

TANWORTH IN ARDEN

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

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BACKGROUND

Landscape character assessment is the process of identifying and describing variations and coherences in the character of a landscape. Statements identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (or “characteristics”) that make a particular landscape distinctive. The statements outline how a landscape is, and has been perceived, experienced and valued by people through time; and how this has shaped that landscape into its existing form.

This document details the distinctive local landscape character of the parish of Tanworth-in-Arden, Warwickshire. It has been produced to support the development, and subsequent application, of the local Neighbourhood Plan.

The Tanworth-in-Arden landscape character statement expands upon existing sources on landscape character, including the Warwickshire Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and Warwickshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) survey. These are valuable resources in their own right, however they do not provide an intimate reflection of local landscape character specific to Tanworth-in-Arden: LCAs operate at resolutions greater than the parish-scale, sometimes overlooking key local characteristics; while HLC can be too abstract for effective use within design and management processes.

This assessment synthesises such resources, while enhancing the evidence base through new characterisation surveys undertaken in collaboration with the local community. It constitutes a holistic and comprehensive appraisal of local landscape character across the geographic area of Tanworth-in-Arden, focussing on the parish as a whole rather than specific special area or protected features.

The character statement is used in the context of the local Neighbourhood Plan to:

- Articulate the values and significance of the Tanworth-in-Arden landscape to the local community, and those who visit it.
- Provide a robust evidence base which supports processes of planning and decision making, ensuring the local landscape’s special qualities are fully accounted for.
- Support assessment of landscape and visual impact, and landscape sensitivity assessments in response to potential development within the parish.
- Help deliver more sustainable development, which responds to the distinct qualities of the landscape through well-inform design and place making, including Green Infrastructure.
- Inform and support the conservation and enhancement of the landscape through initiatives beyond those of the Neighbourhood Plan. Including applications for agri-environment schemes by local landowners, or the formation of management strategies by environmental agencies or the local community.

SUMMARY OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

A rural landscape predominantly defined by post-medieval agrarian characteristics emerging from a mixed (but majority pastoral) farming land-use. Primarily characterised by its small- to medium-scale enclosures, created from the gradual rationalisation and reformation of medieval woodlands and common lands. Enclosure patterns are distinctly irregular or loosely-geometric in the east-and-south, and north-and-west respectively, indicating differing periods of enclosure in the Parish. The landscape is defined by hedgerow boundaries rich in mature hedgerow-trees. It is traversed, at a local scale, via a dense network of winding and often shallow sunken rural lanes and tracks. These features combine with the landscape's gentle undulations, filtered views, woodlands and settlement patterns to create a sense of intimacy when moving around the local area. The landscape is richly furnished with historic features, including many traditional wayside or isolated farmsteads, small areas of formal parkland, industrial waterbodies and rural watercourses. Relicts of more ancient landscapes are also dispersed across the parish, including medieval ancient woodland and manorial earthworks. While the integrity of the post-medieval landscape is exceptional, processes of change are also clearly evident, creating a broader sense of time-depth. This is particularly tangible in the form of both 19th and 20th century transport infrastructure, and early-20th century residential ribbon development. This has created a clear sense of distinctiveness between the parish's various settlements.

SUMMARY OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

- An undulating landscape, restricting long views and creating a strong sense of intimacy. The historic settlements and some higher-status farmsteads are commonly located in topographically prominent locations.
- Prevailing post-medieval rural landscape character, though remnants of medieval activity and 19th and 20th century infrastructure and residential development add to a broad sense of 'time depth' (or 'phasing').
- Strong settlement patterns, including the historic nucleated village of Tanworth-in-Arden, dispersed small hamlets such as Danzey Green and Forshaw Heath, and the linearity of ribbon developments of Earlswood and Wood End. These patterns are relatively well contained to their respective areas, creating a strong sense of distinctiveness between the parish's individual settlements.
- Numerous historic farmsteads of largely medieval and post-medieval origin are dispersed across the parish, commonly positioned either at the wayside of rural lanes (regularly forming local landmark features), or in isolated positions set-back within the landscape.
- Small areas of designed parkland, somewhat isolated from the wider parish (visually and physically) by dense planting schemes around their boundaries.
- Small to medium scale largely post-medieval enclosure systems, formed of a patchwork of 'piecemeal' and rectilinear enclosures, which respectively dominate the south-and-east, and north-and-west areas of the parish.
- Dense network of sinuous hedgerow boundaries subdivide the landscape, richly furnished with hedgerow trees creating a wooded landscape character. Very low proportions of field amalgamation and boundary-removal.
- Dispersed blocks of deciduous ancient woodland and semi-natural ancient woodland of irregular morphology (in the south and east), loose-geometric morphology (north and west), or as components of formal planting schemes (Umberslade Park, as screening for infrastructure, and in private gardens).
- Distinctive network of historic rural lanes winding sinuously through the landscape. These are frequently sunken and are strongly defined by adjacent earthwork banks and tree-lined hedgerows, filtering views and creating intimate corridors of movement.
- High density of public footpaths in the south and east of the parish, connecting historic settlements to the surrounding rural landscape, many of which derive from historic farm tracks.
- Expansive 19th and 20th century transport corridors in the form of canal, rail and road networks which transect the parish. Their landscape impact has been mitigated through planting schemes and communications responding to parish's natural landforms.
- Distinct points of 'transition' between different areas of the parish, created by the winding lanes, tree-lined hedgerows and undulating topography.
- Lack of industrialised characteristics away from the canal reservoirs and communications infrastructure.
- Expansive recreational and utilitarian waterbodies in the north-west of the parish, contrasting with many but small-scale agricultural ponds which pockmark the rural landscape, and formal waterbodies of Umberslade Park and some higher status farmsteads.
- Small sinuous rural watercourses with minimal industrial modification.
- Remnants of medieval common land-use, largely through placenames.

