

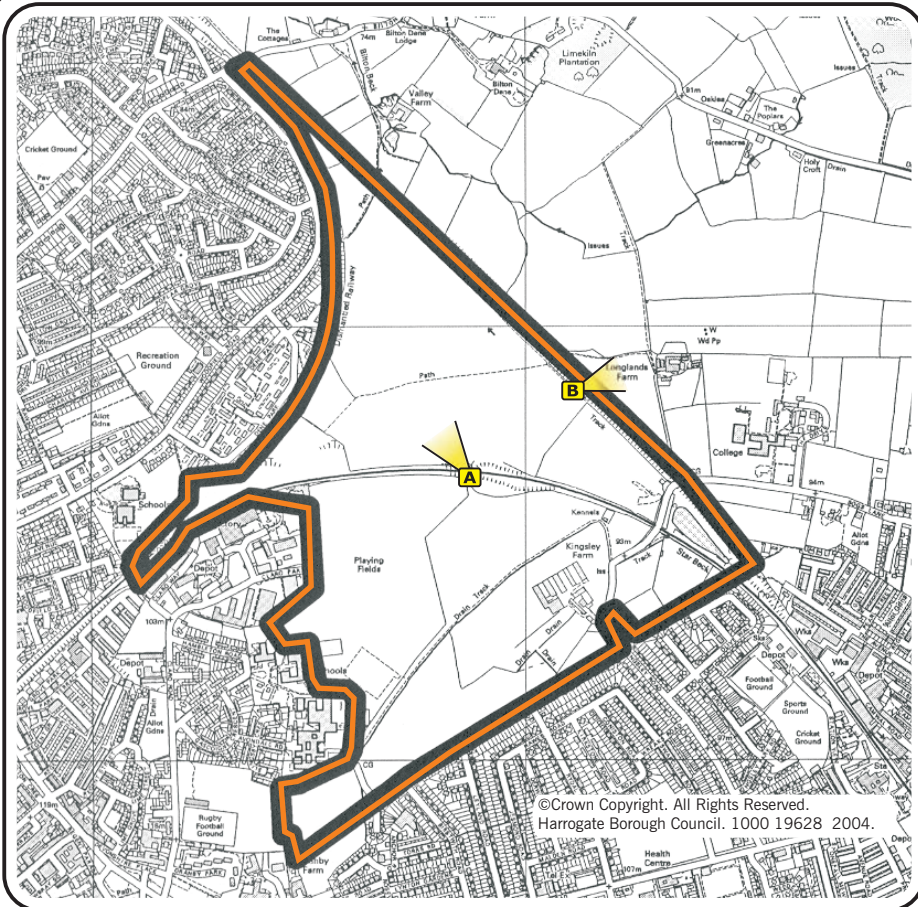
AREA 55

Approved
Feb 2004

A From the bridge over the railway looking north west.



Bilton Triangle



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 is a small, almost triangular-shaped, Character Area covering less than 1km² on urban edge of northeast Harrogate. It is a distinctive place surrounded by development on three sides and a disused railway line along its boundary with open countryside to the northeast. The main York to Harrogate Railway line passes through the area. Housing, small industry and a local leisure centre and school are located on the urban boundary.

The playing fields of the leisure centre and school occupy the south west portion of the Character Area and they are intensively managed for sports such as football and rugby. These manicured fields contrast with the rest of the Character Area which is a mixture of large, open, arable fields sloping away to the north with some grassland. Disused railways along the north west and north east boundaries of the area are now used as footpaths. They are tree-lined and enclose the large fields.

This area is of great recreation and amenity value to the local residents due to its good network of easily accessible public footpaths. It is a popular place for dog walking and is used as a short cut between the north (Bilton) and east (Starbeck) of Harrogate by pedestrians and cyclists.

The residential urban edge is well wooded which softens its impact on views, except for from the school and leisure centre where neighbouring small industry can clearly be seen. Other detractors include a mixture of different boundary treatments such as post or concrete and wire fencing and security fencing.

The area is the subject of a Local Heritage Initiative project along with Character Areas 53 and 54.



B Bridge over the dismantled railway track (now a foot and cyclepath).

Key Characteristics

Geology, soils and drainage

- Millstone grit solid geology.
- Surface water gley soils, slowly permeable, seasonally-waterlogged, fine loamy and fine loamy over clayey soils.

Landform and drainage pattern

- The landform is generally flat, rising slightly to the west and south between 75m and 90m AOD.
- Bilton Beck crosses the north corner of the area and there is an angling lake in the south east corner.

Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife

- Land use is a mix of farmland and playing fields on grade 3 agricultural land.
- Original field pattern has largely been lost and is now influenced by the railway lines both disused and in use.
- Where field boundaries remain they consist of over grown hedges with fences. There is security fencing around the school playing fields.
- Tree cover is concentrated along the railway lines in the northern half of the Character Area and around field boundaries close to Kingsley Farm in the southern half of the character area. In between are large open areas with no trees.

Settlement, built environment and communications

- The main settlement is the urban edge of Harrogate (Bilton and Starbeck) and a single farmstead called Kingsley Farm.
- Half of the Character Area is enclosed by a triangle of two disused and one working railway lines.
- Several public footpaths cross the area.
- The area is within the boundary of The Royal Forest of Knaresborough, a former medieval hunting park.

Sensitivities & Pressures

- The area is an important green link into the centre of Harrogate and the Stray. Part of the area is designated as Green Wedge in the Harrogate District Local Plan in recognition of this role.
- The open character of this small green area is sensitive to built development which would result in a loss of openness.
- There is likely to be increased pressure for development in the area due to its proximity to Harrogate. This would require urban sprawl or encroachment into the area.
- Vehicular access to the area is limited and future development would impact upon the road network and as a result character.
- The urban edge is susceptible to neglect. Woodland and trees have been left and there has been rubbish dumping from residences beyond their garden boundaries onto public footpath. This impacts upon the character of the footpaths and their setting.
- Poor maintenance of footpaths becoming unusable in bad weather.

Guidelines

Aim: Maintain a substantial green link with Harrogate town centre and enhance the wooded character of the urban edge in this area to improve visual link with adjacent Character Area “The Harrogate-Knaresborough Corridor”

- Development proposals must make provision to maintain and enhance the green wedge into Harrogate and mitigate impact on landscape character.
- Encourage planting of trees along urban edge to soften views of housing, the school and neighbouring small industry.

Aim: Respect for the residential amenity of the area and the importance of the footpaths as a local resource contributing to character.

- Residents must be discouraged from tipping waste in the area, especially on the footpaths. Increase awareness of problems linked to tipping.
- Maintenance of footpaths that residents use for quick and easy access along the urban edge.