

Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines

• **Dunsmore** • **High Cross Plateau** • **Mease Lowlands**



Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines

- 
- **Dunsmore**
 - **High Cross Plateau**
 - **Mease Lowlands**

© Warwickshire County Council

L.W.A. Rendell FRTPI MBIM DipTP DipTS
Director of Planning and Transport

Copies of this document are available from:

Countryside Group
Planning and Transport Department
Shire Hall Warwick CV34 4SX
Telephone: 0926 412551

ISBN 0 904937 06 2 £5.00

Published by Warwickshire County Council Planning & Transport Department
P.O. Box 43, Shire Hall, Warwick CV34 4SX Tel: 0926 410410 – November 1993

This booklet is one of a series of three covering the whole of Warwickshire

Landscape guidelines are also available for:
Arden Avon Valley – Feldon – Cotswolds

Warwickshire Landscapes Project

The Warwickshire Landscapes Project is a partnership between Warwickshire County Council and the Countryside Commission. The project was set up in 1987 to consider the unique and distinctive landscapes of Warwickshire, and to develop a new methodology for landscape assessment tailored to the needs of lowland England. This methodology is described in some detail in the Countryside Commission's publication CCP 332 'Assessment and conservation of landscape character – The Warwickshire Landscapes Project approach'.

The initial development work within the project was carried out by Simon Evans and Steven Warnock, both of whom have now left the County Council. The first report 'Arden landscape guidelines' was published in 1990. Since then the county has been completely assessed, and this has culminated in the publication of this and its two companion booklets in November 1993. As the system of landscape assessment is an evolving science, and in the light of new information produced by the regional mapping of the Midlands, the decision was taken to re-assess Arden and to reprint the guidelines along with those for the rest of the county. The format of the three reports has changed from the original, with greater emphasis being placed on development and highways issues.

Since 1990 a number of external consultants have been employed to assist in the completion of the assessment of the county and the development of the guidelines. Dr Della Hooke, a local historian, has provided background information on historical aspects of the landscape, while Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

provided ecological information. Land Use Consultants undertook some of the initial work towards the Arden assessment, and Steven Warnock played a major part, initially with L.U.C. and thereafter as an independent consultant, in completing the assessment of Arden and the rest of the county. Illustrations for this booklet have been provided by Howard Price.

Throughout the life of the project it has been considered important to involve as many outside organisations and authorities as possible, and a number have given valuable comments and views. These include:

- Country Landowners Association
- Coventry City Council
- Department of Transport, West Midlands Region
- English Nature
- Forestry Commission
- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
- National Farmers Union
- National Rivers Authority
- North Warwickshire Borough Council
- Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
- Rugby Borough Council
- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
- Stratford-on-Avon District Council
- Warwick District Council
- Warwickshire County Museum
- Warwickshire Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
- Warwickshire Wildlife Trust
- Warwickshire Rural Community Council
- Warwickshire Sites and Monuments Record

The contributions made by all of the above are gratefully acknowledged.

Designed by 

Planning and Transport Department
Shire Hall Warwick CV34 4SX Tel: 0926 412103

Printed by 
☎ (0926) 491666

Printed on environmentally friendly paper

Foreword

England is characterised by the diversity and subtlety of its landscapes. Many of the regions which make up our countryside are well-known and most are readily differentiated one from another. The Cotswolds, the East Anglian fens, Dartmoor, the Somerset levels, the New Forest – all have a character and charm of their own. Other areas such as the Arden, Feldon, and Dunsmore in Warwickshire are nationally less well-known but nevertheless each has its own unique identity and interest. Even within such regions there are differences which can make one area of a few square miles quite distinct from the next. To take the Cotswolds as an example, the 'High wold', an area of exposed plateau summits and wide views, is quite distinct from the 'Wold' with its rolling topography, broad valleys and fertile red soils. It is this subtle variation within the wider regional pattern which creates the unique 'sense of place' – a feeling of identity and recognition which cannot be gained elsewhere – and the rich diversity of the English countryside.

Landscape assessment is a process which aims to identify and understand the factors which define regional diversity and local distinctiveness. Warwickshire County Council and the Countryside Commission have together pioneered a new and now widely accepted methodology which achieves this by systematically analysing the major influences which have shaped the character of the landscape. Certain factors such as geology, soils, and topography are easy to determine. Others, particularly the historical development of the landscape and the influence of man upon it, can be more difficult to understand but are often the key to appreciating why an area is the way it is. The pattern of settlement, the shape and size of fields, the straightness or otherwise of roads, the extent and types of woodland, and the use of the land are all influenced as much by social and economic factors as by the physical environment, and have played a crucial part in shaping the landscape.

This booklet is one of a series of three in Warwickshire which take the process of landscape assessment one stage further. If we are to maintain the variety and local distinctiveness of the English countryside, we must recognise the key factors which characterise each landscape and manage the land accordingly. If all areas are planted with large woodlands, or hedges are removed to create fields of the same size, one area will start to look like the next and the 'sense of place' will be replaced by blandness and uniformity. More importantly if the influence of suburban development continues to spread into the countryside without recognising the landscape in which it sits, the distinction between rural and urban will be lost. This booklet provides guidelines for management which build on the detailed understanding of the countryside gained through landscape assessment. They do not propose that development is never appropriate, nor that arable farming and large fields are always damaging to the landscape. Instead they offer guidance to landowners, farmers, planners, developers, road engineers, foresters, ecologists and landscape architects on how development and modern land management practices can best be integrated into the landscape. They define areas of strong landscape character, and areas where a concerted effort is required to enhance areas of degradation. Ultimately they aim to ensure that the diversity and beauty of Warwickshire, Shakespeare's County, is conserved for present and future generations to enjoy.



L.W.A. Rendell
Director of Planning & Transport
Warwickshire County Council



F.S. Walmsley
Midlands Regional Officer
Countryside Commission

Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Part one – Landscape assessment	7
<i>Dunsmore</i>	7
<i>High Cross Plateau</i>	16
<i>Mease Lowlands</i>	22
Part two – Strategies and guidelines	26
<i>Landscape change and current trends</i>	26
<i>General development guidelines</i>	29
<i>Dunsmore</i>	32
<i>High Cross Plateau and Mease Lowlands</i>	42
List of organisations to contact for further advice	53

Introduction

Purpose This booklet and accompanying map is one of a set of three which provide a comprehensive assessment of the Warwickshire landscape. The assessment is based on a detailed study, which combined a review and analysis of existing written and mapped information with field surveys to describe the character and special features of the different landscapes within the county. This was followed by an evaluation of recent changes which have affected the landscape and the current issues which are likely to influence change in the future. From this a series of management strategies and landscape guidelines have been developed. These are aimed at all involved in landscape management and point to how and where landscape character needs to be conserved, restored, or enhanced.

The meaning of landscape In its narrow definition the term landscape refers to the visual appearance of the land, including its shape, form and colours. The landscape, however, is not a purely visual phenomenon. The character of a landscape is closely associated with its historical development – the pattern of settlement, land use and fields. Ecological associations – the occurrence of heaths, downland or ancient woods – are also important. All of these factors are strongly influenced by soils, which in turn reflect the underlying topography and geology. It is the way in which these factors relate to one another that create the distinctive patterns and regional variations for which the English landscape is famous. Identifying this pattern helps in understanding how a particular landscape has developed and is the key to assessing landscape character and local distinctiveness.

Method The study has been carried out using a now widely accepted method of landscape assessment. Essentially this involves a desk study to produce landform, land cover and historical overlays, combined with field survey, to identify and classify landscape types which have a discrete and distinctive character. This approach was developed by the Warwickshire Landscapes Project to meet the requirements of lowland agricultural landscapes. This is reported in detail in 'Assessment and Conservation of Landscape Character – the Warwickshire Landscapes Project approach'. (Countryside Commission, CCP 332, 1991).

The process of landscape assessment can be applied at a number of different levels from the national and regional, through the county or district, down to the individual parish or site. At each of these levels a distinction can be made between landscape types and landscape character areas. The former is a generic term, and a particular type of landscape can occur in many different places. The latter term, however, refers to a geographically specific area.

The Warwickshire Landscapes Project is a county-wide study concerned with the assessment of both local and regional landscape character, and in this report reference is made to :

(i) Regional character areas: Distinct landscape regions, often very extensive, where common physical, historical, ecological and cultural associations impart a sense of unity to the landscape. Well known examples include the New Forest, Dartmoor and the Cotswolds.

(ii) Local landscape types: Types of countryside which have a unity of character due to particular combinations of landform and landcover and a consistent pattern of characteristic features. Examples include river

floodplains, wooded estatelands and ancient farmlands. The same landscape types are often found in different regional character areas, but they are distinguished by regional influences.

Regional character areas have provided a regional framework on which the more detailed county-wide assessment of the landscape has been based. Such a framework is much more meaningful than using administrative boundaries as a basis for landscape assessment.

Regional character areas have also proved to be the best level at which to tackle settlement and general development issues. Guidelines for land use, field boundaries and trees and woodlands, on the other hand, are generally specific to individual landscape types and it was at this level that these land management issues were tackled.

Regional character areas in Warwickshire

The first level of assessment identified a total of ten regional character areas within and around the fringes of the county. Only four of these, Arden, Dunsmore, Avon Valley and Feldon, can be truly described as Warwickshire landscapes. The others show characteristics more typically associated with surrounding counties. This is especially true of the Cotswolds, the Ironstone Wolds and the High Cross Plateau. The true character of each of these regions is more fully represented in Gloucestershire, Staffordshire, Northamptonshire and Leicestershire. Nonetheless, they form a distinct upland fringe along the southern and eastern edge of the county. Similarly, the Mease Lowlands is another marginal Warwickshire region, while the area to the east of the river Tame is transitional between Arden and Cannock Forest. For convenience some of these transitional areas around the fringes of the

county have been treated as part of the adjoining Warwickshire regions. As a result the county has been divided into seven broad regional character areas (Map 1). These are:

(1) Arden – an historic region of former wood pasture and heath characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern, ancient woodlands and mature hedgerow oaks.

(2) Dunsmore – a well wooded, and in places urbanised region characterised by low glacial plateaus, sandy soils and remnant heathy vegetation.

(3) Avon Valley – a prosperous agricultural and market gardening region closely associated with the river Avon and characterised by historic market towns, nucleated villages and orchards.

(4) Feldon – a lowland agricultural region strongly influenced by Tudor and later parliamentary enclosures and characterised by heavy clay soils, large geometric fields and a nucleated settlement pattern of small rural villages.

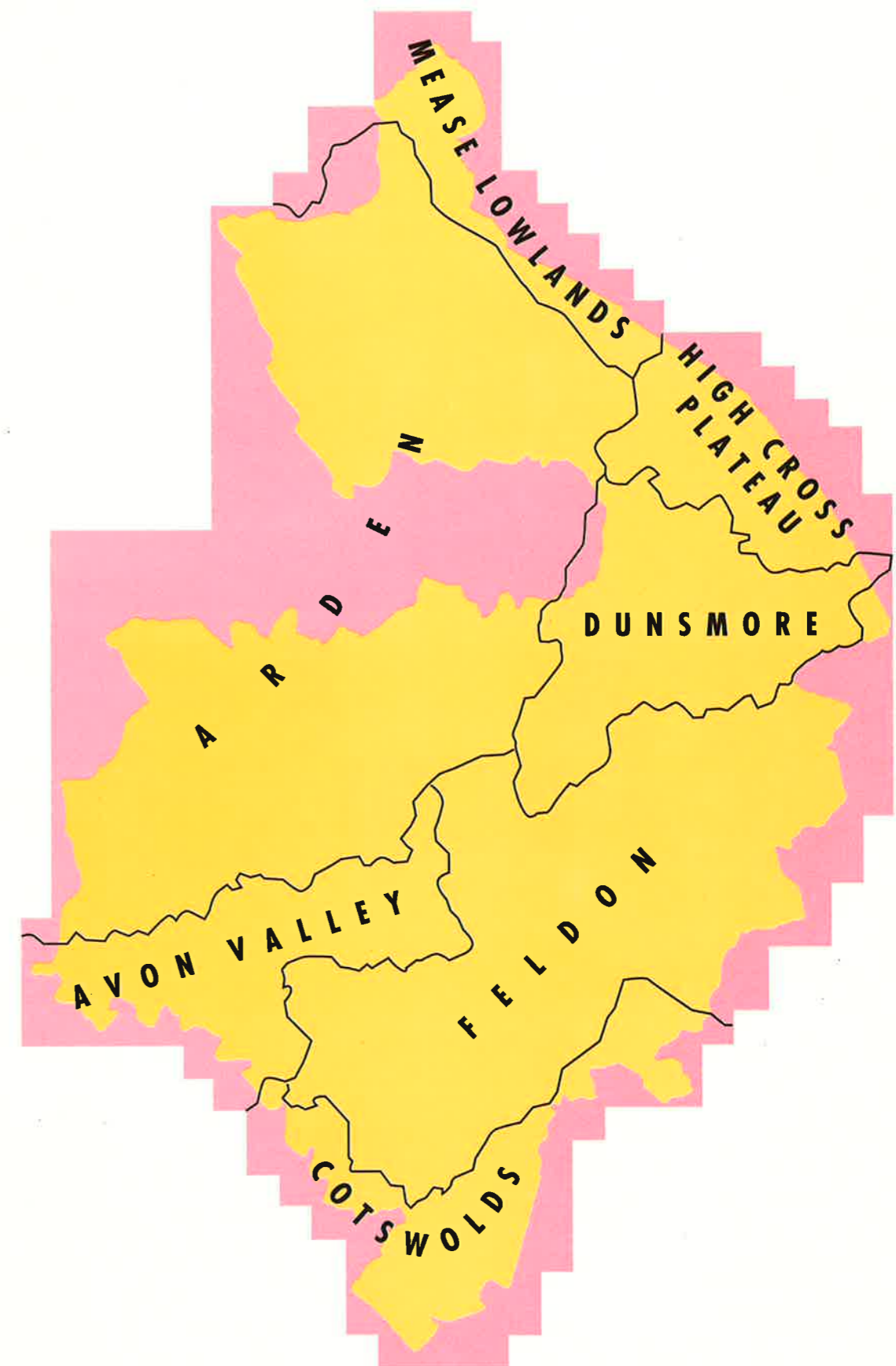
(5) Cotswolds – a sparsely populated region of limestone and ironstone uplands characterised by open wolds, large walled fields and distinctive stone villages.

