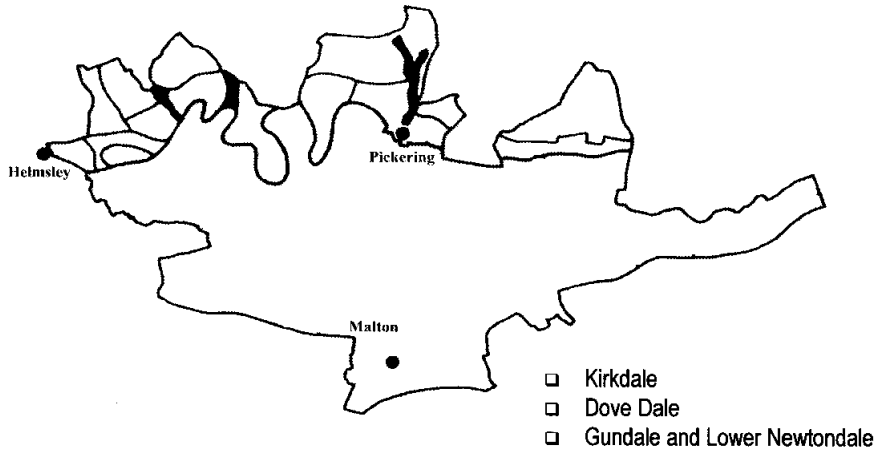


AREA E Wooded Dales**Key Characteristic Features**

- Narrow steep-sided valleys with a north south alignment.*
- Dense sinuous linear woodlands.*
- Predominantly pastoral.*
- Meandering small rivers.*
- Transportation corridors and settlements located at lower elevations.*

Landform and Context

The *wooded dales* are three large valleys that cut through the limestones and calcareous grits of the surrounding Tabular Hills in a north to south direction. They are narrow, twisting and have steep indented sided slopes, sometimes with minor cliffs, such as seen at Ravenswick. The dales contain small meandering rivers that occupy a narrow flat alluvial valley floor. Hodge Beck and the river Dove cut valleys to the west and east of Kirkbymoorside respectively, while Pickering Beck passes through Pickering. All these rivers flow southwards into the Vale of Pickering and are tributaries of the river Derwent.

The *wooded dales* are unusual in the context of the Fringe of the Moors area in that they represent the only wet valleys. Although the District is dissected by a complex valley system, with the exception of these dales, all others are dry.

Many of the rivers appear out of scale with their valleys, which are large, almost gorge like in places. In addition, they have a meandering course set within a deep valley setting. Geomorphologically, this is an unusual situation as meandering river courses are more typical of lower lying flood plain conditions, rather than deep narrow valleys. The reason for this unusual occurrence lies in the fact that these valleys were over deepened during the last ice age when they formed glacial overflow channels. Newton Dale, which lies to the north and east of Pickering (largely within the North York Moors National Park), is a textbook example of such an overflow channel.

Within the Fringe of the Moors study area, the dales tend to be narrow and twisting as they cut through the Tabular Hills dip slope. However, in their upper reaches, outside the study area, they tend to be broader and more sweeping in character.

Land Use and Landscape Pattern

Most of the valleys are wooded. These woodlands relate closely to the landform and consequently emphasise the meandering forms of the valleys.

The flat valley floors are predominantly agricultural, dominated by small scale fields that are set to pasture. Fields are contained by hedgerows and occasional drystone walls that are constructed from locally quarried limestone and calcareous sandstone.

In the past, the *wooded dales* offered good potential for traditional woodland management activities such as charcoal for the iron industry and coppicing of underwood, especially where they contained a strong watercourse,

The local geography of these dales has for centuries promoted them as important communication routes. They allow a relatively easy passage into the interior of the North York Moors and in the case of Newton Dale, which passes through Pickering, afford a continuous rail routeway across the moors. This communication role has resulted in many of the dales being followed by roads and tracks, both along the valley floor and frequently along their upper slopes. In addition, it is typical for settlements to be located where the dales meet the Vale of Pickering.

Other important land uses in the *wooded dales* include quarries and parkland. The dales are also attractive to walkers and tourists. Recreational pressures include lay-bys, kiosks, signboards, car parks and viewpoints. These elements require sensitive siting and detailing.

Settlement

Whilst the narrow confines of the dales have generally served as a constraint to larger settlement, a number of farms are found along their length, particularly in their lower and upper reaches. These farms exhibit a character typical of the Fringe of the Moors area, in that they are principally constructed from limestone with red pantile roofs and demonstrate a strong sense of architectural unity and sensitivity to their wider landscape setting.

In Kirkdale, a small church, known as Kirkdale Minster, occupies a small tributary valley of the main gorge. This is of Saxon origin and testifies to the early occupation of this valley. The area around is currently the subject of a detailed archaeological survey in an attempt to uncover further evidence of the area's early history.

A characteristic of the *wooded dales* is the fact that settlements are often situated along the A170, where the valleys discharge southwards into the Vale of Pickering. The most significant of these is the market town of Pickering. However, others include Kirkby Mills, Keldholme and Welburn. Note that the market town of Pickering is described in *Area F*, in the context of *linear scarp farmland*.

