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Character Area 10: Cole Valley



Corresponding National and County Landscape Character Areas

Countryside Agency: LCA 97 Arden

Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines: Arden

Key characteristics;

- Flat broad valley;
- Dominated by busy roads including the M42, M6 and A446;
- Contained by the urban areas of Birmingham, Coleshill and Water Orton;
- Substantial industrial influences within the north include Hams Hall power station and lines of pylons;
- Remnants of historical parkland landscapes around Coleshill Manor (now converted to offices) and Gilson Hall;
- Isolated and fragmented mixed arable and pastoral landscape between the urban uses;
- Urban and industrial views across the open valley.

Location and boundaries;

The boundaries of this area are defined by settlement and motorway corridors. To the west the M6 follows the Borough boundary, beyond which lies the built up settlement area of Birmingham. To the north the residential edge of Water Orton and Coleshill industrial areas meet the boundary, and to the east Coleshill residential areas extend to the south, where a narrow strip of land to the west of the landfill site provides the setting to a network of major road corridors and junctions.

Landscape Character (key description);

This broad flat valley is characterised by a complex mix of urban, transport and industrial uses that now dominate a historic parkland landscape.

The historic presence of coal mines in this area has attracted secondary industry – today Hams Hall power station, pylons, industrial plants, railways and the motorway network prevail. A dense network of motorways, busy A roads and intersections permeate this area, creating significant traffic noise and a sense of transition and motion. The roads connect Birmingham to the west with extensive industrial areas to the north, including sewage works and the Hams Hall power station with its network of pylons and substations. To the west the many high rise residential tower blocks at the Birmingham fringe are dominant structures on the skyline.

Within this area a discordant and isolated triangle of marginal farmland and former parkland lies between the motorways. Flat, open mixed pastoral and arable fields with low trimmed and often gappy hedges and very few hedgerow trees, extend to the south. The River Cole winds discretely between the fields. Visually intrusive pylons cross this area.

	<p>The centrally located Coleshill Manor has recently been refurbished as an office development and is set within remnant parkland with evergreen trees and linear plantations. Within the north the small village of Gilson with Gilson Hall and older buildings of local red brick and rendered vernacular is enclosed by fields. A scattering of modern and vernacular brick properties exist throughout this area, some are derelict. To the south of Water Orton the field pattern is more intact, hedgerows and hedgerow trees provide some buffer to the nearby motorways and traffic noise although views are still possible beyond the motorways to the pylons and residential tower blocks on the horizon.</p>
Key landscape related designations;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None noted
Pressures for change / key issues;	<p>This former Arden Parkland is now heavily fragmented by a busy network of motorways and major A roads, which connect the peripheral urban areas of Birmingham, Coleshill, Water Orton and large scale industry around Hams Hall power station. The remaining undeveloped land is predominantly open in nature and therefore heavily influenced by the urbanising elements. Some pockets of pastoral landscape remain around Gilson Hall and adjacent to the River Cole but predominantly the area suffers from loss of landscape features as a result of agricultural intensification and conversion to arable use. Currently the peripheral major roads provide a barrier to further expansion of the urban areas however development pressures are likely to remain significant here.</p>
Landscape / management strategies;	<p>The remaining landscape structure would benefit from measures to improve and reinforce its former Parkland character. Preparation and implementation of a comprehensive Green Infrastructure Strategy for the River Cole corridor would be appropriate, this could consider the following recommended measures;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The motorways and A roads currently provide a barrier to urban sprawl and coalescence, this should be reinforced through structural landscape planting to also reduce the impact of the noisy roads and soften the edges of settlements and industry; • Any settlement expansion should be accompanied by the implementation of robust Green Infrastructure with structural landscape planting to assimilate the settlement edge within the landscape; • New agricultural buildings should be sited, designed and landscaped to blend with the surrounding landscape; • Encourage retention and restoration of historic buildings within the valley and protect the remaining setting of Gilson; • Conserve areas of pastoral character and identify opportunities for conversion of arable back to permanent pasture; • Conserve and manage any remaining old permanent pastures and grassland areas; • Conserve and restore the historic field pattern of ancient hedgerows; • New hedge planting should reflect the traditional field pattern and include only mixed native species; • Conserve and enhance tree cover through planting of hedgerow oaks; • Encourage new woodland planting in small connected blocks and/or

	<p>broad tree belts; plant native, locally occurring species and predominantly oak. The design of new woodland planting should complement the shape and scale of the surrounding landscape pattern;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote conservation management of existing woodlands;• Encourage restoration and appropriate management of wetland and riparian vegetation along the course of the River Cole.
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Character Area 11: Tame Valley Wetlands



Corresponding National and County Landscape Character Areas

Countryside Agency: LCA 69 Trent Valley Washlands

Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines: Arden

Key characteristics;

- Alluvial river terraces of the very flat broad valley bottom;
- Extensive central network of restored former gravel workings with significant areas of wetland scrub and woodland centred on Kingsbury Water Park;
- Middleton Hall and gravel workings are contained within a Parkland and wetland landscape;
- Recently restored workings at Cliff Pool Nature Reserve to the north are yet to establish a landscape structure;
- Historic flood meadows and riparian vegetation at Whitacre Heath and Ladywalk Nature Reserves in the south;
- To the far south at the confluence of the Cole and Blythe with the Tame the landscape is disturbed by historic and modern small scale works set against the open backdrop of the Hams Hall industrial estates;
- The river Tame winds unobtrusively through the wetlands;
- Birmingham and Fazeley canal passes through the north;
- Settlements of Whitacre Heath, Nether Whitacre Heath, Lea Marston and Marston include typical red brick vernacular, with peripheral pastoral fields, there are few other properties within the area;
- A low lying landscape, visually contained by wetland vegetation, and the adjacent Hams Hall power station and pylons have little visual influence.

