

APPENDIX 7.2: LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

National Landscape Context

Landscape character at a regional level has been considered using Natural England's National Character Areas (NCA). The guidance provides a view of the defining characteristics of each landscape character area (LCA) and contributes to the baseline position on landscape and visual amenity.

The site is located within National Character Area 97: Arden (Natural England, 2012). The NCA description provides a useful overview and context for the landscape and visual baseline and landscape character of the region and highlights the nature of key existing pressures on the landscape at a regional scale.

A summary of the key characteristics of NCA 97 is provided as follows:

- Well-wooded farmland landscape with rolling landform.
- Geologically diverse with rocks ranging from the Precambrian to the Jurassic and overlain by superficial Quaternary deposits.
- Mature oaks, mostly found within hedgerows, together with ancient woodlands, and plantation woodlands that often date from the time of enclosure. Woodlands include historic coppice bounded by woodbanks.
- Narrow, meandering clay river valleys with long river meadows; the River Blythe SSSI lying between the cities of Coventry and Birmingham is a good example of this.
- Numerous areas of former wood-pasture with large, old, oak trees often associated with isolated remnants of more extensive heathlands. Village greens/commons have a strong association with remnant lowland heath. Fragmented heathland persists on poorer soils in central and northern areas.
- Diverse field patterns, ranging from well hedged, irregular fields and small woodlands that contrast with larger semi regular fields on former deer park estates, eg. Packington Hall and Stoneleigh Park.
- Complex and contrasting settlement pattern with some densely populated where traditional settlements have amalgamated to form the major West Midlands conurbation whilst some settlements remain distinct and relatively well dispersed.
- North eastern industrial area based around former Warwickshire coalfield, with distinctive colliery settlements. North western area dominated by urban development and associated urban edge landscapes such as managed green space, e.g. allotments, gardens, parks, golf courses (rough areas) and public open spaces; playing fields, churchyards, cemeteries and institutional grounds (schools, hospitals etc).
- Transport infrastructure, the M42, M40, M6 and M5 are major transport corridors that sit within the landscape of this NCA.
- Shakespeare's 'Forest of Arden', featured in 'As You Like It', is still reflected through the woodland cover, mature oaks, small ancient woodlands and former wood pasture.