

Malvern Hills AONB Partnership
Three Counties Showground, Malvern

Preliminary Landscape Assessment and Recommendations

November 2011

INTRODUCTION

Carly Tinkler CMLI was appointed by the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership to carry out a preliminary landscape assessment of the Three Counties Showground in Malvern, Worcestershire, most of which lies within the Malvern Hills AONB. The scope of the commission was to:

“Produce a list of recommended actions/works (spatially referenced) which would help to conserve and enhance the landscape of the site, including its boundaries, and which would serve to mitigate the visual impacts of the site in respect of views from and towards the Malvern Hills. All such recommendations should reflect the elements that comprise the 'Enclosed Commons' Landscape Character Type (within which The Showground sits) and should be in accordance with the contents of the Worcestershire County Council Landscape Character Assessment and the recently completed AONB Landscape Strategy. Recommendations should also aim to benefit local wildlife wherever possible, for example, in relation to the connectivity of landscape elements within and adjacent to the site. Crucially, recommendations should also take into account the needs of the showground management, for example, in relation to space management.”

The requested output was a list of possible enhancements, illustrated with reference to a plan of the site.

APPROACH

Preliminary meetings with the AONB Partnership, Malvern Hills District Council and the Three Counties Agricultural Society (TCAS) managers were held in order to determine the various objectives, opportunities and constraints of both the commission and the site itself. Baseline and background information was collected and reviewed and the site and surrounds were visited during October and November 2011 in order to gain an understanding of the following:

- History and cultural associations of the site and surrounding area
- Site's context in terms of regional and local landscape character
- Planning issues and designations
- Views and visual effects
- The AONB's responsibilities and objectives
- Local biodiversity and nature conservation interest
- TCAS requirements especially site operations and management
- Public access
- Land use and landcover including vegetation
- Local topography and hydrology.



Mid-nineteenth century print of view over Severn Plain from Hills (left) compared to similar view today (right)

FINDINGS

Landscape character within the main site and on its boundaries has been degraded over time. The effects of this are less evident when seen from viewpoints in and around the site, but in terms of views both from the Malvern Hills AONB and across the site to the Hills, visual clutter and erosion of the traditional landscape framework gives rise to adverse impacts. The importance of the site's contribution to the high quality landscape of the area is recognised and reflected in planning policies and the AONB Partnership's own guidance, not only in terms of the public's enjoyment but also what it brings to the local economy.

The TCAS recognises the need to compete on a national basis with other showgrounds and that expectations not only of the events themselves but of the environment in which they are held is high. Improving the quality of the site's landscape and biodiversity is likely to bring wide-reaching benefits at all levels.

There appears to be a conflict between the way in which the site operates, especially during large-scale events, and implementing the ideal of a meaningful, well-planned landscape structure that integrates the site with its surroundings. The main issues identified from this visit are:

- Loss of traditional landscape structure through disappearance and erosion of hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Visual impact especially of overflow car parks exacerbated by loss of internal boundary vegetation
- Poor quality hard landscape elements (gates, fences, hard surfaces) which give a poor impression of the showground
- Key access points and associated viewpoints ill-defined and cluttered with uncoordinated signage
- Tree planting strategy appears to include a wide range of species including non-natives which are visually jarring and do not benefit wildlife
- Scattered 'islands' of buildings, show gardens and trees disturb the geometric pattern of the traditional field boundaries
- Some buildings with white roofs which are highly visible from the Hills
- Conflict between site operation and location of built and landscape elements compromise meaningful landscape structure
- Maintenance and storage requirements giving rise to visual clutter
- Lack of long-term management strategy leading to erosion of important landscape elements and subsequent loss of biodiversity
- Lack of physical, natural and human connectivity to the wider area
- Lack of funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are divided into two sections: firstly, general observations that apply to the whole of the land within the TCAS's ownership (strategic) and secondly, location-specific suggestions.

The scope of this assignment is limited and should therefore be seen as a starting point for establishing an overall strategy for implementing the next steps. The TCAS Vision document has already gone a long way towards defining the wider constraints and opportunities and sets out ways of achieving the key objectives. What this report offers is a series of further suggestions for discussion; these will need to be balanced with the other factors which come into play, such as funding, the practical issues of site operation, maintenance and management, and factors such as planning policy, the requirements imposed by statutory designations and the interests of other bodies and organisations.

1. PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS

| REF | EXISTING | OBSERVATION | RECOMMENDATION |
|-----|---|---|---|
| A1 | Hard landscape elements especially gates at main entrances, fences and surfacing. | Many hard landscape elements are old and of poor quality, giving poor impression of showground's offer. Improving / replacing these, especially gates at main entrances and old concrete post and netting fences, would contribute to strong future image and appeal of showground. | Carry out condition survey of all hard landscape elements and features. Develop recommendations for materials and colours. 'Quick fix' could be to stain timber fences black. |
| | Main entrances generally (vehicular and pedestrian). | Existing treatment of entrances does not give good impression of showground: opportunity to create bold, attractive statements and features that are in keeping with local landscape character and spirit of TCAS. | Rationalise these areas as part of overall Strategy. |
| | Signs | Many different types of signage throughout site, at entrances and on roadsides contribute to visual 'clutter'. | Opportunity to rationalise all signs and also create strong 'statement' especially at Blackmore Park / Hanley Road junction. |
| | Buildings | Built form tends to respect geometric character of landscape but would benefit from rationalisation with reference to views from Hills. Wide variety of building materials reflects site's evolving development. Generally walls are not highly visible from Hills (unlike roofs); greens and brown/greys of maintenance sheds and halls is good camouflage, pale brick and creams less so. | Future built form and location is beyond the scope of this assessment, but could ensure that a materials and colour palette is developed to inform future proposals. |
| | Roofscape | Some roofs (especially white on stables) are highly visible from Hills and give rise to adverse visual impact. | Develop palette of colours for roofscape. Is a colour change of existing roofs feasible? Consider green roofs in future. |

| REF | EXISTING | OBSERVATION | RECOMMENDATION |
|-----------|--|---|--|
| | Show gardens. | Question mark over location of individual show and other gardens. These contribute to visual clutter especially in terms of views from Hills. | Is there potential to rationalise show gardens, reconsider location and design / tree species in and around gardens? Link to other structural elements for visual cohesion of site in long-distance views. |
| | Overhead wires and poles for PA system throughout showground | Creates visual clutter on site and prohibits tree planting. | Investigate feasibility of relocating cables underground but ensure this is in conjunction with overall strategy for future location of trees and hedgerows. |
| B1 | Internal and external boundaries. | Historic boundary lines have been eroded and / or lost: in some cases hedge lines are now marked by post and wire fences. This gives rise to significant loss of quality of landscape character especially in terms of views from Hills. Landscape patterns need to be restored and maintained. Opportunity to develop innovative ideas for productive cropping hedgerow fruits and berries / 'living walls' as well as improving biodiversity. | Rationalise these features as part of overall Strategy and restore boundary hedgerows wherever possible (see also site-specific recommendations in Table B below). |
| | Sporadic / unplanned tree planting and lack of cohesive tree / vegetation structure throughout site. | Main issue is in terms of views from Hills, where lack of planned structure creates visual clutter which is out of keeping with the wider landscape character. Existing boundaries tend to follow east-west patterns whereas traditional boundaries have a strong north-south orientation. Opportunity to create robust landscape framework respecting the traditional grain of historic boundaries and natural landscape character. | Carry out arboricultural survey of existing trees in accordance with BS 5837:2005 – 'Trees in Relation to Construction' and produce list of recommendations for existing trees. Carry out surveys of existing features and habitats to inform Masterplan for site. |

| REF | EXISTING | OBSERVATION | RECOMMENDATION |
|-----------|--|--|--|
| | Wide variety of tree species, both native and ornamental, planted throughout site. Some inappropriate species such as leylandii. | A cohesive policy for trees is not apparent. Planting of certain species results in visual clutter especially in terms of views from Hills. Ornamental trees provide fewer opportunities for wildlife. | Produce lists of species suitable for specific locations and situations throughout the site (e.g. 'boundaries', 'avenues', 'screening', 'shade' etc.). Ensure species are most appropriate for maximum nature conservation interest. |
| | Orchards, fruit and other cropping tree collections. | Opportunity to develop tree collections of interest to agriculture / farming: could become 'Centre of Excellence' giving advice on crop trees in terms of climate change, economic benefits, permaculture, vertical farming / agro-forestry, management etc. | Establish / maintain links with relevant organisations, develop ideas and incorporate into Strategy / Management Plan. |
| | Unprotected tree bases and canopies sustain damage from vehicles, mowers etc. | Long term health of trees is compromised resulting in erosion of landscape patterns and reduction in biodiversity. | Protect both new and existing trees from damage. Inspect trees and monitor. |
| CI | Views | Conflict between close-up views and views from Hills – what works on site especially in terms of site operation does not always translate into cohesive and appropriate patterns in wider landscape. | Ensure that landscape character and views from Hills are improved without compromising operations on site. |
| | Key Viewpoints and Gateways | A key viewpoint is at the Blackmore Park / Hanley Road junction where there is currently significant visual clutter. | Draw up detailed designs for this area. Consider high-quality signage, artist-designed main sign etc. |
| | Public access / public rights of way | Well-used public footpath on northern boundary of main site and permissive access to Langdale Wood. | Ensure public continue to enjoy access in well-managed way. Consider future links to development at Blackmore Park: potential for 'Green Bridge' over Blackmore Park Road? |

