

Q1 North East Barnsley Settled Arable Slopes

Classified as *D1 North East Barnsley Settled Arable Slopes*, this character area is defined by a complex relationship of previous and present day industrial activity, urban settlement and arable farming over varied landform.

Middle coal measures, comprising a complex layering of sandstones and shales with numerous coal seams, underlie the majority of the area. A significant tract of boulder clay overlies the middle coal measures at Royston to the north of the area and also at Lundwood to the south, but this does not manifest itself in any obvious changes to landform, land cover or land use activity.

Topographically the land elevation ranges from approximately 50m AOD to 100m AOD. The fluvial activity of the River Dearne and its associated tributaries, and the alternating bands of underlying sandstones and shales which have been eroded at different rates, have created a series of valley-ridge undulations. These vary in sinuosity and aspect, creating localised variation in character due to changes in degree of enclosure, and changes to views within and out of the character area. The landform is generally more enclosing than other character areas within the same landscape type, notably *D2 East Dearne Settled Arable Slopes* and *D3 West Dearne Settled Arable Slopes*.

Land cover and land use greatly influence the overall character of the landscape due to the complex interplay between the rolling, sloping, uncomplicated character of arable land and the sprawling density of urban form. Settlements are largely situated on areas of higher ground such as the length of ribbon development between Cudworth Common and Shafton sited on a subtle ridgeline. Development within adjacent character areas also plays a role in informing the landscape character. This is particularly influenced by clear views across to the town of Barnsley (landscape character area *E2 Barnsley Rolling Wooded Farmland*), which ascends the slopes on the south valley side of the River Dearne.

Arable farmland is characterised by medium to large field units often extending without obvious change up to the urban edge. This is not always the case and there are significant tracts of urban edge farmland characterised by small and tatty field units given over to a mix of uses from pony grazing to pigeon lofts. There is a strong sense that the arable land is intensively worked; made apparent by the loss and continued neglect of field boundaries. There has been significant loss of hedgerows from the landscape - evident by the occasional presence of oak standards marking historic field limits. Remaining hedgerows are often gappy, short flailed and monospecies (hawthorn) and sometimes increase in number and improve in condition where farmland and settlement meet. This helps to soften the urban-rural interface. Field boundaries vary in type, with hedgerows being most common. Other boundary types are also often in poor condition and include post and wire fences, post and rail fences, and stone walls. Field boundaries at the urban edge are often defined by an array of urban fences and materials at the ends of rear gardens.

Developed land is a complex relationship of residential and industrial form, reflecting the intense historic development of the heavy coalfield industry. New industrial estates characterised by warehouses, of varying colour and size, combined with new housing developments of differing style and vernacular also characterise the landscape and are key physical indicators of a landscape in flux and of changing landscape character. Present day industrial activity is largely clustered north of Monk Bretton but evidence of previous historic industrial activity is found dotted across the wider landscape in the form of disused works, tips and spoil heaps. Some of these have been reclaimed (such as the spoil heap west of Carlton) and some have not (such as the spoil heap east of Lund Hill).

There are a significant number of primary and secondary roads running through the landscape and these give an overtly active pace reducing the sense of tranquillity even in the more rural areas.