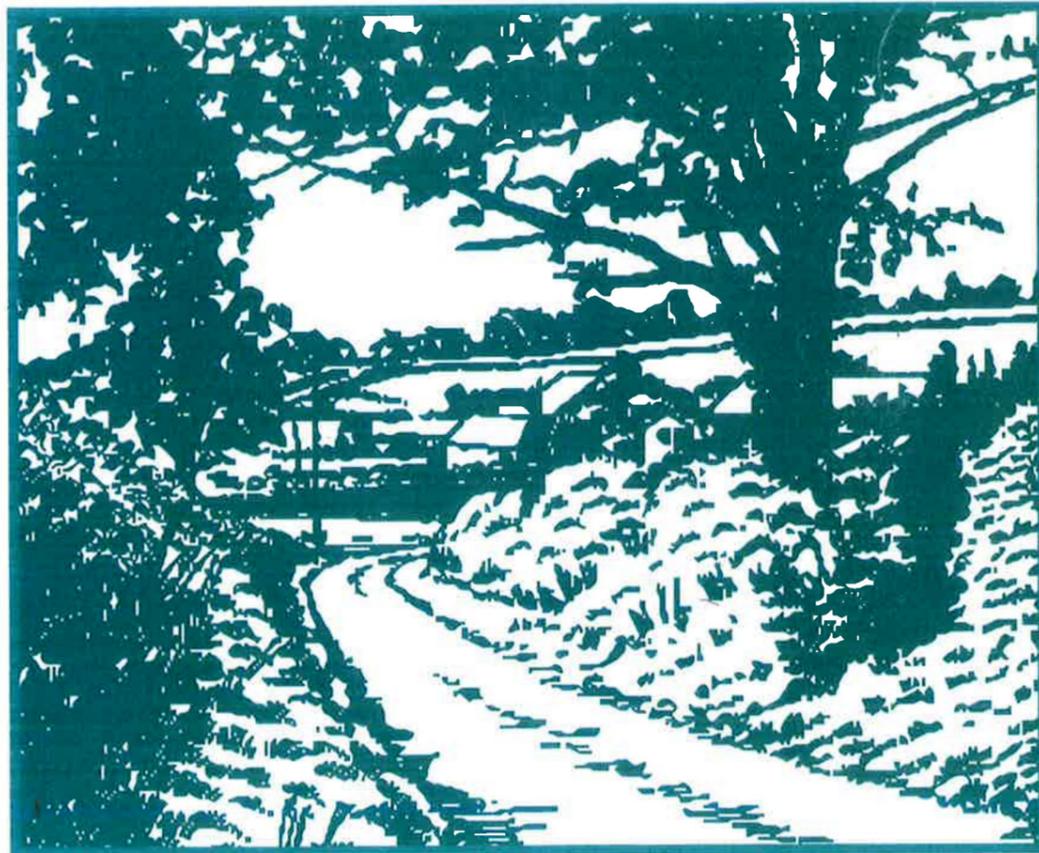
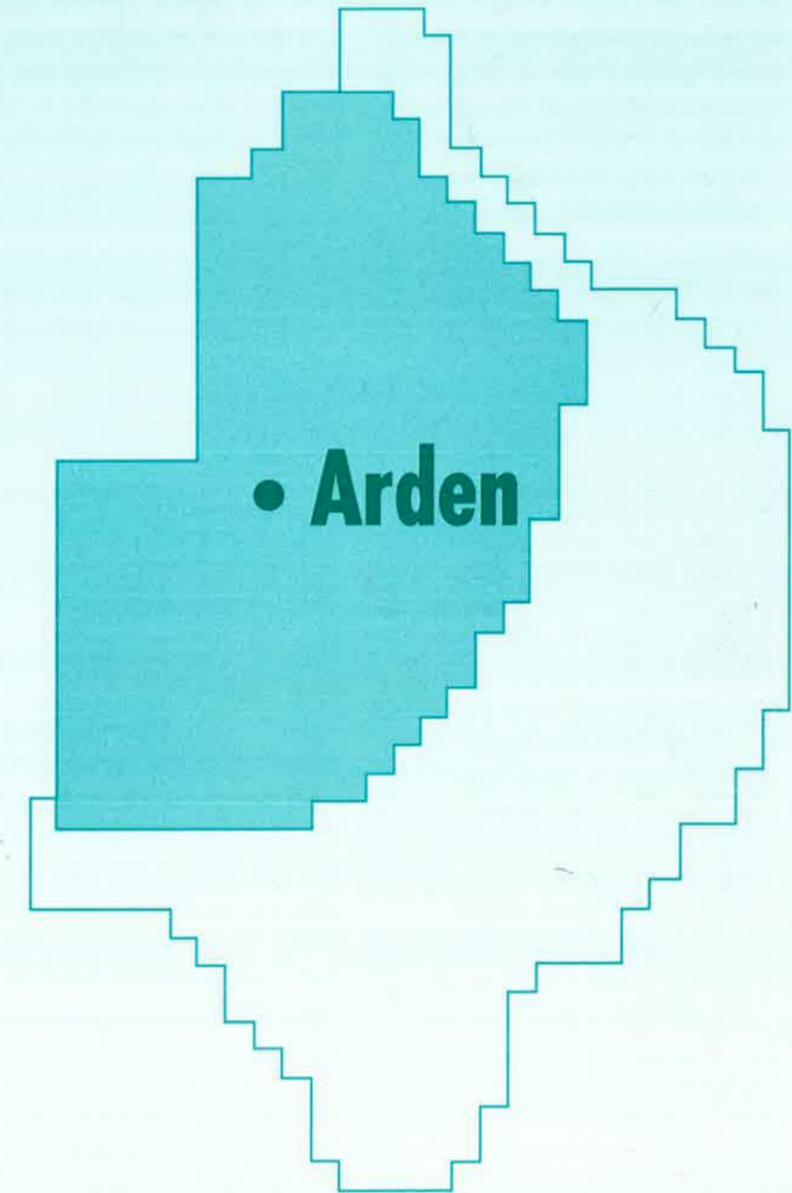


# Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines

## • Arden



# Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines



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

Landscape guidelines are also available for:

Avon Valley – Feldon – Cotswolds Dunsmore – High Cross Plateau – Mease Lowlands

# 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 and Christopher Brooke-Harris.

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.*

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# 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

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# 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 estate lands 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.

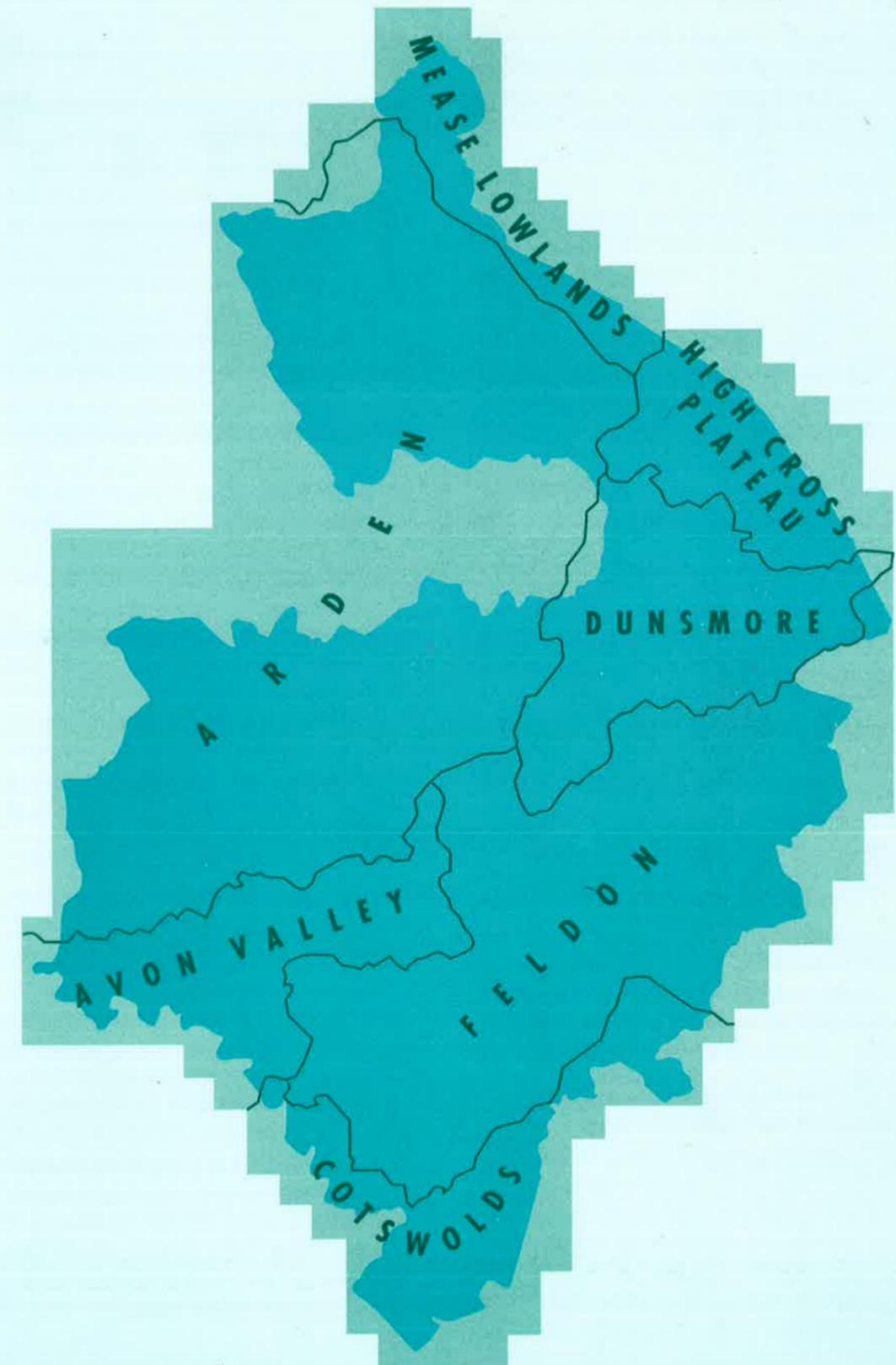
**(5) Cotswolds** – a sparsely populated region of limestone and ironstone uplands characterised by open wolds, large walled fields and distinctive stone villages.

**(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 regional character area lying in the west of the county is described in this booklet: Arden. The booklet should be read in conjunction with the accompanying coloured map, which shows the area and its component landscape types.

## Regional character areas



## Part one Landscape assessment

### Arden

**Introduction** The region known as Arden is an area of former wood pasture and ancient farmlands lying on the eastern side of the Birmingham plateau. Traditionally regarded as the land between the river Tame and the river Avon in Warwickshire, Arden type landscapes also extend into north Worcestershire. Although there are few dramatic physical features, the Arden countryside has an intimate, historic character with a strong sense of unity. Brick and timber are the chief building materials throughout the area and the many farmsteads and hamlets blend subtly with their surroundings. This is Shakespeare's 'Forest of Arden', historically a region of woodlands and 'waste' which remains today one of the more wooded parts of the Midlands.