- An array of species rich habitats, including waterbodies, woodlands, grasslands, and a dense network of wildlife corridors formed of the parish's ancient hedgerow networks.
- Dispersed archaeological remnants of the medieval landscape, including earthwork of moated sites, ridge and furrow, fishponds, and deserted medieval settlements.
- Landmark buildings pertaining to the parish's historic built environment, including structures pertaining to the ecclesiastical, agrarian, and infrastructural development of the parish.
- Filtered and intimate views formed from the undulating wooded landscape, which emphasise the vernacular characteristics of the landscape.
- Rare, but significant open views providing brief but expansive vistas.
- Commanding setting of Tanworth-in-Arden village, elevated within its surrounding landscape and clearly demarcated by its church spire; yet visually contained through surrounding vegetation.
- Strong sense of rural tranquillity, punctuated by local bursts of activity relating to rural land-use and the transport-infrastructure of the parish. Prevalent road noise in the vicinity of the motorway.

DETAILED CHARACTERISATION

Landform

The area's topography is defined by the Birmingham plateau, with higher ground to the north set above lower plains to the south, defined by a soft escarpment. The plateau projects from the northwest of the parish towards its centre. Shallow valleys and bowls define the plains, creating a distinctive gently undulating landscape. Many of the parish's settlements are located on, or at the fringe of, the higher ground. The village of Tanworth-in-Arden is particularly notable for its elevated position immediately above the plains to the east and south of the parish.

The parish's geology is formed of sedimentary bedrock, the majority of which is of the Mercia Mudstone group, with areas of siltstones and sandstones of the Arden Sandstone formation. Superficial deposits of mid-Pleistocene Diamicton Till and areas of sands and gravels are located both atop and aligned to the plateau in the north and west of the parish. Quaternary alluvium deposits of clays, silts, sands and gravels are aligned to watercourses. Local soils are slowly permeable and of a base-rich loamy and clayey texture. The soils are seasonally wet due to impeded drainage, and are of moderate fertility.

Land use (broad)

The landscape is largely defined by agrarian activities and small-scale settlement. 18th through 20th century transport-infrastructure is also a prominent component of local land-use, with canal, road and rail links all transecting the parish. Parkland, recreational lakes and small trading estates are other, localised elements of the landscape.



The gently undulating agrarian landscape of Tanworth-in-Arden, featuring wooded sinuous hedgerow boundaries, small blocks of sometimes ancient woodland, and a patchwork of small-to-medium sized rural enclosures.

Settlement pattern

NB. Detailed characterisations of the parish's architectural heritage, and its three Local Service Villages (Tanworth-in-Arden, Earlswood and Wood End) are available as bespoke documents within the Neighbourhood Plan's evidence base.

Broad settlement pattern within the parish is dispersed. The landscape features a degree of variety in settlement layout, with four distinctive forms.

Pre-20th century settlement is evident in the form of the nucleated village of Tanworth-in-Arden, alongside a number of former hamlets (such as those now amalgamated into Wood End, Forshaw Heath and Earlswood) which commonly clustered at road junctions. These small urban areas are characteristic of medieval and post-medieval settlement in the region, featuring a tightly focussed collection of local industrial, commercial, agricultural and domestic features. Settlements are not commonly prominent features within views from the local landscape, and correspondingly views out from settlements are frequently confined to a short to medium distance. Many of the villages and hamlets are sheltered within their own setting by the undulating topography, and the density of the hedgerow and woodland boundaries. This increases their sensitivity to change which would negate this sense of visual exclusion.

