

S e c t i o n 4
The Vale of Pickering



Section 4 : The Vale of Pickering

Part 1 : Context

The broad, low lying Vale of Pickering is bounded by the Tabular Hills to the north, the Howardian Hills to the southwest and the Yorkshire Wolds to the south. To the east, it extends beyond the boundaries of Ryedale district into Scarborough District, terminating at the North Sea coast. The Vale comprises flat or gently undulating arable farmland, which is notable as much for the absence as for the presence of prominent landscape features. Instead, the low lying plain, with its relatively sparse cover of trees and woodlands, is dominated by views of the surrounding hills beyond its boundaries; the Howardian Hills, the Tabular Hills and the Yorkshire Wolds. A notable feature of the Vale is the considerable archaeological and palaeoenvironmental interest that it holds.

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, the gently sloping terrain and chalky soils, which characterise the 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 in the very east of Ryedale, which has a character more identifiable with the Yorkshire Wolds regional landscape character area and is described here as *Wolds footslope*. 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 exhibits landscape characteristics more in common with the hills to the south than to the flat, low lying landscape to the north. It is, therefore, described as the *Howardian hills footslope local landscape type*.

The two important influences on this landscape are firstly the effects of glacial processes and secondly the influences of man's activities, particularly drainage. These are described in more detail below.

Physical Influences

The broad plain of the Vale of Pickering lies between the dip slope of the Upper Jurassic deposits of the Tabular Hills to the north and the prominent chalk escarpment of the Yorkshire Wolds to the south. To the south west lies the rolling landscape of the Jurassic Howardian Hills. Much of the area lies below the 30m contour with small 'islands' of higher land forming settlement sites in the western Vale. Geologically, the Vale of Pickering is a flat floored

east west valley comprising Upper Jurassic Kimmeridgian mudstones overlain by a variable thickness of drift deposits; largely fluvial and lacustrine clays. Recent alluvium occurs along the main river channels and peat deposits create darker, more fertile soils in the east. Beyond Ryedale District at its eastern end, the Vale is separated from the North Sea by glacial moraine deposits. At its western end, the Gilling Gap, which separates the Howardian Hills from the Hambleton Hills, links it with the northern part of the Vale of York.

The underlying Kimmeridge clays of the Upper Jurassic comprise a thick series of fossiliferous shales that were deposited in seas of increasing depth. However, these rocks rarely appear at the surface and have had little direct influence on the landscape. Instead, the Quaternary period, a time of alternating colder (glacial) and warm (interglacial) stages, has had the most significant effect on the shape of the landscape.

Older glacial deposits in the Vale are limited to a few small outcrops of till (rock fragments set in a clay or silt matrix), sand and gravel. These now form the islands of slightly higher ground in the western part of the Vale at Salton, South Holme, Great Barugh and Kirby Misperton.

During the last glacial period (the Devensian), which ended about 10,000 years ago, ice encroached on the region from the west, north and east, blocking the eastern and western ends of the Vale. Because the North Sea itself was blocked with ice, meltwater could not flow seawards, and so accumulated in the Vale to form a complex of glacial lakes and marshes in which clays and littoral and deltaic sands and gravels ('glacialacustrine deposits') were laid down. Water from the Vale eventually topped the lowest point of the Howardian Hills near Malton and cut the Kirkham Gorge leading to the Vale of York, through which the river Derwent continues to drain. During the ensuing climate warming, the retreat of the ice caused a gradual fall in water levels leading to a series of smaller, shallower lakes and wetlands. In places there was an accumulation of substantial quantities of peat, such as around the river Hertford.

Along the south eastern edge of the Vale, are a series of sandy outwash deposits and windblown sand, including some chalky colluvium eroded from the Wolds escarpment.

The river Rye and its tributaries, the Riccal, Dove and Seven drain the Vale in the west. In the east, it is drained by the rivers Derwent and Hertford, the former being joined by the river Rye just north of Malton. The drainage pattern in the Vale derives from the Devensian glaciation. This accounts for the unusual course of the river Derwent, which after being blocked by glacial till deposits along the coast, now turns west across the Vale and then south, cutting through the Howardian Hills below Malton, before eventually running into the Ouse near Selby and thence into the Humber and the North Sea.

The Vale is fed by two major aquifers; one from the calcareous gritstones and limestones of the Tabular Hills and the other from the chalk of the Wolds to the south. A series of springs occur on both the northern and southern margins of the Vale as water flowing down through these aquifers encounters the impermeable Kimmeridgian clays and flows out at the surface. With the exception of the river Hertford, most of the streams within the Vale have calcareous catchments.

Man has extensively modified the drainage pattern of the Vale over the last four to five millennia, with activities intensifying following an Act of Parliament in the nineteenth century. Drainage channels have been cut and streams and rivers straightened and embanked by engineers to aid cultivation of the low lying marshy land. A network of dykes, cuts and canalised watercourses now crosses the Vale, which has been almost completely drained for arable cultivation. The success of this drainage makes it difficult to appreciate the former expanse of the wetlands. However, a survey of place names, as in High and Low Marishes and the many 'Carrs' and 'Ings' provide some evidence of their former extent. Those small areas of wetland that remain provide visual and ecological interest in what is otherwise a relatively featureless landscape.

Whilst all the soils in the Vale of Pickering show some degree of gleying (grey mottling caused by slowly permeable subsoils impeding surface water drainage), the central part of the Vale has better drained, more calcareous soils, generally classified as brown earths or brown calcareous soils. In the western part of the Vale, the dominant soils are stagnogleys, with clay subsoils, which tend to cause waterlogging of

the upper layers. The alluvial soils along the valleys of the river Rye and its tributaries are also gleyed, as are the gleyed brown earths of the eastern Vale. Areas of peat are found in the river Hertford valley and along Costa Beck north of Kirby Misperton.

