Welsh Marches. Its character today reflects this, with place and farm names often Welsh or anglicised (in contrast to areas further east within Herefordshire) and a historic landscape and settlement

pattern created by Welsh and Anglo-Norman control. Norman Marcher lords were often in dispute over land, and may have led directly to the grant of 2000 acres at Archenfield to the Knights Templar; it was hoped the Templars would bring stability to the area and assist in the safe passage of goods to markets.

**7.172** This is an organic landscape, with an intact, irregular field pattern that is typically of pre-18<sup>th</sup> century origin, some derived from the enclosure of open fields. Fields are generally medium in size.

**7.173** There is limited settlement in the Wooded Brownstone Hills, with clusters of farmsteads and cottages on narrow winding lanes. Loose settlements are formed from clustered smallholdings, for example at Llangrove and King's Thorn and others on the remnants of former commons, such as Welsh Newton Common and Garway. These are likely to have been formed on land cleared from woodland. The larger villages of Little Dewchurch, Llangrove and King's Thorn have increased with more modern residential development.

**7.174** Historic buildings within the LCT are limited to farmhouses and associated outbuildings and churches. These are often built from local materials, predominantly sandstone rubble (whitewashed in places), with some timber-framed buildings.

**7.175** Key transport routes, such as the A49 and A466 cut a major corridor through the western edge of the northern area, while the local road network comprises small, winding lanes that are often very steep. There are limited public rights of way although footpaths connect the small settlements, and the Herefordshire Trail runs between Garway and Little Dewchurch. A small section of National Cycle Route 46 runs through the west. There are considerable areas of CROW Open Access Land on the commons (Garway Common, Garway Hill Common, Dinedor Common) and in some of the larger woodlands such as Nether Wood.

## Perceptual influences

**7.176** A largely tranquil landscape with a good experience of dark night skies away from the trunk roads. Due to the limited access, the LCT often has a remote character. Modern influences on the landscape include a solar farm south of Little Dewchurch, telecommunications masts on Dinedor Ridge, and lines of pylons in the south and north.

**7.177** Enclosed views from woodlands and along winding lanes, contrast with more expansive views on the open commons and from hillsides looking across the valleys to neighbouring hills. From the Dinedor Ridge there are views north across Hereford City to the distinctive cornstone hills above Credenhill and Hope under Dinmore (LCT 12 Wooded Sandstone Hills); conversely the views from Hereford City to Dinedor Hill are mentioned in the Hereford townscape appraisal. From Garway Hill there are panoramic views across Herefordshire to the Cotswolds and west to the peaks of the Black Mountains in Wales.

## Landscape Evaluation

### Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

- The distinctive topography of rounded wooded hills.
- Commons and heaths on higher ground which are important for biodiversity and provide recreational value.
- The blocks of broadleaved and mixed woodlands, the majority of which is ancient, providing visual interest in the landscape and ecological value.
- The organic landscape pattern of woodlands and fields bound by dense hedgerows with mature trees.
- The pre-historic and medieval defensive monuments, providing evidence of the conflicted land ownership of the landscape.

- Historic settlement pattern of farmhouses and loose settlements linked by narrow winding lanes which contribute to the rural character of the landscape.
- The visual contrast between enclosed intimate views in the woodlands, and wide views from higher ground across valleys.

## Forces for change

The Wooded Brownstone Hills LCT has retained its inherent character in a good condition. The prominent landform of small rounded hills and discrete woodlands are the most dominant characteristics.

The character of the woodlands was altered by the introduction of conifer planting and suffer from poor woodland management. Hedgerows are sometimes undermanaged, with some lost due to agricultural intensification and hedgerow trees are ageing, altering the historic field pattern.

Characteristic commons, on hilltops or at the heart of villages, are often declining due to changes in common grazing practices, affecting the diversity of grassland habitats resulting from the expansion of bracken, scrub and secondary woodland.

The existing loose settlement pattern is vulnerable to changes in character through the conversion of existing farm buildings no longer required, and modest increases in size or infill development in the larger settlements.



**Figure 7.50: Steep narrow lanes lined by dense hedgerows, with long views across the lowlands**



## Landscape Guidelines

The overall aim for the Wooded Brownstone Hills LCT is to retain and strengthen the distinctive landscape character which is derived from the combination of the wooded rounded hills, intervening valleys, and historic landscape and settlement pattern. The landscape's woodlands and hedgerows are well managed and characteristic commons are preserved using traditional methods (such as common grazing). The distinctive settlement pattern of hamlets and loose settlements linked by narrow winding lanes is maintained.

**Figure 7.51: Arable fields with hedgerow trees, and long views across Herefordshire**



## Landscape management

- Encourage catchment-sensitive land management practices to improve soil quality and prevent run off into the local rivers.
- Manage and restore the fast-flowing watercourses and associated wetland habitats (including riparian trees and woodland) to enhance their contribution to landscape character. This will also help to maintain high water quality, reduce peak flows and enhance their nature conservation interest.
- Encourage sustainable management of traditional pastures (i.e. low-density livestock grazing and late hay cutting) to strengthen the distinctive

pastoral character of the hills, and enhance their biodiversity interest. Create new grasslands where possible to improve connectivity.

- Promote sustainable and wildlife-friendly land management practices that provide multiple landscape and biodiversity benefits. Conserve and enhance key landscape features including orchards, woodlands, trees, hedgerows and grasslands.
- Conserve and enhance the traditional small-scale organic enclosure pattern of hedged fields, strengthening the structure of the landscape and improving habitat connectivity.
- Where necessary, encourage the reinstatement and gapping up of hedges in poor condition, using species matching the existing hedgerows.
- Retain the distinctive hedgerow oaks and enhance their age structure through new planting or encouraging the growth of existing plants to tree size.
- Encourage appropriate hedgerow management to ensure their long-term good health and survival. Hedgerows should be dense along most of their length with frequent healthy stems.
- Protect, manage and enhance the existing broadleaved and mixed woodlands. Use locally occurring species, favouring oak as the dominant species, to extend and link woodland habitats. This will strengthen landscape character (as well as reduce soil erosion and improve water quality).
- Conserve and manage the ancient woodland sites to encourage biodiversity. Where possible, replace conifers with locally occurring native species, particularly on replanted ancient woodland sites (PAWS).
- Consider opportunities to strengthen the landscape character through new woodland creation, using a mixed age structure and irregular outlines, in line with the aims of the Severn Treescape project.
- Conserve and restore tree cover along watercourses, to enhance their contribution to landscape character.

- Conserve and enhance areas of open grassland on the commons, through appropriate management techniques including scrub removal and suitable and sustainable grazing regimes.
- Protect the expansive views from higher ground across the valleys to surrounding areas, including from inappropriate development in adjacent landscapes.

## Development management

- Conserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes, ensuring that their character is not lost through unsympathetic highway works, unnecessary signage, street furniture, or lighting clutter.
- Conserve the historic settlement pattern. Minimise the impact of new development through careful design, in terms of siting, scale, style, layout and materials to be in keeping with the existing settlement character and landscape setting. Refer to the Herefordshire Design Code.
- Encourage the use of traditional and locally distinctive styles and materials that are in keeping with the local landscape, such as locally sourced sandstone, to build on the strong sense of place.
- Conserve heritage features and their landscape settings, including the numerous defensive structures. Encourage further interpretation and understanding of the border history of this landscape.
- Ensure new development and infrastructure does not detract from the high levels of rural tranquillity, dark skies experienced within the landscape.

