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19. WOODED ESTATELANDS

Regional Character Areas

Cotswolds, Northamptonshire Uplands, Midvale Ridge and Upper Thames Vale.

Location

The landscape type includes parklands at the eastern end of the Cotswolds, ranging from the area around Blenheim Park, Steeple Barton, Middleton Park and as far as Shelswell Park to the north of Bicester. Further south it includes Eynsham Hall Park and Bladon Heath Wood and it also covers the majority of the wooded and parkland areas in the undulating landscape of the Corallian Ridge.

Overview

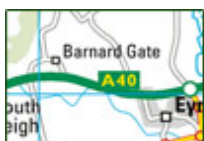
A wooded estate landscape characterised by arable farming and small villages with a strong vernacular character.

Key Characteristics

- Rolling topography with localised steep slopes.
- Large blocks of ancient woodland and mixed plantations of variable sizes.
- Large parklands and mansion houses.



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Aerial View



- A regularly-shaped field pattern dominated by arable fields.
- Small villages with strong vernacular character.

Geology and landform

The geology of the landscape type varies according to the locality. Much of the landscape across the Cotswold area is underlain by a mix of Cornbrash and Great Oolite limestone. The geology in the area around Bicester and further south is dominated by Oxford Clay, whilst the landscape across the Corallian Ridge is underlain by Corallian beds, which are a mix of sands and sandy limestones.

The landform is generally rolling, ranging from gently rolling to undulating. Across the Corallian Ridge the landform is strongly undulating, and is steeply sloping in places resulting in small valleys. At the junction of the Corallian beds and the clay vale, springlines emerge and small streams flow through the valleys.

Land use and vegetation

The landscape has a mix of land uses but is largely dominated by arable farming. On the steeper slopes there is some semi-improved grassland, as well as pockets of calcareous grassland, acid grassland and gorse. This is a well-wooded landscape with large, prominent blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland often located on the steeper slopes. In addition, there is a significant number of smaller, mainly mixed plantations that are scattered throughout much of the area and this adds to the overall sense of enclosure. Dense corridors of willows and poplars, and belts of semi-natural woodland bordering the valley streams are other locally prominent features.

Cultural pattern

The field pattern is generally characterised by a geometric pattern of medium to large-sized fields, with arable cropping in the larger fields. A less regular pattern of enclosure is associated with the strongly undulating landform across the Corallian Ridge close to places like Faringdon, Cumnor and Boar's Hill and around Beckley and Shotover Country Park. Fields are generally enclosed by woodland, as well as thorn and elm hedges. There are also a number of species-rich hedges bordering roads and close to woods. Although there are only a few mature oak and ash hedgerow trees, they still contribute to the wooded character of the landscape. They are more obvious in the vicinity of ancient woodland and quite sparse where arable cropping is dominant. Views are generally filtered through trees and framed by woodland blocks. Large parklands with their distinctive country houses, extensive woodland and ornamental lakes at Blenheim, Middleton, Eynsham Hall and Buscot are also very typical of this landscape type and underline its estate character.

The settlement pattern is characterised by small settlements as well as scattered farmhouses in the wider countryside. The vernacular character is strong in most of the villages and this is reinforced by features such as stone walls. The most widely used building materials are limestone, stone and clay tiles. There are also limestone houses with thatched roofs at Fyfield, Tubney, Hatford, Beckley and Stanton St. John. Stone with bricks around the widows is characteristic in villages such as Sunningwell, Cumnor and South Hinksey. Red bricks with clay tiles can be seen at Nuneham Courtenay, timber framed houses with thatched roofs at Horton-cum-Studley and ironstone houses at Duns Tew.

BIODIVERSITY

Overview

This landscape type is associated with parklands and their associated estatelands. It has a wide range of both locally important and priority habitats.

Key Characteristics

- Predominantly medium to very high bioscores.
- Priority and important habitats include ancient semi-natural woodland, species-rich hedgerows with trees, unimproved grassland, fen, reedswamp and species-rich ponds and watercourses.

