

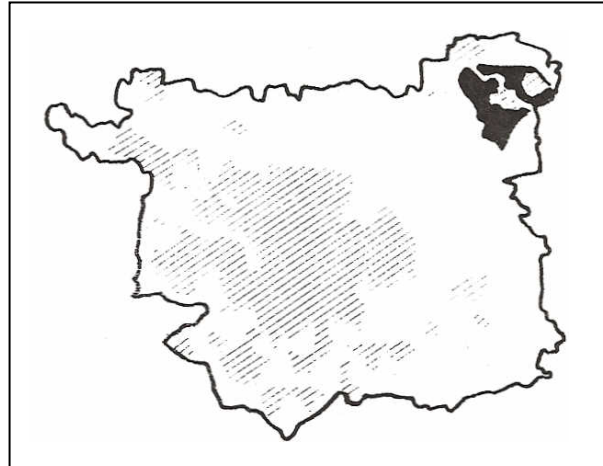
# LIMESTONE VILLAGES AND FARMLAND

## Landscape character

This landscape type occurs on the Magnesian Limestone Belt, in the north-east corner of the District. It can be found in only one landscape unit: Boston Spa, Clifford and Bramham (ELB3). It forms an area of mainly arable farmland, characterised by picturesque villages and small towns built out of the local creamy white limestone. The gently rolling fields of arable are bordered by low gappy hedgerows and isolated hedgerow trees, with small pockets of intact pasture occurring around the village fringes. Trees are present in small mixed woodlands and in mature woodland strips along the occasional beck or stream. The rural nature of this landscape type is broken by the large trading estate of Thorpe Arch, partially screened by trees.

## Forces for change

One of the characteristic features of this area is the contrast between the limestone villages, surrounded by small pockets of wooded pasture and remnant parkland and the open arable areas which occur elsewhere. The pastoral and remnant parkland areas have begun to fall into decline, with the loss of characteristic features such as parkland walls and trees. In the open arable areas, many of the characteristic farmland features are showing signs of neglect, with hedgerows becoming gappy and hedgerow trees dying without being replaced. Urban influences include the large trading estate at Thorpe Arch and future localised change may occur with any proposed new housing development.



## Management strategy and guidelines

The overall management strategy for this area should be a careful balance between conservation of the integrity and character of the limestone villages and their immediate surrounds with restoration of remnant parkland areas and traditional farmland features where these have fallen into decline. Management guidelines which are applicable within the limestone villages and farmland landscape type are described below.

Detailed management strategies and guidelines for the individual landscape unit are described in a separate document, using the reference listed above.

- *Any new development should reinforce the existing pattern of characteristic rural villages and small towns, whilst preserving their character.* Villages and small towns built of the local creamy coloured stone, but each with their individual character and identity, are a characteristic feature of this landscape type. Conservation of this character should be a priority and all new development should be carefully sited and should seek to harmonise with the local vernacular styles.

- *Conserve and enhance the pastoral and wooded continuity of the stream valleys and enhance their value as landscape, wildlife and recreation corridors.*  
The isolated and occasional pastoral and wooded valleys within this landscape type form key linear features and important landscape and wildlife corridors in an otherwise cultivated area. To maintain this value, areas of pasture should be retained and consideration given to returning bankside arable fields to grassland. In addition, natural regeneration of bankside trees should be encouraged. New small scale planting may also be appropriate, designed to reflect the sinuous nature of the watercourses. Consideration should be given to encouraging recreational access along these valleys.
- *Where opportunities exist, consider restoring areas of former parkland.*  
Although landscaped parks are not a particularly prominent feature within this landscape type, there are some remnant areas. As well as their historical importance, parklands provide diversity and interest in the landscape. True parkland in permanent grassland with large scattered trees is in decline. Wherever possible, consideration should be given to reinstating areas of former park and new planting to replace old trees.
- *Strengthen hedgelines by encouraging natural regeneration of hedgerow trees or if necessary, replanting of locally occurring species.*  
Where hedgerows and hedgerow trees have been lost or removed, the landscape can appear rather open and structureless. Hedgerow trees can have the effect of filtering views through the landscape helping to create a better sense of scale and enclosure. Where hedgerow trees still remain, these should be conserved. Where they have been lost, hedgerows should be strengthened wherever possible through encouragement of natural regeneration or replanting, using locally occurring native species.
- *Seek to control field amalgamation and hedgerow loss, restoring hedges where these have been lost or are in poor condition.*  
Field pattern is an important element in this landscape, complementing the secluded character of the landscape, although it is often not always apparent due to the flat to gently rolling nature of the underlying landform.  
The generally large regular fields are bounded by mixed and thorn hedgerows. In places hedgerows are becoming thin and gappy, being replaced by wire fencing, which results in a more open, neglected landscape. Replacement hedgerow planting or restoration through more appropriate management should be encouraged in these areas, complementing the shape and scale of existing fields.