(6) High Cross Plateau – a rural agricultural region characterised by open clay wolds and small nucleated villages.

(7) Mease Lowlands – a rural agricultural region of large country estates and small nucleated villages characterised by tall church spires.

The three regional character areas lying in the north east of the county are described in this booklet: Dunsmore, the High Cross Plateau and the Mease Lowlands. The booklet should be read in conjunction with the accompanying coloured map, which shows these areas and their component landscape types.

Regional character areas



LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

PART ONE

Part one Landscape assessment

Dunsmore

Introduction The area known as Dunsmore includes the wedge-shaped region of low ridges and valleys lying between Leamington Spa, Coventry and Rugby. The core of the region comprises an area of former heath associated with the low glacial plateau running from Cubbington to Hillmorton. In many ways Dunsmore is a transition region. Like Feldon to the south it is primarily a planned landscape of large fields and small villages. The heathy character and many large woodlands are more typical of Arden to the west, while the dissected rolling topography is more characteristic of the High Cross Plateau to the north.

Physical influences The character of Dunsmore is strongly influenced by the underlying geology and physical form of the land. The region lies across the junction between the Mercia mudstone and Lower Lias clay, which characterise Arden and Feldon respectively. For the most part these beds are masked by deposits of Pleistocene sands and gravels. Only along the valleys of the Avon and Leam do the rivers cut through to the underlying bedrock.

The glacial deposits form a series of low plateaus composed of relatively recent lacustrine clays and capped with porous and infertile gravels. The latter produce light sandy soils showing traces of podzolisation, indicative of their late reclamation from heathland. A series of tributaries of the Avon and Leam have mildly dissected these glacial deposits, leaving gravel-capped ridges separated by wetter clay-floored valleys.

The main Dunsmore plateau stretches for approximately ten miles to the west of Rugby. It has a maximum north-south breadth of six miles and rises to just over 120 metres at Dunchurch. A smaller ridge, with a maximum elevation of 100 metres, continues beyond

Stretton-on-Dunsmore ending at the Campion Hills to the east of Leamington. A similar gravel-capped ridge separates the valleys of the Avon and Sowe between Bretford and Bagington, while south of the River Leam a third ridge runs from Eathorpe to Radford Semele.

Most of the region is drained by the Avon and the Leam, both of which are poorly defined by narrow alluvial floodplains bordered in places by gravel terraces. The Avon in particular is in places confined to a narrow incised valley, which opens out only slightly between Bretford and Stareton. The Leam valley is rather wider with an unusually wide spread of terrace gravels stretching upstream to a little beyond the junction of the Itchen. The northern part of the region is drained by the Smite Brook, a tributary of the river Sowe. This is an area of heavy clay soils lying in a broad vale and bounded to the north-east by the rising ground of the High Cross Plateau.

Human influences In Dunsmore the historical development of the landscape is strongly related to the underlying physical character. In particular, the patterns of settlement and enclosure which have developed over many centuries, exhibit features which are clearly distinct from other regions in the county.

Much of the region was cleared and settled relatively early, especially on the lighter soils of the plateau summits and along the valleys of the Avon and Leam, where signs of prehistoric occupation have become increasingly obvious from the evidence of air photography.

The higher parts of the gravel ridges had reverted to rough grazing land and waste by late Anglo-Saxon times. The most extensive area is on Dunsmore Heath and appears to have been an area of intercommoning at the period of parish formation as most of the parish boundaries radiate from its highest point. This is a classic example of the close correlation which

Dunsmore

often exists between parish boundaries and the physical environment. The heath runs from east to west and with the exception of Stretton-on-Dunsmore parish, all the parishes extend radially from the heath to impinge upon either the Leam on the south or the Avon on the north. Such an arrangement made it possible for each parish to include a proportion of meadowland, arable land and rough pasture or woodland. Each parish also had a frontage on a main river, which invariably formed the parish boundary.

Like Feldon to the south, the more productive arable land in the region was densely settled during the early medieval period and farmed in open arable fields under a highly organised two or three-field system. The needs of livestock were met by grazing on the fallow field and on the waste, reinforced by the provision of hay from alluvial water meadows. Depopulation in parts of the area began at a relatively early date. The villages of Lower and Upper Smite are said to have been deserted by the 13th century due to the influences of the Cistercian monks of Combe Abbey. Some other settlements in the area were subject to shrinkage during the 14th and 15th centuries when stock-rearing became increasingly profitable. Depopulation was most marked in the northern part of the region indicated by the deserted villages of Marston in the parish of Wolston, King's Newnham, Little Lawford and Harborough Parva. In the Leam valley the parishes of Offchurch, Wappenbury, Eathorpe and Frankton were also enclosed and many villages declined in size during this period. Only a few parishes, like Marton, Birdingbury and Thurlaston, retained their open fields until the mid 18th century. Some open fields also persisted along the southern fringe of the Avon valley between Milverton and Ryton-on-Dunsmore where the characteristic geometric field pattern of parliamentary enclosure dominates the present day landscape.

Much of the heathland in the region was also enclosed during the 18th and 19th centuries. The higher parts of the Dunsmore plateau, in particular, formed an open heath until the middle of the 18th century. The main London-Coventry road crossed the heath and was noted for attacks on travellers by highwaymen. These areas of former heathland are today characterised by straight roads, large geometric fields and lines of mature hedgerow trees.

Historically, the main town in the region was Coventry, which lies on the boundary between Dunsmore and Arden. The former capital of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia, Coventry overshadowed all other urban centres in the county during the medieval period, ranking below only London, Norwich, Bristol and Newcastle in wealth. After a period of decline the city again became pre-eminent as a centre for ribbon weaving and watchmaking until these industries were replaced by cycle and car manufacture this century. Expansion of the city was initially to the north east, but by the late 19th century Coventry had taken in most of the surrounding villages and hamlets, including Wyken, Stoke, Whitley and Stivichell. Further expansion eastwards this century has also enveloped much of Binley and Willenhall parishes.

Dunchurch was also a flourishing market town during the 17th and 18th centuries, benefiting from its position on the London to Coventry road, which crossed over Dunsmore Heath. It was to be overtaken as a market centre by Rugby with the coming of the railways, but remains a large village today. The town of Rugby with its growing suburbs dominates the eastern part of the region. It has been a market centre since 1255, but significant population expansion only occurred with the coming of the London to Birmingham railway in 1838.

Ecological influences Dunsmore is an intensively farmed region and the extent of

Dunsmore

semi-natural habitat is rather limited. Despite this there remain a number of important habitats, most notably two major ancient woodland complexes to the south and east of Coventry. Flood meadows and other associated wetland habitats are also a feature along the two main river corridors, while other unimproved grasslands can still be found in a number of locations.

ancient woodland The glacial plateaux in the western part of the region support the largest concentration of ancient woodland in Warwickshire. Bubbenhall Wood, Wappenbury Wood, Ryton Wood, Princethorpe Wood, Bull and Butcher Wood, Piles Coppice, Birchley Wood and New Close Wood are the largest of these still retaining a semi-natural character. The dominant tree species include English oak, silver birch and downy birch. Throughout the area ash, holly, hazel and aspen are locally abundant, as is alder on wetter sites. Trees rare in the county which are also present include huge stools of small leaved lime and wild service. The acidic, free draining soils do not support a rich ground flora, but bluebells are abundant, while wood anemones, primroses and red campion are also common. Bracken is abundant and can fill large open glades. In the wetter clay valleys sedges, rushes and other damp-loving species such as opposite-leaved golden saxifrage can be found. These woods also support a large variety of insects, notably several rare woodland butterflies including the white admiral, purple hairstreak and silver washed fritillary.

rivers Flood meadows, rough pasture, scrub and pollarded willows are all part of the riverside scene and can be very important for wildlife. The courses of both the Avon and Leam are marked in places by crack and white willow. There are also stands of Norfolk reed and reed canary grass, and in the water are yellow waterlilies and arrowhead. Moorhens are a common

sight scuttling amongst the rushes and where the river has eroded a soil cliff kingfishers can often be seen patrolling the water.

flood meadows Historically, frequent flooding prevented arable farming on river floodplains, so that much of this land was used for pasture or as meadowland. Today there are few remaining unimproved flood meadows and most are now grazed but rarely cut for hay. The best surviving areas are on the Avon at Brandon, Little Lawford and Newton and along the Leam between Hunningham and Birdingbury. Where the quality of the flood water is high, and the nutrient content of the silt is low, these sites can be very species-rich. Vetches, sweet grass, marsh marigold, ragged robin, meadow cranesbill, birdsfoot trefoil and yellow flag are commonly found, as are occasional clumps of meadow rue along the Avon meadows.

Visual character of the landscape

Dunsmore is characterised by a range of historical and ecological associations which are strongly influenced by the underlying geology of the region. The widespread occurrence of glacial sands and gravels is reflected in the strong association with former common and heath. Although none of the heaths remain today the occurrence of remnant heathy vegetation, the late enclosure pattern of large geometric fields and the abundance of 'Heath' names all impart a strong sense of regional identity. The region also has a well wooded appearance characterised by mature hedgerow oaks, ancient woodlands and historic parklands.

Dunsmore can be sub-divided into three different landscape types, each of which is characterised by a particular aspect of the wider regional character:

- Plateau farmlands
- Plateau fringe
- Dunsmore parklands

Dunsmore

Plateau farmlands This is a very distinctive landscape, closely associated with the summits of the low glacial plateaus in the region. The almost flat plateau landscape is characterised by a regular geometric pattern of fields and roads reflecting the late enclosure from heathland and waste. This historic land use pattern is reflected in the local abundance of 'Heath' names – Bourton Heath, Lawford Heath, Brinklow Heath, Ryton Heath. No heathland remains today but the association is still apparent in the form of remnant heathy vegetation in woodlands and roadside verges. Settlement is sparse in the Plateau Farmlands and largely restricted to scattered farmsteads and isolated brick built field barns. This again reflects the late enclosure of this landscape from waste.

Plateau farmlands occur in three separate areas. The largest includes the main Dunsmore plateau which lies either side of the A45 between Knightlow Hill and Dunchurch. This is the most well developed plateau landscape characterised by a broad flat summit which falls away steeply along its northern and southern margins. Mature hedgerow oaks are a special feature of this area, particularly around Bourton Heath, creating a series of filtered views through the landscape. Hedgerow trees become less abundant to the north of the A45, especially in the vicinity of the old airfield. The impression of openness and space in this part, particularly where roadside hedgerows have been removed, is probably not too dissimilar to the unenclosed character of the former heath. Isolated field barns are a special feature throughout this area.

