

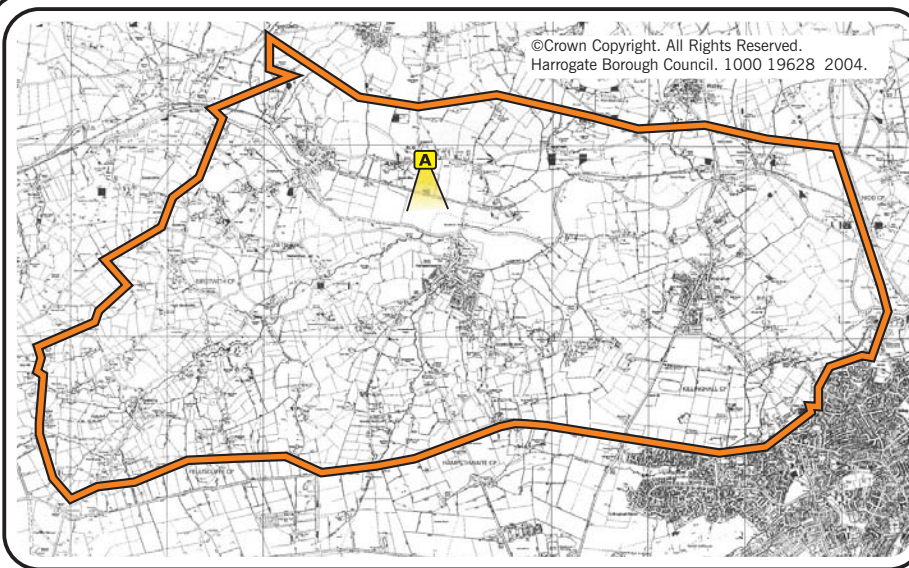
AREA 24

Approved
Feb 2004

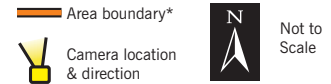
A From Clint looking south towards Hampsthwaite.



Lower Nidderdale Valley north west of Harrogate



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 Character Area covers approximately 27km² to the north west of Harrogate and is a transitional area of the Nidd Valley as it progresses towards lower land. The confluence of Oak Beck with the River Nidd marks the eastern boundary and New Bridge (a 19th century packhorse bridge) on the Nidd west of Birstwith marks the western boundary. The valley Character Area extends to its rim north and south.

This is a large-scale, broad valley with a flat floor that channels extensive views. The valley floor landscape pattern is intimate and diverse with random fields typical of early enclosure. Field boundaries are an eclectic mix of walls, hedges, stock fences and metal estate fences. Higher up the valley sides to the south there are larger fields typical of parliamentary enclosure which are transitional with Character Area 22: Menwith and Penny Pot Grassland.

Land management is diverse with cereal crops on the richer soils of the valley floor and intensive grazing on the valley sides. There is also some small industry such as Kerry's Mill whose signs are discordant in an otherwise well-balanced landscape.

Woodland and tree cover in the area is particularly good on the valley floor. Tree cover does decrease close to the boundary with Character Area 22.

The area is an important gateway site for both Harrogate and Nidderdale. The urban edge of Harrogate influences the eastern edge of the area. There are several villages and scattered farmsteads and residences. The villages tend to be compact but have expanded due to development pressure. The area is well served by roads and intermittent traffic noise can be heard in this easily

accessible area. The western-most end of this Character Area is in the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Much of the area is within the boundary of The Royal Forest of Knaresborough, a former medieval hunting park, and it contains five of its old boundary stones.

The area is well tended around settlements and dwellings, and is generally picturesque.

Key Characteristics

Geology, soils and drainage

- ▶ Millstone grit solid geology.
- ▶ Surface water gley soils, slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged, fine loamy, loamy over clayey and clayey soils on the valley sides.
- ▶ Brown soils consisting of river alluvium, deep stoneless permeable coarse loamy soils along the flat valley floor, some fine loamy soils affected by ground water.

