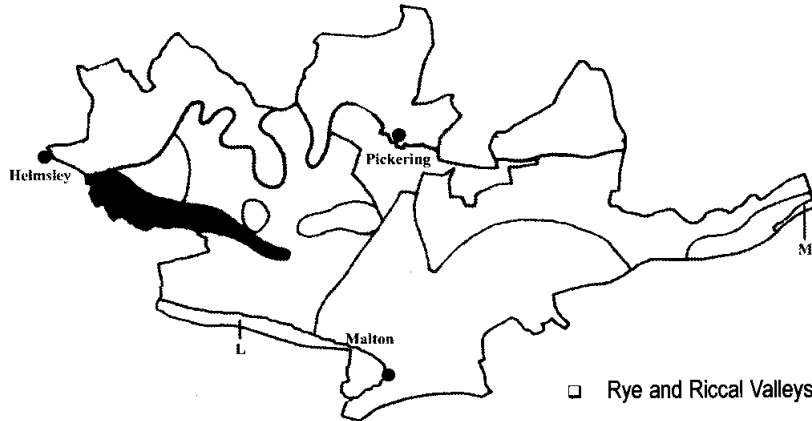


**AREA B Riverside Farmland**



**Key Characteristic Features**

- *Shallow low lying flat bottomed valleys.*
- *Floodplain pasture close to rivers.*
- *Fields of variable size and shape.*
- *Sinuous strips of deciduous woodland along river.*
- *Enclosed due to proximity to elevated land and screening effect of the relatively high tree cover.*

**Landform and Context**

The *riverside farmland* comprises the valleys of the rivers Rye and Riccal, together with the intervening farmland. It lies at the western end of the Vale of Pickering in an area bounded to the south by Caulkkeys Bank (within the Howardian Hills AONB), to the west by the Hambleton Hills and to the north by the rising land of the Fringe of the Moors. Whilst, near Harome, the area is approximately two kilometres wide, further east it narrows to a termination at Brawby. *Riverside farmland* occupies an area where the boundaries between the Vale of Pickering, the Fringe of the Moors and the Howardian Hills become less distinct.

The *riverside farmland* lies between approximately 45 and 30m AOD with the lower land to the east.

The *riverside farmland* is a relatively narrow and linear landscape feature, which is formed on the silty alluvial clays deposited on the river floodplain. These heavy, poorly drained soils are more suited to pasture than to arable cultivation.

**Land Use and Landscape Pattern**

The *riverside farmland* is strongly rural in character. Although most fields close to the river are pastures, there is an increasing concentration of arable cultivation away from the river floodplain. The area immediately adjacent the river is subject to seasonal flooding.

The field pattern varies across the area. Immediately adjoining the river corridors, fields tend to be smaller, more enclosed and irregular in shape, in places following the course of the river. In contrast, the intervening arable farmland is altogether more open, with a patchwork of medium to large scale, geometric fields. Hedgerows are common throughout the area and are predominantly hawthorn with elder, including locally high concentrations of holly. Although regular woodland blocks, such as Crow and Riccal Wood are present, woodlands in the area are generally more linear and sinuous, following the course of the rivers. This is most notable along the rivers Rye and Riccal where alder dominated woodlands are common.

Elsewhere, trees are more dispersed and are mostly found in hedgerows. Away from the rivers and streams, trees are most commonly oak and ash with some holly.

Around the eastern edge of Harome, fields become smaller, more linear and intimate in scale with a higher tree cover.

### Settlements and Buildings

The only settlement in this area is the small village of Harome in the west. Historically the village developed in a linear arrangement along the main street, however, recent years have seen it become more clustered in character. Older buildings in the village are typically constructed of limestone with red pantile roofs with the occasional thatched cottage. The severity of many of the roof pitches indicates that the thatch was once a far more common roofing material and, in many cases, would have pre-dated the use of tiles.

Farms tend to be set on slightly elevated land, above the immediate river corridor where they are less likely to experience flooding. Most of the farms are constructed of limestone, with red pantile roofs and often include other buildings that are in keeping with the scale and character of the area. However, modern agricultural requirements combined with the introduction of modern constructional materials and building technologies are resulting in the introduction of new structures that are commonly out of scale with the more traditional agricultural buildings.

### Subjective Responses

Despite its narrow form and limited geographical extent, this landscape has a strongly rural, tranquil and pastoral quality. Both the river corridors and the intervening farmland have a slightly secluded quality. The surrounding Tabular Hills to the north and the Howardian Hills to the southwest contribute to the overall sense of enclosure, whilst the small woodlands along the river corridors give these an even more enclosed feel.

### Sensitivity to Change

Extensive built development is unlikely to be a possibility in this area, given its proximity to the rivers Rye and Riccal. However, engineering works related to the river channels, transmission lines and changing landuse patterns are all potential forces for change. Proximity to the North York Moors Na-

tional Park, the Howardian Hills and popular towns and villages such as Nunnington and Helmsley also result in a number of recreational pressures being focused upon the area.

The landscape mosaic of generally organic and medium sized pastoral fields close to the rivers, giving way to a larger, more geometric pattern in the intervening farmland is one of the area's most significant features. In recent years this has been diluted through changes in land management, including field enlargement, hedgerow and tree removal. Close to Harome, the linear field pattern remains vulnerable to change and should be protected as an important historical and cultural landscape feature.