Whilst drainage and progressive marling and ploughing have created reasonably fertile soils, surface or subsoil wetness remains a major limitation to cultivation across the Vale.

The dominant land use in the Vale is agriculture. The western Vale is predominantly pastoral, with sheep and cattle grazed over the more clayey soils, whilst the eastern Vale, with its peaty soils, is predominantly large-scale arable, with some localised pig farming.

Human Influences

Prehistoric

As the climate began to ameliorate in early post-glacial times, some 10,000 years BC, the landscape of the Vale of Pickering, was an intricate mosaic of open water, swamps and small islands clad in ferns and birch woodland. By the start of the Atlantic period, some 6,000 BC (the optimal postglacial period for plant growth), there was virtually no open water left. Instead, the area was a mosaic of reedswamp, sedgeswamp and carr woodland on the lower wetter ground, with mixed deciduous woodland on the higher land. As time passed, natural vegetation succession led to drier conditions and a reduction in the area of reed and sedgeswamp, with carr woodlands replaced by dry woodlands. Eventually the long history of drainage converted the land to high quality farmland.

The earliest known evidence of human presence in the area are the Late Upper Palaeolithic sites at Flixton and Seamer Carrs, just outside Ryedale District. These discoveries showed that Upper Palaeolithic hunters explored the southern fringe of the Vale, probably hunting the variety of animals that grazed there including reindeer, horses and red deer. However, it was not until the Early Mesolithic, many hundreds of years later that the Seamer and Flixton sites became permanently occupied. Major excavations at Flixton and nearby Starr Carr (again, just outside Ryedale District) have revealed a quantity of organic remains, flint axes, blades and other tools dating back to some 7,600 years BC. Due to the waterlogged conditions of the peat, these remains survived in an excellent condition. Indeed, Starr Carr represents one of the foremost Early Mesolithic sites

in Europe, its excellent finds having been reinterpreted many times. Recent excavations in the area suggest that it may have been a permanent settlement, possibly for hunters undertaking seasonal forays into the North York Moors.

Ongoing work both at Starr Carr and neighbouring Seamer and Flixton Carrs is revealing valuable information about the palaeogeography of the former wetland landscape and its response to changes in water levels.

By the Late Mesolithic, there is good evidence that the northern fringe of the Vale of Pickering was the site of permanent settlement, with continuing movements to and from the high ground to the north.

Evidence that is more substantial attests to the development of farming communities during the succeeding Neolithic and Bronze Age, although it comprises burials and implements, rather than occupation sites. It is likely that Neolithic settlement occurred on the naturally drained higher ground or the drier Vale edges, with the lower lying areas providing valuable hunting grounds. The number of Neolithic and Bronze Age axe finds suggests that tree shrub or reed cutting must have been common.

Extensive Iron Age settlements are common along both sides of the Vale between the 25 – 30m AOD, although they are only visible from the air as crop marks. Evidence from excavations around Malton and Norton, including the 'Three Dykes' linear earthwork at Norton Dyke Head, point to a system of woodland clearance and mixed agriculture with nucleated hamlets. By the first century AD, on the drier edges of the Vale, the landscape had taken the familiar form seen today, with people farming the land as part of a federation of tribes known as the Brigantes.

Roman

Finds at Malton indicate that the Romans reached Ryedale in the early 70's of the first century AD. A fort was established at Malton and there are small sections of road and sites of Roman villas, such as that at Beadlam near Helmsley (see Fringe of the Moors). These indicate Romanised elements in the population who favoured Roman values and economic organisation. Excavations of the fort have revealed numerous finds including tile fragments, quantities of pottery, bone dice, armour, jewellery and a vast number of coins dating back to Nero (54-68AD). The original wooden fort was replaced with a stone structure very early in the second century AD.

Its site, between the Derwent and the road to Pickering, became known as the Orchard Fields. Although the Roman buildings were quarried, first for a Norman castle, and later a Jacobean mansion, the deep ramparts remain as a reminder of a Roman past.

Malton's importance during Roman times arose from its location as a centre of communications. Roads radiated out to York, Brough-on-Humber, the Wolds, the Howardian Hills and the coast at Scarborough and Filey. Other minor roads and tracks crossed the Vale connecting rural settlements with Malton/Norton and wealthy villas such as that at Beadlam. These had ditches running either side to drain the surface.

To the south of the Derwent, in the area now occupied by Norton, a civilian settlement or 'vicus' was developed in the late second century AD. This town specialised in the manufacture of coarse pottery to supply the ceramic needs of Hadrian's Wall and its immediate hinterland, together with most of the territory between the Humber-Mersey line and Hadrian's Wall. This exploited the Speeton clay, which underlies the chalk and outcrops along the southern edge of the Vale at the foot of the Wolds escarpment. Production was concentrated in the third century AD, but evidence is sparse beyond this period although the Cranbeck potters to the south west may have superseded it.

Other reminders of Roman occupation have been forthcoming in the Vale of Pickering area, including minor settlements and field systems, field boundaries and burials, which tend to occur close to the line of the known Roman roads. It is likely that the Romans were amongst the first people to improve some of the wettest parts of the Vale, using a combination of open ditch drainage and covered drains.

Dark Ages and Medieval

The Romans withdrew from Britain in 410AD. Romano-British society was greatly altered by Anglo-Saxon and later Viking invaders who created settlements of their own, cleared trees, drained bogs and worked the land. Their villages were 'tuns', Rillington, Scampston and Ganton being three local examples. Scandinavian place names include 'by' and 'thorpe' as in Scagglethorpe and Brawby. Excavations at Heslerton on the southern side of the Vale have revealed a lost township, which lasted from before 450 to 650AD. This comprised as many as sixty buildings, including a number of timber framed houses, an open sewer drain, a watercourse used for craft and industry, and a cemetery.

