

**APPENDIX 1**

**EXTRACTED VERSION OF THE LOXLEY VALLEY DESIGN STATEMENT**



# The Loxley Valley Design Statement

**Extract showing matters relevant as SPG in the Peak District National Park**

# Design Issues in the valley

This document will look in turn at the general landscape, at the human settlements within it, and then at the manmade features that give local character to the buildings within those settlements. We will consider what makes our locality special, and how good design can keep it special if and when there is change.

We believe this is the first time the Loxley Valley has been described and defined in such detail. This reflects the knowledge and passion of the many people who took part in the local “workshops” we held during our consultations.

## Landscape Design

### The landscape setting

The landscape of the Loxley valley is special. We want to retain it, and if possible improve it. But we also support change if it does not impinge on the landscape, views or natural resources.

The landscape ranges widely. Undeveloped land includes pasture and arable fields, woodland, heath and moors. Water features include the river, streams, reservoirs and old industrial millponds. The built environment ranges from small clusters of farm buildings to larger hamlets and villages, and the valley also contains old industrial buildings and redundant quarries and mine workings. No one description could cover all this, so we have tried to divide the valley into recognisable “landscape zones”.

### **Zone One. Malin Bridge to Rowell Lane – the Green Belt wedge between Loxley and Stannington, on the edge of the city.**

This is the gateway to the Valley, a “green finger”, reaching from highly populated Hillsborough to the Peak District.

- The “gateway” building is the Malin Bridge corn mill at the bottom of Stannington Road, just before the River Rivelin joins the Loxley.
- The riverside here is wooded, though it was more open in the past. The trees are mainly sycamore, ash, alder and willow. They need regular and sensitive maintenance. There are also relics of ancient oak and beech woodland.
- Old industrial sites are scattered in the valley bottom. Some have become historical ruins; some are still in use. Some have recently become redundant and are at risk of becoming derelict.
- Close to the valley on the Stannington side is the historic Wood Lane House Farm. This has recently been renovated as a countryside centre for the whole of Sheffield, but at the moment there is no direct link to it from the Loxley Valley.
- There are many water features: weirs, mill ponds/dams, and goyts (manmade channels at the side of the river, taking water to and from the old water wheels). They are valuable for industrial heritage and for wildlife. Some are now seriously in need of repair and maintenance, and some of the dams are silting up.
- Away from the wooded riverside, the slopes on the north side of the lower valley are characterised by open pasture.

### **Zone Two. Loxley Common**

Loxley Common is a “Local Nature Reserve”. It is a mix of heathland and birch woodland, with sandy gritstone outcrops, and signs of earlier quarrying. There is a network of footpaths with some bridleways. The common is well used for recreation.

## **Zone Three. The south facing slopes of the valley...**

...**between Loxley and Holdworth**, have geometrical patterns of large fields, dating from measured government surveying for the Enclosures in the late eighteenth century. They are used for grazing and growing arable crops. There are also several commercial plant nurseries on this side of the valley. The slope is mostly bare of trees. There are gritstone outcrops on the ridge at the top of the hill, with moorland vegetation. Loxley Independent Chapel, opposite Rowell Lane, is a fine eighteenth century building, now in private ownership and boarded up.

...**between Holdworth and Bradfield**, have much older, smaller irregular field patterns, with rough pasture; one farm is named in the Domesday Book. Clusters of trees line the field edges and the steep wooded slope of Bailey Hill.

## **Zone Four. The north facing slopes of the valley...**

There are steep scarp slopes immediately above the river, vegetated with scrub and woodland. On the slope just to the west of Rowell Bridge is a stretch of ancient woodland known as Beacon Wood, (owned and managed by the Woodland Trust).

Above these scarps is a gently sloping "plateau", carved by brooks and streams making their way to the Loxley near Dungworth, Hill Top, Loadbrook and Storrs. Field patterns follow land contours (some showing signs of medieval strip farming). The fields are mainly pasture, with some arable fodder crops, and locally sold "Bradfield" potatoes. There are some old mine shafts and quarries from the days when clay was dug for the brick factories. There are also small stretches of woodland, notably "Hall Broom Pastures", towards Loadbrook.

