

# ENCAPSULATED COUNTRYSIDE

## Landscape character

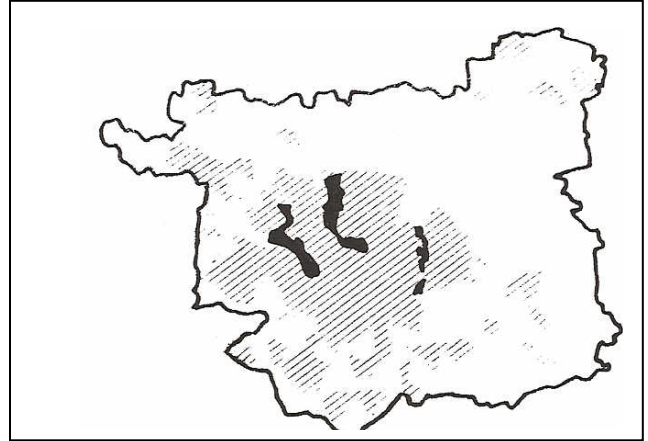
The encapsulated countryside landscape type can be found in three landscape units: the Meanwood Valley (LCM12); the Kirkstall Valley (LCM13); and the Wyke Beck Valley (LCM14). It occurs in linear areas or 'fingers' of countryside associated with river corridors, which extend right into the heart of the urban area.

The valley sides of the corridors can be steep sided and are generally well wooded, with pockets of scrub and pasture forming a green patchwork in an otherwise built up environment. Urban influences are present, with public utility works, isolated industrial units and occasional housing all in evidence, mainly along the valley bottoms. Views from within these areas are framed by either the development along the edges, or by the dense wooded nature of the semi-natural woodlands which abound.

The encapsulated countryside provides a valuable recreational resource for local communities and an important corridor for wildlife.

## Forces for change

Due to their close proximity to the urban edge, the areas of encapsulated countryside are all subject to a range of pressures, typical of the urban fringe. These pressures include building development, recreational pressures, fly tipping and the growth of areas of horse grazing, some of which has become degraded, with run down ancillary buildings and structures apparent. Although some areas such as the Meanwood Valley remain fairly intact, others, such as the Wyke Beck Valley have been fragmented by areas of urban development or roads. Future change could occur with any proposed residential or commercial development.



## Management strategy and guidelines

The overall management strategy for the encapsulated countryside landscape type should be a careful balance between conservation of the characteristic wooded and pastoral valley characteristics, combined with restoration of the features where these are in decline or under pressure. There may also be opportunities for enhancement through small scale woodland planting, particularly in areas such as the Wyke Beck Valley. Management guidelines which are applicable for all the landscape units within the encapsulated countryside landscape type are described below. Detailed management strategies and guidelines for the individual landscape units are described in separate documents, using the references listed above left.

- *Seek to 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, particularly within these linear corridors which extend along the urban fringe. In places this has had a significant impact on the landscape with the proliferation of temporary structures and ancillary buildings and with impoverishment of pasture due to overgrazing. Where possible, these adverse effects of horse grazing should be controlled within these green corridors, to prevent further 'suburbanisation' of the landscape.
- *Retain and enhance stream and river channel diversity and marginal vegetation .*  
River and stream channels and margins are a major feature within the areas of encapsulated countryside, providing a key landscape and wildlife resource. Where the ecological value has declined, there is much scope for improvement through sensitive management. Trees, scrub and plant growth on riverbanks should be retained and protected, and enhanced where appropriate.

- *Conserve and enhance the wooded value and continuity of streamlines and rivers and enhance their value as landscape, wildlife and recreational corridors.*  
Waterside trees, scrub and woodland are important features in the areas of encapsulated countryside, contributing significantly to the wider landscape. Where these areas occur, they should be conserved as a priority.  
Natural regeneration of woodland should also be encouraged and where appropriate, new planting should be undertaken to extend and enhance the corridors. This could then form the basis of additional small scale planting, perhaps in association with a scheme for the wider area, extending out from the corridors. However, care should be taken to maintain a diversity of waterside habitats in addition to the woodland. Consideration should also be given to encouraging recreational access along the valleys, although this is generally already available along these 'green' corridors.
- *Conserve and strengthen the characteristic pattern of small and medium sized fields.*  
Although field pattern is not a particularly dominant visual element in the areas of encapsulated countryside, it is important in some areas, particularly the Meanwood Valley. Here, the small and medium sized fields are typically bounded by a mix of hedgerows and drystone walls. In places, particularly closest to the city centre, the hedges are becoming overgrown and gappy leaving only a remnant boundary. This results in a more 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, footpaths and bridleways.
- *Enhance tree cover through small scale woodland planting.*  
Although two of the areas of encapsulated countryside are generally well wooded, there are opportunities, particularly along the Wyke Beck for small scale deciduous planting. This could be based on a linear planting programme, following the line of the stream or river, in order to enhance the continuity of the corridor, but could also be extended through small scale planting elsewhere. The siting and design of new woodland should be carefully planned and could be undertaken in connection with any wider planting programmes for the urban fringe area (for example along the Lower Aire Valley).