| REF | EXISTING | OBSERVATION | RECOMMENDATION |
|-----|---|--|--|
| | Car parking (including North and South Car Parks) | Generally not significantly visually intrusive from low-level viewpoints but highly visible from Hills. Difficult to screen but options such as internal hedgerow boundaries and allowing trees to escape and grow on could be effective. | Follow site-specific recommendations for hedgerow planting / restoration and tree planting. |
| | Langdale Wood | c. 27ha of woodland with permissive public access. Northern section currently used as campsite during events: sterile environment of limited nature conservation interest (no natural regeneration, understorey or edge) but popular with walkers. Smaller, southern area less disturbed, greater diversity and species richness. Important visual element in wider landscape. | Opportunity to use woodland as a resource to showcase innovative and contemporary woodland farming / agro-forestry methods without compromising public access / camping use / visual interest / biodiversity. The wood would benefit from having its own dedicated strategy. |
| | The Paddocks | Series of fields (pasture) retaining traditional boundary patterns, with native hedgerows (some gappy) and some mature / semi-mature escaped trees. Public right of way traverses. | Assess opportunities to improve biodiversity and develop robust links / wildlife corridors to surrounding area especially Langdale Wood and its eastward extension through Blackmore Park. Restore / reinforce hedgerows. , |
| | Biodiversity | Main site already provides some (limited) opportunities for local wildlife. Good habitats such as native hedgerows, woodland, mature oak and ash, ditches and a pond. Langdale Wood and The Paddocks complement these but links between them should be reinforced (see above). Several protected and notable species recorded within 1km of the site (although no veteran trees identified to date. The site is a biodiversity priority in Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership's 'Biodiversity Delivery Area | Maximise biodiversity and nature conservation interest. Ensure proposals are in keeping with Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership's 'Biodiversity Delivery Area Statement' (June 2011). |

| | | Statement' (June 2011). The landscape between Worcester and Malvern provides important opportunities for linking habitat restoration and creation to the socio-economic agenda, particularly through the development and delivery of the county Green Infrastructure framework. Within the Malvern Chase with Laugharne Valley Biodiversity Delivery Area the main biodiversity enhancement opportunities that are most likely to occur and which should be considered when developing projects are: i) Increasing permanent pasture and restoring lowland meadow and acid grassland, ii) Restoring and improving integrity of the hedgerow network, iii) Restoring and linking ancient woodlands and veteran trees and iv) Restoring and creating traditional orchard. | |
|-----|---|---|--|
| REF | EXISTING | OBSERVATION | RECOMMENDATION |
| D1 | Existing storage and maintenance areas. | Existing storage and maintenance areas give rise to visual clutter from viewpoints on site, along main roads and from Hills. | Rationalise these areas as part of Strategy. |
| | Maintenance and management. | Current conflict between operational / maintenance requirements and budgets, and visual impacts arising from clutter / lack of maintenance and long-term management. | Consider within a long-term management plan. |

| REF | EXISTING | OBSERVATION | RECOMMENDATION |
|-----|------------------------------|---|---|
| E1 | Wider physical connectivity. | Two important and well-used public rights of way (one north of main showground connecting to disused railway line with link to Hills, another across The Paddocks) as well as permissive access through Langdale Wood. Difficulty crossing Blackmore Park Road due to fast-moving traffic. | Maintain existing access routes. Consider promotion of strategic physical organisational links to Hills and surrounding landscape alongside local partners (e.g. MHDC, AONB Partnership). |
| | Wider natural connectivity. | Loss of hedgerows and mature trees results in lack of connection between habitats through wildlife corridors and subsequent loss of biodiversity. Potential for wildlife in and along ditches, watercourses, ponds etc. | Develop and maintain links with national / local organisations to ensure that site's potential is maximised and its place within the broader environment is maximised to benefit wildlife and reach targets for biodiversity. |
| | Wider human connectivity. | Potential for exchange of ideas and common objectives with external bodies and organisations: advice, training, education, visitor centres, centres of excellence. Opportunity to develop connections between showground and Blackmore Park proposals, sharing energy, space, costs, man-power. | Consider promotion of strategic links between TCAS and other local partners, developers etc. |
| | Funding. | Lack of funds is major constraint to implementation of recommendations. | Research sources of funding, grants etc. Consider on-site training and educational programmes whereby necessary work is carried out by people who pay to be trained whilst they are doing it. Set up initiatives e.g. 'Sponsor a Tree'. |

2. PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS (LOCATION SPECIFIC)

The following location-specific recommendations are preliminary suggestions for short, medium and long-term landscape and environmental works based on a rapid assessment of the existing situation on the ground. These should be revised following more in-depth and detailed surveys, studies and strategies as set out above. The numbering should be read with reference to plan attached at the end of this report.

