

AREA 61

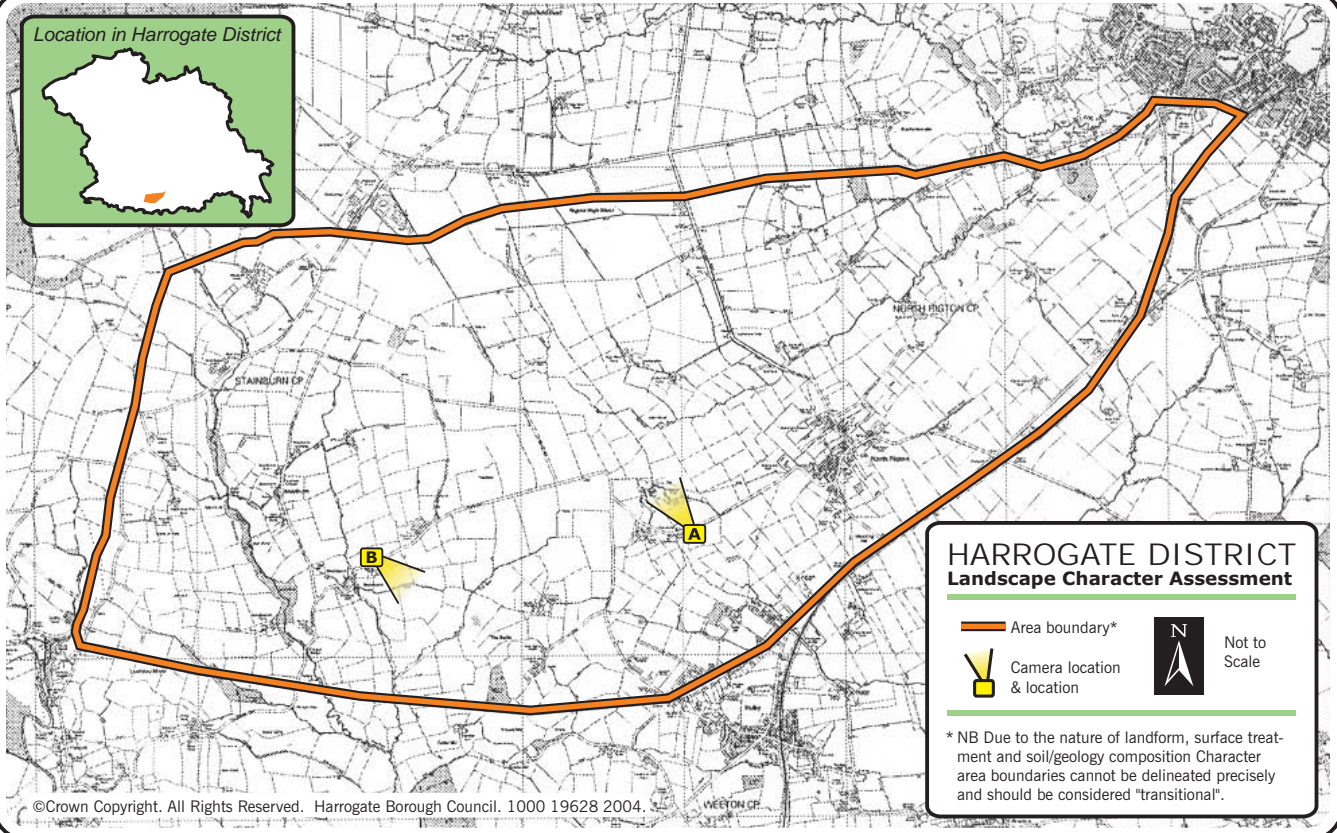
Approved
Feb 2004

A Almscliff crag.

South West Harrogate Upland Fringe Undulating Farmland



Location in Harrogate District



Description

This is a large-scale area covering 17km², which slopes down southwards towards the River Wharfe Valley from the edge of Stainburn Moor in the north west. The landform rolls and undulates with open views across a patchwork of random, medium-sized fields. The land is managed predominantly for livestock with one or two arable fields scattered between.