# LCT 12: Wooded Sandstone Hills



## Location and summary

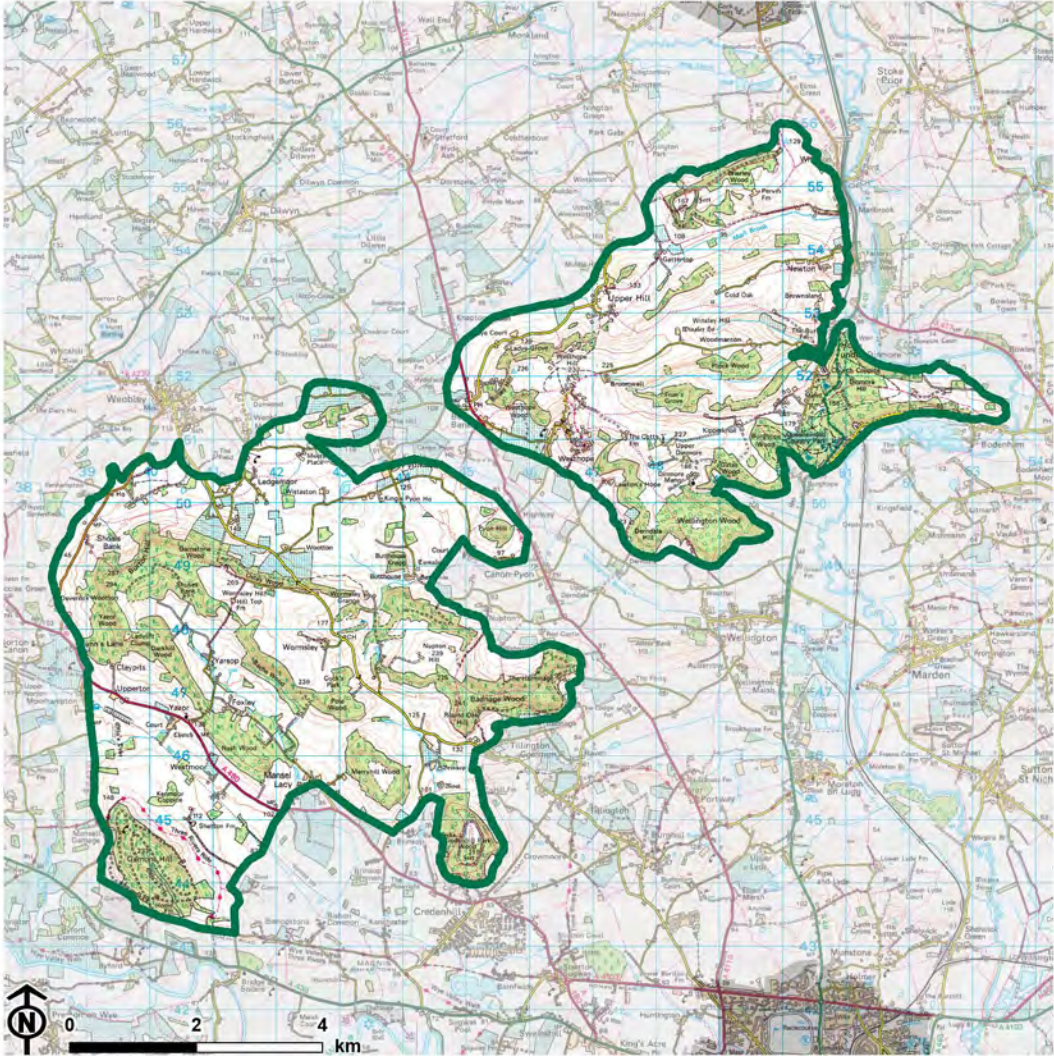
**7.178** The Wooded Sandstone Hills LCT is found in two locations within Herefordshire: in the Southern Hills extending from the Forest of Dean, and the Central Cornstone Hills rising abruptly from the Herefordshire plain. The boundaries are defined by the change in elevation above the surrounding lowlands (mostly above the 120-metre contour) and by their wooded character.

**7.179** This is a pronounced hilly landscape with dominant woodland cover, much of which is ancient woodland. The small, enclosed valleys between the hills are in mixed agricultural use, with fields bounded by strong hedgerows. Much of the Southern Hills fall within the Wye Valley AONB.




**Figure 7.52: Typical view of LCT**



Figure 7.53: Location of Wooded Sandstone Hills North



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-  LCT 12. Wooded Sandstone Hills
-  Herefordshire boundary
-  Settlement

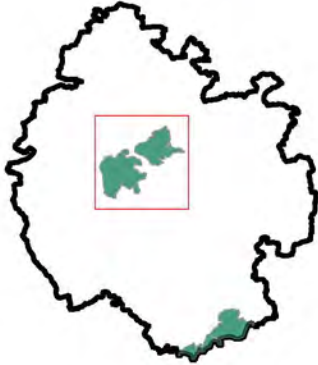
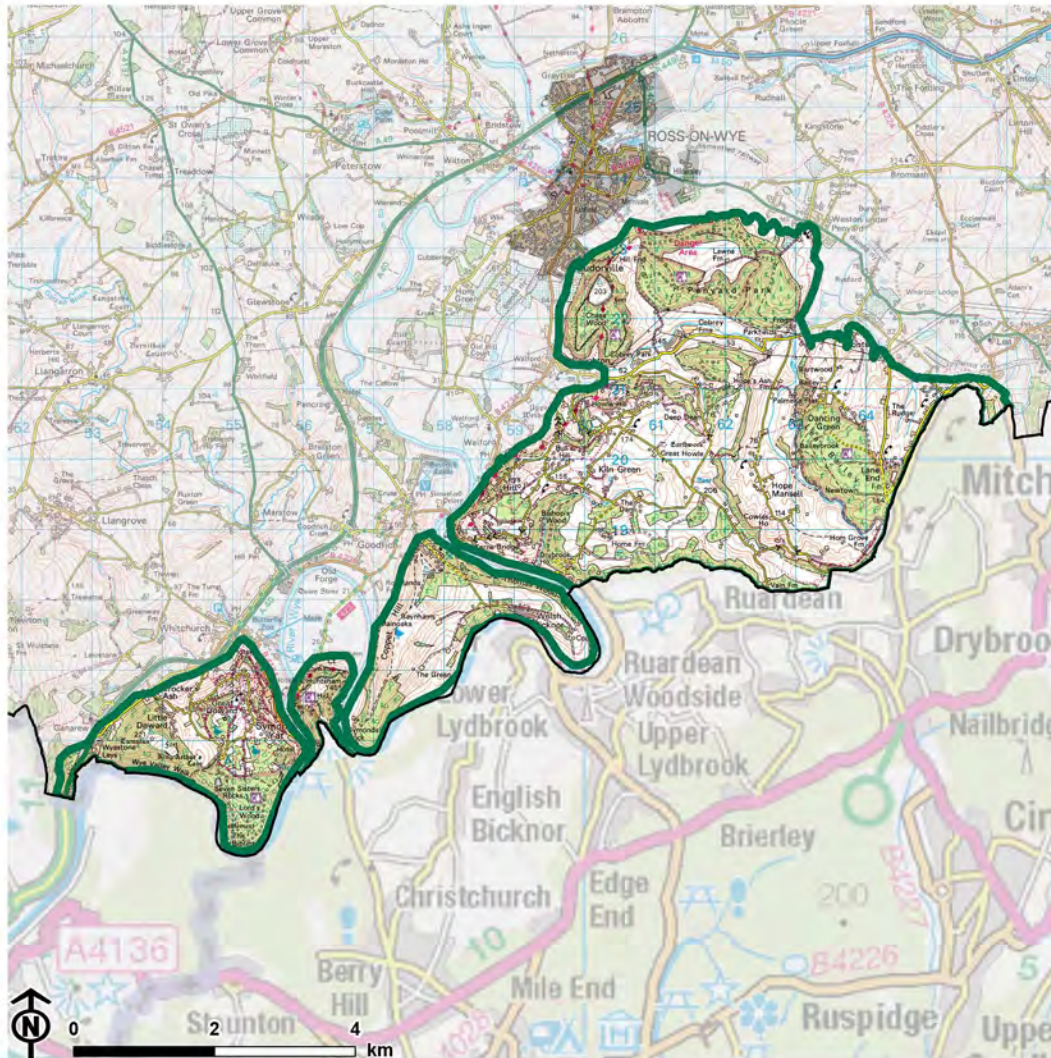





