

E1 Holmfirth - Meltham

The gentle dip slope on the eastern side of the South Pennines creates a relatively broad band of rural fringe within Kirklees. This edge of the Pennines is composed of a series of sloping ridges intersected by the settled valleys of the Colne, Holme and Hall Dike. The land shelters in the lee of Saddleworth and Wessenden Moors and abundant woodland thrives in the hollows and folds in the landform. There are also several shelterbelts, small plantations and areas of natural regeneration which all contribute to a more enclosed character. Views are generally controlled by rolling landform. Farming is the dominant land use with grazed pasture contained by an intricate network of stone walls creating the distinctive 'patchwork' field pattern. Between the valleys parts of the plateau, such as Hanley Moor and Nethererton Moor, are characterised by divisions of long rectangular fields and a network of straight planned roads which contrast with the older irregular fields and winding lanes. The stone walls, throughout, are generally in a good condition. This is a settled, domestic landscape - most of the development is concentrated in the valley settlements, although there are some areas where the development edge has encroached out onto the higher slopes, for example at Meltham, Honley and villages such as Netherthong. Scattered farms, individual dwellings and hamlets cover the slopes. The area retains an intact and attractive rural character although is nevertheless vulnerable, particularly to changes in farming practice. Some areas are no longer farmed and are now managed as horse paddocks, while in others agricultural management has intensified with a switch to intensive grassland management for silage. Proximity to Huddersfield also creates pressures for development.