| REF | EXISTING SITUATION | OBSERVATION | RECOMMENDATION |
|--|---|---|---|
| F. MAIN SHOWGROUND SITE: BOUNDARIES | | | |
| F1 | Brown Gate: Existing mature trees, some ornamental varieties marking entrance area. | Ornamental tree species inappropriate in rural landscape context in terms of biodiversity and visual impact from Hills (colour and form). | Replace with new native spp. |
| F2 | Brown Gate: Fencing OK but gate is old and unsightly. | Old fences, gates and other hard landscape elements detract from visual quality of showground (near-distance views). | Replace old gate with new. |
| F3 | Site boundary between Brown and Blue Gates: Road on embankment above level of site. Original hedge now grown out as line of thin, closely spaced trees – predominantly young / semi-mature ash, some leylandii. | Site boundaries are essential elements contributing to local landscape character and need long-term management in order to maintain integral structure. | Thin ash, remove leylandii, restore hedgerow, plant new oak to maintain character of Hanley Road. |
| F4 | Blue Gate and South Gate: Clipped hedge and on-site tree group marking main pedestrian entrance to site. Concrete post and wire netting fence. | Hedges and tree groups contribute to local landscape character so long as they are in keeping with landscape type and form coherent elements linked to other landscape features. Fence visually unattractive. | Thin out trees as they mature to allow them to grow into healthy, well-formed specimens. Replace old fence with new. |
| F5 | South Gate off Hanley Road: main pedestrian entrance. Group of mature and semi-mature trees, variety of species. | Tree group suitably located on edge of site but not ideal species. Area at entrance point could be improved to create quality statement and good first impressions of showground. | Rationalise and redesign landscape here; plant new large native trees especially oak. |

| | | | |
|------------|---|---|---|
| F6 | Clipped hedge along Hanley Road boundary. | Hedge allows views into showground from road but lacks the hedgerow trees which characterise upper parts of road. | Plant new oak in hedge to maintain strong tree-lined character of Hanley Road. |
| F7 | Fencing along Hanley Road boundary near junction. | Hedgerow peters out – site boundary marked by old metal fence, visually unappealing. | Plant new hedge – can maintain at same height as fence to allow views in. Replace fence. Consider as part of proposals for main junction (below). |
| F8 | Hanley Road / Blackmore Park Road junction: plethora of fences, signs, traffic lights etc.; lack of hedge / planting, poor quality fencing. | Key viewpoint from roads, both across showground and towards Hills. Signs, fences, traffic management etc. give rise to considerable visual clutter and poor impression of both showground and local landscape character. | Junction area needs to be rationalised. Opportunity for high-quality design of adverts, signs, landscape for showground, but should be designed in context of Hills beyond. |
| F9 | Clipped hedge along Blackmore Park Road boundary. | Hedge in good condition. Allows views from road over showground. | Manage hedge. |
| F10 | Red Gate. | Poor quality fencing detracts from visual quality of showground (near-distance views). | Access point could be improved with new fencing and strategic tree planting. |
| F11 | White Gate, Firs Farm / NSA: metal gates with parking area in front of buildings, maintenance areas to south and west. | Old brick buildings visible from road contribute well to local landscape character but trees along roadside boundary, metal gates and parking area visually untidy. | Rationalise this area with management of trees and new planting along boundary, improve parking area / surfacing, replace gates with new. |

| | | | |
|------------|---|---|---|
| F12 | Good clipped hedge with fine mature oak along Blackmore Park Road boundary between White and Yellow Gates. Some dense tree planting near White Gate. Old concrete post and wire netting security fence visible from road. | Mature oak trees and hedge make an important contribution to local landscape character. Poor quality fence detracts from views over showground and towards Hills. | Mature trees require management (esp. health and safety) and some thinning. Plant new oak in hedge (or allow to escape) for long-term replacement of existing trees. Replace old fence with new. |
| F13 | Yellow Gate: main entrance – plain signs, grass mound. Public parking area near public right of way and permissive access (on east side of road) to Langdale Wood. | Mature oak either side of entrance fit well with landscape character of road. Parking area is rustic but unobtrusive. | Entrance point could be improved with better signage and bold tree planting – requires detailed design considerations. |
| F14 | Northern boundary of main site. Good, mature oak and ash, gappy unmanaged hedgerow beneath with ditch and timber post and rail fence. | Important, strong boundary visible from Hills. Fence in acceptable condition but would be less visually intrusive if stained black. | Restore / reinforce hedgerow; ensure long-term management of trees and boundary including ditch. Stain fence black. |
| F15 | Continuation of main site’s northern boundary but with young to semi-mature leylandii and some birch amongst oak. | Leylandii form dense visual screen to views from north but undesirable specie competing with natives. | Remove leylandii and birch and replace with oak / ash and native hedgerow (plant evergreen native such as holly if screen required). |
| F16 | Continuation of main site’s northern boundary with young leylandii and self-seeded poplar to western end. | Poplar out of keeping with local landscape character. | Remove poplar and leylandii, replace with oak / ash and native hedgerow species (plant evergreen native such as holly if screen required). |
| F17 | Western boundary of main site separating parking area from pasture on lower slopes of Hills. Old concrete post and wire netting fence (no hedge), ash and poplar trees off site. | Views of boundary line from Hills screened by mature trees but poor-quality near-distance views of fence: lack of hedgerow causes ‘weak’ on-site structure. | Replace old fence with new; plant new native hedgerow. |

