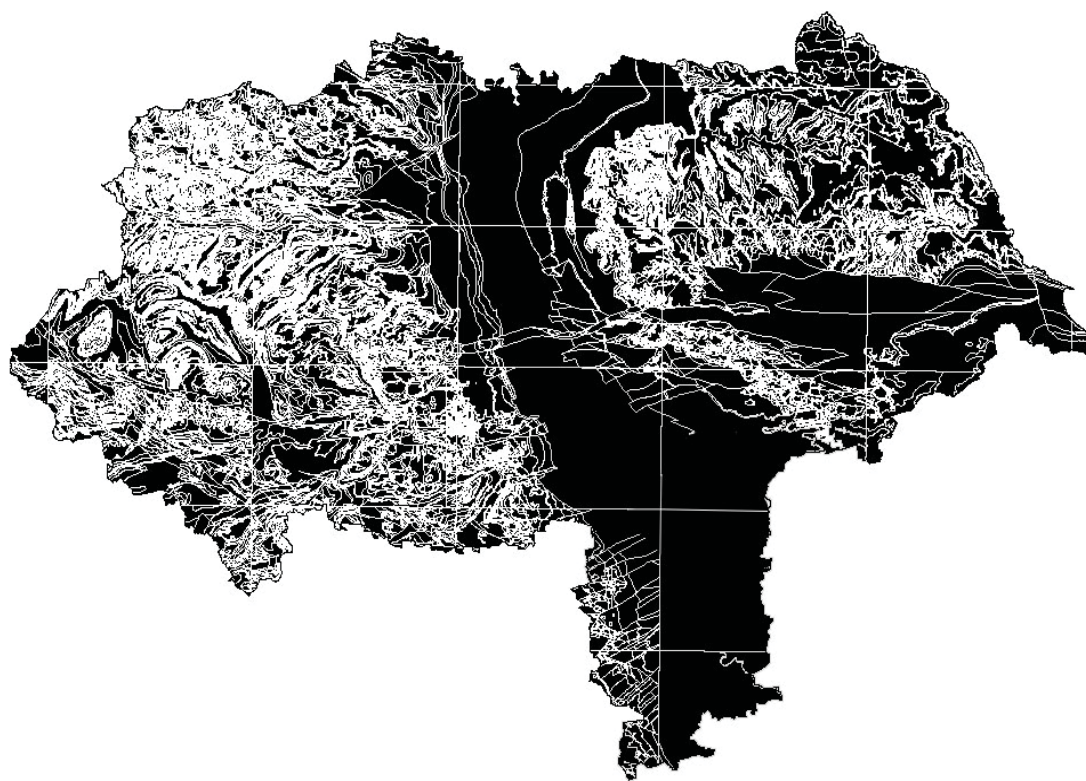


North Yorkshire County Council
**North Yorkshire and York
Landscape Characterisation Project**





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Landscape Characterisation Project**

Approved

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Watkins', enclosed within a circular flourish.

Dominic Watkins

Position

Director

Date

17 May 2011

Revision

Final Report

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 In April 2009, Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) was commissioned by North Yorkshire County Council Countryside Service to undertake a Landscape Characterisation Project to lay a foundation for strategic and long-term approaches to deepening understanding and raising awareness of landscapes within North Yorkshire and York.

1.1.2 The Countryside Service are developing a Countryside Strategy for North Yorkshire, including the National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Key components of this new strategy will include further improvement of the evidence base and the identification of priorities for focus of effort and delivery.

1.1.3 There has never been a County-wide Landscape Character Assessment, and this has been identified as a key requirement in driving forward the Countryside Strategy. Currently, Landscape Character Assessments exist at the District scale for six of the seven Districts of North Yorkshire, for the City of York and for both National Parks. These vary in date from 1991 to 2004 and were prepared following the preparation of the Conservation Strategy for the County in 1991. There is now a requirement for an overarching Landscape Character Assessment to be produced, that follows best practice and is based on core datasets, and analysis of existing District, AONB, and National Park LCA's and integrates with HLC outputs. This Study provides a consistent and integrated County-wide picture which will help to raise awareness of local distinctiveness, issues and strategic initiatives at a landscape scale.