Plateau farmlands also occur along the eastern fringe of Coventry, between Bagington and Bretford, and on the low ridge separating the valleys of the Avon and Leam between Ryton and Cubbington. The low glacial plateaus in both these areas are poorly defined although

the nature of the underlying deposits are much in evidence from the many sand and gravel pits. Large blocks of ancient woodland are a key feature of the landscape in these areas, often creating a strong sense of confinement. Many of these woods are fringed by birch and bracken and some have been replanted as pine plantations. Such features emphasise the heathy character of the landscape. Scattered mature hedgerow oaks are also a feature of the landscape in both areas.

Dunsmore



Plateau farmlands

Character and qualities

A simple, often heavily wooded, farmed landscape, typically confined to low plateau summits, and characterised by sandy soils and remnant heathy vegetation.

Characteristic features

- A gently rolling topography of low glacial plateaus.
- An 'empty' landscape of former waste with few roads and little settlement.
- A regular geometric field pattern defined by closely cropped hawthorn hedges.
- Many mature hedgerow oaks.
- Large blocks of ancient woodland.
- A historic land use pattern reflected in the local abundance of 'Heath' names.
- Remnant heathy vegetation in woodlands and roadside verges.

Dunsmore

Plateau fringe This is a rather variable landscape with a varied undulating topography of low rounded hills, broad valleys and short, steep slopes around the fringe of the Dunsmore plateau. For the most part the Plateau fringe is an intensively farmed landscape with a fragmented or poorly defined field pattern which tends to emphasise the large scale nature of the underlying landform. In places, however, there are pockets of pastoral farmland where the generally more intact field pattern creates a smaller scale landscape character.

Plateau fringe landscapes occur in two belts on either side of the main Dunsmore plateau. The first which is closely associated with the Avon Valley includes the area running from Bubbenhall through Wolston and Long Lawford to Clifton upon Dunsmore. The second includes the southern fringe of the Dunsmore plateau from Princethorpe to Hillmorton, the lower part of the Leam valley and the area of hill country to the east of Leamington. The large expanse of open water at Draycote reservoir lies within this area.

Small nucleated villages are a characteristic feature of the Plateau fringe. These give the landscape a settled character which contrasts with the sparsely populated nature of the adjoining Plateau farmlands. Many of the villages in the Avon valley, such as Ryton-on-Dunsmore, Wolston and Long Lawford, have expanded considerably with the addition of much modern residential development. The opposite is true in the Leam valley, where most of the villages have seen little new development and still retain much of their original character.

The River Avon and the River Leam are special features within this landscape. Due to the nature of the surrounding landform, however, neither river corridor is particularly distinct and often the alluvial floodplain is very narrow. This impression is emphasised by the fact that large arable fields often sweep down to the river's edge. Pockets of river meadowland still survive in places, notably on the Avon at Brandon and Little Lawford and on the Leam between Marton and Birdlingbury.



Dunchurch Pines

Dunsmore



Plateau fringe

Character and qualities

A rather variable, often large scale farmed landscape with a varied undulating topography and characterised by a nucleated settlement pattern of small, often shrunken villages.

Characteristic features

- An undulating topography of low rounded hills and narrow meandering river valleys.
- Large arable fields, often with a poorly defined field pattern.
- Pockets of permanent pasture and smaller hedged fields, usually associated with more steeply sloping ground.
- A nucleated settlement pattern typically comprising loose clusters of dwellings.
- Isolated, brick built farmsteads.

Dunsmore

Dunsmore parklands Dunsmore parklands is an enclosed estate landscape with a well wooded character defined by woodland edges, parkland and belts of trees. Large blocks of woodland and smaller coverts are a key component of the farmed landscape and help to create a sense of scale and enclosure. Wooded streamlines and scattered hedgerow trees, typically oak but also lime, reinforce this impression creating a sequence of linked wooded spaces. This overall well wooded appearance is emphasised by the gently rolling landform and unifies an otherwise intensively farmed landscape with a poorly defined pattern of large fields. On the whole, field pattern is a subsidiary element in this landscape and in places it is absent altogether allowing middle distance views to wooded skylines.

The landscape around Coombe Fields is particularly fragmented and open allowing

wide views northwards to rising ground along the edge of the High Cross Plateau. Busy roads and large industrial buildings are intrusive features in this open landscape.

Dunsmore parklands occurs as a single area in the northern part of the region. Brinklow is the only settlement of any size, although the area adjoins the north-eastern edge of Coventry. The church and adjoining motte are especially prominent features at Brinklow. The village sits within an area of smaller hedged fields with a more intimate pastoral character. Elsewhere, settlement consists of scattered farmsteads, large country houses and groups of estate cottages.



estate village

Dunsmore



Dunsmore parklands

Character and qualities

An enclosed, gently rolling estate landscape with a strongly wooded character defined by woodland edges, parkland and belts of trees.

Characteristic features

- Middle distance views enclosed by woodland edges.
- Belts of mature trees associated with estatelands.
- Mature parkland with large country houses.
- Mature hedgerow and roadside oaks.

High Cross Plateau

Introduction The High Cross Plateau is an area of wide rolling ridges and valleys forming the south western section of the Leicestershire Wolds. Only part of the region extends into Warwickshire where it forms the area of high ground between Rugby and Hinkley in the north eastern corner of the county.

Physical influences The High Cross Plateau is an upland region separating the drainage basins of the Upper Avon tributaries from those of the River Soar. The underlying Mercia mudstones and Lower Lias clays are masked by a thick cover of glacial drift in this area. This forms a rolling plateau, mostly over 100 metres in height, but rising to 140 metres at Cloudesley Bush. The drift deposits comprise clays, gravels, and sands with varying amounts of local rocks and other material including flints and chalk. Locally, this drift mantle attains considerable thickness, particularly around Monks Kirby, where it is over 50 metres in depth.

The plateau is dissected by a series of streams which form deep, but poorly defined valleys separated by broad rounded ridges. The summits of these ridges are often capped by sands and gravels, giving light freely draining soils. For the most part, however, the region is characterised by heavy soils with impeded drainage, derived from the underlying boulder clay. The River Swift is the only stream of any significance in the Warwickshire part of the region.

Human influences The High Cross Plateau was probably a region of open woodland by the late prehistoric period but had lost most of its woodland by the time of the Norman Conquest. The parishes whose boundaries meet at Cloudesley Bush were probably intercommoning an area of open woodland or heathland in early medieval times (Cloudesley seems to incorporate the Old English term *leah*, here meaning 'wood' or 'wood-pasture'). Two major Roman military roads cross the area: the Watling Street and

the Fosse Way. These two roads met at High Cross (Venonae). The boundary between the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and the Danes was drawn up to follow the Watling Street in AD 878. Some of the place-names to the north of this line show Danish influence, among them Ullesthorpe and Cosby.

Agriculture was much less prosperous in this region at the time of the Norman Conquest than in areas of the Feldon in the south of the county but was more developed than within Arden. By medieval times arable land was farmed in large open fields under a three or four field system, centred around the village. Many of these villages lie on a 'dry-point' site provided by a pocket of sand and gravel. In addition to providing a dry site on which to locate the settlement these also yielded a local water supply from shallow wells.

There appears to have been a great deal of enclosure on the High Cross Plateau in Tudor times to provide large fields for stock rearing. In general, it was in the parishes of the higher parts of the region, such as Churchover, Monks Kirby and Withybrook, that open arable fields were subject to enclosure, although many of the larger fields were further subdivided by the 18th century. Enclosure was frequently accompanied by settlement shrinkage or desertion and, as a result, there are many 'empty' townships in this region where a former hamlet or village has been replaced by little more than a solitary farm. Deserted villages are, for instance, recorded at Hopsford in Withybrook, Cestersover, and Coten in Churchover.

Although the minor townships in many parishes were to be enclosed and depopulated, the open fields of the major village centres survived in this region up to the 18th century. In the north-west of the region the open fields of Bulkington, Burton Hastings, Shilton and Wolvey remained unenclosed until the 18th century. However, the fields of Bramcote and

High Cross Plateau

Barnacle (the minor Bulkington hamlets) were already enclosed by that date, as were those of Copston Parva in Wolvey and Shelford in Burton Hastings. Enclosure at Wolvey affected a large area of heathland in the north of the parish. Enclosure in the latter part of the 18th century also affected a substantial part of the central and southern part of the region and large geometric fields are much in evidence in the parishes of Pailton, Stretton-under-Fosse and Harborough Magna.

Ecological influences The High Cross Plateau is primarily an agricultural region and most of the habitats of value to wildlife are associated with farmland. Neutral grassland is the most valuable habitat often in association with individual features such as hedgerows and field ponds. Streamlines are also important as wildlife corridors, forming a network of linked sites.

unimproved grassland Unimproved pasture and hay meadows are perhaps the most important of Warwickshire's wildlife resources in national terms, and are probably its most threatened habitats. In the High Cross Plateau most grasslands have received some level of improvement by drainage, reseeding or fertilisation. Many of the remaining areas lie in pockets around the villages in the region, with the best examples at Withybrook, Harborough Magna and Newton. These grasslands are predominantly neutral to calcareous in nature and typically have a fine sward made up of grasses such as crested dogstail, meadow barley, fescue, timothy and foxtail. In the hay meadows field woodrush is often abundant, as are greater burnet, knapweed, oxeye daisy, yellow rattle and ribwort plantain. Unimproved pasture usually contains fewer wildflowers but can include rare plants such as lady's mantle and various orchids.

streams and marshes The streams and small rivers draining the High Cross Plateau support a wide range of aquatic life. Associated areas of

marginal marsh vegetation, unimproved meadow and alder/willow carr are of particular importance, while flowering plants such as water stitchwort, marsh marigold and yellow flag provide interest and colour. Mayflies and caddis flies, trout and other fish species are found where the watercourses are undisturbed and unpolluted.

woodland A significant proportion of the woodland on the High Cross Plateau is secondary, consisting of recent shelterbelts and spinneys. These sites are rarely equivalent to ancient semi-natural woods but they can be of importance to mammals, birds and insects, particularly in areas with little other semi-natural habitat. The main concentration of woodlands is in the area around Newnham Paddock.

Visual character of the landscape The physical nature of the High Cross Plateau and the historical development of the region have both had a strong influence on the character of the landscape. This is reflected in the pattern of large fields, the nucleated settlement pattern and the strong impression of 'emptiness' in many areas resulting from the early enclosure of this rather marginal agricultural region. Small rural villages are the dominant settlement type. Dwellings and farmsteads are often intimately mixed together and, although there has been modern development in many villages, most still have a core of older brick buildings in the local vernacular style. The farmed landscape also retains many historic features, in particular remnants of medieval ridge and furrow, and associated deserted village sites. Together, these features make the High Cross Plateau an agricultural region with a strong rural character.

The High Cross Plateau can be sub-divided into two different landscape types, both of which are characterised by a particular aspect of the wider regional character:

- Open plateau
- Village farmlands

High Cross Plateau

Open plateau This is a remote rural landscape lying along the north-eastern boundary of the county between Rugby and Hinkley. For the most part the Open plateau is a large scale rolling landscape characterised by wide views and a strong impression of 'emptiness' and space. Field pattern tends to be a relatively minor element in this landscape as the eye is naturally drawn to distant skylines rather than foreground views. This impression is particularly noticeable from the Watling Street in the vicinity of High Cross and again around Churchover. Field pattern is very fragmented in these areas emphasising the dominance of the underlying landform.

Perhaps the most important feature of the Open plateau is the remote rural character of the landscape. There are few roads or settlements and in places there are extensive areas of largely inaccessible 'empty' countryside. These relate closely to medieval village desertion which was particularly severe

around Upper Smite, Hopsford, Cestersover and Bittesby. Those villages that have survived are typically small and often little more than hamlets. Large isolated manor farmsteads are a feature throughout the area.

The farmed landscape is characterised for the most part by large hedged fields. Smaller fields often associated with pockets of permanent pasture are a feature in places. In the area to the south of Cloudesley Bush a number of shelterbelts form prominent features, lending interest and an impression of woodland in what would otherwise be a largely open and featureless landscape. These have been planted along both the northern and eastern boundaries of the parish of Withybrook and along the ridge followed by the B4459 running south-eastward from Cloudesley Bush.



High Cross monument

High Cross Plateau



Open plateau

Character and qualities

A large scale open rolling landscape characterised by wide views and a strong impression of 'emptiness' and space.