| | | | |
|------------|---|---|---|
| F18 | Spinney on western boundary (some mature oak, willow, young cherry). | Bold blocks of trees work well in local landscape context and help screen views from Hills. | Manage spinney ensuring native trees regenerate (or plant new). |
| F19 | Continuation of western boundary to Brown Gate. Partly unmanaged hedge with old post and wire fence separating site parking from pasture near gate. | Lack of hedge creates visual gap in field boundary pattern. | Replace old fence with new; existing hedge to be restored, plant new native hedgerow along open fence line. |

| REF | EXISTING SITUATION | OBSERVATION | RECOMMENDATION |
|--|---|---|--|
| G. MAIN SHOWGROUND SITE: INTERNAL AREAS | | | |
| G1 | Perry pear orchard with concrete post and wire fence on site-side. | Valuable resource but anecdotal evidence suggests that the recently planted orchard trees are not thriving. Orchard does not create good quality visual 'statement' at main junction. Fence is visually unattractive. | Investigate causes of problems and conceive strategy to ensure future success of orchard if feasible. Replace old fence with new. |
| G2 | "Resource Centre": area within site for storage, maintenance etc. Fencing and trees including maturing leylandii. | Fairly well-screened from road but considerable paraphernalia and clutter on site. Leyland cypress is inappropriate specie. | Rationalise trees and hedgelines in this area (internally). Remove leylandii and replace with native screen. |
| G3 | Fishing lake – overgrown in parts. | Opportunity for visually attractive water feature as well as nature conservation interest but lack of maintenance makes area shabby. | Regular maintenance and long-term management plans. |
| G4 | Area behind White Gate and Firs Farm / NSA (sheds, storage etc), fencing, trees including leylandii. | Untidy area; tree species are inappropriate. Green colour of sheds provides camouflage from Hills. | Rationalise trees and hedgelines in this area. Remove leylandii and replace with native screen. |

| | | | |
|------------|---|---|--|
| G5 | Old concrete post and netting security fences with variety of semi-mature trees (including leylandii and Lombardy poplar) on fence line. | Also part of site storage and maintenance areas: clutter of buildings and some inappropriate tree species, small adverse visual impact from Hills against backdrop of Langdale Wood. | Rationalise trees and hedgelines in this area. Remove leylandii and poplar, replace with native screen. Ensure area remains visually tidy - building materials / roofscape colours to be integrated with surrounding vegetation. |
| G6 | Good existing hedge along internal boundary leading to fence (no hedge). | Important boundary line - lack of hedge creates visual gap in field boundary pattern. | Continue existing hedgerow by planting new. |
| G7 | Principal avenue through site from Yellow Gate – recently planted lime. | Strong formal feature, visually reinforcing northern main site boundary. | Long-term management. |
| G8 | Internal Avenue D – currently not marked by planting apart from occasional lone tree. Old concrete post and netting fences. | Opportunity to create strong north-south vegetated line in keeping with the traditional grain of historic Enclosure boundaries. | Plant avenue of appropriate tree species along both sides of Avenue D if not in conflict with site operation, or plant linear groups at strategic locations. Replace fence with new. |
| G9 | Main internal arrival point / gate with hard surfaced parking area. Some good remnant hedge and mature trees (many different species) in parts, otherwise mix of open space and occasional trees. | Visual clutter with inappropriate choice of trees. | Rationalise and tidy entrance area – new fencing, restore hedge lines, replant trees with more appropriate species. |
| G10 | Tree ‘island’ in open space. | Small groups of trees (especially ornamental spp.) appear as visual clutter not in keeping with landscape character when seen from Hills, and no rationale behind location of such groups on site, although does add ‘character’ to arenas. | Consider location of and species in small tree groups as part of overall Tree and Hedgerow Strategy. |