Figure 7.54: Location of Wooded Sandstone Hills South



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-  LCT 12. Wooded Sandstone Hills
-  Herefordshire boundary
-  Settlement





## Key characteristics

### Topography, geology and drainage

- Steep-sided hills which rise abruptly from the surrounding lowlands.
- Underlain by Devonian sandstone and occasional limestone geology.

### Agricultural land use and field patterns

- Mixed agricultural landscape with a small-scale field pattern enclosed by hedgerows and areas of woodland.
- Historic field pattern generally created from the enclosure of earlier field systems and open or common fields. Boundaries are defined by prominent dense hedges with hedgerow trees.

### Semi-natural habitats

- Heavily wooded hills, with mixed broadleaved woodlands often of ancient origin. Ecological designations at international, national and local levels common.
- Scattered traditional orchards and small areas of good quality semi-improved grassland and lowland meadows are common.
- Thick field boundary hedgerows with numerous hedgerow trees are a prominent landscape feature.

### Settlement and road pattern

- The sparse settlement pattern of farms and individual wayside dwellings is linked by a complex network of narrow intersecting lanes.

### Cultural heritage

- Long history of human activity from the Palaeolithic, Iron Age to non-conformist chapels, often constructed of corrugated iron.
- Local vernacular of sandstone rubble and some black and white timber framed buildings. Small individual cottages constructed out of red brick or stone.
- Strong rights of way network, with open access land in some areas of woodland.

### Views and perceptual qualities

- An intimate landscape with a domestic scale.
- Tranquil and sometimes remote character, with limited settlement and few roads.
- Woodlands and dense hedgerow trees create an enclosed landscape, with some filtered views across the valleys.

## Landscape character description

### Natural influences

**7.180** The topography is a defining characteristic of the type. Originally part of a continuous plateau that was eroded by glaciers, more resistant areas emerged as groups of hills separated by steep-sided small valleys. The hills are generally underlain by Old Red Sandstone rocks formed in the Lower Devonian period (Tintern and St Maughans Formation). The Cornstone Hills, in central Herefordshire, are named for the alternating beds of siltstone and sandstone containing nodular calcrete limestones formally known as ‘cornstones’. The limestone and sandstones were mined on a small-scale for building stone and lime, and a number of former quarries are locally designated (LGS) as they provide access to important geological formations.

**7.181** Large, irregularly shaped woodlands dominate the hills, most of it deciduous with abundant oak and ash, and some of it mixed. The woodlands have a high proportion of ancient woodland, with some areas of PAWS. The Wye Valley Woodlands SAC extends into LCA Southern Hills, and is internationally designated for its mixed woodland character of beech forests, old coppice, pollards and high forest, with lime, elm and oak all present. Many of the other woodlands are nationally designated as SSSIs, or locally designated as LWS. Coppett Hill is a LNR, designated for its wooded habitat and open hillside, providing habitats for butterflies, birds and fungi. Many of the woodlands are commercially managed to produce quality timber, such as the Garnons estate.

**7.182** Outside the woodlands, soils are varied, mostly Grades 3 and 4 in the south (LCA Southern Hills), and Grades 2 and 3 in the north (LCA Cornstone Hills). This results in a mixed agricultural land use, typically with arable crops on flatter ground and lower slopes, and pasture grazing on the steeper slopes. Fields are small-scale, and generally enclosed by hedgerows with a good scattering of hedgerow trees. Other priority habitats within the LCT include small areas of good quality semi-improved grassland and scattered traditional orchards, which add to the wooded character of the landscape.

## Cultural influences

**7.183** The Wooded Sandstone Hills LCT has a long history of human activity. Arthur's Cave and Merlin's Cave at Great Doward are two important prehistoric caves, which show evidence of human activity during the Palaeolithic era. Animal bones, bone and flint tools suggest the caves were used by hunting groups to survive the harsh winter conditions. A number of Iron Age camps are located on the hilltops, utilising the natural topography for defensive purposes, such as Crendenhill Camp, Little Doward and Invington (Scheduled Monuments). A section of Offa's Dyke (Scheduled Monument), the 8<sup>th</sup> century earthwork that marked the extent of Offa's lands, also crosses the LCT.

**7.184** The low-density historic settlement pattern has been retained, and comprises an ad hoc pattern of individual farmsteads and wayside cottages

linked by narrow lanes. The settlement pattern developed in a small-scale opportunistic manner and these communities are characterised by the presence of small non-conformist chapels often cheaply constructed from corrugated iron, particularly in the south. Sandstone rubble is a common building material, some with a timber-frame. A number of churches are Grade II\* listed, including the 12<sup>th</sup> century Chapel of St John of Jerusalem, a former chapel of the Knights Hospitaller. The Weobley Conservation Area extends into the north of LCA Cornstone Hills. Foxley Registered Park and Garden is a large estate in LCA Cornstone Hills, home to Sir Uvedale Price, one of the first proponents of the picturesque landscape movement. The landscape comprises of woods with rides on the upper valley sides, and farmland, pools and small-scale settlements on the valley bottom. Later Victorian houses, such as Garnons and its gardens were built to take advantage of the elevated position and extensive views.

**7.185** The landscape pattern owes much of its character to the scale of earlier woodland clearance and historic enclosure of former common land. The field pattern is a result of planned enclosure in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, created from earlier field systems or common grazing or arable lands. There are some fieldscapes that have a pre-18<sup>th</sup> century origin.

**7.186** The steep topography of the landscape has resulted in a few narrow roads that wind their way up the slopes, while trunk roads run along the valley bottoms. The Hereford, Hay and Brecon Railway ran through LCA Cornstone Hills; however it was never a commercial success and was closed in the 1960s.

**7.187** The landscape type is crossed by a number of public rights of way, including the promoted Three Rivers Ride and Wye Valley walk. Herefordshire Golf Club and Queenswood Country Park (the only designated country park in Herefordshire) are both located in LCA Cornstone Hills, providing different recreational opportunities. There are significant areas of CROW open access land within the LCT, for example at Westhope Hill and Credenhill Park Wood.

