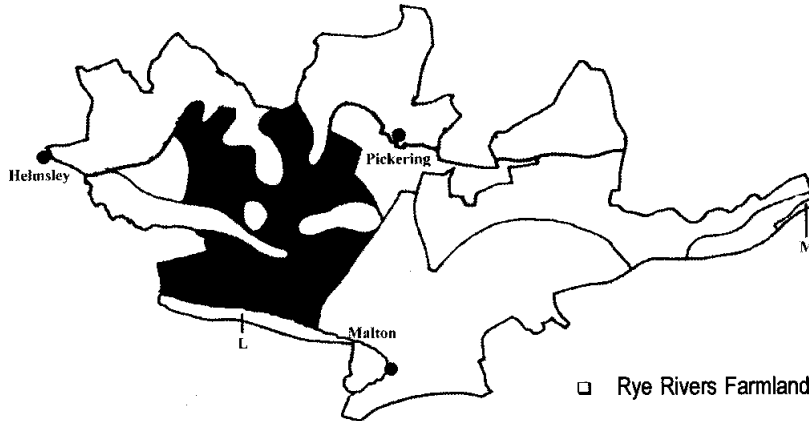


**AREA I** Western Vale Farmland



**Key Characteristic Features**

- Gently sloping land, rising to the south and west.
- High cover of hedgerow trees, with little woodland.
- General absence of settlements, other than around its fringe.
- Accessible landscapes close to well frequented tourist destinations.

**Landform and Context**

The western vale farmland is found on the clay soils in the west of the Vale. The area lies to the west of both Pickering and Malton/Norton, extending westwards to a boundary with the Howardian Hills along Caulkleys Bank and the river Rye. To the south, the boundary is defined by the B1257. To the north it forms a boundary with the Fringe of the Moors, which in this location, follows an irregular line from Helmsley to Pickering and includes several promontories of elevated land that extend southwards to Broats Hill, Great Edstone, Normanby and Riseborough Hill.

Land throughout the western vale farmland, although generally flat and low lying, is varied. The terrain lies between 22- 23m AOD in the east and rises to some 30-35m AOD in the west. Along its southern edge, the escarpments of the Howardian Hills, between Amotherby and Caulkleys Bank and between Nunnington and West Ness, dominate views and serve to contain the landscape creating locally enclosed scenery. This is particularly apparent north of Hovingham and Slingsby. To the north of the area,

the undulating farmland that characterises the Fringe of the Moors serves to contain views, although the sense of enclosure is less profound.

**Land Use and Landscape Pattern**

The western vale farmland is an agricultural landscape of mainly arable fields with floodplain pastures alongside the streams and rivers. There are few non-agricultural land uses within the area and existing developments are generally balanced and attractive, containing cohesive arrangements of traditional buildings. The more elevated land that surrounds much of the area and features in many outer views serves to strengthen this rural quality and provides an attractive backcloth to the agricultural scenery.

A defining feature of this local landscape is the relatively high level of tree cover compared to other parts of the Vale. Although woodland blocks are present, these occur less frequently than in the wooded open vale to the east. The tree cover is provided instead

by the high concentration of hedgerow and riverside trees. Where the few woodland blocks occur, they are typically regular in shape, and comprise mixed planting of recent origin. Most of the woodlands, like others through the Vale, are the product of game covert planting and consequently, have a similar form and age structure.

The pattern of medium to large, geometric fields is largely the product of the seventeenth and eighteenth century enclosures. Fields are bounded by hawthorn hedgerows with hedgerow trees including oak and ash and locally high concentrations of holly.

Similar to many other parts of the Vale, the landscape is drained to facilitate intensive arable cultivation. However, unlike areas to the east where the drainage has necessitated wholesale alteration of the landscape's drainage pattern, river systems in the *western vale farmland* remain generally more naturalistic, although some of the raised floodbanks have an artificial engineered appearance. These rivers mostly flow in a southerly direction, off the Fringe of the Moors, and include Hodge Beck and the rivers Dove and Seven, all of which are tributaries of the river Rye.

