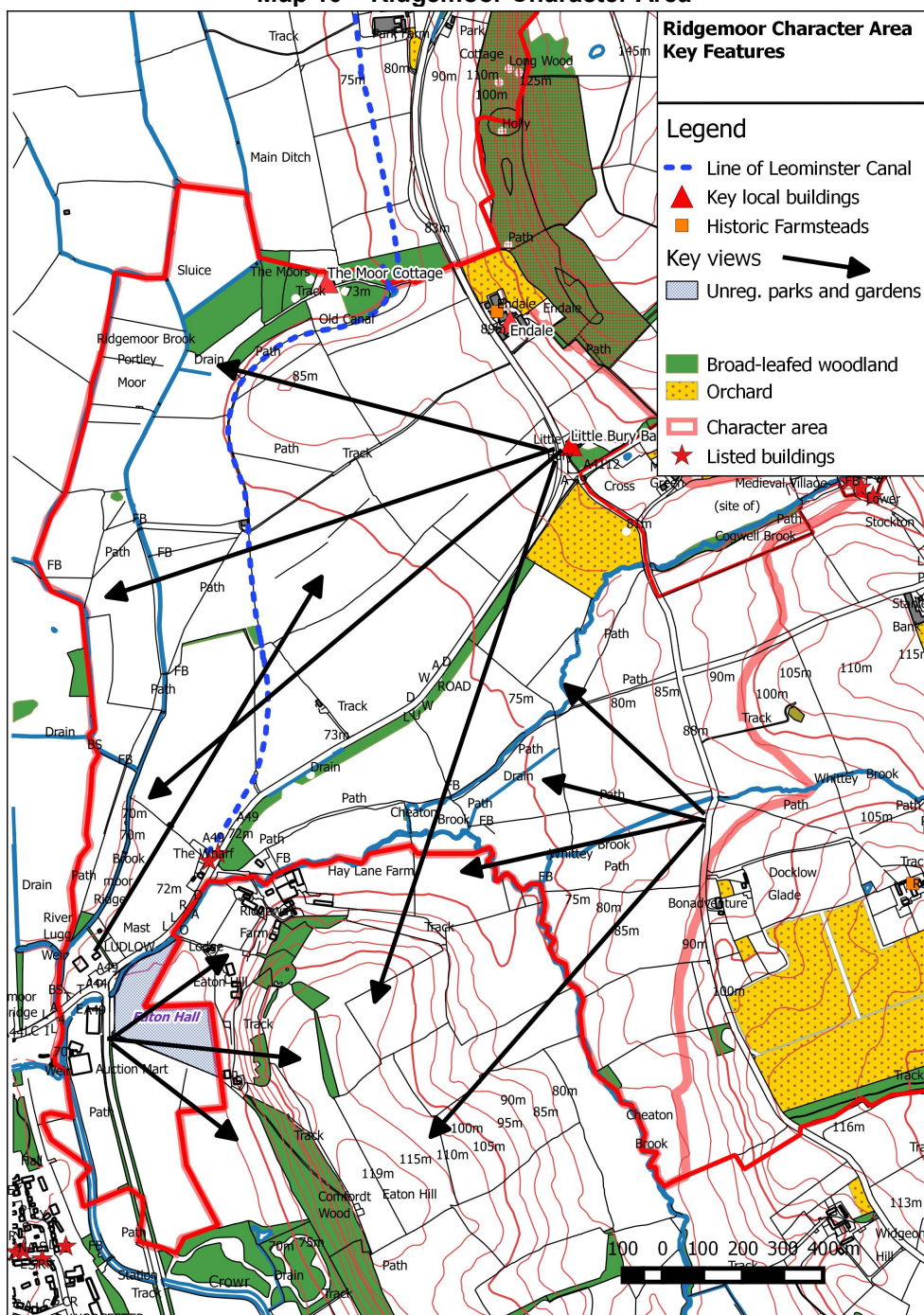


## 4.5 Ridgemoor and Stockton Cross Rural Character Area

4.5.1 The Ridgemoor & Stockton Cross Character Area forms the westernmost part of the Parish and is the only part of the Parish within the Herefordshire Lowlands sub-regional character area. It is made up of three Landscape Character Types – the gently rising eastern area is classified as wooded estatelands, the central and southern parts are Riverside Meadows, and a small area to the north is classified as Wet Pasture Meadows.

Map 10 – Ridgemoor Character Area



#### 4.5.2 Topography & landform

- 4.5.3 Ridgemoor & Stockton Cross marks the transition between the open and flat countryside of Central Herefordshire and the more elevated Bromyard Plateau. The area is generally flat and low-lying at around 70m AoD, rising gently to around 100m AoD in the east.



**Image 44 – the confluence of the River Lugg and the Ridgemoor Brook**

- 4.5.4 The River Lugg occupies the far western corner, and flowing into the Lugg across the area from the east are the Whittey, Cheaton and Cogwell Brooks – all by now significant watercourses reflecting their important role in draining the elevated central parts of the Parish. The Ridgemoor Brook forms much of the western boundary of the area and runs into the Lugg from the north. There are a number of drainage ditches in the central part of the area to the north and west of the A49 reflecting the historically wet nature of the countryside

#### 4.5.6 Land uses

- 4.5.7 Land use is a patchwork of mixed farming with extensive areas being used for the growing of crops – particularly in the lower lying centre and west. There are two orchards – the larger and more prominent one to the south of Stockton Cross and the second to the rear of Endale. Woodland is limited to a small number of copses including a plantation of poplars at the Moor, with the majority of trees being within the streamside corridors of the Whittey, Cheaton and Cogwell Brooks.



