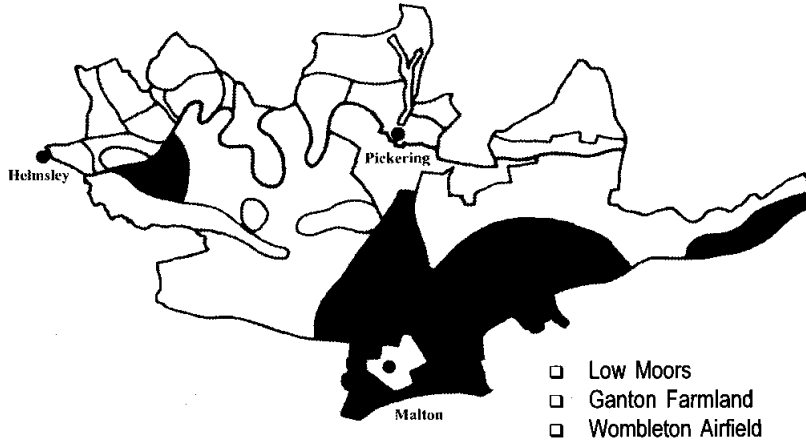


AREA J Wooded Open Vale**Key Characteristic Features**

- Flat, low lying terrain.
- Open countryside.
- Long views punctuated by geometric woodland blocks.

Landform and Context

Wooded vale farmland occurs in three discreet areas. The two southern areas abut the northern edge of the Yorkshire Wolds and have a boundary broadly defined by the A64 and the gently rising land that forms part of the lower slopes of the Wolds escarpment. The largest of these extends from the market town of Malton/Norton west to Amotherby, north to Kirby Misperton and east to West Heslerton. It includes the villages of Scagglethorpe, Rillington, Scampston, and the attractive well-wooded landscape of Scampston Park. The smaller of the southern areas comprises a relatively narrow strip of land, which runs parallel to the A64 between Sherburn and Ganton, extending east through Willerby Carr to the boundary of Ryedale District on the A64. The third area is found in the western Vale where it is associated with the former airfield at Wombledon.

The landscape of the *wooded vale farmland* is flat and low lying, generally around 23m AOD. In common with the *open vale farmland* found further east, it has few prominent landscape features. Its main differentiating characteristic is the higher concentration of woodland blocks and shelterbelts that it contains.

Land Use and Landscape Pattern

This is an agricultural landscape, on land mainly classified as MAFF Grades 2 and 3. There is a general improvement in agricultural land quality to the east, where soils become increasingly peaty and darker in colour. Most of the land is under a combination of intensive arable or grazing, although outdoor pig rearing is a locally prominent feature, particularly in the largest of the three areas.

This highly planned agricultural landscape derives much of its character from the period of eighteenth and nineteenth century enclosures with characteristically angular arable fields and pastures. Fields tend to be medium to large and bounded by hedgerows with few hedgerow trees. A particular characteristic of this flat, low lying agricultural landscape is the presence of regular, geometric woodlands, comprising mixed deciduous species with a high proportion of conifers. Most of these woodlands are relatively recent in origin and were planted for game covert and shelterbelt purposes. Many are still known as 'plantations' and are important landscape features in this landscape. In common with much of the eastern Vale, the *wooded vale farmland* has

been extensively drained. However, despite being crossed by a network of dykes, cuts and canalised watercourses, including sections of the rivers Rye and Derwent, these are not highly visible and do not contribute significantly to the character of the landscape, other than when they are in flood.

Although this is a predominantly agricultural landscape, a notable exception is the parkland that lies around Scampston Park and Knapton Hall to the east of Rillington. Capability Brown laid out Scampston Park in the eighteenth century, although the original design has since been significantly altered. Scampston Hall and village provide the focal point of the park. This is surrounded by a formal deer park that includes shelterbelts of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees, stands of mature trees that serve to frame and manipulate views, ornamental lakes and sweeping lawns and pasture, surrounds these. Characteristic metal strap 'estate' railings contain livestock. These landscape elements combine to create a highly attractive, enclosed and discrete landscape element that contributes significantly to the overall wooded character of the area.