| | | | |
|------------|---|---|--|
| G11 | East-west avenue, partially lined with semi-mature horse chestnut trees in east section, and horse chestnut interspersed with hawthorn trees in west section. | Potentially visually strong linear feature to contribute to traditional landscape pattern. | Plant avenue of appropriate tree species along both sides of avenue if not in conflict with site operation, or plant linear groups at strategic locations. Remove hawthorn. |
| G12 | Tree 'island' in open space. | Small groups of trees (especially ornamental spp.) appear as visual clutter not in keeping with landscape character when seen from Hills, and no rationale behind location of such groups on site, although does add 'character' to arenas. | Reconsider location of small tree groups and range of species as part of overall Tree and Hedgerow Strategy. |
| G13 | "Learning" Garden in central location surrounded by variety of trees; cherry avenue planted in grass leading to garden entrance. Some damage to base of cherries. | Individual show and other gardens are inappropriate features contributing to visual clutter especially in views from Hills. Cherry avenue inappropriate in this area. | Rationalise show gardens, reconsider location and design / tree species in and around gardens as part of overall Landscape Strategy: link to other structural elements for visual cohesion of site in long-distance views. |
| G14 | Island of vegetation around building block in central location. | Small groups of trees (especially ornamental spp.) appear as visual clutter not in keeping with landscape character when seen from Hills, and no rationale behind location of such groups on site. Trees screen building from some viewpoints but not from Hills. | Reconsider location of and species in small tree groups as part of overall Tree and Hedgerow Strategy. |
| G15 | Avenue F: main north-south avenue through centre of site from Blue Gate to gated site access. Ad hoc sporadic tree planting. | Potentially visually strong linear feature to contribute to traditional landscape pattern. | Plant avenue of appropriate tree species along both sides of avenue if not in conflict with site operation, or plant linear groups at strategic locations. |

| | | | |
|------------|---|---|--|
| G16 | Showground offices and parking: hedges and some ornamental trees. | Visually cluttered but long-distance views from Hills mainly screened by buildings. | Rationalise and redesign landscape elements here to tie in to proposals for Avenue F. |
| G17 | Good semi-mature lime avenue in south-eastern sector of site near Halls. Some trees damaged at base. | Avenue offers only minor contribution to character of long-distance views but important feature on site. | Manage trees – consider ways of protecting bases from damage esp. mowers. Monitor health. |
| G18 | Small spinney near Brown Gate: mixed ages and species of trees – some ornamentals including Robinia. Fence line lacks planted edge / hedge. | Helps to screen part of Halls from Hills and fits in with local landscape character. | Manage and thin if necessary; remove ornamentals and replace with natives. Plant native hedge along fence line. |
| G19 | Continuation of G18 – fence line along road between two spinneys. Concrete post and netting fence, sporadic trees (native and non-native), remnant of old hedge eroded. | Important north-south boundary line which would benefit from reinforcement to restore landscape pattern. | Plant new native hedge and trees along fence line. |
| G20 | Open, grassed area south of main arena with ‘islands’ of permanent show gardens planted with ornamental trees plus various built elements. | Individual show gardens are inappropriate features contributing to visual clutter especially in views from Hills. | Rationalise show gardens, reconsider location and design / tree species in and around gardens as part of overall Landscape Strategy: link to other structural elements for visual cohesion of site in long-distance views. |
| G21 | Existing gappy hedgerow (east west line). | Integral part of site’s landscape pattern. | Restore hedgerow with native species and manage. |

| | | | |
|------------|--|---|---|
| G22 | Horse Ring and surrounding area north of coach park. Timber post and rail fences, some good, mature oak along east west boundary line connecting two good, well-maintained spinneys. | Tree clumps form strong landscape feature especially when viewed from Hills. Boundary lines are an integral part of the site's landscape pattern. | Plant new native hedge along east west line. Continue to manage spinneys and plant new native species (esp. oak) to grow on. |
| G23 | Stables area. Some isolated semi-mature trees mostly non-natives. | White roofs of stables visually intrusive from Hills. Individual trees contribute little to on-site tree structure and do not screen. | Reconsider tree locations and species as part of long-term Strategy: plant in bold groups and link with other tree planting if possible. Camouflage roofscape through dark brown / black treatment. |
| G24 | Apple tree avenue. | Some value as part of on-site tree structure but question suitability of apple as avenue tree. | Manage and monitor trees. |
| G25 | Area with isolated trees leading to Stone Garden near Main Arena and Severn Hall. Stone Garden is poor quality design in one of site's most important areas. | Isolated trees, especially ornamental species, are visually inappropriate and detract from quality of landscape character and views from Hills. Question mark over Stone Garden here, could be considerably improved. | Reconsider tree locations and species as part of long-term Strategy: plant in bold groups and link with other tree planting if possible. Relocate or redesign Stone Garden. |
| G26 | Scattered, isolated semi-mature ornamental trees (birch, purple plum, rowan) between east elevation of Severn Hall and Main Arena. | Different colours, heights and forms of trees plus their random location and lack of cohesion are visually unattractive both when seen from Hills and close to. | Reconsider tree locations and species as part of long-term Tree and Hedgerow Strategy: plant in bold groups and / or avenues. |

