

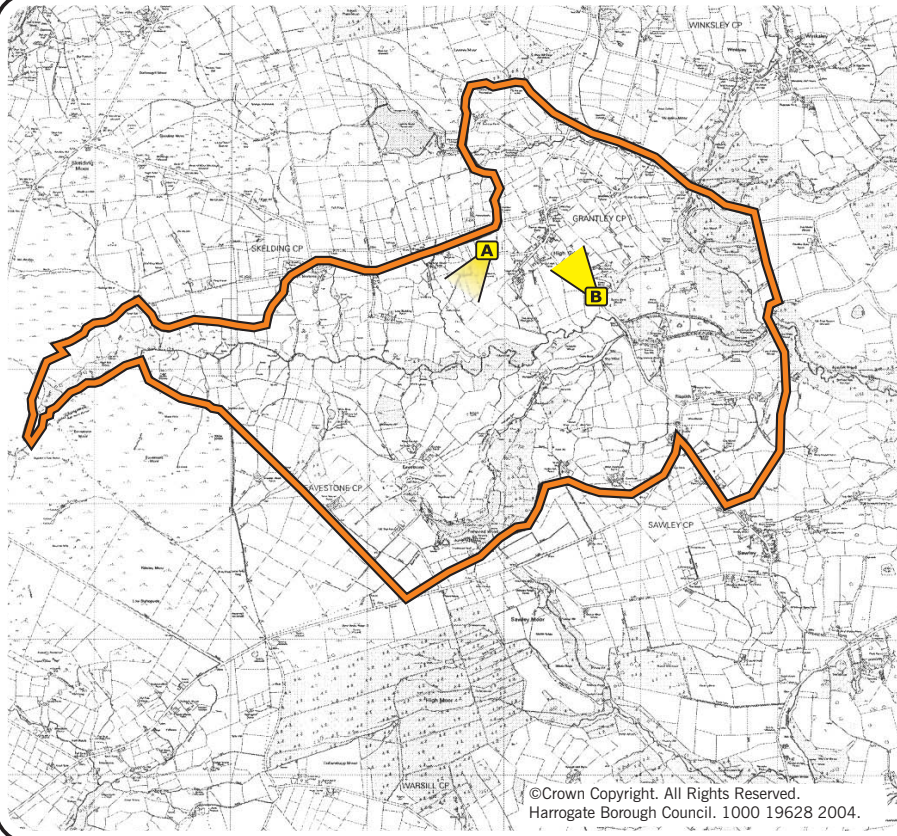
**AREA  
31**

**Approved  
Feb 2004**

**A** Looking south west from High Grantley over the Skell valley.



**Upper River Skell 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".



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**Description**

This is the upper valley of the River Skell extending from its source at Skell Gill on the moorland edge in the west to Low Kirby Wood near Grantley Hall in the east. The area covers just under 10km<sup>2</sup>.

At first the valley is narrow and relatively steep, shrouded in the Ancient Semi-Natural woodland of Skell Gill Wood, channelling and enclosing views beyond the valley floor.

As the valley begins to broaden Hungate Dike and Horsley Dike are two notable tributaries that join the River Skell along heavily-wooded gills that have each been dammed to create Eavestone Lake and Brim Bray Pond.

Woodland is associated with the watercourses and bodies of water, and becomes sparse at higher elevations but for conifer plantations that form insensitive, rectangular blocks detracting from views.

Land management is simple with a random pattern of early enclosure. Muted grassland fields managed for live-stock and bound by a mix of walls, hedges and fencing in varying states of repair. Many field barns are left to crumble through neglect in this remote and stunning setting. This area is within the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

**Key Characteristics**

**Geology, soils and drainage**

- Millstone grit solid geology.
- A slowly permeable, seasonally-waterlogged, brown and surface water gley soils.



**B** Hedges and hedgerow trees near Grantley.

## Key Characteristics (Cont'd)

### Landform and drainage pattern

- Narrow valley landform gradually becoming broader.
- The River Skell is the dominant watercourse plus Hungate Dike and Horsley Dike and other small becks.
- Eavestone Lake and Brim Bray Pond plus several springs.

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

- Improved and semi-improved grassland managed for livestock production in small to medium sized fields.
- Field pattern is random, largely typical of early enclosure with small patches of more regular parliamentary enclosure towards the edges.
- Deciduous clumps and woodland grow along the watercourses and lakes/ponds.
- Woodland and individual trees are scarce at higher elevations except for conifer plantations.
- Skell Gill Wood is Ancient Semi-Natural woodland.

### Settlement, built environment and communications

- The main settlements are High Grantley, Low Grantley, Eavestone, High Skelding and Risplith.
- Building materials include gritstone and stone slate, grey slate and red tile roofs plus modern farm buildings of breezeblock and Yorkshire boarding.
- Grantley Hall with associated parkland and arboretum is a key feature in the wooded valley.
- There are two bridges either side of Grantley Hall, otherwise no major crossing points.
- A network of footpaths and tracks cross the area but there are few roads.

## Sensitivities & Pressures

- Pressure for change is low and linked to the rural economy.
- The distinctiveness of the valley derives from woodland cover and the diverse field pattern coupled with built form and layout that has developed gradually in response to the landscape's physical characteristics. This distinctive quality is sensitive to change.
- Lack of transition between the gritstone moor habitats and improved grassland fields limiting habitat diversity in the area.
- Conifer plantations detract from landscape character in the area.
- Erosion due to run off during heavy rainfall.

## Guidelines

### Aim: To conserve the distinctive field pattern and the wooded character of the gills.

- Maintain, manage and repair field boundaries, particularly close to settlement and at the moorland edge.
- Where possible soften the straight lines of plantations to fit in with landform and landscape pattern.
- Avoid the creation of new tracks and access arrangements.
- Encourage less intensive management of fields at the moorland fringe to diversify habitat and create a more gradual transition between the upper valley and moorland.
- Promote diversification of the woodland structure in the area for example by introducing deciduous species to the edge of conifer plantations.

### Aim: Conserve distinctive landform characteristics of the gills and valleys.

- Avoid the creation of ponds on valley sides.
- Avoid development requiring earthworks that will impact upon the landform.
- New woodland should be concentrated along gills and in hollows to accentuate landform and create a network of woodland habitat.

### Aim: To reduce erosion of the valley sides.

- Explore ways to reduce run off from the moor through blocking of moorland grips where landowners are in agreement.