

The headwaters of the River Adur in the Low Weald comprise a network of narrow valleys and long streams. Rimmed by low ridges the expansive, open brooks pastures of the Henfield and Beeding Brooks have a downland backdrop.

Sheet LW9

Upper Adur Valley

Low Weald

The area covered by the Sheet includes:

The Upper Adur Valley (Area 5) in Mid Sussex District.

The Steyning and Henfield Brooks (Area O3) and the Upper Adur Valleys (Area P2) Landscape Character Areas defined in the unpublished **Horsham District Landscape Character Assessment** (October 2003).



Key Characteristics

- Extensive upper river catchment drained by a network of long, leisurely streams in confined narrow, shallow valleys, a small part within the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- Relatively few panoramic or long views within the valley although views to the south are dominated by the steep downland scarp.
- Small woodlands and networks of hedgerows with hedgerow trees.
- Smaller pastures in the valley bottoms and mixed arable and pastoral farming, medium to large-sized fields on the valley sides.
- Expansive, open brook pastures of the Henfield and Beeding Brooks including small fields, occasional scrub and a small area of remnant ancient woodland.
- Canalisation and embankment of the main river throughout the brook pastures and localised river straightening elsewhere.
- Wildlife corridor with pockets of rich biodiversity.
- Local roads, farmsteads and the old townships of Bramber, Henfield and Steyning lie on higher ground flanking the brook pastures.
- Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including flint, timber-framing and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging.
- Brick and stone bridges.



Historic Features

- Post-medieval landscape of mixed field sizes and boundaries.
- Brooks pastures which were once deliberately flooded.
- Canalisation of river (Baybridge Canal).
- Ruins of Bramber Castle keep.
- Medieval churches, manor houses and historic farmsteads.
- Brick and stone bridges and historic trackways.

Biodiversity

- Expansive watermeadows, species-rich ditches, marsh, reed beds.
- Marginal vegetation along river and stream banks.
- Ancient woodland remnant at Wyckham Wood.
- Alder and willow woodland.
- Small woodlands, hedgerows and ponds in the tributary valleys.
- Small meadowland and water meadow plant communities.

Change - Key Issues

- Importance of retaining the unique identity of the valley and as an important landscape and wildlife corridor.
- Possible continuing pressure for river flood defences and structures.
- Continuing loss of species-rich pasture and grasslands through drainage of watermeadows for arable farmland.
- Continuing field amalgamation in some places into a pattern of medium and large-sized fields, with hedgerow loss and the ageing and loss of hedgerow and field trees.
- Visual impact of new urban and rural development including modern farm buildings, horse-riding centres and paddocks.
- Pressures for built development in the urban areas fringing the valley.
- Visual intrusion from sand and gravel workings, landfill and pylons.
- Increasing pervasiveness of traffic movement and noise on roads flanking the valley.
- Gradual loss of locally distinctive building styles and materials.
- Gradual suburbanisation of the landscape including the widespread use of exotic tree and shrub species.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivities

- Quiet, rural quality in the tributary valleys.
- Visual impact of flood defences and structures.
- Pockets of biodiversity are vulnerable to loss and change.
- Brooks pastures landscape is highly exposed to views from the downs with a consequently high sensitivity to the impact of new urban development, modern farm buildings, masts and pylons and new roads.
- Settlement pattern currently sits well within the rural landscape although there is a danger of the cumulative visual impact of buildings and other structures.



