

Yorkshire Wolds AONB Designation Project Desirability Assessment



**Updated Report Post Consultation
November 2025**

Yorkshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Project

Assessment of whether it is desirable to designate an AONB in order to conserve and enhance Natural Beauty

Prepared for Natural England

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In association with Resources for Change
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Updated Report Post Consultation

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Preface

This report has been updated to take account of changes to the natural beauty assessment as a result of Statutory and Public Consultation.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Scope of Work

1.1.1 In June 2021 a written ministerial statement by Secretary of State George Eustace (Defra) announced that Natural England would be taking forward the Government's commitment to designating additional protected landscapes including the possible designation of the Yorkshire Wolds as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This report sets out issues associated with the desirability of designating land within the Yorkshire Wolds which meets the natural beauty criterion as AONB, as defined in the separate natural beauty assessment (*Yorkshire Wolds AONB Designation Project – Natural Beauty Assessment, May 2024*).

1.2 Rationale

1.2.1 Once an area has been identified as qualifying for inclusion in a landscape designation, it is necessary to determine whether designation of the area is desirable. This report has been prepared by specialist consultants to assist Natural England in reaching its decision on whether it is desirable to proceed with a national landscape designation (AONB) within the Yorkshire Wolds¹. Designation does not follow automatically, simply because land meets the natural beauty criterion. The legislation requires that Natural England must also consider that it is desirable to designate an area in order to conserve and enhance its natural beauty.

1.2.2 The objective of AONB designation is to ensure that the purpose of AONB designation is achieved, i.e. the conservation and enhancement of an area's natural beauty. The Government considers that designation confers the highest level of protection as far as landscape and natural beauty is concerned². Natural England applies a high threshold in relation to the desirability of designation in recognition of the fact that it confers a national level of protection. Natural England considers that areas should be nationally significant for their natural beauty in order for it to be considered desirable to designate them and that there should be confidence that designation is the most appropriate model for future management of the area.

1.3 Natural England Guidance

1.3.1 Natural England has produced guidance to assist in the assessment of whether designation is desirable³. This sets out a series of questions that can usefully be posed. These are:

- Is there an area which satisfies the AONB technical criterion?

¹ In 2023 existing AONBs were rebranded as National Landscapes, however when designating Natural England still legally designates an AONB.

² English National Parks and the Broads: Government Vision and Circular 201 (Defra, 2010), para 20

³ Guidance for Assessing Landscapes for Designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England, Natural England, 2021.

- Is the area of such significance that the AONB purpose should apply to it?
- What are the issues affecting the area's special qualities?
- Can AONB purposes be best pursued through the management mechanisms, powers and duties which come with AONB designation?

1.3.2 The Natural England Guidance also provides additional guidance on factors to consider in making these judgements. It should be noted that the more directly or substantially a factor bears upon the achievement of the AONB purpose, the more weight Natural England will give it in the decision whether or not it is desirable to designate.

1.3.3 It should also be noted that designation may have other potential impacts beyond the statutory purpose. Common issues raised include the potential for impacts on housing markets and local economies. Natural England, in designating, must bear in mind that Parliament has put in place the basic framework for AONBs which already address some of these issues. In addition, Government policy influences how AONBs operate in relation to wider policy issues such as housing, the economy and planning. Any such matters beyond those relevant to the purpose of designation as outlined in Section 1.2.2 above are therefore accorded less weight.

1.4 Broader Background

1.4.1 As part of the Government's 25-year Plan for the Environment, an independent review of designated landscapes in England (National Parks and AONBs) was led by Julian Glover and published in 2019⁴. This review set out a compelling vision for more beautiful, biodiverse and accessible National Parks and AONBs and also warned that challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and a changing, urban society mean that new approaches are needed to get the most out of England's protected landscapes. In January 2022, the Government published its response to this independent Landscape Review, highlighting the issues of nature loss, climate change adaptation and the role of protected landscapes in addressing these issues. In its response the Government cited its commitment to protecting 30% of land by 2030 for nature⁵.

1.4.2 Furthermore, and set against the backdrop of unprecedented concern for the future of the natural world, and intergovernmental reports that the current global response to the effects of human impact on nature is insufficient, the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty has made a series of pledges (known as the Colchester Declaration⁶) to respond to the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity decline. This is relevant as it places greater emphasis on the role of

⁴ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d8a19a3e5274a083d3b78bd/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-commits-to-protect-30-of-uk-land-in-boost-for-biodiversity>

⁶ <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/projects/colchester-declaration>

AONBs in mitigating and adapting to climate change, achieving net zero and helping nature to recover.

- 1.4.3 In the context of a landscape designation in the Yorkshire Wolds, the creation of a new AONB would facilitate conservation work to address the pressing agendas of nature recovery and climate change adaptation. These may be important benefits arising from designation, however, they are not of themselves, a justification for proceeding with designation, or designating land which does not meet the natural beauty criterion.
- 1.4.4 It is important when framing the argument for the desirability of designation, that consideration is given specifically to the questions set out in the Natural England Guidance. This report considers each of these questions in the following sections and provides an overall conclusion as to whether designation of the qualifying area is desirable.