The discovery of Anglian artefacts within the fort at Malton suggest that some attention was still given to the former focal point of settlement whose strategic and defensive qualities may continue to have been valued. The presence of a pre-Norman Conquest church and mill at Old Malton indicate that, at some stage during the Anglian or subsequent Viking periods, the main settlement within Malton Parish came to be established at or very close to the area of the present village.

Whilst the Norman influence led to the establishment of a number castles along the north edge of the Vale of Pickering, along the southern edge, military sites are fewer. A Norman castle was built at Malton, however this has since disappeared. It safeguarded the medieval walled borough, which was founded in the early twelfth century and developed on the neighbouring slopes. The Norman castle was constructed on top of the Roman fort, underlying the strategic and defensive qualities of the site. The new town lay close to an old ford across the river Derwent, at the centre of the Roman road system, some of whose routes may still have been active during the early medieval period. New Malton was therefore well positioned to respond to the economic growth of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The economic importance of the town is attested by the presence of weavers, goldsmiths, masons and mercers during the thirteenth century and the first references to the market in 1283 and the fair in 1295. Wool provided the main source of income for Old Malton Priory, which stood on the site of the church of St. Mary at Old Malton. A licence to build a castle was granted at Slingsby in 1344. The ruins of this castle can be seen today.

There is strong evidence that the settlement pattern was already complete by Domesday. Towns and villages lay in close proximity on the springlines along either side of the Vale. Here they were well positioned to obtain water from the springs and shallow wells and stood above the flood level of the Vale. Elsewhere the settlement pattern was characterised by smaller, more dispersed villages and farms. Although some were on higher land, e.g. Great Edstone, more of the wetlands were becoming available due to drainage, the heavy clay soils in the west of the Vale being settled first. This pattern seems to have undergone little change until the fifteenth century. The medieval field systems that once surrounded many of the villages on the sides and west of the Vale are not always easily visible today. Only around the southern edge of Pickering do the long sinuous fields represent part of the earlier open-field strip cultiva-

tion system. Such fields stand in marked contrast to the enclosures patterns seen elsewhere in the Vale, most of which date back to the Parliamentary Enclosure periods of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although some may pre-date this.

It is likely that the Anglo-Saxons did little to maintain or improve either the Roman roads or drainage works. It was not until after the Norman Conquest of 1066 that interest in land drainage was revived, with the use of open ditches and ridge and furrows, the furrows serving as channels as well as strip boundaries.

Medieval Drainage of the Vale

Whilst there are records of wetlands in the Vale of Pickering as early as Domesday (1086), it was not until the thirteenth century that the extent either to which wetlands within the Vale were being cultivated or the areas within which drainage was taking place began to be revealed.

Drainage during the medieval period employed both open and covered ditches as well as ridge and furrow for surface drainage. There is also likely to have been some use of embankment, especially by the monasteries, which were draining extensively during this period. Elsewhere, undrained areas could also have been used seasonally as meadow.

The central Vale was reclaimed for both pastoral and arable farmland and was farmed almost exclusively by the monastic farms and granges. The monasteries were mainly responsible for farming the eastern Vale, where they colonised wasteland, but much of it remained too wet for cultivation. By contrast, due to the drier conditions afforded by the higher land around Salton, South Holme, Great Barugh and Kirby Misperton, lay farming was more common in the western Vale, where there is a high concentration of villages mentioned in Domesday records. Whilst this cultivation included arable, it is unlikely to have been of any great extent and much of the western Vale remained marsh or meadow under pastoral cultivation.

Drainage was increasingly seen as a solution for arable farming, yet, overall, most of the Vale was pastoral farming. In many parts of the Vale, there was a clear distinction between the lower lying 'Carrs', which were waterlogged throughout the winter and provided only rough summer pasture, and the occasionally flooded 'Ings', which yielded hay and aftermath grazing. This distinction is clear from place names in many of the Vale parishes.

Post Medieval

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw a period of trade recessions, which seriously affected the east Yorkshire woollen industry and resulted in an overall decline in population and settlement. This situation continued and in 1697, Malton was referred to as a *'pretty large town built of stone, but poor'*. It was not until the late seventeenth century that Malton appears to have seen renewed prosperity related to regeneration of its market as the trade centre of the District. This was enhanced by the Derwent Navigation act of 1702, which ensured that by c. 1724, Malton stood at the head of a navigable stretch of river. By the end of the eighteenth century, thirty-five vessels and two sloops regularly journeyed between Malton and Leeds or Hull, carrying corn, coal, lime and woollen cloth, however, the advent of the Thirsk-Malton railway in the 1840's marked the beginnings of its decline.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, some of the wealthy landowners had an influence on the landscape by creating large buildings and estates such as Nunnington Hall, Knapton Hall and Scampston Park.

Whilst settlements within the Vale, particularly Malton, were undergoing expansion and redevelopment during this period, an equally dramatic, if slower, transformation of the Vale's landscape was taking place. There is likely to have been continued small scale drainage, although flooding remained a problem, particularly in the eastern Vale. Here the land immediately prior to the parliamentary enclosures was described by contemporary writers as a *'disgrace to the country'*, being *'overrun with sedges and other palustrine plants, which afford, during a few months in summer, a kind of ordinary pasturage to young flock. In winter months they are generally buried under water, and in summer months are subject to be overflowed.'*

The parliamentary enclosures of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw a rapid pace of agricultural change, with the introduction of a regular pattern of large geometric fields bounded by well managed predominantly thorn hedgerows, and relatively straight roads with wide verges. Much of the common land was also enclosed at this time. By 1788, most of the monastic land was enclosed and farmed by small scale landowners living in scattered farmsteads. Drainage through the creation of embankments and removal of obstructions was considered the only solution to the problem of cultivating wet land.

A number of methods were introduced including Plug (Mole) Drainage, the Interception Principle and the invention of drainage tiles. Thus began the drainage fervour that has continued unabated ever since. Only now are there moves to reverse this process and to raise water levels in suitable places through initiatives such as MAFF's Habitat Scheme.