1.2 Purpose of the Project

1.2.1 The Project seeks to provide a consistent sub-regional level landscape characterisation framework and evidence base for the Study Area. This report is intended to be a reference document for everyone with an interest in the sustainable management of the landscapes which are a defining characteristic of the countryside, coast and settlements of North Yorkshire and York - including national agencies and local authorities, farmers and other land managers.

1.2.2 The aims of the Project are to:

- Provide an improved evidence base for the landscape character of North Yorkshire and York and to form a key contribution to the development of a Green Infrastructure Map of the County;

- Lay a foundation for strategic and long term approaches to deepening understanding and raising awareness and appreciation of the landscapes of North Yorkshire and York and to developing landscape based spatial policy and planning at a variety of scales;
- Provide an interactive digital resource on landscape character for the purposes of informing land use planning and landscape management decision making and for informing the development and implementation of Local Development Framework Policies and action;
- Stimulate community involvement and engagement;
- Develop principals and guidelines for the sustainable management of the countryside of North Yorkshire and York, its coast and its settlements;
- Celebrate the richness and diversity of the landscapes of the Study Area;
- Enable the monitoring of landscape change across the Study Area.

1.2.3 The objectives of the Project are to:

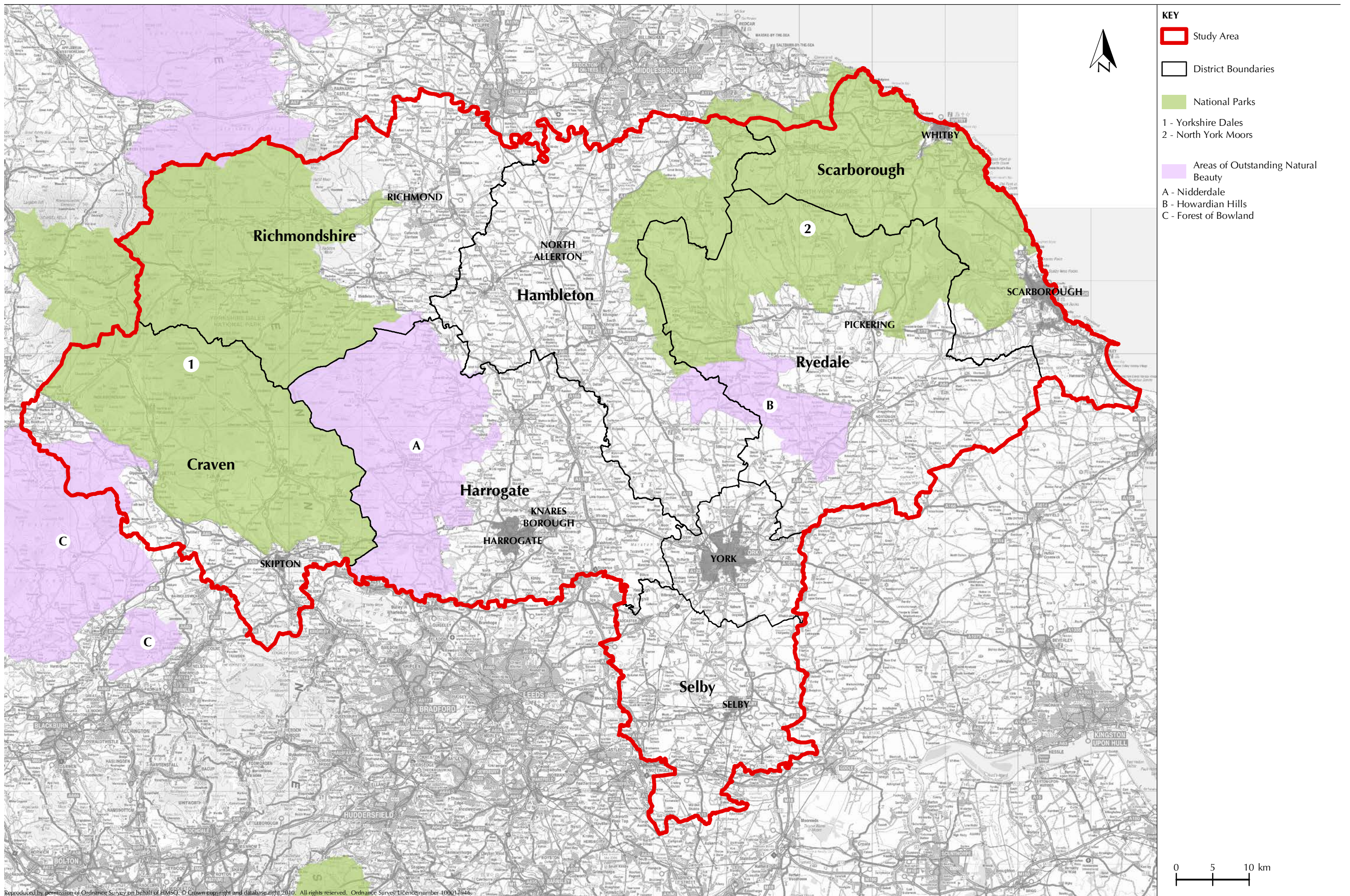
- Develop a GIS map and linked tables which identify the landscape character for the Study Area;
- Identify and explain the landscape character, time depth, the layering and sense of place for each landscape unit;
- Examine the pressures/forces for change in each landscape unit;
- Identify the primary sensitivity to change issues in each landscape unit;
- Establish a set of key overarching landscape management principles relating to climate change (including flood water management), renewable energy (including biofuel), mineral extraction, farming and major development projects (including infrastructure projects and eco-towns);
- Produce guidance for managing landscape change for each of the key landscape management principles based on National Character Areas (NCA) and the appropriate landscape units defined during the mapping phase;
- Produce an illustrated narrative report on the landscape character of North Yorkshire and York;
- Investigate and clarify the relationship of the North Yorkshire and York LCA project with the District, National Park and AONB LCA's and the North Yorkshire Sustainable Energy Study.

