

Landscapes of Worcestershire

Landscape Type Advice Sheet - *Land Management*

Riverside Meadows

Landscape Type Description

A linear riverine 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 with 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



Current Concerns

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.

The strong unity derived from the presence of water meadows 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 of 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.

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Guidelines for Land Management

How to use this sheet

The aim of this information sheet is to provide *general guidelines* about the priorities for land management activities - focusing on relevant landscape features - within this Landscape Type. However, Landscape Types are generic descriptions of landscape character and any advice **must** be interpreted within the context of the site in question. Please also visit the Landscapes of Worcestershire mapping pages <http://gis.worcestershire.gov.uk/home/wcc-lca-maps> to click on your area and read the more specific ecological and landscape descriptions.

In the case of any habitat work, specialist advice should be sought from the County Ecologists and/or the appropriate agency (Natural England, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Defra) to ensure that the work is appropriate, is carried out at the right time of year, in the correct manner and in the best possible location. Surveys may need to be carried out to assess the sites for presence of protected species or existing habitat. With this in mind, please read on for opportunities for land/habitat management activities appropriate to this Landscape Type...

The general guideline for trees in Riverside Meadows is to:

- **conserve** and **restore** continuous linear tree cover along watercourses, ditches and hedge lines

Trees

The population of individual trees (watercourse, hedgerow and field trees) should be safeguarded and augmented as required with additional planting. In many locations, the populations of such trees exhibit the reverse of the age structure that is required to ensure their perpetuation as a characteristic of these landscapes - new populations of watercourse trees need to be established as a matter of priority. Where woodland is present, the existing population of individual trees may require a particular boost to prevent the woodland becoming the dominant tree cover characteristic. New tree planting can strengthen and reinforce the characteristically strong linear tree cover pattern associated with ditches, streams and hedgerows. Appropriate management such as coppicing of alder, pollarding of willow, can be reintroduced where trees have become neglected, in order to help perpetuate such patterns. Many old pollards are eligible for classification as veteran trees - such trees require particular attention and should be safeguarded as a matter of priority.

The general guidelines for wetland habitats in Riverside Meadows are to:

- **conserve** and **restore** existing wetland habitat through appropriate management
- encourage the **creation** of new wetland habitats
- avoid further drainage of waterside meadows
- explore opportunities to return to patterns and processes of natural flooding cycles where feasible

Wetland Habitats

Seek appropriate advice to establish the status and exact nature, composition, and future potential of any wetland communities. Avoid any damage or disturbance to existing wetland vegetation communities during regular management activity. Encourage appropriate management of existing areas of wetland plant communities. Seek to unite fragmented areas of wetland habitat, aiming to develop continuous linking patterns and to expand areas of wetland communities through habitat creation, particularly where these can be linked to existing habitat. Wherever feasible, work to develop and support landscape scale management of the Riverside Meadows which will accept and encourage the natural processes of seasonal flooding. Also, encourage the retention and restoration of the natural form of the river channel, and other watercourses, in terms of pattern and profile. Avoid the introduction of physical features, such as embankments and levees, which cross and dissect the flat linear landform. Similarly avoid the introduction of blocks of trees and woodland planting which will impair the visual perception of the characteristic linear units of form.

Grassland & Hedgerows

The general guidelines for grassland and hedgerows in Riverside Meadows are to:

- **conserve** all remaining areas of permanent pasture
- consider opportunities for converting arable land back to pasture
- **conserve** and **restore** the hedgerow and ditch network

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