Nineteenth Century Onwards

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, some 17,500 acres of land lying adjacent to the rivers Rye and Derwent were considered unsuitable for agriculture due to their likelihood of flooding. It appeared that drainage efforts at the time were uncoordinated and ineffective due to the conflicting interests of landowners. This led to the Parliamentary Act of 1800, which ensured the regulation and systematic drainage of some 10,000 acres of land within and around a triangle formed by the villages of Muston, Yedingham and eastern Wykham. The aim of the Act was to straighten the Derwent, drain and enclose the flooded lands and to enclose and improve the drained areas, so ending the medieval system of open-field strip cultivation. Consequently, by the mid-nineteenth century, only small areas of wetland remained. Within these areas, drainage continued throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century when further Acts were passed culminating in the Land Drainage Act of 1930.

The late twentieth century has seen major changes in the agricultural landscape of the Vale. The processes of post-war agricultural intensification have led to the removal of field boundaries with the consequent loss of hedgerow trees, conversion of pastures to arable land and loss of habitats and species diversity. Technological advances have introduced drainage measures that are increasingly more effective, with the result that marginal land, such as that in the eastern Vale, can now be cultivated. Because of over-engineering and river management, trees and wildlife habitats have been lost along riverbanks. Drainage is also causing a lowering of the watertable; leaching of ochre and shrinkage of the peat in places, with exposure of tree roots and consequent die back. The effects of this have been particularly noticeable in the central and eastern farmland where field sizes have increased considerably and the landscape has become much more open.

Whilst settlements in the Vale have largely escaped the large scale redevelopment which has blemished so many country areas in the latter half of the twentieth century, the area has seen the 'suburbanising effects' of cumulative small scale change. Similarly, road improvements, including the Malton bypass (A64) have had an impact on the landscape of the Vale. Because the landscape is so flat, vertical elements such as transmission lines exert a strong visual influence.

Ecological Characteristics

Human activities have gradually removed most of the Vale of Pickering's natural habitats, converting them to arable farmland or grazed pasture. Remaining natural or semi-natural habitats are fragmented into small areas where farming has proved difficult or undesirable. This habitat loss has in turn meant a decrease in biological diversity within the area.

The dominant feature of the Vale of Pickering is its river systems and their associated flood plains. The rivers Derwent and Rye, together with their tributaries, drain most of the Vale. Although these watercourses have been dramatically altered through drainage, river engineering and canalisation, they, nevertheless, play a crucial part in the biodiversity of the area. Some of the rivers, including the Derwent and Costa Beck are unusual in their lack of pollution and make an important contribution to the area's ecological resource. They also serve as valuable wildlife corridors and a link to other wetland habitats in the region. Because of its importance for wildlife, the Derwent downstream from Ryemouth is designated as an SSSI. The river Rye is locally designated a SINC.

Differences in river management have led to considerable variation in the plant and animal communities each river supports. Where arable land stretches down to the riverside, bankside and floodplain habitats have been lost. Despite this, the rivers and their tributaries still form an important element of many of the Vale of Pickering ecosystems and the communities they support are varied. These range from those associated with large rivers such as the Derwent to the more specialised communities found on the small calcareous streams.

The rivers and their associated habitats support a range of characteristic birds and mammals, which are reliant on these types of habitat for their survival. These include birds such as dipper and kingfisher, which feed along the rivers, and sand martin which

nest in colonies along sandy riverbanks. Mammal species include otter which has been reintroduced in North Yorkshire and water vole whose numbers are threatened nationally by loss of habitat. The river waters support a range of freshwater fish and freshwater crayfish, with commercial watercress growing around Pickering. Many of the rivers are of high water quality and are important for commercial and domestic water abstraction, particularly the Derwent, which supplies much of the area's drinking water.

Drainage across much of the Vale of Pickering has led to a loss of fens and swamp, which once covered large areas. A few fen meadows remain as isolated remnants; for example, Wintringham Marsh and Amotherby Ings both of which have SSSI status. Swamp vegetation occurs locally in linear stands along drainage ditches and in a few flood-plain mires e.g. Norton Ings as well as river margins, including the Derwent and Hertford.

As well as the loss of wetland habitats due to drainage, most of the lotic (standing-water) bodies have also been lost. Many farm ponds have been filled in since they were no longer needed, or have naturally dried up. Those that remain, however, are important since they form the only refuge in the area for species requiring still-water conditions, including the nationally protected great crested newt. There are clay pits in some areas e.g. Upper Carr near Kirby Misperton and near Amotherby, fish havens along the river Derwent and medieval fish ponds at Old Malton. Ditches provide standing or very slow flowing water habitats; some of these such as The Cut near Yedingham are irrigated by groundwater from the gravel aquifer and may have good biological water quality. There are some recently created lakes in former gravel pits, which are showing considerable potential for development as future wildlife sites, particularly for birds. However, these lie outside Ryedale District.

Despite the high level of agricultural use, pockets of unimproved grassland survive in some parts of the Vale notably on the better drained parts of Amotherby Ings and Wintringham Marsh. Many of the remaining grasslands survive as remnants of habitat where roadside verges have remained unmanaged. There are also small areas of species-rich chalk grassland at the base of the Wolds escarpment. Changes in the land use of the river floodplains and the extensive improvements made to the riverside grassland means that fields traditionally managed as hay meadow are now rare.

There is little woodland in the Vale of Pickering, and most of that found is modern plantation. The carr woodlands have been affected by drainage schemes, but those fragments that remain are important. There are remnants of willow carr at Keld Head and the parkland associated with the estates at Nunnington Hall, Knappton Hall and Scampston Park provides open woodland/wood pasture type habitat, which supports a variety of invertebrates and woodland birds. The sandy soils at the base of the Wolds escarpment are relatively infertile and naturally acidic. Because of this, there is less arable cultivation and more extensive areas of dry pastures and conifers. This narrow sandy strip supports calcareous grassland plant communities similar to those on the East Anglian 'brecklands'.