1.2.4 It should be noted that this County level Landscape Character Assessment is intended to be used as a strategic planning and land management tool. Where available, more detailed Landscape Character Assessments undertaken at the District, and National Park/AONB level should be used as tools for informing decision-making at the local scale.

1.3 The Study Area

1.3.1 The Study Area encompasses the County of North Yorkshire and the City of York (see **Figure 1.1**). As landscape character units may not necessarily coincide with administrative boundaries, the assessment also considers landscapes outside, but immediately adjacent to the Study Area boundary.

1.3.2 The Study Area is predominantly rural in character. It contains a large majority of the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors National Parks, and embraces the Howardian Hills, Nidderdale and part of the Forest of Bowland Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It also encompasses a diverse range of dramatic and contrasting landscapes, from the coastal landscapes in the east,



- KEY**
- Study Area
 - District Boundaries
 - National Parks
 - 1 - Yorkshire Dales
 - 2 - North York Moors
 - Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 - A - Nidderdale
 - B - Howardian Hills
 - C - Forest of Bowland

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to the rolling chalklands of the Wolds and comparatively flat agricultural landscapes of the Vales of York, Pickering and Mowbray. These landscapes support a wide variety of land uses; arable, pasture, woodlands, upland grazing and peat bogs, with an equally wide range of natural and historic features.

1.4 Context

- 1.4.1 The context for the landscape character approach is provided by current policy and practice in Europe and the United Kingdom. The most significant and relevant of these are the overarching European Landscape Convention, the Planning Policy Statements of the Government and the assessment Guidance itself.

The European Landscape Convention

- 1.4.2 The European Landscape Convention (2000) seeks to establish and implement policies aimed at landscape protection, management and planning through public engagement and stakeholder involvement in activities that will lead to wider understanding and appreciation, improved knowledge and care of landscapes, as well as strengthening a sense of inspiration, well-being and connection between people and place. The European Landscape Convention defines landscape as:

“An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.”