2 Areas Satisfying the Natural Beauty Criterion

2.1 Findings of the Natural Beauty Assessment

- 2.1.1 The detailed assessment of whether there is an area which meets the natural beauty criterion is included in a separate report titled *Yorkshire Wolds AONB Designation Project – Natural Beauty Assessment, May 2024*. This concluded that there are areas which satisfy the natural beauty designation criterion, and a Candidate Area for designation has been identified. This Candidate Area comprises two discrete areas; an inland area which forms an arc of land stretching from Market Weighton in the southwest to Folkton in the northeast and from Weston in the west to Langtoft in the east; and a smaller coastal area between Reighton and Sewerby Cliffs. These two areas are the focus of further consideration as to whether designation as AONB is desirable in order to conserve and enhance their natural beauty.
- 2.1.2 A full justification for the Candidate Area is contained in the separate Natural Beauty Assessment report along with Figure 10 which shows its broad extent. Not all parts of the Candidate Area meet the natural beauty criterion to the same degree - some areas are finely balanced, as noted in the Natural Beauty Assessment.

3 The Significance of the Proposed Candidate Area

3.1 Is the area of national significance?

3.1.1 To answer this question the Natural England Guidance sets out a number of factors which should be taken into account. These include:

- **Special qualities** - i.e. those aspects of the area's natural beauty which make the area distinctive and valuable, particularly at a national scale and thus worthy of designation.
- **Consensus** - where there is a consensus of opinion that an area meets the statutory criterion or should be designated. This helps in determining whether the land in question is accorded a special value that should be recognised. The opinions of stakeholders and the public can be strong indicators as to whether there is consensus about the value of a landscape. Evidence of past and present recognition of the importance of the landscape is therefore relevant. Care should be taken however to ensure adverse change has not occurred in the landscape since consensus was reached. Furthermore, evidence of local level value does not necessarily mean that an area warrants national level designation.
- **Rarity and Representativeness** - if a landscape, or an element within it, is rare or representative of a particular type of landscape, it may add weight to the judgement that an area should be represented within an AONB, although this is not an essential requirement.

3.1.2 The Candidate Area defined as a result of the Natural Beauty Assessment identified an inland area of qualifying land and a separate qualifying coastal area. This section considers the significance of the Candidate Area, looking first at the inland area and then the coastal area.

3.2 Inland Candidate Area

Special Qualities

3.2.1 A summary of the **special qualities** of the Inland Candidate Area, the extent of which is illustrated on Figure 10 in the Natural Beauty Assessment, is set out below. Further details of what makes the area special are laid out in the Natural Beauty Assessment evaluation tables. Overall, it is the unique and striking geomorphology of the Yorkshire Wolds which gives rise to its special qualities including the juxtaposition of contrasting landscapes which are experienced sequentially, coupled with a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity. These qualities single out this landscape as exceptional

within the national context. Where cultural and natural heritage associations reinforce these qualities, they contribute to the drama and interest of the area.

The inland Candidate Area forms the most northern outcrop of chalk in England and reflects a classic karst landscape, containing a complex arrangement of dendritic periglacial steep sided, dry valley systems, and is defined to the north and west by a dramatic escarpment. The close juxtaposition of its elevated broad interfluves (known locally as wolds) and deeply incised valleys (known as dales), manifest in a landscape of contrasts - open rounded tops of arable farmland offer panoramic vistas and wide domed skies which quickly descend into narrow, winding, secluded pastoral valleys offering intimate enclosure. The sequential experience of these contrasting landscapes gives rise to the area's unique scenic qualities and outstanding and often simple curvaceous compositions which provide artistic inspiration. Lightly settled and away from major infrastructure, this landscape has an emptiness and scale - disorientating valleys and dark night skies adding further to perceptions of remoteness and tranquillity. Scattered throughout are vestiges of the past including field enclosures, earthworks, vernacular buildings in chalk and Jurassic limestone and ecclesiastical and parkland estates. These features where visible, frequently express a strong connection to the landscape and reinforce an appreciation of geology, topographic drama, and natural resources, imparting a sense of longevity, continuity and a tangible connection to the land. Areas of species-rich chalk grassland and hawthorn scrub on steep slopes and wet flushes, meadows and spring fed fens at the foot of slopes and scarps, are especially valuable habitats, which contribute to visual texture and colour throughout the seasons.

Consensus

- 3.2.2 The Inland Candidate Area has been recognised locally as expressing significant value and qualities over the last 23 years.
- 3.2.3 Whilst it may not have been nationally identified in the original Dower or Hobhouse lists for landscape designation (refer to section 4.0 of the Natural Beauty Assessment), it has nonetheless been considered as appropriate for designation by the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) and the local authority since the 1990s. CPRE, in their statement setting out the need for a Yorkshire Wolds AONB in the 1990s, articulated special qualities which are summarised as follows:
- Unique combination of dramatic western and northern scarps, rolling chalk uplands with large arable fields, deep steep-sided dry valleys with rich chalk grassland communities, farmsteads surrounded by mature shelter-belts, and unspoilt villages.
 - Parkland estates including Birdsall, Garrowby, Kilnwick Percy, Londesborough, Sledmere and Warter.

