

# AREA 63

Approved  
Feb 2004

**A** Looking west from Netherby.

## River Wharfe flat Valley Bottom Washburn-Netherby Reach



### HARROGATE DISTRICT Landscape Character Assessment

- Area boundary\*
- Camera location & location



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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Location in Harrogate District



## Description

This area covers nearly 8km<sup>2</sup> and consists of the broad flat valley bottom of the River Wharfe from Leathley Bridge to Netherby. The river forms the boundary of Harrogate District with Leeds City and the Character Area extends to both sides of the river.

Scale varies along the valley bottom tending to become small where the flat valley floor becomes restricted. For much of the area large fields predominate particularly where the flat valley floor is broader, resulting in a larger scale landscape. The valley bottom is enclosed by the valley sides which tend to rise more steeply to the south. The landscape pattern is quite simple and with a muted palette. The area is largely considered to be harmonious and balanced but the presence of busy main roads which cross the Character Area detracts from this.

There are several small settlements and scattered farmsteads along the valley floor. Where Weeton Beck joins the Wharfe there is the important scheduled monument of Rougement Castle ringwork and bailey. This site is believed to date from Norman times and is possibly prehistoric in origin. The site was once the centre of the manor of Harewood. The historic significance of this site is important to the character of this area.

Views are largely channelled up and down the valley becoming dispersed where the valley bottom is broader and the sides less steep. The area is well-tended for agricultural purposes. This is a pleasant and beautiful river valley although constant traffic noise does detract from this.

## Key Characteristics

### Geology, soils and drainage

- Millstone grit solid geology & alluvial drift geology.
- Deep, stoneless and permeable, fine loamy soils at risk of flooding.

### Landform and drainage pattern

- Flat landform below 50m AOD.
- The River Wharfe floodplain plus its confluence with the River Washburn at Leathley.

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

- Intensively farmed, improved grassland with patches of arable and some floodplain meadow.
- Fields bound by fragmented hedgerows generally of poor condition.
- Riverside woodland and marginal vegetation.
- Very few individual trees survive scattered along field boundaries.

### Settlement, built environment and communications

- The main settlements on the Harrogate side are the small villages of Castley and Dunkswick that are situated on higher ground just outside the floodplain. Pool is the main settlement on the south side of the river.
- Few farmsteads and residential properties.
- Two road bridges cross the River Wharfe in this area. (Pool and Harewood).
- Rougement Carr is a Scheduled Monument and there are hints of prehistoric activity at the site.

## Key Characteristics (Cont'd)

- Public footpaths are intermittent along the course of the river.
- Rougemont Carr is a Scheduled Monument at the confluence of Weeton Beck with the River Wharfe.

## Sensitivities & Pressures

- The River Wharfe and intensive agricultural use dominate this low-lying landscape. Pressures on the farming industry and diversification will impact upon the character of this area of which there are extensive views from the neighbouring character areas overlooking it.
- Pressure for improved flood defence.
- Increasing development pressure is likely as the area is within commuter distance of both Leeds and Harrogate. However development potential is restricted due to the extent of the floodplain.
- Recreation opportunities in the area appear to be limited at the moment but there may be provision requirements in the future.
- Gravel extraction has gone on in the past and there may be demand in the future.
- Road and bridge improvements will impact on the character of the area. Increased traffic may cause problems.
- Woodland and tree management appears sporadic.
- Habitat diversity related to the river is limited.
- Historic features have suffered from neglect.

## Guidelines

### Aim: To conserve landscape pattern.

- Ensure that diversification opportunities taken up do not impact upon the valued characteristics of the area i.e. the meandering tree lined course of the river Wharfe and associated historic features.
- Flood defence measures must respect local landscape character avoiding intrusive structures, respecting local landform and using local materials.
- Built development in this character area should be resisted due to potential flooding and extensive views over the area. Where development is permitted it must respect the key characteristics of the area and vernacular.

### Aim: To enhance habitat diversity

- Opportunities to create new habitats and diversify existing riverside fields in line with the Harrogate District Biodiversity Action Plan as part of diversification schemes would help improve habitat diversity and contribute to enhancement of landscape pattern.

### Aim: To conserve historic features and historic links

- Promote the enhancement and maintenance of the setting of historic features through the creation of a buffer which restricts intensive farming practices where appropriate and excludes development.