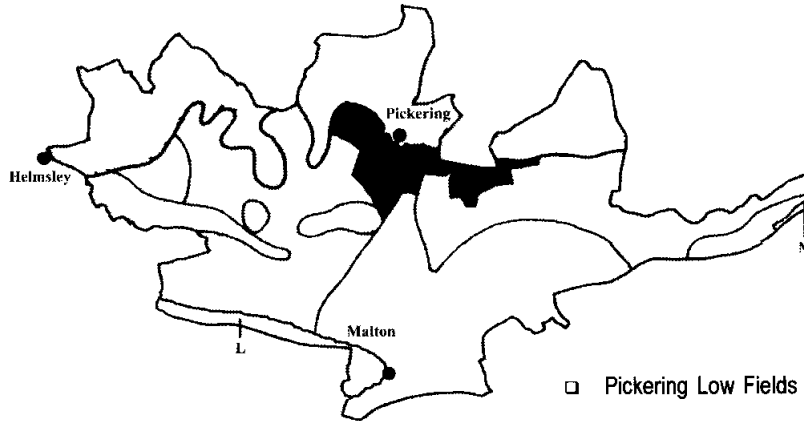


**AREA K** Linear Vale Farmland**Key Characteristic Features**

- Historic linear field pattern.
- Gently sloping land, which rises to the north.
- Distinctive linear field systems.
- Locally enclosed landscape.

**Landform and Context**

Within the Vale of Pickering, *linear vale farmland* is confined to the south side of Pickering, where it forms a boundary with the Fringe of the Moors regional character area, a boundary that is approximated by the A170. It extends southwards into the Vale to form an area that extends eastwards from Riseborough Hill, passing to the north of Flamingoland at Kirby Misperton, south of Lane View Farm and then past Low Grundon, High Grundon and Charity Farms to a westerly point located south of Wilton.

This is typically a gently sloping landscape, which rises from approximately 23m AOD in the south to 28m AOD in the north. Although subtle, this gentle variation is notable in comparison to much of the rest of the Vale, much of which is extremely flat and low lying.

**Land Use and Landscape Pattern**

Land use in the *linear vale farmland* is predominantly agricultural, although there is a greater percentage of pastoral farmland than seen in some other parts of the Vale. However, the most notable characteristic of this area is its long linear fields, which are a relic of the medieval open-field strip cultivation system. This historic field pattern superficially resembles modern hedged arable or pastoral fields, since the strips have been subject to strip amalgamation or consolidation and the fields are often planted in the same crop, leaving no sign of the original strips.

Whilst similar field patterns are not unusual within the Fringe of the Moors, there are no other examples to be found within the Vale. Here, the majority of fields date back only to the enclosure period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

To the east and west of Pickering the linear fields are orientated in a north south direction where they follow a similar pattern to that found in the Fringe of the Moors. However, immediately to the south of the town, the field pattern is aligned in an east to west direction. The overall effect of these fields, which are defined by a good network of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, is to create the impression of a more enclosed and intimate local landscape that sets it apart from much of the rest of the Vale.

This is a drained landscape. Whilst Pickering Beck remains reasonably undisturbed and naturalistic in profile, Costa Beck has been subject to major engineering and realignment. Historically, this area had a high number of field corner ponds. Whilst a reasonable proportion of these remain today, their numbers are gradually being depleted to the detriment of local Great Crested Newt populations.

### Settlement

The pattern of the landscape with its distinctive arrangement of fields is intrinsically linked to the area's proximity to Pickering. The town dates from Norman times and has for centuries played a vital strategic role, located at the entrance of an important gateway through the North York Moors. It was particularly wealthy during the Saxon period during which time the medieval open-field cultivation system developed. Although once covering large areas of the country, today only remnants of these field patterns remain. These are mostly located in the Midlands and the North East where they are an important historic and cultural landscape feature.

Although Pickering is the most important settlement close to the *linear vale farmland*, it actually lies within the Fringe of the Moors regional character area (where issues relating to the town are discussed more fully) as do a number of smaller settlements which overlook and have an influence on the area, including Wrelton, Aislaby, Middleton, Thornton-le-Dale and Wilton. There are no villages actually within the *linear vale farmland*. Instead, settlement is restricted to a small number of isolated farmsteads and occasional properties, particularly along Pickering Beck and the A169 Malton Road.

### Subjective Responses

Much of the *linear vale farmland* is enclosed and has an intimate, often secluded character. The consistent repetitive landscape structure of long linear fields imparts an overall sense of harmony and order. Although the landscape is generally attractive, in places it has become degraded and has an urban fringe appearance, dominated by urban elements such as roads, new housing and small scale industry.