| REF | EXISTING SITUATION | OBSERVATION | RECOMMENDATION |
|--|--|---|---|
| H. NORTH CAR PARK, PLANTATION AND ORCHARD | | | |
| H1 | Continuation of clipped hedge with fine mature oak along Blackmore Park Road boundary. Hedge is gappy in this section. | Mature oak trees and hedge make an important contribution to local landscape character. | Gap up hedge and manage – allow more native trees esp. oak to escape. |
| H2 | Gappy but reasonable native hedgerow along northern boundary of North Car Park. | Important boundary line which contributes to traditional landscape pattern. | Manage. |
| H3 | Old boundary line but majority of vegetation gone apart from truncated section of hedge. | Important boundary line which contributes to traditional landscape pattern. | Reinstate native hedgerow along original line. |
| H4 | Continuation of H2 but no hedge, only post and wire fence. Line of semi-mature cherries planted c. 5m south of fence. | Important boundary line which contributes to traditional landscape pattern. | Reinstate native hedgerow along original line. |
| H5 | Old boundary line but majority of vegetation gone. | Important boundary line which contributes to traditional landscape pattern. | Reinstate native hedgerow along original line. |
| H6 | Good, robust, recently planted native hedge on site's northern boundary. | Important boundary line which contributes to traditional landscape pattern. | Manage. |
| H7 | New plantation of native trees and shrubs. | When mature will contribute to character of strong tree line along disused railway. | Manage. |
| H8 | Gappy hedge between new plantation and existing orchard. | Important boundary line which contributes to traditional landscape pattern. | Gap up hedge and manage – allow more native trees esp. oak to escape. |
| H9 | Old, well-managed orchard: remaining trees (approximately 50 no.) appear to be in good condition. | Important feature both in terms of landscape character and biodiversity. | Manage and plant new traditional varieties of fruit trees for future. |

| | | | |
|------------|--|--|---|
| H10 | Off-site wooded embankment along line of disused railway: part of site's western boundary. Several large, mature poplar. | Part of strong tree line making important contribution to wider landscape character but poplar not most appropriate trees. | No action as off-site but manage /remove poplar seedlings and suckers which encroach onto the site. |
|------------|--|--|---|

| REF | EXISTING SITUATION | OBSERVATION | RECOMMENDATION |
|--------------------------|--|---|---|
| I. SOUTH CAR PARK | | | |
| I1 | South Car Park boundary, defined by wooded line of disused railway bisecting fields. | Mature vegetation along disused railway forms strong, well-defined line in landscape; good boundary and screen to overflow parking site. Some mature trees and open 'parkland' feel at western end. | If in TCAS ownership, ensure long-term management of trees. |
| I2 | South Car Park eastern boundary along Blackmore Park Road: good trimmed hedge with some escaped trees growing on. Poor quality fence and gate at access point. | Hedge makes an important contribution to local landscape character. Poor quality fencing creates poor impression of area. | Manage hedge, allow more trees esp. oak to escape. Replace fence and gate. |
| I3 | Boundary hedge along Hanley Road (east of Blue Gate): few escaped trees but hedge in reasonable condition. | Hedge makes an important contribution to local landscape character. Continuation of mature tree line further west would help reinforce strong tree-lined character of Hanley Road. | Manage hedge, allow more trees esp. oak to escape or better still, plant new. |
| I4 | Boundary hedge along Hanley Road (from Brown Gate to Blue Gate): well-managed hedgerow with good cover of mature oak and ash on both sides of road. | Hedge and mature trees make an important contribution to local landscape character. | Manage and ensure replacement of roadside trees in long term. |

| | | | |
|-----------|--|---|--|
| I5 | Gappy hedge separating car park fields. | Important boundary line which contributes to traditional landscape pattern. | Reinforce and manage hedge, allow more trees esp. oak to escape. |
| I6 | Post and wire fence separating car park fields. | Important boundary line which contributes to traditional landscape pattern. | Restore native hedge. |
| I7 | Trimmed, gappy hedge separating car park fields. | Important boundary line which contributes to traditional landscape pattern. | Plant up gaps and allow trees (oak, ash) to escape. |

