

14. Sleights

Please note that this study only refers to the parts of Sleights within or adjoining the National Park.

14.1 Location, Landscape Context and Setting

Sleights is located at the eastern end of Esk Dale, to the south-west of Whitby. The village is located in the valley floor and lower valley sides, and its name is derived from the Old Norse 'sletta', meaning 'flat land'. The A169 Pickering-Whitby road runs north-south through the village; to the south it climbs the notoriously steep Blue Bank up on to Goathland Moor. The River Esk forms a natural boundary to the north of the village along with the Esk Valley Railway Line.

The National Park boundary excludes most of Sleights from the National Park. Only houses on the southern side of Iburndale Lane and Eskdaleside are within the National Park. The adjacent hamlet of Iburndale is also included, as is the cluster of buildings at the base of Blue Bank.

These areas are within the Central Valley Landscape Character Type (LCT 8). The surrounding fields, woodland and rough ground of the Esk Dale valley side form their setting, which is strongly rural. The Little Beck (a tributary of the River Esk) flows northwards in a narrow-wooded valley through Iburndale, and forms the eastern boundary of Sleights village before joining the Esk.

14.2 Settlement form and character

The 1857 Ordnance Survey map shows Sleights as linear settlement along the north-south main road. The hall, church and school at the southern end of the village are also shown. To the west are shown Esk Hall (Listed Grade II) and Woodlands Hall (now St Hilda's School and Listed Grade II*). Also to the west of the village, near the River Esk, is the ruined 13th Century Chapel of St John (Listed Grade II). Sleights expanded significantly in the 20th Century, mostly to the east of the main road, but there was also some linear development at the southern end of the village along Eskdaleside and Iburndale Lane. More recent development took place on the south side of Eskdaleside at Hermitage Way. This housing estate extends up the valley side in a notable break from previous patterns of settlement expansion. A new housing development – Alum Drive – has been tucked in at the western end of Eskdaleside. It is much lower than Hermitage Way and uses primarily agricultural materials.

14.3 Key views, approaches and gateways

The settlement edge within the National Park can be seen in views across Esk Dale from the north, for example from around Aislaby. In these views it is seen in its valley-side setting, surrounded by fields and woodland, with Goathland Moor above. There is a clear distinction between the built-up area of Sleights and its rural surroundings. At the moment the landform is the dominant feature in these views. However, if any large or more obtrusive buildings were to be constructed, then they would draw the eye away from the landform and the rural setting. Looking from the east, across the Little Beck Valley from UGGLEBARNBY ROAD, the countryside can be seen sweeping down to the village edge at Iburndale Lane. Again, there is a clear distinction between the village and the countryside which surrounds it.

From within the settlement there are views eastward and westwards along Esk Dale, and northwards across the dale. The steep valley side forms a backdrop when looking south. All combine to create an awareness of the setting from within the settlement, contributing to its strong sense of place.

The main approach is from the south, along the A169. Having descended Blue Bank, the road bends as it passes a cluster of mainly 19th Century buildings including a pub, garage, houses and former school, as well as some recent infill housing. There are views east across Esk Dale and between houses towards the Little Beck Valley. Beyond the junction with Eskdaleside, the National Park boundary runs along the A169 for a short distance. The church is set within trees on the right, on the corner of Iburndale Lane.

A minor road (Eskdaleside) approaches from the west, along the southern side of Esk Dale. Bends in the road, topography and vegetation largely screen views of the village until fairly close. On coming over a brow, the western edge of the village is marked by a large farm (Eskdale Gate) to the north, and the agricultural-style houses of Alum Drive to the south. The road then becomes more suburban in character, with the entrance to Hermitage Way, and linear development of detached 20th Century houses set in mature gardens. However, between plots and houses there are long views to the north across Esk Dale, which help to retain the sense of place.

The eastern approach is also along a minor road, from UGGLEBARNBY. On this approach there is a glimpsed view of the edge of Sleights, before the road drops down to cross the Little Beck Valley. The historic hamlet of Iburndale is located in the valley floor. The road crosses a bridge over the Little Beck and as the road (now Iburndale Lane) starts to climb, the character of the buildings changes to 20th Century linear development.

14.4 Settlement edges

There is a clear differentiation between the built-up area and the surrounding countryside, with no sense of 'urban fringe' in views. Garden trees, hedges along property boundaries and along the Little Beck help to soften the edge of the built-up area. Occasionally fields extend up to the road, enabling views into the surrounding landscape.

14.5 Heritage and nature conservation sites

There are a handful of Listed Buildings, including St John's Church and churchyard wall, Rosedale Cottage in Iburndale, the Plough Inn on the A169 and Eskdale Gate Farmhouse. Further Listed Buildings are found further west, including St Hilda's School, Esk Hall and the Chapel of St John.

Tree Protection Orders cover several trees in gardens to the south of Iburndale Lane, and there is also a cluster of protected trees in the grounds of St Hilda's School.

14.6 Summary of key elements and features which may be sensitive to development

- Elevated land on the valley side which forms the rural setting to Sleights and where development would expand the settlement up the hillside in views across the valley.