## Perceptual influences

**7.188** The LCT has a strong sense of place provided by the localised steep and wooded hills rising above the wide lowland plains (within adjacent LCTs). The woodland cover provides a strong sense of unity and visual integration.

**7.189** Views are usually framed between and filtered through the woodland blocks. The hillsides are covered in mixed woodlands, where deciduous trees and dark conifers contrast in colour and texture with the arable land on the valleys below. There are occasional views west to the Welsh hills. The Wooded Sandstone Hills are highly distinctive in views from outside the landscape type; views to Penyard Park and Chase Wood are mentioned as forming an important backdrop to Ross-on-Wye within the townscape appraisal.

**7.190** This is an intimate landscape, on a domestic scale, with a complex pattern of pasture fields and narrow lanes. The landscape is quiet, tranquil and largely undeveloped, with a good experience of dark night skies across the landscape. This is only disrupted by noise from A roads within and close by, and views to polytunnels.

## Landscape Evaluation

### Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

- The distinctive topography of steep sided hills which rise abruptly from the broad valleys, providing a strong sense of place.
- Extensive semi-natural woodland habitats across the hilltops, much of ancient origin, which are internationally, nationally and locally designated.
- The diversity of land use with arable fields, grazing, prominent dense hedgerows and woodland providing visual interest.

- Important prehistoric monuments including Palaeolithic caves and Iron Age hillforts provide time depth.
- The ad hoc settlement pattern of farmhouses and wayside cottages, with distinctive sandstone and timber framed vernacular.
- The intimate character of small fields enclosed by hedgerows, large woodlands and numerous hedgerow trees.
- Strong rights of way network, with open access land providing recreational value.
- Tranquil and often remote character, with a strong sense of tranquillity and dark night skies.

## Forces for change

Previous forestry practices have often resulted in geometrically shaped blocks of woodland with a high proportion of conifers which can disrupt the visual unity of the landscape. This is particularly true when conifers dominate the skyline.

Modern agricultural practices have led to an increase in polytunnels in the adjoining valleys, which are visually prominent in views from the Wooded Sandstone Hills.

An increase in horse grazing on the slopes has resulted in the conversion of small pastures to paddocks, with subdivision of fields by horse tape and an increase in stabling.

New residential development and extensions to originally modest cottages do not always reflect the small, domestic scale of this landscape, and result in the loss of small plots of rough land or pasture.

**Figure 7.55: Arable fields with prominent hedgerow trees and long views across Herefordshire**



## Landscape Guidelines

The overall aim for the Wooded Sandstone Hills LCT is to conserve the rural intimate character of the landscape created by hilltops with extensive and linked native woodlands interspersed with small intimate valleys with a mixed agricultural land use enclosed by strong hedgerows. Preserve the small-scale ad-hoc settlement pattern, respecting the strong local vernacular and narrow hedge-lined winding lanes. There are occasional views across the broad valleys to adjacent wooded hills.

**Figure 7.56: Narrow lanes intersect arable fields, bounded by thick hedgerows**



## Landscape management

- Conserve and manage the ancient woodland sites to encourage biodiversity. Where possible, replace conifer plantations with locally occurring native species, particularly on replanted ancient woodland sites (PAWS).
- Consider opportunities to strengthen the landscape character through new woodland creation, to link fragmented woodlands, where the interlocking pattern of woodland is no longer evident. This is in line with the aims of the Severn Treescape project. Ensure a mixed age structure and irregular outlines are used.
- Forestry practices should respect the character of the landscape, promote traditional management techniques (e.g. coppicing), and take particular care when assessing the visual impact of new planting and felling.



- Conserve and enhance the traditional pattern and structure of the landscape. Improve the quality and continuity of existing field boundary hedgerows and increase hedgerow tree numbers. Ensure that hedgerow and hedgerow tree species are native, dense, provide a diverse habitat, and are appropriate to the local character.
- Encourage appropriate hedgerow management to ensure their long-term good health and survival. Hedgerows should be dense along most of their length with frequent healthy stems.
- Promote sustainable and wildlife-friendly land management practices that provide multiple landscape and biodiversity benefits, to conserve and enhance key landscape features, the natural beauty of the landscape, its biodiversity value and connectivity.
- Encourage sustainable management of traditional pastures, including through late hay cutting and low-density livestock grazing. Create new grasslands where possible to improve connectivity. This will strengthen the pastoral character of the steeper slopes, and enhance their biodiversity interest.
- Encourage the retention and appropriate management of permanent pasture. Where pasture fields have been converted to horse paddocks, minimise the extent of field subdivision and associated structures.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, on CROW open access land and along public rights of way. Improve connections and signage, enhancing access and enjoyment across the woodland and farmland.
- Ensure the special qualities of the Wye Valley AONB are conserved and enhanced. As appropriate, look at opportunities and strategies set out in the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan.

## Development management

- Conserve the area's archaeological prehistoric monuments and their landscape setting. Encourage further education and understanding of these monuments through increased interpretation.

- Conserve the historic ad hoc settlement pattern. Minimise the impact of new development through careful design, in terms of siting, scale, style, layout and materials to be in keeping with the existing settlement character and landscape setting.
- Encourage the use of traditional and locally distinctive styles and materials that are in keeping with the local sandstone vernacular, to build on the sense of place. Refer to the Herefordshire Design Code.
- Conserve the pattern of narrow intersecting lanes, ensuring their character is not lost through unsympathetic highway works, unnecessary signage, lighting, street furniture, or removal of hedgerows and hedgerow trees.