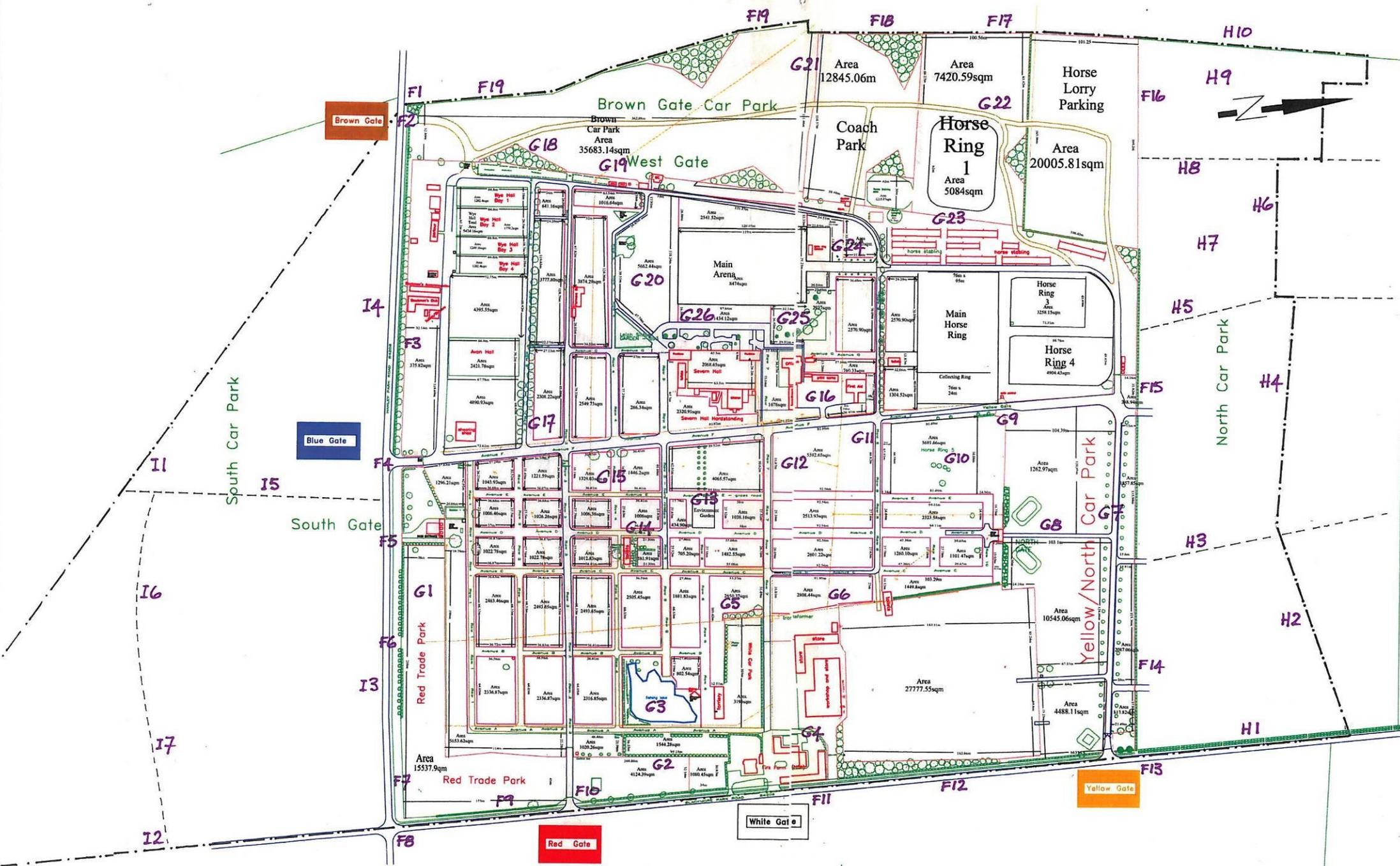
The key documents, publications and other resources referred during this assessment include:

- Malvern Hills AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (July 2011)
- Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan (2009 – 2014)
- WCC Landscape Character Assessment website
- WCC Land Management and Planning and Development Advice for Landscape Types
- Worcestershire Habitat Inventory
- BAP Priority Habitat Records
- Worcestershire Biological Records Centre
- The Three Counties Showground: A Twenty Year Vision (June 2009)
- SW Development Plan Consultation Draft (September 2011)
- MAGIC website
- Various books on local cultural and natural history.

[Firs Farm on Blackmore Park Road] “is one of the best places to see the whole history of the town in one wide sweep. A little to the right is the old track of Wood Street along Balden Ridge, and at one’s back is the deer leap from Blackmore Park into Malvern Chase, which hereabouts was dense with thick trees of great timber. Ahead, across the large fields of the eighteenth century Hanley Castle inclosure award, the horizon is bounded by the line of the granite hills. Immediately in front is Pinnacle Hill, capped by two tiny pimples which are the Bronze Age burial mounds, while over to the south are the Iron Age ditches on the Herefordshire Beacon. A darker hollow on the slopes of Pinnacle Hill betrays the source of the Holy Well and a splash of cream to its north is the Wells House, successively one of the oldest hotels and earliest schools. The towers of both priories, Great Malvern to the north and Little Malvern to the south, may just be seen, and over the ridge to the right the town spreads downhill in terraces, from the large stone houses of the water cure spa to the glass and concrete of the Royal Radar Establishment. Whichever way one turns, however, it is the hills which command the scene – protecting early man, preserving game and wild life, sheltering hermits and monks, and pouring out pure water.”

(Extract from “A History of Malvern” by Brian S Smith (Alan Sutton & The Malvern Bookshop 1978))





PLAN TO ACCOMPANY REPORT