**Physical influences** The name Arden is derived from the old British word 'Ardu' meaning 'high land'. This relates primarily to the northern and central parts of the region which lie across the main Severn-Trent watershed on the eastern side of the Birmingham plateau. In the wider context of the West Midlands, the Birmingham plateau consists of two uplifted units of older Palaeozoic strata – the South Staffordshire and East Warwickshire plateaus – separated by an area of Triassic rocks covered for the most part by glacial drift. This central plateau is lower lying than the adjoining Palaeozoic areas and in Warwickshire it is largely underlain by Mercia mudstones with a covering of glacial sands and gravels or boulder clay. This gives the plateau a flat to gently rolling character, finely cut by the River Blythe and its tributary streams which flow northwards to join the Tame at Hams Hall. The Blythe is a slow-moving meandering river with countless minor tributary streams trickling in from every side. Many of these tributary valleys

are badly drained and occupied by sluggish, braided streams. Indeed, some of the place names, such as Fen End, Sedgemoor and Bradnock's Marsh, suggest that the area retained its marshy character until comparatively recent times. The Tame valley is wider than that of the Blythe and has a much more developed floodplain with at least two associated gravel terraces.

The East Warwickshire plateau is a dissected upland plateau closely associated with a spindle-shaped horst of Carboniferous and older rocks, which rise to just over 180 metres near Corley. The major part of the plateau is occupied by the Upper Coal Measures, consisting mainly of red marls and sandstones and characterised by red, free draining soils. These are fringed on the north and north-east by the Middle (Productive) Coal Measures with which the Warwickshire coalfield is associated. A narrow band of Cambrian and pre-Cambrian rocks also outcrop along the north-eastern edge of the plateau, between Atherstone and Nuneaton. These older rocks, mainly consisting of hard diorite and quartzite, are faulted against the adjoining Triassic mudstones and present a steep scarp slope towards the Mease Lowlands to the north-east. The Carboniferous rocks are also cut off on the west by a major boundary fault which forms a pronounced edge to the plateau along the Blythe and Tame valleys. South and eastwards, where glacial drift deposits flatten the landform, the plateau slopes gradually into the valleys of the Avon and the Sowe.

To the south of the main Severn-Trent watershed lie the river basins of the Arrow and the Alne which drain southwards into the Avon valley below Alcester. This area, underlain mainly by Mercia mudstones, has a varied undulating topography characterised by outcrops of Arden sandstone which form a series of prominent escarpments. Steep slopes are also found along the Lias escarpment to

## Arden

the east of Haselor, while a series of narrow parallel ridges of glacial origin are a feature of the area between Wootten Wawen and Snitterfield. To the west along the county boundary is the Ridgeway, a flat-topped ridge also of glacial origin which once marked the watershed of the old Avon-Soar river system. The tributaries of the Arrow and the Alne, in contrast to those of the Blythe, are frequently swift flowing and often enclosed in steep sided valleys. Narrow alluvial floodplains are associated with the lower parts of both rivers while terrace deposits occur only along the Arrow, where they form areas of flatter land adjoining the river corridor.

**Human influences** The historical development of Arden is a major factor influencing the character of the present day landscape. In a region with few dramatic physical features it is these subtle human influences, developed over many centuries, which have created the man-made landscapes and special features which clearly distinguish Arden from other areas of the county.

Agriculturally Arden may have originally served as an area of seasonal pasture for the more intensively developed Feldon estates to the south. However, permanent pastoral settlements were established at an early date. The resulting clearances were farmed as small hedged enclosures or 'closes' which created a characteristic pattern of small irregular fields. These were particularly representative of the areas between Tanworth and Rowington and from Allesley to Fillongley.

In contrast open field agriculture was only represented to any degree in the Blythe valley, the lower Arrow and Alne valleys and the areas around Bearley and Norton Lindsey. Generally this was closely associated with nucleated villages. Piecemeal enclosure began relatively early in the southern part of the region with most fields being enclosed before the 18th

century. Here the rolling topography and gradual enclosure produced a characteristic pattern of medium sized fields. In the Blythe valley full enclosure was not completed until the 19th century resulting in a more regular pattern of larger fields. Elsewhere enclosure into large semi-regular fields is a feature of former deerparks. Examples are the Warwick and Kenilworth Castle parklands, which were enclosed between the 16th and 18th centuries.

Extensive woodland cover remained until the Norman Conquest, with the most heavily wooded manors recorded in the Domesday Survey. This registered over 50 square miles of woodland and wood pasture. Subsequently much woodland was cleared and enclosed for arable and stock. Between the 12th and 14th centuries, numerous manorial deer parks were created which probably helped conserve woodland cover. Most have left little impression upon the modern landscape, though good examples survive at Packington and Stoneleigh. Parks continued to be enclosed from the 15th century onwards and it is these, for example Merevale, Arbury and Berkswell, which are most prominent today.

As late as 1540 Leland wrote that ".....the ground in Arden is much enclosyd, plentiful of gres and woode". However, by 1822 C & J Greenwoods' one inch County map showed only small remnants of woodland. Little further shrinkage occurred during the 19th Century as maps show only slightly more woodland than is found today. Minor additions resulted from the Enclosure movement of this period with the planting of many small woods and coverts. These are uniform in size and shape and lack the irregular sinuous boundaries and woodbanks of ancient woods. Often they are named as 'coverts', 'gorses' or 'spinneys'.

Commons were a feature of areas of remnant woodland and many were wooded until

## Arden

relatively recent times. A typical wood pasture common was grassland or heather with thickly scattered trees and bushes. Other commons represented areas of heathland on poorer soils and the numerous 'Heath' names indicate those cleared of woodland at a relatively early date. Commons did not disappear completely until the last stages of enclosure in the early 19th century. The largest occurred at Sambourne and Shrewley, the latter extending nearly 10 miles from Rowington to Balsall Common. Commons have left little impression upon the present landscape, except that they can often be identified as areas with a geometric pattern of fields and lanes within a surrounding irregular or semi-regular pattern.

Commons attracted settlement by landless labourers and poorer sections of the community. These formed the basis of many Arden hamlets, especially those known as 'End' or 'Green'. An allied settlement type is the wayside cottage established on a roadside verge and taking in a long linear garden.

The dispersed settlement pattern more generally found in Arden was closely related to agricultural development. The typical expression of woodland assarting and heathland enclosure was a pattern of scattered farmsteads and hamlets. This dispersed pattern is reflected in a maze of narrow lanes, trackways and footpaths which grew up to serve outlying farms and hamlets. A land-owning peasantry gave rise to a wealthy class of yeoman farmers by the late medieval period. As a result many substantial brick and timber farmhouses were built in the 16th and 17th centuries, often on earlier moated sites.

A more recent and very distinct settlement type is associated with the pit villages of the coal mining industry. Extensive coal exploitation began in north Warwickshire in the 19th century, shortly after the start of the Industrial Revolution. This has had a

profound effect on the landscape of this part of Warwickshire. Mining villages contain much early 20th century terraced housing, often situated on hill tops and with a very distinctive 'northern' character. Some of these were new villages built to house mining families, while others were older villages relocated as a colliery expanded.

The presence of coalmines attracted secondary industry which relied on coal for power. Hams Hall power station was built to produce electricity directly from coal. Other industrial plants sprung up to convert coal to coke and other products. Railways and roads were also built to transport the coal to other areas of the country. The effects of the mines therefore spread far beyond the colliery gates, and have made the north eastern part of Arden, between Tamworth and Nuneaton, an industrial landscape unlike any other in the county.

**Ecological influences** The natural vegetation of Arden is thought to have consisted of dense broadleaved woodland, dominated by oak on the light sandy soils and lime on the heavier clays and loams. Woodland clearance, from earliest times, resulted in the development of grassland and wood pasture over much of the area with heathland on the poorer, leached soils. Marshland occurred in low lying areas along rivers and streams. All of these habitats have been greatly influenced by land-use history and no large areas have survived. The sites of greatest ecological interest today are those that retain remnants of these ancient vegetation types. They reflect the underlying geology and soils and make an important contribution to landscape character. Some, particularly woodlands, also form prominent visual features.

**ancient woodland** Scattered blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland occur throughout Arden but are most common in the parishes of

## Arden

Tanworth and Bentley where Clowes Wood and Bentley Park Wood are fine examples. Although none retain the climax species composition of the original wildwood, some on the sandy soils on the North Warwickshire plateau can still be classified as oak dominated woodlands. The rest are now best described, as a result of frequent disturbance by man, as oak-birch woodlands. On the clay loams of central and southern Arden there are only one or two small areas left of lime dominated woodland, since lime was managed 'out' of woodlands in favour of the more useful oak. These woodlands are now typically oak-ash or oak-birch, though in places small-leaved lime is still a significant component, reflecting the woodlands' ancient origin.

Many woods, although on the ancient woodlands register, have been substantially replanted in modern times and are reduced in their conservation value. However, their rich ground flora and fauna built up over centuries is often still present, particularly along rides and around the edge of the woodland. This makes them superior wildlife sites to more recent plantation woodlands, and high priorities for conversion back to a semi-natural species mix. Ancient woodbanks, not found in recent woodland, add additional historical interest to many ancient woodlands.

**heathland** Heathland and commons, now rare and greatly diminished in area, were historically associated with wood pasture and waste. Yarningale Common, Kenilworth Common, Baddesley and Grendon Commons are the most significant areas now remaining. Elsewhere fragments of heathy grassland survive at Packington, Earlswood and along some roadside and railway banks. Although all three heather species exist, true heathland in Arden is characterised by ling heather with bilberry, purple moor-grass, heath bedstraw and wavy hair-grass. Where management has

ceased, gorse, bracken and silver birch start to colonise. Bracken is perhaps the most obvious 'heathy' indicator and is a common feature of many woods and roadside verges, especially in the central and northern parts of the region.

**hedgerows** Ancient, mixed hedgerows, often more than two metres wide, are a special feature of Arden, and some may represent remnants of the original wildwood as it was cleared and converted into small hedged fields by assarting. The hedges were assimilated from shrubs found along the previous woodland edge, or from the seed bank in the soil, and the species mix therefore reflects that from the woodland itself. A wide variety of woody species are typically present, often dominated by hazel, but with dogwood, field maple, hawthorn, blackthorn and holly also common. Holly is associated particularly with the lighter soils of the East Warwickshire plateau. Where hedge banks complement ancient hedges, these often support a diverse flora with many woodland plant species.

