

P1 Elsecar Lowland River Floor

The landscape character area classified as *Elsecar Lowland River Floor* is a long, narrow flat valley floor with water present along its length. Immediately outside the character area the land slopes up to form valley sides, giving a sense of enclosure. The underlying geology is middle coal measures, overlain in places with alluvium. The elevation of C1 is fairly constant, dropping gradually from approximately 70m AOD at Elsecar Reservoir in the south west, to approximately 30m AOD at the north west end where it meets character area *C2 Lower Dearne Lowland River Floor*.

Landform and vegetation limit views to the valley sides and short distances along the valley. To the north of C1 the settlements of Elsecar, Hemingfield and Wombwell, and agricultural land in the adjoining character area *E4 Hoyland Settled Wooded Farmland* can be seen. To the south farmland, woodland, tree covered steep slopes of a colliery spoil tip, a new retail park and the settlement of Brampton can be seen outside the Borough, in the Borough of Rotherham. The valley floor is covered in a diverse range of land uses, which reflect the wide range of functions the valley has had over the years. Land use includes agriculture, recreation, residential, industry, industrial heritage, communication, landscape renewal and nature conservation.

The presence of historical industrial features, many of which are now disused or used for other purposes, provides a strong reminder of the industrial past. For example, the disused Dearne and Dove Canal, and a disused railway, that run from Elsecar, along the length of the character area, used to service coal and ironstone mines further west. Old stone industrial buildings at Elsecar are now a heritage centre/museum.

Small pockets of land under permanent pasture and arable cultivation, isolated from the open countryside by urban and industrial development, sweep down the valley sides immediately outside the character area and flatten out to become part of the valley floor. These fields are bounded by gappy and sometimes overgrown hawthorn hedgerows. Some farmland close to buildings and roads are messy and poorly maintained, with unmanaged hedgerows and horse shelters.

The valley floor is largely free of settlement, except for the occasional isolated farm or pub, or where housing or industry protrudes into the open corridor adjacent to roads that cross the valley. Most of these buildings were built pre-1920 and are made of stone with slate roof tiles. The occasional modern brick house with associated garden fencing, and commercial buildings, have also been constructed on the valley floor.

The towpath along the disused canal is part of the Trans Pennine Trail and the Barnsley Boundary Walk. Other recreational landuse includes a small park (Elsecar Park) at the south west end of the character area, with well maintained grass and planting, and a bandstand.

Extensive areas of land alongside the disused canal and railwayline are covered with naturally occurring herbaceous, scrub and tree vegetation, much of which is comprised of species associated with wet ground (such as willow and alder). This provides a valuable habitat and corridor for wildlife that is known as the Elsecar Greenway. Much of *C1 Elsecar Lowland River Floor* is designated as a nature conservation site.

Minor roads cross the valley, passing over the canal by stone bridges in the central and south western sections of the character area. The busy new A6195 dual carriageway runs across and along the valley at the north eastern end. This 'A' road is bounded by an immature, open landscape, with new tree planting on grass verges. At this north eastern end the valley sides slacken, mature trees and scrub become more scarce, and the valley floor becomes less enclosed. The landscape character is influenced by the new road and by the proximity of large new retail buildings immediately outside the character area to the south east.