



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

# Vale of Pickering

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 26



# Introduction

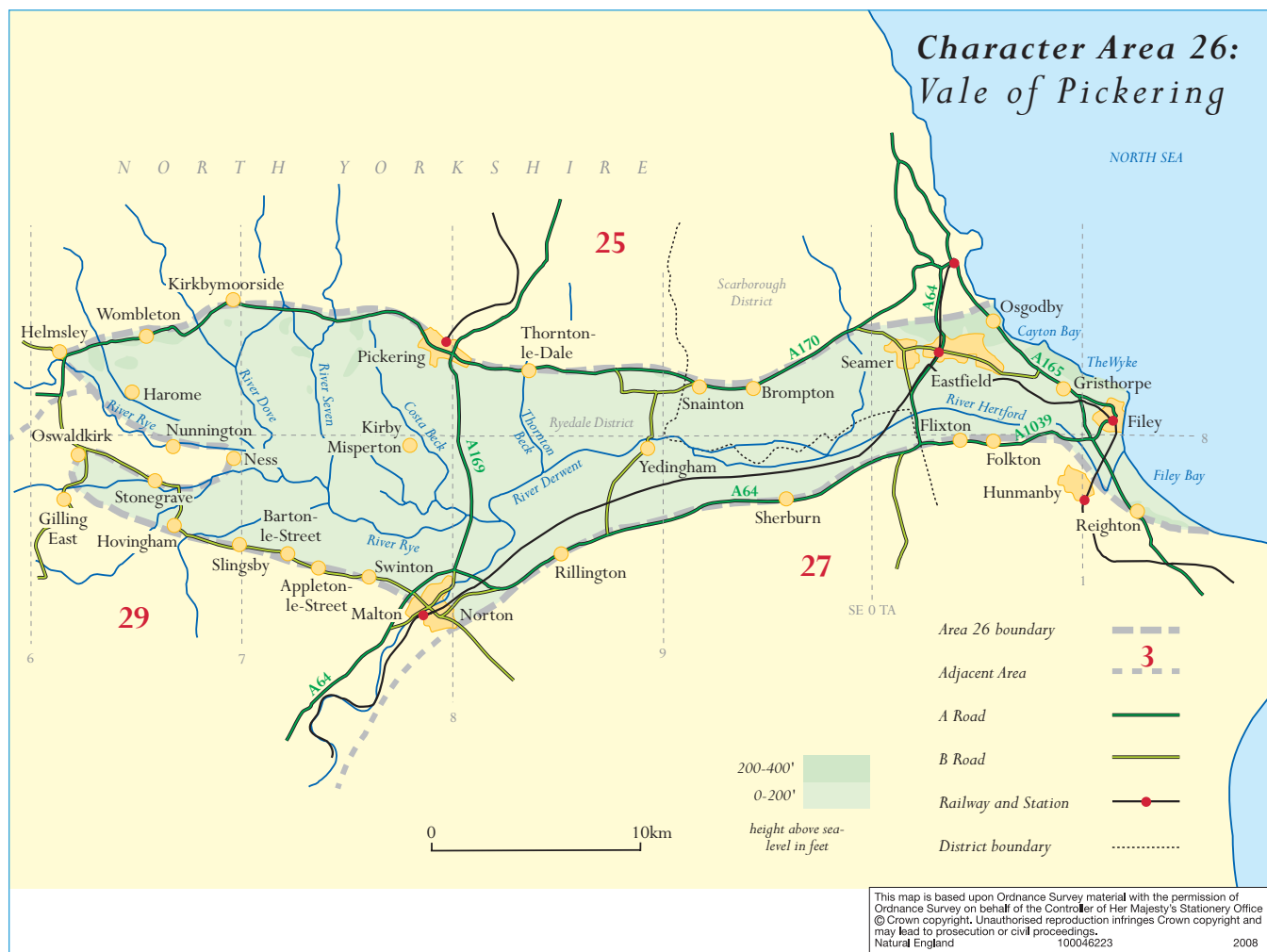
The Farmstead and Landscape Statements will help you to identify the historic character of traditional farmsteads and their buildings in all parts of England, and how they relate to their surrounding landscapes. They are now available for all of England's National Character Areas (NCAs), and should be read in conjunction with the NCA profiles which have been produced by Natural England using a wide range of environmental information (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles>). Each Farmstead and Landscape Statement is supported by Historic England's advice on farm buildings (<https://historicengland.org.uk/farmbuildings>), which provides links to the *National Farmsteads Character Statement*, national guidance on **Farm Building Types** and a fully-sourced summary in the *Historic Farmsteads: Preliminary Character Statements*. It also forms part of additional research on historic landscapes, including the mapping of farmsteads in some parts of England (see <https://historicengland.org.uk/characterisation>).



