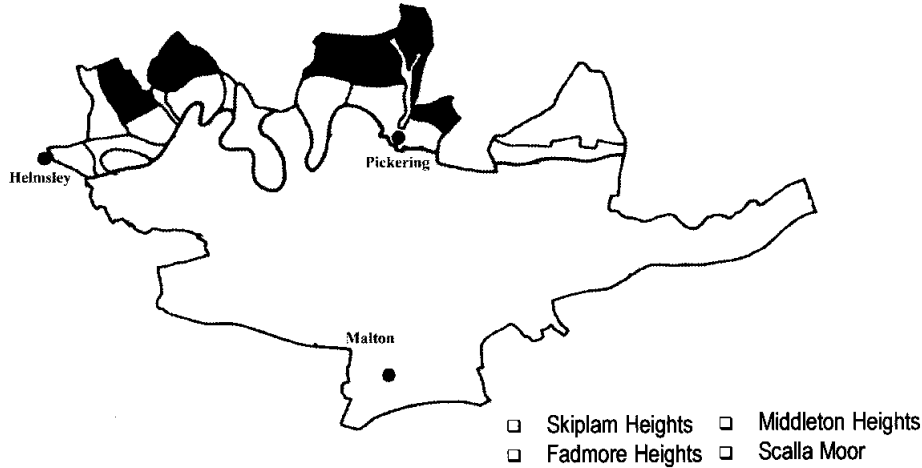


AREA D Sloping Open Farmland**Key Characteristic Features**

- Elevated large-scale sloping plateau dissected by dry valleys.*
- Open rural landscape with generally expansive views.*
- Scattered farms and settlements located on elevated land.*
- Few woodlands.*

Landform and Context

The *sloping open farmland* is geographically the most extensive local landscape type in this regional character area and is found in four areas to the north and west of the Fringe of the Moors where it abuts the boundary of the North York Moors National Park. All the areas are elevated, mostly above 100m AOD, but rising to nearly 200m AOD near Newton-on-Rawcliffe.

The *sloping open farmland* is underlain by the limestones and calcareous grits of the Tabular Hills dip slope that extends southwards from the North York Moors towards the Vale of Pickering. At higher elevations and in the west of the District, the slopes are consistently shallow, whilst in the east the sloping terrain becomes much steeper near the A170 where Kimmeridge clay deposits have been brought in close contact with more resistant Middle Jurassic rocks along the line of the Helmsley - Filey fault.

The dip slope of the Tabular Hills has been eroded by a number of valleys, most of which are now dry. The effect is to produce a softly undulating terrain, particularly at higher levels. On lower slopes, the valleys become steeper and more incised, producing stronger contrasts in landscape character.

In addition to influencing terrain, the underlying geology affects many other landscape features, including the agricultural productivity of the land. Most of the soils are classed as MAFF Grade 3 agricultural land although in higher areas Grade 4 land is more common. A particularly noticeable affect of local geology is the shallowness of the soil and the visible presence of limestone during ploughing.

Land Use and Landscape Pattern

This is an agricultural landscape, predominantly arable, although the amount of grassland increases nearer the settlements. Fields tend to be medium to large, regular shaped and are generally bounded by hedgerows. Close to elevated settlements, notably to the west of Newton-on-Rawcliffe, north of Middleton and around Cropton, a strong medieval pattern of long, linear fields bounded by hedgerows remains. Up on the higher ground, prehistoric tumuli provide evidence of even earlier use of this area. Many of these are Scheduled Ancient Movements.

Characteristic of the area are the shallow dry valleys that dissect the scenery. At a lower altitude, these valleys are often wooded, however, in more elevated areas the steeper slopes prohibit cropping and the valleys are characteristically seen as fingers of pasture extending through the predominantly arable landscape. Similar to the *sloping wooded farmland*, it is possible that these will contain archaeological features that are, as yet, unrecorded.

Lanes through the area are broadly orientated in a north - south direction and connect the A170, with the higher land to the north. Typically, these lanes have narrow grass verges and are contained by hawthorn hedgerows that include occasional trees, predominantly ash.

Settlement

The settlement pattern of this area is one of scattered, isolated farms and small clustered villages, such as Fadmoor and Gillamoore. Most of the villages occupy elevated positions at the edge of the North York Moors National Park, a pattern of distribution that may date back thousands of years. The elevated villages are an important component of the open farmland and serve to provide a population resource in an area that would otherwise appear relatively remote and inaccessible.

Although recent development has, in places, had a negative impact, most of the villages tend to exhibit a strength of character based on a unity of architecture and constructional materials. Most of the buildings tend to be constructed of limestone with red pantile roofs. Many of the elevated villages, such as Newton-on-Rawcliffe, Fadmoor and Cropton, are centred on small greens. These greens are important compositional features and serve to provide an attractive and unifying element. The character of these elevated villages are further strengthened by

the fact that approaching them, fields tend to become smaller, more linear and consequently hedgerow and hedgerow tree cover increases.

Farms are generally large and, in addition to substantial stone built farmhouses, tend to include similarly constructed ancillary buildings. Like the villages, the farms demonstrate a strong visual unity; their presence emphasised by their shelterbelts of mature ash trees.

Subjective Response

An expansive, open landscape, affording generally large-scale panoramic views across a relatively homogenous scenery. The gently rolling terrain produces many horizons and a strong sense of scale and distance. In more elevated areas the influence of the higher moorland becomes more pronounced, and there is an impression, despite the exposure of the area, of enclosure. On lower slopes, as the land becomes more dissected by deeper, steeper valleys, proximity to the Vale of Pickering creates a scenery that, whilst expansive and open, feels less elevated and exposed. This landscape can feel remote despite the relative proximity of settlement and the intensity of agricultural production.