Aside from the habitats that have been described, the nature conservation interest within the agricultural areas is largely confined to the hedgerows and associated ditches and scrub. Although many of the hedgerows are poor and broken, they will still act as wildlife corridors to a greater or lesser degree depending on the habitats that remain.

Visual Characteristics

The broad low lying Vale of Pickering extends along the south side of the Tabular Hills from Helmsley in the west, eastwards to the North Sea coast. It comprises flat, open farmland punctuated by occasional stands of trees, which has been extensively drained for cultivation. At first glance, the landscape of the Vale appears to lack conspicuous visual features and is instead dominated by views of the surrounding hills immediately beyond its boundaries. However, on closer inspection, there are subtle yet discernible differences between the eastern and western parts of the Vale. To the east, the landscape is more open with larger, more geometric fields and darker more peaty soils. Whilst most of the land is under intensive arable cultivation, there are also some large areas of grassland. Along the south eastern edge of the Vale, the infertile sands and gravels of the A64 corridor are less suited to arable cultivation and there are areas of dry pasture, pine plantations, parkland at Scampston, a golf course at Ganton and both working and disused sand pits. Some of the disused sandpits are now piggeries, which leave a distinctive, if temporary, mark on the landscape. There is a lack of hedgerows, and field boundaries mostly follow ditch lines or access tracks. Where hedgerows do exist, they are frequently broken and poorly managed. Views are long, the landscape generally open, punctuated by occasional blocks of wood-

land, and small groups of trees. Most occur north of Malton and on the poorer soils of the south eastern edge of the Vale, where they are mixed deciduous and coniferous plantations. Minor tree groups tend to occur alongside the roads and access tracks or are grouped as shelterbelts around the isolated properties. Roads are characteristically straight with wide verges bounded by hawthorn hedges and link the relatively few, large scattered farmsteads. A network of dykes, cuts and canalised watercourses, which regulate the water table and are visible, but not prominent, in the landscape, crosses the area. Although there are a number of roads and tracks, these are mainly for farm access. The overall sense is of an isolated, remote rural landscape, its value stemming not from its scenic quality, which is relatively featureless, but from its visual expansiveness and seclusion.

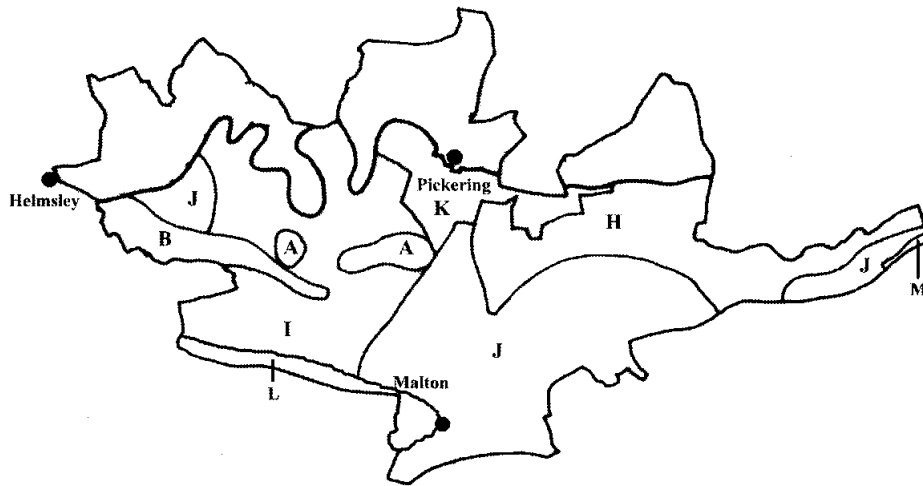
In contrast, to the west of Costa Beck, the Vale has more varied undulating relief and is increasingly enclosed by the surrounding hills. There are more extensive areas of sheep and cattle grazed pasture on the floodplains of the rivers Rye and Derwent, although arable cultivation now extends up to the edge of the riverbank in some areas. Fields, although variable in size, tend to be smaller overall. They are frequently enclosed by hedgerows comprising mainly hawthorn with a number of hedgerow trees such as oak and ash, with willow, poplars and holly locally common. Whilst woodlands remain relatively sparse, locally high concentrations occur around the site of the former Wombledon airfield. Field sports are an additional influence on the landscape with scattered game coverts maintained in the otherwise sparsely wooded landscape. The overall impression is of a more tranquil rural scene, in which the quality of the landscape varies, with the farmland of the Rye Valley in the western part of the Vale being the main area of high landscape value.

The present day settlement pattern of the Vale of Pickering shows a close relationship to the landform of both the Vale and the surrounding hills. Villages and small towns are strung out along the springlines of both the northern and southern side of the Vale. Those to the north, including Pickering and Kirkbymoorside, are found on the springline at the foot of the Corallian limestone dip slope, where related well developed medieval open-field strip cultivation patterns are evident. These fall within the Fringe of the Moors regional character area and are described elsewhere in this document. Those on the southern fringe of the Vale are found on the sandy soils at the foot of the Wold's chalk escarpment, which

approximates the A64 York to Scarborough corridor. Throughout the rest of the Vale, the settlement pattern is characterised by more dispersed groups of houses and isolated farmsteads in areas of rising ground. Long narrow tracks and lanes with wide grass verges bounded by well maintained hawthorn hedges link these. This pattern results from the relatively late eighteenth and nineteenth century enclosure of the wetlands following their drainage. Small villages are also found on the islands of higher ground in the west of the Vale at Salton, South Holme, Great Barugh and Kirby Misperton.

Traditional building materials vary from warm red brick, soft limestones and sandstones to harder gritstones that occur in some of the fringing settlements to the north. The current roofing material is pantile, however, the steep slopes of many of the roofs in the area suggest that thatch was much more common historically. A number of villages, including Harome retain the occasional thatched roof.

