



THE LANDSCAPES OF NORTHERN RYEDALE

An Assessment of the Vale of Pickering and the Fringe of the North York Moors National Park,
with Management Guidelines for their Future



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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Context

Gillespies were commissioned in March 1999 to undertake a landscape assessment of Ryedale District as part of the ongoing programme of landscape assessment being carried out by the District Council, which aims to improve the knowledge and understanding of the area's landscape. The District Council funded the commission with support from the Countryside Commission and North Yorkshire County Council. Like Ryedale District, these organisations are concerned to ensure that future development is responsive to the special landscape qualities of the area.

The brief for the assessment identified the main need for the preparation of a district-wide landscape assessment and guidelines as follows:

- Guide and influence positive landscape change.
- Promote an appreciation of landscape issues and highlight potential priority areas for landscape initiatives.
- Assist in the formulation of advice on landscape and habitat creation and management and in securing resources such as MAFF's Countryside Stewardship Scheme.
- Serve as an aid to the decision making of landowners, managers, and those who influence and guide such people, and to guide parish councils and communities in their efforts to enhance the local environment.
- Guide and influence development plans and policies.

The management of a landscape can influence its character, conserve its distinctive qualities and provide for enhancement opportunities and creative conservation. Landscape assessment is a basic tool for focusing attention on the essential issues involved in creative conservation and management. The process of assessment also raises awareness of local landscape character, distinctiveness and promotes consideration of the best ways to provide for its protection and enhancement.

Study Area

The Fringe of the Moors and the Vale of Pickering, which form the focus for this report lie between the North York Moors, the Yorkshire Wolds and the Howardian Hills as shown in Figure 1.0 (Context plan). The southern fringe of the North York Moors is de-

finied by the Tabular Hills, which run east west across the northern part of Ryedale District and slope down to the Vale of Pickering to the south. Much of the hills fall into the North York Moors National Park. Where the Park boundary retracts northwards, however, the hills fall within the Ryedale District Plan area and form the 'Fringe of the Moors'. To the south of the Tabular Hills is the broad, low lying Vale of Pickering, which runs east west across the study area, extending beyond the boundaries of Ryedale District and terminating at the North Sea coast. Running along the southern boundary of the Vale are two narrow slivers of land, which lie to the north of the B1257 and the A64. These are included within the study area yet share landscape characteristics more in keeping with the Howardian Hills and the Yorkshire Wolds respectively.

Regional Character Areas

A particular requirement of the study was that it should be set in the context of the recently published 'Character of England: landscape, wildlife and natural features' map. This was completed in 1997 as a joint venture between the Countryside Commission and English Nature with advice from English Heritage. It provides a comprehensive and consistent description of the varied character of the English countryside as viewed from a regional perspective. The map divides the country into a series of regional landscape character areas based on variations in its historic and cultural heritage, natural features and landscape character. Each is geographically distinct and the purpose of the assessment is to guide policy, implementation and establish operations.

The study area comprises parts of four of the five regionally defined character areas in Ryedale District; the *North Yorkshire Moors and Cleveland Hills Character Area (Area 25)*, the *Vale of Pickering (Area 26)*, the *Howardian Hills (Area 29)* and the *Yorkshire Wolds (Area 27)*.

The Howardian Hills and the Yorkshire Wolds have been covered by landscape assessments carried out during the 1990's. The Vale of Pickering (Area 26) has only been covered by an assessment carried out as part of an MSc project in 1997 and there has never been a landscape assessment of that part of Area 25 (the North Yorkshire Moors and Cleveland Hills) within Ryedale District (outside the National Park).

Landscape Characteristics

Landscape is a broad term and there is a range of factors, which go to make up the distinctive sense of place associated with a particular landscape – ecology, archaeology, history, local culture, land management, land use and perception are all important. Amongst the many forces that have shaped the landscape, it is the underlying geology, together with glacial processes, that are the essential influences on landscape character. The topography plan (Figure 1.1) indicates the relief of the study area. To a large extent this relief derives from the underlying geology illustrated on the simplified geology plan (Figure 1.2) indicates the level of the relationship between the underlying rocks and the landform.

Overlaid upon the geological structure is the long history of human occupation and land use, which has progressively shaped the patterns of landscape leaving a legacy of visual features. Landscape management policies, both past and present, have been a key influence, contributing directly to landscape quality in terms of land use and the characteristic patterns formed by woodlands, fields and hedgerows.

The landscape can thus be seen as a mosaic, with the scale, diversity and interrelationship of the component parts being significant in defining visual character and its sensitivity to change.

Analysing Landscape Character

Landscape assessment provides the means to analyse the character of the landscape in a comprehensive and structured manner. It can be carried out at a variety of scales, from the national, regional, down to the county, district, or specific site level. Whilst the same principles and approach to assessment apply at all levels, the detailed technique varies depending on the purpose of the assessment and the level of detail required.

The Countryside Commission approach to landscape assessment, set out in their document Landscape Assessment Guidance CCP 423 (1993), provided a framework for this study.

The main emphasis of this study has been to define and map *local landscape types* throughout the district, with a view to providing guidance for landscape management. *Local landscape types* are defined by the Countryside Commission as generic landscape character areas that can occur anywhere in the coun-

try, whereas *local landscape areas* are geographically specific. These closely reflect the geological, geographical and topographical characteristics of the land, which have influenced its cultural and historic development.

It is important to note that the boundaries between the different local landscape types are usually transitional. Gradual changes in character are more typical than abrupt transitions.

The Landscapes of Northern Ryedale

This document is set out as follows:

- Detailed identification of the boundaries between the regional landscape character areas within the study area.
- Identification of the primary characteristics of the Fringe of the Moors and Vale of Pickering regional character areas (outside the National Park). This is described in relation to four key headings: *physical influences, human influences, ecological characteristics and visual characteristics*. A landscape strategy and landscape guidelines suggesting key issues for landscape management for the regional character area follow. These are set out under the following categories: *new housing, expansion of market towns, large buildings, tourism and recreation, agriculture and forestry, quarrying and extraction, roads, communications and infrastructure*.
- Identification of sub-regional local landscape character types, each of which are mapped and described in relation to five key headings: *landform and context, land use and landscape pattern, settlement, subjective response and sensitivity to change*. Landscape guidelines, including a proposed strategy for each local landscape type follow the descriptions. These are set out under the following categories: *land management, field boundaries, trees and woodlands, settlements and buildings, and infrastructure*. They are specifically geared towards conserving and enhancing the special features of the landscape that contribute to small scale variations in landscape character and, therefore, to local distinctiveness. A summary of priorities for action is also provided for each local landscape type.

- Identification of the current influences on the landscape and their likely causes, including a range of guidelines to assist the formulation of policies for countryside management, stewardship and development control.

The thirteen *local landscape types* (Areas A to M) defined within the study area are mapped on pathfinder maps at a scale of 1:50,000. Figure 1.3 indicates the location of each of the local character areas. A large-scale version of this plan is enclosed in a wallet at the back of this document. A description of the methodology used is provided in Appendix 2.