- 1.4.3 ‘Landscape character’ is defined by the Convention as:

“A distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape.”

- 1.4.4 The principles of the Convention apply to landscapes everywhere of whatever quality and in any condition. This includes urban and peri-urban areas; towns, villages and rural areas; the coast and inland areas; outstanding or protected landscapes; and ordinary or degraded landscapes. A key principle underpinning the European Landscape Convention is to integrate into regional and town planning policies measures based on landscape character assessment methods aimed at protecting, managing and planning the landscape. In conjunction with the active participation of interested parties, the Convention encourages the identification and assessment of the character, forces for change and value of the landscape to inform the definition of landscape quality objectives.

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development

- 1.4.5 PPS1 sets out the Government's overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system in England. It states that one of the Government's objectives for planning is that it should facilitate and promote sustainable urban and rural development by protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment and the quality and character of the countryside (paragraph 5). In its key principles, PPS1 states that 'a spatial planning approach should be at the heart of planning for sustainable development' (paragraph 13.iii) and 'design which fails to take the opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted' (paragraph 13.iv). It goes on to say that, when preparing development plans, 'planning authorities should seek to enhance as well as protect biodiversity, natural habitats, the historic environment and landscape and townscape character' (paragraph 27). PPS1 also requires new design to be integrated into the existing urban form and natural and built environments (paragraph 35).

Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

- 1.4.6 Landscape Character Assessment, along with Village or Town Design Statements and Village or Parish Plans, are recommended by Government Policy in PPS7¹ as tools to assist local authorities in the preparation of policies and guidance that encourage good quality design throughout rural areas in England (paragraph 13). Landscape Character Assessment is also recommended in PPS7 as a tool for creating carefully drafted criteria-based policies in Local Development Documents to protect valued landscapes outside nationally designated areas without the need for rigid local designations, which may restrict sustainable development and the economic vitality of rural areas. Local landscape designations should only be maintained or, exceptionally, extended, where it can be clearly shown that criteria-based policies cannot provide the necessary protection (paragraphs 24 and 25).
- 1.4.7 PPS 7 recognises the importance of national designation such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in protecting landscapes from major development. There is also recognition that outside nationally designated areas, there may be landscapes that are particularly highly valued locally. Robust, criteria-based policies, supported by Landscape Character Assessment are seen as a valid planning tool to ensure that the special qualities and distinctive characteristic of all landscapes are recognised and safeguarded in the face of forces for change.

¹ At the time of writing, consultation was being undertaken for a new, replacement for PPS 7: 'Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment' (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1498981.pdf>)

Landscape Character Assessment Guidance

1.4.8 In England and Scotland, Landscape Character Assessment² is widely acknowledged as an appropriate way to look at the whole landscape, not just areas protected by designations, because it provides a structured, robust and largely objective approach for identifying character and distinctiveness. It does this by mapping and describing the variations in physical, natural and cultural attributes and experiential characteristics that make one area distinctive from another at a range of spatial scales. Landscape Character Assessment also recognises how landscapes have changed over time, and acknowledges the changing influences of human activities and the impacts of economic development. The ‘character approach’ is a valuable tool for helping make informed decisions about how landscape should be managed in the future.

1.5 Approach and Methodology

General approach

1.5.1 The overall approach to the Project was based on the latest published national Landscape Character Assessment guidance³. It also took into account the approach to classification set out in the Regional Landscape Framework Feasibility Study⁴. The key messages from this approach were:

- Use of consistent datasets for classification and boundary definition;
- Development of criteria for defining boundaries;
- Searching for opportunities for integration of biodiversity and HLC data;
- Definition of boundaries of landscape types;
- Production of draft descriptions;
- Use of rapid field survey to ground truth the classification and fill in gaps where local level information is not available;
- Inclusion of stakeholder engagement.

