

ARABLE FRINGE FARMLAND

Landscape character

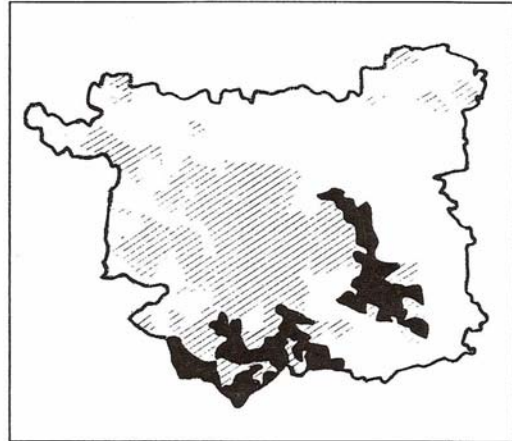
The arable fringe farmland landscape type occurs around the southern and eastern fringes of Leeds and is found in six landscape units: East Leeds Fringe (LCM3); Kippax and Swillington Fringe (LCM4); Rothwell Fringe (LCM5); East Ardsley Fringe (LCM6); East Morley Fringe (LCM7) and the South Morley Fringe (LCM8).

It is a landscape of actively farmed land, containing a mixture of landscape influences, all dominated by human activity such as housing, industrial areas, quarries, tips, amenity land, recreation grounds, neglected or disturbed land. The farmland tends to consist of mainly small scale arable fields, with horticultural crops such as broccoli, rhubarb and potatoes common throughout.

Some of the farmland, particularly in the south of Leeds, is under intense public pressure, with urban fringe uses such as caravan storage, scrap yards and horse grazing in pockets of degraded pasture, in evidence. Often the structure of the landscape has, or is starting to break down, with fields being amalgamated and with many hedgerows becoming low cut or gappy. Some of the non-arable areas are well used by the local community for both authorised and unauthorised recreational uses, providing a valuable amenity resource.

Forces for change

The arable fringe farmland landscape type is under pressure from the encroachment of urban activities such as the development of new roads, industrial commercial and residential areas, and mineral extraction activities.



Some of the land is degraded, under-used agricultural land, with activities such as horse grazing apparent. In addition, there has been a gradual deterioration of farmland features such as hedgerows which has emphasised the fragmented and generally neglected nature of this landscape. Future change could occur with new highway developments, new residential and commercial development and mineral extraction activities such as opencast coal mining.

Management strategy and guidelines

The overall management strategy for the pastoral fringe farmland landscape type should be a combination of restoration of the predominantly arable farmland features where these are in decline, combined with enhancement through new woodland planting, where the existing character has been lost completely. The arable fringe farmland offers the greatest opportunities for new large scale woodland planting, particularly in the landscape units to the south and south east of Leeds. Management guidelines which are applicable for all the landscape units within the arable fringe farmland landscape type are described below. Detailed management strategies and guidelines for the individual landscape units are described in a separate document, using the references listed above.

- *Seek to control the adverse effects of horse grazing in inappropriate locations.*
In recent years, there has been an increasing demand for the use of land for horse grazing, particularly around the fringes of urban areas. In places this has had a significant impact on the landscape with the proliferation of temporary structures and ancillary buildings with impoverishment of pasture due to overgrazing. Where possible, these adverse effects of horse grazing should be controlled, as they can introduce a 'suburbanising' influence into rural landscapes.
- *Enhance tree cover through large scale planting as part of a wider woodland planting scheme for the urban fringe area*
There is scope for significant woodland planting in the arable fringe landscape type, particularly in the East Morley Fringe and Rothwell Fringe landscape units. In these areas, fragmentation has occurred to such an extent that much of the landscape structure has been lost. This has produced an open large scale landscape which has the capacity to accept quite large areas of planting. The siting and design of new woods will need to be carefully planned and could be undertaken in connection with a wider scheme for the urban fringe area. New planting should be targeted along linear features such as streams and becks, railway lines, roads and motorways and form part of a screening programme for particularly intrusive industrial and commercial developments. However, there will also be significant opportunities for planting outside these areas, as part of a wider planting programme for the area.
- *Conserve and enhance the value and continuity of streamlines and enhance their value as landscape, wildlife and recreational corridors.*
Although not particularly numerous, pastoral and wooded streamlines form important linear landscapes and wildlife resources or corridors, particularly as they tend to be surrounded by intensively farmed land and urban fringe land uses. Where these areas occur, they should be conserved as a priority, but opportunities should be sought for creating new habitats on areas of farmland along stream corridors. Natural regeneration of woodland should be encouraged and where appropriate, new planting should be undertaken to extend and enhance the corridors. This could then form the basis of larger scale planting, perhaps in association with a scheme for the wider area, extending out from the valleys on to the surrounding higher ground. However, care should be taken to maintain a diversity of waterside habitats in addition to the woodland. Consideration should also be given to encouraging recreational access along the valleys, where this is not already available.
- *Conserve and enhance tree cover along field boundaries, through regeneration and replanting of boundary trees.*
A priority for this landscape could be to enhance the areas of fringe farmland through new planting, while maintaining a diversity of land uses and maintaining areas of intact viable farmland. In the more intact areas of farmland, tree cover along hedgerows, particularly along the lower slopes and within the valleys is a characteristic feature. To maintain and enhance this, natural regeneration of boundary trees should be encouraged wherever possible or replanting should be carried out using locally occurring species such as oak and sycamore. Lines of trees along hedgerows can then act help to join and reinforce new areas of planting.

- *Where opportunities exist, consider restoring areas of former parkland.*
Although landscaped parks are not a particular feature within this landscape type, there are some isolated remnant areas. As well as their historical importance, parklands provide diversity and interest in the landscape. True parkland in permanent grassland with large scattered trees is in decline. Wherever possible, consideration should be given to reinstating areas of former park and new planting to replace old trees.
- *Conserve and restore primary hedge lines and manage them more positively as landscape features.*
In general, this landscape is characterised by a large-scale, regular field pattern, which in the most part has become very fragmented and is in decline. Where tree cover is weak, which is true for most of the fringe farmland, this pattern becomes more significant and it is important to try and avoid further fragmentation of the landscape through hedgerow removal. In particular, primary hedgelines alongside roads and farm boundaries should be conserved and managed more positively. This would allow hedges to grow thicker and taller and where they have been removed, consideration should be given to replacement planting. This type of management would be particularly appropriate in areas which are adjacent to or outside any areas identified for large scale new tree planting as part of the Forest of Leeds Strategy.