Local Landscape Types within the Vale of Pickering



The landscape of the Vale of Pickering has been divided into the following six local landscape types, each demonstrating subtle differences in character.

Area A	Undulating Farmland	Area I	Western Vale Farmland
Area B	Riverside Farmland	Area J	Wooded Open Vale
Area H	Open Vale Farmland	Area K	Enclosed Linear Farmland

In addition to these six local landscape types an additional two are included in the section. Lying in the adjoining regional landscape areas of the Howardian Hills and Yorkshire Wolds respectively, these local landscape types are as follows:

Area L	Howardian Hills Footslope	Area M	Wolds Footslope
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Part 2 : Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for the Vale of Pickering

This section provides a broad landscape strategy for the Vale of Pickering, regional landscape character area followed by a number of landscape guidelines designed to guide restrict or prohibit actions that are considered excessively disruptive to the character of the area. In addition, guidelines are provided to encourage land management systems or strategies considered beneficial to the context of the wider landscape and its scenery.

Landscape Strategy

The Vale of Pickering has a distinctive character typified by flat, open farmland punctuated by occasional stands of trees. The overriding visual influence, particularly in the west, is the views of the surrounding hills beyond its boundaries. Despite having been radically altered by drainage, it retains a distinctive sense of place. The value of the landscape rests not in its appearance, which can appear relatively bland, but in its visual expansiveness and isolation. In addition, the Vale of Pickering is one of the most informative and interesting areas for British archaeology, containing prolific remains, which have provided a clear impression of the landscape that belonged to post-glacial prehistoric man.

There is a subtle change in character between the eastern and western parts of the Vale. West of Costa Beck, the Vale is more attractive and has a more varied topography, being more tightly enclosed by the surrounding hills. Fields are smaller, and there are more hedges and tree cover. River courses have been less modified and there are areas of floodplain pasture on the clayey soils. Overall, this part of the Vale presents a more pastoral rural scene which landscape strategies should seek to conserve and enhance.

By contrast, the eastern part of the Vale comprises low lying flatter land, with dark peaty soils sustaining intensive arable farming. Fields are large and rectangular, surrounded by broken hawthorn hedgerows or drainage ditches lined with reeds or occasionally willows. Drainage is strongly regulated and a network of canalised, straightened river courses, artificial cuts and drainage ditches crosses the area. This is an expansive open landscape, with few notable features. Instead, the eye is drawn to the views of the surrounding hills, particularly the Yorkshire Wolds to the south. It is a landscape of variable quality, within which there is clearly considerable scope to improve both the visual and ecological quality of the landscape

through strategies of enhancement and restoration. These should concentrate on the reinstatement of wetland habitats rather than extensive new tree planting, which would be detrimental to the overall expansive character of the landscape. Such strategies would also protect delicate archaeological sites, which are highly vulnerable to desiccation of the peat.

Many organisations are currently working in the Vale on projects or grant aided schemes, including the Environment Agency, English Nature, English Heritage, the Internal Drainage boards and MAFF. These existing initiatives, together with the relevant development and conservation issues set out in Structure and Local Plans prepared by North Yorkshire County Council, Scarborough Borough Council and Ryedale District Council are summarised in the *Vale of Pickering Wetlands Project: Phase One Report, 1998*, prepared by the University College of Ripon and York St John. It is intended that the guidelines set out below should compliment these initiatives and policies.

Landscape Guidelines

Land Management

Drainage and intensive arable cultivation have radically altered the appearance of the Vale so that the landscape today reveals little of its original wetland origins. Particularly in the central and eastern parts, land has been drained, rivers have been straightened and fields amalgamated, leading to a general decline in landscape structure and habitat diversity.

- *The primary objective in the central and eastern Vale should be to arrest any further decline in landscape structure and habitat diversity. Whilst further enlargement of arable fields should be discouraged, management strategies should aim to retain the open structured char-*

acter of the landscape, particularly in the east, by maintaining the current balance and distribution of woodland and tree cover.

- Area wide studies should be undertaken to ensure the best approach to maximise the visual, ecological and floodplain management requirements of all the watercourses in the Vale, including the rivers, streams and drainage channels.
- Priority should be given to the conservation and enhancement of stream and riverside landscapes. This should include changes to drainage patterns in some areas to reinstate wetlands and the reversion of some arable fields to wet grassland with attendant pools, fen areas and swamp. Tree and shrub planting could locally enhance the river corridors. This would both provide habitat for birds and mammals and help to emphasise the visual presence of water features in the landscape.

The western part of the Vale has more varied relief, and is more pastoral in character, particularly around the river valleys with an increase in tree cover, more hedgerow trees and occasional woodlands.

- This more enclosed and irregular landscape with its floodplain pastures should be retained and enhanced by introducing more diversity of form and a wider range of habitats. The continued use of the valley farmland for grazing should be encouraged and the area protected against agricultural intensification. Arable farmland should be converted to grassland wherever possible to reinforce the pastoral qualities of the scenery. This would benefit archaeological sites by protecting large areas of crop marks.
- The amount of woodland cover could be increased. New woodlands should be of small scale and have an irregular, organic character designed to emphasise minor changes in landform and create a varied mosaic.

There is currently a strong visual transition between open landscape of the Vale and the more intimate and enclosed landscapes of the higher ground to the north and south.

- Whilst the character of this transition should vary, it is important to maintain the overall bold contrast between the surrounding higher ground and the Vale. East of Malton along the southern edge

of the Vale, there may be scope for new woodland planting to give wider emphasis to the boundary between the Vale and the undulating landform of the Wold's escarpment to the south. This should reflect the existing geometric pattern of woodlands in terms of distribution, structure and composition.

The Vale is highly visible from the surrounding hills. Large structures such as Pauls Matings are particularly prominent.

