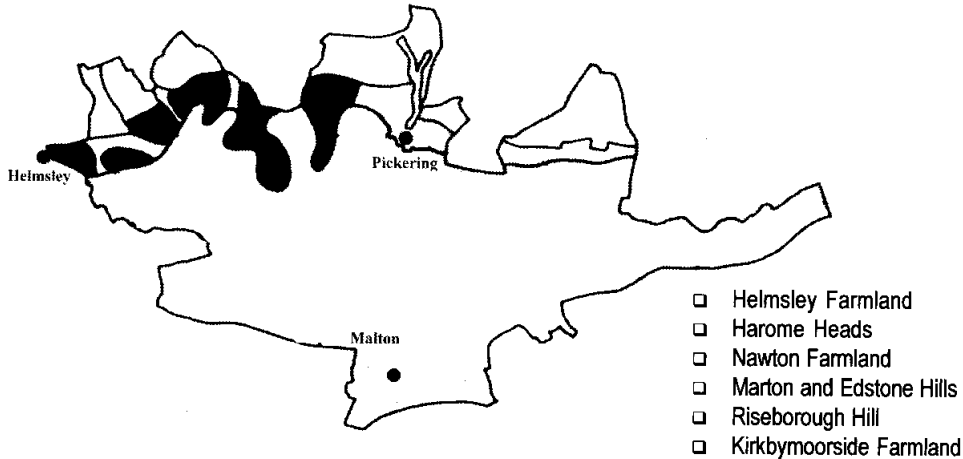


Area A Undulating Farmland**Key Characteristic Features**

- Gently rolling, sometimes sloping relief.
- Varied patchwork of farmland and small woodlands interlaced by hedgerows.
- Predominantly arable land with some pasture set in medium sized regular shaped fields.
- Lanes are straight, often with sharp bends and have wide grass verges and dense hedgerows.
- Villages tend to be nucleated and located on low lying land adjoining the Vale of Pickering.

Landform and Context

The *undulating farmland* is situated to the west of the Fringe of the Moors area abutting the north western edge of the Vale of Pickering. Here the underlying geology has created a complex topography and led to the creation of a relatively indistinct boundary between the two regional character areas. It is generally situated on land lying between 40-50 and 100-120m AOD. Although a significant part of the *undulating farmland* extends as ridges of higher land southwards into the Vale of Pickering, the character of the area is more closely associated with the sloping land of the Tabular Hills and the Fringe of the Moors. The local landform is derived principally from Kimmeridge clay that overlays limestone calcareous sandstones. The Kimmeridge clay, sandstone and limestones that form part of the wider Tabular Hills have been eroded to create a gently undulating relief. Boulder clay, which is of limited extent through the study area, has overlain this relief, and has contributed to the creation of a particularly soft relief and relatively deep soils.

Watercourses flow southwards off the North York Moors and the Tabular Hills into the Vale of Pickering. These watercourses usually flow in steep, narrow valleys or dales and serve to dissect the *undulating farmland*. The main watercourses passing through the area are the river Riccal, Hodge Beck, river Dove and the river Seven, which are described and classified as *wooded dales*. With the exception of a small number of minor tributary streams, watercourses in the undulating farmland are mostly absent.

Land Use and Landscape Pattern

The overall appearance of this strongly rural landscape is complex agricultural scenery of medium sized, straight edged fields that are enclosed by hedgerows with occasional trees. This pattern can be seen on the ridges of *undulating farmland* that extend southwards from Sinnington. Regular small scale woodland blocks that are predominantly deciduous break this pattern at intervals. Villages, hamlets and farms form small clusters, with villages and hamlets often being located on lower lying land at the edge of the area close to the Vale of Pickering.

Narrow lanes, typically enclosed by hedgerows and wide verges, link the scattered farms, hamlets and nucleated villages. Where the *undulating farmland* is associated more closely with the Fringe of the Moors (i.e. north of the A170), these lanes tend to be broadly linear and orientated in a north south direction. To the south, the pattern of lanes is more random and characteristic of the road pattern exhibited through the Vale, where straight sections of lane are interspersed with sharp corners.

A local variation in the pattern of land use occurs close to settlements. Around the Kirkbymoorside and the villages of Great Edstone, Marton, Wrelton and, to a lesser extent, Normanby, medieval open field strip cultivation has left its mark on the landscape in the form of long linear fields of what is now mainly pasture, but was once ploughland. Although originally open, these fields are now bounded by hedgerows and hedgerow trees including oak, ash and occasional sycamore. Areas of ridge and furrow provide evidence of early cultivation.