# LCT 13: Plateau Farmland and Estates



## Location and summary

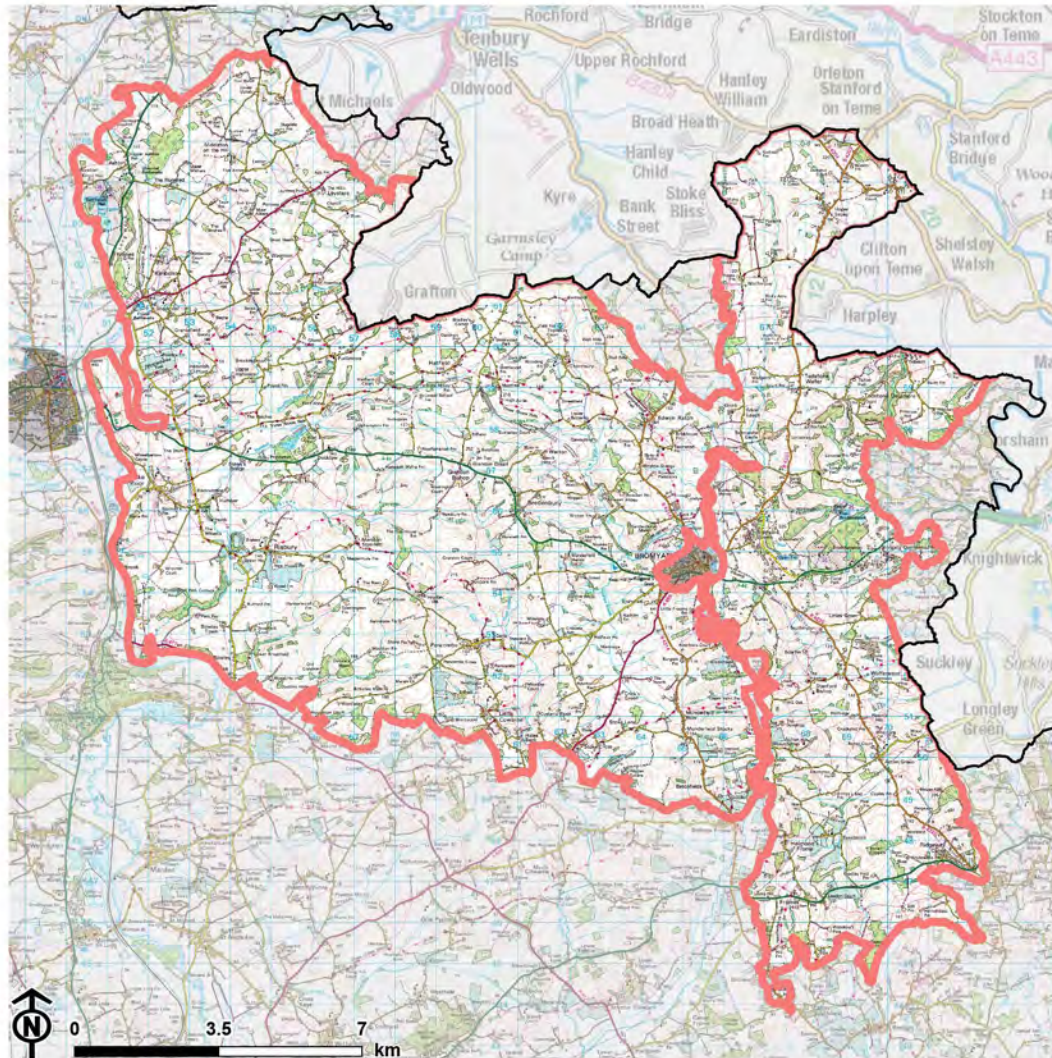
**7.191** The Plateau Farmland and Estates LCT is located in the north-east of Herefordshire although the type extends across the county boundary into Worcestershire to the north and east. It is defined by the rolling open plateau around Bromyard, which rises above the Herefordshire lowlands to the west and south. The plateau has distinctive limestone edges, marked in some places by woodland belts.

**7.192** The landscape is sparsely populated and characterised by mixed farming interspersed with formal parklands and wooded dingles. It retains its historic dispersed settlement pattern of small estate hamlets and manor houses. The east of the area is influenced by the urban edges of Bromyard.




**Figure 7.57: Typical view of LCT**



Figure 7.58: Location of Plateau Farmlands and Estates



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-  LCT 13. Plateau Farmland and Estates
-  Herefordshire boundary
-  Settlement



## Key characteristics

### Topography, geology and drainage

- A pronounced elevated plateau, with gently rolling topography that rises abruptly from the lowlands.
- Wooded limestone scarps define the edges of the plateau.
- The landscape is underlain by Old Red Sandstone with shallow, poor soils.
- The plateau is incised by small narrow river and stream valleys, with spring lines on the limestone scarp.

### Agricultural land use and field patterns

- Traditional mixed farming land use with arable dominating the flatter landform of the plateau and smaller irregular pasture on steeper slopes.
- Scattered small-scale traditional orchards, particularly in the east and west.
- Mixed regular and irregular medium to large-scale fields bound by species-rich hedgerows with hedgerow trees, and small woodlands.
- Horse grazing with associated developments is common.

### Semi-natural habitats

- Linear pattern of deciduous woodland in valleys and dingles, with some scattered ancient woodland.
- Scattered priority habitat traditional orchards, and areas of lowland meadow around Bredenbury.
- A parkland estate character with priority habitat wood pasture, planned groups of veteran trees, with ornamental conifers common.

### Settlement and road pattern

- A sparsely populated landscape of isolated churches, small estate hamlets, manor houses and country houses within parkland.
- Hamlets have retained their historic character with a local vernacular of local reddish brown and grey sandstones.
- Settlements are linked by smaller, often sunken, historic lanes, while the few major roads provide east-west and north-south connections through Bromyard.

### Cultural heritage

- A long history of human activity, with earthworks providing evidence of Neolithic, Iron Age, Roman and medieval activities and settlements.
- Large farmhouses and estate houses, often listed, are scattered across the landscape, which retain an estate character.
- Public rights of way are limited to promoted routes that cross the plateau. Common land at Bromyard Downs is popular for recreation.

### Views and perceptual qualities

- Variation in topography leads to changing views, with enclosed views on valley bottoms and wider views from the plateau edges across surrounding landscapes.
- Field boundary hedgerows are visually prominent on the plateau landform.
- A relatively remote and tranquil landscape with a good experience of dark night skies.

## Landscape character description

### Natural influences

**7.193** The plateau topography is the defining characteristic of the landscape type. It is an elevated gently rolling plateau incised by small river and stream valleys and wooded dingles, including the Whyte Brook and Hackley Brook. The plateau drops abruptly to the Lugg and Frome river valleys to the west and east. Rapid run off from the plateau can contribute to significant flooding in the adjacent valleys and lowlands.

**7.194** The landscape is underlain by Old Red Sandstone (St Maughans Formation) from the Lower Devonian period, with areas of superficial Quaternary glacial head deposits, marking the eastern limit of the Welsh ice sheet, and alluvium along the small river valleys. The steep limestone scarp edge of the plateau, formed of Bishop's Frome Limestone, is a key feature of the type. A number of Local Geological Sites are designated on the plateau, as excellent examples of the St Maughans Formation. The landscape is overlain with shallow, poor soils (mostly classified as Grade 3), with heavier loams and clays in the narrow river valleys. The landscape supports arable farming on the flatter areas and sheep pasture dominates the steeper slopes. Fields have sinuous boundaries and are bound by hedgerows, with damson hedgerow trees common.

**7.195** Woodland and tree cover provides structure on the plateau, and give it a well-treed character. These consist of small woods, often ancient or replanted ancient woodland, game plantations, and wood pasture within the estates, for example at Brockhampton. The woods are often of a regular shape and dominated by oak. Groups of veteran trees, often exotic conifers, are noticeable features of the ornamental grounds and parklands of the country estates. Linear woodlands, often of ancient origin, run along the limestone scarps on the edges of the plateau, and in the steep wooded dingles.



**7.196** Priority habitat traditional orchards are found across the plateau.

Traditional orchards for cider and perry were planted from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, with hop fields following in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These were typically planted on flatter ground, intermixed with arable cropping.

**7.197** Priority habitat semi-improved grassland and lowland meadow

(particularly around Bredenbury) create interest and variety across the plateau.

In places, roadside verges support bracken and other heathy or acid grassland vegetation. Two areas of woodland and grassland are designated nationally as Special Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSI) – Hill Hole Dingle SSSI for its ancient woodland with associated grassland and scrub on a steep secluded section of the Humber Brook valley, and Birchend SSSI for the woodland and largest area of calcareous grassland in Herefordshire on a ridge overlooking the River Frome. Woodland and grassland sites are also often designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).

## Cultural influences

**7.198** Earthworks, including several Scheduled Monuments provide evidence for Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age activities on the plateau. Wall Hills Camp, Thornbury is one of the largest and most prominent Iron Age hillforts within the landscape type, and dates from the Iron Age. The plateau was home to extensive Roman settlement, including a fort at Coppice House and a settlement east of Blackwardine.