Farmsteads in villages, as here at Humnaby, can illustrate centuries of historic development and relate to medieval plots (sometimes amalgamated as farms grew in size) and strip fields. This farmhouse probably originated as a longhouse in the 15th to 17th centuries. Its domestic end to the right was rebuilt c 1700, and its agricultural end to left in the early to mid-19th century, when the granary, barn and other buildings to the rear were developed around a cattle yard. Photo © Jen Deadman

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**Front cover:** Regular courtyard plan farmsteads to the south of Pickering (see map on p 9) within an area of late 18th- or early 19th-century enclosure of former carr land which, as elsewhere in this area, provided valuable seasonally flooded grazing land. Photo © Historic England 28540/007



This map shows the Vale of Pickering, with the numbers of the neighbouring National Character Areas around it.

# Summary

See the National Farmsteads Character Statement for a short introduction to the headings below, including maps and tables.

The Vale of Pickering comprises an area of lowland – mainly drained by the rivers Derwent and Rye – bordered by the foothills of the North York Moors to the north, the Yorkshire Wolds and Howardian Hills to the south and the North Sea to the east. Of the area, 3.4% is urban, 1.7% is woodland and 93% is cultivated, whilst 3.8% lies within the Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

## Historic character

- This area has retained extensive evidence for Romano-British and prehistoric settlement preserved in waterlogged conditions.
- Until drainage in the late 18th and early to mid-19th centuries, the farming of the area displayed a strong contrast between the valley-bottom meadows and pastures and the medieval village settlements surrounded by the piecemeal enclosure from strip fields around the fringes of the North York Moors and the Yorkshire Wolds. Pre-1750 buildings on isolated sites relate to shrunken settlements and moated sites.
- Linear farmsteads, including evidence for longhouses, and loose courtyard plan farmsteads, are concentrated within villages. Dispersed-plan farmsteads with multiple yards and loose courtyard plan farmsteads are also found on isolated and village-edge farmstead sites with medieval origins that developed on a piecemeal basis, with an emphasis on holding stock in yards. Regular plan farmsteads of different scales dominate the area but are concentrated in landscapes of regular enclosure that result from the late 18th- and 19th-century drainage of peaty soils.
- Key building types, almost all dating from the late 18th to mid-19th centuries, are combination barns (often including granaries), stables, cart sheds and housing for fatstock and dairy cattle. Pigsties were often built into multifunctional ranges. There are some engine houses for the mechanised threshing of corn crops and the preparation of fodder.
- The area is characterised by a mix of brick, limestone and chalk with pantile and Welsh slate roofs. These have almost completely swept away buildings in timber and thatch which were common into the 18th century.

## Significance

- Some farmsteads relate to shrunken medieval settlements, ridge and furrow and also rare surviving relict common and their associated routeways.
- The extent of 19th-century rebuilding means that working buildings with 18th-century and earlier fabric are of exceptional rarity and will provide important evidence for how this landscape developed. These include evidence for longhouses or buildings derived from the longhouse tradition.
- Recesses for bees in buildings and farmyard walls are a distinctive feature of this area.



## Present and future issues

- In this National Character Area, the Photo Image Project (2006) recorded a medium proportion of listed working farm buildings

converted to non-agricultural use (36%, the national average being 32%.

