

AREA 97

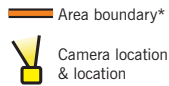
Approved
Feb 2004

A On Cattal Bridge looking south west.



Nidd Corridor Ribston Park to Skip Bridge Reach

HARROGATE DISTRICT Landscape Character Assessment

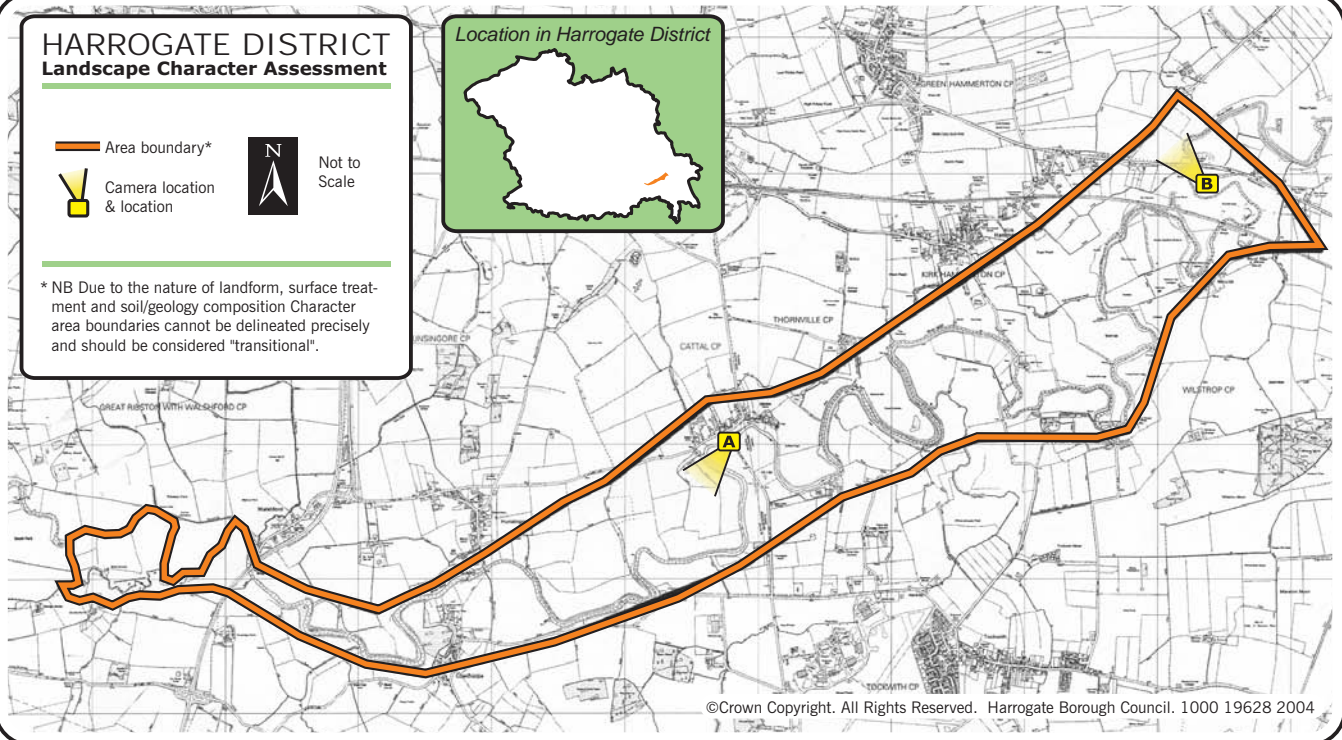


Not to Scale

Location in Harrogate District



* 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 moderate scale Character Area of the River Nidd corridor along its journey between Ribston Park and Skip Bridge Farm. It covers approximately 8.3km² and is characterised by the flat floodplain of the River Nidd as it meanders in a general north-easterly direction to eventually converge with the River Ouse at the eastern boundary of the District.

Land use is a diverse mix of enclosed, improved intensively managed grass and arable fields with areas of rough grassland and meadow and evidence of medieval ridge and furrow.