General Description

This is a very large landscape type occupying around 11.2% of the rural county. It includes a large part of the Midvale Ridge and a significant part of the Cotswolds character area. It is a diverse area and supports a wide range of locally important and priority habitats. Within the Midvale Ridge and on the corallian limestone there are many substantial blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland including Stanton Great, Brasenose and Waterperry Woods to the east of Oxford. To the west of Oxford, around Frilford, there are significant areas of acid grassland, heath and calcareous fen. There are also areas of limestone grassland within Chilswell Valley to the west of the City and in the Cotswolds near Fawler and Charlbury. The many parklands support a wide range of habitats including mature and veteran trees, species-rich lakes and semi-improved grassland, with Blenheim probably being the best example. In addition, there are smaller areas of neutral and wet grassland and reedswamp. There are also a number of important geological sites including Stratton Audley and Shellingford quarries.

LOCAL CHARACTER AREAS

A. Blenheim Park (CW/29)

Landscape character

The field pattern is dominated by large-scale arable fields and some grass fields around Combe. Woodland cover is prominent throughout the landscape, with large blocks of ancient woodland and mixed plantations. The woods of the Ditchley estate consist mainly of ash, beech and some hazel coppice, whilst the woodland at Blenheim is mainly ash and oak, with a substantial number of conifers. Parklands are very characteristic in this area, including the picturesque landscapes at Blenheim and Ditchley. Mature hedgerow trees are also thinly scattered throughout and they are mainly oak, ash, beech and some sycamore. Fields are enclosed by woodland and thorn hedges. Roadside hedges are often species-rich and gappy, and internal field hedges are fragmented and lost in places.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 128/H

This area supports locally important habitats including plantations, semi-improved grassland and species-poor hedges with trees. It also has a number of ancient semi-natural woodlands including Out Wood which is just under 20 ha in size. Species-rich hedgerows are found throughout the area particularly in association with the ancient woods. Blenheim Park with its veteran trees, lakes and woodlands is particularly important. There are small surviving patches of limestone grassland along the Saltway near Ditchley and in the parish of Fawler. An important geological site is located near Charlbury.

B. North Aston (CW/51)

Landscape character

The area is mainly characterised by large-scale arable fields and some improved grassland. Surviving acid grassland and gorse can be found close to Tackley Wood. Large blocks of ancient woodland, mixed plantations and small woods add variety to an otherwise intensively managed landscape. The composition of the woods is mainly oak and ash but, at places like Tackley Wood, they have been largely replanted with conifers. Thorn hedges are generally low and gappy, but are taller in the vicinity of Tackley Wood. Hedgerow trees, consisting mainly of ash, some sycamore and occasional oak, are sparsely scattered particularly in the area around Tackley Wood. There are also some species-rich hedges in the southern part of the area. The parkland at Steeple Barton, with its mature trees, lakes and pasture, adds to the diversity of the landscape.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 135/H

The area has a number of locally important habitats including plantations, semi-improved grassland, scrub and species-poor hedges with trees. It also has a number of ancient semi-natural woodlands, such as Tackley Wood, some of which have been substantially replanted with conifers. Species-rich hedgerows with trees feature in the southern part of the area, and the parkland at Steeple Barton is important for its mature trees and lakes. There is some surviving acid grassland and gorse at Tackley Heath, but much of the common is dominated by bracken.

C. Middleton Stoney (CW/59, CW/58, UT/37)

Landscape Character

The area is dominated by large arable fields and localised improved grassland. There are smaller grass fields around villages, particularly Bletchington and Kirtlington. Woodland is a strong landscape element, and large woodland blocks are associated with the parklands and estates. It is mainly ancient semi-natural woodland, with species such as ash, oak, hazel, and field maple, as well as mixed plantations. Throughout the landscape, there are belts of young mixed and coniferous plantations next to roadside hedges and they often function as field boundaries. Hedgerow trees such as ash, sycamore and occasionally oak are found in some roadside hedges, but they are sparser to the north where there is more intensive arable cropping. In parts there are dense corridors of willow and ash, belts of semi-natural woodland and poplar plantations bordering watercourses. Hedgerows vary from tall, thick species-rich hedges with shrubs such as wayfaring tree, dogwood, hazel, field maple, spindle and wild privet through to low, gappy internal field hedges. Parklands are a prominent feature throughout and they include Middleton, Bignell and Tusmore Parks in the north and Kirtlington and Bletchington Parks in the south.

