

## 7.20 SANDSTONE FARMLANDS

### CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

In Herefordshire, Sandstone Farmlands are only found in the Archenfield Sub-regional Character Area. These are upstanding agricultural landscapes with a moderate to gently undulating landform. The fertile, free draining soils support a range of agricultural uses with a tendency for sheep to be grazed in smaller fields near the farms and land further from the farm buildings being used for agricultural crops, including market gardening. This is an ordered, prosperous landscape with medium to large, regularly shaped fields separated by straight, single species hedges. Unusually, these hedges are often of holly, although hawthorn and occasionally hazel are also used. Hedges along the lanes however, are more often of mixed species including holly, hazel, hawthorn and elm. Roadside verges often support an associated heathy/acid grassland ground flora, which reflects the sandy nature of the soil. Like the Enclosed Settled Commons, holly was grown in nurseries set up for enclosure purposes and often used in preference to other native hedging species in these exposed well drained conditions. Tree cover is limited, being restricted to sparsely scattered hedgerow trees, some remnants of linear woodland running along the bottom of the steeper stream valleys and groups of trees around farms. Settlement is generally a dispersed pattern of substantial farmsteads and country houses with a characteristic four square style and mainly built of Old Red Sandstone with hipped slate roofs.

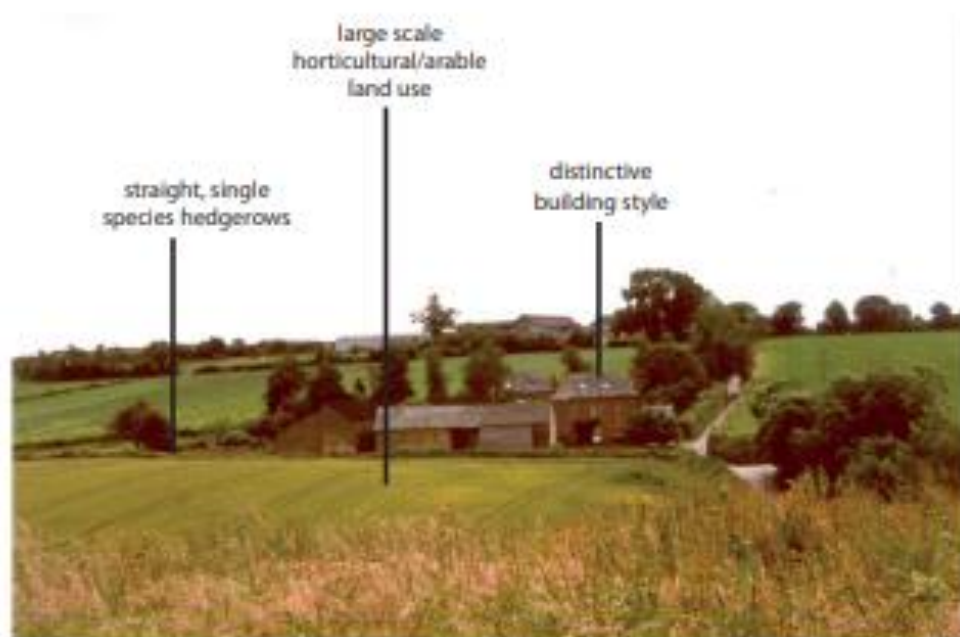
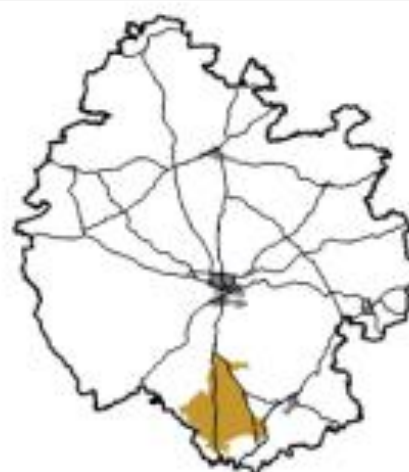
### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

#### Primary

- fields divided by straight, single species hedges, often holly
- distinctive building style

#### Secondary

- horticultural cropping/arable land use
- large scale landscape
- dispersed settlement pattern





### FORCES FOR LANDSCAPE CHANGE

Sandstone Farmlands are one of the most intensively farmed Landscape Types within Herefordshire. The escalating requirements of modern arable and horticultural cropping have led to a decline in hedgerow density as hedges are removed to enlarge fields, cut back brutally to reduce their land take or left derelict. Similarly, the hedgerow trees and fragments of woodland are gradually disappearing. Generally, this is a landscape that is becoming more featureless as its agricultural practices develop at an ever enlarging industrial scale.



### SETTLEMENT PATTERN

The inherent settlement pattern of dispersed farmsteads and country houses has become compromised in places by the imposition of new housing which tends to have a clustered pattern. The large scale of this landscape will accept new development but individual dwellings would be preferable in order to preserve the dispersed settlement pattern. Any development must be in accordance with UDP policy.

### ENCLOSURE PATTERN

The sub-regular enclosure pattern of medium to large regularly shaped fields has become less characteristic as fields have been enlarged to accommodate modern arable machinery.

### WOODLAND OR TREE COVER PATTERN

The linear pattern of woodland along the more deeply incised streams is becoming less distinctive as trees are lost and not replaced. Similarly, tree groups around individual farmsteads and large houses are not as prominent in the landscape as they once were. Additional woodland in this Landscape Type should respect the linear nature of the existing woodland pattern.

### MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES AND ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION

The impoverishment of landscape character in these areas is due to both loss of landscape features and the imposition of inappropriate elements. The principal aims of future land management should therefore be to **restore** those remaining landscape features that contribute to the character of the area and to appropriately **enhance** the landscape where features have been lost. Sympathetic management of the remaining hedgerows, along with new hedgerow planting of holly along the original alignment would do much to restore the landscape character. Similarly, there are opportunities for new tree planting along the steeper stream valleys where agriculture is restricted by the topography.

RESTORATION	ENHANCEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage appropriate hedgerow management, including gapping up with like species</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promote new hedgerow planting, ensuring that species conform to those traditional to the area (usually holly) and along the original alignment</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure that the enclosure pattern of medium to large rectangular fields is respected</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promote native broadleaved linear tree planting along sloping stream valleys</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage appropriate management of streamside trees</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage tree planting of native species in association with dwellings</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enhance the dispersed settlement pattern by discouraging groups of new houses while encouraging individual dwellings</li></ul>