

The key feature, providing the character and structure of this landscape, is the dominant presence of dense lines of mature hedgerow oaks. However, the age structure of these trees is unbalanced, with the majority being mature or veteran. Changes in land use are evident, with a change to arable farming and also an increase in the grazing of horses becoming evident, both of which can have a detrimental effect upon the hedgerow structure, and in turn on the perpetuation of hedgerow trees. Significant numbers of field ponds are being lost due to infilling.

This landscape is also subject to many pressures due to proximity of the conurbation of Birmingham, not least through the modification of the characteristic wayside dwellings as a result of modernisation and enlargement. Pressures to modify the narrow winding complex of lanes could become a priority as traffic volumes increase.

## *- Planning and Development*

There may be opportunities to plant new hedgerow trees, especially oak, and extend the life of existing hedgerow trees through such means as tree surgery, protective measures, or protection of the setting (i.e. the hedgerow). The use of protective designations such as TPOs might be relevant. The removal of inappropriate trees – such as belts of poplar may on occasion be appropriate, combined with new planting of a more appropriate nature in terms of species and location

Opportunities may arise to sub-divide large fields or parcels of land. Open plan schemes may be afforded some semblance of structure in order to create subdivision of area. The location and orientation of new buildings can create intimate areas, particularly if regular patterns are avoided. The planting of trees of appropriate scale can filter views, and the incorporation of hedgerows can contribute to the small scale character of an area. The incorporation of such features as chimneys, and other roof structures to reduce the uniformity of the roofscape can also contribute to creating an intimacy of scale and filtering of views.

Opportunities may arise, to promote Stewardship and other agri-environment funding incentives to encourage a predominantly pastoral land use, particularly if arable land uses appear to be dominating. Also, this is a landscape which formerly included a distinctive concentration of unenclosed commons, the essential character of which could be integrated into any new development proposals for the area, in order to facilitate opportunities for recreation