## Historic development

- Extensive evidence for Romano-British and earlier settlement sites includes those preserved in waterlogged conditions to the centre of the Vale, in the area of the pre-glacial Lake of Pickering, and around the vale-edge contours. These also include the earthworks of enclosed and unenclosed farmsteads with round houses and ladder settlements in and around East Knapton, West Heslerton, East Heslerton and Sherburn. The area within and around the drained glacial lake has national and international significance for its paleo-environmental evidence and potential.
- The principal urban settlements (including Malton, Pickering, Norton, Eastfield and Filey) developed as medieval market towns. In the medieval period, arable land was concentrated around valley-side villages, bordering the North York Moors to the north and the Yorkshire Wolds to the south, and on higher land around smaller scattered settlements, the grange farms of monastic estates and the individual ring-fenced farms of moated and manorial sites. Farmers and communities made use of the poorly drained grazing land that extended across much of the area.
- Formerly extensive water meadows, marshes and swampy woodland have given their name to Old Norse 'ing' and 'carr' place names. These offered rich grazing resources for surrounding communities, and some of the scattered farmsteads and settlements on higher land above flood levels. From the late 18th century, as the drainage of large areas with ditched and sometimes embanked boundaries commenced, the area developed around newly established and often rebuilt earlier farmsteads for processing corn, housing fatstock and providing farmyard manure. The vale developed a prosperous cattle rearing and fattening industry with extensive meadow lands to the centre and rotational cropping for roots and arable. The rearing of coach horses was also significant in the 18th and 19th centuries. Dairying and pig farming assumed greater importance from the mid-19th century, enabled by the Scarborough to York railway line and encouraged by the growth of Scarborough. Sheep washes marked on historic OS maps indicate the historic significance of sheep, which did not require farm buildings.
- A dual economy (combining farming with linen weaving) enabled smaller farms to survive into the 20th century. Gravel and sand pits, chalk pits and quarries are found across the area.
- The area has been strongly influenced by estates, from the grange farms of medieval monastic foundations to the development of Victorian agricultural and shooting estates. Medieval deer parks are concentrated in the west and north of the area. In the post-medieval period, country houses (some around fortified cores), parkland and designed farming landscapes also developed across the area, and some villages have a strong estate character with schools and housing (for example Brompton, Hovingham, Nunnington). Hunting kennels and plantations are another testament to the growth of fox hunting and game shooting from the early 19th century.

## Landscape and settlement

- The present pattern of nucleated settlements, generally located above the flood level close to springs and shallow wells, was established between the 8th and 13th centuries. Villages are surrounded by patterns of post-medieval piecemeal enclosure that has often retained the form of strip fields that surrounded them. Ridge and furrow survives in some areas. Villages bordering the North York Moors and the Yorkshire Wolds retain very long infield strips set between trackways leading to outfield areas and former rough grazing: these have 9th- or 11th-century origin, and are also found in the North York Moors, the Yorkshire Wolds and Holderness.
- Some villages retain a strong sense of their farming past, either in the form of large scale steadings which result from systematic improvement and enlargement of holdings (for example Fryton, Folkton) or for probable former longhouses and smaller-scale buildings on smaller holdings (for example Harome). Farm buildings in some villages (for example Brompton, Hovinghan, Nunnington) are intermixed with schools and housing built for local estates.
- Some isolated farmsteads away from villages have medieval origins, as do the grange farms of monastic estates (mostly to the west of the area), the moated farmsteads of manor farms and independent farmers, or they represent the shrinkage of settlement in the 14th to 17th centuries. Surrounding fields may retain 17th century or earlier irregular and sinuous – and often species-rich – boundaries.
- Most isolated farmsteads are sited within fields that result from late 18th- and 19th-century regular enclosure, often resulting from extensive programmes of drainage and land improvement. Farmsteads are usually associated with shelter belts and field boundaries with thorn hedgerows, dykes and ditches. Further distinctive elements are the islands of pasture that exist around farmsteads and along the water courses of the Vale. These often contain important earthworks indicating former agricultural systems, such as ridge and furrow (for example Flaxton and Harton).

## Farmstead and building types

Pre-1750 fabric is rare and largely confined to village-based linear farmsteads (including some retaining evidence for former longhouses), farmhouses and some threshing barns. Farmhouses and working buildings can display evidence for their raising from single-storey to storeyed buildings.

### Farmstead types

- Linear farmsteads have largely been swept away. Loose courtyard plans with detached buildings (commonly to two or three sides of the yard) are concentrated in villages and some pre-1750 farmstead sites. Regular courtyard plans dominate the area and are overwhelmingly associated with farmhouses that were newly built or rebuilt from the late 18th century. Farmhouses are either attached or form an integral part of U-shaped and full courtyard arrangements. Covered yards (as used from the 1850s) and multi-yards are more likely to evidence piecemeal development.