**unimproved grassland** Permanent grassland is still in feature of the more pastoral Arden landscapes, and where this remains unimproved it can be rich in flowering plant species. Many sites which existed up to the second world war have now been destroyed or damaged as a result of agricultural intensification, but many areas remain, particularly on marginal land. The best remaining sites are found on steep hillsides as rough, often scrub grassland; on high canal and roadside embankments; on disused railway cuttings; or as isolated groups of hedged fields.

**field ponds** Field ponds, often fringed by scrub and trees, are found throughout Arden and are associated with its history of stock-rearing. Where they are managed to avoid silting up and overshadowing by surrounding

## Arden

scrub vegetation, they can be valuable wildlife habitats. Although many ponds have been lost as a result of agricultural intensification and neglect they are still an important feature of the region, and are particularly abundant in Fillongley and Meriden parishes.

**river wetlands** Historically river floodplains were managed as wet meadowland. These were floristically very rich and of great nature conservation value. The Alne river and the Blythe (the latter a Site of Special Scientific Interest) remain relatively unspoilt, retaining a good variety of marginal vegetation, wet grassland, riverside trees and scrub. Some areas of particular interest include the marsh, reedbed and floodland on the Arrow at Alcester; the wet meadows at Kinwarton and Haselor; the osiers at Pettiford on the Alne and the water meadows along the Blythe at Hampton in Arden.

### Visual character of the landscape

Arden is characterised by a wide range of historical and ecological features, which create a landscape of intimacy and a strong 'sense of place'. Most significantly it remains a wooded landscape with mature hedgerow oaks, ancient woodlands and historic parklands. The association with former common and heath

imparts a strong sense of unity and is reflected in the widespread occurrence of heathy vegetation, particularly roadside bracken. A number of remnant commons still survive but most of the larger areas have been enclosed and are today characterised by a geometric pattern of roads and small fields. The landscape retains many ancient features, in particular a pattern of irregular fields defined by thick hedgerows; a network of narrow, winding and often sunken lanes and trackways; a dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and hamlets; and a wealth of antiquities including castles, fishponds and moated sites. These features are woven within a farmed landscape which in places still retains a strong rural character.

The above features define Arden as a broad landscape region. Within this area seven distinct types of landscape can be identified, each of which is characterised by a particular aspect of the wider regional character:

- Ancient Arden
- Arden pastures
- Industrial Arden
- Arden parklands
- Wooded estate lands
- Arden river valleys
- River valley wetlands



wayside cottages

## Arden

**Ancient Arden** This is the most extensive Arden landscape and forms the core of ancient countryside in Warwickshire. It is located in two main areas: the northern section covers the eastern half of the North Warwickshire plateau, while the southern section forms the undulating countryside between Hatton and Redditch. It is a small scale, intricate landscape with many low rounded hills, steep scarps and small incised valleys. Landform is rarely dominant but in places it is emphasised by hilltop woodlands and wooded scarps. Within the area landform relates intimately with tree cover and field pattern to form a strong sense of enclosure. Views are restricted by thick roadside hedgerows and are often short, overlooking two or three fields to a wooded skyline. Occasional distant views are afforded from hilltops and ridgelines revealing a varied, wooded topography.

The farmed landscape is characterised by a well defined small to medium sized irregular field pattern, complemented by an irregular pattern of narrow lanes. Most lanes and trackways are tightly defined by thick hedgerows often on hedgebanks. Pockets of permanent pasture are closely associated with small scale field patterns around hamlets and lanes. These form the treasured, undisturbed Arden landscapes where a combination of ancient hedgerows, unimproved pasture and grazing animals creates a strong sense of place and a peaceful reminder of times past. The intimacy of the landscape is often reinforced by the presence of sunken trackways and old field ponds which provide the finishing touches to tranquil, typically English rural scenes.

Throughout much of the area the landscape has a well wooded character formed by a mixture of woodlands, hedgerow trees, small parks and strongly wooded streamlines. Woodlands are particularly prominent on higher ground on the North Warwickshire plateau between

Meriden and New Arley. The majority of woodlands are less than 5 hectares in size, although several such as Close Wood and Birchley Hays Wood just north east of Meriden are considerably larger. Most are oak dominated, but a substantial proportion particularly of larger woods have been replanted with mixed broadleaved and coniferous species. The irregular shape of most woodlands reflects the large number that have ancient origins. Hedgerow trees are mainly associated with pastoral landscapes, such as those found around Tanworth-in-Arden. Free standing field trees and groups of trees around field ponds are also locally important. Elsewhere trees are more scattered, but in combination with thick hedgerows they often maintain a semblance of wooded character.

An integral element of the landscape is the dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets and farmsteads. Many historic brick and timber farmhouses and parish churches are particularly prominent. Modern houses are found on the edges of most hamlets and along roadsides, but in north and south Arden these do not markedly detract from traditional settlement character. In central Arden however, in the parishes of Allesley, Berkswell, Corley and Meriden, urban influences give a suburban feel to the landscape.



## Arden



### Ancient Arden

#### Overall character and qualities

An small scale farmed landscape with a varied, undulating topography, characterised by an irregular pattern of fields and narrow, winding lanes.

#### Characteristic features

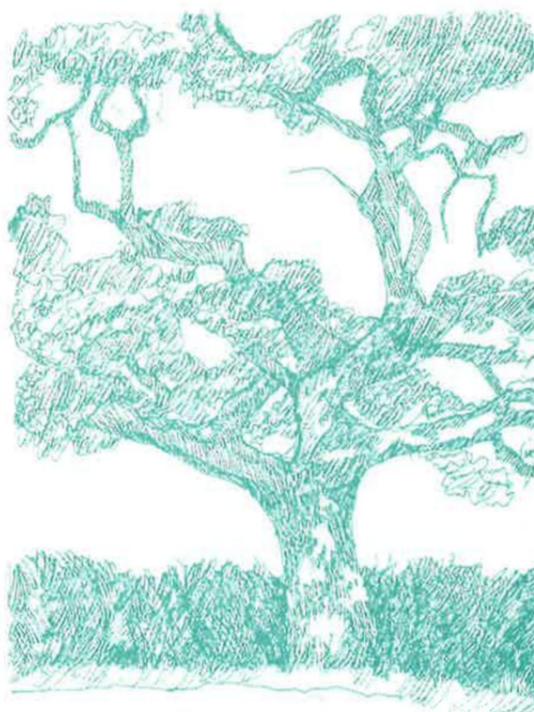
- A varied undulating topography.
- A network of winding lanes and trackways often confined by tall hedgebanks.
- An ancient irregular pattern of small to medium sized fields.
- Hedgerow and roadside oaks.
- Field ponds associated with permanent pasture.
- Many place names ending in Green or End.

## Arden

**Arden pastures** Arden pastures is a landscape of poor soils and small hedged fields associated with deposits of glacial drift on the southern edge of the Birmingham plateau. Much of this area remained as wood pasture and waste until relatively recent times. This is reflected in the many place names ending in 'Heath' or 'Common'. The village of Balsall Common, for example, takes its name from a large area of former heathland which extended from Berkswell to Shrewley. Today this area is characterised by long straight roads and small geometric fields. Balsall Common itself originated as a group of wayside cottages built on the common, supplemented by later ribbon development. This pattern of late enclosure followed by the development of new settlements has been repeated throughout Arden pastures in places such as Hockley Heath, Earlswood, Wythall and Aspley Heath. Some of these settlements have expanded considerably in the last thirty years or so, with much modern 'infill' development. This has resulted in a landscape often pervaded by suburban influences. These pockets of 'suburbia' in the countryside are superimposed on an older dispersed pattern of farmsteads and wayside cottages.

Despite the densely populated character of this landscape, settlement is not usually a dominant visual element. Instead the gently rolling topography and numerous mature hedgerow trees combine to create a heavily wooded appearance throughout much of the area. It is not uncommon in some areas to find lines of mature oak trees in almost every hedgerow. The effect of so many trees is to create filtered views and a strong sense of enclosure. Where the fields are very small, the feeling is often one of confinement. Throughout the area as a whole the general impression is of a strongly unified landscape where to a large extent the impact of new settlement is visually contained by tree cover.

The main part of Arden pastures lies in Solihull district, but extends into Warwickshire around Forshaw Heath, Terry's Green and Kingswood. A second smaller area occurs at Balsall Common. The farmed landscape in both areas is characterised by permanent pasture, often grazed by horses or ponies. Field pattern is varied, including geometric semi-regular and irregularly shaped fields. The latter are typically bounded by ancient mixed hedgerows. Elsewhere thorn hedges are more common, while roadside hedgerows are often characterised by holly and bracken.



*pollarded oak*

## Arden



### Arden pastures

#### Overall character and qualities

A small scale, enclosed landscape, often pervaded by suburban influences and characterised by small fields, typically bordered by mature hedgerow trees.

#### Characteristic features

- A gently rolling topography.
- A well defined pattern of small fields and paddocks.
- Numerous mature hedgerow oaks.
- Permanent pasture often grazed by horses.
- A network of minor lanes often with ribbon development.
- Many place names ending in Heath.

## Arden

**Industrial Arden** This is a variable, rather fragmented urban fringe landscape characterised by mining settlements, spoil heaps and pockets of both pastoral and arable farmland. This is a landscape often dominated by the proximity of urban and industrial land, including housing estates, commercial development, factories, coal mines, and quarries. Roads, railways, canals and pylons are also common features, the former typically busy with the sound of traffic. The character of these community urban fringe landscapes varies widely, often with each discrete parcel of land having its own identity. This identity depends on the nature of the adjacent settlement edge, the presence of industrial or mining sites, the local landform and the nature of the open land.

Although farmland makes up a significant proportion of the landscape, much of this land has a run-down character, with gappy, poorly managed hedgerows. This is particularly apparent where fields have been enlarged as a result of arable cropping. Pockets of permanent pasture in small hedged fields survive in many places, however, especially around settlement fringes. Often these fields are bounded by ancient hedgerow of hazel and holly, but thorn hedges or wire fences are also common. Areas of farmland are typically surrounded on two or more sides by urban development, but the urban edge is rarely well defined and often broken by 'fingers of green space'. These are utilised for a variety of purposes including pony paddocks, allotments, playing fields and golf courses.

Coal mining has greatly influenced the character of this landscape, particularly with regard to settlement character and the legacy of spoil heaps. Mining villages, typically on hilltops and comprising rows of red brick, terraced housing are a recurring visual theme throughout the area. Most also include more modern housing estates and small industrial units. Some villages, such as Ansley, Old and New Arley, Baddesley

Ensor and Wood End lie in a semi-rural situation, while others such as Keresley, Galley Common, Ansley Common, Wilencote and Hockley have been incorporated into the expanding conurbations of Coventry, Nuneaton and Tamworth respectively. The undulating nature of the landform throughout the Industrial Arden often allows views from one mining settlement to another, reinforcing the settled community character of the landscape.