The undulating farmland east of Helmsley exhibits a number of prehistoric burial mounds or tumuli visible as green mounds within, otherwise, arable fields. These are statutorily protected as SAM's and testify to man's early use of the area.

In addition to the linear field system, other visible evidence of medieval occupation are the double dykes found near Normanby and Sinnington Park, remnants of the many deer parks, found throughout the area. Similarly, Neville Castle at Kirkbymoorside was once a hunting lodge for a deer park. Almost all evidence of the medieval park has now gone, other than the place names – 'Low Park', 'High Park' and 'Park Lane'.

Settlement

This reasonably well-populated rural landscape contains a number of villages, hamlets and farms. The largest settlements in the area are Kirkbymoorside and Helmsley.

Kirkbymoorside, the second smallest of Ryedale's four market towns, lies at the toe of the Tabular Hills immediately east of the river Dove which discharges through Farndale. This river once served as an important focus for textile production (linen and wool) and rope making. To the west of the town is Hodge Beck. Kirkbymoorside is an attractive market town, which has a long history dating back to at least the Domesday period. Although it once had a prominent castle, situated at Vivers Hill, any obvious visible evidence of this has long since disappeared. The older part of town has a north south orientation, and much of it is designated as a Conservation Area. This designation serves to illustrate the town's unity, sense of overall attractiveness and strong sense of character. In 1875 when the railway arrived, the town gravitated southwards, and today development can be seen towards the railway and along the A170.

As Kirkbymoorside is located on rising ground, it is highly visible particularly in views from the Vale of Pickering. Vivers Hill, which broods over the town, is a particularly important area of open ground that affords expansive views and contributes to the town's overall setting.

George Frank, an early town historian, noted that the town '*remained almost a sealed book*' until the arrival of the railway in 1874-75. Even then, it was noted at the beginning of this century that, '*one cannot help feeling that the village is still far removed from the influence of modern civilisation*'. Things have changed since then and today it is an attractive and prosperous market town that, nevertheless, has retained many of its early features.

Helmsley is the smallest of Ryedale's four market towns. It lies to the west of the study area, where the valleys of Ryedale and Bilsdale drop down off the higher ground and join the lower lying, flatter scenery that characterises the less elevated parts of the Fringe of the Moors and the Vale of Pickering. It is situated on a bridging point of the river Rye and the junction of the A170 Thirsk – Scarborough road and the B1257 Stokesley Road. The town has considerable historic and architectural merit and retains the original medieval layout, which developed around the central market place. This is reflected in its Conser-



Source: Environment Agency

Great Edstone (GR 706 841)

Area A

Undulating Farmland

Farmsteads tend to be large scale and locally dominant

Shallow hills serve to enclose the landscape



Near Great Edstone

Villages tend to be attractive and are often clustered around a village green

Where present hedgerow trees are important landscape elements



Marton



Near Helmsley

vation Area status and the fact that it contains seventeen listed buildings, including the ruins of a castle. Unsurprisingly, the town is a popular tourist attraction.

The surrounding countryside is highly attractive and is protected by a number of landscape designations. To the north and south of the town, outside of the study area, is the North York Moors National Park. To the south of the town and the river Rye, also outside the study area, is the Howardian Hills AONB. Areas of open countryside to the east of Helmsley, which lie within the study area, provide an attractive approach to the town. However, this is the area where pressures for development, notably housing, have been concentrated. These pressures are unlikely to recede in the near future, indeed, two new industrial/business allocations have recently been granted. Given the landscape quality both of the town and its surrounding area, there is little scope for expansion without adversely affecting the quality of either.

Other than Kirkbymoorside and Helmsley, settlements tend to be small and nucleated and most are strung along the springline at the foot of the Tabular Hills. Great Edstone is untypical, as it is located on a hill. Settlements are generally clustered, although Normanby has developed a more linear pattern associated with the river Seven. Most contain farms and display a hierarchical collection of buildings centred on a church, inn, vicarage and sometimes a manor house. The settlements tend to be attractive and have a strong character based on a general unity of building materials, architectural styles and strong compositional form. Several are Conservation Areas, which is evidence of their architectural attractiveness and unity. The building material is predominantly white and grey limestone with roofs constructed in red pantile. Red brick and slate, whilst not absent, are only used to a limited extent. The strong unified character of settlements is emphasised by a number of additional factors, such as, chimneys being typically red brick with pots constructed from red clay, windows being typically sash-type, often painted white, and buildings rarely being higher than 2-storey.

