

Landscapes of Worcestershire

Landscape Type Information Sheet

Riverside Meadows

Landscape Type Description

A linear riverline landscape associated with a flat, generally well-defined alluvial floodplain, in places framed by steeply rising ground. This is a secluded pastoral landscape, characterised by meandering, tree-lined rivers, flanked by alluvial meadows and grazing animals.



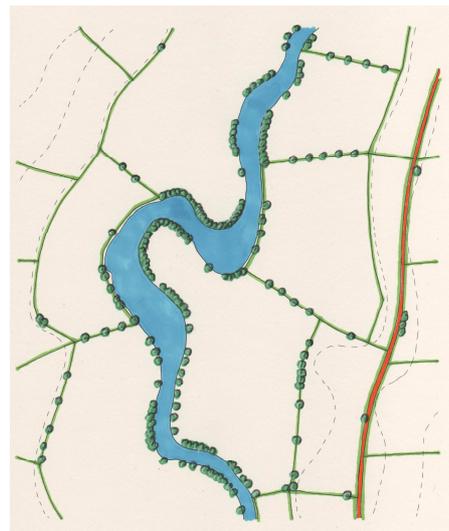
Key Characteristics

Primary

- Flat low-lying topography
- Pastoral land use, including seasonal grazing meadows
- Tree cover character of individual trees rather than woodland
- Tree cover pattern of linear tree belts along ditches, watercourses and in hedgerows

Secondary

- Unsettled with few roads
- Seasonally flooded alluvial floodplain
- Meandering river channel
- Medium-to-large fields with hedge and ditch boundaries
- Rushes, reeds and other wetland vegetation



Throughout these landscapes, the presence of extensive areas of waterside meadows, used for seasonal grazing has in the past, provided a strong sense of visual and ecological unity. These are landscapes that accommodated a degree of flooding annually, a factor which was reflected in the patterns of land use, the lack of settlement and development, and the representation of species and habitats tolerant of such waterlogged conditions. Tree cover is a notable element of these landscapes, typically of alder and willow, the latter often in pollard form, forming the pattern of tree cover relating to the hedge and ditch lines and to the banks of watercourses.

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The strong unity derived from the presence of watermeadows and pasture is becoming fragmented by the encroachment of arable land uses. The decline in the traditional practices of seasonal grazing and haymaking have diminished the nature conservation interest of the remaining areas to pasture. Similarly modification of the natural shape and profile of water courses and drainage channels has reduced the wildlife value of such features and produced a functional, somewhat urban appearance. These are essentially linear landscapes, which convey their sense of unity as a result of extensive views along the length of river corridors. New roads have been constructed on embankments directly across the flood plain, notably in the vicinity of Worcester, fragmenting the visual unity of these riverside meadow corridors as a result.

These are landscapes where the remaining areas of pasture should be conserved and opportunities sought to convert areas of arable land use back to pasture. Wetland habitats are nationally scarce today and opportunities to restore or recreate them should be encouraged and in areas where property would not be at risk, a return to annual flooding cycles could be considered in order to achieve this. There is little to indicate that woodlands have been a characteristic feature of these landscapes since their use as grazing meadows evolved, therefore opportunities to introduce new tree planting should respect the patterns of existing tree cover as outlined above.

The management strategy for the riverside meadow landscapes is therefore primarily one of restoration and conservation - to conserve and restore the visual unity and distinctive pastoral character of the landscape.

Landscape Guidelines

- seek to retain the unity of the linear form of these landscapes
- conserve all existing areas of permanent pasture
- seek opportunities to encourage the conversion of arable land back to arable
- conserve and enhance continuous tree cover along hedgelines, ditches and watercourses
- conserve existing wetland habitats and seek opportunities for further wetland habitat creation
- avoid building or road construction works
- avoid further drainage of waterside meadows
- explore opportunities to return to patterns and processes of natural flooding cycles where feasible

For more information visit our website www.worcestershire.gov.uk/lca or contact the Worcestershire County Council Environmental Policy Team on 01905 766038