The fields are bound with hedges. Some are tall and overgrown. Despite the relative lack of woodland blocks there are a lot of individual trees on field boundaries, giving the area a well-wooded appearance.

The simplicity of the landscape is harmonious and, despite being easily accessible with intermittent traffic noise, can feel remote. There are several minor roads crossing the area but few farmsteads.

With views of Almscliffe Crag this is a beautiful and stunning landscape that is important to the rural upland fringe setting of Harrogate.

Key Characteristics

Geology, soils and drainage

- Millstone grit solid geology and till drift geology
- Slowly-permeable, seasonally-waterlogged, fine loamy over clayey soils.

Landform and drainage pattern

- Rolling/undulating landform gradually falling south and east.
- Occasional rock outcrops, most notably Armscliffe Crag a ridge south west of Pannal.
- Several becks and roadside drainage ditches drain the area south and east.

Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife

- Agricultural land managed for both livestock and cereal crop production.
- Average field size is medium with occasional larger fields at higher elevations to the north.
- Mix of early and parliamentary enclosure fields.
- Field boundaries consist mainly of hedges, some fragmented with fences and post and wire fences for stock control.

Key Characteristics (Cont'd)

- ▶ Individual trees scattered along boundaries.
- ▶ West Beck and Thrispin Beck are well-wooded and registered Ancient Semi-Natural. Elsewhere woodland cover is sparse.
- ▶ Great Almscliffe Crag is an SSSI.
- ▶ Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation at Stainburn Gill Wood (along West Beck) and Thrispin Beck Marsh.

Settlement, built environment and communications

- ▶ The main settlement is North Rigton. There are also several hamlets and farmsteads dispersed randomly across the area.
- ▶ A broad network of lanes, tracks, and paths cross the area.
- ▶ Moat at North Rigton of is a Scheduled Monument believed to be the site of a 13th century manor house. From 1244 until the dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539 the manor was held by Fountains Abbey.
- ▶ The area is within the boundary of The Royal Forest of Knaresborough, a former medieval hunting park.

Sensitivities & Pressures

- ▶ This area is located between Harrogate and Leeds and there is pressure for residential development as it is well within the commuter belt. However, most of the area is within the West Riding Green Belt which gives some measure of protection against inappropriate development.
- ▶ Post and wire fencing for stock control is replacing fragmented hedging resulting in degradation of the strong characteristic field pattern.
- ▶ A change in the trimming regime of the hedgerows will impact on visual characteristics.
- ▶ Introduction of arable land could lead to amalgamation of field and loss of field boundaries to increase production.
- ▶ The "woodiness" of this area is provided by individual trees along field boundaries and would change character if they were lost.

Guidelines

Aim: To maintain and enhance tree and woodland cover.

- ▶ Promote the conservation and management of all Ancient Semi-Natural woodland.
- ▶ Research areas of woodland too small to be registered to determine their origins.
- ▶ Conserve the wooded nature of West Beck and Thrispin Beck as wildlife corridors.
- ▶ Maintain and replant individual trees along field boundaries.
- ▶ Promote woodland planting along valleys and close to existing buildings to enhance wildlife corridors, taking account of landform.
- ▶ Discourage built development that would impact upon views, characteristics and features. Development should only be permitted where it respects landform, landscape pattern and vernacular.

Aim: To conserve the diverse landform, texture and pattern.

- ▶ Maintain and replant hedgerows so that they are high and bushy especially along the roadsides.
- ▶ Restore field boundaries and discourage amalgamation of fields where possible.
- ▶ Promote varied management regimes to diversify field appearance and improve biodiversity.
- ▶ Maintain and enhance extensive views and the setting of Almscliffe Crag which is a highly valued geological feature and landmark.

Aim: To conserve and promote archeologically important sites and protect their setting in the landscape.

- ▶ The medieval moated site at North Rigton is important to the history of this landscape once under the control of Fountains Abbey and was in the Royal Forest of Knaresborough.
- ▶ Protect the setting of historic sites and views to and from them.



B Looking south east from Stainburn