**7.199** The plateau has largely retained its historic field pattern, with small to medium-scale fields. In the west the fields are pre-18<sup>th</sup> century in origin, derived from enclosure of open field systems. Elsewhere there is a mix of planned fieldscapes from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (some created from common arable or grazing), and pre-18<sup>th</sup> century field patterns.

**7.200** The settlement pattern across the plateau is of dispersed settlements, as a result of settling common land. Nucleated settlements developed along stream valleys and springlines in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, as Bromyard was

developing as the major market town of the area. Following the Norman conquest, many manors developed, and their remains and pattern of groupings of a motte, church and manor house remain, for example at Edwyn Ralph. In the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, estates with landscaped grounds and gardens emerged, sometimes from the original medieval deer parks, such as at Hampton Court where a late 17<sup>th</sup> century formal garden was improved in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Humphrey Repton and Joseph Paxton (and is now a Registered Park and Garden). Similarly, Brockhampton Manor was built in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, however in the 18<sup>th</sup> century a new fashionable brick house was built on higher ground and a landscape park created (now a Registered Park and Garden). The third Registered Park and Garden in the LCT is Berrington Hall, where the estate was laid out to a design by Lancelot (Capability) Brown. Brown created a lake and springs from a tributary of the River Lugg, and used views across to the Black Mountains, Brecon Beacons and Iron Age hillfort of Croft Ambrey as part of his designs. Other estates include Broadfield and Hennor House, and together they provide an ordered character to the landscape.

**7.201** Outside of estates, small hamlets with a manor house, farm and church are typical across the landscape such as at Thornbury and Tedstone Delamere (both designated as Conservation Areas). A local vernacular of reddish brown and grey sandstone dominates, with some timber-framed buildings. This historic settlement pattern of large country houses and small estate villages and hamlets has altered little, although some modern development exists within the villages. The east of the LCT is influenced by the urban expansion of Bromyard, with on-going and planned residential development and associated road improvements. The landscape on the outskirts of the town is characterised by urban fringe developments, including a car showroom and industrial units to the north of the town.

**7.202** The settlements are linked by small rural roads, which are often sunken, and lined by hedgerows. Three A roads cross the plateau, connecting east-west and north-south through Bromyard, including the well-used A44, which links the West Midlands and Mid Wales.

**7.203** Promoted routes including the Three Choirs Way, Herefordshire Trail and Three Rivers Ride provide public access across the plateau. Bromyard Downs is an area of open access, and is popular for recreation.

## Perceptual influences

**7.204** This is a relatively remote rural landscape largely unaffected by modern development. There are areas of tranquillity associated with the steep, wooded valleys, woodlands, parklands and orchards and traditional hamlets connected by narrow sunken lanes.

**7.205** The rolling topography creates a changing sequence of visual perspectives, ranging from open vistas on the plateau summits to more enclosed views along the valley bottoms. Long views from the plateau edges are possible across the adjacent landscapes, with the North West Herefordshire hills visible to the west. Glimpses of Eaton Hill are mentioned within the Leominster Conservation Area Appraisal.

## Landscape Evaluation

### Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

- The elevated rolling plateau, with wooded limestone scarp slopes which creates a distinctive landform rising above the surrounding lowlands.
- Steeply incised dingles lined by ancient woodland which are a distinctive feature of the landscape.
- A mixed land use of traditional orchards, woodlands, parklands associated with historic estates, and mixed farming with strong hedgerows, which create a strong landscape pattern.
- Archaeological earthworks and historic field patterns that create a sense of time depth.

- Historic estates with distinctive parklands and houses, which create a sense of time depth and ordered character.
- Dispersed hamlets with a strong local vernacular of reddish brown and grey sandstone which provides a sense of place.
- Narrow sunken lanes lined by hedgerows, that contribute to the rural character.
- Wide and varied views from the plateau edge across the surrounding lowlands which contrast with the enclosed character of the wooded dingles.
- A strong sense of rural remoteness, tranquillity and dark skies.

## Forces for change

The Plateau Farmland and Estates LCT is subject to many of the common forces for change across Herefordshire, relating to changes in agricultural practice. This includes a reduction in pasture and loss of meadows, loss and deterioration of traditional orchards as they are replaced by bush orchards and an increase in poultry farming, large scale agricultural buildings and equine developments.

There has also been a decline in traditional estate management, including hedgerow management, and ongoing ornamental tree planting, leading to an ageing tree structure.

Development pressure in the LCT is generally low but there has been small-scale development in the estate villages which is not in keeping with the distinctive reddish brown and grey sandstone vernacular and continued expansion of Bromyard into the surrounding landscape.

Figure 7.59: Estate manor house and gatehouse at Brockhampton



## Landscape Guidelines

The strategy for the Plateau Farmlands and Estates LCT is to conserve and enhance the distinctive pattern of historic parkland and mixed farming including permanent grasslands, traditional orchards and small woodlands. The dispersed settlement pattern and narrow sunken country roads should be retained.

**Figure 7.60: Stockings Meadow including lowland meadow and deciduous woodlands**



## Landscape management

- Promote sustainable and wildlife-friendly land management practices that provide multiple landscape and biodiversity benefits. Conserve and enhance key landscape features including orchards, grasslands, trees and hedgerows.
- Encourage catchment-sensitive land management practices to improve soil quality and prevent run off into the local rivers.
- Protect, manage and enhance native broadleaved woodlands. Use locally occurring species to link woodland habitats including small woodlands, linear tree cover along dingles, orchards and the hedgerow network.
- Conserve and manage the ancient woodland sites to encourage biodiversity. Where possible, replace conifer plantations with locally occurring native species, particularly on replanted ancient woodland sites (PAWS).

- Consider opportunities to strengthen the landscape character through new woodland creation, using a mixed age structure and irregular outlines.
- Improve the quality and continuity of existing field boundary and road hedgerows and increase hedgerow tree numbers. Ensure that hedgerow and hedgerow tree species are native, dense, provide a diverse habitat, and are appropriate to the local character.
- Encourage appropriate hedgerow management to ensure their long-term good health and survival. Hedgerows should be dense along most of their length with frequent healthy stems.
- Conserve and manage historic parklands within the landscape. Replant key ornamental tree species to retain parkland character.
- Conserve and enhance grassland and lowland meadow and improve habitat connectivity by creating new grasslands where possible.
- Protect and manage traditional apple orchards and hop growing. Where possible connect and extend small orchards, and involve local communities in management of these spaces.
- Encourage the retention and appropriate management of permanent pasture. Where pasture fields have been converted to horse paddocks, minimise the extent of field subdivision and associated structures.

## Development management

- Conserve the dispersed historic settlement pattern. Minimise the impact of new development through careful design in terms of siting, scale, and layout in keeping with the existing settlement character and landscape setting.
- Encourage the use of traditional and locally distinctive styles and materials that are in keeping, such as locally sourced sandstones and timber-framed houses, to build on the strong sense of place. Refer to the Herefordshire Design Code.

**Chapter 7** Landscape Character Type Profiles

**LCT 13** Plateau Farmland and Estates

- Conserve the area's historic and cultural historic assets including earthworks and designed parklands. Encourage further interpretation and understanding of these.
- Conserve the pattern of narrow sunken lanes, ensuring their character is not lost through unsympathetic highway works, unnecessary signage, lighting, street furniture, or removal of hedgerows and trees.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape on the Bromyard Downs and public rights of way, particularly along promoted routes that cross the LCT. Improve connectivity and signage.



