



VALE OF YORK OPEN FARMLAND

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE 2: OPEN FARMLAND

COUNTRYSIDE CHARACTER AREA: Vale of York

Location

This character type is located east of the Derwent corridor and north and east of Pocklington. The type encompasses farmland that rises up to the edge of the Yorkshire Wolds in the east and farmland around the villages of Full Sutton, Fangfoss, High Catton and Bugthorpe. The character type has a varied landform reflecting the transition from the Derwent Valley to the Wolds edge.

Key characteristics of Open Farmland in the Vale of York:

- Low lying gently undulating landform.
- Topography varies between 80m AOD and 10m AOD.
- Numerous villages and hamlets scattered throughout.
- Medium to large rectilinear fields bound by hedges. Smaller fields with hedgerow trees concentrated around settlements creating a sense of enclosure.
- Small becks, fed by rectilinear drainage system, meandering through the rectilinear fields draining the intensively farmed land.
- Ponds are scattered throughout the area.
- Arable land use dominates with some areas of grassland.
- Medieval sites scattered throughout.
- Romano-British settlement, roads and agriculture.
- Airfield and industrial estate at Full Sutton are prominent in the landscape.

Physical Influences

The underlying geology of the area was laid down during the Triassic period. To the east is Mercia mudstone group and to the west is the Sherwood sandstone group. The solid geology has been overlain by glacial drift geology of the Devensian period when much of the area was covered by Lake Humber, a large water body that developed as a result of the ice sheet blocking the Humber gap. The northern extent of the Escrick moraine provides a distinctive geological feature to the west of this character type.

Soils are a combination of Pelosols and ground water gleys. Agricultural land classification is mainly grade 3 with some areas of grade 2.

Topography of the area is between 80m and 10m AOD falling gently to the south and west. The landform is gently undulating across the character type. The undulations become more pronounced close to the edge of the Wolds. Hummocky glacial deposits contribute to the more varied landform.

The land drains south and west into Pocklington Beck and the River Derwent via a series of improved natural ditches and man made drains south and west. There are a number of ponds scattered throughout the area. The southern extent of the character type drains south towards the River Foulness and Market Weighton Canal.

Human Influences

There is evidence of human activity in the area over many centuries. However, much of the visible physical evidence has been lost due to changing land management practices, in particular modern agricultural methods. As a result the landscape character of the area does not reflect the influence of man's early activities. Many of the settlements in the area originated during Anglo Saxon

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times. Some of these, such as Bishop Wilton, became planned villages during medieval times and there are earthworks of the Archbishop of Yorks Manor House at the north end of the village. There is evidence around some of the villages of early medieval enclosures and the best example is at Bishop Wilton on the western edge of the Yorkshire Wolds. The A166 follows the line of a Roman road.

There are four scheduled monuments in the area two of which are medieval moated sites and there is evidence of unscheduled moated sites in the area. There is also a registered Battlefield at Stamford Bridge. The battle of Stamford Bridge took place in 1066. Unfortunately much of the area has been developed and evidence of the battle has been lost.

Land use in the area is mainly arable farmland with areas of grassland for livestock production scattered throughout. Field size is a combination of large fields around Full Sutton and medium sized fields elsewhere. Enclosure of open fields and commons was complete in the 18th century either by agreement or by an act of parliament. Over the years fields have amalgamated resulting in the loss of hedgerow boundaries.

Stamford Bridge is a large settlement on the western edge of this character area and is the site of an Historic Battlefield (Battle of Stamford Bridge, 1066). Unfortunately, much of the site of the battlefield has been built upon and there is little evidence of the event today. The built edge of the village impacts on the character of the open farmland character which provides the setting for the east side of the village and its approach. Building materials are mainly brick with tile and slate roofs. There are some stone buildings. Modern 20th and 21st century development has taken place extending the urban edge into the open farmland landscape.

20th century development has taken place around Full Sutton. The airfield was used during the Second World War by the RAF and areas of the airfield have since developed as an industrial estate.

The Market Weighton to York railway line crossed this character type between Pocklington and Stamford Bridge. The A166 follows the route of a former Roman road across the Wolds and crosses this character type from Stamford Bridge to Garrowby Hill. Minor roads criss cross the area linking villages.

Ecological Influences

The area is intensively farmed and there are few woodland blocks. Tree cover tends to be concentrated around settlement. As a result the influence of ecology on the character of the area is limited.

Water courses coupled with hedgerows are an important ecological resource in the intensively farmed area. Ponds are scattered throughout the area provide habitat for a variety of flora and fauna.

Woodland cover is limited in this landscape type. Hedgerows and hedgerow trees provide corridors linking habitats. There is only one SSSI in this character type west of Bishop Wilton.

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CHARACTER AREAS

Three character areas have been identified in this landscape character type. They are:

- Character Area 2A: High Catton Ridge Farmland
- Character Area 2B: Full Sutton and Fangfoss Farmland
- Character Area 2C: Bugthorpe/Bishop Wilton wooded Rising Farmland
- Character Area 2D: South east Pocklington rising farmland.