In stark contrast to the medieval patterns of settlement-nucleation, is the linearity of the landscape's early-to-mid 20th century developments. This is largely focussed in the north and west of the parish. Many of these areas are symptomatic of 'ribbon' development prevalent in England in the Inter-War period. Properties spread along arterial roads, and were regularly formed of large detached and semi-detached plots constructed at a low density due to large garden plots. These developments have transformed Earlswood, Wood End and Aspley Heath, with ribbon development consequently becoming the prevalent distinctive characteristic of these areas of the parish. This style of development is now a distinctive feature within the landscape of the parish in its own right, forming a notable component of the eclectic spectrum of local architecture. While a small amount of contemporary 20th century development is evident within Tanworth-in-Arden, this has not altered the post-medieval nucleation.

Historic farmsteads are a prominent component of local settlement character. There is some variation in farmstead form across the parish. The majority of surviving traditional farm buildings are of brick construction dating from the 18th through 19th centuries, accompanied by a range of 20th century sheds. There are however many notable examples of earlier farmsteads featuring timber-framed structures (e.g. Dairy House Farm). There is a strong degree of variation in farmstead size, from large to very small scale. Farmsteads are most commonly laid out as regular or loose courtyards. There are also an assortment of more linear arrangements, particularly in relation to smallholdings, and in areas adjacent historic common land. The farmsteads are dispersed relatively evenly across the parish and are most commonly located either at the wayside of rural lanes, or within isolated positions within the landscape, accessible along farm tracks. A small number of farmsteads are directly associated with villages, hamlets and estates. The setting of these farmsteads is a key characteristic of local landscape character. Farmsteads regularly act as landmark and gateway features, as discussed further within 'Landmarks and Gateways' section. Historic farm

tracks are also by far the most common provenance of the footpaths and lanes which connect parish's settlements to one-another, and to the wider landscape.

The final major form of settlement with the parish is that of the country house and estate. The late-17th century Umberslade Hall and Park are by far the most prominent example of elite settlement. A more modern iteration can be found at Shenstone House, a component of the 20th century westward expansion of Tanworth-in-Arden. Both of these estates sit within highly enclosed (visually and physically) plots, somewhat isolating themselves from the wider parish landscape. As a result their influence within the parish landscape is often felt when local to them, and not at a broad scale.

Enclosure

The Tanworth-in-Arden landscape is exemplar of a distinctive form of post-medieval enclosure which continues both to the east and west across north Warwickshire and Worcestershire respectively. The prevalent form of enclosure according to the Warwickshire HLC is 'piecemeal enclosure', primarily located across the landscape to the south and east of Tanworth-in-Arden. The piecemeal enclosures are formed of small-to-medium sized fields created on an ad-hoc basis from earlier medieval open fields. They feature distinctively sinuous tree-lined hedgerow boundaries, often of a 'reverse S curve' or 'dog-leg' morphology typically associated with medieval open-field farming. More regularity of enclosure-pattern is evident within the north and east of the parish, where distinctive areas of more rectilinear enclosure allude to post-medieval rationalisation of former common land, particularly east of Earlswood and west of Wood End.

This ancient patchwork of arable land, grasslands, and hedgerow-boundaries contributes substantially to other key characteristics of the local landscape. This includes creating valuable habitats and wildlife corridors; and contributing to the intimate nature of the undulating landscape by further filtering views from the local dense network of local footpaths and lanes.

Within the parish practices of field amalgamation and boundary-removal are limited. This results in a high level of preservation of the post-medieval rural environment relative to other parishes of the north Warwickshire and north Worcestershire landscape.

Woodland and tree cover

The Tanworth-in-Arden landscape has a distinctly wooded character. Woodland is not, however, particularly extensive, formed of distinct blocks of deciduous ancient woodland and semi-natural ancient woodland interspersed within field enclosures. The morphology of these woodlands is comparable to the landscape's pattern of enclosure – having undergone periodic processes of clearing, assarting and planting concurrent to consecutive phases of land-rationalisation. Ancient woodland is more extensive towards the upper elements of the parish's hills and undulations, and on the steeper valley slopes, as is typical with such woodland, with less historic incentives for clearance. The major examples are Clowes Wood and Windmill Naps in the northwest. Smaller blocks of remnant medieval woodland are scattered throughout the piecemeal enclosures of the lower lying areas of the parish.

In spite of the modest proportion of woodland, tree cover is a distinctive characteristic of local landscape character. This is due to an extremely high density of individual trees, particularly oaks, which are associated to various historic and modern land uses. Regular patterns of hedgerow trees are particularly prominent and pervasive, furnishing the landscape's many field boundaries and lining rural lanes. Many of these roadside hedgerows are elevated on earthworks, which feature woodland flora along their banks. These extend into the parish's historic settlements, bringing seasonal woodland characteristics to built-up areas.