### Building types

- Storeyed combination barns dominate farmstead groups. These typically have central threshing areas and flanking stabling or (less frequently) cattle housing, with steps to first-floor granaries and mixing houses. Some have chutes for feeding pigs in gable ends.
- Wheel houses, locally termed horse gins, which had been used in mines for centuries, were adapted from the late 18th century to provide rotary power for powering threshing machines. They were built adjacent to the barn in which the threshing machine and

other fodder-processing machinery were housed.

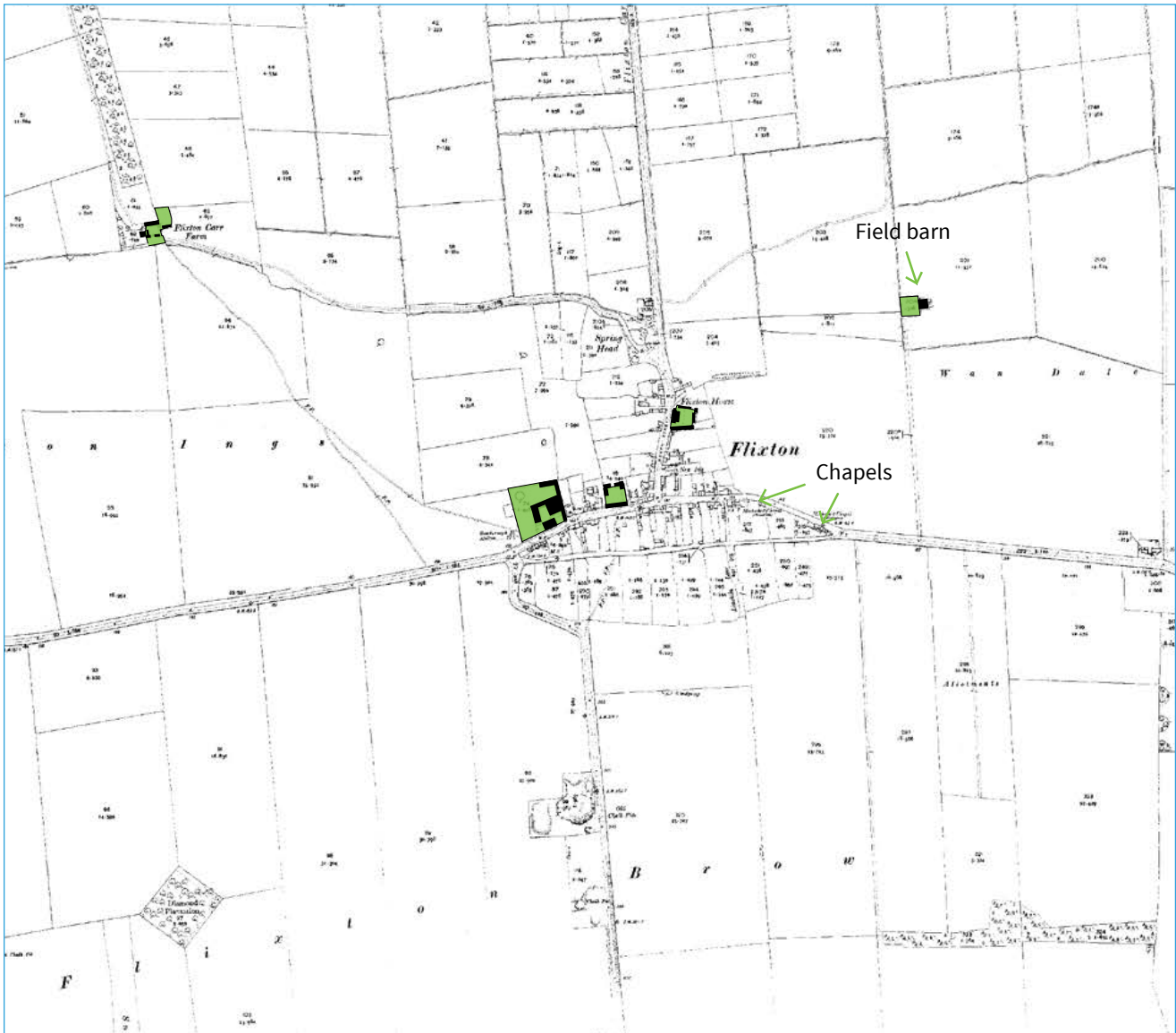
- Grain production is characterised by granaries (frequently built as an upper storey over a cart shed or animal housing), cart sheds, implement sheds and stables.
- Looseboxes and shelter sheds facing yards provide evidence for the dominance of fatstock, many farmsteads having more than one phase of such buildings. Most cow houses for dairy cattle were built after the mid-19th century.
- Pigsties can be unusually extensive by national standards.
- Bee skeps (recesses in walls, often to pigsties) for Beekeeping were a feature of Vales farming, hives being taken out onto the heather-clad moorlands in the summer.
- The great majority of farmsteads are still in farming use. The large scale of 19th-century buildings has in many cases facilitated their continued importance to the fatstock industry – as evidenced by the building over of former open yards and reutilisation/adaptation of existing building stock, rather than demolition



