

AREA

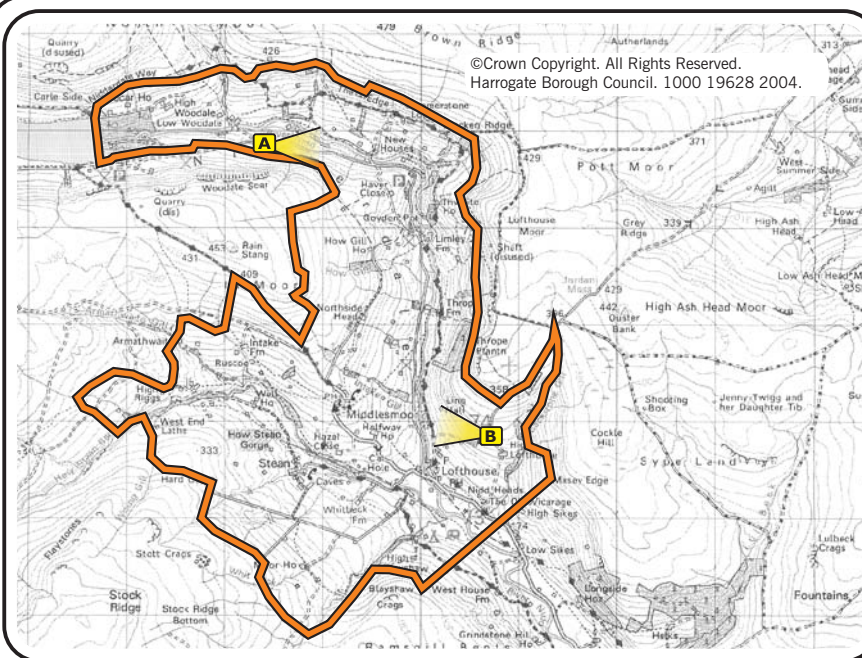
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Approved
Feb 2004

A Looking down the valley.



Upper Nidderdale Valley



HARROGATE DISTRICT Landscape Character Assessment

Area boundary*

Camera location
& direction



Not to
Scale

* 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

A diverse landscape covering 15km² where the small-scale valley systems of Blayshaw gill and How Stean Beck converge with the Nidd valley. Many tributaries drain the surrounding moorland into the River Nidd.

The valley is narrow and steep sided evoking feelings of partial enclosure along the valley floor. Channeled views are enhanced by dense tree/woodland cover along the river corridor and up the gills, which incise the valley sides. At higher elevations the valley sides broaden and the landscape becomes more open offering longer, dispersed views. Middlesmoor village is situated at the apex of the broad ridge between the Nidd Valley and How Stean Beck Valley and has extensive views across both.

Regimented blocks of conifer plantations are prominent along the upper extent of the Character Area particularly on the south facing valley slope.

The settlement at Middlesmoor may be prehistoric: field patterns vary from small, higgledy-piggledy fields (many of which were created as monastic farmland) at lower elevations and around settlement, to contrasting rectangular enclosures higher up, bounded by stone walls, fences and trees. The field patterns and other historic features indicate a long tradition of farming.

The main road follows the former Nidd Valley Light Railway line (which is visible as a bank for most of its length). A public footpath network provides easy access on foot and a road following the valley floor links villages and farmsteads with larger settlements

downstream. The area is well-used by walkers and valued by local people and the tourism industry. It is pleasant and attractive and lies within the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Upper Nidderdale Site of Special Scientific Interest includes the underground course of the River Nidd and How Stean Gorge.

Key Characteristics

Geology, soils and drainage

- Millstone grit solid geology with fluvio-glacial drift deposits.
- Slowly-permeable, seasonally-waterlogged mixture of fine to coarse loamy soils over clay with acidic peaty topsoil.

Landform and drainage pattern

- V-shaped valley rising from 150m AOD in the valley bottom downstream to approximately 430m AOD at the valley rim upstream.
- How Stean Gorge is a notable narrow gorge where underlying limestone is exposed.
- How Stean Beck, Blayshaw Gill and many major tributaries and gills converge with the River Nidd.

Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife

- Improved, semi-improved and rough grassland managed for livestock with grade 4 agricultural land value.

Key Characteristics (Cont'd)

- Early enclosure small fields along the valley floor and lower slopes.
- Parliamentary enclosure of larger rectilinear fields at higher elevations.
- Fields are bound by dry stone walls reinforced with post and wire fencing in areas, post and rail fencing alongside the road plus individual trees scattered along field boundaries.
- Several small geometric blocks of coniferous plantations along valley rim and deciduous woodland clumps along the river corridor plus a few individual trees scattered within fields.
- There are 3 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation:
 - Lofthouse Spoil Heaps (calcareous grassland);
 - Backstone Gill Wood (oak woodlands);
 - High Thrope Wood (wet woodlands).

Settlement, built environment and communications

- The main settlements are Middlesmoor and Lofthouse (both have village Conservation Areas). Stean is a small hamlet in the valley of How Stean Beck. Middlesmoor Church is a prominent landmark.
- There are small-scale scattered farmsteads along the valley side and floor.
- Sparsely-scattered field barns of good condition.
- Traditional building materials of local gritstone and stone slate roofing sometimes replaced with corrugated sheeting plus a few modern farm buildings of breeze block and Yorkshire boarding.
- Farm roads cross valley sides.
- Public footpaths, including the Nidderdale Way, radiate from Middlesmoor.
- Evidence of past quarrying, mining, textiles and water supply.
- Evidence of Bronze Age settlement at Middlesmoor.

Sensitivities & Pressures

- The remote rural character of the area is sensitive to the residential conversion of isolated field barns.
- Pressures on farming and its viability have led to a need to diversify from traditional management regimes, introducing new business such as recreation facilities (e.g. caravan parks) and changes in land use (e.g. forestry).
- Pressure from existing tourism facilities and attractions and possible demand for new facilities could adversely impact upon character.
- Characteristic traditional farm buildings have become redundant as farming has modernised.

- Modern farm buildings (needed to help business remain profitable) have impacted upon character when they are highly visible and do not relate to settlement pattern and landform.
- Profiled metal sheeting roofs have replaced stone roofs on some barns for economic reasons resulting in minor changes in character but having limited impact on overall landscape character.
- Rectilinear conifer plantations detract from landscape character.

Guidelines

Aim: To conserve and enhance the intimate rural character of the two upland valleys.

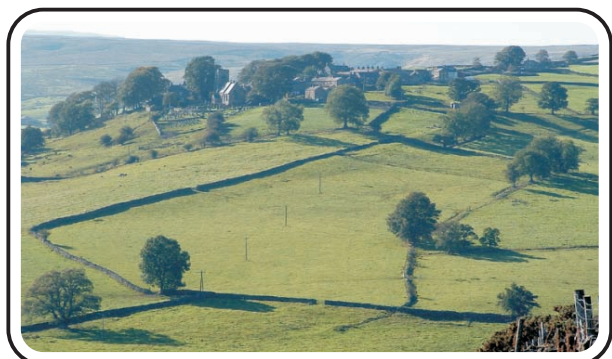
- Conversion of field barns should only be considered where they relate well to existing settlements and would not require upgraded access.
- Promote the consolidation and appropriate repair of field barns and traditional farm buildings.
- New farm buildings must relate to existing farmsteads and settlement pattern and be of appropriate materials.
- Repair and maintain stone walls to preserve field pattern variety - especially early enclosure.

Aim: Promote management of recreational facilities and tourist attractions to minimise impact on landscape and biodiversity.

- Design of visitor attraction signs requires co-ordination to respect local character.
- Car parking provision must integrate with landscape character and pattern. Highly visible locations would not be acceptable.

Aim: To encourage the creation of transitional habitats between the moorland edge and improved grassland.

- Promote diversification of grassland habitat at moorland edge through less intensive farming practices in consultation with DEFRA.
- Conifer plantations should be designed to fit with landform and landscape pattern, incorporating deciduous fringes.



B Middlesmoor.