- The visual structure of the landscape should be assessed from the higher ground to ensure that the relationship between the Vale and its surrounding landscapes is well balanced.

Wrapping around the southern edge of Pickering and along the eastern section of the A170, the pattern of linear fields is an historically important relic of the medieval open-field strip cultivation system. This is under threat, both from changing agricultural practices, from edge of town development and the more subtle effects of suburbanisation caused by proximity to a built up area.

- This linear field pattern, which makes such an important contribution to the visual structure, historic character and ecological diversity of the landscape, should be a priority for conservation and enhancement.
- Studies are urgently needed to collect information on the field systems both in terms of their form and evolution, but also on their conservation and management.
- Considerable effort should be made to ensure that field consolidation to facilitate large scale arable cultivation is resisted in these areas.

Much of the Vale of Pickering is rich in sites of archaeological and cultural value. Some of these are nationally important and statutorily protected as Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Most are unprotected, but would be worthy of conservation within small scale schemes.

- *Before any significant land management work is considered, the Sites and Monuments Record held by the North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Unit should be consulted in order to form a better understanding and interpretation of any likely adverse effects on either known or, as yet, undiscovered sites.*

Some of the remaining wetlands in the Vale preserve cultural, plant and animal evidence, giving clues to the succession of the wetland systems and information about past climate, former plant or animals distributions or changes in sea level, from which the past landscape and human impact may be constructed.

- *It is important that archaeological sites are positively managed and essential that those small areas of peat that do remain be preserved for future study.*

The Vale has a remote, isolated quality, particularly in the east. With the exception of the Flamingoland theme park, the area is only used for low-key recreation.

- *It is important that this privacy and seclusion is retained. Any new recreational proposals should be carefully evaluated to ensure that they would not adversely affect local transport, habitats or landscape character. The introduction of further large-scale recreational facilities should be resisted.*

Field Boundaries

Hedgerows are particularly important in defining the visual structure of the landscape and contributing to its overall ecological diversity. They are frequently neglected and broken, particularly in the central part of the Vale.

- *Hedges should be conserved, managed and replanted wherever possible. Hedges should be managed using traditional methods, avoiding mechanical over-flailing.*
- *The restoration of hedgerows is a priority in the more intensively farmed areas where the hedgerow network has been depleted, particularly in the central and western parts of the Vale. In the east, hedgerow planting should only be considered on the southern fringes of the Vale where it will not impinge on the open character of landscape.*

- *Variations in the form and character of hedgerows and their associated trees should be conserved and enhanced. Where hedgerow trees are characteristic, they should be planted to strengthen the existing visual structure of the farmland, with increased tree cover near settlements and along lanes.*

- *Where hedgerow trees are present, these should be conserved and where trees are sparse any existing saplings should be avoided during hedge trimming and allowed to mature.*

- *There is scope for new hedgerow tree planting to help screen and assimilate development on the edges of settlements, particularly to soften views to the rear elevations of properties. New planting should be designed to tie in with existing small woodlands and copses to improve the overall setting of the villages. Such improvements to hedgerows should also seek to strengthen their role as wildlife corridors by selection of locally occurring native species, such as oak or ash and the use of traditional forms of management. These should be clearly marked so that they are avoided during management operations.*

- *In areas where hedgerow oaks are characteristic (particularly on the heavier clay soils to the west), individual oak trees should be planted sporadically within hedgerows to replace existing overmature specimens. Tree surgery may be necessary to safely retain and improve the appearance of some of the older specimens. All tree management should take into account the possible presence of fungi, hole nesting birds and bat roosts. The 'Veteran Tree Guidelines' prepared by English Nature are recommended as the basis for the management of old trees.*

- *Suburbanised hedges containing exotic species such as laurel or conifers, should be replanted whenever possible with more visually and ecologically appropriate species.*

In parts of the Vale, the roadside hedges are associated with ditches.

- *These should be conserved and enhanced. The vegetation of these 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.*

- *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.*

Mention has already been made of the valuable visual and historic contribution made by the pattern of long linear hedgerows to the south of Pickering.

- *It is important that this pattern is conserved and all boundary hedgerows are conserved and enhanced wherever possible.*

Trees and Woodlands

Overall, the Vale has relatively sparse woodland cover. Woods and shelterbelts are particularly prominent in certain areas, tending to be concentrated north and east of Malton along the south eastern edge of the Vale and on the former Wombledon airfield.

- *New planting should be designed to reflect the existing scale and structure of the landscape. Within the large scale landscape to the east, areas of woodland should be concentrated along the southern edge of the Vale, with woodlands planted as small, geometric, mixed deciduous and coniferous blocks. Irregular field corner planting should be avoided. In contrast, new woodlands in the western vale should be mixed deciduous and more irregular in shape, avoiding straight edges and sharp angles. Such planting should be primarily deciduous and include species indigenous to the Ryedale area. It should relate closely to the hedgerow pattern, and be designed to emphasise local landform.*

Similarly, the Vale has a relatively sparse hedgerow tree cover although this tends to increase in concentration to the west.

- *It is important that the existing hedgerow tree network be retained and strengthened where it is a characteristic local feature. Where appropriate, new hedgerow trees should be concentrated near villages and farms and along lanes. In the east, it is important that new planting should not detract from the open character of the landscape.*

The buildings and woodlands around Nunnington Hall, Knapton Hall and Scampston Park make an important visual and historic contribution to the landscape of the Vale.

- *The conversion of arable land to permanent pasture should be encouraged in areas with parkland trees. Every effort should be made to retain the mature trees within the parkland.*
- *The best views of the parkland from beyond their official boundaries should be identified. These views should be enhanced or, in some cases, revealed through carefully designed planting or woodland clearance schemes.*

Settlements and Buildings

The settlement pattern is strongly related to the landform of the Vale. Strung out along the foot of the hills to the north and south are a series of small towns and villages. By contrast, throughout the rest of the Vale, the settlement pattern is more dispersed with isolated farmsteads scattered throughout. Whilst the eastern Vale contains only the village of Yedingham, the western Vale contains a number of small villages and hamlets. These are concentrated on areas of higher ground and are generally attractive and traditional in character. Because of their location on higher ground, they are often highly visible.