Blocks of medieval ancient-, and semi-natural ancient woodland are located across the parish, remnants from expansive forests and woods gradually assarted and cleared from the medieval period onwards.

Designed landscapes also contribute to this wooded character, including the avenue, wooded groves and woodland pastures of Umberlade Park, and the formal planting of the Wood End golf course, elements of which are associated to historic parkland. Tree cover has also been enriched within densely planted private gardens, using both native and non-native species, particularly within the large Inter-War and Post-War ribbon developments. Modern infrastructure also contributes substantially through the planting of woodland screening along the motorway and railway corridors.

Communications

Tanworth-in-Arden is a landscape of contrast in respect of its communication infrastructures, with features ranging from small ancient lanes to expansive modern highways.

Surviving historic communications form key characteristics of the local landscape. Historic rural lanes wind sinuously through the landscape between settlement centres and farmsteads. These lanes are frequently shallow sunken routes, and are strongly defined by the dense tree-and-hedgerow lined embankments which delineate the adjacent fields. This creates intimate corridors which channel movement through the Parish, filtering views and elevating many wayside features to form landmarks.

Historic footpaths are common within the parish. The landscape features a dense but irregular network of rural trackways, largely associated with former medieval and post-medieval agricultural land-use. These historic routes enhance the interconnectivity of the parish's settlements, farmsteads, fields, woodlands and parkland making a strong contribution towards both the visual and physical experience of the landscape. This facilitates many locally important views, and allows access across much of the parish. This dense pattern and high frequency of footpaths is not, however evident across the entirety of the parish. In the north (particularly north and east of Earlswood) there is a low density of public footpaths, resultant of the areas' medieval and post-medieval land-use - used as common land, gradually encroached upon by the surviving rectilinear enclosures. This open land-use resulted created a far lower density of rural trackways than the landscapes to the south and east. Consequently, few historic routes have were adopted within the 20th century development of Earlswood, with the settlement inheriting the historically limited level of rural connectivity.

The lanes and footpaths combine to create distinctive corridors of 'transition' within the landscape – allowing rapid movement between the urban and rural environments. Leaving the historic settlements, particularly Tanworth-in-Arden is relatively abrupt in all directions, whether heading West beyond the 'dog leg' of Bates Lane, north along Tom Hill or Vicarage Hill, or immediately southeast of The Green along Well Lane.

The 19th and 20th centuries brought radical change to the landscape through the development of large scale transport-infrastructure. Tanworth-in-Arden has seen the development of three major



Shallow sunken winding lanes are characteristic of the parish, enclosed by earthworks banks and the densely tree-lined field boundaries of adjacent enclosures.

transport corridors in the forms of canal, rail and road infrastructure, demonstrating the area's close proximity of major urban centres.

The earliest major infrastructure is the Stratford-upon-Avon canal, constructed across the late-18th and early-19th centuries. The canal itself is relatively peripheral to the parish, largely defining its north-western boundary. It does however remain a significant recreational asset. The canal's most significant contribution to the local landscape is its feeder reservoirs, forming the heart of the village of Earlswood in the northeast. This is discussed further within the 'Watercourses and Waterbodies' section.

The 'North Warwickshire Railway Line' forms the second major linear transport asset to appear within the Tanworth landscape. The early 20th century railway transects the parish from northwest to southeast, skirting Earlswood Lakes, Wood End and Tanworth-in-Arden on its journey between Birmingham and Stratford-upon-Avon. The railway has had an impact in a number of ways. Most tangible is the introduction of distinctively engineered features to the landscape, from the rails and tracks, to bridges, several stations and the other paraphernalia of rail travel. In time these have become architectural heritage in themselves, adding to the landscape's sense of time-depth. There is also an increased, if periodic, sense of activity around the railway lines as trains move through and beyond the area.

It is however notable how the wider landscape character of the parish has not been substantially altered by the introduction of the railway. This is due to the railway's broad form and aesthetic being



Large-scale linear transport-infrastructure bisects the parish in multiple directions, including major rail, road and canal links.

loosely comparable to the core characteristics of the post-medieval agricultural landscape. The engineered earthwork embankments and channels blend into the undulating topography of the local environment. And further, the screening of the railway (albeit with distinct species) with curvilinear lines of dense vegetation partially mirrors the sinuous tree-lined-hedgerow boundaries of the post-medieval agricultural landscape.

