

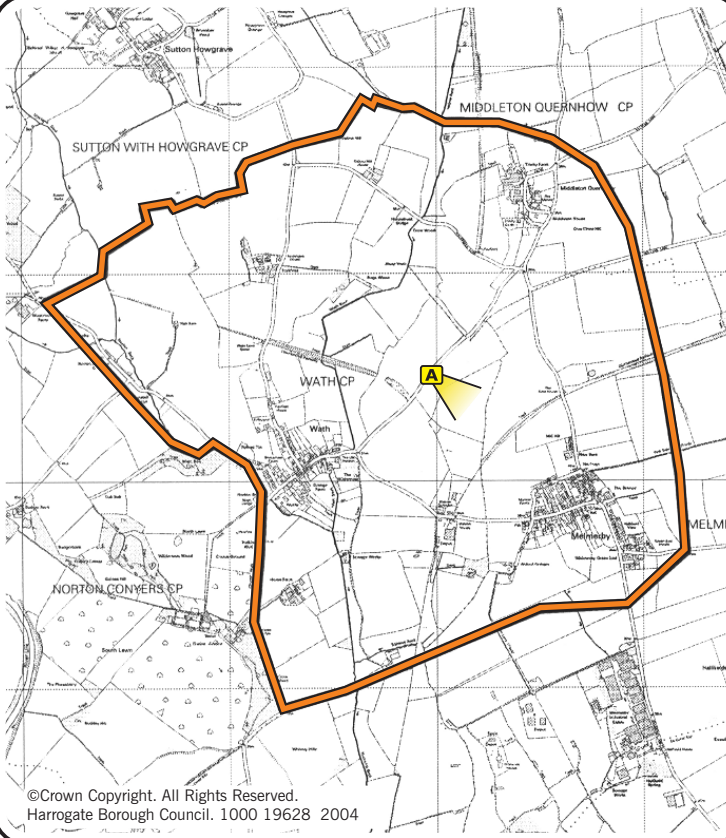
AREA
80

Approved
Feb 2004

A Wath farmland



Wath farmland with parkland



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HARROGATE DISTRICT Landscape Character Assessment

— Area boundary*

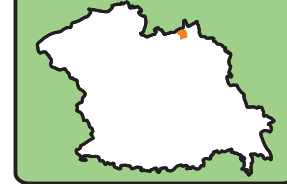
! Camera location
& direction



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".

Location in Harrogate District



Description

This is a moderate scale landscape situated to the north east of Ripon and covering approximately 5.6km². The Character Area extends beyond Harrogate District boundary to the north to include Sutton Howgrave.

The gently undulating landform is intensively managed for arable production, with smaller grassland fields clustered around settlements.

The large cereal fields create a relatively organised pattern on the landscape and are bound by fragmented hedges, often reinforced with post and wire fencing.

There are several small blocks of woodland and a few individual trees scattered along field boundaries that disperse views and evoke feelings of partial enclosure.

A network of roads connects the villages of Wath, Melmerby and Middleton Quernhow, providing easy access between them and the A1. Three dismantled railway lines meet between the villages and are a feature within the landscape. Wath is mentioned in the Domesday Book and there are remains of Saxon sculpture in the church, which itself has 12th century origins.

Norton Conyers Registered Historic Park and Garden is located on the west boundary of this area between the arable farmland and the River Ure corridor. The Park and Garden shares some characteristics with both neighbouring Character Areas but is distinct from them due to its *designed* arrangement.

Altogether this is a pleasant area with interesting villages in an attractive, rural setting.

Key Characteristics

Geology, soils and drainage

- Sherwood sandstone solid geology overlain with till and sandy till drift geology.
- Deep well-drained, coarse loamy and sandy brown soils locally over gravel.

Landform and drainage pattern

- Gently undulating below 50m AOD.
- Wath Beck and Norton Beck, both channelled in places, flow through Wath.

Key Characteristics

Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife

- ▣ Arable farmland, grade 1 and 2 agricultural land.
- ▣ Large fields bound by hedges reinforced with fencing plus grassland around settlement.
- ▣ Several clumps and a few blocks of deciduous and mixed woodland.
- ▣ Few individual trees.
- ▣ Site of Importance for Nature Conservation at Salmist Beck Carr, marshy and waterlogged grassland supporting wetland plants.

Settlement, built environment and communications

- ▣ The main settlements are Wath (which has a village Conservation Area), Melmerby, Middleton Quernhow plus scattered houses and farmsteads.
- ▣ Middleton Quernhow Hall has fine earthworks of a Medieval village or possibly gardens dating from the early 17th. Century.
- ▣ Building materials include red brick and tile roofs plus white render. Some of the earlier buildings are stone.
- ▣ Remnants of dismantled railways north of Wath and Melmerby.

Sensitivities & Pressures

- ▣ This intensively farmed area is sensitive to change resulting from the changing fortunes of the agricultural industry, which may lead to more varied management regimes and diversification. The area has little capacity to accept inappropriate development without significantly altering settlement pattern and character. The villages are small and compact although Melmerby has expanded in recent years.
- ▣ There may be moves to reopen one or more of the railways lines in the future as a result of transport policies. This is likely to be a long time into the future but could have considerable impact on the character of the area.
- ▣ Neglect and loss of field boundaries/hedges resulting in loss of field pattern and diversity.
- ▣ Intensive farming practices resulting in the loss of key landscape features and the introduction of large-scale farm buildings in this relatively open landscape.
- ▣ The impact of changing landscape pattern on the setting of Norton Conyers Historic Park and Garden in the adjacent Character Area to the west could be detrimental.

Guidelines

Aim: To conserve and enhance the setting of Norton Conyers.

- ▣ Development that impacts on the approaches and views of Norton Conyers and its parkland should be avoided.
- ▣ Wath is important to the setting of Norton Conyers. Development here should only be permitted where it respects the compact, linear layout of the village and vernacular.
- ▣ Norton Conyers parkland is well-wooded. Extending woodland cover eastwards to respect landscape pattern would add to diversity and setting of the Park and Garden.

Aim: To protect the pastoral setting of villages.

- ▣ Development of grass fields in the vicinity of villages should be avoided. Change of use to garden, and residential in particular, could have considerable detrimental impact.
- ▣ Protect remaining field patterns around the edge of settlements, which contribute to diversity and interest in this intensively farmed landscape.
- ▣ Encourage traditional hedgerow management and reinstatement of native hedgerows particularly in the vicinity of villages to highlight the smaller scale field pattern.
- ▣ Development to respect valued spatial qualities of the villages as outlined in the respective Conservation Area statements and Harrogate Council's Residential Design Guide.

Aim: To conserve and enhance existing landscape pattern.

- ▣ Small woodlands linking to existing tree cover and woodland in neighbouring areas will help to enhance landscape pattern.
- ▣ Hedgerows and ditches often follow parish boundaries and may have historic significance. These lines are often not straight and add diversity and interest to the large-scale field pattern of the area. Hedgerows and ditches along these boundaries should be protected from removal. An assessment of hedges along parish boundaries would help to determine whether or not they are considered important under the Hedgerow Regulations criteria.
- ▣ Built form between villages is limited to a few scattered farmsteads. Future development outside villages should relate to existing farmsteads and respect settlement pattern as well as views.