Most of the mines in the North Warwickshire coalfield have now closed, but the presence of this former industry is also reflected in the many spoil heaps which remain throughout the area. Some of these have been reclaimed and developed for recreation or as sites for light industrial use. Others have vegetated over naturally with birch woodland and scrub and now provide valuable wildlife habitats. Subsidence associated with mining at Alvecote has produced a complex of wetland habitats along the Anker Valley.

Hard rock quarrying rather than coal mining dominates the landscape in the area around Hartshill. This is associated with a band of very old rocks which form the steeply sloping scarp along the north-eastern edge of the North Warwickshire plateau. The varied undulating topography creates a more unified landscape in this area. This is further strengthened by the many woods which have survived on the poor soils associated with these old rocks. The high proportion of non-agricultural land gives this marginal farming area a strong community character.

Industrial Arden is also characterised by heathy associations reflected in the widespread occurrence of birch, gorse and bracken. Unenclosed commons, supporting remnant heathland vegetation, survive at Baddesley and Bentley. Unfenced roads pass through both commons allowing easy access to these historic landscape features.

## Arden



### Industrial Arden

#### Overall character and qualities

A rather variable, often run-down urban fringe landscape characterised by mining settlements, spoil heaps, and pockets of farmland.

#### Characteristic features

- A varied, often steeply undulating topography.
- Pockets of farmland, often surrounded on two or more sides by urban development.
- A generally poorly defined pattern of small hedged fields.
- Small, closely spaced mining settlements, often on hill tops.
- Rows of terraced houses along roadsides.
- Disused spoil heaps with semi-natural grassland and scrub.
- Golf courses, playing fields and other non-agricultural land.

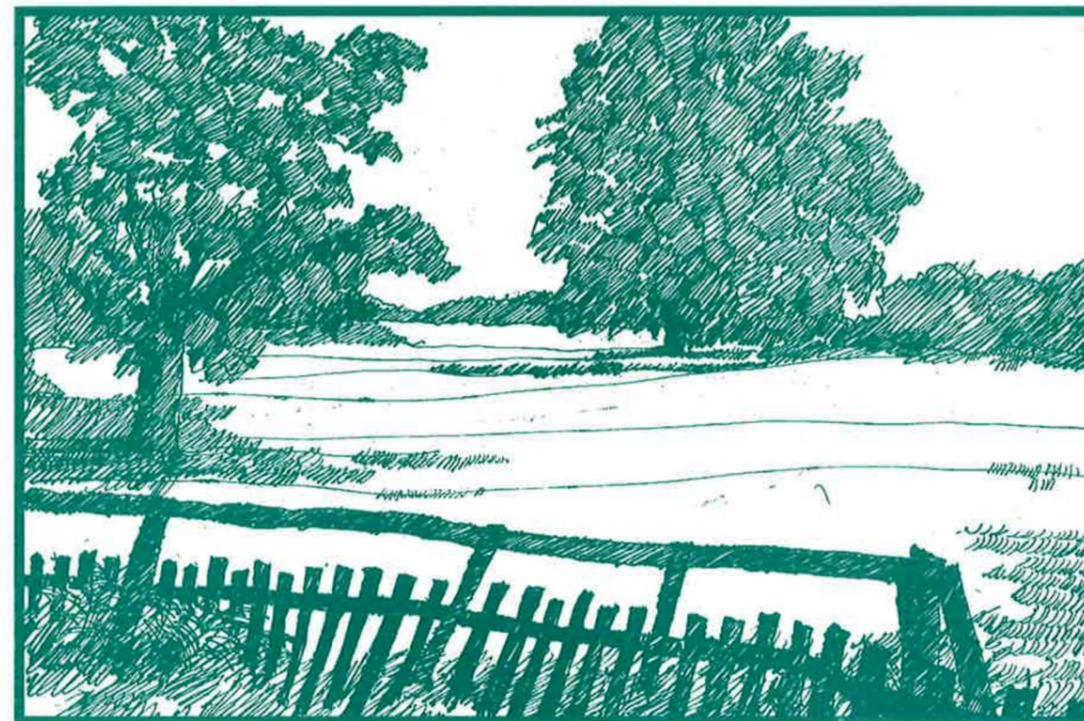
**Arden parklands** Arden parklands is a planned estate landscape closely associated with an area of former wood pasture and historic deerparks. This landscape is especially characteristic of the gently rolling countryside of central Arden between Wroxall and Stoneleigh and in the lower Blythe valley. The landscape pattern is medium to large in scale and defined by woodland edges, belts of trees and wooded streamlines. The impression of enclosure is enhanced by the almost flat topography, which emphasises woodland edges and makes the shape and composition of woodland blocks relatively unimportant. Well wooded streamlines and mature hedgerow oaks reinforce this impression which is repeated throughout the landscape creating a sequence of linked wooded spaces. Where the pattern of medium to large sized fields has become fragmented these spaces can appear rather open and featureless, but middle distance views are typically enclosed by the surrounding wooded skylines. This heavily wooded appearance maintains a sense of unity in a landscape that is both intensively farmed and under pressure from suburbanisation and urban development. These pressures are most apparent around Curdworth and in the area between Birmingham and Coventry.

Woodlands are of varied composition, but are typically large in size. A significant number are irregularly shaped ancient woodlands, some of which have remained largely semi-natural, such as Crackley Wood near Kenilworth.

Other ancient woodlands such as Hay Wood to the south of Baddesley Clinton have been replanted with conifers or other non-native species, but retain valuable semi-natural vegetation along rides and edges. Hay Wood is a particularly good example of 'assarting', the piecemeal conversion of former woodland into private farms which has left characteristic ragged edges.

Geometrically shaped plantations, usually consisting of mixed, non-native species, complement the pattern of ancient woodlands. These were mostly established in the 18th and 19th centuries when many of the large estates were created and land was enclosed from waste. Another feature particularly characteristic of this landscape are the parklands established at the same time, which formed the centrepiece around the estate house or hall. One or two, such as Arbury Berkswell and Umberslade, still retain the classic parkland structure of mature specimen trees within a pastoral setting. Others such as Chadwick Park have been converted to arable, but can be identified by the isolated mature trees which remain as testament to their former splendour. Golf courses are a more recent feature of Arden Parklands and in places have been sited within former parks.

There also remain a few examples of historic deerparks which date back much earlier to medieval times. Good examples are the remnant deerparks at Packington and Stoneleigh, where ancient pollarded oaks, remnant heathy vegetation, and the surrounding pallsade fencing create a strong sense of place and link with the past. Other areas more subtly reflect the influence of former deerparks, in particular the old Warwick and Kenilworth Castle parklands. Although this area was enclosed at an early date and no parkland trees now remain, the sparsity of roads and houses and the survival of historic features, such as the Park Pale along Rouncil Lane, still reflect the structure of these former deerparks. The historic character is greatly enhanced by the majestic red sandstone ruins of Kenilworth castle which overlook the area, and overall a surprisingly strong rural character is retained despite the proximity of Warwick and Kenilworth.



### Arden parklands

#### Overall character and qualities

An enclosed, gently rolling landscape defined by woodland edges, parkland and belts of trees.

#### Characteristic features

- Middle distance views enclosed by woodland edge.
- Belts of mature trees associated with estatelands.
- Many ancient woodlands, often with irregular outlines.
- Large country houses set in mature parkland.
- Remnant deerparks with ancient pollard oaks.
- Thick roadside hedgerows, often with bracken.

## Arden

**Wooded estatelands** The wooded estatelands is a well wooded agricultural landscape of large arable fields and prominent hilltop woodlands. In most places the large scale undulating topography is the dominant element in the landscape, particularly where the pattern of fields and hedgerow trees has become more fragmented. In these open areas woodlands became visually more prominent and together with the landform define the scale of the landscape. Where field pattern is still reasonably intact the scale is usually reduced and filtered views through the landscape are more common.

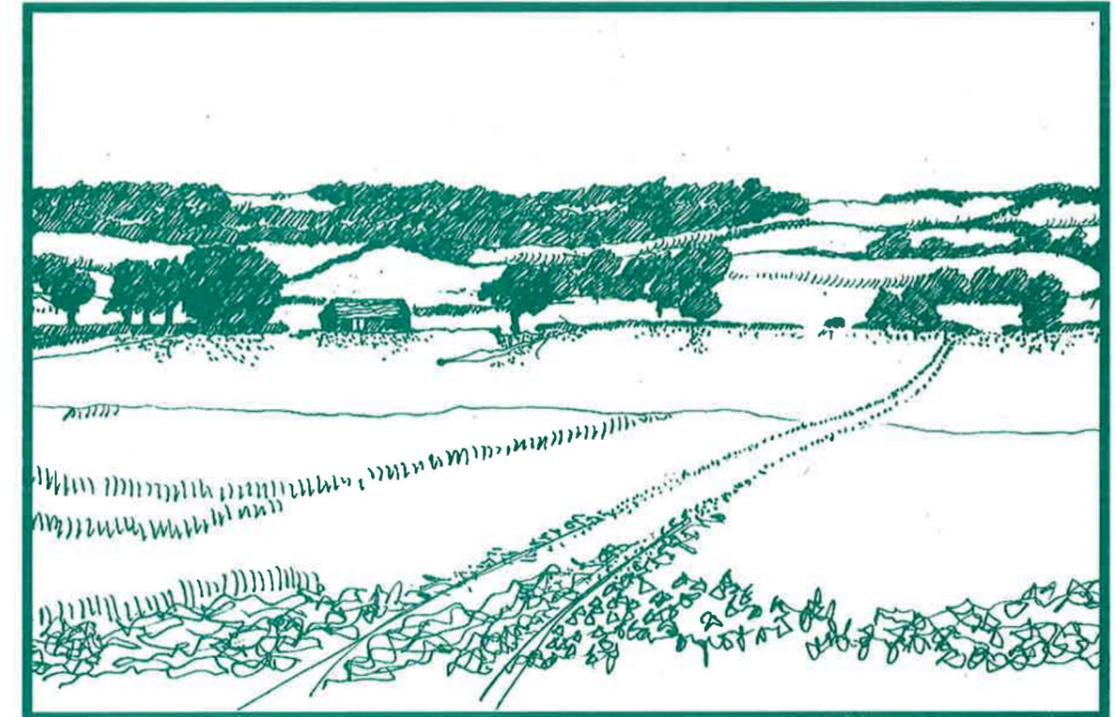
Wooded estatelands occur in three main areas in the northern and southern parts of the region. The largest is a broad belt of countryside stretching from Alcester to Warwick along the northern fringe of the Avon Valley. This is a landscape of mixed farmland and medium to large sized fields where the characteristic dispersed Arden settlement pattern gives way to one of small nucleated villages. These retain a semblance of rural character but mostly now function as dormitory settlements for nearby towns. Large woodlands and mature hedgerow oaks remain a feature in the landscape, especially in the Arrow valley and on the hills around Bearley. The scarp woodlands to the south and east of Haselor form particularly prominent landscape features. Ancient deerparks are recorded at Ragley, Coughton, Wootton Waven and Fulbrook. True parkland survives only at Ragley, but these areas still retain an ancient wooded character. Elsewhere parkland and associated estatelands, characterised by plantation woods and belts of trees, are a feature at Studley, Edstone, Sherbourne and Grove Park.

