

7.21 PRINCIPAL SETTLED FARMLANDS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

The rolling, lowland area of Central Herefordshire is dominated by this Landscape Type. These are settled agricultural landscapes of dispersed, scattered farms, relic commons and small villages and hamlets. The mixed farming land use reflects the good soils on which they are typically found. Networks of small winding lanes nestling within a matrix of hedged fields are characteristic. Tree cover is largely restricted to thinly scattered hedgerow trees, groups of trees around dwellings and trees along stream sides and other watercourses. The composition of the hedgerow tree cover differs from that of Timbered Farmlands in its lower density and lack of oak dominance. This is a landscape with a notably domestic character, defined chiefly by the scale of its field pattern, the nature and density of its settlement and its traditional land uses. Hop fields, orchards, grazed pastures and arable fields, together make up the rich patchwork which is typical of Principal Settled Farmlands.

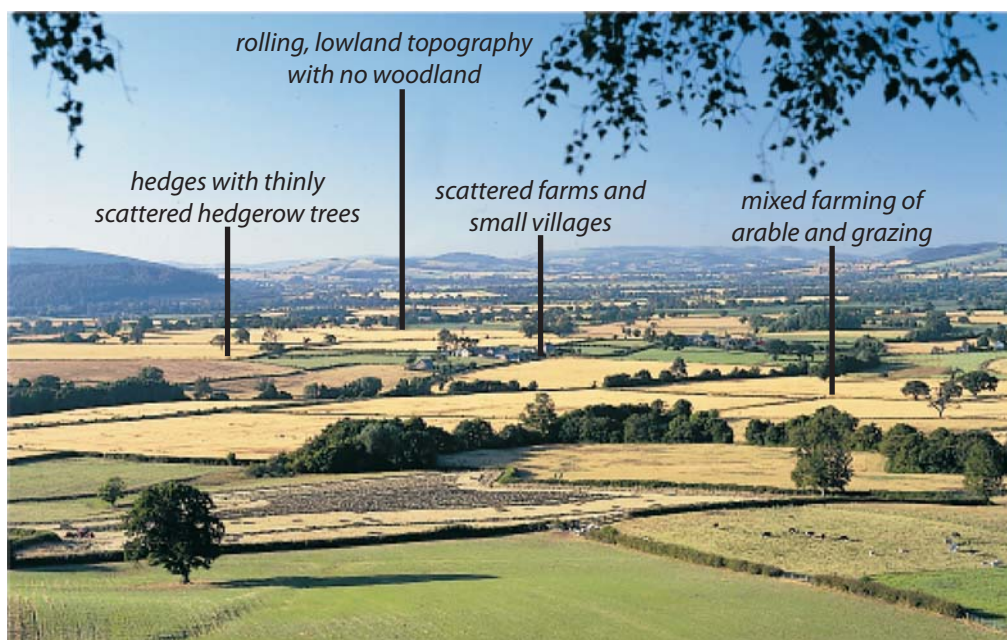
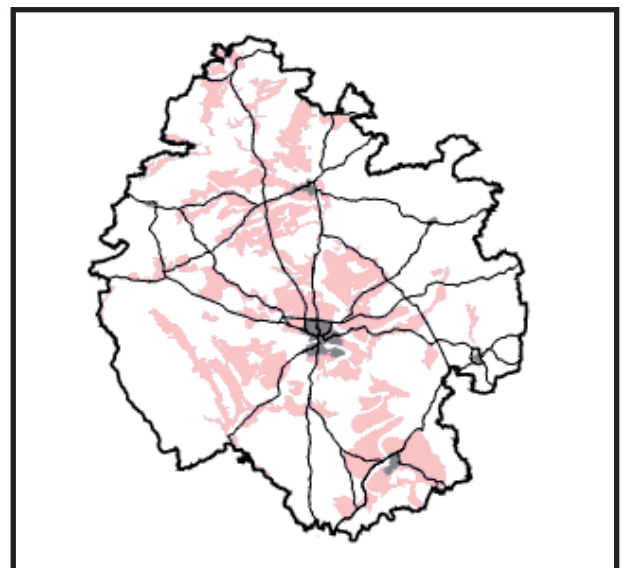
KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary

- hedgerows used for field boundaries

Secondary

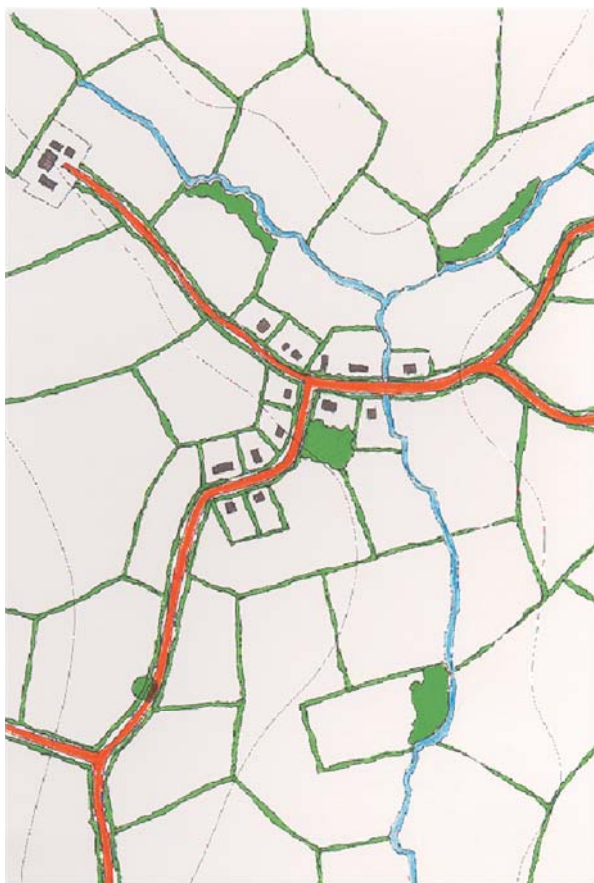
- mixed farming land use





FORCES FOR LANDSCAPE CHANGE

The pattern of small to medium sized hedged fields is vulnerable to change as the tendency towards arable dominance reduces the functional need for hedgerows. In spite of the Hedgerow Regulations, inappropriate maintenance is still resulting in the degradation and loss of the hedgerows which are one of the most significant features of the landscape. Intensification of farming practices is also resulting in a simplistic visual uniformity as landscape character is eroded. Development pressure in many of these areas has resulted in a distinctly nucleated or clustered settlement pattern which is contrary to the landscape character.



SETTLEMENT PATTERN

The dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and hamlets is capable of accommodating limited new development if it is in accordance with UDP policy. Low densities of individual dwellings would be acceptable as long as they are not sited close enough to coalesce into a prominent wayside settlement pattern. Additional housing in hamlets and villages should be modest in size in order to preserve the character of the original settlement.

ENCLOSURE PATTERN

The enclosure pattern varies considerably but is generally of a planned sub-regular nature. The small to medium sized fields are vulnerable to amalgamation through hedgerow loss.

WOODLAND OR TREE COVER PATTERN

Tree cover is most notable along stream sides and watercourses, with only scattered tree cover along hedgerows. Groups of trees and orchards are often associated with settlements. Woodland is not a characteristic feature of this Landscape Type.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES AND ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION

The overall strategy for Principal Settled Farmlands would be to **conserve** and **enhance** the unity of small to medium scale hedged fields. Opportunities

for new tree planting should be concentrated along watercourses where the linear tree cover pattern could be strengthened. Additional tree planting in the vicinity of settlement would also be appropriate and would assist in emphasising the domestic quality of the landscape. New woodland should not be introduced as it is out of place and would compromise the landscape character. The mixed farming land use is becoming increasingly arable and the small permanent pastures are gradually declining. These are often species rich and initiatives to safeguard them should be strongly promoted. New development should remain at a low density with most housing associated with existing hamlets and villages.

CONSERVATION	ENHANCEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve and enhance the hedgerow pattern 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve and enhance tree cover and wetland habitat along watercourses 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek opportunities to conserve remaining areas of permanent pasture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen patterns of tree cover associated with settlements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek to maintain a balance of arable and pastoral land use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek opportunities to maintain and increase traditional standard orchards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain the integrity of a dispersed settlement pattern 	