# LCT 14: Rolling Brownstone Plateau Farmlands



## Location and summary

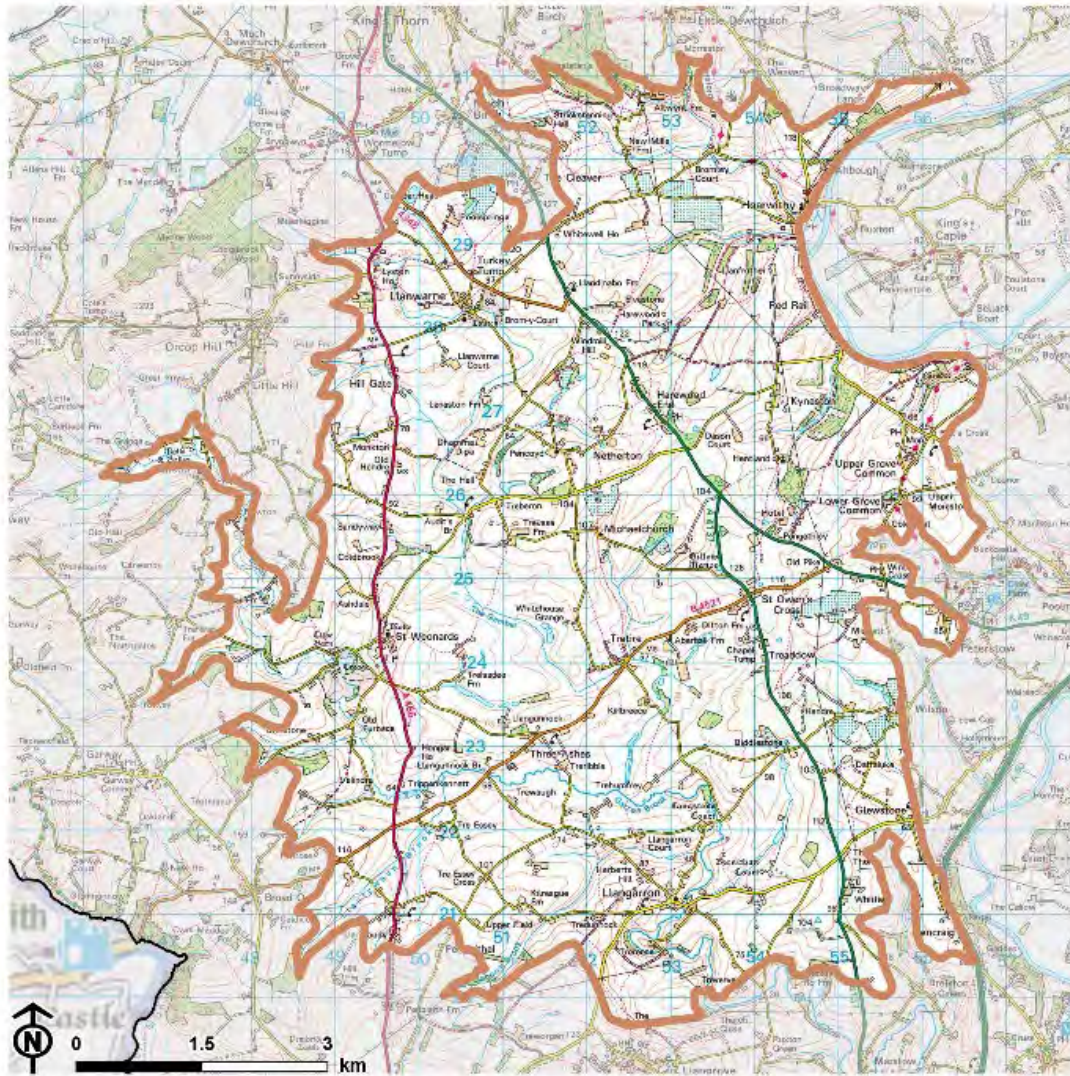
**7.206** The Rolling Brownstone Plateau Farmlands LCT is located in the south of the county and defined by the extent of the underlying sandstone geology of Brownstone Sandstones, and its elevated topography above the River Wye to the east. It is bound to the west by the rise in topography to the wooded hills along the Welsh border. Garren Brook and The Gamber form narrow valleys that wind through the area.




**7.207** The area is rural in character with scattered small villages and substantial farmsteads. Several A roads crossing the area are busy transport corridors. It has a gently rolling landform where fertile soils support a variety of agricultural land uses.

**Figure 7.61: Typical view of LCT**



Figure 7.62: Location of the Rolling Brownstone Plateau Farmlands



-  LCT 14. Rolling Brownstone Plateau Farmlands
-  Herefordshire boundary
-  Settlement



## Key characteristics

### Topography, geology and drainage

- An elevated landscape of rolling farmland underlain by Brownstone sandstones and incised by the narrow brook valleys of Garren Brook and The Gamber and their tributaries.

### Agricultural land use and field patterns

- The fertile sandy soils support intensive arable and horticultural land uses, with some sheep grazing near farms, and small traditional orchards.
- A large-scale landscape with a rectilinear field pattern of medium to large scale open fields with some modern field amalgamation.
- Fields are bound by straight single species hedgerows, which are often degraded.

### Semi-natural habitats

- Limited tree cover with scattered blocks of coniferous and deciduous woodlands, hedgerows with few hedgerow trees as well as tree groups around farmsteads and shelter belts.
- Roadside verges often support an associated heathy/acid grassland ground flora, which reflects the sandy nature of the soil.

### Settlement and road pattern

- Scattered historic farmsteads and a small number of villages and hamlets linked by narrow rural lanes but limited access by footpath.
- Large-scale modern farm buildings and polytunnels, often well-concealed within the landscape.

### **Cultural heritage**

- Numerous Grade II listed buildings throughout the LCT, including substantial country houses, farmhouses and stone farm buildings with a distinctive building style.

### **Views and perceptual qualities**

- A sense of openness due to the large arable fields and sparse tree cover. Some longer-distance views are available from higher ground.
- A linear pattern due to the predominantly north-south, east-west axes of roads, and the predominance of rectilinear fields and parallel lines of polytunnels.
- Rural and remote with largely unsettled character and a strong experience of dark skies, except along the busier trunk roads.

## **Landscape character description**

### **Natural influences**

**7.208** The bedrock geology is characterised by outcrops of the higher beds of the Lower Old Red Sandstone, known as Brownstones (Brownstones Formation). Brownstones is a pebbly sandstone formed during the Devonian period, which is more resistant to erosion than the Old Red Sandstones that typify much of Herefordshire. The bedrock is overlain by alluvium in the stream valleys.

**7.209** An elevated agricultural landscape with a moderate to gently rolling landform, falling to the lower ground of the Wye in the east and rising to the wooded hills along the Welsh border to the west. Narrow valleys are formed by the twisting and winding Garren Brook and The Gamber which drain south eastwards into the Wye, fed by numerous streams.

**7.210** The fertile soils are free draining, slightly acid and loamy. They form good quality agricultural land (predominantly Grade 2 with a concentration of Grade 1 in the east). As a result, the area is intensively farmed, supporting a range of agricultural land uses with sheep grazing in smaller fields near farms and arable and horticultural crops elsewhere.