Tree cover is associated with the river giving the appearance of partial enclosure, dispersing views out across the farmland and channelling them along the river corridor. Trees around settlements are often ornamental species and this can be to the detriment of the rural corridor character where they are prominent in the landscape. Away from the influence of the river and settlement, fields are bound by fragments of hedgerows and trees that struggle to impact on the openness of the large fields.

The area is easily accessible via a network of minor roads that provide constant traffic noise plus public footpaths as well as access tracks to the more remote farmsteads.

The river appears pleasant and attractive but its wider setting of intensive farmland can appear quite bland.

Key Characteristics

Geology, soils and drainage

- Sherwood sandstone solid geology overlain with alluvium drift geology.
- Combination of deep, stoneless, fine silty and clayey and fine or coarse, loamy, permeable brown and groundwater gley soils affected by groundwater and at risk from flooding.

Landform and drainage pattern

- Flat river floodplain below 30m AOD
- The River Nidd flows through the area with one or two minor drainage ditches.

Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife

- Rough and improved grassland, cereal crops and meadow, grade 3 agricultural land.
- Medium to large sized fields bound by hedges and often reinforced with post and wire fencing.
- Small clumps of deciduous woodland plus individual deciduous trees along field boundaries including outgrown Hawthorn hedging.
- The river corridor is relatively well-wooded.
- Aubert Ings is an SSSI.

Key Characteristics (Cont'd)

- There is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation at Tockwith Ings, long-established grassland with low intensity of management supporting rich variety of wildflowers.

Settlement, built environment and communications

- The main settlements are Cowthorpe and Cattal plus a few large farmsteads/Halls/Lodges associated with the villages.
- Traditional building materials include red brick and tile or slate and occasional Magnesian limestone.
- Cattal Bridge is of historic interest.
- North east of Cattal the south side of the river is served by a public footpath.
- The deserted medieval village of Wilstrop is located on the edge of the Character Area and has evidence of ridge and furrow.

Sensitivities & Pressures

- River corridors by their nature are sensitive to change through development which can often impact upon the natural course of the channel. For example the A1(M) motorway river crossing will impact upon character of the corridor as a result of the structures introduced in this rural location.
- Intrusive elements along this sensitive landscape corridor have resulted in impact on the character. Signs and traffic lights at the narrow older bridges detract from vernacular.
- Large conifer hedges in open countryside impact on landscape character detracting from key characteristics.
- Lack of tree cover in places and changing land management particularly of ings land.
- Access to the riverbank is limited in places and there are few public rights of way to the west of Cattal.
- The area is within an Area of Search for gravel extraction identified in the North Yorkshire Minerals Local Plan. Future pressure for quarrying will impact considerably on the tranquil character of the corridor.

Guidelines

Aim: To protect and enhance the distinctive, tranquil character of the corridor.

- Investigate mitigation measures to reduce impact of intrusive elements already in place (e.g. tree planting at river crossings) and the use of traditional building materials to face engineered structures.
- Discourage the use of conifer hedge boundaries to fields and domestic curtilage. Support the replacement of ornamental hedges with native hedgerows in countryside locations.
- Gravel extraction in the area should only be permitted where there are no alternatives. Environmental Impact Assessment will be required for such proposals. Appropriate restoration and long and short-term mitigation measures will be required.

Aim: To preserve vernacular style of the few built structures found along this corridor.

- Old river crossings, such as the bridge at Cattal, are made from materials that blend with the landscape and are of a scale that minimises impact. These crossings are important to character and should be protected. Signs associated with these crossings should be kept to a minimum.
- Where new structure/buildings are required they should respect vernacular style of the corridor and neighbouring Character Areas.

Aim: To conserve and enhance the diversity of the river corridor and public enjoyment of this resource.

- Promote tree planting in the river corridor and traditional grassland management for the ings land in line with Harrogate Council's Landscape Design Guide: LDG8.1.3 and Harrogate District Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Investigate opportunities to maintain improve access to the riverside in consultation with landowners, the Environment Agency and anglers.
- Explore opportunities to restore historic routes across the river between Tockwith and Green Hammerton, including Skewkirk bridge.



B Skip Bridge on the A59.