

## N5 Hoyland Rolling Wooded Farmland

XX The landscape character area classified as *E4 Hoyland Settled Wooded Farmland* is defined by a complex relationship of previous industrial activity, urban settlement, arable farming and woodland over varied landform.

Middle coal measures, comprising a complex layering of sandstones and shales with numerous coal seams, underlie the area. Uneven erosion of the varied geology has resulted in a rolling landform. The higher ground in the west of this landscape character area links to steadily rising ground further west. The high ground, with a maximum elevation of 180m AOD on the north western edge of Hoyland continues east through the centre of this character area and drops away to the north, east and west towards the valley floors associated with the valleys of the River Dove and the disused Elsecar canal. The minimum elevation is found on the south eastern edge of Wombwell at 25m AOD.

The character area comprises a diverse range of land uses. Settlements, woodland and agriculture cover a large proportion of the character area. There is a smaller area of land devoted to industry and recreation. Evidence of the former predominance of industry in the area is strong, mainly as reclaimed tips, dismantled railways and canals. The different physical qualities associated with each land use gives rise to areas of land with different appearances.

Two large settlements dominate the landscape character area. Wombwell on the north eastern boundary lies on the valley sides sloping towards the north and east. Hoyland lies on the high ground as well as valley sides sloping south and has almost merged with the smaller settlements of Jump, Elsecar and Hemingfield to the east. This has resulted from development along the roads between them. The remaining separation consists of narrow urban green spaces or small pockets of farmland.

Several smaller settlements occur north of the A6195 on elevated land above the slopes of the valley of the River Dove. These include Blacker Hill that has almost merged with Hoyland along the road linking them, Pilley and Birdwell. Farmsteads are scattered throughout the remaining agricultural land.

The character area contains a network of major roads, including the M1 motorway, the A61 running from Junction 36 of the M1 to Barnsley and Sheffield, and the new A6195 dual carriageway. The M1, running through the south eastern corner of the character area, creates a narrow corridor of visual and noise intrusion, but these adverse effects are not widespread due to enclosure and screening by built development, woodland and landform. The A6195, a major new road with numerous roundabouts, crosses through the centre of the character area running east from the motorway. A network of minor roads gives access to settlements. In many cases, these have formed the framework for urban expansion. The railway line from Barnsley to Sheffield runs through the character area.

Large blocks of deciduous woodland as well as smaller woods occur frequently. They provide localised enclosure and help to screen the varied land uses. Some are relicts of ancient woodland, most notably the large Wombwell Wood. There are many established geometric shaped plantations in the south of the character area. There are also recent plantations on spoil heaps that have been reclaimed, such as the former Rockingham Barrow opencast coal site. These plantations are immature and do not currently provide any sense of enclosure or screening. In some woodlands there is visible evidence of urban pressures from fly tipping and litter.

Agriculture exists as pockets of arable land and pasture that have been fragmented by the other land uses. Medium sized fields are bounded by hedges and post and wire fences. In the west of the character area, stone walls bound some fields. Mature trees occur infrequently in hedgerows and fields. Farmland runs up to the edges of settlements in many locations, but is often more degraded here with fragmented hedgerows and untidy areas.

There are several modern, commercial/ industrial estates. Most of them do not impose on the surrounding open land due to their proximity to large settlements and screening by hedges,

strips of trees and woodland. There are some small industrial works that are sited in highly visible locations, away from large settlements that are not screened by vegetation. These have an adverse influence the character of the surrounding open land. Pre-19<sup>th</sup> century spoil heaps around the shafts of bell pits are visible as rows of rounded mounds at Tankersley Park, west of the M1 motorway. A dismantled railway east of Blacker Hill contains scrubby vegetation and provides a corridor for wildlife. A dismantled railway that once served the coal mines runs through the heart of the area.

Landscape renewal is evident through mitigation of the effect of previous industrial activity. This includes reclaimed tips, such as the large area of land at the former Rockingham Barrow site, as described previously. Reclaimed land along the A6195 consists of rough grass and overgrown hedgerows, and appears to be prepared for future development.

Recreational land use includes two well-managed golf courses. There is a network of footpaths and bridleways across the character area. The Jump Valley public open space separates the settlements of Hoyland and Jump. This narrow strip of land is designated both as Urban Greenspace and Green Belt in Barnsley Borough Unitary Development Plan. It consists of mown grass on the flatter ground and scrub on steeper slopes. Urban fringe pressures are evident with litter and degraded stone walls.