Wooded estateland landscapes also occur in the north of the region on the older rocks of the north Warwickshire plateau. Although

associated with the Warwickshire coalfield, three areas can be identified with a large scale wooded estateland character. Merevale and its associated woodlands still retains a strong sense of unity which is complemented by the steeply sloping topography in this area. Around Kingsbury and Birchmoor, the structure of the landscape is more fragmented creating wide open views through and beyond these areas to the surrounding industrial landscapes. Kingsbury Wood and the remnant estatelands around Flanders Hall and Alvecot Priory, however, provide more of an impression of the original landscape character.

A small area of dissected sandstone upland also occurs in the extreme north-western corner of the county around Littleworth End. This heavily wooded landscape is part of the adjoining Cank Wood regional character area in south Staffordshire. For the purposes of this assessment, however, and because it is visually very similar to the Arden Wooded estatelands, it has been grouped in this landscape type. Indeed Cank Wood, which includes Cannock Chase, has many similarities with Arden. The main distinction is the much stronger heathland character which is due to differences in the underlying geology. This is reflected in the character of this area which was formerly an area of heathland and waste, but is now characterised by a geometric pattern of large fields and plantation woodlands. Pockets of heathland survive in places, the most extensive being Sutton park, which historically was a part of Warwickshire. The occurrence of two large ancient woods (Trickley Coppice and New Park Wood), in what is still Warwickshire, reflects the more clayey nature of the soils in this area.

## Arden



### Wooded estatelands

#### Overall character and qualities

A well wooded estate landscape characterised by a large scale rolling topography and prominent hilltop woodlands.

#### Characteristic features

- A large scale rolling topography with occasional steep scarp slopes.
- Large woodlands, often associated with rising ground.
- Mature hedgerow and roadside oaks.
- A semi-regular pattern of medium to large sized fields.
- A varied settlement pattern of small villages and scattered farmsteads.

## Arden

**Arden river valleys** These landscapes mark the narrow, linear river corridors of the Arrow, Alne and Blythe, and a small section of the River Cole. They are defined exclusively by the limits of the alluvial flood plains, though associated river terraces or steep river bluffs may be important features in the landscape as experienced from the river itself.

The river channel is the dominant feature of these landscapes, especially where it is well defined by fringing alders and scrub. Old willow pollards are also locally important. The most diverse river channels are those which have been least affected by river improvement works. These are typified by many meanders, islands and shingle beds. They also retain a varied bank profile with much marginal vegetation. In places these features are associated with adjoining flood meadows, creating a strong sense of place and feeling of naturalness. The sound and movement of water adds to this tranquillity, particularly in areas of fast flowing shallows.

Permanent pasture is a characteristic feature of river corridors. Within the alluvial floodplain of the Arden river valleys, flood meadows are the traditional land-use and where intact have a high value as nature conservation sites. Wet grassland and marsh add further interest. The field pattern in these meadows is often poorly defined by ditches or wire fences, but in places the boundary of the floodplain is marked by a prominent, sinuous hedgeline. The most extensive areas of flood meadow occur along the Alne and the Blythe and also at Studley on the river Arrow. These landscapes retain a peaceful, undisturbed, pastoral character with a strong sense of unity. Elsewhere, this unity is interrupted by the encroachment of arable farmland to the river's edge. This is especially true along much of the Arrow.

the peaceful, undisturbed character of the riverside environment. Due to their linear nature, however, the impact of development or the movement and noise of traffic is often very noticeable. This is particularly evident along the Arrow near Redditch and the Blythe at Packington.

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT  
PART ONE

There are few buildings within these landscapes, and this contributes strongly to

## Arden



### Arden river valleys

#### Overall character and qualities

Narrow meandering river corridors with riverside trees and grazing meadows.

#### Characteristic features

- River corridors defined by narrow alluvial floodplains.
- Grazing meadows, often with patches of wet grassland.
- Curvilinear hedgerows along the edge of the floodplain.
- Diverse meandering river channels with shingle beds and much marginal vegetation.
- Fringing elders and scrub.
- Old willow pollards.

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT  
PART ONE

**River valley wetlands** The character of the Tame Valley to the south of Tamworth is strongly influenced by urban and industrial activities including mineral extraction, power lines and major road and rail routes. The river corridor lies in a broad valley which for the most part is poorly defined by gently sloping sides. Between Kingsbury and Dosthill, however, there is a more prominent river bluff where the valley runs along the edge of the North Warwickshire plateau. Steep scrubby banks are a feature in this area.

Areas of farmland still remain between the transport routes and gravel pits, though some of these are areas of restored gravel workings where there are large fields with no hedges or trees. Elsewhere pockets of pasture remain and provide a reminder of what the landscape must have been like some years ago. This former River meadowlands landscape has largely been replaced by open water and disturbed ground.

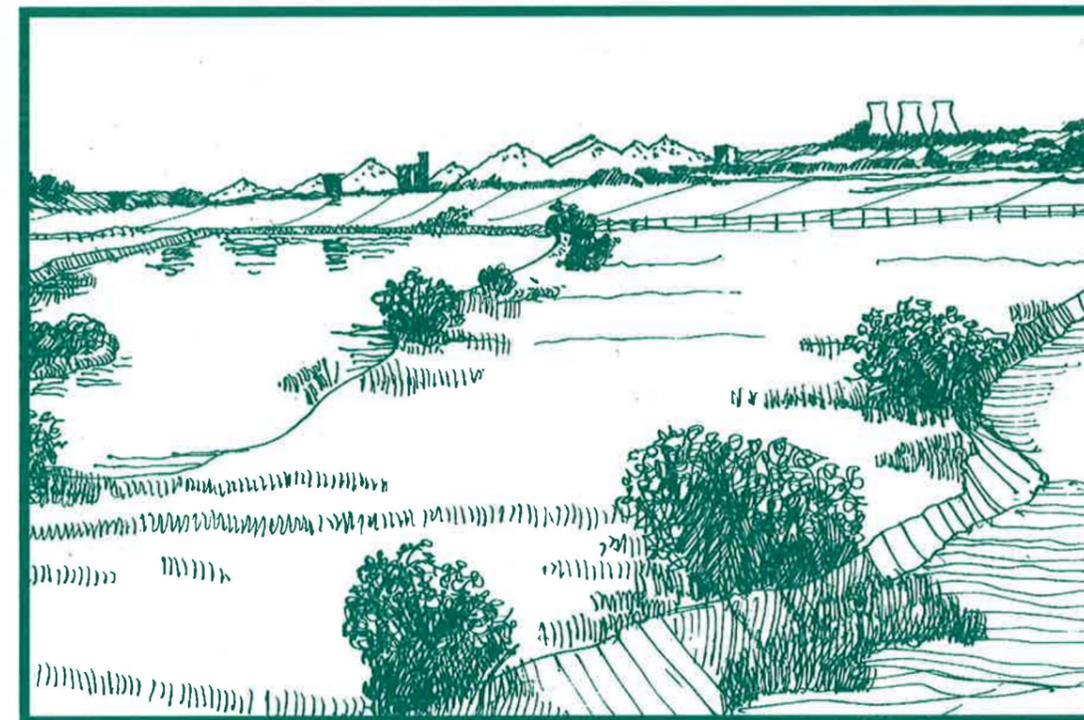
The River valley wetlands is a highly modified, and in places rather featureless, river corridor landscape, extensively worked for sand and gravel. Successive phases of extraction and restoration have resulted in a very variable landscape with little sense of unity. Five broad zones can be distinguished representing different stages in the development of a completely new river landscape. These include:

- areas currently being worked for sand and gravel
- unrestored or newly restored areas around recently flooded gravel workings
- mature wetland areas around old flooded gravel workings
- areas that have been filled and restored to farmland
- other non-agricultural land used mainly for sewage treatment lagoons

The mature wetland zone perhaps best represents the key characteristics of this new

river landscape, which is most well developed at Kingsbury Water Park. This is an enclosed wooded landscape characterised by a series of linked spaces comprising areas of open water. These vary in size from small ponds to large lakes. The straight edges around some of these lakes are visually discordant but overall the appearance of the landscape is considerably softened by much woodland, scrub and lines of trees. The River Tame is not a prominent feature in this wetland landscape, and the polluted and often heavily modified channel has itself few features of interest.

The power station at Hams Hall is a particularly prominent feature within the wider valley although much of the site lies on the edge of the alluvial floodplain. Associated industrial features including spoil tips, pylons and railways, however, impinge onto the river valley. Together with the nearby sewage treatment works these features have a major physical and visual impact creating a disturbed landscape with little sense of unity. The river channel through this area is canalised and lined with flood banks.



## River valley wetlands

### Overall character and qualities

A highly modified rather degraded river valley landscape strongly influenced by sand and gravel extraction and other industrial activities.

### Characteristic features

- Broad flat alluvial floodplain.
- Large areas of open water in flooded gravel pits.
- Disturbed ground associated with sand and gravel extraction.
- Alder carr, willow scrub and fringing wetland vegetation.
- Spoil heaps with recolonising woodland and scrub.
- Modified, often canalised river channel.

STRATEGIES & GUIDELINES  
PART TWO

## Part two Strategies and guidelines

**Introduction** Part two of this report examines recent changes which have affected the landscape in Arden 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 seven landscape types identified within Arden. 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 on the North Warwickshire plateau where in 1946 approximately 75% of the farmland was pastoral with dairying as the major land use. By the late 1980s this had declined to approximately 30% of the farmed area. Though not as marked, similar trends can be seen elsewhere in Arden, while on the

## Landscape change and current trends

plateau area to the south of Birmingham many smallholdings are now farmed part-time or given over to pony paddocks.

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 has 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. This has been particularly marked in the north of the region where the historic pattern of small irregular fields has been completely swept away in some areas. The features that remain often appear out of scale with their surroundings. In particular isolated field trees and remnant gappy hedgerows reinforce the impression of a landscape in decline.

Land drainage has severely affected the character of many river landscapes. This has resulted in a loss of wetland habitats and the conversion of former flood meadows to arable production. Wetland habitats have also been cleared during river channel management. The River Arrow in particular has lost much of its marginal vegetation and associated wet grassland, and is only slowly recovering. Similarly, with the demise of working mills many mill leats and islands have been lost.

