Chapter 4

Forces for Change

4.1 This chapter provides an overview of the main forces for change affecting the landscape of Herefordshire. It considers past, current and future forces for change that have, and will continue to, shape the landscapes seen today. Area-specific future forces for change are included in individual LCT profiles.

4.2 Understanding the forces for change which will affect the landscape has helped to shape the broad development management guidelines which are provided in **Chapter 6:** Management Guidelines.

Changes in agricultural practices and rural land use

4.3 Changes in agricultural practices reflect the need for farmers to diversify their operations to remain economically viable. In Herefordshire this has resulted in:

- Intensive arable farming and amalgamation of fields, changing the pattern and texture of the landscape.
- A decline in the traditional management of some field boundaries which has led to a loss of hedgerows and hedgerow tree. This has contributed to the fragmentation of semi-natural habitats and reductions in biodiversity.
- Hedgerows are often gappy, heavily over-trimmed or tall and overgrown, further eroding the underlying pattern of the landscape.
- A decline in management of traditional orchards, and replacement by more commercially viable bush orchards, eroding the scale of the landscape.
- Expansion of large agricultural buildings, which can be out of scale in the rural landscape, and are sometimes made of unsympathetic materials,

which lack local distinctiveness. Buildings used for storage of larger farm machinery or grain stores increase the need for lorry docks and large hard surfaced turning areas.

- An increase in the use of polytunnels for soft fruit growing, which are visually incongruous in the landscape, presenting a homogeneous appearance in the wider countryside.
- Changes in grazing practices have led to a reduction in the diversity of the upland grass vegetation, and bracken and scrub encroachment on grazing land and open commons.
- Increase in poultry farming in large, uniform sheds, which contributes to poor water quality in the Wye catchment in particular.
- Increase in anaerobic digesters, which have an unusual domed appearance and require considerable adjacent infrastructure, associated buildings, and vehicle access.
- Land set aside for biodiversity net gain and requirements to increase woodland may alter the landscape character.

Development pressure

4.4 Settlement expansion, increases in tourism and renewable energy development are the main drivers for landscape change:

- Expansion of settlements with modern 20th and 21st century residential building styles, sometimes of different character to the rest of the settlement.
- Development pressures in rural areas including agricultural developments, renovation/replacement dwellings and recreational or tourism improvements.
- Large industrial or commercial units at settlement edges sometimes result in a poor transition from the urban into adjacent rural areas, with different functional form, layout and appearance of buildings and infrastructure.

- Increasing prevalence in tourist accommodation, second home ownership and holiday lets, including pressure for the conversion of agricultural buildings to visitor accommodation.
- Pressures from tourism related developments related to tourist hotspots. This includes pressures for transport routes and car parking within the landscape, including on the fringes of historic villages and within the AONBs.
- Construction of masts, telecommunications and power lines has introduced new features into some rural landscapes.
- Light pollution from roads, settlements and industrial developments.
- Incremental change to country lanes as a result of factors including new access points, widening, increased numbers of passing points, lighting, signage and alterations to field entrances.
- Increasing number of vehicles on roads, leading to changes to country lanes or pressure for new roads, including the future impact of a possible ring road around Hereford City.
- Solar farms and wind turbines are important sources of renewable energy, however together with their associated infrastructure can have significant impacts on landscape character and visual amenity.

Climate change

4.5 Climate change is a major pressure on rural landscapes and is likely to result in increasingly unpredictable weather with hotter drier summers, more intense rainfall and longer dry periods resulting in the need for agriculture to adapt to grow different crops and develop more flexible and responsive land management practices. Hotter summers and increases in temperatures could result in increased demands for agricultural irrigation.

4.6 Climate change and increasing demands for urban development can increase the urban heat island effect. This is where urban areas are warmer

than the surrounding rural landscapes due to heat trapping from urban land use, including street layout, tarmac and roads and increased glazing in buildings.

4.7 Climate change resulting in more extreme weather could alter the species composition of existing species-rich woodlands and hedgerows, favouring species with lower water demand. Increasing incidences of pathogens may change the species mix of woodlands and higher temperatures and prolonged droughts are likely to put woodlands under further stress and increase the risk of wildfires.

4.8 Climate change is increasing the impact of pests and diseases, including ash dieback and acute oak decline, and the increased spread of invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam.

