

ARABLE PLATEAU FARMLAND

Landscape character

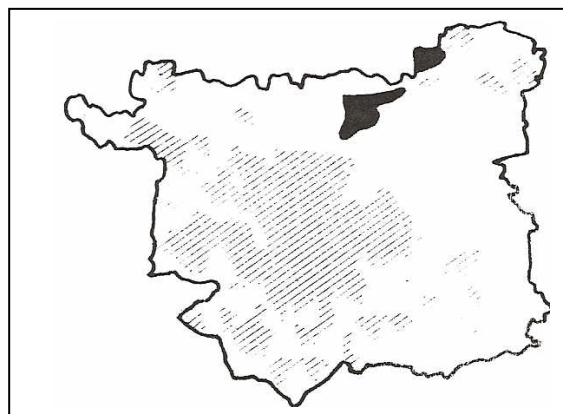
The arable plateau landscape type can be found on the plateaux to the north and south of Wharfedale, in two landscape units: the Linton Hills (WHF1); and Hollin Hall Plateau (MGP]). Similar in character to the large-scale open arable farmland, this landscape types occurs on the plateau tops, resulting in generally open and exposed farmland, with few hedgerow trees and areas of woodland. The large regular fields contain reasonably productive soils, giving rise to mainly cereal cultivation. Small areas of ley pasture and some permanent pasture also occurs, adding variety and colour contrast to an otherwise fairly simple landscape. Settlements are sparse, with isolated, often large farm buildings dotted throughout. Due to the open nature of the landscape, long views can be gained from some of the higher plateau areas.

Forces for change

In recent years, the main pressures on the arable plateau farmland landscape type appear to have been related to agricultural intensification, with the amalgamation of fields into even larger units increasing the sense of openness on the plateau. This has been further emphasised by the loss of hedgerows with some being poorly maintained and suffering from neglect. Today, with the new EC set-aside rules, the amount of set-aside land in landscape types such as this is likely to increase, creating new opportunities for land management.

Management strategy and guidelines

The overall management strategy for the arable plateau farmland landscape type should be one of restoration, where traditional farmland features are beginning to break down. Opportunities for new woodland planting are limited, but small scale planting as screening for intrusive farm buildings and encouragement of natural regeneration around existing woodland would be suitable, taking care to maintain the characteristic open nature of the plateau.



Management guidelines which are applicable for all the landscape units within the arable plateau 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 left.

- *Encourage the development of wide field margins along streamlines and woodland edges.* With the outlook for farming changing particularly in areas of intensive farming such as the arable plateau farmland, expanded field margins offer positive opportunities for enhancing both landscape and wildlife interest. Options include wildlife fallow margins to encourage wildflowers and grassland margins to be managed as rough grassland. To gain maximum benefit, field margins should be developed alongside features of interest such as hedgerows, woodland edges and streamlines.
- *Seek to control the design and location of new agricultural buildings, particularly where they are highly visible on the plateau.* The traditional farm buildings of the arable plateau farmland are gradually being replaced by the construction of large modern farm buildings, which often look out of place and can be visually intrusive. Many of these new buildings are large by necessity and therefore careful siting and design are important considerations as no amount of landscaping will conceal a building that is fundamentally badly designed. Big buildings can sometimes sit well in the open plateau farmlands, but only if they are well sited in relation to other features such as land form and tree cover. Selection of building materials and choice of colours should complement those in existing buildings and in the surrounding landscape.

- *New small scale woodland planting may be appropriate around existing copses or as screening for prominent farm buildings, although this should be carefully designed to conserve and strengthen the open character of the plateau.*
There is some scope for woodland planting within this landscape, but the priority should be to maintain the open character of the plateau. Additional areas of coniferous planting should be discouraged, with the aim being to soften the edges of existing woods through deciduous planting. This is particularly appropriate in these flat to gently rolling plateau areas, where attention needs to be given to the nature of woodland edges. Small scale deciduous planting using locally occurring trees could also be used as screening for prominent farm buildings. However, planting should be used in a positive way to strengthen the overall farm landscape, rather than looking like an afterthought in an attempt to hide a farm building .
- *Conserve the pattern of large hedged fields, with priority given to strengthening and restoring primary hedgelines.*
Large regular fields bounded by hedgerows are a characteristic feature of this landscape, although the generally flat or gently rolling topography does not allow this pattern to register strongly. Where hedgerows have been removed, the field pattern is often fragmented and the scale of the landscape increased. In these areas, it is important to avoid further fragmentation of the landscape through hedgerow removal. Where the hedgerows are in poor condition, priority should be given to restoring primary hedgelines, including those along roads, footpaths and bridleways and farm boundaries, through replacement planting.