Several significant streams flow into the River Loxley - Load/Storrs Brook, Sykehouse Brook and Ughill Brook. They are lined with trees. Their banks are secluded and are rich in wildflowers and wildlife. They contribute significantly to the biodiversity of the area.

## **Zone Five. The river corridor - Little Matlock to Stacey Bank.**

(This sector overlaps slightly with Sector One). Former industrial sites dominate this stretch of the valley. They range in size and age from small, centuries-old mill buildings to large factories, which closed quite recently. Some of the old buildings have become ruins, some have been reused, and some – particularly the large factory buildings at the upper end – now stand derelict. The older buildings were originally water-powered. The dams at their side are now used for fishing, and are rich in wildlife. Little Matlock was recently revived as a small-scale steel-rolling mill, with a link with English Heritage.

## **Zone Six. Reservoirs – Damflask up to Strines.**

The upper valley contains four major reservoirs – Damflask, Agden, Dale Dike and Strines. All are owned and managed by Yorkshire Water as part of the local water supply. The dam walls were built from local stone in the nineteenth century.

Mixed native and conifer plantations edge the three lower reservoirs; Strines edges onto the moors. Damflask is used by sailing and rowing clubs, and is also popular with anglers. Damflask, Agden and Dale Dike are all ringed by footpaths – all of these paths have been extended recently.

The path around Damflask was extended in 2001 using surfaces and gradients that provide access for disabled people. It has proved popular and seems to be drawing in many new visitors. This may create demand for more car parking and toilets, and extra customers for buses and pubs. If visitors continue to increase, there could eventually be enough demand for new businesses like shops and cafes.

## **Zone Seven. Ughill and surrounding hamlets to Bradfield.**

The upper end of the valley. Characterised by small fields and farms in valleys and on steep slopes where the topography has not made building impossible. Higher up, the valley becomes increasingly quiet and isolated with the cultivated land eventually giving way to wild moors grazed by grouse and sheep.

# Design of the Built Environment

Settlements in the Loxley Valley range from small individual farmsteads to dense suburban housing. Mostly they are not “planned”, in the modern sense. The layout of the buildings has evolved “organically”, dictated by natural features like slopes and watercourses, and manmade features like roads and water wheels.

The way the buildings fit together and how they fit into the landscape helps give the valley its distinctive character. This is just as important as the design of the individual buildings. We have therefore produced design guidelines that go beyond individual structures to address the wider built environment.

Before we come to the guidelines, we will take a detailed look at the villages and buildings of the valley.

## Villages in the valley

There are three main village groups: the “Bradfields”, Loxley, and the area around Dungworth and Storrs. There are some smaller settlements in between and also in outlying parts of the valley – for example, Holdworth, Ughill, Loadbrook and Stacey Bank. Nearly all the valley settlements are built into or along slopes - only Low Bradfield is built beside the river, and the houses there are set on slightly higher ground to protect them from the historic threat of flooding.

### Bradfield

The village of Bradfield lies about four and a half miles from the edge of the Sheffield conurbation. It is split into two levels – Low Bradfield and High Bradfield – which both have the character of individual villages. There are also many outlying small farms and dwellings that form part of the Bradfield “family”.

Both High and Low Bradfield are “Conservation Areas” within the Peak District National Park. This means the Park’s conservation officers do detailed “character analyses” which identify important open spaces, views, buildings and boundaries. This provides important information for decisions on new developments.

#### Quotes from the Bradfield consultation workshop:

*“Visitors from the city are welcomed, but it can feel like living in a “goldfish bowl”*

*“Peak Park legislation protects, but is seen to prevent what could be useful to the community”*

*“Properties bought up and left to decay prevent others from moving in, who might help strengthen the community”*

**High Bradfield** has its historic parish church, dating in part from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and a pub. The little main street leading to the church has a very strong sense of local character. The spectacular view from the churchyard looks down over the whole valley towards the city and up towards the Bradfield moors. Close to the church are two large earthworks, known as Bailey Hill and Castle Hill. Bailey Hill is a motte and bailey structure, thought to date from around 1000AD. Gravestones in the churchyard date from the seventeenth century.