4.9 Climate change is also likely to affect other important semi-natural habitats. These changes may manifest themselves within the natural environment through changes in habitats and a decline of flora and fauna which are unable to adapt quickly enough to the changing habitat conditions. Longer drier summers may affect heathland and dry grassland and increase the risk of fire. The changing seasons may also disturb migrating birds and invertebrates, as there will be an increasing mismatch in timing of the arrival of migratory species and food sources, affecting neutral grassland and woodland as well as intertidal habitats.

4.10 River valleys are at high risk of flooding from watercourses. Impacts of flooding on the landscape include the temporary evacuation or permanent abandonment of buildings and damage to roads, buildings and field boundaries. Measures to provide flood protection may lead to conflict between defences and wildlife value, and erection of flood defences may also have a visual impact on the landscape. Increased frequency of flooding can lead to increased runoff of pollutants from the land. Conversely, hotter and drier summers result in lower summer river flows, which means there is less water available for dilution and dispersion of pollutants such as nutrients and contaminated sediments. The risk of eutrophication and algal blooms increases the longer nutrients remain in a water body.

4.11 Herefordshire Council declared a climate emergency on 8 March 2019, which was later strengthened to a climate and ecological emergency in December 2019. This includes a target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2031. Mitigation and adaption to climate change, in order to achieve Net Zero, is also changing the landscape. This includes the demand for renewable energy including new solar installations, wind farms and associated grid connections.

Meandering River Morrow

Chapter 5

Landscape Character of Herefordshire

Landscape character types

5.1 The updated landscape classification identifies 14 generic landscape character types (LCTs), each representing a distinct identity and common geology, topography, land use and cultural pattern. These are listed in Table 5.1: Landscape Character Types.

5.2 Lowland farmland dominates the centre of the county, associated with river floodplains and the different morphologies of river valleys. Transitional areas of rising topography and woodland link to upland areas, which are differentiated by their woodland cover and geology and shown on Figure 5.1.

5.3 It is important to note that boundaries between one LCT and the next are transitional and there is rarely a clearcut change ‘on the ground’. This assessment has been mapped at a scale of 1:25,000 which provides an appropriate level of detail for the landscape character assessment at the strategic county scale. In considering any change in one landscape character area the impact on views to/ from and the character of neighbouring areas should also be considered.

5.4 Lowland farmland dominates the centre of the county, associated with river floodplains and the different morphologies of river valleys. Transitional areas of rising topography and woodland link to upland areas, which are differentiated by their woodland cover and geology.

Table 5.1: Landscape Character Types

LCT number	LCT name	Summary of reasons for boundary
1	**River Floodplains**	Boundaries drawn to the outer extents of Flood zone 3,extents of alluvial superficial geology, and areas of wet pasture / riverside meadow.
2	**Lowland Farmlands**	Open lowlands extending from Hereford associated with the Upper Wye, Lower Lugg and its tributaries the Arrow and Frome.
3	**Shallow Vales**	Defined valleys of Lowe Wye and Leadon.
4	**Enclosed River Valleys**	Narrow enclosed river valleys – the upper reaches of Teme, Lugg and Wigmore Basin, Dore (Golden Valley), Monnow.
5	**Undulating Wooded Farmland and Estates**	Wooded farmland.
6	**Exposed Sandstone Uplands**	Distinctive ridged landform, defined by the bedrock geology, moorland habitats and elevation over 250 metres.
7	**Sandstone Upland Hills and Valleys**	V-shaped valleys of the Monnow, Olchon and Escley Brook. Defined by change in bedrock geology, the 250-metre contour in the north and 120 metre contour elsewhere.
8	**Wooded Limestone Ridges**	Defined by bedrock geology.
9	**Limestone Uplands**	Defined by bedrock geology and elevation above 150 metres.

LCT number	LCT name	Summary of reasons for boundary
10	**Border Sandstone Hills**	Low wooded hills, defined by wooded character and elevation above 100 metres.
11	**Wooded Brownstone Hills**	Rounded wooded hills, defined by elevation above 120 metres.
12	**Wooded Sandstone Hills**	Steep sided wooded hills, defined by elevation above 120 metres.
13	**Plateau Farmland and Estates**	High plateau on sandstone with distinct wooded edge on limestone bedrock. Defined by bedrock geology, the edge of the limestone scarp and elevation above 120 metres.
14	**Rolling Brownstone Plateau Farmlands**	Defined by bedrock geology and elevation above 120 metres in the west and above 60 metres in the east.