Vertical elements are visually prominent in this flat, low lying landscape. A number of electricity power lines and transmission towers introduce an urban form into what is otherwise a rural landscape.

Settlement

The settlement pattern exhibited in the *wooded vale farmland* mirrors that seen across the wider Vale. Villages, such as Scagglethorpe, Rillington and West Heslerton tend to be restricted to the slightly elevated southern margin. Farmsteads and small hamlets are scattered across the lower lying farmland. Long narrow lanes and tracks with wide grass verges bounded by hawthorn hedgerows link these. Many of the lanes and tracks are 'no-through' roads and are often private, giving this part of the Vale a sense of seclusion and inaccessibility.

The largest settlement within the *wooded open vale* and, indeed within the wider area, is the market town of Malton/Norton, which lies at the junction of the Vale of Pickering, the calcareous Howardian Hills and the chalk escarpment of the Yorkshire Wolds. The river Derwent separates the two parts of the town, creating a visually important tract of open land along its corridor.

Malton is situated to the north of the river on gently sloping ground formed by the underlying limestones of the Howardian Hills. The latter extend into the Vale as a finger of more elevated terrain extending to Orchard Fields and Peaseny Hills. The B1248 (York Road), which links Malton to the A64 west of the town, runs along this higher ground and provides an attractive approach to the town, affording southerly views to Norton, the river Derwent and the low lying Vale landscape to the south of the town. Similar attractive views are available when entering Malton from the north west along the B1257 (Old Malton Road). Although this landscape has characteristics more typical of the Howardian Hills, for the purposes of this report, it is included within the Vale.

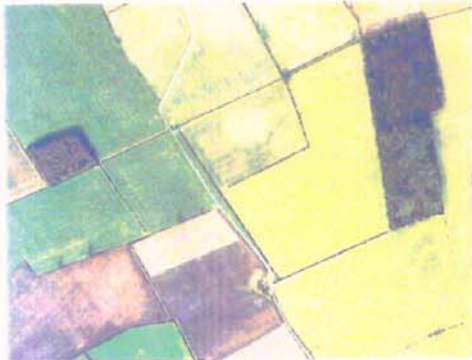
Norton is located on the generally flat land to the south of the river Derwent. Although containing a number of listed buildings, it is a less traditional town than Malton. It is larger than Malton, extending in a broadly radial pattern southwards and westwards from the railway and bus stations close to Railway Street Bridge and County Bridge, which are the central crossing points of the river.

In common with other settlements in the area, Malton/Norton is under continued pressure to accommodate the expanding employment and residential needs of the District. The Council currently adopts and will, for the near future, continue to adopt a general presumption permitting controlled development of market towns. However, development will only be allowed where it will not adversely affect either the character or appearance of these towns or their setting.

Subjective Responses

Whilst lacking any features of particular note and showing some evidence of local decline in landscape structure with field enlargement and loss of hedgerows, these parts of the Vale, nevertheless, have a distinctly rural character. The area is used for low-key recreation and has a somewhat secluded air, which is emphasised by the relative lack of through-roads.

East of Sherburn, the landscape of the A64 corridor becomes increasingly more suburban with proximity to Scarborough.



High and Redcarr Plantation (GR 855 774)

Source: Environment Agency

Area J

Wooded Open Vale

Mature woodland blocks, containing predominantly deciduous trees, typify Wooded Open Vale



Near Knapton Lodge

The landscape has a strong rural character and although open, includes a number of woodland blocks that serve to provide local enclosure



Riccal Moor



Riccal Moor

Sensitivity to Change

Development would be detrimental to the rural character of this area, which, although not intrinsically highly attractive, does possess a rural quality, seclusion and subdued charm. These important characteristics could easily be eroded through piecemeal development or through the imposition of further power lines or developments on a scale such as Pauls Maltings at Knapton.