The final phase of major infrastructural development is evident in the mid-20th century M42 and M40 motorways which enter the parish from the north, east and west. The parish hosts expansive elements of these motorways, including the main junction between the two routes. The physical impact of the engineering and excavation works is apparent as the heavily sunken route, and adjacent bunds. However, it is important to note that, like the railway, the conspicuousness of the motorways are well-mitigated - lowering them into the local topography, and again through use of screening by banks of vegetation. This, combined with the landscape's natural undulations and dense hedgerows, do partially reduce their visual impact. There has however been a substantial impact in the form of the fragmentation of the north-western landscape from the rest of the parish, and the introduction of varying levels of road noise depending on proximity.

Landmarks and Gateways

The historic built environment affords many landmarks within the parish.



Wayside historic farmsteads punctuate travel along country lanes.

None are more prominent than the Church of St. Mary Magdalene within Tanworth-in-Arden village, where it dominates the central green through its scale and siting as a terminating building. The church's landmark status is further elevated by its spire, often the only element of the village visible from afar.

Farmsteads, and their farmhouses, are important landmarks when traversing the parish. This is in two forms. Wayside farmsteads act as landmark features, punctuating travel along the winding rural lanes, or heralding the outskirts of a village or hamlet. Isolated farmsteads also feature prominently within local views, regularly forming focal points when looking out across the parish landscape.

Other landmark building include: the pumping house adjacent Earlswood Lakes, which demarcates the entrance to the parish from the direction of Wythall and northern Worcestershire; and wayside public houses, particularly those associated to the early-20th century developments in the north, such as the Bull's Head, The Royal Oak, and The Reservoir which are all set close to the roadside. While Umberslade Hall is relatively visually contained within its parkland, associated landscapes features form important landmarks in the eastern extent of the parish, particularly the tree-lined avenue which extends all the way to Tanworth-in-Arden.

Finally, the transport-infrastructure developments of the 19th and 20th centuries have introduced distinct gateways to the landscape, where previously transition between areas would have been a more gradual experience. The canal, which defines a large part of the parish's northern boundary, has introduced small intimate brick-built road bridges which demarcate passages in-and-out of the Parish. The railway has also introduced gateways where stations have been constructed within or



Bridges and underpasses relating the introduction of road, rail and canal infrastructure in the 19th and 20th century now commonly delineate approaches to-and-from settlements.

adjacent to settlements. A prime example is the underpass along Tom Hill, north of Tanworth-in-Arden, which now defines a clear starting-point for the village's 'approach', and creates a stronger sense of delineation between the settlement and its historically connected landscape to the north. The motorway, bisecting the parish from east to west, creates another physical barrier. The road bridges which pass over the sunken motorway-corridor consequently create modern gateways (and concurrently a heightened sense of delineation) between the northern extent of the parish, and the remainder of its historic landscape.

Watercourses and waterbodies

The largest waterbodies within the landscape are the reservoirs which form 'Earlswood Lakes'. Constructed in the early 19th century, these expansive waterbodies supply the Stratford-upon-Avon canal. A wide range of soft and hard infrastructure is associated with The Lakes including an engine house, large bund, and causeway. With the lakes rapidly becoming a draw for recreation and tourism consequent to their development, the characteristics of the site have also evolved beyond the utilitarian. The lakes further enrich the area through their natural habitats and biodiversity. The Stratford-upon-Avon canal is also in itself significant to local landscape character, with the watercourse both physically and visually defining the north-western boundary of the parish.

Field ponds are another notable element of local character, pockmarking the parish's enclosures. These are commonly small in size, located along or adjacent field boundaries, and are defined by earthwork banks. The gradual abandonment of these ponds has resulted in extensive scrub and tree growth on and around them, with many now appearing as small blocks of scrub within landscape



Earlswood Lakes, created as feeder reservoirs for the canal, and now a highly valued for its recreational and natural-environmental contribution to the parish.

views. These ponds have two prevailing histories. Some were intentionally created as ponds to serve within pastoral regimes. Others are former extraction sites which have naturally filled with water after the removal of marl, gravels and clay.

More formal waterbodies are evident within the landscapes associated to higher status areas of the parish. Several large fishponds are evident at Umberslade Park, with a small number also located in association to historic farmsteads. There is also a notable density of medieval moated sites, several of which remain at least partially extant, and either permanently or seasonally water-filled.

While watercourses are not prominent characteristics of the landscape, several transect the fields and woodlands, most notably the River Alne. They are most often visually defined by the vegetation growing along their shallow bank, often forming irregular linear and semi-circular features in the landscape. The watercourses are however notable within the parish's wider landscape setting, through their general absence of waterside industries and related industrial modifications (as discussed within the 'Industry' section).