Characteristic features

- A rolling plateau dissected by broad valleys.
- A medium to large scale, often poorly defined field pattern.
- A sparsely populated landscape of hamlets and isolated manor farmsteads.
- Deserted medieval village sites surrounded by extensive areas of 'empty' countryside.
- Pockets of permanent pasture often with ridge and furrow.
- Prominent belts of woodland.

High Cross Plateau

Village farmlands

This is a small scale, mainly pastoral hedged landscape, closely associated with village settlements within and around the edge of the open plateau. Village Farmlands occur in six areas within the region. These include the countryside around Burton Hastings and Wolvey; Shilton, Ansty and Barnacle; Withybrook; Monks Kirby and Pailton; Harborough Magna; and Newton. In all these areas the clusters of houses and farmsteads, narrow winding lanes, small hedged fields and, in places, the undulating topography, combine to create a varied, intimate landscape which contrasts strongly with the surrounding large scale Open plateau landscape.

The farmed landscape is characterised by a mainly geometric pattern of small hedged fields, enclosed by thorn hedges. Where they are well managed these create a strong sense of scale and visual unity. In places hedgerow trees, mostly ash, emphasise this pattern,

occasionally creating a relatively strong impression of enclosure.

This is especially true around Barnacle, where the landform is less pronounced. Elsewhere, particularly around Withybrook, Monks Kirby and Newton, enclosure is defined by the more undulating nature of the underlying topography.

Settlement is a key feature of this landscape and for the most part is confined to small nucleated villages. All of these have a core of older vernacular buildings but most also include a varying proportion of more modern suburban style development. The church at Monks Kirby is a particularly prominent built feature and dominates the small valley in which the village is located. Urban fringe influences become more noticeable along the western margin of the region around Wolvey, Barnacle and Ansty. Ribbon development is often a feature in these areas and views to distant built skylines on the edge of Coventry, Bedworth and Nuneaton are common.



rural village

High Cross Plateau



Village farmlands

Character and qualities

A small scale mainly pastoral hedged landscape closely associated with village settlements around the plateau fringe.

Characteristic features

- A varied undulating topography typically associated with small valleys.
- A mainly geometric pattern of small hedged fields.
- Permanent pasture often with ridge and furrow.
- A nucleated settlement pattern of small rural villages.
- Scattered hedgerow and roadside ash trees.
- Field ponds often fringed by trees and scrub.

Mease Lowlands

Introduction The Mease Lowlands are a relatively low lying rolling agricultural region which runs in a broad belt along the River Mease from the Trent Valley lowlands in the west to Market Bosworth in the east. The region lies largely outside Warwickshire but includes the northern tip of the county beyond the Anker valley.

Physical influences The Mease Lowlands are closely associated with a large tract of Mercia mudstone lying between two uplifted areas of older coal bearing rocks. These mudstones give rise to reddish clay soils which give way locally to well drained sandy soils derived from an irregular outcrop of Triassic sandstone.

The region is drained by three relatively minor rivers; the Mease to the north and the Anker and its tributary the Sence to the south and east. The many streams and brooks which drain into these rivers have produced a dissected gently rolling topography rising to just over 130 metres at No Man's Heath. In Warwickshire, the River Anker forms a rather indistinct valley separating the region from Arden to the south west. The narrow floodplain is flanked by gravel terraces but in the lower valley some of the right bank tributaries flow over very wide spreads of alluvium. The most extensive of these forms a flat, low lying vale between Warton and Austrey.

Human influences The Mease Lowlands were already largely cleared of woodland at an early date and there was little woodland recorded in the Domesday Book. The region displays many of the characteristics of the southern Feldon with small nucleated villages set amidst open arable fields, some of which survived until the late 18th or early 19th century. The late date of enclosure helped to preserve the strongly nucleated settlement pattern, which is a particularly distinctive

feature of the region. Villages tend to occupy high sites overlooking their surrounding fields while parish boundaries frequently follow the intervening streams. In Warwickshire these include Seckington, Austrey, Warton and Newton Regis. Seckington was also the site of a Norman motte and bailey castle.

The late date of enclosure in this region also resulted in the geometric pattern of large hedged fields characteristic of parliamentary enclosure which is still seen in parts of many parishes today. Although parts of these parishes were enclosed at an earlier date only Bramcote in Polesworth is known as a depopulated settlement. Today most of the enclosure hedges within this township have been removed. There were extensive meadows on the low lying area to the south west of Austrey. These were associated with alluvial deposits of a tributary stream of the Anker. Areas of heathland, Clifton Heath and No Man's Heath, persisted along the northern county boundary in Newton Regis until the late 18th century. The latter lay at a road junction and has become a small settlement focus but the former, part of which was once used as a rabbit warren, has now been subdivided into the regular geometric fields associated with late enclosure.

Minor manor houses and country houses abound throughout the region. Some of the manorial sites were earlier moated, such as New House Grange at Sheepy which was a grange of Merevale Abbey. Larger country houses, many of which are set within parkland, include Thorpe Hall, Statfold Hall, Amington Hall and Caldecote Hall.

Ecological influences The Mease Lowlands are primarily an agricultural region and, as might be expected, most of the habitats of value to wildlife are associated with farmland. Unimproved grassland is the most valuable habitat type often in association with individual

Mease Lowlands

features such as hedgerows and field ponds. Streamlines are also important as wildlife corridors, forming a network of linked sites.

streams and meadows The streams and small rivers draining the Mease Lowlands support a wide range of aquatic plant and animal life. Associated areas of marginal marsh vegetation, unimproved meadow and alder/hawthorn scrub are of particular importance, while flowering plants such as water stitchwort, marsh marigold and yellow flag provide interest and colour. Hedges and ditches with great hairy willowherb, nettle, bittersweet and fools watercress bound the low lying fields at Austrey meadows. Marsh marigolds (locally called mollyblobs) and lady's smock can also be found in the remaining damp grassland.

unimproved grassland Unimproved pasture and hay meadows are two of the most important of Warwickshire's wildlife resources in national terms, and are probably its most threatened habitats. Most grasslands have received some level of improvement by drainage, reseeding or fertilisation. Most of the remaining fragments occur in pockets around the villages in the region and on slopes too steep for the plough. The latter group of mainly dry grasslands have a sward made up of meadow barley, sheeps sorrel, greater knapweed, harebell, devilsbit scabious, meadow cranesbill, great burnet and cowslip. Where grazing has ceased, coarse grasses, gorse, bramble and hawthorn quickly become dominant.

Visual character of the landscape The character of the Mease Lowlands is strongly influenced by the historical development of the region. This is reflected in the pattern of large hedged fields and the nucleated settlement pattern of small rural villages. The churches in many of these villages have tall stone spires and are often prominently situated on hilltops. The

existence of many large country houses is also a recurrent visual theme creating a strong sense of regional identity.

Only one landscape type occurs in the small part of the Mease lowlands falling within the county.

Estate farmlands This is a well ordered agricultural landscape characterised by its gentle, rolling topography, large hedged fields and small rural villages. Of special importance, however, are the many small regularly shaped game coverts which occur throughout the area. These are associated with large country estates and together with the many halls often set in mature parkland they greatly influence the character of this landscape.

The Estate farmlands are an intensively farmed landscape with much arable cropping. Permanent pasture is largely restricted to small pockets around villages and along river corridors. The most extensive area occurs around Austrey, where there is also much surviving ridge and furrow. Field pattern is generally intact but often poorly defined by low cut or gappy hedgerows. In places field pattern has become fragmented by the extensive removal of hedges, creating very large arable fields. This is particularly noticeable around Bramcote and Orton-on-the-Hill.

Small rural villages, typically situated on hilltops, are a feature of this landscape. Settlement pattern is strongly nucleated and there are few outlying dwellings or farmsteads. Most of the villages, which in Warwickshire include Warton, Austrey, Shuttington, Seckington, Newton Regis and No Man's Heath, contain both traditional vernacular buildings and more recent development. Tall church spires are particularly eye catching features in many of these hilltop villages. The area is served by a fairly dense network of minor roads and lanes typically bordered by wide grass verges.

Mease Lowlands



Estate farmlands

Character and qualities

A well ordered agricultural landscape characterised by large country estates and small game coverts.


Characteristic features

- A gently rolling topography of low rounded hills and valleys.
- A late enclosure pattern of large hedged fields.
- Many small regularly shaped game coverts.
- Large country houses often set in mature parkland.
- Small hilltop villages often marked by a tall church spire.
- Winding country lanes bounded by wide grass verges.

Part two Strategies and guidelines

Introduction Part two of this report examines recent changes which have affected the landscape in north east Warwickshire and the current issues which are likely to influence change in the future. From this a series of management strategies set out the direction which is required in order to maintain and enhance regional character and local distinctiveness. These strategies are supported by a comprehensive set of landscape guidelines which provide detailed advice for farmers, foresters, developers and highway engineers. Responsibility is also placed on planners to encourage higher standards, using persuasion, planning conditions or enforcement as necessary. The same principles apply to other organisations who play a part in managing the landscape.

The guidelines show how landscape character should be conserved, restored or enhanced. They have been grouped into five topics reflecting the user groups at which they are aimed. Each topic is depicted by a stylised symbol:

settlement & buildings	
highways	
land management	
field boundaries	
trees & woodlands	

Nature conservation is treated as an integral component within each of these topics. The guidelines are presented in the form of a short statement, supported by a summary outlining the issue in question

and the reasons why a particular course of action has been recommended.

The guidelines should be used in conjunction with the fold out map accompanying this booklet. This shows the location of the three regional character areas and six landscape types identified in north east Warwickshire. The map also highlights areas within each landscape type where the structure and character of the landscape are in decline. These areas, termed 'enhancement zones', are indicated by hatching on the map. They represent priority areas where resources for landscape and habitat restoration should be targeted.

Landscape change and current trends

There have been dramatic changes to the Warwickshire landscape in the last half-century as a result of agricultural intensification, urban expansion and the suburbanisation of the countryside. The impact of these changes has been compounded by neglect and natural disasters, in particular Dutch elm disease, which has highlighted the environmental decline of the countryside. The result has been a gradual erosion of local character and sense of place.

agricultural intensification Major agricultural changes have taken place since the 1940s with an increase in arable land at the expense of permanent pasture. This has been most marked in parts of the High Cross Plateau where in 1946 grassland accounted for over 80% of the farmland in the region. Since then, stimulated by agricultural subsidies, arable production has expanded substantially and by the late 1980s permanent pasture had

Landscape change and current trends

declined to under 40% of the farmed area. A similar trend can be seen in Dunsmore and the Mease Lowlands although the lighter soils in both these regions have traditionally been more intensively cropped. Visually these changes have had quite a dramatic effect upon the landscape as large areas of permanent pasture and grazing animals have disappeared to be replaced by ploughed fields and grain.

In parallel there have been changes in grassland character with the making of silage rather than hay. This has resulted in many traditional pastures being reseeded or improved by chemicals and herbicides which have greatly diminished their floristic interest. There are now very few grasslands which retain their original nature conservation interest.

The intensification of agriculture has in places resulted in the wholesale removal of hedgerows and trees, creating open fragmented landscapes. The features that remain often appear out of scale with their surroundings. In particular isolated field trees and remnant, gappy hedgerows contribute to a neglected, derelict appearance to the landscape.

To some extent the general condition of field hedgerows may be an unavoidable part of the evolution of the countryside, an effect of the continuing demographic and agrarian change which created the enclosed landscape in the first place. This is by no means the case everywhere, however, and hedgerows still have a function in many landscapes, despite the often poor condition of individual hedges. It is these areas where resources for hedgerow management should be targeted.

Although further agricultural expansion is now less likely, declining incomes and continued uncertainty in the short term

may result in intensification of production on existing farmland. This could lead to continued agricultural improvement of older grasslands and further loss of hedgerows. In the longer term new incentives may encourage more environmentally sensitive farming, with perhaps a return to more traditional mixed farming regimes. A return to permanent pasture, on river floodplains and areas of former parkland should be a priority.

trees and woodlands Warwickshire in general is not well wooded and this is particularly the case in the north east of the county. Perhaps not surprisingly, therefore, the area of woodland appears to have changed very little this century. There has been a clear change in woodland character, however, as 42% of the ancient woodland area has been replanted with a mixture of broadleaved and coniferous species. Many ancient woodland sites now have only small areas of semi-natural woodland remaining, although some of the replanted woods retain much of their wildlife value.

In the future it is likely that there will be continued incentives for landowners to manage existing woodland and extend tree cover with new planting through government schemes. This should be encouraged, provided that new planting complements the existing landscape character and avoids damage to historical or ecological features. Most of the landscapes in north east Warwickshire would benefit from increased tree planting and several areas are capable of taking substantial amounts of new planting. It is likely that much of this will be on surplus agricultural land. It should be noted, however, that some landscapes are unsuited to large scale woodland planting. Forestry strategies should reflect these differences in the scale and character of different landscape types.