Biodiversity

Bioscores/biobands: 199/VH: 49/LM: 71/M

This combined local character area supports a range of locally important habitats including deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, scrub, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. It also has a number of important and priority habitats and these are largely associated with the broad limestone plateau to the east of the Cherwell valley. They include ancient semi-natural woodland such as Stoke Bushes and species-rich hedgerows with trees. Kirtlington and Middleton Parks with their associated trees, woodlands and lakes are also very important. There are surviving fragments of limestone grassland, but these are very small and often restricted to old quarries such as Ardley and Stratton Audley. These quarries are also of geological importance. A site noted for its calcareous fen falls partially within the area near Weston on the Green.

D. Hethe (BC/4)

Landscape Character

The area has medium-sized geometrically-shaped fields and a mix of land uses dominated by arable farming. Occasionally, patches of gorse and unimproved grassland can be found, particularly close to woodland. The landscape is characterised by interlocking large blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland, mixed plantations and smaller deciduous and conifer plantations. The composition of the woods is ash, oak and some beech. Extensive areas of parkland are an integral part of the woodland complex at Shelswell Park. Many mature oak and ash hedgerow trees emphasize the strong wooded character of this area. Hedges consist mainly of hawthorn, elm and field maple and are generally in good condition, but become gappier where there is intensive arable farming.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 134/H

The area has several locally important habitats including plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedgerows with trees and tree-lined watercourses. It also has parkland and its associated habitats of mature trees and lakes at Shelswell, ancient semi-natural woodland including Spilsmere Wood and some wet woodland. There is some surviving limestone grassland and scrub on the old disused railway to the north of the area.

E. Freeland (UT/24)

Landscape Character

The area has medium-sized fields with a mix of land uses including some small pasture fields on the steep valley sides in the eastern part of the area. The landscape has a very strong wooded character, resulting from the large ancient semi-natural woods and mixed plantations of ash, oak and conifers that are largely associated with the parklands at Eynsham Hall and

Freeland. The mature oak and ash hedgerow trees reinforce this wooded character, although they are sparser to the south of Cogges Wood where arable farming dominates. The belts of semi-natural woodland associated with the valley sides and floor reinforce the intimacy of this pastoral landscape. Fields are enclosed by thorn hedges and woods, and the grass fields on the valley sides are bordered by watercourse trees and fences. Hedges are generally tall and in good condition, but are more intensively maintained and gappy where they enclose arable land.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 99/MH

Locally important habitats include deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There are several significant blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland including Cogges and Pinsley Woods. Eynsham Hall Park with its mature trees and lakes is also important. A small area of neutral grassland near Freeland partially overlaps with an adjacent landscape type.

F. Bladon (UT/27)

Landscape Character

The area is characterised by a well-defined, large-scale, geometric pattern of arable fields enclosed by thorn and elm hedges. Large blocks of ancient woodland are locally prominent. Burleigh Wood has been largely replanted with conifers. There are a few hedgerow oak and ash trees, which are largely confined to roadside hedges. Overall, the hedges are low and in good condition, but some of the internal field hedges are gappy and intensively maintained.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 31/LM

Locally important habitats include plantations and species-poor hedges with trees. The only other significant habitat is ancient semi-natural woodland including Burleigh Wood, but this has been largely replanted with conifers.