1.5.2 In overview, the characterisation process involved a desk-based ‘top-down’ approach, which used a consistent set of digital data layers related to physical and cultural landscape attributes to identify and map broadly defined landscape character units, at a scale of 1:50,000. The resulting ‘County level’ landscape classification (or typology) was then compared with the existing ‘District⁵’ level 1:25,000 scale Landscape Character Assessments, tested and refined through consultation with stakeholders.

² Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002).

³ Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland (Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002).

⁴ Natural England, Land Use Consultants and the University of Sheffield, Feasibility Study for the Development of a Regional Landscape Framework for Yorkshire and Humber, March 2009, Final Report.

⁵ Including National Park and AONB assessments.

- 1.5.3 Statutory agencies and other key stakeholder organisations, including landscape specialists and planning officers from District Councils, AONB's and National Parks, have been involved in the process of developing the Landscape Characterisation Project. The feedback from consultation helped to strengthen the evidence base, and promote awareness of the value of the Landscape Characterisation Project as a tool for informing planning and land management decisions. Two stakeholder workshops were held (see **Appendix C** for details).

Phase 1: Defining Methodology

- 1.5.4 A method statement was agreed with North Yorkshire County Council, which set out the proposed approach to developing a consistent sub-regional classification within the Study Area. In order to establish best practice principles for the characterisation methodology, a review of landscape character assessments for adjacent Counties and Unitary Authorities was undertaken. The key issues noted are set out below:

- Assessments for adjacent Counties/ Unitary Authorities defined a combination of Landscape Character Types/Sub-types;
- Several of the assessments were carried out before the current best-practice Landscape Character Assessment Guidance was published in 2002;
- The assessments varied in their identification of forces for change, sensitivities, landscape strategies and guidelines, however, where these are defined, Landscape Character Types are consistently used as the common unit for evaluation.

Phase 2: Evidence Gathering

- 1.5.5 This phase included the following tasks:

- Collation of relevant datasets;
- Review of data collated by the Regional Landscape Framework Feasibility Study;
- Review of adjoining Regional Landscape Character and Landscape Framework approaches and other regional scale good practice to inform methodology;
- Identification of key sources of data and relevant regional and sub-regional studies (such as the North Yorkshire Sustainable Energy Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study);
- Consultation with appropriate regional and sub-regional specialists;
- Definition of the parameters of the GIS linked database and datasets.

Phase 3: Mapping

- 1.5.6 This phase included the following tasks:

- Review and assessment of core datasets including geology (bedrock and superficial), topography and drainage, land cover, historic landscape character⁶, historic parks and gardens and historic features;

⁶ At the time of preparation of this report, a draft Historic Landscape Character GIS layer was provided (which was subject to checking and revisions). As part of this, GIS polygons, based on groups of modern land parcels were defined to reflect common

- Identification of Primary Landscape Units and Landscape Character Types at a scale of 1:50,000;
- Review of existing local Landscape Character Assessments and data collated by the Regional Landscape Framework Feasibility Study;
- Examination and testing of the relationship between broad Landscape Character Types and district scale Landscape Character Types/Areas to refine and confirm boundaries;
- Production of Primary Landscape Units (broad groups of different Landscape Character Types);
- Production of draft Landscape Character Type mapping;
- Undertaking of rapid, targeted field assessments to test the preliminary Landscape Character Type mapping;
- Consultation with North Yorkshire County Council and its partners.

Phase 4: Characterisation

1.5.7 This phase included the following tasks:

- Production of a draft structure for Landscape Character Type descriptions;
- Analysis of key characteristics, overall character; and definitive attributes (geology, topography and drainage, land cover, enclosure/field pattern, settlement pattern, visible historic features);
- Consultation with North Yorkshire County Council and landscape specialists;
- Revision of GIS layers where appropriate.

Phase 5: Evaluation

1.5.8 For each Landscape Character Type, an evaluation of the main forces for change and primary sensitivity to change issues was undertaken. These judgements were used to develop guidance for managing landscape change that highlights needs and opportunities to inform planning and land management decisions.