Landscape change and current trends

pressures for new development Large scale new development has been relatively well regulated by strict development control throughout north east Warwickshire. Urban expansion has been most marked around the fringes of Coventry and Rugby. Elsewhere the historic settlement pattern of small nucleated villages is still largely intact. The siting and design of new development has generally been poor, however, and in many places new building has had a detrimental 'suburbanising' effect on settlement character. Suburbanisation is reflected not only in modern dwellings which do not incorporate vernacular features, but also in street layouts, excessive infilling of internal village space and unimaginative ornamental planting. Conversion of redundant farm buildings and the amalgamation of small cottages into larger dwellings have also had a subtle, cumulative impact on the landscape by bringing social change and a new appearance of affluence.

With increasing numbers of people wanting to live in rural areas, there is almost certain to be continued pressure for new development throughout the area. Declining incomes and continued uncertainty in farming will ensure that farm diversification and rural tourism will be growing issues. An increasing number of farmers are likely to consider diversification as a financial alternative, which may result in new built development. As in the past, many of these pressures are likely to be concentrated near transport corridors.

The construction of new motorways and village bypasses, and the widening or realignment of existing roads, are continuing to have a major impact on the character of the rural environment. New roads, particularly motorways, cut through existing landscape patterns. This often

leads to field rationalisation along the road corridor, resulting in a loss of hedgerows and trees, which can make the road more visible and intrusive. Traffic movement and noise have a deleterious effect on rural character along major road corridors such as the A45, M6 and A5. Upgrading existing roads to meet design and safety standards is also having a gradual cumulative impact on the landscape by introducing suburban features into a rural setting.

General development guidelines

One of the key determinants of landscape character is whether built development intrudes on the landscape or integrates with it. With the diverse means available, through planning policy and related planning and highways legislation, a significant influence can be exercised in mitigating any adverse effects of development and in harnessing its many potentially enhancing effects. The general development guidelines set out below are designed to achieve those ends. These guidelines should be regarded as a good practice guide to be applied to all new development wherever it may occur. More specific design guidance to conserve and strengthen local settlement character can be found within the strategy and overall guidelines section for each regional character area.



North-east Warwickshire contains many antiquities and historic buildings, some of which are scheduled or listed, but there are many others unprotected by official designations. These features provide strong social and cultural links with the past and add considerably to landscape character at a local level. They are also part of our heritage and it is important to conserve all sites of archaeological and historical significance.

- **Conserve all sites of archaeological and historical importance**



The suburbanising influences associated with new development are an increasing pressure on the traditional character of rural villages. These influences are having a subtle, cumulative impact, especially on all matters of design. Examples are; the external modernisation of buildings, the erection of illuminated and corporate plastic roadside signs, the replacement of roadside hedges with quick growing ornamental screens, the increased use of security fencing, and even standardised landscaping schemes. Standardised planning and highway design criteria also often necessitate the replacement or modernisation of existing features and tend to result in rather bland and characterless developments. Much more discretion is needed when applying design standards in rural landscapes. In particular, original features such as walls, roadside hedges and mature trees should be retained. Where this is not possible consideration should be given to moving or replacing such features.

- **Conserve the rural character of villages by retaining existing features and local patterns in all development schemes**



Rural villages typically have a low settlement density and a high proportion of land which is not built up. This may include gardens, allotments, pony paddocks, the village green and other open spaces. These features are an important part of the village scene and should be conserved. They also contribute to an irregular settlement outline and help to tie the village into the wider farmed landscape. Excessive infill development can disrupt this pattern and result in a hard built edge against open farmland. The design of new development should therefore incorporate sufficient open space to break up hard edges and to allow appropriate landscaping to link the new settlement edge into the surrounding farmland.

- **Protect and enhance the internal open space and irregular outline of village settlements**

General development guidelines



Settlement in north east Warwickshire is characterised by compact nucleated villages, typically located in the centre of their parish. Apart from occasional scattered farmsteads there are usually few dwellings outside the village. Pressures for new development in open countryside pose a serious threat to this historic settlement pattern and to the rural character of the farmed landscape. An increasing trend is the development of disused airfields for warehousing or light industrial uses. Not only does such development conflict with the type and scale of rural settlement patterns, but also the open nature of these sites, often located on high ground, makes them particularly intrusive. Roadside filling stations, restaurants and motels are by their nature also highly visible and intrusive in a rural setting.



Traditional farm buildings constructed from local materials often have a distinctive regional identity. This identity is being eroded by the construction of modern farm buildings, which often look out of place and visually intrusive. Many new buildings are necessarily large, particularly the roof areas which can be a dominant feature. Siting and design are therefore very important and no amount of 'landscaping' will conceal a building that is fundamentally badly designed. Big buildings can sit well in an open landscape if they are well sited in relation to other features such as landform and tree cover. Use of shadows, different textures and careful selection of building materials can add interest and break up the mass of a large building. Similarly, the choice of colours should complement those in existing buildings and in the surrounding landscape. Darker, matt colours are generally less obtrusive than light, shiny colours. The surroundings of new buildings are also very important but often given inadequate consideration. Locally occurring trees should be used in a positive way to strengthen the overall farm landscape, rather than as an afterthought in an attempt to hide an ugly building.



The construction of new roads and the widening or re-alignment of existing roads can have a major impact on the character of the landscape. The visual impact can often be considerably reduced through careful route selection and it is important that landscape considerations are thoroughly assessed at the inception of all such schemes. No amount of landscaping will ameliorate the impact of a badly chosen route. A landscape assessment should be undertaken prior to carrying out improvements to existing roads as well as for new ones.

- **Conserve the historic nucleated settlement pattern by avoiding new development in open countryside**

- **New agricultural buildings should be sited, designed and landscaped to blend with the surrounding farmed landscape**

- **Landscape assessment should be a major consideration at the inception of all road schemes**

General development guidelines



Country roads are an important component of the rural landscape. Improvements to meet modern highway standards can have a detrimental impact on the character of the roadside environment by introducing suburban influences into the rural landscape. Of particular concern are treatments such as concrete kerbing, galvanised railings, new or replacement street lighting and standardised road signs. These features, which are often visually intrusive, are also alien in a rural setting, and should be used only where absolutely necessary. Opportunities should also be sought for using more traditional materials such as stone setts for kerbing, or reverting to the use of locally distinctive road signs.



In north-east Warwickshire, roads are typically bounded by hedgerows set back behind wide grass verges. Ditches are also a characteristic feature in some areas. Improvements to existing roads and lanes often result in the removal of these historic features. For example, hedgerows and trees are often removed to improve sight lines, or bends are straightened with the loss of roadside hedgerows and ditches. Guidance should be sought to enable a preliminary landscape assessment to identify key features that should be retained, moved or reinstated.



Landscaping along new roads can greatly improve the immediate highway environment, but is often insufficient to maintain the integrity of the adjoining landscape. Greater attention should be given to landscape enhancement within a wide road corridor, perhaps up to a half kilometre either side of the carriageway. In particular, sufficient space should be allowed to enable embankments and cuttings to be shaped to reflect the surrounding landform. Geometric slope profiles should be avoided. Within the wider corridor priority should be given to linking highway landscaping into the surrounding landscape pattern. Local authorities could play an active role here by coordinating and promoting landscape conservation initiatives.



North-east Warwickshire has extensive mineral deposits, particularly sand and gravel, which have been worked for many years. Restoration proposals accompanying mineral applications often show little appreciation of how an extraction site relates to the wider landscape. This can result in landscaping schemes which do not reflect the character of the surrounding landscape. Detailed landscaping schemes should be based upon an assessment of landscape character. Such an assessment should be submitted with the planning application, to inform a decision as to whether reinstating the original landscape, or creating a new landscape is most appropriate. Consideration must also be given to the long term management of new landscape features.

- **Conserve rural character by limiting standardised treatments during highway improvement schemes**

- **Protect the character and special features of country roads**

- **Highway landscaping should be strongly linked to the surrounding landscape pattern**

- **Restoration proposals for mineral workings should be based upon an assessment of landscape character**

Dunsmore

The overall strategy and guidelines for Dunsmore set out below provide the framework for conserving and enhancing the character and unity of the region. The three landscape types which make up the region, however, have their own distinctive characteristics and for each of these there is a separate strategy and set of management guidelines. These are specific to the individual landscape types, but should be read in conjunction with the overall strategy and guidelines for the region.

The character of Dunsmore is in many ways transitional between Arden and Feldon. Like Arden it is a relatively well wooded region characterised by ancient woodlands and hedgerow oaks, but the late enclosure pattern and nucleated villages have much more in common with Feldon. A significant proportion of the farmed landscape was enclosed from heathland and waste, however, and this historical association is still much in evidence today. Together, these characteristics have resulted in a quite distinct regional identity, but urbanisation, mineral extraction and agricultural intensification have disrupted the unity of the landscape in many places. If further fragmentation is to be avoided then attention must be aimed at strengthening the key characteristics of the landscape. To achieve this, management should focus on reinforcing the wooded, heathy character of the region.



Many of the woods in the region are of ancient origin. Ancient woodland sites are those which have had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600. Following losses this century there is now a presumption against further woodland clearance, and conservation of all ancient woodlands must be given the highest priority. Oak is usually the dominant tree species but ash and silver birch are also locally important. To maintain species diversity management should favour small scale felling coupes and natural regeneration. Where vigorous regrowth can be obtained through coppice regeneration this would be a suitable management option. Only where species interest is greatly diminished should replanting be undertaken, favouring indigenous broadleaves raised, where possible, from locally collected seed.



The association with former heathland and waste in the region provides the opportunity for including both broadleaves and conifers in new woodland planting schemes. Selection of species will need to reflect a wide range of considerations including the balance to be struck between nature conservation, landscape enhancement, recreation, timber production and the physical conditions of the particular site. Oak is likely to be the most suitable broadleaved species whilst Scots pine, which is also very much associated with sandy soils, could be used to enhance the heathy character of the landscape. All planting schemes should include a proportion of other locally occurring native trees and shrubs.

Management strategy

- **Enhance the identity and unity of the landscape by strengthening the wooded heathy character of the region**

Overall guidelines

- **Conserve all ancient woodland sites and restock with locally occurring native species**
- **New woodland planting should favour oak as the major tree species with pine and silver birch on sandy soils**

Dunsmore



Often the interface between new development and the surrounding landscape appears sharp and stark. This is most noticeable when a hard built edge abuts open farmland where the landscape is in decline. This is often the case in Dunsmore, particularly around the edges of the larger settlements. Tree planting within and around new development is one of the best ways to soften hard edges. Integration can be best achieved by allowing established trees to run into a development site and designing new planting to break up their densely built appearance. At least 10% of the site should be allocated for tree and woodland planting and resources should be provided for the ongoing management of these features. Opportunities should also be sought, perhaps through planning gain, for offsite woodland planting to help link the development into the wider landscape pattern. The aim should not necessarily be to hide buildings, but rather to integrate them into the landscape. Always use locally occurring species of trees and shrubs. Ornamental species planted as quick growing screens, particularly 'leylandii', should be avoided as these draw attention to the development they are trying to hide.



Increasing leisure time has resulted in greater demands for sport and recreational facilities in the countryside, especially around the fringes of the larger urban centres. This type of development should be avoided in most rural areas. In some, however, particularly the more wooded estate landscapes such as Dunsmore parklands, such facilities can be more readily assimilated into the landscape. Golf courses, for example, could be designed to take on the appearance of modern day parklands as they mature. The selection of appropriate tree species is an important consideration, and more emphasis needs to be given to the planting of longer lived trees such as oak, lime and sweet chestnut. Most landscaping at present appears to favour quick growing or smaller amenity species. There should also be opportunities for creating new wildlife habitats including heathlands, meadowlands and wetlands.



Heathland was once a common feature associated with the poorer sandy soils in Dunsmore. Some plant species still survive along roadside verges. Species such as bracken and gorse are especially evident and provide historic links with the former commons and waste. They also create interest and diversity along the roadside environment. Management of existing verges should seek to maintain and enhance this diversity. In road improvement schemes opportunities may also arise for habitat creation, especially where the underlying soils are sandy. In such cases the exposed subsoil is ideal for establishing heathland vegetation; topsoiling must be avoided. This approach would provide an interesting alternative to amenity tree planting and could prove less costly than conventional topsoiling, seeding and planting.