Subjective Response

The *undulating farmland* is a strongly rural and attractive landscape lying in the lee of the Tabular Hills and North York Moors. Due to this association, the scenery has a protected and sheltered feel. The landscape occupies an area of complex, yet subtle terrain, and displays a varied local character. It is a

transitional landscape whose character reflects its proximity to both the low lying Vale of Pickering and the higher land of the Fringe of the Moors. To the west, in the vicinity of Helmsley, the effect of proximity to the North York Moors to the north and the Howardian Hills to the south creates a local landscape with a particularly enclosed feel. To the east, close to Kirkbymoorside, the character of the landscape is more open.

Sensitivity to Change

The landscape of the *undulating farmland* is transitional. The visual relationship between the agricultural patchwork of The Vale of Pickering and the higher land of the Tabular Hills is particularly sensitive. Any changes in the landscape pattern should seek to strengthen the visual structure and identity of the local landscape. Although small scale, changes to the landscape pattern could, and have been, absorbed, the cumulative effect of piecemeal changes can result in a degraded landscape, where the overall integrity of the visual structure is lost.

In some areas, particularly close to settlements, fields have been enlarged and hedgerows lost. This has resulted in the erosion of the important historic field pattern and the development of a less distinctive farmland. The loss of hedgerow trees and, in places, the lack of hedgerow repair, is leading to a dilution of the area's rural character. Elsewhere pressures from informal recreation are apparent. Caravan parks are not uncommon in this area, although they tend to be sensitively designed. Informal parking on grass verges and farm entrances is a problem along certain lanes.

Landscape Guidelines

Landscape Strategy

This is an historic landscape of arable fields and pastures, small woodlands and nucleated villages set in a gently rolling landform above the level farmland of the Vale of Pickering. It is a scenic and highly visible landscape, which should be conserved and locally enhanced.

Land Management

The visual structure of this landscape should be assessed from the surrounding lowland to ensure that the relationship between the higher land and its adjacent landscapes is well balanced.

The transition from a relatively large scale landscape pattern dating back to the period of Parliamentary Enclosures, to a more intimate patchwork of farmland, woodland and hedgerows nearer the villages, is an important visual characteristic that contributes to the overall character of the landscape. Management strategies should aim to strengthen this variation and discourage further enlargement of arable fields, particularly near settlement fringes.

Panoramic views from the higher land out across the Vale of Pickering towards the Howardian Hills, Yorkshire Wolds and North York Moors are a distinctive feature of this landscape, which should be considered when planning landscape change.

Specific landscape features, such as individual farm buildings, copses, hedgerows and landform are of considerable importance, particularly in distant views from the Vale of Pickering. The visual quality of such features is valuable to the landscape. Attractive features should be conserved and those that have a negative visual influence should be identified as a priority for removal, enhancement or screening.

It is important that the tradition of quiet enjoyment of this countryside is maintained through the control of new recreational facilities. Inappropriate large-scale facilities such as golf courses and large caravan parks could introduce a suburbanising influence and should be controlled.

Important archaeological sites, such as the many tumuli found east of Helmsley, should continue to be protected.

Field Boundaries

The scale of its patchwork of fields and hedgerows determines the structure of this landscape. Future management should ensure that the existing hedgerow network is conserved and strengthened along existing alignments. Traditional hedgerow management techniques should be promoted, avoiding mechanical over-flailing.

Field hedgerows should be replanted along historic field boundaries where they have been removed due to agricultural intensification and field enlargement. New hedgerows should be designed to strengthen and restore the historic field pattern, particularly the relic open-field cultivation system near settlements, and should use locally occurring native species.

Hedgerow trees are an important visual and historic feature of this landscape. However many are overmature and in need of surgery or replacement if they are to continue to play a positive role. Any trees requiring tree surgery or removal should be checked for roosting bats before work is carried out.

Trees and Woodlands

Existing woodlands tend to be regularly arranged and relatively small in scale. Whilst the current distribution of tree cover could be increased, any new planting should seek to replicate this arrangement, be of an appropriate scale, and relate to the existing field pattern. It could include a variety of forms including hedgerow trees, copses and individual specimens.

