

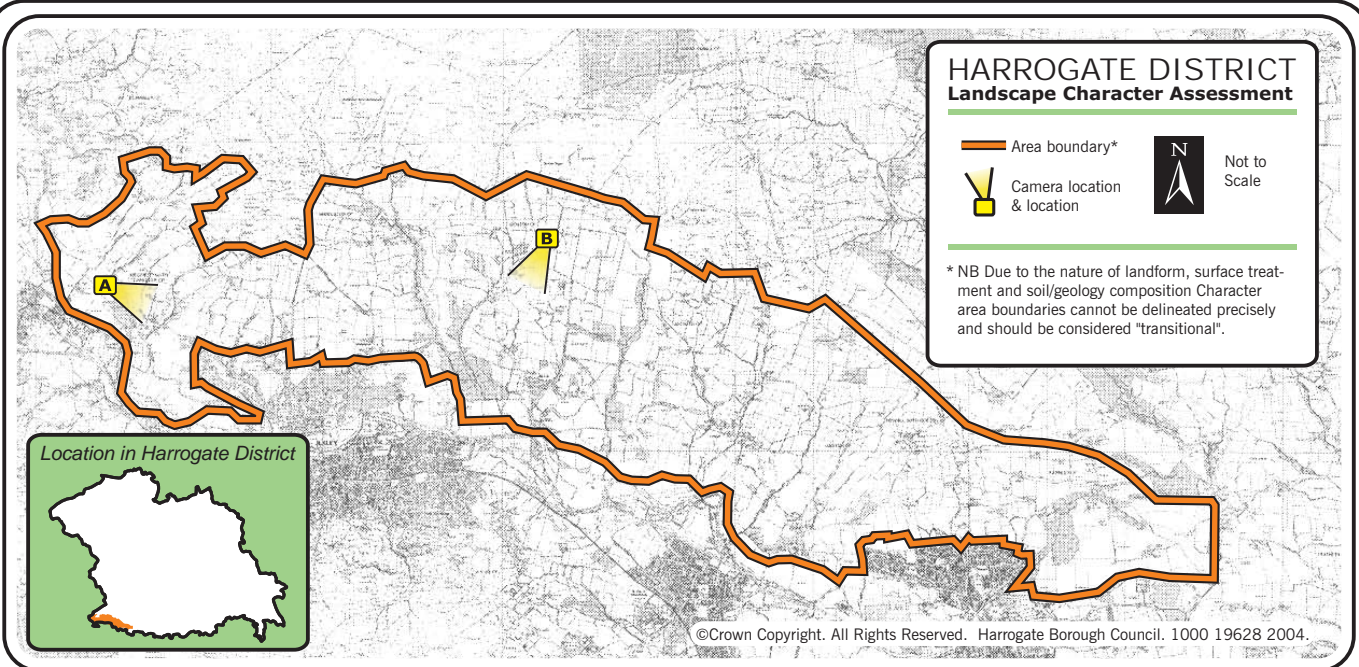
AREA 18

Approved
Feb 2004

A Wharfedale valley looking east to Nesfield.



Wharfedale south-facing valley side Lathe House Beck - Weston Park



Description

This linear character area, approximately 35km² in size, is the south facing valley side of the River Wharfe corridor where it forms the southern boundary of Harrogate District. It is distinctive from the built up and steeper north facing valley side outside the District. The valley runs in a west to east direction towards the confluence with the River Ouse.

The U-shaped valley is large scale and broad with sides that gently undulate as they slope down from the upland moor to the flat valley floor. The pattern created by man in the form of fields and settlement is smaller scale.

The River Wharfe meanders across the floodplain and is fed by several tributaries that flow from north to south incising the valley side. The river and its tributaries are heavily cloaked in deciduous woodland forming dark green sinuous shapes in the landscape. Many of the woods are registered as Ancient Semi- Natural Woodland. Alongside the river improved grassland fields are bound by hedges and fencing as well as patches of open floodplain meadow and marginal vegetation.

Further up-slope views become extensive and land use is simpler with regular fields of improved grassland managed for livestock. Large blocks of woodland are angular and form geometric patterns, insensitive to the landform. The Anglo-Danish originally founded many settlements. Some settlements here are typical estate villages.