- **Soften hard built edges through increased tree planting within and around new development**

- **The design of recreational facilities, such as golf courses, should seek to reflect the character of existing landscape features**

- **Diversify roadside character through the creation and management of heathland on highway verges**

Plateau farmlands

One of the special features of the Plateau farmlands is the undeveloped empty character of the landscape with few roads and little settlement, reflecting the late enclosure from heathland and waste. This planned enclosure also produced the geometric pattern of hedged fields defined by lines of mature hedgerow trees. These features combined to create a very distinctive landscape. In places, however, urban influences have had an appreciable impact on this historic character. Mineral extraction mostly has a short term impact but can offer longer term opportunities for landscape enhancement, perhaps through the re-creation of areas of heathland. Ensuring that built development is carefully controlled and well integrated in the landscape is a key element in maintaining the distinctive character of the Plateau farmlands.



The historic pattern of large hedged fields is a distinctive feature of this landscape, although the almost flat topography does not allow this pattern to register strongly. The importance of hedgerows is accentuated in places by lines of mature oaks. Where hedgerows have been removed the field pattern is often fragmented and the scale of the landscape increased. In these areas it is important to avoid further fragmentation through hedgerow removal. In particular it is important to conserve primary hedgelines, including those along roadsides, bridleways, footpaths and farm and parish boundaries. These form the essential fabric of the landscape and where they have been removed consideration should be given to replacement planting.



Roadside and hedgerow oaks are a characteristic feature of the Dunsmore plateau giving filtered views through the landscape. Many of these trees are mature, however, and in most areas there are few younger replacements. To maintain this wooded character natural regeneration of hedgerow oaks should be encouraged wherever possible. Most hedgerows have seedlings, which at little cost can be selected and left to grow. At the same time old trees should be retained until others have grown to replace them. This will be a long term management strategy as it takes many years for an oak to develop to maturity. Management agreements could be used to initiate a programme of conservation and replacement.



A number of the larger ancient woodlands in the Plateau farmlands have been replanted with non-indigenous conifers and broadleaves. Though reduced in their interest these woods are still of much higher nature conservation value than recently established woodlands. Where possible oak woodlands should be re-established on such sites, preferably through natural regeneration where indigenous species still survive. Only where species interest, particularly the ground flora, is greatly diminished should replanting be undertaken, favouring indigenous broadleaves where possible.

Management strategy

- **Maintain and enhance the distinctive historic character of the landscape**

Landscape guidelines

- **Conserve the historic pattern of large hedged fields, with priority given to strengthening and restoring primary hedgelines**
- **Conserve the wooded character of mature hedgerow and roadside oaks**
- **Restocking of plantation ancient woodlands should favour native broadleaved species preferably through natural regeneration**

Plateau farmlands



There is some scope for enhancing this landscape by woodland planting, but the priority should be to maintain the open character of the plateau summits. New planting should be targeted along the A45 corridor and around the fringes of Coventry and Rugby. The aim should be to soften the impact of urban influences in these areas, but planting must not be so extensive that the feeling of altitude and openness is lost. As the topography is relatively flat, particular attention should be given to the nature of woodland edges, to the location and shape of woods and to the spaces they enclose.



The unenclosed character of the former Dunsmore heaths is reflected to some extent in the appearance of open arable farming. With 1990's agricultural policy offering incentives to reduce arable production the creation of heathland could be considered on sites where the soils are suitable. Restoration of sand and gravel workings has traditionally been to agricultural use in Dunsmore. Most restoration schemes offer positive opportunities for creative conservation and enhancement of landscape character, in particular the creation of heathland on the areas of plateau gravels. Historically, these areas supported large tracts of heathland and waste. These have long disappeared but many associations, such as the abundance of 'Heath' names, still remain. By re-establishing pockets of heathy vegetation or even areas of heathland on worked out gravel pits, this distinctive regional characteristic could be considerably strengthened. This would provide visual diversity, enhance nature conservation interest and re-establish an important historic feature in the landscape.



Traditional farm buildings are of significant value to landscape character and it is important to maintain the fabric and appearance of such buildings. Isolated field barns are a special feature on the Dunsmore plateau, where the scarcity of dwellings creates a strong impression of emptiness. Where they can no longer be maintained in agricultural use careful consideration needs to be given to appropriate alternatives. Changes to the appearance of either the building or its surroundings should be avoided, especially where these are not in keeping with the rural character of the landscape. Conversion to residential use would be particularly inappropriate in a region where settlement is strongly nucleated in small villages.

- **New woodland planting should be carefully designed to conserve and strengthen the open, empty character of the landscape**

- **Identify opportunities for re-establishing heathland on suitable sites**

- **Conserve and restore field barns as a feature in the landscape and avoid conversion into dwellings**

Plateau fringe

The Plateau fringe is an intensively farmed agricultural landscape where the pattern of large hedged fields and woods is a key visual element. This is complemented by the pastoral river corridors of the Avon and Leam. Where this pattern has become fragmented, the overall structure of the landscape is in decline, emphasising the large scale nature of the underlying topography. The priority in such areas should be to enhance the structure and unity of the landscape by restoring or strengthening primary linear features, combined with a programme of large scale woodland planting.



For the most part this landscape is characterised by a large scale hedged field pattern, which in many places has become fragmented and is in decline. Where tree cover is weak, this pattern becomes more significant and in these areas it is important to avoid further fragmentation of the landscape through hedgerow removal. In particular, it is important to conserve primary hedgelines along roadsides, bridleways, footpaths and parish and farm boundaries, which often include many of the remaining hedgerow trees. Primary hedgelines form the essential structure of the landscape and they should be managed more positively as landscape features. This would include allowing hedges to grow thicker and taller. Where primary hedgerows are very gappy, or have been removed, consideration should be given to replacement planting. Pockets of smaller fields with a more intact field pattern are also a feature of this landscape and in these areas hedgerow management should be a priority.



Alluvial floodplains associated with the River Avon and the River Leam form primary landscape features running through this landscape. The continuity of these corridors is often disrupted by arable cropping, but also in places by built development and new roads. Occasional flooding can be a problem to such development resulting in calls for further damaging flood alleviation schemes. New development should therefore be restricted where possible to higher ground and should avoid river floodplains. Where arable farming has encroached onto the floodplain, consideration should be given to returning this to permanent pasture.



With the outlook for farming changing, farmers are increasingly urged to reduce production, diversify their farm businesses and look after the environment. In areas of intensive arable farming, such as Dunsmore, expanded field margins offer positive opportunities for enhancing both landscape and wildlife interest. Options include conservation headlands to encourage gamebirds, wildlife fallow margins to encourage wildflowers, and grassland margins to manage as haymeadow or rough grassland. To gain maximum benefit field margins should be developed alongside existing features of interest such as primary hedgerows, woodland edges, and streamlines.

Management strategy

- **Enhance the overall structure and key features within the farmed landscape**

Landscape guidelines

- **Conserve and restore all primary hedgelines and manage them more positively as landscape features**

- **Conserve the visual and ecological continuity of river corridors**

- **Encourage the development of wide field margins along streamlines and woodland edges**

Plateau fringe



Rivers and streamlines form important landscape features, especially where they are fringed by scattered trees and shrubs. Well wooded streamlines help to create a sense of scale and enclosure by dividing the landscape into a series of large compartments. To maintain this effect natural regeneration of trees should be encouraged. Planting new trees may also be appropriate in places, but care should be taken to avoid ecologically important sites such as unimproved grasslands and wetlands. New planting should reflect the sinuous nature of the water course and should also aim to keep one bankside clear to maintain a variety of wildlife habitats along stream margins. Large woodland planting should be avoided, particularly where this has the effect of infilling meanders.



Hedgerow and garden trees are an important feature within and around rural settlements, where they provide shelter and a sense of proportion and balance to the built environment. Mature trees are particularly valuable as local landmarks and their presence often creates a strong sense of place. Trees also soften the hard edges of new buildings and help to link the settlement into the wider farmed landscape. This especially important where the surrounding farmland has a more open, large scale character. In such areas it is particularly important to retain, and where necessary restore, a fringe of smaller fields and trees around the edge of the settlement. This may be best achieved through local initiatives such as a Parish Map project.



There is scope for significant woodland planting in this landscape. In many areas the fragmented pattern of large hedged fields is now subsidiary to the underlying landform. This has produced a large scale landscape which has the capacity to accept quite large areas of planting. The siting and design of new woods will need to be carefully planned, however, and the aim should be to try and frame views rather than completely close them off. New planting should be targeted, where possible, on hilltops and rising ground. Particular care should be taken to shape the lower margin of new woods in very gentle curves, especially where the field pattern is fragmented. Mixed woodlands would be acceptable as long as edges and skylines are sensitively handled.

- **Enhance the continuity and wooded character of river and stream corridors**

- **Conserve and enhance tree cover within and around rural settlements**

- **Enhance tree cover through large scale woodland planting on rising ground**

Dunsmore parklands

Dunsmore parklands are a well wooded landscape where large blocks of woodland, smaller coverts, parkland and belts of trees create a sequence of linked wooded spaces which define the scale and pattern of the landscape. The continuity of this pattern is variable, however, and where tree cover is weak the structure of the landscape also tends to be rather fragmented. The overall management strategy is therefore aimed at creating a more unified landscape by enhancing the wooded character of these areas.



It is important to retain the offset and overlapping nature of woodlands and belts of trees as these create a strong sense of enclosure. Any major breaks in continuity would have the effect of opening up distant views which would distort the scale of the landscape. Enclosure and landscape scale can be maintained by choosing a regeneration system which minimises visual change to key sections of a woodland. Such a system might include: well shaped and scaled retentions in front of felling coupes; minimising visual change to key sections of the woodland; staggering fellings over time, including premature and late felling; and retaining drifts of trees on the edge of felling coupes. The shape and scale of the coupes themselves are also important. When managing woodlands these approaches would create interest and diversity in the landscape.



The gently rolling topography over much of the region is such that woodland edges are the most prominent features. As a result a major part of many large woods cannot be seen. Provided they are not ancient woods are ideally suited for commercial forestry operations. However, where conifers appear along woodland edges, particularly as continuous single species stands, they present an unnatural appearance and disrupt the overall broadleaved character of the landscape. This effect could be softened by the inclusion of well shaped and scaled, irregularly spaced groups of broadleaves to vary species height and diversity.



Streamlines and primary hedgelines along roadsides and parish and farm boundaries form a key structural element in this landscape. The visual importance of these features is considerably enhanced by the presence of mature trees. These have the effect of filtering views through the landscape to create a sense of scale and enclosure. Such features should be conserved and strengthened wherever possible through replanting or natural regeneration of irregularly spaced hedgerow and streamside trees. Most hedgerows have seedlings which at little cost can be selected and left to grow. Locally occurring native species such as oak, ash and field maple should be favoured, with alder and willow along streamlines. Over-mature willows should be rejuvenated by pollarding.

Management strategy

- **Maintain and enhance the enclosed wooded character of the landscape**

Landscape guidelines

- **Felling coupes should be carefully designed to retain the effect of wooded enclosure**

- **Species selection along woodland edges should favour native trees and shrubs**

- **Strengthen the wooded character of streamlines and primary hedgelines through replanting or natural regeneration**

Dunsmore parklands



Landscaped parks are a distinctive feature of this landscape and there are many good examples from the 18th and 19th centuries. As well as their historical importance, parklands provide diversity and interest in the landscape. True parkland, in permanent grass with large scattered trees, is in decline. Many areas of former park have been taken into intensive agricultural production and old parkland trees frequently stand isolated and dying within arable fields. Wherever possible it is important to retain the peaceful, pastoral character of traditional parkland and to encourage new planting to replace old trees. Planting should respect the original design intentions of individual parks, or where there are several layers of design it may be necessary to identify a particular stage of development which reflects the most important historical context. This may involve historical research and drawing up a restoration plan. Where opportunities arise through government incentives consideration should also be given to reinstating areas of former park.



For the most part this is a well wooded landscape but there is scope for significant new planting in places especially in the area of open farmland to the north east of Coventry. Planting could take a number of forms including small blocks of field size to extend and reinforce existing woods, or the creation of new woodland on a similar scale to All Oaks Wood. The latter would be particularly appropriate for softening the impact of large scale development around the M6/A46 intersection. Small scale amenity planting is wholly inadequate in this situation. Mixed woodlands would be acceptable as long as edges and skylines are sensitively handled. Particular attention should be given to the location and shape of woods, and to the space they enclose. The aim should be to try and farm views rather than completely close them off.