To conserve the existing landscape character, new woodlands should be broad-leaved using native species preferably of local provenance. The species mix and the proportion of each species planted should reflect that found in existing ancient semi-natural woodlands in the area. The dominant species are ash, pedunculate oak, and wych elm, plus understorey species, namely holly, field maple, guelder rose, hazel and blackthorn.

Existing woodlands, copses and shelter belts should be conserved and managed to achieve a balanced age structure by thinning to allow natural regeneration and replanting with native species where necessary. Woodland thinning should concentrate on removing non-native trees if present, particularly sycamore, which is very invasive and can prevent the regeneration of native species. The opening of glade areas would allow for a diversification of the woodland habitat. Where appropriate, traditional

management techniques such as coppicing should be employed to encourage the diversification of the field layer, which tends to be richer in coppiced woodland. Dead trees should not be removed, unless there is a threat to the public near to footpaths. Where felling is necessary, the dead wood should be left on site to provide habitat for invertebrates.

If no survey data is available, woodlands should be surveyed, for both flora and fauna, before any management work is carried out, to ensure any rare or localised species are conserved. Any work should take into account the impact on these species, and suitable mitigating measures should be taken. Each woodland should be considered individually, and in some cases, a decision will need to be taken to conserve a rare species, possibly at the expense of biological diversity. Ideally, ten-year management plans should be prepared for the important sites, which take into account the objectives of conservation of rare species, and of biological diversity. In some cases, new peripheral planting would promote ecological diversity and help to establish an improved overall shape that would link to existing hedgerows and relate to local variations in landform.

However, in selected areas, other species could make a valuable contribution to the visual diversity, although their inclusion in planting mixes should not preclude specific nature conservation objectives. Such additional species might include, field maple and wild cherry.

Settlements and Buildings

Small scale tree planting around development would help to soften its appearance and assist its integration into the landscape. However, it is important that any such schemes are designed strategically in response to a careful, detailed visual analysis, which takes full account of views both into and out of the area.

The setting of Kirkbymoorside is particularly sensitive to change. The town occupies an area of locally elevated terrain and is highly visible from the south. In places the abrupt edge of the built up area appears discordant with the surrounding countryside. Areas of elevated open ground around the town, such as Vivers Hill, are very sensitive to development. Because of this, there should be a general presumption against expansion of the town on elevated land to the north of the A170 and any new development proposals should be closely evaluated to ensure their visual and architectural appropriateness from both within the town, and beyond.

The setting of Helmsley at the foot of the North York Moors and the Howardian Hills is, similarly, very sensitive to change. It is an attractive and historic market town, which is highly visible in views from the surrounding elevated areas. There should be a general presumption against development to the north and west of the town (i.e. within the National Park). Any future development allocations should be directed to carefully controlled infill and limited expansion to the east of the town, which should take full account of views from surrounding areas, particularly from the adjacent Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the river Rye corridor.

Development should seek to strengthen the existing pattern of nucleated village form.

Traditional farm buildings should be conserved wherever possible. Such buildings are important as they are used as nest sites for birds such as swallow, house martin and barn owl and as roost sites for bats. Although conversion of redundant buildings may be appropriate, this should be handled sensitively and only permitted if the traditional architectural features and rural setting are to be retained. All efforts should be made to resist suburbanisation by inappropriate construction and detailing.

Infrastructure

There is further scope to improve the setting of the A170, focusing particularly on hedgerow restoration and carefully sited tree planting. The suburbanising influence of swathes of ornamental daffodil planting within the grass verges should be avoided. Management measures should instead concentrate on the diversification of grass and native wildflower species. Instead, the use of the native daffodil planted more naturally along and under hedgerows, would be more appropriate.

The existing character of the rural lanes should be maintained, resisting upgrading schemes involving works such as road widening or straightening and the introduction of artificial kerbs, which can introduce a suburbanising influence. Informal car parking on grass verges, lay-bys and farm entrances should be controlled.

Priorities for Action

- ❑ *Conserve the existing landscape pattern of medium sized fields, becoming smaller and more treed near settlements.*
- ❑ *Conserve and, in many instances, restore hedgerows and hedgerow trees to enhance the structure of the landscape, particularly the relic open-field cultivation system around settlements.*
- ❑ *Manage woodlands to maximise their ecological diversity.*
- ❑ *Protect the setting of Kirkbymoorside, particularly when viewed from the Vale of Pickering.*
- ❑ *Protect the setting of Helmsley.*
- ❑ *Enhance the landscape of the A170 road corridor.*
- ❑ *Continue to protect important archaeological sites.*