Location and boundaries;

Defined by the broad flat alluvial terraces of the valley bottom and extending to the north beyond the Borough boundary. To the east, and north of Kingsbury a steeper river bluff marks a clear boundary to this area, elsewhere to the east and west the boundary is defined by a distinct change in character to the predominantly arable lower valley slopes. To the south the fringes of the National Distribution Park at Hams Hall and the Blythe Hall Parkland mark the boundary.

Landscape Character (key)

This flat, highly modified river corridor landscape has been extensively worked for sand and gravel, the resulting new wetland landscape

description);	<p>dominates the north and contrasts with the remaining flood meadows, villages and pastoral land to the south. Although largely contained by wetland vegetation, busy roads and rail lines pass through linking peripheral settlement and industry have an urbanising influence.</p> <p>The northern part of this area is dominated by a series of linked areas of open water, which vary in size from small ponds to large lakes. The straight edges around some of the lakes are visually discordant but overall the appearance of this landscape is softened by wet woodland and scrub. The River Tame winds through this area. The area around Kingsbury Water Park is most established. To the north the more recently restored Cliff Pool Nature Reserve has recently restored banks and artificial landforms, and vegetation is yet to establish. Mineral extraction also occurs screened from view within the wooded Parkland landscape south of Middleton Hall. The hall itself is fine example of wood and red brick vernacular.</p> <p>To the south and within several isolated fields to the west of Kingsbury areas of flood meadow with extensive riparian vegetation remain. This area provides the setting to the adjacent Conservation Area and Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). Whitacre Heath and Ladywalk Nature Reserves lie to the east of Hams Hall power station. Slightly elevated above the flood meadows the settlements of Whitacre Heath, Nether Whitacre Heath, Lea Marston and Marston include traditional red brick properties, with peripheral pastoral fields.</p> <p>To the far south, at the confluence of the Rivers Blythe, Cole and Tame the landscape contains historic mill and water works buildings and modern small scale works and minerals extraction set against the open backdrop of the Hams Hall industrial estates and pylons. Elsewhere, although these industrial influences are close by and a network of busy roads, including the M42 and the A4097, and rail lines pass through the area, the low lying nature of this LCA and the containment afforded by extensive areas of scrub and wetland vegetation mean that the urbanising influences only occur locally rather than throughout the landscape.</p>
Key landscape related designations;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAM and Conservation Area at adjacent edge of Kingsbury; • Several peripheral small 'Ancient Woodland' blocks.
Pressures for change / key issues;	<p>The low lying wetlands adjacent to the River Tame have changed dramatically following former gravel extraction. Few areas of traditional landscape remain; the landscape is still evolving as wetland regeneration associated with former gravel workings continues. Given the location between and close proximity to Tamworth, Kingsbury and industrial areas around Tams Hall power station, these peripheral urbanising elements and the connecting busy A roads and motorways have an ongoing influence on the area. Pressure for minerals extraction continues, with areas south of Middleton Hall and west of Blyth Hall under extraction. The floodplain character largely protects this area from encroachment by built development</p>
Landscape /	<p>This emerging character of this predominantly new wetland landscape</p>

<p>management strategies;</p>	<p>should be strengthened and the remnant areas of traditional valley floodplain landscape improved and conserved. As a whole the area would benefit from a comprehensive Green Infrastructure Strategy;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the predominantly unsettled character of this area; • Conserve the built character of the area by ensuring that new development reflects the vernacular style; • Conserve and enhance tree cover around the peripheral settlement and industrial fringes; • Prepare and implement a Landscape Enhancement Plan to protect the setting of the historic Conservation Area at Kingsbury and remnant historic landscape structure elsewhere; • The design and management of new and enhancement of existing recreational facilities should seek to reflect the character of the existing landscape features; • Conserve the pastoral character of the remnant farmland and identify opportunities for conversion of arable back to permanent pasture; • Retain grassland along the River floodplain and where possible consider a return to traditional grassland management; • Enhance river channel diversity and marginal vegetation; • Conserve and enhance remaining riverside wetland habitats and identify opportunities for re-creating elsewhere; • Opportunities should be sought for creating more diverse wetland habitats during restoration of any future sand and gravel workings, developers should provide comprehensive restoration proposals for approval at planning stage.
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Character Area 12: Middleton to Curdworth - Tame Valley farmland



