

7.14 RIVERSIDE MEADOWS

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

These are linear, riverine landscapes associated with a flat, generally well defined, alluvial floodplain, in places framed by steeply rising ground. They are secluded pastoral landscapes, characterised by meandering tree lined rivers, flanked by riverside meadows which are defined by hedge and ditch boundaries. Settlement is typically absent. Throughout these landscapes, the presence of extensive areas of seasonally grazed waterside meadows has in the past provided a strong sense of visual and ecological unity. These are landscapes that accommodate a degree of annual flooding, a factor which has been reflected in the traditional patterns of land use, the lack of settlement and development (except for the occasional water mill), and the representation of species and habitats tolerant of such waterlogged conditions. The natural fertility of Riverside Meadows has often been maximised by employing devices such as sluices to control and direct the silt laden flood waters. The unique Lammas Meadows bordering the River Lugg at Hereford are an excellent example of traditionally managed riverside meadows where the historic pattern of cutting and grazing has been continued for centuries. Tree cover is a notable element of Riverside Meadows, usually in a linear pattern along the hedge and ditch lines and to the banks of watercourses. Typically, species are alder and willow, the latter often pollarded. This Landscape Type is associated with large rivers, and in the case of Herefordshire, the Rivers Arrow, Clun, Frome, Leadon, Lodon, Lugg, Monnow, Teme and Wye.

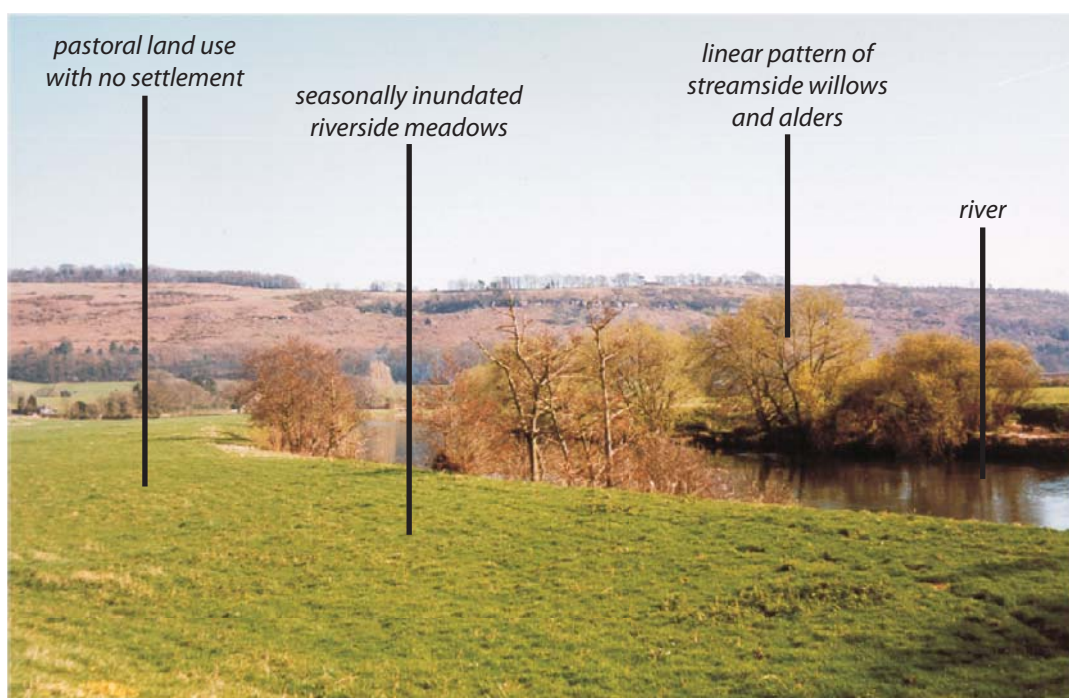
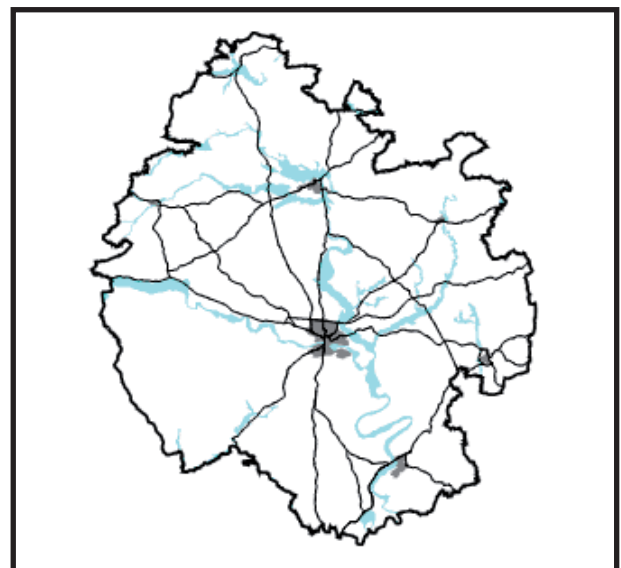
KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Primary

- **pastoral land use**
- **well defined linear patterns of willow and alder**
- **tree cover represented by stream side and hedgerow trees**
- **unsettled landscape**

Secondary

- **wetland habitat**
- **river channel**
- **hedge and ditch boundaries**





FORCES FOR LANDSCAPE CHANGE

The strongly consistent visual and ecological character that has arisen through traditional methods of land management has been noticeably impoverished during the post war period. A rapid increase in arable cropping, in Herefordshire notably potatoes, has disrupted the classical patchwork of water meadows and pasture. The decline in the traditional practices of seasonal grazing and hay making, together with flood alleviation works which involve the controlled channelling of flood water with associated straightening and bank re-profiling have all led to a reduction in ecological and visual interest. Elsewhere, built development has been undertaken and the resulting risk of flooding has often been overcome by the construction of uncharacteristic structures such as bunds, flood walls or flood relief channels. These are linear landscapes where the sense of unity relies heavily on extensive views along the length of river corridors. Added features such as roads or embankments which dissect the river corridor have resulted in numerous instances of visual fragmentation.



SETTLEMENT PATTERN

These are essentially unsettled landscapes with occasional mills or other buildings directly associated with the river.

ENCLOSURE PATTERN

The pattern of enclosure is that of a planned nature where regularly laid out fields are hedged, ditched and traditionally managed.

WOODLAND OR TREE COVER PATTERN

Tree cover is typically that of lines of alder and willow along the banks of the rivers and wet ditches. The grazing meadow land use has forged the landscape character and woodland is generally therefore not a feature of Riverside Meadows, although there may be some limited opportunity for wet woodland creation.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES AND ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION

Built development should be actively discouraged as it will always lead to a conflict with flood water as well as being contrary to the landscape character. Similarly, arable cropping not only

leads to loss of landscape character but also to erosion and river pollution through silt and nitrate rich run off, particularly in flood conditions. Wetland habitats are becoming more scarce, therefore opportunities to **conserve** and **restore** them and to **enhance** biodiversity and landscape character by returning the land to a controlled annual flooding regime should be encouraged.

CONSERVATION	RESTORATION	ENHANCEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve, restore and enhance continuous linear tree cover along hedge lines, ditches and watercourses 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve and restore wetland habitats and seek opportunities for further wetland habitat creation 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve all areas of permanent pasture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek opportunities to return arable areas to pasture 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek to retain the strongly linear form of the landscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities to return to traditional patterns and processes of natural flooding cycles 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discourage further drainage of waterside meadows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek opportunities to restore natural river bank and bed features and resist further loss of river habitat 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discourage built development 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discourage construction works that would interrupt the linear unity of the landscape 		