G. Buscot Park (UT/1)

Landscape Character

The area is characterised by a geometrically-shaped, large-scale field pattern dominated by arable farming with some improved grassland. There are large blocks of ancient woodland which are part of the Buscot estate, and these are locally prominent features. Views are also interrupted by medium-sized, mixed plantations. Fields are enclosed by thorn and elm hedges which are fragmented in places. They are generally taller and thicker next to ditches and along parish boundaries. Mature ash and oak hedgerow trees are generally thinly scattered throughout, but are denser along ditches and parish boundaries. The parkland at Buscot, with its ornamental lakes and mature trees, is a significant landscape element in an otherwise intensively managed landscape.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 72/M

The area includes locally important habitats such as deciduous woodland, plantations, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. Badbury Forest is a substantial area of ancient semi-natural woodland, and the mature trees and lakes associated with Buscot park are also important.

H. Appleton Lower Common Wood (UT/15)

Landscape Character

The area has medium and large-sized fields with a mix of land uses, although large arable fields dominate. Small, mainly deciduous plantations are dotted throughout the landscape and small to medium-sized blocks of ancient woodland with ash and some oak also contribute to the woodland cover. Fields are enclosed by woods, hawthorn and elm hedges. The hedges are

generally in poor condition and fragmented in many places, particularly where they enclose arable fields. They are often taller where they surround pastureland. Hedgerow trees, mainly ash, dead elm and oak, are sparsely scattered throughout. They are denser where they border ditches, and comprise a mix of crack and shrub willow, dead elm, ash and oak.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 85/M

Locally important habitats include plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There are a number of ancient semi-natural woodlands. Appleton Lower Common is an important wet ash-wych elm woodland south of the River Thames.

I. Faringdon (CR/2)

Landscape Character

The area is dominated by medium to large-sized arable fields. On the steeper slopes there is some semi-improved pasture and some gorse nearer the top. Fields are generally enclosed by hedges, woods and narrow winding lanes. Large blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland and different sized mixed plantations are characteristic. The main tree species in the plantations are elm, beech, oak, Scots pine and larch. Hedges are mainly thorn and elm, with a few oak trees. Most of the hedges are intact and well-maintained, but a few are quite low, particularly where they are associated with areas of arable farming. Parkland features, including mature trees, can be found around Faringdon House and St Mary's Priory.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 65/M

Locally important habitats include deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland and species-poor hedges with trees. There is some ancient semi-natural woodland including Coxwell Wood, which is around 50 ha in size, and some parkland habitat near Faringdon. An important geological site lies to the south of Faringdon.

J. Stanford in the Vale (CR/3)

Landscape Character

The landscape is characterised by a geometrically-shaped pattern of very large, open arable fields, and some improved grassland crossed by a network of straight roads. This is a very varied landscape of scattered, different sized mixed and deciduous plantations. There is also a large block of ancient woodland which has largely been replanted with conifers. A number of small copses, planted in field corners and around farmhouses, add to the woodland cover. Dense corridors of pollarded willows and linear strips of wet woodland bordering streams are also locally prominent features throughout. Fields are enclosed by hedges of hawthorn, elm and blackthorn. They are fragmented, low and, in many places, have been completely removed resulting a very open landscape. Hedges, with a few scattered trees, are more intact around the Pusey Estate. Distinctive parklands and their mixed plantations are part of the Pusey and Buckland estates. To the north of the village there is an existing limestone quarry and partially restored landfill site.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 167/VH

This area is very varied and supports a wide range of locally important and priority habitats. The former include deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There are a number of ancient semi-natural woodlands including sites such as Buckland Warren wood which has been largely replanted with conifers. A number of wet woodlands, such as Chinaman Copse and Newhouse Covert, border watercourses near Hatford and Longworth. Calcareous and marshy grassland is associated with Cherbury Camp near Charney Bassett, and there are scattered examples of acid grassland, wet grassland and reedswamp. The parklands at Pusey and Buckland, with their mature trees and lakes, also add to the overall diversity of the area.

