







**Image, previous page:** Grazing sheep in grasslands sheltered by ancient, mature trees. Taken from the country lane which leads past Rowlestown House.

**Image, this page:** modern dormer house and industrial scale grain production share the countryside, the house benefitting from plentiful hedges and trees around the river to give privacy and a discreet appearance within the vegetation. This integration, a *symbiosis* of living and landscape can only be maintained at relatively low densities.





Autumnal Images show, **on this page**, fallen conkers below horse chestnut tree, and leaves, nuts and shells from a beech tree. The background of woodland from which these images were taken is the area around the Lawn Gates entrance to Rowlestown House



## 1.51 Rural Countryside (continued)

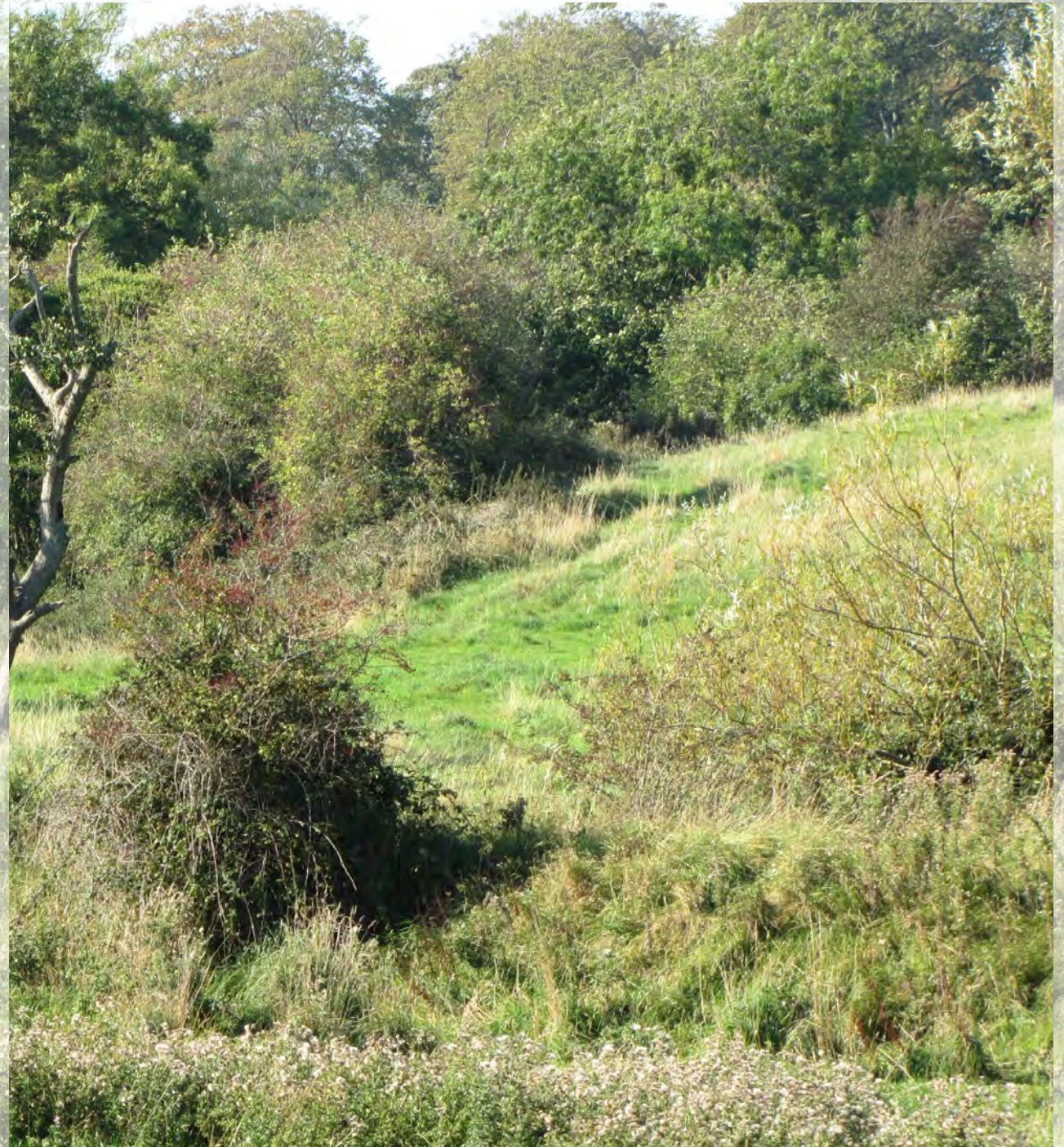
### Defining the Rural Countryside

Rowlestown's location in a special landscape is its distinctive quality.

The shaping of its immediate landscape in a low-lying area accentuates the relatively small contour changes on either side of the river. The steepness of the river's banks, and the likelihood of occasional flooding as it flows through the village has helped to limit the building up of the river's edge. The County Development Plan (CDP) policies incorporate a 30m riparian zone on either side of the river to help biodiversity and to allow for a flooding margin. OPW and 'FEMFRAM' studies extend some areas further in recently measured areas liable to flooding. These margins can accommodate recreational use and the enjoyment of nature, provided public access can be achieved.

The immediate areas beyond the village experience pressure for development; there is potential conflict between natural heritage policies and residential development strategies, as the river and riparian zones traverse the central areas of the village.

Further out from the village, there is sporadic development close to the river, but the scenery, in the main survives. The combined CDP policies of green infrastructure and natural heritage provide strong cause to limit development in deference to the value of the landscape, especially the river and margins and the fine mature eighteenth and nineteenth century demesne landscape and hedgerows.