Agricultural improvements, and land drainage, have continued to erode the natural character of the river's Rye and Riccal. However, unlike many similar watercourses in the Vale, these rivers retain a locally meandering course and many streamside trees.

### Landscape Guidelines

#### Landscape Strategy

**This is a low lying landscape of flat and gently undulating pastures and arable fields bounded by a strong pattern of hedgerows and hedgerow trees. It is an attractive landscape that is enhanced by proximity to the rising ground of Caulkleys Bank and the Howardian Hills, which dominate views and contribute to the overall more enclosed character of this part of the Vale. This local landscape type shares characteristics that are common both to the Vale and the Fringe of the Moors. In this respect it is unusual and should be conserved and locally enhanced.**

#### Land Management

Management strategies should aim to conserve and emphasise the large and small scale variations in field size within this area. These variations, for instance between the smaller more irregular fields of the river corridors and the more regular field pattern of intervening farmland, make an important contribution to its visual character.

# Area B

## Riverside Farmland



Source: Environment Agency

River Rye and River Dove (GR 713 790)

Flood embankments follow river courses

Riparian vegetation is commonly seen  
along the river corridor



River Rye



In many places the trees along rivers provide a valuable  
wildlife habitat.

The irregular small scale field patterns within the river corridors should be a priority for conservation. It would be beneficial to maintain traditional pasture grazing in those associated with the rivers, so as to retain the nature conservation value associated with damp conditions and unimproved grassland.

Further agricultural intensification should be resisted and, wherever possible, arable farmland converted to grassland to reinforce the pastoral qualities of the scenery.

The amount of woodland cover could be increased. New woodlands should be small scale and have an irregular, organic character designed to emphasise minor changes in landform and create a varied mosaic.

The rivers Rye and Riccal are an important feature of this landscape, introducing a smaller, more organic and sinuous form into the otherwise open and highly visible landscape of the Vale. Priority should be given to the retention and enhancement of all areas of wetland or water related features, including damp, unimproved grassland. New riverside features should closely mirror its linear winding form.

Unless essential for flood control, there should be no further modification of the river channel or changes to the banksides. It is particularly important to allow the rivers to maintain their natural course with seasonal flood and dynamic erosion patterns. Further drainage of the surrounding land should be avoided to prevent further damage to wetland habitats. Some re-grading of the existing bank profiles is advisable where the banks have a very artificial appearance. Specialist studies will be necessary to ensure the best approach to maximise visual, ecological and drainage requirements.

Riverbank and natural streamside vegetation should be protected and preserved and the conversion of arable farmland to permanent grassland encouraged alongside riverbanks to create a buffer zone and provide valuable wildlife habitats. Any re-seeding of arable land should use a suitable grassland seed mix, of local provenance where possible, which reflects the species found in unimproved grasslands within the local area.

The potential for locally widening the river channel to create marshy scrapes that could be integrated with existing remnant ditches and channels should be examined. All such work should take into account the possible presence of bank-nesting birds such as sand martin whose nest sites should be protected.

The potential for local restoration of traditional flood meadows should be explored and consideration given to the management of farmland as seasonally wet pastures to maximise the ecological and visual potential of the river corridors.

### Field Boundaries

All existing hedgerows should be conserved and managed. There is scope to extend the hedgerow network in some parts of the area, particularly where the local landscape is visually degraded and lacking in identity. Gaps along boundaries should be replanted using locally occurring native species, such as hawthorn, holly or hazel. Linkage between hedgerows and woodlands should be encouraged to maximise visual and wildlife benefits. Traditional hedgerow management techniques should be encouraged and mechanical over-flailing avoided.

### Trees and Woodlands

The existing mature woodlands should be conserved and managed to provide a balanced age structure and habitat diversity. Where necessary woodlands should be thinned, preferentially removing non-native species especially those that are invasive and tend to shade out others. Priority should be given to the conservation of semi natural woodland on the banks of the river Riccal.

Whilst there are small areas of riparian woodland within some of the meanders of the river Rye, much of the remaining bankside areas are artificial banks supporting grazed pasture. It is important that all groups of trees along the riverside are conserved since they form an important part of the wildlife corridor. Care should be taken when carrying out tree surgery or necessary felling since these trees possibly harbour roosting bats, in particular the Daubentons bat which feeds mainly over water and often roosts close to waterbodies.

To enhance the wildlife potential of the riverside areas and strengthen the wildlife corridor afforded by the river, a more natural management regime should be introduced to enhance the wooded character of the river. This should include the exclusion of grazing animals along some sections, to allow natural regeneration of bank side species and marginal vegetation. Existing woodland and groups of trees could be enhanced by the planting of suitable carr woodland species such as alder, goat willow and crack willow and the protection of existing wetland habitats.

### Settlements and Buildings

The use of traditional building and roofing materials should be encouraged, particularly thatch, which is rare in North Yorkshire.

Any farm building where there is proposed redevelopment or restoration should be checked for roosting bats and nesting birds in particular barn owl, swallow and house martin. Work should avoid the bird-breeding season and should seek to preserve any bat roost wherever possible.

### Infrastructure

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

Verges and banks should be managed to encourage native grassland and wildflower species.

### Priorities for Action

- Give priority to the conservation and enhancement of the riverside landscapes.
- Conserve and enhance the hedgerow pattern.
- Resist recent trends towards canalisation and dredging of watercourses and encourage traditional river management.
- Explore the possibilities for restoration of traditional flood meadows.
- Encourage the conversion of arable farmland to permanent pasture along the riverbanks.