

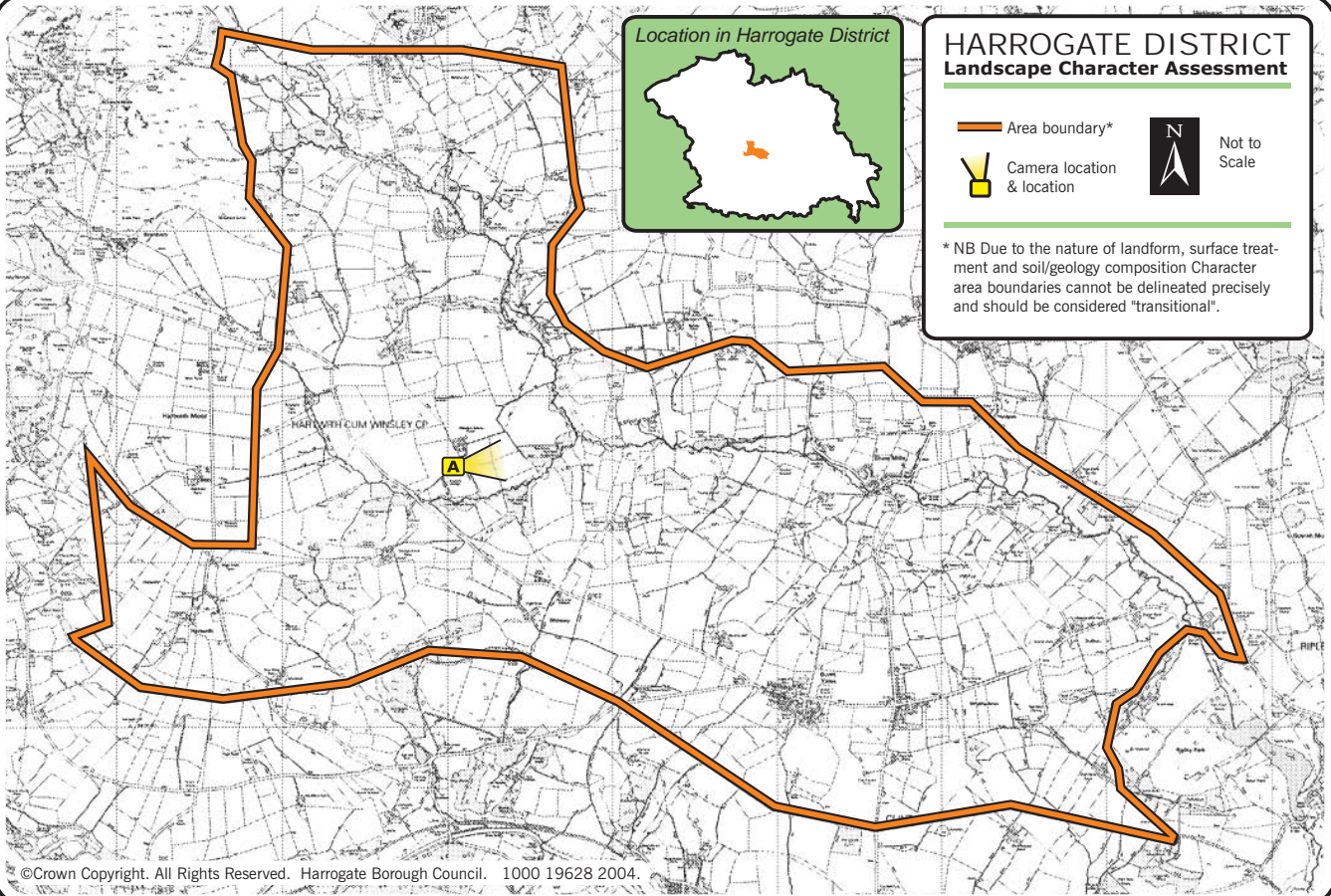
AREA 25

Approved
Feb 2004

A Looking east over Lurk Beck from Mansion House Farm.



Thornton Beck Vale Fringe Grassland



Description

This is a diverse transitional Character Area of 16.5km² extending from Hartwith Moor Grassland Plateau in the west to Ripley Park in the east following the course of Thornton Beck and the upper valley edge of the north valley side of Nidderdale. Landform is varied with undulating grassland fields incised by the winding, small-scale valleys of Thornton Beck and Lurk Beck.