Along the valley rim, adjoining the moorland, fields are slightly larger and are bound by neglected dry stone walls. The transition between the grass fields and

Gritstone moor is abrupt along the upper field boundaries.

The valley landscape is well-tended and easily accessed by a network of roads that run along and across the character area plus a dense network of public footpaths. Despite a few detractors (modern farm buildings, post and wire fencing, telecom masts and conifer plantations) the area is beautiful and stunning with many recreational opportunities for people who enjoy the countryside. This area is in the designated Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Key Characteristics

Geology, soils and drainage

- Millstone grit solid geology with head and till drift geology.
- Slowly permeable, seasonally-waterlogged, fine loamy and fine loamy over clayey soils.

Landform and drainage pattern

- Broad and undulating valley side rising from 50m to 210m AOD.
- Several tributaries fed by the moor to the north and the many springs on the valley side, run south, incising the valley side to join the River Wharfe.
- March Ghyll Reservoir at the top of Bow Beck Gill is a small water body in the area.

Key Characteristics (Cont'd)

Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife

- Improved grassland fields intensively managed for grazing with occasional arable fields.
- Medium to large fields with a mixture of hedges, fencing and walls, plus rabbit-proof fencing around some tree plantations.
- Individual trees are scattered along field boundaries on the lower slopes of the valley side and valley floor.
- Large woodland blocks across the valley side plus heavily treed river tributaries, square conifer plantations and shelterbelts along Denton Moor edge.
- Ancient Semi-Natural woodland along West Beck and along Dean Beck at Dean, plus small blocks along Bow Beck and Hopper Carr Beck
- Isolated areas of parkland trees at Denton Park, Farnley Park, Weston Park and Middleton.
- Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation:
 - Holden Gill Wood, West Park, Stubbs Wood are calcareous woods made up of Ash, sometimes Hazel and Hawthorn shrubs beneath the canopy;
 - March Ghyll Grassland is acid, dominated by a range of fine leaved grasses and flowering plants;
 - Middleton hospital is long established grassland with a history of low intensity farm management supporting a rich variety of rare wild flowers.
- Golf course west of Ilkley at Riddings Lathe.

Settlement, built environment and communications

- The main settlements are Nesfield, Langbar, Farnley, Clifton, Weston, Askwith, Denton and Middleton (Denton, Weston and Clifton have village Conservation Areas).
- The settlements have Anglian or Scandinavian origins and several have become estate villages.



B Looking south from above Denton.

- Traditional building materials are mainly local sandstone with stone flag and blue slate roofs.
- Minor roads cross the valley side on a north-south axis providing access to Otley and Ilkley (just outside Harrogate District).
- A good network of public footpaths criss-crosses the valley side.

Sensitivities & Pressures

- Development pressure from demand for houses in the countryside in this area within commuting distance of Leeds and Harrogate.
- Capacity of the existing road network to take increased traffic is limited. Possible pressure to upgrade the road between Otley and Ilkley on this side of the valley.
- Demand for recreation facilities in the countryside.
- Use of tracks by off-road vehicles to access moorland tracks.
- Rhododendron invasion of the woodlands is changing their character.
- Field pattern suggests a mix of early and parliamentary enclosure. This pattern could be lost if field boundaries are neglected.

Guidelines

Aim: Protect the diversity of the landscape pattern.

- Ensure development fits with settlement pattern and vernacular. Avoid amalgamation of existing settlements and scattered farmsteads and houses. New development must respect local pattern of well-spaced settlement.
- Field boundaries require protection and maintenance.

Aim: Maintain distinct rural character of this south facing valley side in contrast to that of the north facing valley side.

- Scale of development must respect local settlement and landscape pattern.
- Manage recreation activities by providing information and interpretation at relevant locations. Liaise with local clubs.

Aim: Retain woodland and tree cover and enhance the integration of square blocks

- Woodland management needs to take a proactive role in maintaining the wooded nature of this area in the long run.
- Promote the diversification of geometric plantation edges to integrate coniferous woodland with the broadleaved wooded valley landscape.