Character Area 2A: High Catton Ridge Farmland



View from road south of High Catton looking southeast (2005)

This area is located on the Escrick Moraine east of the River Derwent. The area is elevated above the surrounding landscape reaching a height of 35m AOD. The village of High Catton is located on the lower slopes of the Escrick moraine approximately a mile south of Stamford Bridge. It is a linear village that runs almost parallel to Low Catton approximately 1 mile to the west on the edge of the Derwent corridor. It is the landform of the ridge that distinguishes this area from its surroundings. Fields are generally large medium in size.

There is little woodland in this area. Hedgerows are well treed close to High Catton which, linked with the small scale of the fields there results in a more enclosed character. Beyond the village edge fields are larger and boundary hedges contain fewer trees and are less intact.

Small grass fields with intact hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees are associated with the village. There is evidence that the parish boundary in this area formed the boundary of a medieval deer park.

Ponds scattered throughout the farmland provide aquatic habitat for amphibians. Common toads are often seen in the early spring, migrating to their breeding ponds. This area is also frequented by otters, being close to the resident population on the River Derwent.

The built edge of Stamford Bridge to the north influences character introducing urban influences to views in the landscape. The rural character of the area is important to the setting of the settlement.

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Character Area 2B: Full Sutton and Fangfoss Farmland



View towards Full Sutton Industrial Estate from west of Fangfoss (2005)

This area is located around the villages of Fangfoss and Full Sutton, and is generally below 30m AOD. The area is generally flat with rising undulating ground to the north, east and west.

Full Sutton airfield and industrial estate and Full Sutton prison are prominent non agricultural land uses in this area. The dismantled railway line is also a prominent linear feature.

Medium sized rectilinear field pattern with hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees. Land use is mixed but there is more arable land than grassland.

There is a scheduled medieval moated site at Bolton.

The ditches within this area provide good habitat for otters and water voles, with records from various places including Foss Beck, Spittal Beck and Yapham Common.

The barn owl and tawny owl are sometimes sighted hunting their small mammal prey in the vicinity of Fangfoss.

This is a large scale character area with open views occasionally enclosed by scattered woodland, clumps of trees and hedgerows. Pylons can be seen and the industrial development brings an element of discord to the otherwise pleasant landscape. Overall there are no outstanding features and the landscape is quite bland.

Character Area 2C: Bugthorpe/Bishop Wilton wooded Rising Farmland

This area is located immediately west of the edge of the Yorkshire Wolds, north of the town of Pocklington. The landform in this area is gently undulating and rising towards the foot of the Wolds scarp slope.

Landscape pattern is dominated by medium sized rectilinear fields with smaller fields associated with settlement as can be found at Bishop Wilton and Bugthorpe. The enclosures at Bishop Wilton date from the medieval period and are a scheduled monument. The fields around these settlements also show signs of medieval cultivation in the form of ridge and furrow earthworks. Bishop Wilton

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is a distinctive linear village and is known to be a planned medieval village on the edge of the wolds. The Archbishop of York's Manor House was located here.

Much of the land is dominated by farmland. Most of the existing grassland has been re-seeded, however some species-rich hay meadows survive, for example at Bishop Wilton Poorland SSSI. This site consists of low-lying unimproved damp neutral grassland, characterised by grasses such as meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) and red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), with herbaceous plants including great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), black knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*). Rare species are also found here, including adder's-tongue (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*), meadow barley (*Hordeum secalinum*) and saw-wort (*Serratula tinctoria*).

Bugthorpe is a linear estate village containing a variety of 'old' buildings including farmsteads, residential properties and barns. Woodland cover is intermittent. Hedgerows contain trees and many have fences for livestock. Low Hall, formerly the manor house, is surrounded by a moat.

This is a moderate scale semi enclosed to open landscape that is relatively simple and harmonious. Narrow roads away from the A166 give it a remote feel and the landscape is attractive.



View of Bugthorpe from the south (2005)

Character Area 2D: South east Pocklington rising farmland.

This area is located on the west edge of the Yorkshire Wolds south east of Pocklington and encompasses the gradually rising farmland in the Vale of York between Market Weighton and Pocklington.

The area is relatively well wooded in comparison to other parts of this character type and it forms a transitional zone between the less well wooded Vale of York and the wooded western scarp slope of the Yorkshire Wolds.

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The area includes the remnant of parkland between Pocklington and Kilnwick Percy which is now a golf course and part of the avenue of trees that leads to Londesborough. The main settlement in the area is Burnby though which Burnby Beck runs in a southwest direction. The south west boundary of the character area approximately follows the line of the dismantled railway between Market Weighton and Pocklington.