**Low Bradfield** sits in the valley bottom about half-a-mile away and three hundred feet below its neighbour. It is immediately below Agden Reservoir, at the point where two small rivers, Dale Dike and Agden Dike, join to form the River Loxley. Low Bradfield is dominated by a large flat open green space. This accommodates the village cricket pitch, a bowling green, tennis courts, and the village hall. There is also space for people to sit and soak in the scenery, and for children to play. On summer weekends, Low Bradfield is a magnet for visitors on trips from the city.

The buildings of Low Bradfield are clustered loosely around the green space. They have developed over centuries in a “higgledy-piggledy” fashion along old lane patterns. The Parish Council offices are in a distinguished old chapel building just across the road from the green space. Just along the road is the old blacksmiths forge, now used as a vehicle repair garage. The forge is close to the site of a twelfth century corn mill. A small development of “affordable rural housing” was built in the 1980s.

Bradfield lost its school when it was amalgamated with Dungworth a few years ago. Its post office and shop has struggled to keep going, and the garage has stopped selling petrol because it could no longer turn a profit. People in the village are concerned about the gradual loss of these important community resources. The village hall, the only community building, is heavily used, but in a very poor state of repair. Attempts over the years to raise money for a new one have not been successful. At the time of writing the building needed attention urgently. Sheffield City Council recently suggested closing the only public toilets, but changed their minds after a local outcry.

It should be noted that the village hall and the church play an invaluable part in the life not just of Bradfield but of the wider community in the valley.

## **Loxley**

Loxley is about three miles down the valley from Bradfield, on the edge of the Sheffield built-up area. It was originally a stone-built village, made up of farm buildings and cottages where workers from the local mining and metals trades lived. These old buildings have now been partly absorbed into small suburban developments of the twentieth century.

About three thousand people live in Loxley, with a good mix of ages and of long-time residents and incomers. It has a primary school, post office, two pubs and a Methodist chapel, but no village hall or park. Some local groups use an old prefabricated "Horsa hut" in the school grounds, but it is dilapidated. The village urgently needs a proper community hall.

Previously the fine building of the Loxley Independent Chapel beyond Long Lane was in community use as a chapel and as a scout, cub and beaver meeting venue. It is now in private hands but quite unused and uncared for. Alternatively, the possibility of refurbishing (and extending) the pavilion on council-owned land opposite the bottom of Long Lane to become a village hall could be explored. Bradfield Parish Council has bought some land on Black Lane, which it plans to turn into a park.

Loxley sits on the side of the valley. There are no flat areas, so houses mostly sit above one another rising up the slope. Many of the houses have a treasured view across or along the valley. The settlement pattern is of houses strung out either side of Loxley Road, with others along lanes leading off it, up the hill at acute angles. There is no clear centre or meeting point.

Loxley has a rural feel, through retention of the green open spaces between buildings and the views into open countryside.

## **Dungworth and Storrs**

The village of Dungworth sits on a hillside on the opposite side of the valley to Loxley. It is about two miles further out from the edge of the city. Its near neighbour is Storrs, a smaller scattered hamlet about half a mile closer to Sheffield. Their combined population is about five hundred and fifty. Community life revolves around the Royal Hotel, village hall, the Methodist chapel and the primary school. There are no longer shops or a post office.

They are agricultural places, based around half a dozen working farms. There is also a terrace of workers' cottages in Storrs, and two sets of council-built houses in Dungworth that were originally provided for workers from the brick factory in the valley below. Many farms have amalgamated, and their redundant outbuildings and barns have been converted into houses. They are owned now largely by people commuting to Sheffield and beyond.

Age range is well mixed. Access to public services in the city for children and older people is limited, though local bus services have improved.