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 land. This could lead to continued '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. Priority areas for returning to pasture might include Ancient Arden landscapes, river floodplains and areas of former park and heath. Surplus arable land could also be targeted for other uses such as new woodlands.

**trees and woodlands** Since the 1950s 16% of ancient woodland sites have been partly cleared, largely for agriculture but also for urban development and mineral extraction. In addition there has been a distinct change in woodland character with 42% of ancient sites replanted with a mixture of native and exotic species. Most notably there has been a demise in oak as the final timber crop. Many small planting schemes have also favoured quick growing non-indigenous species, often to provide cover for game or shelter around buildings.

Although a dominant element in the landscape, many small woods have been neglected, resulting in unmanaged, even-aged stands. Likewise hedgerow oaks and parkland trees are for the most part mature and in many places there are few young trees coming on to replace them. Excessive trimming of hedges exacerbates this problem by suppressing the natural regeneration of hedgerow trees. Without urgent action there is likely to be a continued decline in the wooded character of the landscape.

In the future it is likely that there will be continued incentives for landowners to plant trees through government planting schemes. Provided that new planting complements existing landscape character and avoids damaging historical or ecological features, it should be encouraged. To maintain the essence of Arden, however, oak must remain the dominant tree species.

## Landscape change and current trends

**pressures for new development** Urban expansion has been a major influence affecting the Arden landscape and in places both the ancient settlement pattern and rural character have been eroded. Some hamlets have expanded into larger residential centres, ribbon development has taken place along the Coventry urban fringe and new houses have been built throughout the area, with many conversions of redundant farm buildings. These influences are having a subtle cumulative impact on the landscape by bringing social change and a new appearance of affluence.

Urban influences are especially dominant in central Arden between Birmingham and Coventry and they have imprinted a suburban character on the landscape. To help control their expansion most of Arden was designated as Green Belt after approval of the original County Structure Plan in 1973. In the future however, Arden will continue to be a popular place in which to live and work and if rural integrity is to be retained, it will be important to restrict the spread of suburban influences. This is particularly the case in south Arden following the opening of the M40 motorway.

Locally mineral extraction has also had an impact on the landscape with coal mining on the North Warwickshire plateau and sand and gravel workings in central Arden. Though only having a limited lifespan these workings are often visibly intrusive.

**highway improvements** Road construction has had a major impact on the Arden landscape. New roads, particularly motorways (M6, M45, M40, A45), cut through existing landscape patterns. In places this has led to field rationalisation along the road corridor resulting in a loss of hedgerows and trees which makes the road more visible and intrusive. Traffic movement and noise has

had a particularly deleterious effect on many formerly peaceful rural landscapes. Improvements to existing roads can also effect landscape character as road widening and realignment have resulted in the removal of hedgerows, ancient hedgerows and fords.

## 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.



Due to its ancient landscape character Arden retains a wealth of antiquities and historic buildings. Many of these are scheduled as ancient monuments or listed buildings, 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 detail 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 settlements, and are having a subtle, cumulative impact. Examples include 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, moved or replaced. Where this is not possible consideration should be given to moving or replacing such features.

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



The interface between new development and the surrounding landscape can often appear sharp and stark. Tree planting within and around new development is one of the best ways to soften hard edges. Integration can best be 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, using locally occurring native species. Ornamental species planted as quick growing screens, particularly 'leylandii', should be avoided.

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

## General development guidelines



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.



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.

- **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**

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

## General development guidelines



A characteristic feature of Arden is its irregular road network which reflects the ancient landscape pattern. Features are many and varied, including thick roadside hedgerows, narrow sunken lanes and trackways, irregularly shaped verges, hedgebanks, fords and mature roadside oaks. Wherever possible these features should be retained. When improvements need to be made they should reflect the irregular landscape pattern, trying to avoid straight lines and looking to replace historic features. 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. 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 initiatives.



Arden has a variety of mineral deposits which have been worked for many years. These include coal, hard rock aggregate and sand and gravel for the construction industry. Restoration proposals accompanying mineral applications often show little appreciation of how an extraction site relates to the wider landscape, which can result in landscaping schemes that do not reflect this wider context. 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.

- **Protect and conserve the irregular pattern and characteristic features of roads and lanes**

- **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**

## Arden

The overall strategy and guidelines for Arden set out below provide the framework for conserving and enhancing the character and unity of the region. The seven 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.

Internationally, Arden is famous for its historical and cultural associations as being 'Shakespeare's Arden'. The wooded character of the landscape also has direct historical links with the ancient Forest of Arden. It is the most densely wooded part of Warwickshire (8%), which is well above the county average (3%). Of particular significance is the high proportion of ancient woodland sites and the association with oak as the dominant tree species. Equally important are the many built and other historic features and antiquities which impart an 'ancient' landscape character. Together, these associations are an important part of our national heritage and they distinguish Arden from the later 'planned' countryside found elsewhere in Warwickshire.



In contrast to the rest of Warwickshire, Arden is characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads and hamlets – the latter often no more than a loose cluster of wayside cottages. Ribbon development and more recent infill development have overwhelmed this historic pattern in many areas while barn conversions are eroding the rural character of undeveloped lanes. Where new housing is necessary in the countryside it should be located in loose clusters to form new hamlets. This would reflect the scale and pattern of existing settlement. Equally, it is important that new development should not be permitted along lanes that are presently undeveloped.



A characteristic feature of the Arden landscape is the wealth of brick built farmsteads and country houses which date from the 16th and 17th centuries. These give the area a strong and coherent building style which should be conserved. A trend in recent years has been the conversion of redundant barns into dwellings. This often results in modifications to the external appearance of a building. If the existing character is to be maintained consideration must be given to retaining traditional style and features. New housing should also harmonise with the vernacular style, with particular attention being given to scale, building materials and the incorporation of traditional features.

### Management strategy

- **Conserve the historic, well-wooded character of the region**

### Overall guidelines

- **Maintain the historic dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets and scattered farmsteads**
- **Conserve the built character of Arden by ensuring that new development reflects the vernacular style**

## Arden



Mature oaks are a characteristic feature of the Arden landscape. Through their size and antiquity individual trees can contribute greatly to landscape character. They are also ecologically important as they support many species of insects and birds. Wherever possible these old trees should be retained as their heritage value far outweighs any economic value. Management agreements could be used to help preserve these trees for future generations.



Ancient woodland sites are those which have had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600. Over 70% of the woodlands in Arden are of ancient origin. These sites represent the final core of woodlands which retain a link with the ancient Forest of Arden. 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. These sites usually have a very high nature conservation interest with a diverse flora and fauna. Oak is usually the dominant tree species but small leaved lime is 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 and regeneration this would be a suitable management option.



Plantation ancient woodlands are those which have been replanted often with non-indigenous broadleaves or conifers. Though reduced in their interest these woods are frequently of much higher nature conservation value than recently established woodlands. Much of their ecological interest can be enhanced through sympathetic management. On sites where indigenous species survive, natural regeneration of native broadleaves should be encouraged. Only where species interest is greatly diminished should replanting be undertaken, favouring indigenous broadleaves where possible.



Small woodlands are a feature of many Arden farms. Historically they were managed for timber and firewood. A shift towards intensive agriculture, coupled with reduced farm labour and a demise in management practices such as coppicing, have resulted in many of these woods being left unmanaged. As landscape and wildlife features many 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. These woods would be suited to long rotation coppicing and should be targeted for management grants. Coppice management would be especially sensitive to both the landscape and nature conservation value of these sites.

- **Conserve the high heritage and ecological value of individual ancient oaks**

- **Conserve all ancient woodland sites and restock with locally occurring native species**

- **Restocking of plantation ancient woods should favour native broadleaved species preferably through natural regeneration**

- **Promote long rotation coppicing as a management tool for neglected small woods**



There is considerable scope for enhancing regional character through new woodland planting. The location and scale of all new planting, however, must reflect the character and scale of the different landscapes in Arden. The size and shape of new woodlands should complement the surrounding landscape pattern. Small woods are likely to be most suitable where the field pattern is still intact, while large woods may be more appropriate where the structure of the landscape has become fragmented. All new planting should avoid sites of ecological or historical interest.



The use of appropriate species in well-designed mixes is an important factor to consider 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 and timber production. Most Arden woodlands are of ancient origin and are predominantly broadleaved in character. New planting should reflect this where possible, and where schemes include non-indigenous species, oak should be included in the mix and favoured as the final hardwood crop. Species selection for amenity woodland should favour locally occurring associations of native trees and shrubs, including small-leaved lime as a co-dominant species with oak.



Hedgerows are prominent landscape features and frequently define roads, bridleways, footpaths and parish boundaries. Lanes and trackways are emphasised in many places by double hedgerows. These are historic features in their own right and form important wildlife corridors within the overall field pattern. In open landscapes they are often the only remaining features and are valuable as a basis for rebuilding the structure of the landscape. It is important to avoid further fragmentation of the landscape through hedgerow removal, particularly those along highways and parish boundaries. Hedgerows along woodland edges are often associated with ancient banks and ditches, and even where a woodland has been cleared these features may still survive and should be conserved.



The general condition of hedgerows in Arden is very variable. Roadside hedges are usually well maintained, but many field hedgerows are closely trimmed or gappy, and would benefit from being managed more positively as landscape features. This would include allowing them to grow thicker and taller (up to two metres in height) and replanting those that are gappy. Existing incentives for replanting should be more actively promoted. Where possible management should avoid excessively tidy low cut hedges, and 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.

- **The design of all new woodland planting should complement the shape and scale of the surrounding landscape pattern**

- **New woodland planting should be broadleaved in character and favour oak as the major tree species**

- **Avoid the removal of hedgerows, especially along footpaths, bridleways, parish boundaries and woodland edges**

- **Promote the management of hedgerows and landscape features**



Heathland was once a common feature of the Arden landscape but following losses to agriculture and urban development it is now rare and very restricted. Those sites where heather survives have particularly important nature conservation interest. Elsewhere remnant heathy vegetation remains a characteristic feature with bracken and gorse particularly common along roads and in ancient woods. In all cases open heathland is in decline due to encroachment of trees and lack of management. Priority should be given to removal of trees and the regeneration of heather and other heathland flora. This can be most effectively carried out through the reinstatement of grazing with cattle or sheep.



Heaths are now very restricted and rare, but many of the associated plant species still survive along roadside verges. Species such as bracken and gorse are especially evident and provide historic links with 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. In such cases the exposed subsoil is ideal for establishing heathy vegetation, but topsoiling must be avoided. This approach would provide a more interesting alternative to amenity tree planting.



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 Arden parklands and Wooded estatelands, 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 the planting of longer lived trees such as oak, lime and sweet chestnut should be favoured over quick growing or smaller amenity species. There should also be opportunities for creating new wildlife habitats including heathlands, meadowlands and wetlands.