These valleys run along the northern edge of the Character Area and are heavily cloaked in woodland that is sparse elsewhere but for a few trees scattered along field boundaries.

The landscape is moderate in scale with views semi-enclosed and dispersed by the woodland of the becks and the undulating landform which is highest at Hartwith before generally falling away to the south east towards the Nidderdale Valley and to the north east towards Thornton Beck. This area was within the land holdings of Fountains Abbey in the past and this has influenced the landscape pattern.

Beyond the river valleys land use is balanced with medium sized muted green grassland fields managed for livestock. This simple landscape can often seem remote but it remains well-tended and is intensively farmed. The western part of the area is in the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Key Characteristics

Geology, soils and drainage

- Millstone grit solid geology
- Slowly permeable, seasonally-waterlogged, fine loamy over clayey soils with patches of well-drained coarse loamy soils over rock.

Landform and drainage pattern

- Undulating landform following the valley of Thornton Beck.
- Thornton Beck, with its strong network of tributaries, and Lurk Beck are the main water features.

Key Characteristics (Cont'd)

- Mill Dam and Mill Race (disused), few reservoirs, Spa Well (sulphurous).
- A network of ditches along field boundaries drains the land particularly around Shaw Mills.

Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife

- Improved, early enclosure, grass fields in a random pattern.
- Dry stone wall field boundaries close to buildings and settlement and on higher ground reinforced by post and rail fences.
- Hedge field boundaries with fences at lower elevations.
- Heavily wooded watercourses, in particular Thornton Beck. Ancient Semi-Natural woodland at Trustee Wood, Winsleyhurst, South Wood and Spring House Wood.
- Few individual, deciduous trees scattered along field boundaries plus parkland trees at Winsley Grange, Spring House farm and near Brimham Lodge.
- Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation are Spring House Wood and Shaw Mills High Dam.

Settlement, built environment and communications

- The main settlements are Burnt Yates, Hartwith and Shaw Mills plus individual scattered farmsteads and old residential houses.
- Traditional building materials are local sandstone and grey/blue slate roofs.
- Fishponds at Brimham Hall, Brimham Lodge and its Sundial and the course of the monk wall linked to Fountains Abbey are of historic importance.
- There are two disused mills on Thornton Beck.
- An intricate network of footpaths (including the Nidderdale Way) and roads criss-crosses the area.

Sensitivities & Pressures

- This rural pastoral landscape does have some capacity to accommodate rural development of appropriate scale due to its wooded nature and landform as well as scattered settlement pattern. However, the area is sensitive to road improvements, enlargement of settlements and change in vernacular.
- This Character Area is important to the setting of Ripley Park, a Historic Park and Garden located southeast at the downstream end of the Thornton Beck valley. Changes in water quality and changes in the valley as viewed from Scarah Bank will impact upon the character and setting of the Historic Park and Garden.

- There may be blocks of Ancient Semi-Natural woodland too small to be Registered (below 2 hectares in size) which may come under threat.
- Woodland structure and diversity requires management for wildlife and timber production to maintain character.
- Historic buildings, structures and features may be neglected resulting in loss of elements intrinsic to the history of this character area.

Guidelines

Aim: To protect and enhance the pattern of tree cover.

- Promote proactive woodland management, in particular identified sites of Ancient Semi-Natural woodland.
- Research small woodland blocks to determine whether or not they are Ancient Semi-Natural woodland.
- Liaise with DEFRA and the Forestry Commission regarding woodland management.

Aim: To conserve the diverse landscape pattern and landform.

- Promote the maintenance and repair of both dry stone wall and hedge field boundaries.
- Encourage the planting of individual trees along field boundaries and in areas of parkland, particularly along Thornton Beck corridor hedgerow field boundaries.
- New native woodland planting should be located in hollows and along watercourses to accentuate landform, avoiding the skyline.
- Development must respect settlement pattern and vernacular and should be discouraged where views and landscape pattern are affected. The contribution that the area makes to the setting of Ripley Park should also confer protection from development.

Aim: To preserve the historic fabric of the landscape.

- Promote the identification of historic field patterns and their origins. The area includes parliamentary and early enclosure from various times (some of which could be medieval).
- The area was in the control of Fountains Abbey during monastic times and some of the features and patterns date from that time. The south-east end of the area was in the Royal Forest of Knaresborough, a former medieval hunting park. Characteristics and features contributing to the history of the area should be protected.