

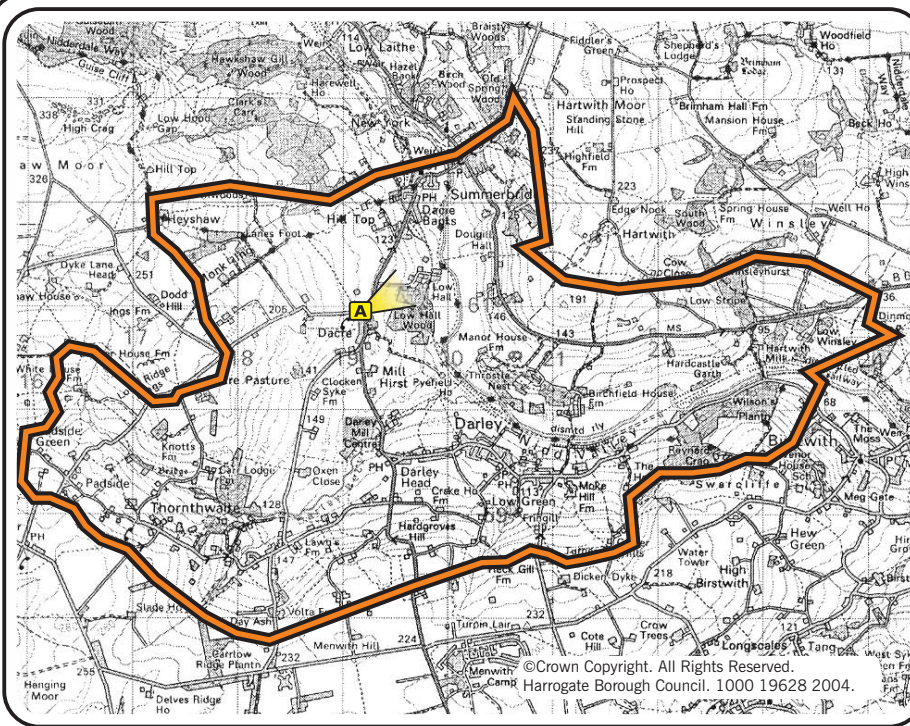
# AREA 13

Approved  
Feb 2004

**A** View east across Nidderdale from Dacre.



## Nidderdale Valley (Summerbridge to New Bridge, Birstwith)



### HARROGATE DISTRICT Landscape Character Assessment



\* NB Due to the nature of landform, surface treatment and soil/geology composition Character area boundaries cannot be delineated precisely and should be considered "transitional".



## Description

This is a diverse Character Area that encompasses the Nidd valley from Summerbridge to Birstwith and includes east-facing slopes of the broad ridge to the west separating Nidderdale from the Washburn Valley. The small-scale valley system of Darley Beck, a major tributary of the River Nidd, is also included. The area covers 22km<sup>2</sup>.

The valley floors are well-wooded creating a sense of enclosure and channelling views. The broad valley sides gently rise away from the valley floor where views become dispersed and the landscape more open with patches of rock outcrops along the valley rim.

Grassland fields are a mixture of early enclosures and parliamentary enclosures that form contrasting random and organised patterns on the landscape. Field boundaries are a mix of hedges and stone walls often replaced or reinforced with fencing for stock control. Individual trees along field boundaries are important and contribute to the valley's well-wooded appearance.

Land management is simple dominated by improved grassland intensively managed for grazing. Historically the area south of Darley Beck is within the boundary of The Royal Forest of Knaresborough medieval hunting ground. The area is easily accessible with a good network of minor roads and public footpaths. The B6165 and B645 are the main roads that access the area and run parallel to the River Nidd with a network

of secondary roads and lanes offering access to surrounding villages and farmsteads.

The area is highly valued and lies within the designated Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Discordant features such as intermittent traffic noise and telegraph poles detract from the experience of the place.