- **Promote the regeneration and management of heathland flora on all remnant heathy areas**

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

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

## Ancient Arden

This landscape is especially significant as it is the only area of ancient countryside in Warwickshire. The irregular landscape pattern reflected in the shape of fields and the network of narrow winding lanes is the essential structural element. Maintaining this pattern is the key to conserving the ancient landscape character. The pastoral character of the landscape is also important. Though now fragmented, this creates visual unity where it survives and contributes to Ancient Arden's distinct sense of place.



Field pattern is defined by thick boundary hedgerows and these are a key feature of Ancient Arden. Most are of medieval age and are distinguished by their size, irregular pattern and diversity of hedgerow species. They form the essential fabric of the landscape and once lost this unique combination is very difficult to replace. It is important in landscape and historical terms to conserve what is left, and where hedgerows have been removed consideration should be given to replacement planting.



New hedgerow planting should be encouraged in those areas where field pattern has become fragmented. Where practical priority should be given to reinstating ancient hedgerow patterns. New planting should complement the irregular shapes of existing fields and a regular geometric pattern should be avoided. Hedges should be planted in double rows with a mixture of locally occurring species. Hedgerow trees should also be incorporated at irregular spacings, with oak as the dominant species.



Ancient Arden has traditionally been a pastoral landscape and still retains this character in many places. Some of the older pastures are floristically diverse and often they are associated with areas of more steeply undulating ground. These are Arden's landscape gems where a peaceful, undisturbed character creates a strong sense of place and link with the past. Many formerly pastoral landscapes have been converted to arable, however, resulting in a loss of landscape features and fragmentation of the ancient field pattern. Where opportunities arise restoration of pastoral character should be encouraged, especially where this is part of a scheme to restore the historic field pattern. It is likely that this would have to involve government incentives to encourage more environmentally sensitive farming.

### Management strategy

- **Conserve and restore the ancient irregular landscape pattern**

### Landscape guidelines

- **Conserve and restore the irregular pattern of ancient hedgerows**

- **New hedge planting should reflect the irregular field pattern and include only mixed native species**

- **Conserve pastoral character and identify opportunities for conversion of arable land back to permanent pasture**

## Ancient Arden



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. 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.



Mature oaks are a characteristic feature of field and roadside hedgerows in Ancient Arden. These create variety and give filtered views through the landscape. Tree cover should be enhanced through the natural regeneration of hedgerow oaks. Most hedgerows have seedlings which at little cost can be selected and left to grow. Replanting need only be undertaken where few hedgerow trees remain and the seed source has diminished.



Woodland cover in Ancient Arden is varied and consists of both large and small woods. The shape of most woodlands is characterised by an irregular outline created by early woodland clearance. This ancient pattern is reflected in the layout of fields and lanes. New planting should complement this irregular pattern, avoiding geometric shapes and straight edges. Woodlands up to field size would be most appropriate, but where field pattern is fragmented larger areas of planting may be acceptable.



Although close to Birmingham and Coventry Ancient Arden retains a rural character throughout much of its area. This is being steadily eroded however, by the gradual change of agricultural land to other uses, such as sport and leisure facilities. Such changes are imprinting a suburban character on the landscape. In these ancient landscapes conservation of rural character should be given a high priority and all new development should be tightly restrained.

- **Retain and manage field ponds in areas of permanent pasture**

- **Encourage the natural regeneration of hedgerow oaks**

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

- **Conserve rural character by restricting changes in the use of rural land**

## Arden pastures

A key feature of Arden pastures is the sense of enclosure provided by the abundance of mature hedgerow trees. The density of trees reflects the generally intact pattern of small pastoral fields. Together these features create the impression of a strongly unified landscape despite the presence of much suburban development in the area. Management should therefore be aimed at maintaining and where necessary strengthening the well wooded pastoral character of the landscape.



Roadside and hedgerow oaks are a characteristic feature of Arden pastures, where they create a strong sense of enclosure and visual unity. Wherever possible old trees should be retained until younger trees have matured sufficiently to replace them. This will be a long term management strategy as it takes many years for an oak to develop the characteristic features of a large mature tree. Management Agreements could be used to initiate a programme of conservation and replacement.



The visual character of Arden pastures is dominated by mature hedgerow trees. Young or semi-mature trees are generally much less common. Action is therefore needed to diversify the age structure by encouraging the natural regeneration of hedgerow trees. Most hedgerows have oak seedlings which at little cost can be selected and left to grow. Replanting need only be undertaken where few hedgerow trees remain and the seed source has diminished.



The relatively flat topography and dominance of hedgerow trees means that fields are not a dominant visual element in Arden pastures. They form the essential fabric of the landscape, however, and are a key element controlling the density of hedgerow trees. Where hedgerows have been removed, tree cover is often much reduced and the scale of the landscape increased. Replacement hedgerow planting, using locally occurring species, is to be encouraged in such areas and where possible this should complement the shape and scale of existing fields. Hedgerow trees should also be incorporated at irregular spacings with oak as the dominant species.

### Management strategy

- **Conserve and enhance the unity and small scale enclosed character of the landscape**

### Landscape guidelines

- **Maintain the wooded character of mature hedgerow and roadside oaks**

- **Conserve and enhance tree cover through natural regeneration of hedgerow oaks**

- **Conserve the historic pattern of small hedged fields**

## Arden pastures



Arden pastures, as the name implies, has traditionally been a pastoral landscape characterised by small livestock farms. This character is still evident today although cattle and sheep have been replaced by horses and ponies in many places. Where pasture has been converted to arable production this has often resulted in a loss of landscape features and fragmentation of the small scale field pattern. In such areas opportunities should be identified for restoring pastoral character through government incentives to encourage more environmentally sensitive farming.



Permanent pasture is typically associated with poor soils in Arden pastures. Where these have not been 'improved' they still retain a diversity of plant and animal species. Such pastures should be conserved and managed appropriately as traditional, low input grassland. Reseeding or ploughing must be avoided. Tree or woodland planting is also inappropriate on these sites.



Unenclosed commons were once a distinctive feature of Arden pastures. These have now disappeared, but many associations, such as the numerous place-names ending in 'Heath' or 'Common', still remain. Historically commons were associated with settlement and often they had roads running through them. Where they survive today they frequently have a high recreational value. In densely settled landscapes, such as Arden pastures, there is often a requirement for new areas of public open space in addition to those that already exist. With careful planning such areas could be designed to reflect the character of commons. The re-creation of these historic features would enhance landscape diversity and with sympathetic management there would also be opportunities to create new wildlife habitats.

- **Conserve pastoral character and identify opportunities for conversion of arable land back to permanent pasture**

- **Conserve the diversity and special character of old permanent pastures**

- **Identify opportunities for enhancing landscape character through more creative design of public open space**

## Industrial Arden

Although this is an urbanised and, in places, degraded landscape where landscape enhancement is often a priority, it has a distinctive character which is found only in this part of the county. This is associated primarily with the long history of coal mining in the area and is reflected not just in the many abandoned workings and spoil heaps, but also in the character of the mining settlements and their surroundings. Conserving those features which contribute to this local distinctiveness should be a key component of all new development or landscape enhancement schemes in this area.



In many ways the character of Industrial Arden is best represented by its mining villages, comprising rows of red brick terraced housing, often prominently situated on hilltops. These older villages are a key feature of the landscape and they should be regarded as an equally important part of our heritage as, for example, the stone villages in the south of the county. Modern suburban development, however, is threatening to swamp the identity and distinctive character of these former mining communities. Conservation of village character should be a priority and all new development should seek to complement the scale and design of the existing settlements. Particular attention should be given to building materials and to the incorporation of vernacular features.



The farmed landscape in Industrial Arden is characterised by permanent pasture in small to medium sized, hedged, fields. Often these fields are bounded by ancient hedgerows of hazel and holly, but hawthorn hedges are also common. In places these are thin and gappy, or have been replaced by wire fences, resulting in an open visually neglected landscape. Replacement hedgerow planting using locally occurring species is to be encouraged in these areas and where possible this should complement the shape and scale of existing fields. Existing hedgerows should be managed more positively as landscape features. This would include allowing hedges to grow thicker and taller (up to 2m in height) and restoring individual gappy hedges.

### Management strategy

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

### Landscape guidelines

- **Conserve the distinctive local vernacular character of mining villages**
- **Conserve and strengthen the pattern of small and medium sized hedged fields**

## Industrial Arden



Although most of the coal mines have now closed, the legacy of spoil heaps is still a visible reminder of this former industry. Some of these have been reclaimed and developed for other uses. Others have vegetated over naturally with birch woodland and scrub, and now provide valuable wildlife habitats. In addition, some of the older conical spoil heaps form distinctive local landmarks as a monument to the land use history of the area. These should be conserved where possible and managed more positively for their ecological value.



Pockets of unenclosed heathland were once a common feature of Industrial Arden. These are indicated by the many place names ending in 'Heath' or 'Common', but only one or two small areas now remain. Historically heathland and other 'waste' land were associated with settlement and often they had roads running through them. Where they survive today they frequently have a high recreational value. In densely settled landscapes, such as Industrial Arden, there is often a requirement for new areas of public open space in addition to those that already exist. With careful planning such areas could be designed to reflect the character of commons. The re-creation of these historic features would enhance landscape diversity and with sympathetic management there would also be opportunities to create new wildlife habitats.



Oak is the characteristic tree of the region and in Industrial Arden is a common feature of field and roadside hedgerows. Most of these trees are mature and in most cases there are few younger replacements. Wherever possible natural regeneration of hedgerow oaks should be encouraged. Most hedgerows have seedlings which at little cost can be selected and left to grow. Replanting need only be undertaken where few hedgerow trees remain and the seed source has diminished.



Tree cover in Industrial Arden is variable. In some parts the landscape is heavily wooded while in others there are few woods or trees. New planting should be designed to enhance the overall unity of the landscape and to soften the impact of new development. Woodlands up to field size would be appropriate in most areas, but where field pattern is fragmented or where landform is dominant, larger areas of planting may be acceptable. In general the shape and scale of new planting should complement the surrounding landscape pattern and where possible broadleaved species should be favoured.

- **Retain and manage old naturally re-vegetated spoil heaps as landscape features**

- **Identify opportunities for enhancing landscape character through more creative design of public open space**

- **Encourage the natural regeneration of hedgerow oaks**

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

## Arden parklands

The effect of wooded enclosure in this landscape is created by the presence of large ancient woodlands and belts of trees. These create a sequence of linked wooded spaces which define the scale and character of the landscape. Visually they are the most dominant elements, although parkland also contributes to the effect of wooded enclosure. The many old deer parks have a particularly important historical dimension which adds variety and cultural interest to this landscape. The continuity of tree cover, however, is fragmented in places. 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. When managing woodlands these approaches would create interest and diversity in the landscape.