Herefordshire Natural Environment Evidence Base
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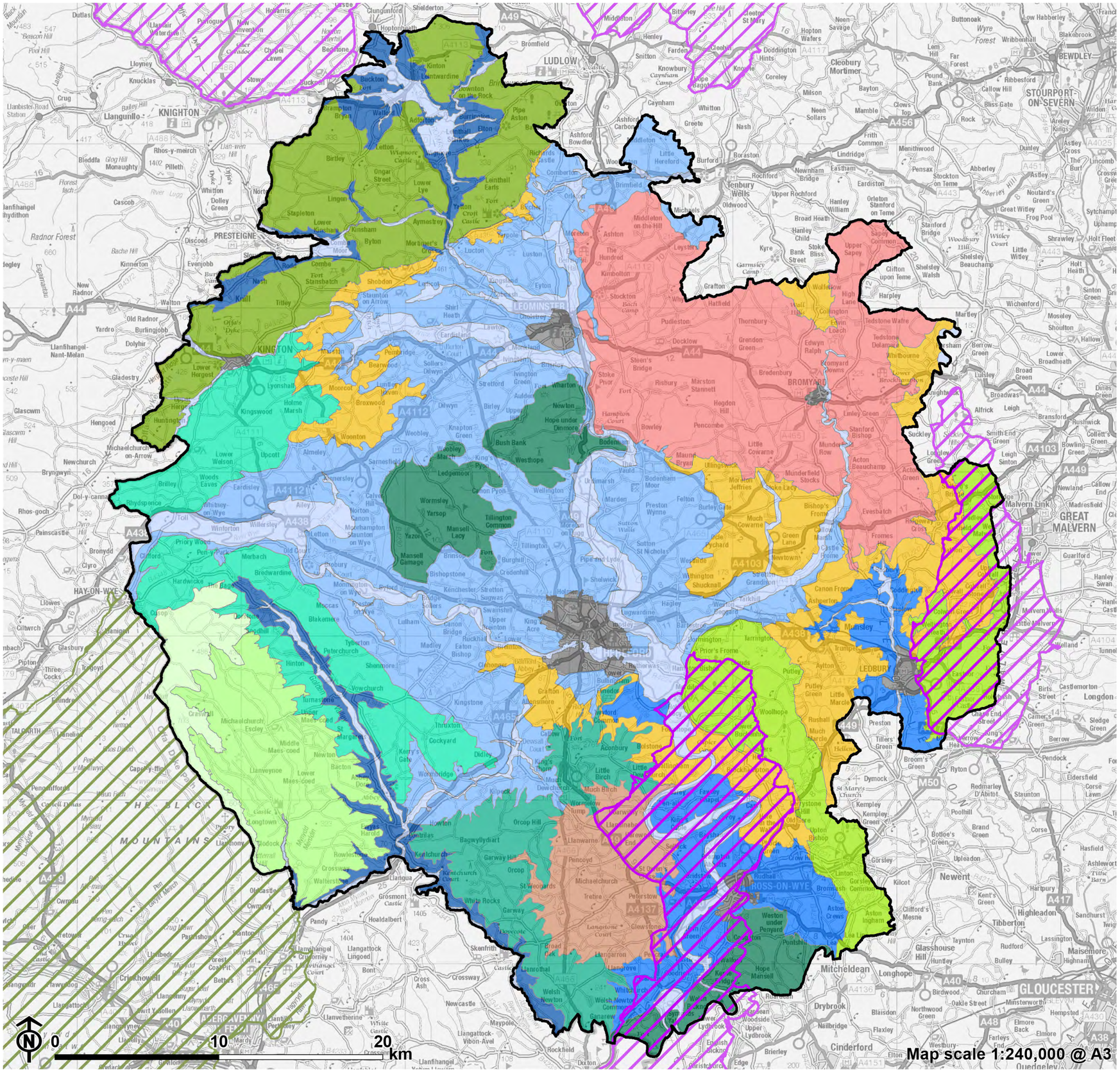
Figure 5.1: Landscape Character Type



- Herefordshire boundary
- Settlement
- National park
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Landscape Character Type

1. River Floodplains
2. Lowland Farmlands
3. Shallow Vales
4. Enclosed River Valleys
5. Undulating Wooded Farmland and Estates
6. Exposed Sandstone Uplands
7. Sandstone Upland Hills and Valleys
8. Wooded Limestone Ridges
9. Limestone Uplands
10. Border Sandstone Hills
11. Wooded Brownstone Hills
12. Wooded Sandstone Hills
13. Plateau Farmland and Estates
14. Rolling Brownstone Plateau Farmlands

Source: LUC, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, Herefordshire Council, Ordnance Survey

Chapter 6

Management Guidelines

6.1 This chapter presents general guidelines which apply to all landscape character types. These should be read in addition to the LCT-specific guidelines which are contained within the individual profiles in **Chapter 7**.