Subjective Response

The *wooded dales* seem more intimate and secluded in relation to the more open scenery characteristic of the surrounding Tabular Hills. Most of the dales have a strong sense of harmony, order and tranquillity with land uses responding closely to variations in landform. Views are generally contained within the dales and the varied patterns of woodland, pasture and settlement often form bold, distinctive visual compositions.

Sensitivity to Change

The *wooded dales* are small scale and intimate, with views generally contained in the middle ground. The woodlands do afford little potential for screening development, as even small scale clearings will be highly visible from one side of the valley to the other. Most existing settlement occurs within the lower reaches of the dales and it is here that future development pressure is likely to be concentrated, particularly within the A170 corridor. Tree cover typically increases in these areas with the result that there is some capacity to absorb small scale development but only if it is carefully integrated into the surrounding landscape.

The dales are relatively accessible in that they contain some of the main communication routes between the Vale of Pickering and the North York Moors. This makes them vulnerable to change and loss of character and identity.



Source: Environment Agency

Newton Dale in Pickering (GR 798 845)

Area E

Wooded Dales

Where the valley sides slope gently, the land is used for agriculture. These slopes serve to enclose the valley.

In places the landscape has a parkland character



Ravenswick

In most places the valley sides are too steep to accommodate agriculture and woodland dominates



Ravenswick

Landscape Guidelines

Landscape Strategy

These well-wooded landscapes follow deeply incised valley systems through the surrounding, more open and elevated rural landscape. They are intimate and highly attractive, often containing a range of important habitats. Any strategy should seek to enhance the important visual and ecological qualities of the dales and seek to protect them from incremental change.

Land Management

The characteristically diverse mix of land uses within the valleys provides an important contrast to the surrounding, more homogenous farmland and should be retained and enhanced wherever possible.

Priority should be given to the conservation of the irregular patchwork of pastures that occur on the valley floor, as these field patterns are most likely to be threatened by development or changing patterns of agriculture. Many of these pastures may also support unimproved grassland and so have additional ecological value, which could be enhanced.

The overall proportion of woodland to open farmland, which appears to be approximately two thirds woodland and one third farmland, tends to retain a balanced and natural integrity that should be maintained.

The transition from the bold distinctive shapes of the woodlands on the upper slopes to the more irregular, patchy landscape of the lower slopes and valley floor is an important visual characteristic that contributes to the visual interest of these valleys. Such contrasts should be conserved or enhanced.

New planting should follow landform, reflect the variations in landscape scale and avoid fragmented woodland on skylines.

New planting of mixed woodland towards the urban fringes of Pickering and Kirkbymoorside, and in other areas where suburban development has a visual influence, should be encouraged. Such planting should aim to screen development but should also respond to the small scale and relatively fine grain of the valley landscape.

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 lo-

calised 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.

Field Boundaries

Hedgerows and drystone walls, whilst not a prominent feature in this landscape, are found on the lower slopes and valley floors. These should be conserved, strengthened and in some cases restored to enhance the structure of the landscape.

Trees and Woodlands

The mature woodlands lining the sides of the valleys are visually important and lend much to the area's aesthetic appeal. It is recognised that many of the woodlands are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Importance (SSSI's) or as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC's), however, priority should be given to the protection and management not just of these, but of all the dales woodlands.

It is important that existing woodlands are managed to conserve a natural balanced woodland structure. This should be done by selective thinning to open up glade areas and allow natural regeneration. Where non-native trees are present, these should be preferentially thinned. New planting may be necessary in some woodlands, where regeneration is likely to be slow due to poor seed production, or where non-native trees predominate. Where appropriate, traditional management of woodland as coppice or coppice with standards should be employed.

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.

In areas of new planting, 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 and blackthorn. New planting should be of broad-leaved native species preferably of local provenance. The replacement of exotic conifers by native broad-leaved species should be encouraged.

Unless it is considered appropriate to allow it to develop into secondary woodland, scrub should be managed to provide a mixed age and species structure and thereby maximise visual and ecological benefits. Scrub clearance or thinning should be carried out in irregularly shaped patches and follow contours to avoid hard edges and gives more visual emphasis to landform.

The spread of invasive species e.g. Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and rhododendron should be controlled. The occurrence of sycamore should be monitored and controlled to ensure that it does not threaten local species diversity.

Settlements and Buildings

To conserve the intimate, remote rural character of this landscape, development should be strongly resisted other than very small scale development within the lower reaches of the dales along the A170. Here it should only be permitted if accompanied by detailed visual assessment of its likely impact and the imposition of appropriate mitigating measures.

Infrastructure

The existing intimate character of the rural lanes and tracks should be maintained and informal car parking on grass verges, lay-bys and farm entrances should be controlled.

Grass verges and banks should be managed to enhance native grasses and wildflower species. Important recreational facilities such as the terminus of the North York Moors Railway should be positively managed to meet recreation and educational needs. Priority should be given to improving the setting of the railway terminus through selective screening.

Priorities for Action

- *Conserve and enhance strong contrasts in the scale and character of the landscape mosaic, whilst always ensuring that landform remains the predominant visual influence.*
- *Manage all the woodlands to maximise ecological diversity.*
- *Design planting schemes to improve the integration of communications corridors, recreational and urban development within the wider landscape.*
- *Undertake specialist studies of quarries with a view to possible restoration.*