The gently rolling topography of this landscape is such that woodland edges are the most prominent features. As a result a major part of many large woods cannot be seen. These 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.



The wooded character of Arden parklands depends on the continuity of the various tree cover elements to create a sequence of linked wooded spaces. Where tree cover is weak, particularly on the edge of urban areas, the structure of the landscape also tends to be rather fragmented. There is scope for significant new planting in these areas. Mixed woodlands would be acceptable as long as edges and skylines are sensitively handled. Belts of trees should be broadleaved in character. Particular attention should be given to the location and shape of new planting and to the space it encloses.

### Management strategy

- Retain and enhance the effect of wooded enclosure

### 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

- Enhance tree cover through the planting of new woodlands and belts of trees

## Arden parklands



Parkland was once extensive throughout the region, but despite losses to agriculture and urban development, it remains a characteristic feature in Arden parklands. Good examples survive of both medieval deer parks and 18th and 19th century ornamental parklands. As well as their historical importance, parklands provide diversity and interest in the landscape. True parkland, however, in permanent grass with 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. Where opportunities may arise through Government incentives consideration should also be given to reinstating areas of former park.



Arden parklands is characterised by large arable fields, often poorly defined by low cut and gappy hedgerows. Although field pattern tends to be a subsidiary landscape element, it is important to conserve primary hedgelines, including those along roadsides, bridleways, footpaths and parish boundaries. These form a key structural element in the landscapes, particularly where they contain mature hedgerow trees. Such features should be conserved and managed more positively as landscape features. This would include allowing hedges to grow thicker and taller (up to 2m in height), strengthening individual gappy hedges, and encouraging the natural regeneration of hedgerow oaks. Where primary hedgerows have been removed, consideration should be given to replacement planting.



Heathland was once a common feature on the poorer sandy soils associated with areas of glacial drift in Arden parklands. Where these have been worked for sand and gravel there are positive opportunities for the creation of heathland. With the 1990's agricultural policy offering incentives to reduce arable production there may also be opportunities for creating heathland on farmland where the soils are suitable. By re-establishing pockets of heathy vegetation, or even larger areas of heathland, this distinctive regional characteristic could be considerably strengthened. This would provide visual diversity, enhance nature conservation interest, and restore an important historic feature in the landscape.

- Existing parkland should be retained and enhanced and where opportunities arise, consideration given to restoring areas of former park

- Conserve and strengthen primary hedgelines and manage these more positively as landscape features

- Identify opportunities for re-establishing heathland on suitable sites

## Wooded estatelands

The Wooded estatelands is mainly a peripheral Arden landscape, but characterised by large blocks of woodland, smaller coverts, and areas of parkland. The large scale undulating topography emphasises the importance of woodlands in the landscape. The continuity of this pattern is thus dependent on tree cover, and where this is weak the structure of the landscape also tends to be rather fragmented. The strategy is therefore aimed at creating a more unified landscape by enhancing the structure and wooded character of these areas.



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.



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 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.

### Management strategy

- **Conserve and enhance the overall structure and well wooded character of the landscape**

### Landscape guidelines

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

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

## Wooded estatelands



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.



With the outlook in farming now changing farmers are increasingly being urged to reduce production, diversify their farm businesses and to look after the environment. Particularly in areas of arable farmland 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 hedgerows, woodland edges, streams and ponds.



Settlement in the Wooded estatelands is mainly characterised by small rural villages. These 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.

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

- **Encourage development of wide and diverse field margins**

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

## Arden river valleys

Narrow meandering river corridors with flood meadows and riverside trees are the distinctive features of this landscape. They combine to form small scale pastoral landscapes which have a peaceful, undisturbed character. The continuity of these corridors is formed by permanent pasture along the floodplains with patches of wet grassland and marsh. These features evoke a strong sense of naturalness which gives river landscapes a special quality that is now rare elsewhere in Arden. This is also reflected in their important nature conservation interest.



Traditionally river floodplains were managed for haymaking and summer grazing. Since the 1940's, flood alleviation schemes have helped stimulate an increase in arable production. This is particularly apparent along the course of the River Arrow where, as arable production has encroached, the continuity of the river corridor has started to break up. The rivers Alne and Blythe have been less affected by drainage schemes but arable encroachment is evident in places. As a result many old flood meadows and associated wetland habitats have disappeared. Given the current agricultural climate to reduce surplus cereal production and to control nitrate leaching into water courses, river floodplains would be most suitable areas to return to traditional grassland management.



River channels are major linear features in the landscape. They are also the key landscape and wildlife elements of river corridors. Where the ecological value has declined, there is much scope for improvement through sensitive management. Water cleanliness is critical, as is the retention of a diverse range of water features such as meanders, islands, shallows, cliffs, and mill ponds. River margins are also important and trees, scrub and plant growth on river banks should be retained and protected. All these features have an intrinsic value and are integral to the visual and aesthetic quality of the riverside environment.



Marshland and wet grassland were formally common features of most river corridors. These habitats are particularly important for wildlife and give an element of naturalness to river landscapes. They are now uncommon and all remaining wetland habitats should be protected. Through government incentives there may be scope for the creation of new wetlands in certain areas. The restoration of sand and gravel workings in particular offers positive opportunities for more creative conservation schemes. Ponds and lakes are not a characteristic feature of Arden river valleys.

### Management strategy

- **Maintain the special character and continuity of river corridors**

### Landscape guidelines

- **Retain grassland along river floodplains and where possible consider a return to traditional grassland management**

- **Retain and enhance river channel diversity and marginal vegetation**

- **Identify opportunities for re-creating riverside wetland habitats**

## Arden river valleys



Long, sinuous hedgerows frequently define the historical boundaries to river floodplains. They often date to the early enclosure of adjacent open fields and form important landscape features. In many places these hedgerows have been replaced by wire fences while others are generally gappy and poorly defined. Where they remain these boundary hedgerows should be retained and managed as landscape features. Where they are gappy or have been removed consideration should be given to replanting new hedgerows.



Scattered waterside trees are important features contributing to the riverside environment. To maintain this effect natural regeneration of trees should be encouraged. Planting new trees and copses may also be appropriate in places, particularly where this complements existing tree cover. Care should be taken to avoid ecologically important sites such as unimproved grasslands and wetlands. Planting should also aim to keep one bankside clear to maintain a variety of wildlife habitats along river margins. Always use locally occurring native species of trees and shrubs. Large woodland planting should be avoided, particularly where this has the effect of infilling meanders.

- **Maintain and enhance the sinuous hedgerows defining river floodplains**

- **Maintain and enhance the wooded character of river corridors**

## River valley wetlands

The River valley wetlands is a fragmented, often degraded landscape with little sense of unity. The character of the landscape has been extensively modified and the original River meadowlands largely replaced by a chaotic mix of industrial, new wetland and restored agricultural landscapes. There are considerable opportunities for landscape enhancement and reconstruction but these need to be part of an overall scheme to strengthen the structure and unity of the landscape throughout the valley. Such a scheme should enhance the wetland character that has been created, through positive habitat creation and management.



The Tame Valley has been extensively worked for sand and gravel. This has resulted in the creation of a series of large lakes. Where these have developed a fringe of willow and alder scrub, the impact of these man-made features is much reduced. The visual impact, however, increases with size and regularity of shape. Opportunities should be sought in both old and new workings to create a more varied wetland landscape of smaller lakes and ponds with areas of reedbed and marsh. The aim should be to achieve a better balance between 'wetland' and open water.



The River Tame has been extensively modified by river drainage works. The channel has been canalised and typically has a uniform cross-section with steep banks to improve the flow of water. Flood banks have also been erected in places, further emphasising that the river is little more than a large drain. Opportunities should be sought to restore river channel diversity by creating a more varied bank profile and introducing new features such as marginal shallows and backwaters. Where flood banks are needed these should be kept as far back from the river as possible. Such measures would considerably enhance the visual and ecological importance of the river environment, particularly if they were combined with a water quality improvement programme.



Riverside trees and scrub are important features contributing to the visual continuity of the river channel. They also provide cover and nesting places for a variety of animals. Tree cover is generally fragmented in the River valley wetlands and improvements to the river channel have resulted in the loss of most riverside trees. Where it does not conflict with drainage requirements, consideration should be given to enhancing the unity of tree cover throughout this landscape. This may involve new tree and shrub planting, or allowing natural regeneration to take place. Large scale woodland planting should be avoided, and locally occurring native trees and shrub species should be used wherever possible.

### Management strategy

- **Enhance the unity and wetland character of the landscape through habitat creation and management**

### Landscape guidelines

- **Opportunities should be sought creating more diverse wetland habitats during restoration of sand and gravel workings**

- **Enhance river channel diversity and create new habitats for marginal vegetation**

- **Enhance the continuity and wooded character of the river corridor**

## Species lists – Arden

The following is a list of those tree and shrub species which are common and characteristic to the Arden, 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

- Dominant species
- Other appropriate species

		WOODLANDS		HEDGES AND HEDGEROW TREES	WET AREAS AND RIVERSIDES
		Clay Loams	Sandy Soils		
<b>Trees</b>					
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>	○	○		○
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>				●
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>		○		
Small leaved lime	<i>Tilia cordata</i>	○			
<b>Shrubs</b>					
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>	○	○	●	
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>			○	
Wild privet	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	○		○	
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	○		○	
Goat willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>	○	○		○
Guelder rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	○		○	○

Planting should contain at least 80% of dominant species

### Semi-natural habitats

A number of exciting and increasingly threatened semi-natural habitats are associated with Arden. True heathland characterised by ling heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), with bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) on the acid sands 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.

Summary of landscape guidelines

MANAGEMENT OPTION	ANCIENT ARDEN	ARDEN PASTURES	INDUSTRIAL ARDEN	ARDEN PARKLANDS
<b>Settlement &amp; buildings</b>				
Conservation of rural character	●	○	○	○
Conservation of settlement pattern	●	○	●	○
Conservation of vernacular character	●	○	●	●
<b>Land management</b>				
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	○	●	●	●
<b>Field boundaries</b>				
Conservation of historic field pattern	●	●	●	○
Conservation of primary field boundaries	●	●	●	●
Hedgerow replanting and management	●	○	●	○
<b>Trees &amp; woodlands</b>				
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

Summary of landscape guidelines

MANAGEMENT OPTION	WOODED ESTATELANDS	ARDEN RIVER VALLEYS	RIVER VALLEY WETLANDS
<b>Settlement &amp; buildings</b>			
Conservation of rural character	●	●	○
Conservation of settlement pattern	●	-	-
Conservation of vernacular character	●	●	-
<b>Land management</b>			
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	○	●	●
<b>Field boundaries</b>			
Conservation of historic field pattern	○	-	-
Conservation of primary field boundaries	●	●	-
Hedgerow replanting and management	○	○	○
<b>Trees &amp; woodlands</b>			
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