#### 4.5.8 Roads, streets, routes

4.5.9 The A49 trunk road runs through the area from north to south, proving a key link from the Parish to the towns of Leominster and Ludlow and to the national road network. At Stockton Cross it is joined by the A4112 which runs east through the Parish and onto Tenbury Wells. The eastern part of the area contains a number of rural lanes which are relatively wide and open particularly when compared with much of the central and eastern parts of the Parish. To the west of the A49 there are no metalled roads but there is a network of generally unenclosed farm tracks and footpaths.

#### 4.5.10 Historic features

4.5.11 The area contains a number of historic features which provide evidence of settlement across a wide range of eras.



**Image 45 – the line of the Leominster Canal with the embankment visible in the foreground and Wharf House centre right**

4.5.12 The most significant feature is the line of the Leominster Canal, built between 1794-1796 between Leominster and the collieries at Mable. The Canal was not a financial success and ceased operating in 1858. Most of the canal has been drained but there are clear indications of its route in the fields to the south of the track which serves the Moor Cottage in the north of the area, and in the field pattern between Moor Cottage and the terminus at Wharf Cottage on the A49. There were three locks in the stretch between Moor Cottage and the Wharf, served by Locks Cottage which was demolished in 1985.



**Image 46 – Wharf House showing the tiled roof and timber frame on the left side of the building.**

4.5.13 Wharf Cottages were contemporary to the Canal, and the Grade II listed Wharf House to the east is of 17<sup>th</sup> century date with late 19<sup>th</sup> century additions and was used as a bargers' boarding house.

4.5.14 The role of the area as a key transport corridor is also reflected in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century milestone on A49 to the immediate north of Wharf Cottages.

4.5.15 In the southernmost part of the area is an unregistered parkland associated with the Victorian Eaton Hill house.

4.5.16 Endale is identified as a historic farmstead and is part of the Berrington Hall Estate.

#### 4.5.17 Settlement Pattern and Buildings

4.5.18 The area as a whole contains very little settlement and is the least populated part of the Parish.

4.5.19 The area to the north and west of the A49 largely devoid of buildings with the exception of Moor Cottage and Endale.



**Image 47 – Moor Cottage showing the sandstone construction and massive chimney stack**

- 4.5.20 Moor Cottage is a modest two storey dwelling of sandstone rubble construction with a slate roof and large chimney stack on its gable end - a feature typical of domestic buildings across much of the Parish.
- 4.5.21 Endale is a substantial farmstead with extensive ranges of buildings including a number of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century stone barns, sheds and granaries. The farmhouse itself is well proportioned and of brick construction with a slate roof, perhaps replacing an earlier building.
- 4.5.22 The complex of buildings at the Wharf include the part timber and stone Grade II Wharf House and a pair of brick built cottages contemporary to the Leominster Canal.
- 4.5.23 The south of the area contains a significant group of 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial buildings clustered around the A49 roundabout. They include an auction mart, roadside service station and diner. These buildings are of modern materials, are well maintained and are of a design and scale consistent with their function.
- 4.5.24 Landmarks
- 4.5.25 There are no significant landmarks in the area.
- 4.5.26 Green and natural features
- 4.5.27 The principal natural features are the network of hedgerows, the corridors of streamside woodland referred to above and a number of watercourses including the River Lugg. The Hedgerows are predominantly mixed native species and are in variable condition. In the low lying central and western area many hedgerows have been removed and those



that remain contain significant gaps and present opportunities for restoration and enhancement.

4.5.28 The River Lugg flows through the westernmost part of the area and is some 10 metres wide. Its confluence with the Ridgemoor Brook is surprisingly peaceful given its location to the immediate rear of the roadside service station. The River Lugg is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and part of the Wye Special Area of Conservation (SAC) reflecting its national biodiversity significance. The SSSI is considered to be of unfavourable recovering condition and this part of the SAC is exceeding phosphate targets. The other watercourses which run through the area – the Whittey, Cheaton and Cogwell Brooks provide important wildlife habitats – particularly in the eastern part of the area where streamside trees are more prominent.

#### 4.5.29 Views

4.5.30 The more elevated eastern parts of the area provide long distance views west towards Leominster and the countryside of north Herefordshire as shown on Plan 10. Particularly important viewpoints are at Endale and Bonaventure.



**Image 48 – the open and flat countryside to the north of the A49 with Eaton Hill left**

4.5.31 Within the area itself there are open views across the low lying open land to the west of A49. Eaton Hill is visible from much of the area, including from the track on the eastern side of A49 opposite the auction mart. The western slopes of Eaton Hill contain ornamental trees associated with the unregistered parkland, and areas of woodland on the upper slopes. The key views are shown on Map10.

#### 4.5.32 Summary of key defining characteristics / other observations

4.5.33 The area marks the transition between the elevated Bromyard plateau which characterises the central and eastern parts of the Parish, and the low-lying 'bowl' of central Herefordshire. The historic rural character of the western parts of the area has been disturbed by the A49 trunk road and the removal of the majority of hedgerows in the fields to its west creating an open landscape largely undisturbed by buildings. The eastern parts of the area have much more in common with the Parish as a whole – elevated rolling countryside, with far reaching views and a network of hedgerows interspersed with a series of wooded streamside corridors.

#### 4.5.34 Management guidelines and priorities

4.5.35 The key priorities are:

- Conservation and enhancement of existing hedgerows with the priority being the area to the west of A49.
- Conservation and enhancement of traditional orchards
- Conservation and restoration of tree cover along the key watercourses
- Maintain the open landscape of the land to the west of A49 and the dispersed settlement pattern across the area. Resist proposals for prominently located large scale buildings.
- Develop a greater understanding of historic elements of the landscape and protect and enhance key features including the Leominster Canal.