## **Stannington**

Like Loxley, Stannington is on the edge of the built-up area at the city edge, though until the nineteen sixties it was very much a village outside Sheffield in the West Riding. It sits on the ridge between the Loxley and Rivelin Valleys. Parts of Stannington village do overlook the Loxley Valley – notably the north side of the Acorn estate, Greaves Lane and High Matlock, the lower part of Wood Lane and the

Marchwood estate. But only people on the northern fringes of Stannington would think of themselves as actually 'in' the valley.

Local people feel the Acorn estate is an example of how NOT to design housing for the Loxley Valley. It was built in the early nineteen eighties, despite opposition from many local people. They resent the way it dominates the top of the hill. The builders attempted to produce local character by using stone, and they copied traditional features from local barns and farm buildings. But Acorn Hill still gives the impression of a sprawling suburban estate, lacking local character and completely out of keeping with its surroundings. Its flaws are in layout and density, and in the lack of a vegetation strategy.

## **Schools**

Most children of primary age attend Bradfield-Dungworth, Loxley, or the Nook Lane school in Stannington. Most secondary school pupils go to Bradfield School, which is in Worrall, just beyond the northern edge of the valley. There is no public transport from the valley to this school; pupils are taken by bus from collection points around the valley. After-school activities are limited to those whose parents can taxi them. Fetching sick children home or attending parents' evenings, without a car, requires a taxi.

## **The character of the buildings in the valley**

In the Loxley Valley the distinctive character of the buildings derives less from the detail and more from their scale and shape, and from the way they fit together and sit in the surrounding landscape.

The buildings are in a wide variety of styles, but they do have things in common. Many have been built using local and traditional materials. They are modest in size. Even in Loxley where other materials have been used, the houses have largely been kept to a similar scale and relation with the landscape, not imposed but with a sense of growth in response to human need.

Their architectural "style" comes from functional usage and locally available materials. Some buildings have combined agricultural, industrial and domestic functions – for example, in Dungworth, there are several houses with cutler's workshops attached. Many buildings have changed uses over their lifetime, from barn or workshop to dwelling, from forge to motor repair workshop, from chapel to offices or home, from pub to post office to flats, from farm workers' terrace to holiday cottage, and so on.

Buildings are mostly low, with two storeys, occasionally three. They were often built on split-levels, to fit into the hillside. This is a feature found on a larger scale with settlements or factories, for example Dungworth village or the Dyson's refractory works at Stopes – they both nestle into the landscape, well below the tops of nearby hills or ridges.

More elaborate building was invested in chapels, churches, and "Halls", built by land or factory-owners, but these are also modest in scale and decoration and fit in.

## **Some Distinctive Features of Buildings in the Loxley Valley**

These are detailed observations of the character of buildings in the Loxley Valley and can be used as key principles for new development in order to safeguard and enhance the built environment. We do not envisage large-scale new development in the valley – indeed elsewhere in the Valley Design Statement we argue against it. But we recognise that new buildings will be proposed from time to time, and therefore new development should seek to incorporate these characteristics as far as possible.

- Even in the built-up areas a rural atmosphere is retained in the character of the buildings
- Many buildings use gritstone from local quarries. This is rugged abrasive sandstone, which over the years has become darkened by weathering. There are outcrops of this rock around the top of the valley, and these were often quarried commercially, for example on Loxley Common or at Stannington Roughs, (all of the quarries have now closed).
- Buildings have large stones at the bottom of their walls, grading to smaller stones at the top.
- Many buildings have a variety of window styles, usually of modest size, particularly in Bradfield.