General guidelines

Landscape management

- Encourage catchment-sensitive land management practices to improve soil quality and prevent run off into the local rivers.
- Address issues of seasonal flooding through the implementation of natural flood management schemes including the creation and expansion of flood meadows in the floodplain, planting woodland on slopes to slow flows, and introduction of leaky dams. Work with landowners to consider a holistic approach to catchment management.
- Promote sustainable and wildlife-friendly land management practices that provide multiple landscape and biodiversity benefits.
- Conserve the organic, irregular pattern of historic fields, by retaining traditional field boundaries. Conserve and enhance the traditional pattern and structure of the landscape through appropriate farm management.
- 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.
- Protect and manage flower rich habitats in hedgerows and along roadside verges.

- Protect and manage trees that are associated with traditions and commemoration that provide identity to local landscape character.
- Protect and manage traditional orchards. Where possible, connect and extend small orchards, and involve local communities in management of these spaces.
- Creation of new orchards should be carefully considered to be in a suitable location, using appropriate species, with long term management and maintenance proposals in place from the outset.
- Explore opportunities to expand and connect existing woodland and tree cover through natural regeneration or small-scale planting. This will strengthen landscape character, as well as bring benefits for biodiversity, carbon sequestration, 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.
- As climatic conditions change, plant suitable species or encourage natural regeneration to create climate resistant woodland.
- Monitor potential changes in flora and increase in pests and diseases, often resulting from climate change, particularly in ash, oak and black poplar.
- Monitor the spread of invasive plants and animals in water courses and woodlands, and put in place management to slow the spread and/or irradicate.
- 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.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their landscape settings. Encourage further interpretation and understanding of these.
- Protect the landscape setting of Conservation Areas, including key views to and from the settlement.

- Conserve and manage historic parklands. Replant key ornamental tree species to retain the parkland character.
- Protect and manage the valued recreational use of the landscape, particularly along promoted routes. Improve public right of way connections, infrastructure and signage, and identify opportunities for green infrastructure.
- Protect and enhance key views within, to and from landscape character types, including views to and from, and the setting of, AONBs.

Development management

- Evaluate and assess all development proposals to ensure they reinforce and, where possible enhance, local distinctiveness and local landscape and settlement character.
- Enhance the sense of place through careful design (including siting, massing, scale and materials) to minimise the impacts of any new development. Design Codes in Herefordshire will further specify design requirements.
- New buildings should respond to the existing topography and avoid large earthworks that contrast with landform and may make the building appear more conspicuous.
- Materials and colours should be considered and reflect the landscape and geology around them, as well as the vernacular building style. Environmental Colour Assessment is a useful tool to establish the appropriate choice of materials and palette of harmonious colours for the landscape.
- Consider the impact of commercial polytunnels on the landscape, referring to the Herefordshire Polytunnels Planning Guide (2018) **[See reference 6]**.
- Retain existing vegetation where possible, and supplement with appropriate new tree planting to enhance landscape patterns.

- Use landscape schemes and incorporate appropriate management to ensure new development integrates into the surrounding landscape.
- Ensure new development integrates green and blue infrastructure proposals and contributes to biodiversity net gain.
- Consider how the scheme fits with other similar proposals in the area in terms of cumulative effects and in-combination effects.
- When converting existing buildings to residential use, retain existing detailing, make use of existing openings where possible to minimise new windows and doors, and consider the impact of full walls of glazing in views towards the property.
- Conserve the rural lanes, ensuring that their character is not lost through unsympathetic highway works, unnecessary signage, lighting, street furniture, or removal of hedgerows and trees.
- Utilise existing roads and tracks for site access wherever possible. For new roads and tracks, consider how these can fit in with the landscape character and complement the pattern of existing road networks.
- Ensure new development and infrastructure does not detract from the high levels of rural tranquillity and dark night skies experienced across the county.
- Carefully manage tourist pressures at tourist hubs and hotspots. Plan for new tourist features such as car parks, footpaths and interpretation to respond to the local vernacular.
- Ensure new development is not overly prominent in views both from within the LCT and from adjoining landscapes. Ensure key views and panoramas are retained and protected/