This landscape is characterised by a large scale geometric field pattern, which for the most part has become fragmented and is in decline. Where tree cover is weak, this pattern becomes more significant and in these areas it is important to avoid further fragmentation of the landscape through hedgerow removal. In particular, it is important to conserve primary hedgelines along roadsides, bridleways, footpaths and parish and farm boundaries. These often include many of the remaining hedgerow trees and their removal would thus have a greater impact due to the additional loss of tree cover. Primary hedgelines also form the essential structure of the landscape and they should be managed more positively as landscape features. This would include allowing hedges to grow thicker and taller. Where primary hedgerows are very gappy, or have been removed, consideration should be given to replacement planting. Smaller hedged fields are a special feature of the landscape around Brinklow and in this area hedgerow management should be a priority.

- **Conserve and restore existing parkland and where opportunities arise consider restoring areas of former park**

- **Identify opportunities to enhance tree cover through large scale woodland planting**

- **Conserve and restore all primary hedgelines and manage them more positively as landscape features**

Dunsmore

Summary of landscape guidelines

MANAGEMENT OPTION	PLATEAU FARMLANDS	PLATEAU FRINGE	DUNSMORE PARKLANDS
Settlement & buildings			
Conservation of rural character	○	○	○
Conservation of settlement pattern	○	●	●
Conservation of vernacular character	○	○	○
Land management			
Conservation of historic features	●	○	○
Conservation of pastoral character	○	○	○
Management of field margins	○	●	○
Restoration of permanent pasture	○	○	○
Management of river and stream corridors	○	●	○
Management of roadside vegetation	●	○	○
Management of semi-natural habitats	●	○	○
Habitat creation	●	○	○
Field boundaries			
Conservation of historic field pattern	●	○	○
Conservation of primary field boundaries	●	●	●
Hedgerow replanting and management	●	○	○
Trees & woodlands			
Conservation of mature trees	●	○	○
Regeneration of hedgerow tree cover	●	○	○
Management of primary boundary trees	○	●	●
Amenity tree planting	×	×	○
Parkland management	-	○	●
Woodland management	●	○	●
Small scale woodland planting	○	○	●
Large scale woodland planting	×	●	●

● High priority ○ Low priority × Inappropriate - Not applicable

Species lists – Dunsmore

The following is a list of those tree and shrub species which are common and characteristic to Dunsmore, and which contribute to its regional identity. Other native tree species may also be appropriate to individual sites - professional advice is recommended and is available from the sources listed at the back of this report.

Main soil types - clay loams and sandy soils

		WOODLANDS		HEDGES AND HEDGEROW TREES	WET AREAS AND STREAMSIDES
		Clay Loams	Sandy Soils		
● Dominant species					
○ Other appropriate species					
Trees					
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>	○		○	
Common alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	○			●
Silver birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>		●		
Downy birch	<i>Betula pubescens</i>	○			○
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	●			○
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	○	○		
Crab apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	○	○		
Scots pine *	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>		○		
Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>	○	○		○
Wild cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>	○			
Sessile oak	<i>Quercus petraea</i>		●	●	
Pedunculate oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	●	●	●	
White willow	<i>Salix alba</i>				●
Crack willow	<i>Salix fragilis</i>				●
Shrubs					
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>			○	
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	○		○	
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	○		○	
Midland hawthorn	<i>Crataegus laevigata</i>	○	○	○	
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	○	○	●	
Wild privet	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	○		○	
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	○		○	
Goat willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>	○	○		○
Osier	<i>Salix viminalis</i>				○
Guelder rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	○		○	○

Planting should contain at least 80% of dominant species

* Scots pine is not native to Warwickshire but is associated with former heathland in Dunsmore.

Semi-natural habitats

A number of exciting and increasingly threatened semi-natural habitats are associated with Dunsmore. True heathland dominated by ling heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) on the dry acid soils is a rare but important habitat. Its re-creation is practical on suitable sites, and is often best achieved through natural colonisation, but specialist advice should always be sought.

High Cross Plateau & Mease Lowlands

Although they are geographically and visually distinct the High Cross Plateau and the Mease Lowlands share a number of key regional characteristics which are reflected in a common overall landscape strategy. As this determines the appropriate land use and settlement guidelines for both areas, they have been grouped together in this section of the report to avoid repetition.

One of the special features of the High Cross Plateau and the Mease Lowlands is that they are agricultural regions largely unaffected by urban or industrial development. Both areas have a strong rural character which is emphasised by the many wide views over rolling farmland. In places, especially on the High Cross Plateau, where settlement is sparse or where villages are tucked away in folds in the landscape, there is often a strong impression of remoteness and space. Conversely, influences such as new development or moving traffic are often very visible in these open landscapes. This is particularly apparent along the major road corridors (A5, M6, M42, M69) which bisect both regions. Ameliorating the impact of such influences is a key element in maintaining the distinctive character of the landscape.



The High Cross Plateau and Mease Lowlands are both relatively sparsely populated regions with a nucleated settlement pattern of mainly small rural villages. As a result the historic settlement pattern is still largely intact, but major new development away from these existing centres would weaken the region's distinctive rural character. Approval for new development should therefore seek to reinforce the existing settlement pattern.



Both the High Cross Plateau and the Mease Lowlands are predominantly agricultural regions where arable farming and stock rearing are the dominant land uses. There are few large urban centres and little industrial development. Suburban activities are therefore limited and the region has a strong rural character. Changing agricultural policies and declining price support are forcing many farmers to investigate other sources of income through farm diversification schemes. These may involve a change to alternative agricultural enterprises, food processing to add value to farm products, or activities such as farmhouse bed and breakfast. Increasingly farm support is also being switched to more environmentally sensitive farming through schemes such as Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Countryside Stewardship. All of these activities are likely to maintain or even enhance rural character. Non-agricultural schemes, such as caravan sites, golf courses and theme parks, would have a negative impact on landscape character by introducing suburban influences into the rural environment.

Management strategy

- **Conserve and enhance the remote rural character of the region**

Overall guidelines

- **Any new development should reinforce the existing settlement pattern of small rural towns and villages**
- **Conserve rural character and avoid types of farm diversification which are inappropriate to an agricultural landscape**

High Cross Plateau & Mease Lowlands



Working farms are a characteristic feature in rural settlements especially within small villages and hamlets. The presence of farmsteads, often in the heart of the village, emphasises the rural character of the region and the fact that it is a working agricultural landscape. Often when a farm comes on the market, the farmhouse and adjoining buildings are sold separately and converted into dwellings. This usually leads to changes in the fabric and surroundings of the site, but more significantly, the rural character of the village is diminished.



The wave-like undulations, known as ridge and furrow, are a special feature in many parts of the High Cross Plateau. These are often associated with deserted village sites and together they represent intact medieval landscapes, which were preserved when these areas were enclosed for sheep pasture during the Tudor period. Many of these ancient pastures remained until the late 1940s. Since then, most have been ploughed up and returned to arable production. Once lost, this unique feature cannot be replaced. It is therefore important, from both a landscape and historical perspective, to conserve those few areas that still survive.



Rivers and streamlines form important linear landscape features. They are also valuable as ecological corridors, especially in more open, intensively farmed landscapes. Of special importance are all surviving areas of marginal aquatic vegetation, unimproved meadow, and fringing trees or scrub. Such areas should be conserved as a priority, but opportunities should also be sought for creating new habitats on areas of improved farmland along stream corridors. The water channel itself is a key element, but many streams have been affected by land drainage schemes. As a result, features such as meanders, shallows, and fringing vegetation have been lost and replaced by a more uniform channel profile. Such areas offer considerable scope for creative habitat improvement.

- **Conserve the character of rural villages by retaining farmsteads within settlements**

- **Conserve all the remaining deserted medieval villages and ridge & furrow landscapes**

- **Conserve and enhance the value of rivers and streamlines as wildlife corridors**

Open plateau

This landscape is characterised by an open rolling plateau dissected by wide valleys. The large areas of 'empty' countryside, with no roads or settlements, are a distinctive feature and have much in common with some upland landscapes. Unlike the latter, however, landform does not have a dominant and unifying effect on the landscape. Instead the pattern of fields and to some extent woods is more important, but where this pattern has become fragmented, the overall structure of the landscape is in decline. This tends to emphasise the large scale nature of the underlying topography. The priority in such areas should be to enhance the structure and unity of the landscape by restoring or strengthening primary linear features, combined with a programme of large scale woodland planting.



This landscape is characterised by a large scale geometric field pattern, which for the most part has become fragmented and is in decline. Where tree cover is weak, this pattern becomes more significant and in these areas it is important to avoid further fragmentation of the landscape through hedgerow removal. In particular, it is important to conserve primary hedgelines along roadsides, bridleways, footpaths and parish and farm boundaries. Primary hedgelines form the essential structure of the landscape and they should be managed more positively as landscape features. This would include allowing hedges to grow thicker and taller. Where primary hedgerows are very gappy or have been removed, consideration should be given to replacement planting.



Rivers and streamlines form important landscape features, especially where they are fringed by scattered trees and shrubs. Well wooded streamlines help to create a sense of scale and enclosure by dividing the landscape into a series of large compartments. To maintain this effect natural regeneration of trees should be encouraged. Planting new trees may also be appropriate in places, but care should be taken to avoid ecologically important sites such as unimproved grasslands and wetlands. New planting should reflect the sinuous nature of the water course and should also aim to keep one bankside clear to maintain a variety of wildlife habitats along stream margins. Large woodland planting should be avoided, particularly where this has the effect of infilling meanders.

Management strategy

- **Strengthen the structure and unity of the landscape through large scale woodland planting**

Landscape guidelines

- **Conserve and restore all primary hedgelines and manage them more positively as landscape features**
- **Enhance the continuity and wooded character of river and stream corridors**

Open plateau



Hedgerow and garden trees are an important feature within and around rural settlements, where they provide shelter and a sense of proportion and balance to the built environment. Mature trees are particularly valuable as local landmarks and their presence often creates a strong sense of place. Trees also soften the hard edges of new buildings and help to link the settlement into the wider farmed landscape. This is especially important where the surrounding farmland has a more open, large scale character. In such areas it is particularly important to retain, and where necessary restore, a fringe of smaller fields and trees around the edge of the settlement. This may be best achieved through local initiatives such as a Parish Map project.



There is scope for significant woodland planting in this landscape. In many areas the fragmented pattern of large hedged fields is now subsidiary to the underlying landform. This has produced a large scale landscape which has the capacity to accept quite large areas of planting. The siting and design of new woods will need to be carefully planned. Of special importance is the remote, rural character of this landscape, and new planting should not be so extensive that the feeling of openness is lost. New planting should be targeted, where possible, on both open hilltops and rising ground, taking care to ensure that woodlands do not visually overlap and block off views. Mixed woodlands would be acceptable as long as edges and skylines are sensitively handled.



New woodland planting should appear predominantly broadleaved in character. The use of appropriate species in well designed mixes is important in determining how well new planting will fit into the landscape. Selection of species will need to reflect a wide range of considerations, including the balance to be struck between nature conservation, landscape enhancement, recreation, timber production and the physical conditions of the particular site. Broadleaved species should predominate, but a proportion of conifers can also be valuable in adding variety in shape, texture and colour. Native tree species which occur locally include oak and ash, with wych elm, field maple and alder.

- **Conserve and enhance tree cover within and around rural settlements**

- **Enhance tree cover through large scale woodland planting on rising ground**

- **New woodland planting should be predominantly broadleaved and favour oak with ash as the major tree species**

Village farmlands

The varied, small scale, settled nature of this landscape contrasts strongly with the wide views and large scale, remote character of the open plateau. The greater diversity is due in part to the varied undulating topography, but also to the pastoral character, the small scale field pattern and the more widespread occurrence of hedgerow trees. Similarly, the presence of village settlements, most with a core of older buildings, and the associated network of lanes and trackways provide further interest. All of these features need to be conserved, and where necessary strengthened, if the local distinctiveness of this landscape is to be retained.



Permanent pasture, typically with ridge and furrow, is a special feature on the heavy clay soils which characterise this landscape. Some of these pastures are floristically very rich, and support a wide variety of insects and animals. These are the treasured landscapes of the region, where the peaceful, undisturbed character creates a strong sense of place and link with the past. Such areas should be conserved and managed as traditional low input grassland. Reseeding or ploughing should be avoided. Tree or woodland planting would also be inappropriate on these sites.