- Many still have stone roofs.
- The angle of roof pitch is noticeably shallow – a gentle 35° to 45°, (originally to allow for the extra weight of stone slates).
- Some buildings have been constructed out of local brick – especially those buildings associated with the local brickworks.
- Barns have round openings on the upper floor, and wide arched doorways.
- Many boundaries around buildings and on farms are marked by dry stone walls, again using local gritstone. The angle of the top stones denotes the side of ownership, sloping down towards the owner or person responsible for their maintenance.
- Gateposts, many with different kinds of markings, are evident relating to different periods and dates.
- Farmyards and some old workers' footpaths are paved in local stone setts
- There are some cruck barns dating from the thirteenth century, with frames constructed from pairs of whole oak trees, (examples can be found in Storrs, Dungworth & Bradfield).
- Many traditional farm clusters front their stone barn walls to the west - the side of the prevailing wind, which helps protect the weak points of window and door joins, (these being placed on the eastern face of the building, away from the wind and rain). There is often also a line of mature sycamores planted usually to the west, which helps temper the wind and sun, and moderate the microclimate. They are usually set well below the skyline.
- Lighting is generally subtle, preventing glare and retaining a distinctively dark atmosphere as opposed to the well-lit environments of the city.
- Small-scale "workers' terraces" such as existing ones at Rowell Bridge and Stone Row, Storrs, serve as useful models for future development.
- Other models for grouped housing include farm clusters such as Hill Top, and the street at High Bradfield.
- Drainage is carefully managed to deal with problems associated with the high water table and impermeable soils in many parts of the valley. Disruption of this delicately balanced system can lead to secondary problems of flooding and icing on roads as well as contamination of ground water.
- A close relationship between the built environment, natural beauty and wildlife (such as bats, owls, swallows and house martins) helps to define the rural character of the valley and is greatly valued.

**ANNEX**

# The Consultation Process – stages

1. May 2000 - Meeting called by Bradfield Parish Council of representatives of local groups and communities, which set up the steering group.
2. Between June and December 2000:
  - Survey questionnaires on relevant subjects – one general to householders, and one to visitors to the Percy Pud Race event in December 2000
  - 3 exhibitions at local summer shows, in Bradfield & Stannington (2000) & Dungworth (2000 & 2001)
  - 3 full day Village Character Workshops, in Dungworth, Bradfield & Loxley.
3. November 2000, provisional report on the consultation, drawing together local background and issues, circulated to local MP, City Councillors for the local area, Parish Councillors, planning officials, interested local groups and individuals.
4. At all stages, discussions and personal conversations in various settings, pubs, school playgrounds etc.
5. Meetings and discussions with officials of Sheffield City Council Planning Department and Peak Park Planning.
6. October 2002 - Public Consultation on the Draft Statement, with exhibition in Bradfield Parish Council offices, local libraries and village hall. This produced comments from individuals and organisations, which informed the next revision.
7. March 2003 - revised Statement with Supplementary Planning Guidance, welcomed and accepted by Sheffield City Council North Area Panel.
8. April 2003 - SCC North West Area Planning Board referred document for extra citywide consultation of relevant organisations. Comments collected and considered by planning officers and discussed with Loxley Valley Design Group.
9. October 2003 – Revised document brought to SCC NW Planning Board, for acceptance as Supplementary Planning Guidance within the Loxley Valley. Extracted version also informally agreed by Chair and Vice Chair of Policy Committee at Peak District National Park Authority.
10. January 2004 – Joint Launch of Loxley Valley Design Statement by Sheffield City Council and Peak District National Park Authority.
11. February 2004 - Formal adoption of Extracted version of Design Statement by Peak District National Park Authority as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Over the three-year period, the Design Group worked in several subgroups covering different aspects of the valley, history, ecology, local planning context, landscape, building and settlement character. A further group worked on editing and illustration.

Questionnaires have been analysed, and comments from workshops and elsewhere collected, some of which appear in this document. Top concerns have been identified, and as a result of comments on the draft it is clear that many individuals and organisations within the valley and beyond feel that they have a stake in its future.

### Some figures

Survey questionnaires to local residents: 86 returned

Percy Pud questionnaires to visitors: 70 returned.

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|---------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Attended workshops: | Dungworth | 21 + VDS team |
|                     | Bradfield | 24 + VDS team |
|                     | Loxley    | 46 + VDS team |

Documentation of local consultations and further details can be seen at Bradfield Parish Council Offices.