Adur Valley, Upper Beeding



River Adur, Shermanbury

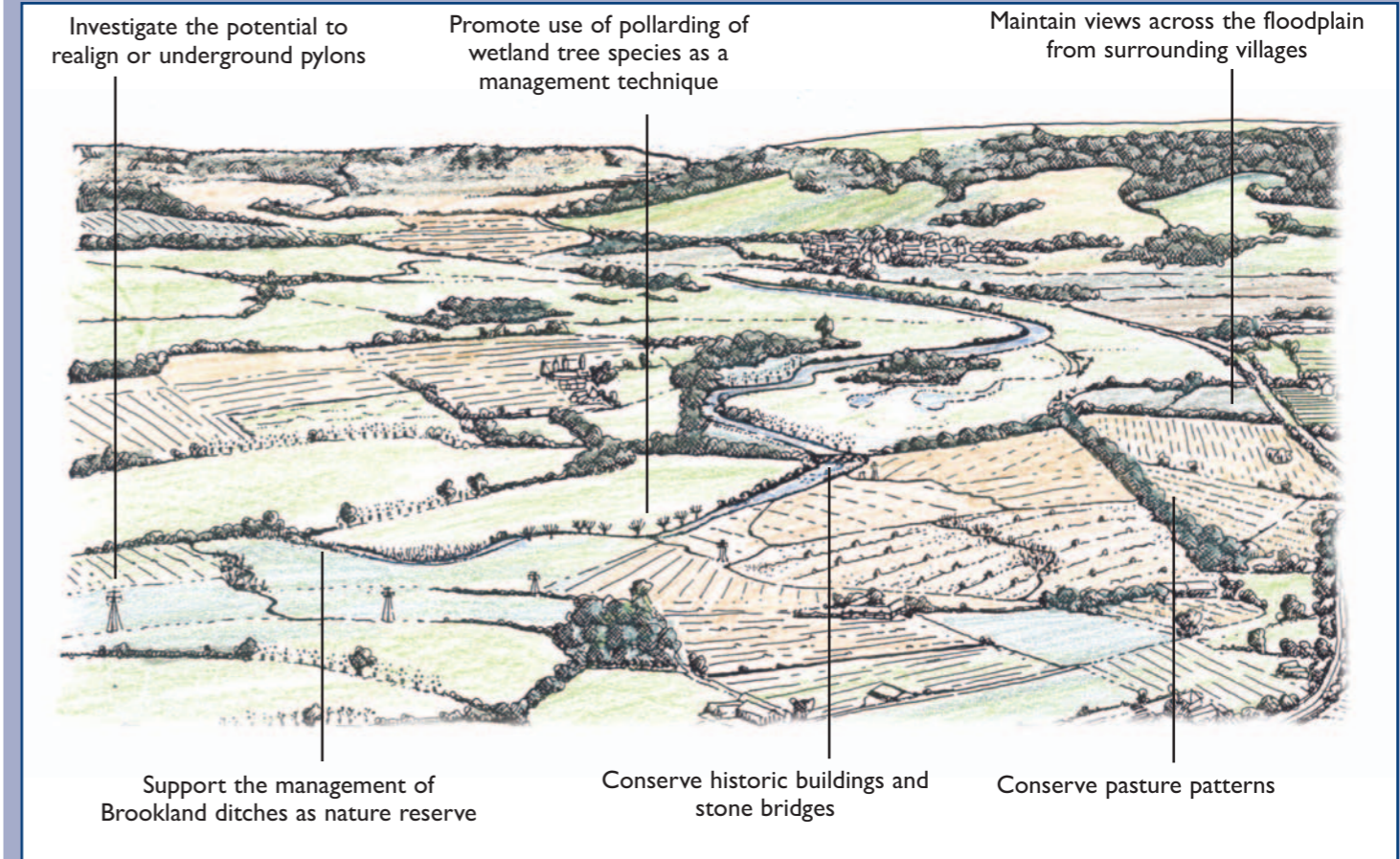


River Adur, Wineham



Adur Valley, Henfield

Land Management Guidelines



Conserve and enhance the tranquil, secluded character of the tributary valleys and the landscape pattern and wildlife of the brooks pastures.

- Conserve and enhance the undeveloped character and pastoral qualities of the valley and the character of the river including its drainage pattern.
- Ensure that any new development has a minimum impact on views from the downs and is integrated within the landscape.
- Pay particular attention to the siting of telecommunications masts.
- Minimise the adverse impact of flood defences and structures.
- Pursue active management of the brooks pastures, maintaining and extending the small-scale pattern of the pastures and enriching biodiversity including streamside vegetation.
- Plan for long-term woodland regeneration the appropriate management of existing woodland, the planting of new small broad-leaved farm woodlands on the valley edges including pollarding of wetland trees, and the creation of landscape features along streams and water channels through alder and willow planting.
- Conserve, strengthen and manage existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees, especially around irregular fields, and re-plant hedgerows where they have been lost.
- Promote the creation of arable field margins and corners including alongside the sides of streams.
- Undertake landscape improvements and tree planting on the margins of the brooks pastures and around urban areas.
- Ensure that any valley-edge road improvements do not damage character.
- Reduce the visual impact of horse stabling and grazing.
- Minimise the effects of adverse incremental change by seeking new development of high quality that sits well within the landscape and reflects local distinctiveness.

The Guidelines should be read in conjunction with:

- County-wide Landscape Guidelines set out in *A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape* (November 2005) published by West Sussex County Council.
- Objectives and actions contained in the *Interim South Downs Management Plan* (March 2004) published by the Sussex Downs Conservation Board.