Field ponds are important features in pastoral landscapes where historically they were used for watering livestock. They remain common in most parishes. In arable areas their function is now redundant but fringing scrub and trees often form important landscape features. Retention of ponds should be a priority in pastoral areas where they have greater wildlife potential in association with permanent grassland and mature hedgerows. Many of these ponds are now badly silted and shaded and management is needed to improve their wildlife and landscape interest. Management allows ponds to be retained as landscape features as well as providing a valuable source of water for livestock. Allowing limited access to livestock also adds diversity to the wetland habitat.



Field pattern is one of the dominant visual elements in the Village farmlands, forming a small scale landscape structure that complements the historic settled character of this landscape. The small and medium sized, geometric fields are typically bounded by thorn hedges. In places these are thin and gappy, or have been replaced by wire fences, resulting in a more open neglected looking landscape. Replacement hedgerow planting is to be encouraged in such areas and where possible this should complement the shape and scale of existing fields. Hedges should be planted predominantly with hawthorn, with perhaps up to 20% of other locally occurring native species.

Management strategy

- **Conserve the diversity and local distinctiveness of the landscape**

Landscape guidelines

- **Conserve all remaining areas of permanent pasture**
- **Retain and manage field ponds in areas of permanent pasture**
- **Conserve and strengthen the regular pattern of small and medium sized, hedged fields**

Village Farmlands



The general condition of hedgerows throughout this landscape is poor. Most hedges are closely trimmed and many are gappy or dying out at the base. All hedgerows would benefit from more appropriate management.

This would include allowing hedges to grow thicker and taller and planting up individual gappy hedges. Existing incentives for replanting should be more actively promoted. There is also a need to move away from hedgerows being excessively tidy and low cut. Where possible management should favour trimming at three yearly intervals to improve wildlife interest. Consideration should be given to traditional hedgelaying, or coppicing where hedges have grown spindly or become gappy at the base.



Scale and enclosure in this landscape are controlled by field pattern and the density of tree cover. Hedgerow trees tend to be ash, and where they are present they give filtered views through the landscape. Wooded streamlines reinforce the impression of enclosure with lines of willows and alders. To maintain and enhance tree cover natural regeneration of hedgerow trees should be encouraged wherever possible. Most hedgerows have seedlings which at little cost can be selected and left to grow. Ash, perhaps with some oak and field maple, are likely to be the main species. Streamlines can also be strengthened either by pollarding, or through encouraging the natural regeneration of locally occurring trees and shrubs.



Field pattern is the dominant visual element in this landscape and any new woodland planting should complement and strengthen the small scale geometric pattern of hedged fields. Field corner spinneys or larger coverts would be particularly appropriate. Larger woods, up to field size, would also be acceptable, but care should be taken not to block off views through the landscape. All new woodland planting should generally be shaped to match the existing field pattern and broadleaved species should be favoured.

- **Enhance field pattern through more appropriate hedgerow management**
- **Conserve and enhance tree cover through regeneration and replanting of hedgerow trees**
- **Enhance tree cover through small scale tree and woodland planting**

Estate farmlands

This is a well ordered agricultural landscape characterised by large country estates and small rural villages. Large woodlands are not widespread but small regularly shaped game coverts are a key visual component of the landscape. These are linked by a regular pattern of large hedged fields. Large country houses set in mature parkland add variety and cultural interest. All of these features need to be conserved, and where necessary strengthened, if the local distinctiveness of this landscape is to be retained.



The historic pattern of large hedged fields is a distinctive feature of this landscape. The importance of hedgerows is accentuated by the scarcity of tree and woodland cover. Where hedgerows have been removed the field pattern is often fragmented and the scale of the landscape increased. In these areas it is important to avoid further fragmentation of the landscape through hedgerow removal. In particular it is a priority to conserve primary hedgelines, including those along roadsides, bridleways, footpaths and farm and parish boundaries. These form the essential fabric of the landscape and where they have been removed consideration should be given to replacement planting.



The general condition of hedgerows throughout this landscape is variable. Most hedges are closely trimmed and many are gappy or dying out at the base. All hedgerows would benefit from more appropriate management. This would include allowing hedges to grow thicker and taller and planting up individual gappy hedges. Existing incentives for replanting should be more actively promoted. There is also a need to move away from hedgerows being excessively tidy and low cut. Where possible management should favour trimming at three yearly intervals to improve wildlife interest. Consideration should be given to traditional hedgelaying or coppicing where hedges have grown spindly or gappy at the base.



Small woods and coverts are a feature of this landscape. Historically these were managed for timber or game, but agricultural intensification coupled with reduced farm labour and the demise of management practices such as coppicing, has resulted in many of these woods being left unmanaged. As landscape features these are now in decline and in urgent need of management. Government incentives now favour the diversification of farm enterprises including the management of small woods for timber, fuel, game, wildlife, landscape and recreation. Some of these woods may be suited to long rotation coppicing. This may involve a number of owners working together to benefit from economies of scale. The design of coppice coupes should be carefully considered, especially where woods are visually prominent. Where coppicing is impractical, high forest management may be a more suitable option.

Management strategy

- **Conserve and restore the distinctive rural estate character of the farmed landscape**

Landscape guidelines

- **Conserve the historic pattern of large hedged fields, with priority given to strengthening and restoring primary hedgelines**
- **Enhance field pattern through more appropriate hedgerow management**
- **Promote long rotation coppicing as a management tool for neglected small woods and spinneys**

Estate farmlands



Landscaped parks are a distinctive feature of this landscape and there are many good examples from the 18th and 19th centuries. As well as their historical importance, parklands provide diversity and interest in the landscape. True parkland, in permanent grass with large scattered trees, is in decline. Many areas of former park have been taken into intensive agricultural production and old parkland trees frequently stand isolated and dying within arable fields. Wherever possible it is important to retain the peaceful, pastoral character of traditional parkland and to encourage new planting to replace old trees. Planting should respect the original design intentions of individual parks, or where there are several layers of design it may be necessary to identify a particular stage of development which reflects the most important historical context. This may involve historical research and drawing up a restoration plan. Where opportunities arise through government incentives consideration should also be given to reinstating areas of former park.



Rivers and streamlines form important landscape features, especially where they are fringed by scattered trees and shrubs. Well wooded streamlines help to create a sense of scale and enclosure by dividing the landscape into a series of large compartments. To maintain this effect natural regeneration of trees should be encouraged. Planting new trees may also be appropriate in places, but care should be taken to avoid ecologically important sites such as unimproved grasslands and wetlands. New planting should reflect the sinuous nature of the water course and should also aim to keep one bankside clear to maintain a variety of wildlife habitats along stream margins. Large woodland planting should be avoided, particularly where this has the effect of infilling meanders.



Field pattern is the dominant visual element in this landscape and any new woodland planting should complement and strengthen the small scale geometric pattern of hedged fields. Coverts and small woods up to field size would be particularly appropriate. These should generally be shaped to match the existing field pattern and designed to appear predominantly broadleaved in character. Larger woods would also be acceptable particularly where field pattern has become fragmented, but care should be taken not to block off views through the landscape. Mixed planting would be acceptable as long as edges and skylines are sensitively handled.

- **Conserve and restore all areas of existing parkland**

- **Enhance the continuity and wooded character of river and stream corridors**

- **Enhance tree cover through small scale woodland planting**

High Cross Plateau & Mease Lowlands

Summary of landscape guidelines

MANAGEMENT OPTION	OPEN PLATEAU	VILLAGE FARMLANDS	ESTATE FARMLANDS
Settlement & buildings			
Conservation of rural character	●	●	●
Conservation of settlement pattern	●	●	●
Conservation of vernacular character	○	○	○
Land management			
Conservation of historic features	○	○	○
Conservation of pastoral character	○	●	○
Maintenance of field ponds	○	●	○
Management of field margins	○	○	●
Restoration of permanent pasture	○	○	×
Management of river and stream corridors	●	○	●
Management of roadside vegetation	○	○	○
Management of semi-natural habitats	○	○	○
Habitat creation	○	○	○
Field boundaries			
Conservation of historic field pattern	○	●	●
Conservation of primary field boundaries	●	●	●
Hedgerow replanting and management	○	●	●
Trees & woodlands			
Conservation of mature trees	○	○	○
Regeneration of hedgerow tree cover	×	●	○
Management of primary boundary trees	●	○	●
Amenity tree planting	×	●	×
Parkland management	○	-	●
Woodland management	○	○	●
Small scale woodland planting	×	○	●
Large scale woodland planting	●	×	×

● High priority ○ Low priority × Inappropriate - Not applicable

Species lists – High Cross Plateau

The following is a list of those tree and shrub species which are common and characteristic to the High Cross Plateau, and which contribute to its regional identity. Other native tree species may also be appropriate to individual sites - professional advice is recommended and is available from the sources listed at the back of this report.

Main soil type - poorly drained clay loams

		WOODLANDS	HEDGES AND HEDGEROW TREES	WET AREAS AND STREAMSIDES
● Dominant species ○ Other appropriate species				
Trees				
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>	○	○	
Common alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	○		●
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	●	●	○
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	○		
Crab apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	○		
Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>	○		○
Pedunculate oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	●	●	
White willow	<i>Salix alba</i>			●
Crack willow	<i>Salix fragilis</i>			●
Shrubs				
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>		○	
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	○	○	
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	○	○	
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	○	●	
Wild privet	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	○	○	
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	○	○	
Goat willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>	○	○	○
Osier	<i>Salix viminalis</i>			○
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	○		
Guelder rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	○	○	○

Planting should contain at least 80% of dominant species

Species lists – Mease Lowlands

The following is a list of those tree and shrub species which are common and characteristic to the Mease Lowlands, and which contribute to its regional identity. Other native tree species may also be appropriate to individual sites – professional advice is recommended and is available from the sources listed at the back of this report.

Main soil type – free draining loams

- Dominant species
- Other appropriate species

		WOODLANDS	HEDGES AND HEDGEROW TREES	WET AREAS AND STREAMSIDES
Trees				
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>	○	○	
Common alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	○		●
Silver birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>	●		
Downy birch	<i>Betula pubescens</i>	○		
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	●	●	○
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	○		
Crab apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	○		
Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>	○		○
Pedunculate oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	●	●	
White willow	<i>Salix alba</i>			●
Crack willow	<i>Salix fragilis</i>			●
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	○		
Shrubs				
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>		○	
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	○	○	
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	○	○	
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	○	●	
Wild privet	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	○	○	
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	○	○	
Goat willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>	○		○
Osier	<i>Salix viminalis</i>			○
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	○		
Broom	<i>Sarothamnus scoparius</i>	○		
Guelder rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	○	○	○

Planting should contain at least 80% of dominant species

For further advice

For further information on the landscape guidelines; for details of county-wide strategic planning, environment, countryside, minerals, waste disposal and highways issues; and for advice and details of grants for small woodland planting, hedgerow and hedgerow tree planting, pond restoration and other conservation schemes:

Planning and Transport Department,
Warwickshire County Council, P.O.Box 43,
Shire Hall, Warwick CV34 4SX
Tel 0926 – 410410

For information on Warwickshire's history, archaeology, geology and ecology:

Warwickshire Museum, Market Place,
Warwick CV34 4SA Tel 0926 – 419840

For details of the countryside stewardship and hedgerow incentive grant schemes, and further information on national and regional countryside issues:

Countryside Commission, Midlands Regional Office, Cumberland House, 200 Broad Street, Birmingham B15 1TD Tel 021 – 632 6503

For advice and details of grants for woodland planting:

Forestry Authority, West Midlands Conservancy Office, Rydal House, Colton Rd, Rugeley WS15 3HF Tel 0889 – 585222

For advice on nature conservation:

1) Farm Conservation Adviser, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Warwickshire College, Moreton Morrell, Warwickshire CV35 9BL Tel 0926 – 651150

2) Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Brandon Marsh Nature Centre, Brandon Lane, Coventry CV3 3GW Tel 0203 – 302912

For information on Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Local Nature Reserves:

English Nature, 10/11 Butchers Row, Banbury, Oxfordshire OX16 8JM Tel 0295 – 257601

For details of local planning policies:

1) Planning Department, North Warwickshire Borough Council, The Council House, South Street, Atherstone CV9 1BD Tel 0827 – 715341

2) Planning & Development Department, Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council, Town Hall, Nuneaton CV11 5AA Tel 0203 – 376376

3) Planning Department, Rugby Borough Council, Town Hall, Rugby CV21 2LB Tel 0788 – 533533

4) Planning Department, Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Church Street, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 6HX Tel 0789 – 267575

5) Planning Department, Warwick District Council, Warwick New Road, Leamington Spa CV32 5JD Tel 0926 – 450000