### Settlement

Villages, such as Hovingham, Slingsby, Barton-le-Street and Amotherby are located on the more elevated land of the B1257 corridor, where they lie within the *Howardian Hills footslope* local landscape type. The B1257 connects Hovingham in the west with Malton/Norton in the east.

Other villages, which exert a visual influence on this area, yet strictly lie outside it, include Wombleton, Great Edstone, Normanby, Marton, Salton, Great and Little Barugh and Kirby Misperton. Larger settlements actually within the *western vale farmland* are few in numbers. Like Brawby and Great Habton, they tend to be located along the river Rye. Dispersed farmsteads are more common. These farms are typified by the presence of a farmhouse constructed from local stone and red pantile roof. Most farms also include some shelterbelt planting, which serves to soften the overall appearance and aid their integration into the well-treed landscape.

A network of lanes and tracks connect these dispersed farms, hamlets and villages. The lanes are bounded by hedgerows with hedgerow trees, grass verges and occasional ditches.

### Subjective Responses

Although it sometimes lacks detail and interest, overall, much of this landscape has an attractive rural quality, which is particularly influenced locally by proximity to Caulkleys Bank.

It is an accessible landscape that lies close to visitor attractions including Helmsley, the Howardian Hills and Flamingo land. Because of this it has a less remote sense of place than other parts of the vale.

### Sensitivity to Change

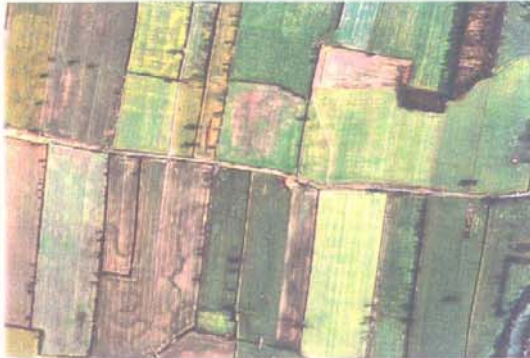
Development would be generally detrimental to the character of this attractive area, much of which is highly visible from the surrounding hills. However, due to its continued vulnerability to seasonal flooding, the area is unlikely to come under significant development pressures which are, instead, likely to be focused on the existing settlements that lie along the B1257 corridor, within the Howardian Hills.

The hedgerows and occasional woodlands provide some scope for screening small scale development, if it is carefully sited and if associated planting is designed to integrate closely with the surrounding landscape pattern. However, care must be taken to ensure that piecemeal development does not erode the overall rural character.

The most vulnerable landscape element is the strong, geometric hedgerow network, which provides an overall visual structure. Pressures from intensive arable farming have already led to the removal of hedgerows in many parts of the area and there is an urgent need to stop any further loss.

# Area I

## Western Vale Farmland



Source: Environment Agency

North of Kirkby Misperton (GR 780 815)

The flat low-lying land is strongly rural and is typified by moderate and large-scale fields



View looking westwards towards Normanby

Woodland blocks interspersed by hedgerows and hedgerow trees are characteristic to Western Vale Farmland



View looking southwards from Caulkleys Bank

## Landscape Guidelines

### Landscape Strategy

This is a farmed landscape, which although locally exhibiting some local decline in landscape, retains a strongly rural character. It comprises predominantly arable land with a higher concentration of pastures along the corridors of the rivers Seven, Dove and Rye. A defining quality of this landscape is the relative absence of woodland. Tree cover is instead provided by the high number of hedgerow trees, mainly oak and ash with occasional holly. Additional tree cover is also found along the river corridors where it mainly comprises alder and willow. The overall high tree cover contributes to the attractive character of this landscape, which should be conserved and locally enhanced.

### Land Management

Wherever possible, the visual structure of the landscape should be assessed from the surrounding higher ground to ensure that the relatively open, structured character of this landscape including the overall proportion of woodland to farmland and pattern of hedgerow trees, is maintained.

The primary objective should be to avoid any further agricultural intensification and field enlargement. Hedgerows and hedgerow trees are an important defining feature of this landscape and should be protected, managed and replanted along their original alignments.