This farmland is relatively open but the hedgerows and occasional woodlands also offer some scope for screening small scale development, provided that 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.

Landscape Guidelines

Landscape Strategy

This is a predominantly low lying landscape of drained arable fields and pastures, bounded by hedgerows with few hedgerow trees. Tree cover is provided by the high number of woodland blocks and shelterbelts that are scattered throughout the area, with particularly high concentration found on the rising ground of the A64 corridor. The area has a secluded rural quality, which would benefit from enhancement with local restoration of wetlands.

Land Management

Wherever possible, the visual structure of the landscape should be assessed from the Wold's escarpment to ensure that the relatively open, structured character of this landscape, including the overall proportion and distribution of woodland to open farmland is maintained.

Any further field enlargement, removal or hedgerows and consequent loss of landscape should be avoided.

Water is an important feature of this landscape, yet it is generally invisible in longer views. Priority should be given to the conservation and enhancement of features associated with the margins of the water-courses to enhance their visual and ecological interest.

Unless essential for flood control, no river or stream channel should be modified by canalisation, diversion or changes to the banksides. Further drainage of the surrounding land should be avoided to prevent further damage to wetland habitats.

The riparian habitats on the rivers Rye and Derwent and their tributaries should be conserved and priority given to the ecological improvement of these areas. The riverbanks should not be overgrazed or subject to excessive erosion due to the movement of stock. The river Derwent is designated as an SSSI along much of its length and the section between Ryemouth and Malton, which lies within the Vale of Pickering, is part of this designation and subject to statutory protection. All proposed management work within this area must be agreed with English Nature. Parts of the river Rye are designated a SINC, which underlines its importance in a local context. The aquatic and bankside plant communities should be conserved by preventing the further intrusion of arable land close to the river, preventing overgrazing of banksides and limiting the areas where stock have access to the banksides to control erosion.

Specialist studies should be undertaken to ensure the best approach to maximise the visual, ecological and drainage requirements of the drainage ditches. Wide uncultivated buffer margins should be created alongside drainage ditches where they abut arable land.

Along the A64 corridor, the contrast between the relatively large scale landscape patterns of the Vale to the more intimate, enclosed landscape of the Wolds escarpment to the south should be maintained. In places, there may be scope for new woodland planting to give greater emphasis to this boundary.

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 or caravan parks could introduce a suburbanising influence and should be resisted.

Field Boundaries

The scale of its patchwork of fields, hedgerows and woodlands determines the visual structure of this landscape. Future management should ensure that the existing hedgerow network is maintained and reinforced along its existing alignments. Linkage between hedgerows and woodlands should be encouraged to maximise visual and wildlife benefits.

Traditional hedgerow management should be encouraged, avoiding mechanical over-flailing. Any significant gaps should be replanted using locally occurring native species such as hawthorn, holly or hazel.

There is evidence to suggest that hedgerows have been removed to improve agricultural productivity. Wherever possible, replanting should be considered to strengthen the hedgerow network, defining the lane and field boundaries in areas where it has been depleted. Gaps should be replanted using locally occurring native species such as hawthorn, holly or hazel.

Although not a distinctive feature of this local landscape type, where hedgerow trees occur locally, they should be protected, replanted and managed. New hedgerow tree planting should be concentrated near villages and farms and along lanes. Such planting could enhance the sense of scale and distance in the Vale by improving sequences of views, but without detracting from the overall open character.

Along the A64, further planting of hedgerow trees using locally occurring native species of ultimately statuesque proportions, such as ash or oak should be encouraged to enhance both the setting of these villages and the road corridor.