## Key Characteristics

### Geology, soils and drainage

- Millstone grit solid geology with glacial drift deposits.
- Slowly permeable, seasonally-waterlogged mixture of fine loamy and coarse loamy soils over clay.

### Landform and Drainage Pattern

- Broad U-shaped valley landform rising between 70m AOD on the valley bottom to 330m AOD.
- The River Nidd is a key feature following a course south-westwards to Harrogate. Darley Beck flows eastwards along a small valley system to converge with the Nidd in the middle of this character area.
- Many springs feed numerous small becks which in turn feed into Darley Beck and the Nidd.

## Key Characteristics (Cont'd)

- Three small dams along two minor tributaries at Spence Dam and Fringill create millponds for past milling industry.

### Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife

- Improved grassland intensively managed for livestock.
- Small to medium sized fields of early and parliamentary enclosures bound by stone walls or hedges with individual trees scattered along field boundaries.
- Several small to medium sized woodland blocks including Ancient Semi-Natural woodland at The Darley Mill Centre, Low Hall Wood, Throstle Nest, Willies Wood, West Wood and Winsleyhurst.
- Woodland cover becomes sparser up the valley sides and where the valley levels out in the transitional area between undulating upland grassland and valley landform.
- Winsley Grange (unregistered) is a notable parkland landscape.
- Site of Importance for Nature Conservation at Woodman Wray Flush, marshy grassland habitat, where waterlogging supports wetland plants.
- Caravan/camping Park in valley bottom at Manor House Farm.

### Settlement, built environment and communications

- Main settlements at Dacre Banks, Dacre, Darley, Thornthwaite, Throstle Nest and Summerbridge.
- Lots of scattered individual farmsteads.
- Traditional vernacular building materials include local gritstone with stone slate roofs. Recent developments in villages use brick.
- Thornthwaite Packhorse Bridge of historic interest.
- Strong network of public footpaths including the Nidderdale Way.
- Dismantled railway parallel to the River Nidd.
- Evidence of past milling industry with millponds and mill buildings such as at Summerbridge.

## Sensitivities & Pressures

- The area is sensitive to change from new development particularly on upper valley sides and high ground between the two valleys.
- The landscape may have a greater capacity to absorb change along valley floor due to tree cover, existing development pattern and landform.
- Pressure stems from the changing fortunes of farming and the need to change land management regimes and diversify business to stay profitable. Coupled with increasing demand for residential properties in the countryside in this picturesque area close to Harrogate and Leeds, continued change in landscape character is expected.

- Marginal habitats are susceptible to neglect, change of use and built development.
- Potential loss of vernacular due to neglect of traditional buildings and use of inappropriate materials for new development.
- Neglect and loss of heritage features due to modern/changing land management practices could impact adversely on landscape character.

## Guidelines

### Aim: Maintain rural character and habitats of the area.

- Settlement beyond existing development limits will impact upon the rural character. New built development should relate to the existing settlement pattern of its location in the character area, for example Darley is linear and Summerbridge is compact.
- Use tree planting to limit extent of settlement edge in the valley bottom villages and farmsteads.
- Protect natural and semi-natural habitats; promote creation of appropriate new habitats and management of existing ones in line with the Harrogate District Biodiversity Action Plan.

### Aim: Preserve strong landscape pattern.

- Promote repair and maintenance of stone walls and hedges to preserve diverse field pattern along the valley sides.
- Encourage woodland, tree and forestry management to respect and enhance landscape pattern and landform.
- Development to respect settlement pattern and resist sprawl into the countryside.

### Aim: To improve and enhance woodland and habitat.

- Promote woodland management and replacement of individual trees in line with the Harrogate District Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Encourage appropriate habitat creation through changes in land management in consultation with DEFRA and Countryside Stewardship Schemes.

### Aim: To protect vernacular characteristics.

- New buildings must contribute to vernacular.
- Promote the maintenance and repair of vernacular buildings.
- To recognise value and contribution of vernacular buildings to landscape character, new buildings to respect vernacular.