Sensitivity to Change

The *sloping open farmland* is large scale and has a sweeping character. Even relatively small elements in the landscape, such as hedgerows, trees or farm buildings, are visible over large distances.

The characteristic open qualities of this landscape make it sensitive to development. Woodlands and hedgerows although present do not afford many opportunities for screening new development.

Most forms of development will be highly visible, particularly if located on the more elevated areas. However, small scale, well designed development could be accommodated if carefully sited and concentrated close to existing villages. Thorough, detailed visual analysis is, however, essential before any form of development takes place and opportunities should be sought for reducing the visual impact of existing visually intrusive elements in the landscape.

Area D

Sloping Open Farmland



Source: Environment Agency

Holly Park north of Nawton (GR 658 863)

The topography is softly undulating

Coniferous plantations often serve to contain distant views



Haugh Rigg Area

Though in places hedgerows are in good condition, they are often gappy or missing

Close to settlements fields become smaller and more linear



Near Crook Farm



Newton-on-Radcliffe

Landscape Guidelines

Landscape Strategy

This is a landscape of arable fields and pastures, woodlands and clustered villages set in a gently rolling elevated landscape. It is a scenic and highly visible landscape, which should be conserved and locally enhanced where opportunity arises.

Land Management

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

The existing pattern of the landscape and particularly the range of field shapes and sizes should be retained. Further field enlargement should be avoided.

There is a transition from the relatively large-scale patchwork of fields on the higher slopes to a smaller scale, more linear pattern of farmland, hedgerows and woodland on the lower slopes to the south. This important visual characteristic contributes to the simple scenic harmony of the landscape, particularly when viewed from the Vale of Pickering. It is important to conserve and enhance this contrast, as the linear fields on the lower slopes are most likely to be threatened by development or changing patterns of agriculture.

Similarly, the smaller, often linear pastures that make such an important contribution to the visual structure and historic character around the higher villages, such as Newton-on-Rawcliffe and Cropton, should be a priority for conservation. Some may also be unimproved grassland and thus have additional ecological value, which could be further enhanced.

Distant panoramic views out across the Vale of Pickering are a notable feature of this landscape, which should be framed and enhanced through selective planting.

Specific features such as farm buildings, copses, hedgerows or landforms are of particular importance within the more open fields of the large-scale landscape and the visual quality of these landscape elements is significant. Attractive features should be conserved and those that have a negative influence should be identified as a priority for removal, upgrading or screening.

Kirkbymoorside Golf Course contains some naturalistic landscaping with use of the existing contours and vegetation. The course incorporates areas of calcareous grassland, woodland and scrub, which are of nature conservation value and are generally managed sympathetically. The Golf Club is in the process of drawing up a conservation plan in conjunction with Ryedale District Council. Some of the farmland around the golf course, however, exhibits a loss of landscape structure with overgrown and broken hedgerows. Replanting of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, together with hedgerow management should be a priority to strengthen the farmland mosaic in this area.

Specialist studies that take full account of geological, nature conservation and aesthetic issues are required to determine the best approach to quarry restoration, and ensure the conservation of rare or localised species. In some cases, restoration might include the chamfering back of rock faces; elsewhere it may be preferable to retain quarry faces intact to preserve their geological or nature conservation interests.

Important archaeological sites should continue to be protected and should be a priority for grassland restoration schemes with associated scrub clearance and appropriate grazing regimes.

Field Boundaries

The scale and form of its patchwork of fields and hedgerows determine the visual 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, using locally occurring native species. This is particularly important around the elevated villages, such as Fadmoor and Gillamoore, where fields are traditionally smaller and more linear.

Overmature hedgerow trees should be managed or replaced. Any trees requiring tree surgery or removal should be checked for roosting bats before any work is carried out.

Trees and Woodlands

The existing cover of small woodlands, copses and shelterbelts should be maintained. Priority should be given to the protection and long term management of ancient semi-natural woodland.

Woodlands are often situated on the steep sided slopes of the narrow valleys. Several of these, such as Manor Vale north of Kirkbymoorside and Beadale Wood, are noted for their habitat value. These are ash dominated and have a rich ground flora that supports a range of rare species, which should be protected and enhanced.

The replacement of exotic conifers by native broad-leaved species, to increase their visual and ecological appeal and maintain the sense of place is considered important.

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, in particular 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 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.

The current distribution of shelterbelts and small woodlands could be increased, particularly near farms and villages. However, this should only be undertaken after careful analysis of existing views. New tree planting should be of an appropriate scale and relate both to the existing field pattern, building scale and landform.

Given that the wooded areas may contain important archaeological features, it is recommended that the County Archaeologist should be consulted before any major planting or management initiatives are undertaken.

Settlements and Buildings

Demands for new housing should be accommodated only through carefully controlled village infill, with due respect to the clustered form of existing villages.

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

Traditional farm buildings should be conserved wherever possible. 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 retained. All efforts should be made to resist suburbanisation by inappropriate construction and detailing. Changes in use of redundant buildings should take into account the use of the building by nesting birds and possible bat roosts.

Infrastructure

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.

Grass verges and banks should be managed to encourage native grasses and wildflower species.

Priorities for Action

- Conserve the existing landscape pattern of medium sized fields, becoming smaller and more linear with a higher tree cover near settlements and on the lower slopes.*
- Conserve and, in many places, restore hedgerows and hedgerow trees.*
- Conserve and manage woodlands.*
- Undertake specialist studies of quarries with a view to possible restoration.*
- Continue to protect important archaeological sites.*