- The strongly rural character of the Little Beck Valley.
- The clear distinction between village edge and the rural setting – at the moment the countryside appears to sweep down to the village.
- The current lack of large or visually intrusive buildings in views across the valley from the north. This helps to keep the eye focussed on the landscape, rather than on buildings.
- Glimpsed views of Esk Dale from the village edge.
- Protected trees; Listed Buildings and their settings.



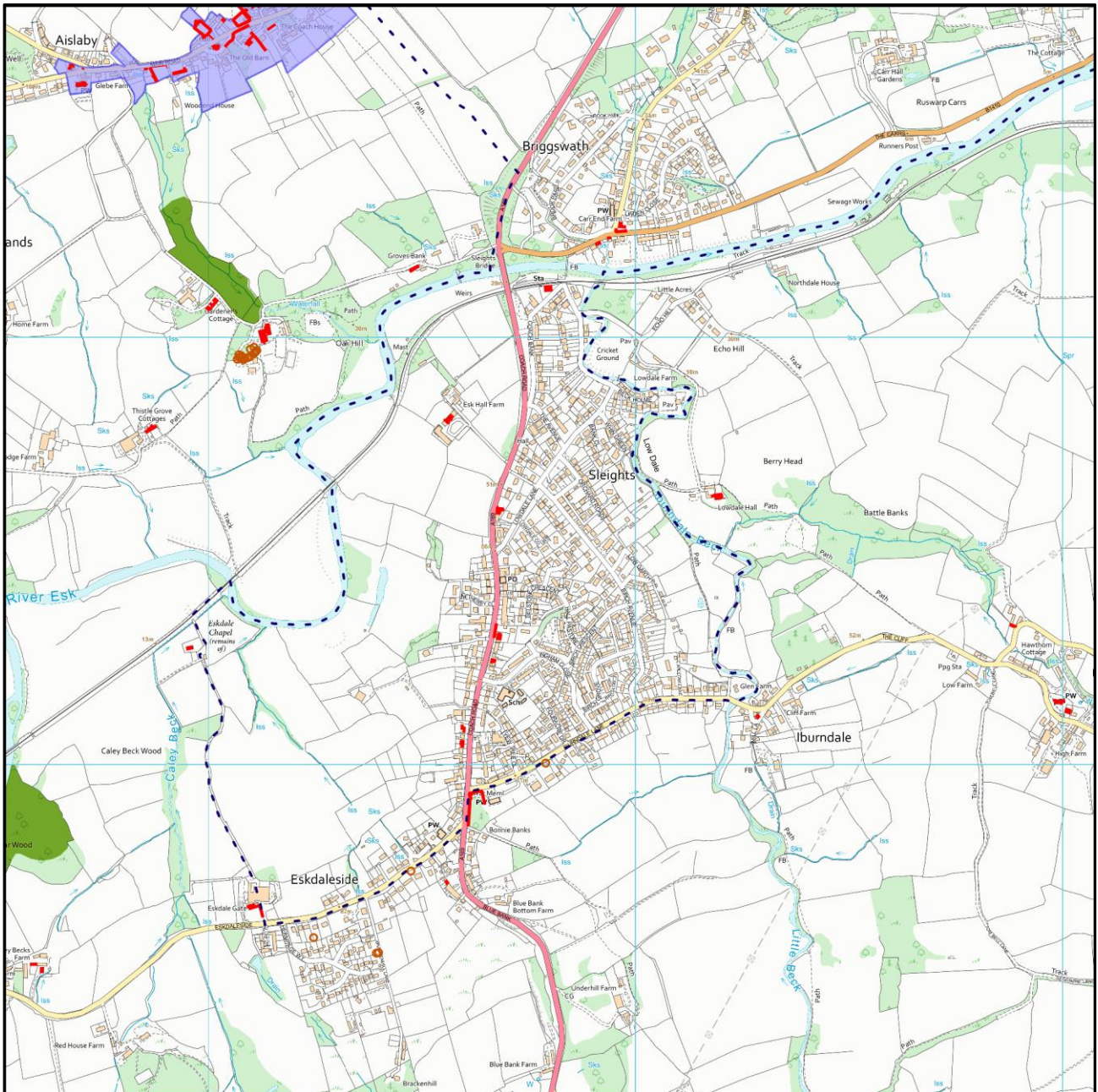
View of Sleights looking south across Esk Dale from Aislaby Churchyard



The southern edge of Sleights as seen from Ugglebarnby Lane, looking across the Little Beck valley. Iburndale is hidden in the trees in the valley bottom.



Glimpsed view of Esk Dale on the approach to Sleights down Blue Bank (A169)



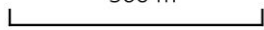
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North York Moors Landscape Character Assessment Update 2021

Settlement Sensitivity Study Sleights



500 m



- - National Park Boundary
- Conservation Areas
- Listed Buildings
- Ancient Semi-natural Woodlands
- Tree Preservation Orders

Map showing designated sites in Sleights and its environs