Designed landscapes

Umberslade Park is the primary designed landscape within the parish. Associated to Umberslade Hall, the extant park is of largely 18th century provenance. The presence of medieval earthworks and a moated site does however illustrate a more ancient land-use beyond the existing landscaped park and garden. The landscape is relatively distinctive of 18th century formal parkland, featuring verdant characteristics of undulating lawns, irregularly planted trees, groves, fishponds, drives, lodges, walled gardens, walks, and a range of ornamental features.

The park forms a semi-isolated feature within the landscape with the parish, well veiled and enclosed by its densely planted woodland boundaries. In spite of this relative isolation, there is a clear sense of connectivity between the estate and Tanworth-in-Arden village to its southwest created by the extensive tree-lined drive, which extends over 2km from the Umberslade Estate to 'Tom Hill' Lane immediately northwest of the village. This physical connection has recently been visually enhanced with the extension of the drive's historic double avenue of trees, now delineating the entirety of the route from the estate to the village.

Ladbrook Park, located in Wood End, is the other notable historic designed landscape within the parish. The small area of informal parkland is associated to Ladbrook Hall, and is again characteristic of the English landscaped garden. The park has a wider impact on local landscape character through the use of prominent coniferous plantation, which stretch along its roadside boundaries and along nearby lanes, clearly delineating its location. The extent of designed landscape character around Ladbrook Park has been sizeably expanded through the 20th century development of an eponymous golf course. Here, as is common with many English golf courses, the semi-formal verdant characteristics of the English landscaped park have been inherited within this modern recreational environment.

Characteristics of the English landscaped park are also evident within the parish at a 'micro' scale - within the private gardens of the area's high-status early-to-mid 20th century ribbon developments.



While the parish's designed landscapes are relatively enclosed with their own environs, their influence remains apparent within the broad landscape. Here, the replanted avenue of Umberslade Park can be seen projecting eastwards from where it joins Tanworth-in-Arden village at Tom Hill.

As is common within such developments, many of the aesthetics of these spaces has been inspired by the iconic features of the landscaped-park-and-garden, albeit as a microcosm. This is particularly noticeable along Bates Lane, in Tanworth-in-Arden (where Shenstone House is most notable); and within garden plots along The Common, Earlswood.

Common land

Common lands are often ancient historical characteristics of the landscape and the parish retains some key traces of such open areas. Post-medieval rationalisation and reorganisation has however minimised tangible evidence of this once widespread land-use. This is particularly evident in the north and northwest of the parish, atop the escarpment, where the small rectilinear fields adjacent Earlswood and Wood End are testament to the gradual encroachment of local agricultural practices across the once open heathlands and common land of the medieval landscape. Evidence of common land is most immediately evident within local placenames, such as 'Aspley Heath' and 'Earlswood Common'. A number of the field boundaries are also likely to derive from the common land-use; however these are not immediately distinctive within the existing rural landscape.

Industry

This section discusses the influence of non-agricultural industries within the landscape. The Tanworth-in-Arden landscape is not broadly characterised by either historical or contemporary industries, with an agricultural landscape character prevalent. Industrial features are largely small scale, and highly localised.

The Stratford-upon-Avon canal and its feeder reservoirs form expansive features. These are now of largely recreational function, but still provide a clearly tangible link to a formerly industrial land-use

which defined the northern boundary of the parish for over a century. The railway provides a similar connection to a more industrialised era. All four of the rail stations situated within the parish are of a predominantly residential-commuting function.

A small number of local trading estates are dispersed across the parish. These localised sites are mostly the result of the expansion and/or diversification of historic farmsteads (e.g. Lyndon's Farm, Cank Barn). These new buildings are mostly set-back from the roadside, situated within or adjacent the farmsteads' historic yards, and therefore are of low prominence within the landscape.

Remnants of historic industry are evident within the village of Tanworth-in-Arden. Extant historic buildings pertain to the settlement's small industries and rural economy, including a smithy, workshops, and garage. This is distinctive from many other villages within the 'Arden' landscape of northern Warwickshire and Worcestershire where larger industrial buildings pertaining to riverside manufacturing and metalworking are more prevalent.

Local hydrology has not driven the emergence of waterside industries. Again, this is in marked contrast to many settlements along the River Arrow that located within a very similar setting less than 10km to the west; alongside the more southerly stretches of the River Alne which passes through parishes including Henley-in-Arden and Wootton Wawen. While these areas feature an array of industrial features (particularly mill complexes, workshops and factories), Tanworth-in-Arden's watercourses are characteristic in their lack of industrial heritage, with an agrarian remaining prevalent. The only notable exception within the landscape is Tanworth Corn Mill, situated in the southeast of the parish.