K. Tubney (CR/6)

Landscape Character

The area has a geometrically-shaped pattern of medium to large-sized fields with a mixture of arable cropping and semi-improved pasture. There are also large fields dominated by pig farming to the north of Marcham and there are some orchards around Fyfield. Acid grassland interspersed with heather and gorse is a significant feature at Frilford Heath Golf Course. Woodland cover is very prominent in this area and consists of large blocks of ancient woodland, including Tubney Wood, and a number of different sized mixed plantations. Fields are enclosed by thorn and elm hedges with a scattering of elm, oak, sycamore, poplar and willow. These become sparser where arable cropping is dominant. However, a much more prominent feature is the dense corridors of poplars and pollarded willows bordering streams and ditches. Hedges are generally tall and overgrown, but where they enclose arable land they are intensively maintained and in some cases removed altogether and replaced by fences. There are small parklands with semi-improved grassland and mature trees at Besselsleigh School, Sheepstead Park and Kingston Bagpuize House.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 172/VH

This area is notable for its range of locally important and priority habitats. The former include plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There are significant areas of acid grassland and some heathland associated with Frilford Heath Golf Course. Examples of calcareous fen can be found near Frilford, Cothill and Marcham. Frilford Heath is also notable for its species-rich ponds and areas of wet woodland. There are also blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland including Tubney Wood and parkland habitat is found at places such as Sheepstead Park and Kingston Bagpuize House.

L. Cumnor Hill (CR/9)

Landscape Character

The area has a mix of land uses including medium-sized, semi-improved grass fields and larger arable fields. There are remnants of calcareous grassland on the steeper slopes adjacent to the Thames floodplain. Woodland dominates the landscape, particularly towards the east where there are very large blocks of ancient woodland including Kennington and Radley woods. The minor valleys and small streams, bordered by belts of dense scrub and wet woodland, are distinctive features that add diversity to the landscape. The streams are often species-rich, with significant patches of reedswamp vegetation. Fields are enclosed by thorn and elm hedges, but there are also some species-rich hedges with shrubs such dogwood, spindle and wayfaring tree close to the ancient woodland. Hedgerow trees of oak, ash and dead elm are also more prominent in the vicinity of ancient woodland, but are almost absent towards the west, where arable cropping predominates. Hedges are generally taller and in better condition in the eastern part of the area and are very low, fragmented or replaced by fences in the west.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 166/VH

Again, this area supports a wide range of locally important and priority habitats. There is deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There are several large blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland, including Bagley and Radley Woods, and species-rich hedges with trees. A number of valleys, including Chilswell Valley, have been created by springlines draining the corallian ridge to the west of Oxford. These support a range of priority habitats such as calcareous grassland, fen, species-rich watercourses and wet woodland.

M. Stanton St. John (CR/20, CR/21)

Landscape Character

The landscape is characterised by medium-sized arable fields with smaller fields of semi-improved grassland mainly on the steep hillsides, along with remnants of calcareous grassland. This is a very diverse landscape where fields are enclosed by woods, prominent tall thorn and elm hedges and narrow winding lanes. Large blocks of ancient and semi-natural woodland are

strong landscape features, particularly on steeper slopes in the northern part of the area. Hedges are also tall, thick and species-rich in this area. Many mature oak, ash and sycamore hedgerow trees contribute to the enclosed wooded character. Hedges are lower, gappier and with fewer trees in the south where arable farming dominates. Another characteristic feature is the minor valleys and small streams bordered by willows, poplars, belts of semi-natural woodland and neutral grassland. The parkland at Shotover and Shotover House underlines the estate character of this area.

Biodiversity

Bioscores/biobands: 198/VH; 12/L

In this area there is a range of locally important habitats including deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There are several large blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland, including Stanton Great Wood, and species-rich hedges with trees. Examples of unimproved meadows can be found near Beckley and acid and calcareous grassland is associated with Sidling's Copse, a nature reserve owned and managed by the local wildlife trust.