1.5.9 Natural England has developed interim integrated objectives for National Character Areas within the Yorkshire and Humber region, representing the first step towards drawing up integrated objectives for all the National Character Areas across England. The guidance for managing landscape change for each Landscape Character Type reflects the interim objectives for the relevant National Character Areas.

1.5.10 This phase also involved developing a series of ‘high level’ overarching landscape management principles for informing decision making in relation to the key forces for change affecting the Study Area’s landscapes as a whole. The principles were developed from research and discussions with Stakeholders regarding the key issues and opportunities for landscapes within the Study Area (see **Appendix C**). These also provided a framework and context for the

historic characteristics and assigned to broad Historic Landscape Types. These Historic Landscape Types were used to inform the Enclosure/Field Pattern definitive attribute sections for each Landscape Character Type defined within the Study.

Landscape Character Type-specific guidance. Principles were provided for the following four key drivers of landscape change:

- Agriculture and Land Management;
- Development and Infrastructure;
- Climate Change;
- Mineral Extraction.

1.6 Structure of the Assessment

1.6.1 The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2.0: Evolution of the Landscape** – provides an overview of the physical and historical influences on the evolution of the landscape within the Study Area;
- **Section 3.0: Landscape Character of North Yorkshire and York: Identifying Distinctiveness** - outlines the hierarchical classification of landscape character units within North Yorkshire and York within their National context;
- **Section 4.0: Retaining Character and Managing Landscape Change** – provides an overview of the forces for change affecting the Study Area's landscapes as a whole and sets out a series of 'high level', overarching landscape management principles for informing decision making in relation to key drivers of landscape change;
- **Section 5.0: The Landscapes of North Yorkshire and York** – sets out detailed profiles for the thirty nine Landscape Character Types within the Study Area, including classification and evaluation information, within the overarching framework of the Primary Landscape Units;
- **Section 5.0: Conclusions and Recommendations** – presents, in overview, the key findings of the Project, and sets out recommendations for further work to support sustainable landscape management across North Yorkshire and York.

2.0 EVOLUTION OF THE LANDSCAPE

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 The present day landscape of the Study Area is a product of the physical and human influences that have shaped its basic structure and appearance. In particular, the underlying geology and the processes of erosion and deposition have had a profound effect on the landscape, influencing not only landform, soils and vegetation communities, but also the human activities dependent upon or affected by them. In turn, human activity has been superimposed on the physiographic foundations of the landscape, changing natural vegetation patterns to suit human needs and introducing man-made elements into the landscape.

2.2 Physical Influences on Landscape Character

2.2.1 The underlying geology of the Study Area, as shown on **Figure 2.1** forms series of distinctive groups, which provide strong influences on the visual character of the overlying landscapes. In summary the landscape slopes gently from west to east, with the oldest deposits in the west of the Study Area, progressing to more recent deposits in the east.

Geological evolution of the landscape

2.2.2 The oldest geological deposits in the Study Area date from the Silurian period, 400 million years ago, formed from thick ocean sediments which comprise of a series of marine mudstones, sandstones and silts containing various fossils. These are visible within the present landscapes of the Study Area as a series of outcrops, to the north of Settle and within the southern part of the Yorkshire Dales.

2.2.3 Deposits from the Early Carboniferous period (354 to 290 million years ago), comprising limestones, sandstones and shales of Carboniferous Limestone are exposed in the west of the Study Area. These deposits were formed within fluctuating seas which once covered the Study Area, resulting from variations in the size of the southern polar ice sheet. The landscape of the Yorkshire Dales, including the Three Peaks of Wharfedale, Pen-y-ghent and Ingleborough is dominated by the influence of limestone. The three peaks are composed of a succession of rocks that lie in almost level layers. The Great Scar limestone dominates the scenery around Ingleton and Settle, attaining a thickness of over 200 metres.

2.2.4 During the Middle Carboniferous period (330 million years ago) the sea covering the Study Area gradually became choked up with mud and sand, creating a large river delta which was spreading south and draining land to the north. The constant flooding and draining of this