- *This existing pattern of settlement should be reinforced.*
- *Developments should be limited to suitable sites in existing settlements.*
- *In the open countryside of the Vale, isolated development should be discouraged unless it is protected from wider views.*
- *Urban sprawl, ribbon development and the coalescence of villages along the A64 and B1257, should be strongly resisted.*

The issue of market town expansion has been discussed in relation to Pickering, Kirkbymoorside and Helmsley in the section on the Fringe of the Moors. However, similar issues apply to Malton/Norton on the southern edge of the Vale. The current position of Ryedale District is for development to be accommodated through a policy of controlled expansion. As such, Malton and Norton are subject to particular development pressures.

- *The expansion of this market town and other smaller settlements should be carefully controlled.*

Farms have a strong visual presence in the open landscape of the Vale. This is often emphasised by their isolation, presence of shelterbelts and situation on rising ground. Many of them have undergone considerable expansion and amalgamation. Some are now of an agri-industrial scale with large metal barns and other buildings dominating the more traditional farmhouse.

- *Landscape measures should be introduced to reduce the impact of large scale complexes in the open countryside. Such measures would primarily include the planting of deciduous shelterbelts.*
- *Re-use of existing buildings is ultimately preferable to the construction of new buildings. Where, modern agri-industrial scale buildings are required, and as far as permitted development rights will allow for control, these structures should be accompanied by appropriate new screen planting.*

Many of the villages are nucleated.

- *New buildings within or on the edge of existing settlements should respect the scale, proportions and materials of surrounding buildings and there should be a strong presumption against expanding villages by a ribbon of suburban style houses that are unrelated to the character of existing development.*
- *Consideration should be given to the preparation of 'Countryside Design Summaries' and 'Village Design Statements', which are designed to ensure that development 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.*

Essentially these require an integrated approach that describes how the following aspects of design relate to each other:

- *the patterns of the landscape, and the setting of the buildings and villages within it;*
- *the shape of the settlements, their built forms and their relationship with the wider countryside;*

- *the nature of the buildings themselves, their massing, materials, colour, texture and detailing.*

Traditional farm buildings that have fallen into disuse are frequently subject to redevelopment proposals.

- *Proposals for the sensitive reuse, conversion or rehabilitation of traditional buildings, which are structurally sound and largely intact, can be accessed safely and are readily provided with water, drainage and other services, should continue to be considered sympathetically. There should, however, be no automatic presumption in favour of redevelopment or replacement of derelict or dilapidated buildings in the countryside, particularly where the proposed development is of a different scale and character to what had existed previously.*
- *Any redevelopment should take into account wildlife that may be occupying the building, in particular barn owls, bats, nesting swallows and house martins.*

Infrastructure

The open landscape of the Vale is overlooked from much of the surrounding higher land. Although woodlands and hedgerow trees provide local enclosure, views across much of the Vale, particularly in the east, are largely unrestricted. Because the land is so flat, vertical elements exert a strong visual influence. A number of electricity power lines and transmission towers introduce a prominent urban form into what is an otherwise rural landscape.

- *The introduction of further transmission lines should be resisted. If unavoidable, great care should be taken in their siting to minimise any further visual impacts.*

Extending along the southern edge of the Vale is the A64, which is the area's most important transportation corridor. This serves to link Malton/Norton and the many villages that are strung out along the base of the Wolds with York and Scarborough. The last twenty years have seen much of this road improved and Malton bypassed, which has brought about much needed improvements to the character of the market town formerly a notorious bottleneck.

However, because this road remains one of the main routes to the coast, it is high speed and busy, particularly in summer. In addition, the A64 corridor becomes increasingly urban in character towards Scarborough, particularly east of Sherburn.

- *Verges and banks should be managed to encourage native grassland and wildflower species.*
- *Any future road improvements to the A64 should consider the rural context of this road and the character of the villages through which it passes. Further urbanising influences should be avoided and issues such as hedgerow and hedgerow tree conservation addressed. Opportunities to develop the floristic diversity of the verges using locally occurring native species should be taken. In addition, it is recommended that, east of Sherburn, a detailed study of the A64 corridor be undertaken in order to identify where environmental improvements could be made.*
- *Attractive 'entrance' features could be provided on the approach to villages along the A64, similar to those seen at Thornton-le-Dale on the A170. These could use vernacular materials and traditional methods of construction to reinforce and reflect the character of the individual villages. By giving the appearance of narrowing the road corridor, they may also assist in the reduction of traffic speeds.*
- *Areas of redundant carriageway should be removed and reinstated with appropriate tree and shrub planting.*

The pattern of country lanes in the Vale of Pickering tends to become increasingly more linear and geometric to the east. In the west, lanes are generally more winding, bounded by hedgerows, often with ditches, and grassy verges.

- *It is important that the character of the rural lanes should be maintained, resisting upgrading schemes involving works such as road widening or straightening and the introduction of artificial kerbs, which can introduce a suburbanising influence. Informal parking on grass verges, lay-bys and farm entrances should be controlled.*

Part 3 : Description and Guidelines for Local Landscape Types

The following section provides landscape guidelines for the eight *local landscape types* that have been identified in the Vale of Pickering. *Local landscape types* are described under the following headings:

landform and context;
land use and landscape pattern;
settlement;
subjective response; and,
sensitivity to change.

In addition, landscape guidelines are provided that include an overall landscape strategy and guidelines under the following headings;

land management;
field boundaries;
trees and woodlands;
settlements; and,
buildings and infrastructure.

Priorities for action are also provided to indicate the most urgent needs.