Landform and drainage pattern

- ▶ Broad valley landform 60m AOD at the flat valley floor gradually rising to 160m AOD.
- ▶ The River Nidd has several tributaries that incise the valley sides to meet the river including Ripley Beck, Tang Beck and Cockhill Beck.
- ▶ Springs and wells are dotted throughout the valley.

Key Characteristics

Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife

- Valley sides are intensively managed as pasture for livestock with small areas of arable production on the flat valley floor.
- Early enclosure field pattern with small patches of parliamentary enclosure are evident, with field sizes enlarging up the valley sides.
- Several deciduous clumps and a few notable woodland blocks include Ancient Semi-Natural woodland at Wilk's Wood near Clint. Individual trees scattered along boundaries and a few isolated areas of trees scattered within fields (parkland remnants).
- Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation are:
 - Tang Beck (wet woodland);
 - Fountainhead (acidic grassland).

Settlement, Built Environment and communications

- Main settlements are Killinghall, Birstwith, Clint and Hampsthwaite (a village Conservation Area) strategically placed at or close to river crossings.
- Killinghall dates back to before the Domesday Book and takes its name from Celtic origins and would be much more widely appreciated if not for its traffic congestion.
- There are important Grade II listed 17th and 18th century landmark buildings within the parish and many unrivalled views of the Lower Nidd Valley, as well as many elements of historic interest (bridge and church at Hampsthwaite, Cross and stocks at Clint and Clint Hall remnants) plus the course of the medieval monk wall near Birstwith.
- Scattered farmsteads and individual houses are distributed along the valley sides.
- Traditional building materials include local sandstone, slate and red brick and tile.
- A dismantled railway line passes along the valley bottom north of the river.
- There is an intricate network of minor roads linking the villages and the many scattered hamlets, farmsteads and residential dwellings. The older road bridge was acknowledged for many hundreds of years as one of the three most important bridges in Nidderdale. A Roman road also crossed the Nidd at Hampsthwaite.
- A network of public footpaths particularly around Hampsthwaite, Killinghall and north Birstwith including the Nidderdale Way. Some of these are old packhorse routes.

Sensitivities & Pressures

- There is pressure for built development in this area for residential, tourism and small industry purposes. This area's ability to accept change without harm to its character is limited, especially where development would be visible or result in the loss of woodland and trees or in the increase in conifer plantation.

- The landscape contains many scattered buildings and has a limited capacity to accept additional built development without detriment to landscape character through coalescence.
- Ignoring the importance of historic origins of this area could mean archaeology is lost.
- Parkland areas are susceptible to change through changing farming practices, and the loss of hedges and walls will impact upon landscape pattern and ultimately character
- Individual trees characteristic of the area appear of similar age with few young replacements. Their loss will ultimately impact upon the character.
- Signs for small industry and traffic control, to meet highway standards, impact on the character of minor roads.

Guidelines

Aim: To retain landscape pattern and rural character between settlements.

- Preserve traditional field boundaries and encourage the restoration and management of hedges and walls.
- Promote proactive management of the river corridor in consultation with landowners, the Environment Agency and anglers.
- Additional individual buildings between settlements will impact on rural character, as would the domestication of the few field barns remaining.

Aim: Maintain diverse tree cover in the area, preserve woodland habitats and promote habitat diversity.

- Protect and manage Ancient Semi-Natural woodland.
- Hedgerow and parkland trees require management and a programme of replacement.
- Explore opportunities to diversify grassland in the area and enhance the patchwork pattern on the valley sides.

Aim: To conserve archaeological & historical features.

- Protect early enclosure boundaries and promote research and identification of key archaeological features and their setting.

Aim: To ensure public rights of way remain in use.

- Encourage appropriate public access throughout the area and to surrounding areas.
- Promote the maintenance of public rights of way.

Aim: To improve integration of roads with the landscape.

- Ensure that new access arrangements are in keeping with landform and landscape pattern.
- Linear planting along major roads should be avoided as this can accentuate the road's presence in the landscape - planting should respect the pattern and landform of the landscape.