Some of the largest courtyard farmsteads – sometimes on the sites of high-status medieval farms which developed as large farms – developed on the northern borders of the North York Moors, as here at Snaiton. The buildings of brick and sandstone set around several cattle yards date from after the late 18th century, at a time when the land was worked as two farms. The core of the farmhouse is dated to 1288, with later Georgian additions. Photo © Jen Deadman



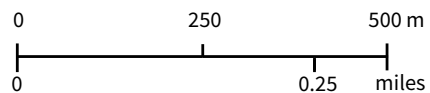
Evidence in a gable end for an earlier chalk building, heightened with late 18th-century brick tumbling – a characteristic feature of this area – to the eaves. Photo © Jen Deadman



Maps are based on 2nd edition 25" Ordnance Survey maps, which show farmsteads after the last major phase in the building of traditional farmsteads in England.  
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Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.




## Flixton

Linear farmsteads, and later courtyard plan farmsteads, rebuilt and extended in the later 18th and 19th centuries, developed within and around the medieval village of Flixton, which is one of a string of settlements that were sited with easy access to the Yorkshire Wolds rising to the south and the carr lands of the vale to the north.





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 Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.

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## Low Carr, south of Pickering

These regular courtyard plan farmsteads developed as an integral part of the drainage and enclosures, around 1800, of this carr land to the south of Pickering – see cover image.



Multifunctional buildings for arable-based farming are typical of this area. This example at Foulbridge comprises a stable with a hay loft to the left and a granary over cart sheds to the right. Photo © Jen Deadman



The size of granaries over cart sheds (left) or stables (right) illustrates the importance of arable-based farming from the late 18th century. Note the louvred windows for ventilation Photo © Jen Deadman



**Howe** An example of one of the large-scale regular courtyard farmsteads that developed in this area, in this case on rising land well suited to growing corn and with easy access to meadow land along the River Rye and Malton Moor to its south. The early 19th-century farmhouse faces into its own garden, there is a walled garden and the courtyard buildings (mostly for fatstock cattle) are sited around a cattle yard with a storied combination barn that comprises a barn, granary and cart sheds. Photo © Historic England 28477/052





Early 19th-century, formally designed farmstead at Low Carr, the house facing into its gardens and away from the barn (to the left) and other working buildings. Photo © Historic England 28450/010



The date and number of cart sheds also illustrate the development of arable-based farming, smaller carts being needed to take farmyard manure to the fields. This small cart shed has pegged oak roof trusses, rarely used after the 1840s and predating the common use of softwood. Two bays are set on the long elevation, with a third, its entry widened, accessed from the gable end. Photo © Jen Deadman



Pigsties are a common feature in this area, pigs being fattened on grain and roots for export as well as fed on the by-products of dairying. The gable end has a brick-arched row of recesses housing feeding troughs for pigs housed within this building. Sett pott or meal houses are another distinctive feature, with chimney stacks indicating the presence of fires for heating and mixing meal. Some have upper-floor hen houses, the example to the top right having nesting holes and perches for pigeons. Note the use of clay pipes as vents under the eaves to the right. Photo © Jen Deadman

## Materials and detail

- Predominant materials are brick with pantile roofs, with limestone extracted from the area bordering the North York Moors to the north and chalk alongside the Yorkshire Wolds to the south. Brick quoins and dressings are commonly used on chalk walls.
- There is extensive documentary evidence for timber-frame, and cruck-framing, with thatch as the predominant constructional form and roofing material for houses and farm buildings before 1750.





# Historic England

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Jeremy Lake with Jen Deadman.

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