Peri-Urban services

Orchards and allotments are not a historically characteristic component of the landscape, with land-use largely focussed on pastoral and arable production. Some small scale cultivation is evident, but solely in relation to local estates, such as the walled kitchen gardens of Umberslade Hall. Very few of the local farmsteads feature (or appear to have featured) orchards.

Habitats

The predominant habitats of the parish pertain to distinct areas of historic land-use, particularly industrial waterbodies, managed woodlands, and farmland. One of the most expansive habitats is Earlswood Lakes, the canal feeder reservoir which now has a largely recreational function. The lakes constitute a large area of open water which host an array of flora and fauna including rare avian, mammalian, invertebrate and amphibian species. The blocks of remnant deciduous ancient woodland also host important species, particularly small mammals and invertebrates, and are registered as Sites of Special Scientific Interest accordingly. The agrarian landscape provides a further range of habitats, several of which are recorded within the Priority Habitat Inventory. This includes species rich grasslands and meadows, particularly in the lowlands and alongside the watercourses. The parish's many ancient species-rich hedgerows are key to the parish's character, formed of numerous species, notably many lines of mature oaks. The hedgerows are made further distinctive through the woodland species (such as bluebells) present in and along their earthwork banks. This projects characteristics of historic woodlands out from the parish's wooded areas into



Many local habitats relate to the medieval and post-medieval agrarian land-use. Here an ancient hedgerow, densely planted with mature trees, forms a small component of a vast network of wildlife corridors.

the wider agrarian landscape; and in places into the settlements where the ancient rural boundaries have been inherited as the urban areas have expanded. Hedgerows form valuable natural nesting sites and communication routes, creating dense networks of wildlife corridors across the parish. The built environment can also provide valuable habitats, particularly historic buildings and infrastructure. For instance, many historic farmsteads now provide seasonal roosting sites for birds and bats.

Time Depth and Archaeological Monuments

An area's 'time depth' is defined by the extent to which different periods of an area's past remain evident within the modern landscape. Landscapes can be defined by features that date from many periods (thus, having a sizeable sense of 'time depth'), or can be largely characterised by the dominance of features from one period above all others (thus, a lesser sense of 'time depth').

Tanworth-in-Arden's prevailing landscape character is one of a post-medieval agrarian environment, with distinctive field patterns, nucleated settlements, parkland, architecture and woodlands (as described in detail in the respective sub-sections).

Processes of change are evident pertaining to the relatively extensive early-to-mid 20th century ribbon developments, introducing more suburban morphologies and architecture to the parish, particularly around the former dispersed hamlets of Earlswood and Wood End. The large infrastructural projects of 19th and 20th century, encompassing canal, road and railway expansion have also added to the landscape's "phasing".

This post-medieval landscape character was in itself a product of gradual, but radical process of change. Many of the medieval settlements, commons, open fields, parklands and woodlands which once defined the parish landscape have been rationalised and reformed to facilitate the extant farming regimes.

Relicts of the medieval landscape do however remain as tangible links to this ancient environment, though their relationships to one-another has been largely fragmented. Tanworth-in-Arden's church of St. Mary Magdalene is perhaps most prominent, alongside the network of lanes, which are in places medieval (or earlier) origin. The areas of ancient woodland contain elements of medieval forest; however their modern form and morphologies are largely influenced by post-medieval encroachment and replanting. The parish also features a notable density of medieval archaeological earthworks. This includes moated sites (associated to now demolished manors and houses), areas of ridge and furrow (products of historic farming practices), fishponds, and deserted medieval settlements (including house platforms and holloways). Several placenames also allude to medieval land-use (e.g. 'Aspley Heath' and 'Earlwood Common').

Prehistoric activity is evident in the form of a number of burnt mounds, and a possible (though contested) site of a round barrow. These are not prominent features, and do not make a sizeable contribution to landscape character beyond their immediate environs.

In summary, the parish has a broad sense of 'time depth': formed of a prevailing post-medieval agrarian landscape character, supplemented by an assortment of medieval features, and large-scale residential and transport-infrastructure developments of the 19th and 20th century.

Views

Local views are widely 'filtered' in nature, created through a combination of the landscape's topography, wooded nature, and partially sunken lanes, which intermittently restricts and reveals vistas across the landscape. This generates a distinctive sense of intimacy, with views commonly limited in extent – generally from as little as a few-hundred metres, up to a few kilometres in distance.

This sense of intimacy enhances the prominence of the parish's distinctive vernacular characteristics within views, turning the more commonplace features into key visual elements. Examples include: local historic farmsteads sited prominently atop undulating horizons; networks of tree-lined hedgerows creating the dense patchwork of rural fields; and subtle earthworks of historic cultivation practices alluding to a more ancient landscape. The contribution of these individual features to local views is discussed in more detail within their constituent sections of this landscape character statement.



