

RIVER VALLEY

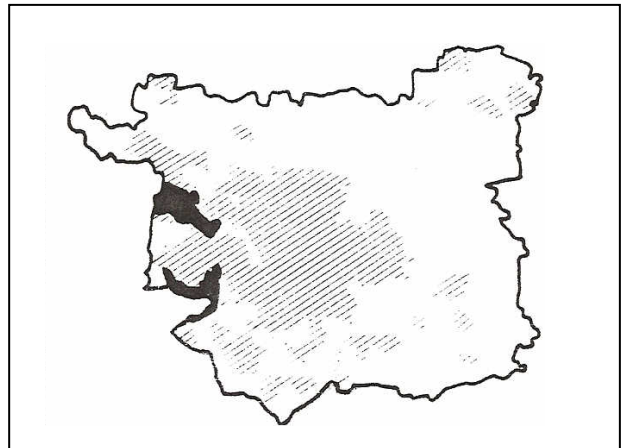
Landscape character

The river valley landscape type occurs in two landscape units: the Calverley Valley (LCM1 X); and the Cockersdale Valley (LCMI9).

It forms an intact and distinctive river valley, defined by a prominent valley landform. The flat narrow valley floor generally contains a mix of land uses, including pastoral farmland, areas of amenity or recreational use and isolated pockets of industry or public utility works. Woodland, mainly semi-natural, lines stretches of the river banks, forming a strong linear feature alongside communication lines such as railways, canals and roads which can also be present. Woodland is prominent on the steeper valley slopes, providing an important recreational and visual resource and surrounding pockets of intact pasture. These tend to be bordered by drystone walls or a strong pattern of hedgerows.

Forces for change

The river valleys generally form intact rural corridors, in close proximity to the urban areas which dominate views along the higher ground. Due to the proximity of the urban edge, this landscape is under pressure from urban influences, including industrial development and formal recreational facilities such as golf courses. Where the countryside has remained generally intact, the main changes appear to be related to a gradual decline in the condition of field boundaries, particularly hedges which have become overgrown and gappy.



Management strategy and guidelines

The overall management strategy for the river valley landscape type should be a careful balance between conservation of the intact, rural pastoral and wooded features of the river valley, combined with restoration where these features are in decline or where urban influences are beginning to encroach.

Management guidelines which are applicable for all the landscape units within the river valley landscape type are described below. Detailed management strategies and guidelines for the individual landscape units are described elsewhere in separate documents, references as above left.

- *Conserve areas of permanent pasture.* Permanent pasture is a characteristic feature along the river valley and slopes. Where pasture occurs, particularly that which has remained undisturbed for many years, it should be conserved and managed as low input grassland, to increase its value for landscape and wildlife. Any tree planting should be designed to avoid the best areas of pasture.

- *Identify opportunities for recreating riverside wet land habitats*

Reedbeds and marshland are typically associated with river corridors. These habitats are particularly important for wildlife and give an element of naturalness to river landscapes. Any remaining wetlands should be conserved and opportunities should be sought for creating new wetlands in certain areas.

- *Control the adverse effects of horse grazing in inappropriate locations.*

In recent years, there has been an increasing demand for the use of land for horse grazing, including around the fringes of urban areas. In places this has had a significant impact on the landscape with the proliferation of temporary structures and ancillary buildings with impoverishment of pasture due to overgrazing. Where possible, these adverse effects of horse grazing should be controlled, to avoid increasing the 'suburban' influence in the river valley landscape.

- *Conserve and enhance tree cover through regeneration and replanting of field boundary trees.*

Scale and enclosure in this landscape are controlled by the nature of the topography, field pattern and the density of the woodland and tree cover.

Hedgerow trees and trees alongside roads and lanes reinforce the impression of enclosure. To maintain and enhance this, natural regeneration of hedgerow trees should be encouraged wherever possible, although replanting could be undertaken if necessary, using locally occurring native tree species .

- *Enhance the continuity of the river channel through appropriate tree and shrub planting.*

Within the generally well wooded river valleys, strip woodland and waterside trees and scrub are important features, contributing to the riverside environment.

To maintain this effect, natural regeneration of trees should be encouraged and planting of new trees and copses may also be appropriate, especially where they complement existing tree cover or can act as screening for industrial developments in the valley. Locally occurring native species and shrubs should be used and where possible, planting should also aim to keep one bankside clear to maintain a variety of wildlife habitats

- *Where opportunities exist, consider restoring areas of former parkland.*

Although landscaped parks are not a particular feature within this landscape type, there are some remnant areas for example around Rawdon Hall Farm. As well as their historical importance, parklands provide diversity and interest in the landscape. True parkland in permanent grassland with large scattered trees is in decline. Wherever possible, consideration should be given to reinstating areas of former park and new planting to replace old trees.

- *Conserve and strengthen the characteristic pattern of small and medium sized fields.*

Field pattern is a dominant visual element, particularly on the valley slopes. The small and medium sized fields are typically bounded by thorn hedges or drystone walls. In places, the hedges are becoming overgrown and gappy and the walls falling into disrepair. This results in a more open neglected looking landscape. Many hedges would benefit from more appropriate management, which would include traditional management techniques such as coppicing and planting up of individual gaps. In addition, walls should be restored, with priority given to restoring those along roadsides and along farm boundaries.