This is an attractive transitional landscape at the bottom of the Yorkshire Wolds scarp slope. There are a number of woodlands in the area that link with the wooded slopes of the nearby dales at Londesborough and Warter.

EVALUATION

Positive Landscape Features

- Water Courses provide habitat corridors and are often associated with trees and hedgerows.
- Rectilinear field pattern is broken occasionally by meandering watercourse.
- Villages and settlements scattered throughout with distinctive vernacular resulting designation of conservation areas.
- Undulating landform provides variation.
- Mixed land use adds to diversity.
- Earlier enclosure patterns in isolated places provide insight to historic character of the landscape.
- Well spaced woodland clumps.

Condition and Strength of Character

The presence of industrial development that does not reflect the rural character of its surroundings at Full Sutton impacts upon the landscape character of this area. However, the majority of the landscape character type is not affected by that development. The transitional nature of the area along the western edge of the Wolds serves to strengthen its character.

The elements that contribute to landscape character across the character type vary in their condition. Hedgerows are intact in some places and provide a strong outline to landscape pattern. In other places fields have been amalgamated and hedgerows are fragmented resulting in a weakened character.

The presence of historic features is an important characteristic. However, these features do not contribute significantly to the character of the area as they are not visually apparent.

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Overall this landscape type is assessed to be in reasonable condition with detractors such as Full Sutton Industrial Estate, Airfield and prison impacting on rural character.

Quality

Landscape quality varies between the character areas across the character type. In particular the landscape character of the areas around Full Sutton is affected by development. However, the area is relatively low lying in comparison to its surroundings. There are views of the development from surrounding roads and nearby settlement in this open landscape. The quality of the landscape character around Full Sutton is assessed to be ordinary.

The quality of the landscape character areas that border the Wolds is assessed to be good because of their relative intactness and the lack of detractors in the area.

Forces for Change

Changes in land management practices as a result of pressures on the farming industry are may result in change to landscape character in the long term. Farmers are likely to be given incentives to allow hedgerows to grow taller and be trimmed less regularly and to allow wider field margins. It is likely there will also be greater incentives for hedgerow and woodland planting.

Pressure for industrial development at and around Full Sutton airfield is likely to continue. This will continue to impact on the rural character of the area. The cumulative impact of continued development in this area will result in a change to the rural landscape character of the area as a whole.

Renewable energy targets for the East Riding are likely to increase the pressure for wind farm development in the area. The location of potential wind farms will largely be dependent upon wind speeds.

Growth in residential development particularly around Pocklington and Wilberforce will affect the landscape character of the rural setting of these settlements.

Sensitivity and capacity

There are extensive views over this area from the edge of the Yorkshire Wolds particularly above Bishop Wilton and Garrowby. Currently there are few detractors at the forefront of those views although on a clear day the Power stations of Drax, Eggborough and Ferrybridge can be clearly seen. The addition of structures close to the edge of the Wolds in the Vale of York would result in a noticeable change to landscape character. The landscape is therefore sensitive to development.

At Full Sutton industrial estate there may be capacity for development of a similar character and nature to that which is already there within the existing development limits providing that appropriate landscape mitigation measures are implemented i.e. tree and woodland planting, layout and design to integrate with existing. Development that would extend beyond the existing development limits would extend the influence of the industrial area into the open countryside. Therefore the landscape has high sensitivity to development outside the development limits. In addition there is the risk of cumulative impact and each development proposal would need to be assessed individually.

The capacity of the landscape to accept wind farms without detriment to character will depend upon the characteristics of the development and its

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location. This relatively open undulating landscape would be detrimentally affected by if wind turbines were to be located on the higher ground making them visible in the landscape. The landscape may have medium capacity to accept small scale wind farms at lower elevations to the west providing they are moderate structures appropriate to the scale of the landscape.

Strategy

The overall strategy is to conserve and enhance the landscape of the character type.

Where the condition of landscape is good then the key characteristics of the landscape should be protected from development. Hedgerows and trees are particularly important as is the undulating landform that rises gradually to meet the Wolds western scarp slope. There is the potential for hedgerows that follow historic boundaries to be considered important under the Hedgerow regulations and an inventory of possibly important hedgerows would help to conserve the contribution they make to landscape character.

There are large scale buildings in the open farmland which detract from the rural character of the area, particularly associated with Full Sutton industrial estate. It would be beneficial to character to screen these buildings using native woodland planting and hedgerows. Native Species found in the area include Ash, Oak Hawthorn, Birch, Hazel and Field Maple.

Development that adds vertical structures would be visible in this area and would detract from landscape character. However, the landform is slightly undulating and small scale structures may be acceptable in one or two locations to the west. Detailed assessment is required to verify if this is the case.

Layout of development should respect landscape pattern and landform and employ appropriate mitigation measures. The use of traditional bricks and tiles to fit with local vernacular should be considered. The colour of new agricultural buildings will also determine their prominence in the landscape. Dull greys and greens tend to blend better with the skyline or back ground vegetation.