Trees and Woodlands

Most of the woodlands within the area are plantations and shelter belts and there is little ancient semi-natural woodland. The existing woodlands should be conserved, with management being related to their original purpose where the woodland has been deliberately planted. Those areas planted as covert should retain their scrub cover, since this provides valuable bird and small mammal habitat. Where existing plantation woodlands or shelter belts are removed, the areas should be replanted with a suitable range of indigenous trees and shrubs to encourage an increase in biodiversity over that found in monoculture.

Management of the existing woodlands should also aim to increase species diversity by introducing a greater range of habitats. This should be done by thinning, opening up of glade areas and introduction of native tree and shrub species where appropriate. Before any removal of mature trees, particularly deciduous species, or tree surgery, trees should be checked for roosting bats or the presence of hole-nesting birds. Where possible, dead wood should be left on site to provide habitats for detritivores.

Along the A64 corridor, transition from the more geometric open landscape of the Vale to the more irregular and enclosed landscape of the Wolds escarpment should be maintained. There may be scope for new woodland planting to give greater emphasis to this boundary. New planting should be designed to reflect the existing scale and structure of the landscape. New woodlands should have bold, distinctive, geometric shapes and should be carefully sited so as not to disrupt the relatively open character of the landscape. Field corner planting should be avoided.

The landscapes of Knapton Hall and Scampston Park make an important visual and historic contribution to the landscape of the Vale, which should continue to be maintained. The parkland in the Scampston area should continue to be managed to conserve the stands of mature trees and maintain their species diversity. The conversion of arable land to permanent pasture should be encouraged in areas with parkland trees. Planting or woodland clearance schemes should seek to identify and enhance the best views of these parklands where they extend beyond their official boundaries.

Settlements and Buildings

The development limits around Malton/Norton have been drawn tightly around the settlement to protect the attractive setting of the town, which to the south is created by the Yorkshire Wolds 'Area of High Landscape Value', to the west by the Howardian Hills AONB and to the east by 'Old Malton Conservation Area' and the river Derwent corridor, which is important both in ecological and landscape terms. Expansion of the town will be difficult to accommodate and will require considerable attention to the siting, arrangement and architectural detailing to ensure that development is sympathetic to the character and landscape setting of the town. Recent development in the town, such as the Norton Grove Industrial Estate, serve as an illustration of how inappropriately sited large scale development can appear unsightly and out of place.

Whilst there may be some opportunity for limited and sensitive infill, this is unlikely to fulfil the long-term growth commitments required of the town. Some expansion on the fringes of Malton/Norton is therefore likely in the longer term.

From a landscape perspective, urban expansion would best be accommodated on the flat, low lying land to the south and east of the towns. This area is already affected by large scale development, notably the Norton Grove Industrial Estate, and would not impinge on the attractive landscape setting of the Howardian Hills footslope that lies to the west of the town. However, new development should only be accommodated through the introduction of large scale woodland planting.

Other settlement is concentrated in villages strung out along the southern edge of the area. Coalescence of these villages through ribbon development along the A64 should be strongly resisted.

Detailed landscape assessments should be carried out to identify scope for improving the landscape setting of visually prominent developments such as Pauls Malt at Knapton.

Any alterations to farm buildings should take into account their use by birds and by roosting bats. Buildings should be checked and work carried out avoiding the bird and bat breeding seasons.

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.

Detailed landscape assessments should be carried out to assess the scope for improving the A64 corridor, particularly to the east of Ganton where it becomes increasingly suburban with proximity to Scarborough.

The introduction of further transmission lines into the open countryside should be resisted.

Priorities for Action

- *Maintain the existing proportion and distribution of woodland to open farmland.*
- *Avoid any further field enlargement or hedge-row removal.*
- *Protect, manage and replant all existing hedge-rows.*
- *Locally restore and enhance wetlands in the area, so that they are more sympathetic to landscape and wildlife.*
- *Continue to maintain the attractive parkland landscapes around Scampston and Knapton Halls.*
- *Undertake a landscape assessment to identify opportunities for enhancing the A64 corridor.*