Pressure from planned and unplanned recreation and development potential tends to cause abandonment of regular agricultural management usually leading to a neglected appearance. Land tends to be turned to horse pasture, with gradual replacement of traditional hedges by unsightly post and wire fences.

### Sensitivity to Change

Due to proximity to Pickering, the area is likely to come under development pressure. The relatively high hedgerow and tree cover of the area provides a landscape that has a largely enclosed character, which could potentially accommodate small scale, well sited and sympathetically designed development. However, the historic field pattern that characterises this area is highly vulnerable to damage and loss, particularly given its location in the midst of highly productive farmland. This landscape should, therefore, be viewed as highly sensitive to change. Over and above development pressure, the biggest threat comes from amalgamation of landholdings as the older farmers retire and field amalgamation to create larger fields more suitable for modern farming methods.

There is some potential for screen planting, which would help to accommodate development whilst at the same time strengthening the existing visual structure and identity of the landscape, particularly near Pickering where pressures for incremental changes such as horse grazing or further road improvements are likely to be high. Views from the higher ground to the north of the town should be taken into account when planning any changes to landscape patterns within this area.

# Area K

## Linear Vale Farmland



Source: Environment Agency

Pickering (GR 802 832)



Streamside woodlands and pasture along Pickering Beck

Pickering Beck



Linear fields enclosed by hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees, characterise this Local Landscape Type

South of Pickering

## Landscapes Guidelines

### Landscape Strategy

This is a smaller, more intimate landscape than seen elsewhere in the Vale other than in parts of the riverside farmland. It is an historic landscape defined by the pre-parliamentary enclosure pattern of long linear, often pastoral, fields. This field pattern is more typical of landscapes found to the north in the Fringe of the Moors. However, in most other respects its defining features and characteristics place it firmly within the Vale. Due to proximity to the market town of Pickering, there has been some loss of landscape structure and urban influences are locally prominent. It would benefit from conservation and local enhancement and restoration.

### Land Management

The most vulnerable element of the landscape is the strong geometric field hedgerow network and the hedgerows, trees and verges associated with the roads, particularly on the approach to Pickering. These provide an overall visual structure. Pressures from intensive arable farming have already led to the removal of hedgerows in some areas and there is a need to reverse the trend. The Hedgerow Regulations will only protect large areas of important field patterns in certain circumstances. Other methods of protection should also be sought. Where fields are bounded by fences, hedgerow planting should be considered to reinforce the linear rhythm.

The most significant waterway from a visual and nature conservation standpoint is Pickering Beck. The natural characteristics of the beck should be conserved together with its aquatic plant communities. The conversion of arable farmland to permanent grassland alongside the stream should be encouraged to create a buffer zone, provide improved ecological habitats and extend the visual influence of the beck's corridor. 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.

Remaining field ponds should be positively managed to ensure their continued viability.

This area is affected by proximity to Pickering and should be protected against erosion by bikes and horses. Positive management is required to meet the recreational needs of the town.

### Field Boundaries

Field hedgerows should be replanted along historic field boundaries where they have been removed. New hedgerows should be designed to strengthen and restore the historic field pattern using locally occurring native species. This is particularly important in the immediate vicinity of Pickering where the landscape has been degraded by urban influences.

Many of the hedgerows are tall, bushy and species-rich. This contributes both to the more enclosed character of the landscape and to the ecological value of the area. They should therefore be retained.

The hedgerow trees should be conserved, with appropriate tree surgery if required. Hedgerow trees may serve as bat roost sites and trees should be checked prior to any work being done.

### Trees and Woodlands

Woodlands are not a defining feature of this landscape. However, there may be scope for the introduction of small scale woodland planting near the town, particularly where there is a need to integrate and partially screen development. Such planting should comprise tree and shrub species that are native to the area to produce a good woodland mix. The use of exotic conifers should be avoided.

### Settlements

The south side of Pickering is under pressure for development. This should be handled sensitively with all efforts made to ensure that it is carried out so that it is in harmony with its setting and contributes to the conservation and, where possible, enhancement of the local environment.

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

### Infrastructure

The existing character of the rural lanes should be maintained resisting upgrading schemes 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 avoided.

### Priorities for Action

- *Conserve the existing landscape pattern of long linear fields.*
- *Conserve and, in many places, restore hedgerows and hedgerow trees.*
- *Ensure that development is handled sensitively and is in harmony with its surroundings.*
- *Carry out tree planting to soften the appearance of new development and help integrate it into the surrounding landscape.*