The Church of St. Mary Magdalene sits prominently above its surrounding landscape, rising up above the village of Tanworth-in-Arden which itself rests in an elevated location.

The general truncation of views to the short-to-medium scale also creates a heightened sense of delineation between different areas of the parish. Views of landmark or gateway features are often limited until one is immediately upon them, regularly creating a relatively immediate sense of transition from one area to the next. This acts to enhance the tangibility of local variations in landscape character, such as changes in vegetation or built forms. A prime example is the experience of passing from Tanworth-in-Arden to Wood End, along Vicarage Hill towards Broad Lane. Here, the rolling topography, wooded boundaries and sunken lanes restrict views beyond the post-medieval rural landscape which defines the area around Tanworth-in-Arden village; thus, the highly distinctive 20th century characteristics of Wood End only become apparent as one comes into close proximity of the junction road junction.

Views within particular areas of the parish are also important. This encompasses views across Earlswood Lakes; views within the remnant ancient woodlands; views within settlements (such as that across The Green in Tanworth-in-Arden); and views across historic landscaped parkland. Again, these views add to a distinctive sense of intimacy, as they are regularly restricted to the area in question, framed and truncated by topography, vegetation and the built environment. This creates a clear sense of 'enclosure' within these areas of the parish, again elevating the prominence of more subtle vernacular features, which would otherwise be overlooked within more expansive views.

While near-and-medium distance views are most prevalent, there are many open long-distance views and panoramic vistas making an important contribution to the experience of the landscape. These are often engaged with along the rural lanes and footpaths, revealed as one crests the ridges

and hillocks of the undulating landscape. They are frequently experienced with brevity as they are rapidly revealed, engaged with, and then lost. This adds to their impact.

Views of historic village of Tanworth-in-Arden (or lack thereof) form a key part of the village's setting. The topography of the surrounding landscape, dropping away from the prominent position on which the settlement is situated, elevates the village visually within its environment. Approaches to the village along narrow rural lanes and tracks are regularly framed by views towards this raised land. The dense vegetation around the settlement does however limit visual engagement with the built heritage of the village from afar, providing only glimpsed views of the settlement, and never an impression of its whole. The church spire, however, rises high above the dense vegetation and building-lines to clearly delineate the village within its landscape; thus acting as the parish's primary landmark.

Non-visual factors

The landscape's aural characteristics are of marked contrast. While a strong sense of tranquillity prevails through much of the landscape, this is periodically punctuated by the rousing sounds of activity. The parish's agrarian land-use enriches the landscape with the serenity of birdsong, the calls of farm animals, and rustling vegetation and flowing watercourses; yet this is intermittently accompanied by the roar of agricultural vehicles and machinery. A similar pattern has emerged since the construction of the railway, with the scheduled passage of trains through the landscape bringing elevated noise and sense of activity. The development of the motorways has however broken this mould. Unlike the railway, there is a relatively constant noise associated to road-use, discernible to varying degrees dependent on proximity to their route, the time of day, and the climactic conditions.

KEY SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The landscape character assessment for Tanworth-in-Arden has collated information from an array of sources, to inform and supplement the characterisation survey of the landscape.

The resultant landscape character statement is not designed to supersede these sources, many of which will contain more detailed information on the forms and distributions of individual characteristics discussed within. Rather, they have been collated and synthesised to create a detailed representation of the parish's distinct and valued landscape. The following lists provides an overview of the **primary** sources used to create this character statement.

Local knowledge contributed significantly, and the value of this resource should be appreciated when using the statement to inform future development and management within the parish.

- Warwickshire Landscape Character Assessment (*Warwickshire County Council*)
- Warwickshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (*Warwickshire County Council*)
- *Natural England* National Character Area Profiles: 97 Arden (NE 337) (*Natural England*)
- National Heritage List for England (*Historic England*)
- Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (*Warwickshire County Council*)
- Provisional Agricultural Land Classification mapping (*Natural England*)
- Lexicon of Named Rock Units (*British Geological Society*)
- Landscape Typology mapping (*Countryside Agency*)
- Priority Habitat Inventory (*Natural England*)
- Register of Common Lands and Village Greens (*Warwickshire County Council*)
- Atlas of Rural Settlements in England (*Historic England*)
- LandIS 'Soilscapes' (*Cranfield Soil and Agrifood Institute; DEFRA*)
- National Forest Inventory (*Forestry Commission*)
- Ancient Woodland Inventory (*Natural England*)
- Register of land-based statutory and non-statutory natural environment designations (*Natural England via MAGIC*)
- Historic and modern mapping (*Ordnance Survey*)