Corresponding National and County Landscape Character Areas

Countryside Agency: LCA 69 Trent Valley Washlands
Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines: Arden

Key characteristics;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gently undulating east facing slopes cut by small watercourses that drain towards the River Tame including the Langley Brook; • A predominantly open arable landscape with large fields divided by low, tightly trimmed hedges with few hedgerow trees; • A dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets, villages and farmsteads, some with modern farm sheds; • The settlements are contained by peripheral small hedged pastoral fields and woodland; • Dispersed network of busy A roads and a few smaller quieter lanes connecting the settlements; • The M42 / M6 toll junction within the south and nearby visible industry has a substantial influence upon the open landscape; • Several golf courses in the area, the largest being the Belfry Hotel; • The Birmingham and Fazeley Canal passes discretely through the area; • Long and panoramic views to the east from elevated open slopes.
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Location and boundaries;	<p>Comprises the east facing slopes of the Tame valley, its eastern boundary meets the adjacent Tame Valley wetlands character, the west is more broadly defined by elevated wooded upland, the south abruptly meets the industrial estates at Hams Hall and to the north the character continues along the upper reaches of the Tame Valley beyond the Borough boundary.</p>
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Landscape Character (key description);	<p>Broadly defined as the gently undulating and open arable slopes of the western Tame Valley, a number of small watercourses cut through the landscape to connect to the Tame, the most notable being the Langley Brook, which flows to the south of Middleton.</p> <p>This area is sparsely settled with a scattering of small hamlets and villages, including Middleton, Over Green, Bodymoor Heath and Hunts Green and scattered farmsteads often with large modern sheds, although typical properties are red brick and white rendered local vernacular. A few quiet and winding narrow lanes link the settlements, in places these have close hedges and hedge banks, and elsewhere hedges have been removed allowing open views across fields.</p> <p>Several busier A roads pass through the area and connect to the busy and exposed A42 / M6 toll junction to the south. These busy transport corridors connect to nearby industrial areas to the south around Hams</p>
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	<p>Hall and have an urbanising influence, particularly on the south part of this landscape area. The settlement of Curdworth is located just beyond the junction at the fringe of the area. Lines of pylons also cut through this landscape.</p> <p>There are also several golf courses, the largest at the Belfry includes young landscaped areas which are yet to mature and integrate the course with the wider landscape.</p> <p>The Birmingham and Fazeley Canal passes through the landscape but is not a clearly discernible landscape feature except in locations such Bodymoor Heath where the road passes over a humped back bridge and a collection of historic buildings located at the canalside.</p> <p>The landscape is predominantly agricultural with some very large arable fields are enclosed by low often gappy hedgerows with a few hedgerow trees. The arable fields are predominantly regular in shape, with irregular fields around Middleton reflecting the different periods of enclosure within the valley. Pockets of smaller fields and pastoral land remain around the settlements and are most notable around Middleton and Hunts Green. These are contained by dense hedges with hedgerow trees and small woodland blocks.</p> <p>A general lack of woodland and tree cover in combination with the sloping landform creates an open empty feel to this landscape, except within the immediate vicinity of the small villages/hamlets. As land becomes more elevated some parts are very open with long panoramic views east across the arable landscape to distant wooded scarps.</p>
<p>Key landscape related designations;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several small, dispersed ‘Ancient Woodland’ blocks; • SAM at Middleton; • SAM adjacent to North Wood.
<p>Pressures for change / key issues;</p>	<p>This is a wide open landscape that has been subject to considerable agricultural intensification, this has resulted in loss of hedgerows and landscape features. Historic Parkland areas such as the Belfry have been converted to golf course use and golf courses are dominant landscape elements within this open landscape. Busy motorways and A roads on higher land have a significant urbanising effect on this landscape combined with peripheral industrial uses to the south.</p>
<p>Landscape / management strategies;</p>	<p>This predominantly open arable landscape would benefit from improvement and reinforcement of its landscape features;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the historic dispersed settlement pattern of small villages and scattered farmsteads; • Conserve the built character of the area by ensuring that new development reflects the vernacular style; • Conserve and protect the irregular outline of the settlements and the tree cover around them; • The design and management of new and enhancement of existing recreational and golf course facilities should be in keeping with the landscape character of the area and seek to assimilate the facility

	<p>within the wider landscape. Consider peripheral woodland planting blocks to better assimilate the Belfry golf course within the wider landscape;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve the historic field pattern and pastoral character around the settlement edges and identify opportunities for conversion of arable back to permanent pasture; • Encourage development of wide and diverse field margins; • Conserve and strengthen primary hedge lines and manage these more positively as landscape features; • Consider new hedgerow planting and include only native locally occurring species; • Enhance tree cover through planting of hedgerow oaks; • Encourage woodland planting on rising ground and particularly in the vicinity of the M42/M6 toll junction; new woodland planting should complement the shape and scale of the surrounding landscape pattern and use native locally occurring broadleaved species, predominantly oak; • Encourage natural regeneration of trees and vegetation alongside watercourses and promote small areas of wetland planting in areas currently lacking in habitats; • Encourage ecological management of grassland areas and wetlands.
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