**7.211** Intensive farming has limited ecological diversity, and the LCT contains no natural heritage designations, with only small areas of priority habitat deciduous woodland, often associated with villages or farms. Ancient woodlands are found mostly around Hentland, and on the western periphery of the LCT, although the larger woodlands are mostly replanted ancient woodland and managed as conifer woodland. There are several traditional orchards (priority habitat) across the landscape. Otherwise, tree cover is limited to sparsely scattered hedgerow trees, and groups of trees around farms. Hedges are often of holly, although hawthorn and occasionally hazel are also used. Hedges along the lanes are more often of mixed species including holly, hazel, hawthorn and elm.

**7.212** Roadside verges increase ecological diversity, with associated heathy/acid grassland ground flora, which reflects the sandy nature of the soil.

## Cultural influences

**7.213** This is an ordered, prosperous landscape. Planned fieldscapes typically 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century in origin predominant, although the traditional enclosure pattern has become less characteristic as fields have been enlarged to accommodate modern arable machinery. Fields vary in size but are usually medium to large, regular shaped fields separated by straight, single species hedges.

**7.214** The dispersed settlement pattern comprises substantial farmsteads and country houses. Some manor houses have a distinctive four square style such as Bernithan Court and Pencoyd Court dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century as well as the fortified Gillow Manor (Grade II\*) which dates from the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

There are very few villages, mostly small in size and located at small, offset crossroads, such as St Weonards, Llangarron, and Llanwarne. The ruined 13<sup>th</sup> century church (Grade II\*), is one of a number of listed buildings in Llanwarne, which is designated as a Conservation Area. Farmsteads often include large 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century stone barns (often Grade II listed) including threshing barns, granaries and cider houses. Traditional buildings, from farmhouses to churches, are constructed of the local sandstone with slate roofs. These are more likely to be of regularly coursed rubblestone rather than blocks. The local brownstones are pebbly sandstones, of a red-brown colour, and more uniform in appearance than Lower Old Red Sandstone formations.

**7.215** The settlement pattern has become compromised in places by the imposition of new housing which tends to have a clustered pattern, for example at Broad Oak. Lines of polytunnels are common in the north-east of the LCT along the A49, although these are often well-concealed within the landscape by hedgerows.

**7.216** The principal road within the LCT is the A466 which runs north-south linking Hereford and Monmouth, while the A49 and A4137 run along the eastern boundary. Elsewhere the LCT is traversed by a network of narrow lanes. The LCT has few public rights of way, which connect farmsteads to the hamlets. The promoted Herefordshire Trail runs through the east and north of the LCT.

## Perceptual influences

**7.217** This is a landscape with a remote and exposed agricultural character, defined chiefly by the scale of its field pattern, the sparsity of tree cover and its dispersed settlement pattern.

**7.218** The rolling landform and open landscape allow wide far-reaching views across the landscape and over lower surrounding areas, particularly over the Wye in the east. The uncluttered skylines make vertical features more prominent, such as telegraph poles. Narrow rural lanes enclosed by hedgerows, and incised brook valleys provide enclosure locally.

**7.219** The rural landscape has a strong sense of tranquillity and experience of dark skies, although this is disrupted by the busy trunk roads ( A466, A4137 and A49) which run through the LCT.

## Landscape Evaluation

### Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

- The narrow brook valleys which form a distinctive landform feature within the plateau.
- The small blocks of semi-natural ancient woodland within the open landscape which are important for biodiversity.
- The diversity of agricultural land use with arable fields, grazing and orchards, which provide visual interest in the landscape.
- The historic dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets, manor houses and farmhouses which contributes to rural character.
- Historic manor houses, churches and farm buildings with their uniform local brownstone vernacular, which provide a connection to history and aesthetic value.
- Narrow winding rural lanes and floristically rich grass verges which provide a scenic quality to the landscape.
- The open character of the landscape with wide views across the landscape and over surrounding lower landscapes.
- The rural character of the landscape, with a strong sense of tranquillity and dark night skies.



## Forces for change

This is one of the most intensively farmed Landscape Types within Herefordshire. The requirements of modern arable and horticultural cropping have led to an increase in modern agricultural buildings, including polytunnels, and a decline in hedgerow density as hedges are removed to enlarge fields, or left derelict. Similarly, the hedgerow trees and fragments of woodland are gradually disappearing. Generally, the landscape is becoming more open as farms increase in scale and agricultural practices industrialise. The open character of the landscape is vulnerable to change from development, including tall structures within or adjacent to the LCT.

**Figure 7.63: Historic sandstone church remains at Llanwarne**



## Landscape Guidelines

The strategy for the Rolling Brownstone Plateau Farmlands LCT is to conserve the rural character of the landscape and sense of place created by the combination of undulating landscape, varied agricultural practices, with hamlets and substantial stone-built farmsteads and manor houses, linked by rural lanes, and with long reaching views across the farmland.

**Figure 7.64: Arable fields with poplar shelterbelts screening polytunnels**



### Landscape management

- Promote sustainable and wildlife-friendly land management practices that provide multiple landscape and biodiversity benefits. Conserve and

enhance key landscape features including the narrow brook valleys, woodlands and mixed agricultural land uses.

- Conserve and enhance the traditional pattern and structure of the landscape. Improve the quality and continuity of existing field boundary hedgerows. Ensure that hedgerow and hedgerow tree species are native, dense, provide a diverse habitat, and are appropriate to the local character.
- Encourage appropriate hedgerow management to ensure their long-term good health and survival. Hedgerows should be dense along most of their length with frequent healthy stems.
- Protect, manage and enhance the extent of native deciduous woodland/tree cover, particularly along sloping stream valleys and around settlements. Use locally occurring species to link the small deciduous woodlands and hedgerows.
- Conserve and manage the ancient woodland sites to encourage biodiversity. Where possible, replace conifers with locally occurring native species, particularly on replanted ancient woodland sites (PAWS).
- Protect and manage traditional apple orchards. Where possible, connect and extend small orchards, and involve local communities in management of these spaces.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape on public rights of way, enhancing access and enjoyment through well-maintained linked routes through farmland.

## Development management

- Conserve the dispersed settlement pattern. Minimise the impact of new development through careful design, in terms of siting, scale, style and layout, discouraging groups of new houses while encouraging individual dwellings.
- Avoid large scale urban extension within this rural agricultural landscape, characterised by its dispersed settlement pattern.

- Manage the increasing industrial scale of agricultural buildings through appropriate siting, style and colour, as well as providing mitigation planting.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their rural settings. Encourage further interpretation and understanding of these.
- Ensure the scale, building materials, layout and lighting of any conversions of historic farmhouses and agricultural buildings are sympathetic to and in keeping with the local landscape and enhance local distinctiveness. Refer to the Herefordshire Design Code.
- Consider the visual impact of large-scale glazing in domestic and commercial buildings on the rural character of the landscape and the integrity of a dark landscape.
- Integrate existing and new development within the wider landscape using native hedgerows, trees and woodlands.
- Consider the visual impact of development on the open character of the landscape, including views over the open landscape and surrounding river valleys.
- Consider the impact of commercial polytunnels, buildings and solar panels on the landscape and seek to integrate these structures through appropriate siting and mitigation.
- Ensure new development and infrastructure does not detract from the high levels of rural tranquillity and dark night skies experienced within the landscape.
- Conserve the pattern of rural lanes and their species-rich verges, ensuring that their character is not lost through unsympathetic highway work, unnecessary signage, lighting, street furniture, or removal of hedgerows and trees.