N. Shotover (CR/17)

Landscape Character

This area lies predominantly outside the Country Park and is dominated by large arable fields with some smaller, semi-improved grassland fields on Shotover Hill. Patches of acid grassland and heathland occur within the Country Park. The landscape is characterised by interlocking blocks of ancient and semi-natural woodland, which are particularly prominent on Shotover Hill. Parts of the area are remnants of the old Royal Forest of Shotover. Many field boundaries of thorn and elm have been removed, resulting in an open landscape. Some survive on Shotover Hill, where they are mixed with gorse and spindle. Hedgerow trees, mainly mature oak and ash, are mainly associated with the wooded area on Shotover Hill. Poplar shelterbelts sometimes border arable fields.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 79/M

Within this area there are a number of locally important habitats including deciduous woodland, semi-improved grassland and species-poor hedges with trees. Combe Wood is a large block of ancient semi-natural woodland, and survives from the old Royal Forest of Shotover. Most of the important priority habitats can be found within the Country Park, including restored areas of acid grassland and heath.

O. Horton-cum-Studley (CR/23)

Landscape Character

The area is characterised by a mix of land uses, including medium-sized fields with semi-improved and occasionally unimproved acid grassland interspersed with gorse, particularly on some of the steeper slopes. Mature oak hedgerow trees are densely scattered throughout the area. Large blocks of ancient woodland are found on the steep slopes. Fields are enclosed by tall, very gappy hedges, with hawthorn, hazel and elm dominating.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 63/M

Locally important habitats include semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and some tree-lined watercourses. Waterperry Wood is a large block of ancient semi-natural woodland and there is some surviving acid grassland associated with part of the golf course near Horton-cum-Studley.

P. Nuneham Courtenay (CR/15)

Landscape Character

The area is dominated by large geometrically-shaped arable fields. Large blocks of ancient

woodland and mixed plantations are prominent throughout the area. There are a few hedgerow trees, but they are not a significant landscape feature. Fields are enclosed by woodland and gappy thorn hedges. The parkland surrounding Nuneham Park is dominated by arable farming.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 100/MH

A number of locally important habitats have been recorded in this area, including deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There are blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland, parkland and some acid grassland associated with the arboretum at Nuneham Courtenay.

FORCES FOR CHANGE

- Overall, the hedges are in good condition but intensive agriculture has led to the fragmentation of field boundaries, particularly in areas dominated by arable farming. In such areas the hedges are very intensively maintained, fragmented, and in places removed altogether and replaced by fences.
- The vernacular character is strong in most of the villages and there is generally a low impact from residential development, especially within the wider countryside. However, in some villages new residential development is out of character, even though it is contained within the village envelope. There is also sprawling development along some of the main roads, particularly the A420 and A338, although this is mitigated to some extent by woodland and mature garden trees.
- In very intensive areas of arable farming some of the new, large-scale barn complexes are visually intrusive.
- Some large-scale business parks using inappropriate building materials are also visually intrusive.
- There is a localised visual impact from operational quarries and partially restored landfill sites, particularly around places such as Stanford-in-the-Vale.
- The golf course next to the A420 close to Buckland is visually prominent. Frilford Heath golf course, by comparison, blends well with the surrounding countryside by integrating successfully with existing woodlands and heath.
- Overhead pylons are very intrusive in the more open areas where intensive arable farming predominates. This is evident in areas near Nuneham Park, Cumnor and Harcourt hills and to the north of Cuddesdon.
- In the flat, open area near Weston-on-the-Green, the large airfield is visually prominent, in spite of the dense screen planting.

Landscape Strategy

Safeguard and enhance the characteristic landscape of parklands, estates, woodlands, hedgerows and unspoilt villages.

Guidelines

- Conserve and maintain semi-natural and ancient semi-natural woodland. Where appropriate, replace non-native conifer species with native species such as oak and ash. Promote the establishment and management of medium to large-scale deciduous and mixed plantations in areas where the landscape structure is particularly weak.
- Strengthen the field pattern by planting up gappy hedges using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn and hedgerow trees such as oak and ash.
- Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type.
- Conserve and sympathetically maintain species-rich hedgerows and, where appropriate, replant gappy hedges using species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, wayfaring tree, dogwood and spindle.
- Conserve parklands and their associated landscape features such as stone walls, lakes, mature trees and woods.
- Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland, particularly within parklands.
- Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting willows and ash and where appropriate, pollarding willows.

- Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses such as quarries, landfill sites, airfields and large-scale development, such as new barns and industrial units, with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside.
- Maintain the nucleated pattern of settlements and promote the use of building materials and a scale of development and that is appropriate to this landscape type.

Biodiversity Strategy

Ensure that all surviving priority habitats are safeguarded, in favourable condition and management, and enhanced to satisfy the actions and targets identified within the relevant habitat and species action plans. Safeguard, maintain and enhance all locally important habitats in a way that is appropriate to the landscape character of the area. Promote agri-environment schemes, which will benefit biodiversity in general and protected species and farmland birds in particular.

Guidelines

- Parts of this landscape type support a range of important priority habitats including acid grassland, heath, limestone grassland and fen. The majority of these habitats are associated with sites that have been designated as sites of special scientific interest or county wildlife sites. The priority must be to ensure that all these sites are in favourable condition and management. With S.S.S.I.s this can be achieved, where appropriate, through formal agreement between the landowner and English Nature. For county wildlife sites this can be promoted with advice from organisations such as the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, and the targeting of agri-environment schemes.
- The acid grassland, heath, fen and ponds at Frilford, including part of the golf course, are particularly important within the landscape type and a priority must be to ensure that they are in favourable condition and management.
- Within the valleys to the west of Oxford achieve a balance between species-rich limestone grassland and scrub. Prevent scrub encroachment in areas of species-rich grassland by grazing, as exemplified by the work of Oxford City Council in Chilswell Valley. Opportunities for expanding this habitat include the establishment and management of field margins/buffer strips adjacent to existing limestone grassland habitat using native wildflower species appropriate to the area.
- Opportunities for extending the range of these habitats is feasible, particularly acid grassland, on suitable land adjacent to existing similar habitats across the Corallian ridge. Oxford City Council has been successfully restoring acid grassland and heath within Shotover Country Park, and the techniques applied here can be used on soils with a similar fertility and acidity.
- Expansion of these habitats should be promoted through the use of agri-environment schemes and the restoration of mineral workings.
- Ancient semi-natural woodland is an important and characteristic feature throughout the landscape type. A priority is to ensure that it is sustainably maintained so that it remains in favourable condition and management. A substantial amount has been replanted with conifers, and where practicable these should be replaced with native tree and shrub species appropriate to the landscape type.
- Species-rich hedgerows are distributed throughout different parts of the landscape type. Priority should be given to safeguarding, maintaining and expanding this resource, particularly in those local character areas where they remain a significant feature.
- Parklands, and their associated habitats of woodlands, trees, lakes and grassland, make a significant contribution to the biodiversity resource of the landscape type and a priority must be to ensure that they remain in favourable condition and management.
- Tree-lined watercourses are a feature throughout the landscape type. They should be safeguarded and enhanced by planting species such as ash and willows, pollarding willows where appropriate, and establishing buffer strips/field margins to potentially benefit small mammals, invertebrates and birds.
- Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland, particularly on land adjacent to watercourses.
- Opportunities for the establishment of other locally important habitats, such as semi-improved grassland and medium to large-size deciduous woodlands, should be promoted in order to strengthen wildlife corridors and enhance the local landscape character.
- Promote the use of agri-environment schemes such as conservation headlands, overwintered stubbles and winter-sown crops to benefit farmland birds such as skylarks and yellowhammers.
- Parts of the Corallian limestone ridge are notable for their rare arable weeds, and every opportunity should be sought to safeguard and expand this interest through the use of agri-

environment schemes and the restoration of mineral workings.

Key Recommendations

- **Safeguard and enhance landscape character of the ancient woodlands, parklands, species-rich hedgerow network and tree-lined watercourses.**
- **Ensure that all priority habitats are in favourable condition and management, and opportunities for expanding this resource should be promoted through agri-environment schemes and the restoration of mineral sites.**