Specialist studies should be undertaken to ensure the best approach to maximise the visual, ecological and floodplain management requirements of all the watercourses in the area. Further canalisation and dredging of watercourses should be resisted and traditional stream management encouraged. In particular, it is important to allow the rivers to adopt their natural course, seasonal flow and erosion patterns.

The riparian habitats on the rivers Rye, Dove and Seven and their tributaries should be conserved and priority should be given to the ecological improvement of these areas. Aquatic and riparian plant communities should be conserved by limiting the spread of cultivated land and preserving a margin of unmanaged grassland between the agricultural fields and the riverbanks. The conversion of arable

fields to permanent pastures alongside riverbanks should be encouraged. Any re-seeding of arable farmland should comprise a suitable seed mix, where possible of local provenance, which reflects the species found in unimproved grasslands within the local area.

The floodplain pastures should be managed using traditional techniques to conserve species diversity. The stocking level of grazing animals should be controlled to prevent overgrazing and extensive poaching of the land.

The calcareous streams and rivers of the Rye system should be conserved by controlling water pollution, particularly from agricultural sources, to protect the invertebrate and fish populations.

### Field Boundaries

Field hedgerows are an important visual and historic feature of this landscape and should be a priority for conservation. The vegetation of any associated ditches should be left undisturbed as far as possible since these areas, together with the hedgerows, provide valuable wildlife habitat within an area of intensive agriculture. Hedges should be managed using traditional methods, avoiding mechanical over-flailing.

Hedgerow trees and scrub along the ditch sides should be managed to maximise their benefit to wildlife and should not be removed. Any necessary scrub removal should avoid the bird-breeding season, and trees should be checked for bat roosts and nesting birds before felling or tree surgery.

Wherever possible, hedgerows should be replanted using locally occurring native species, such as hawthorn, holly or hazel to strengthen the hedgerow network, defining lane and field boundaries in areas where it has been depleted.

### Trees and Woodlands

Hedgerow trees are a defining feature of this landscape and should be planted to provide visual links with woodlands and to enhance the setting of farms and villages within the wider landscape.

Naturally regenerating hedgerow trees should be encouraged and trained up.

Where hedgerow oaks are common, individual oak trees should be planted sporadically within hedgerows and occasionally within pastures to replace existing overmature specimens. New oaks should be planted with the space to grow up as specimens with a fully developed crown.

Tree surgery may be necessary to safely retain and improve the appearance of some of the older hedgerow trees. All tree management should take into account the possible presence of hole nesting birds and bat roosts.

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 Daubentons bat which feeds mainly over water and often roosts close to waterbodies.

Whilst there should be no large scale woodland planting, there may be scope to for new waterside planting of appropriate wetland tree species. This would help protect and enhance the visual influence of streams and rivers in the wider landscape. Such planting should reinforce the existing pattern of small groups and sinuous lines, marking bends in the streams or, at a broader scale, the outer edge of their associated damp grasslands. It should comprise suitable species such as alder, goat willow or crack willow.

### Settlements and Buildings

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 to be retained.

All alterations or restorations of existing farm buildings should take into account their use by birds during the nesting season, and roosting bats. Restoration work should include, where possible, the preservation of bat roost access points so that the roost may be maintained.

Wherever possible, the rationalisation of farm buildings and the removal of modern farm buildings should be considered.

To conserve the rural character of this area, large scale development should be resisted. Although some small scale village infill may be appropriate, this should be handled sensitively. All efforts should be made to resist suburbanisation through inappropriate construction and detailing.

### 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.

The introduction of further transmission lines into the open countryside should be resisted. If unavoidable, great care should be taken in their siting to minimise their visual impact.

### Priorities for Action

- *Conserve and, in places, restore the network of hedgerows and hedgerow trees and avoid any further field enlargement or hedgerow removal.*
- *Encourage conversion of arable fields to grazed pasture particularly along river corridors.*
- *Encourage the rivers to follow their natural course and pattern of erosion.*
- *Introduce buffer zones and planting to encourage broader river landscape corridors wherever possible.*