

Section 2
Understanding the Boundaries



SECTION 2 : UNDERSTANDING THE BOUNDARIES

The study area comprises parts of four of the five regionally defined Countryside Commission/English Nature 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)*.

A requirement of this study was to understand more fully the essential differences in landscape between these regional character areas and provide a detailed identification of their boundaries within Ryedale District.

The Vale of Pickering and the North Yorkshire Moors and Cleveland Hills

The boundary between the Fringe of the Moors and the Vale of Pickering is a clearly discernible feature in the landscape, particularly east of Pickering. This section of the study seeks to illustrate, in tabular form, the primary physiographic, visual, cultural and ecological reasons that serve to define the boundary between the two areas.

The contrast between the flat Vale of Pickering and the gently rolling topography of the Tabular Hills is primarily the product of the underlying solid and superficial drift geology. The underlying solid rocks of the Vale of Pickering are blanketed in a thick layer of lacustrine clays that were deposited at the end of the last ice age. This has resulted in the creation of flat low lying scenery with deep waterlogged soils that have been progressively drained for agricultural purposes. In contrast, the Fringe of the Moors area has no lacustrine clays and consequently has a character more influenced by the underlying solid geology. This has resulted in the creation of undulating and elevated scenery with shallow, stonier soils.

The southern boundary of the Fringe of the Moors is most simply defined by the absence of thick lacustrine deposits, evidenced by a break of slope at or around the 30m contour. This boundary is more clearly distinguished east of Pickering. Here the Helmsley – Filey fault line, which is approximated by the position of the A170, juxtaposes Kimmeridge clay deposits against the underlying Middle Jurassic strata, creating a more defined break in slope. West of Pickering, however, the boundary is more diffuse and less easily defined. Between Helmsley and Kirkbymoorside, as the gently rolling scenery of the Tabular Hills falls in a southerly direction towards the Vale of Pickering, there is no marked break in slope and only a gradual transition into a flatter, lower lying landscape. Here the fault line is discontinuous and the break in slope lies within the Kimmeridge clay deposits, which abut the middle Jurassic calcareous gritstones and limestones more gradually, and in an irregular manner. Around Wombledon, ridges of limestone, locally overlain by boulder clay, extend out from the Tabular Hills into the Vale creating clearly visible lobes of higher land. Further complexity occurs due to the dissection of the dip slope by the many valleys, falling from within the catchment of the river Rye.

The table overleaf outlines more fully the range of both distinct and subtle, landscape character differences that typify the two areas. It should be noted that, based on this distinction, a part of the *Vale of Pickering Character Area (Area 25)* as defined by the Countryside Commission/English Nature is actually classified here as being a part of the Fringe of the Moors.

	VALE OF PICKERING	FRINGE OF THE MOORS
Geology (solid)	Kimmeridge clay	Jurassic limestone and calcareous sandstones
Geology (Drift)	Lacustrine clay	Localised boulder clay and alluvium
Soils	Deep	Shallow and stony
Altitude	Low lying (below 40-50m contour)	Elevated (above 40-50m contour)
Topography	Flat	Dipping and undulating
Drainage	Modified by man	Mostly natural
Field Pattern	Mostly large and regular	Mostly large and regular
Enclosure	Open and expansive in the east, enclosed in the foreground	Open and expansive
Views	Long views contained by Wolds and Tabular Hills, more locally by woodland blocks	Elevated panoramas
Woods	Tend to be small scale and regular shaped	Often linear and relating to topography
Trees	Varied, including oak, ash, sycamore and holly	Predominantly ash with occasional
Hedgerows	Mostly robust and well-maintained	Mostly robust and well maintained
Drystone Walls	Absent	Common in east
Villages	Clustered and often located on small hills – absent from the east	Mainly orientated along springline at base of dip slope
Archaeology	Limited concentrations of pre-historic earthworks and artefacts	High concentrations of pre-historic earthworks and artefacts (particularly in east)
Churches	Central to parish villages	Central to parish villages
Roads	Variable in orientation	Tend to be straight and orientated up and down the dip slope – except the A170, which runs east-west across the dip slope

The Vale of Pickering and the Yorkshire Wolds

It is commonly accepted that, in the central and eastern part of the Vale, the A64 marks the boundary between the southern edge of the Vale of Pickering and the Yorkshire Wolds. On closer inspection, however, at the very eastern end of Ryedale District, the gently sloping terrain and chalky soils, which characterise the Yorkshire Wolds extend some distance to the north of this road, perhaps as far as the 30-40m contour. This leaves a narrow strip of land north of the A64 but within the study area, which has a character more identifiable with the Yorkshire Wolds regional landscape character area and is described here as the *Wolds footslope* local landscape type.

The Vale of Pickering and the Howardian Hills

A similar situation occurs in the west of the Vale. Here the B1257 is regarded as the boundary between the Howardian Hills and the Vale, yet a narrow strip of land to the north of this road and extending into Malton, exhibits landscape characteristics more in common with the Howardian Hills to the south, than to the flat, low lying landscape of the Vale of Pickering to the north. It is, therefore, described as the *Howardian Hills footslope* local landscape type.