## 1.52 Rural Countryside policies from the Fingal Development Plan - A Summary

Fingal's rivers support salmonid systems on several, including the Broadmeadow river. The 30m width of riparian corridor is needed to allow species such as otter, bat, kingfisher and dipper to thrive. "Because of their importance, all rivers will be maintained in an open, semi-natural condition, wherever possible."

The **landscape** is described as low-lying, a mix of arable and pasture farming. At Rowlestown, it varies from this general character because of the surrounding woodlands and river landscape. It is an objective "that all development proposals (should) include measures to protect and enhance biodiversity." and to "ensure development reflects and, where possible, reinforces the distinctiveness and sense of place of the landscape character types...including various elements such as geology and landform, habitats, scenic quality, settlement pattern, historic heritage, local vernacular heritage, land-use and tranquility"

"The major river corridors should be protected and improved by leaving a minimum 30 metre wide margin, on each side of these rivers, undeveloped and encouraging planting where appropriate, to enhance the landscape and habitat value of these corridors...Resist development such as houses... which would interfere with the character of highly sensitive areas or with a view or prospect of special amenity value, which it is necessary to preserve."

Among the Principles for Development, this advice is given on potential sites: "Sites with natural boundaries should be chosen, rather than open parts of larger fields. Clustering with existing farmhouse and/or farm buildings is generally preferable to stand-alone locations."

( Reference: Fingal County Development Plan 2011-2017)



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## CHAPTER 5 NATURAL HERITAGE

### AIM

Conserve, enhance and manage the County's natural heritage including its biodiversity, landscapes and geological heritage, and promote understanding of and access to it.



FINGAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2011-2017

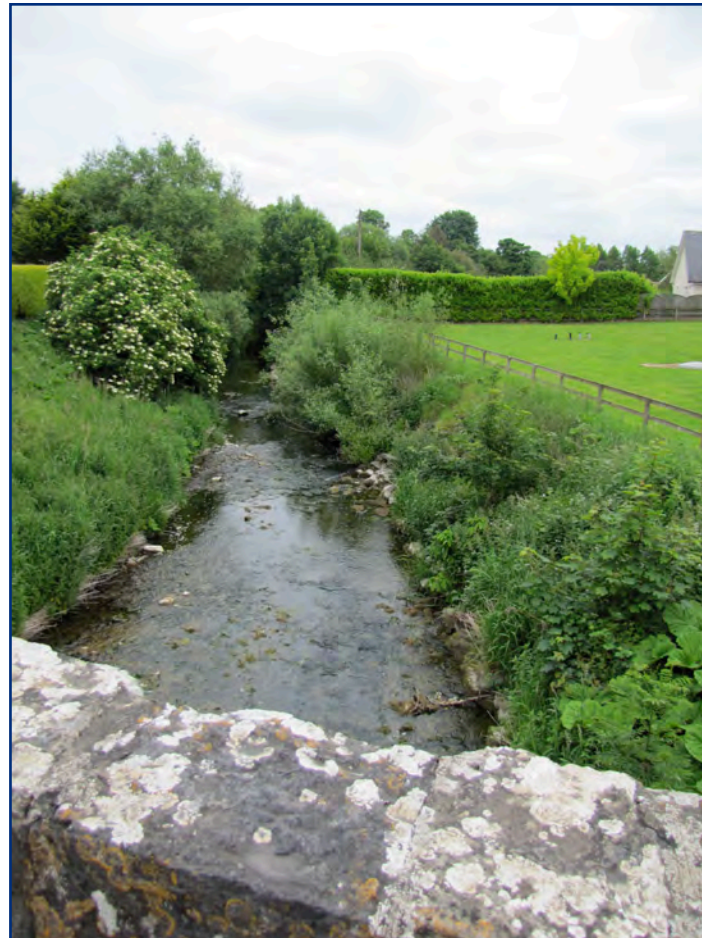




**Above:** Ducks foraging in the field at Lawn Gates, the entrance to Rowlestown House. No doubt the ducks, too, would appreciate easy access to the river.

### 1.53 Broadmeadow River

The river acts as a geographical feature which divides today's village into north and south, with the two parallel roads, Church Road and R125, giving access to all the potential development areas. Thus, the river is actually a zone of natural vegetation which passes through the centre. The creation of a riverside walk with regular access to the development sites and the two roads, would make for a remarkable new network of walkable access in the village. At the same time it would be useful to plan walks to cross the river on pedestrian bridges. The images of the river which follow are those which may be obtained from public places, bridges and the R125.



**Right:** Broadmeadow River downstream from the Rowlestown Bridge - one of the few views available from public areas in the village. The river is set down in a deep cut to mitigate flooding.

**Far right:** Potential access from the north side of the bridge and facing westwards, this path is barely accessible at present, and may not be a right of way.





### 1.53 Broadmeadow River (continued)

This area is visible from the eastern approach of the R125. It is a low lying flood plain on the Southern side and a quite steep escarpment on the northern side. Both sides so far have been kept free of development, and free from serious encroachment into the natural habitat. As part of a recreational corridor, this area might include a small lake.

At the top of the escarpment, new houses overlook the river within a development on Church Road. The gable is a repetitive visual theme which does not dominate the scale of the riverside, although the positioning of the houses puts them on top of the horizon and quite conspicuous. Further planting at the upper level would help, in time, to diminish the visual impact.