- Exceptional number of earthworks and other archaeological remains including well known sites such as Wharram Percy.
- A landscape in which much of the history of its development is visible.
- Concentration of SSSIs including unimproved grassland in the dales and roadside verges.
- Long distance footpaths including the Yorkshire Wolds Way.
- Recognition in local plans in the form of Areas of High Landscape Value.

3.2.4 East Riding of Yorkshire also considered the area suitable for AONB designation⁷ and set out the qualities of the Wolds landscape that indicated it is worthy of special protection as follows:

- Diversity of characteristics that contribute to distinctiveness
- Strong and dominant vernacular buildings
- Diverse tree cover dominated by native woodland and hedgerow trees
- Strong field pattern reinforced by strong boundary features (i.e. hedges/ditches)
- Lack of light pollution
- Few if any detractors
- Historic significance
- Views and focal points
- Rarity

3.2.5 Both the East Riding and CPRE statements demonstrate a degree of consensus regarding the qualities of the Yorkshire Wolds landscape. They provide a starting point for understanding what makes the Yorkshire Wolds landscape special.

3.2.6 Furthermore, the Yorkshire Wolds landscape has also been given recognition in policy terms. In the Ryedale Local Plan⁸ (Strategy Document 2013) the Wolds landscape is identified as an Area of High Landscape Value. Similarly, in the current East Riding Local Plan Update 2020-2039 (May 2021), the Yorkshire Wolds is identified as an Important Landscape Area with some parts defined as having 'highest quality'. These highest quality areas primarily coincide with the most elevated land, where there is also the greatest concentration of dry sinuous valleys. This reinforces the conclusion of the natural beauty assessment, that the area which has outstanding special qualities at a national level, occurs as an arc in the northwest as shown on Figure 10.

3.2.7 Other areas to the south (e.g. south of Market Weighton), and east (e.g. the Great Wold Valley), are also identified as having value within The East Riding Local Plan. However, the detailed Natural Beauty Assessment (August 2023) has concluded that, whilst these areas contain patches of natural beauty, they lack the qualities which are

⁷ Examining opportunities for the designation of the Yorkshire Wolds as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: an expression of interest from East Riding of Yorkshire Council (June 2013).

⁸ Now part of the North Yorkshire Council following Local Authority reorganisation.

outstanding at a national level, and overall are fragmented by significant areas of intensive farmland.

Rarity and Representativeness

3.2.8 The Inland Candidate Area is considered to be representative of chalk landscapes found within England and Europe alongside the Lincolnshire Wolds, Chilterns, Surrey Hills, and Kent Downs AONBs and the South Downs National Park. The fact it is also the northern-most outcrop of chalk nationally and contains a rare concentration of dramatic narrow dry sinuous valleys, make it unique within the family of chalk landscapes nationally. This and the resulting distinctive scenic quality that results, add weight to the judgment that this area should be represented within an AONB (although the Natural England Guidance clarifies that this is not an essential requirement). Furthermore, the Candidate Area includes approximately 67% of good quality semi-improved grassland habitat and approximately 90% of lowland calcareous grassland habitat⁹ found within the wider Yorkshire Wolds National Character Area (NCA). In other words, these valued habitats, which contribute to the distinctiveness and qualities of the area, are concentrated within the proposed Candidate Area and are less common in the wider farmed chalk landscape to the east and south.

3.2.9 The Natural Beauty Assessment details the qualities of the area and those reflecting rarity and representativeness of the proposed Candidate Area have been brought together and are summarised below:

- The Yorkshire Wolds is the northern most outcrop of chalk geology in England and a classic karst landscape.
- The dendritic pattern of narrow dry sinuous valleys, created by glacial melt water over frozen ground, comprises one of the most dense and complex collection of such features in the UK.
- The deserted medieval villages of Cottam and Wharram Percy are regarded as outstanding examples nationally.
- Registered Parks and Gardens of Londesborough (Grade II*) and Sledmere House (Grade I) are of national significance and especially valued for their designed landscapes, parkland, wood pasture, veteran trees and estate villages.
- The majority of remaining calcareous chalk grassland within the Yorkshire Wolds National Character Area (NCA) is designated as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Millington Wood and Pastures SSSI is also especially valued for its extensive spring-fed fens and deciduous woodland (including ancient woodland which supports Baneberry which is nationally rare).
- The dry sinuous valleys, quarry faces, railway sidings and grass verges contain c. 2.4-3% of the UKs lowland calcareous grassland habitat, but in

⁹ Data Source: Priority Habitats Inventory (England) (12 September 2022)

addition, this nationally rare habitat represents a biogeographically distinct 'northern chalk grassland' in the Yorkshire Wolds.

- The area expresses exceptional tranquillity, with little to no intrusion of man-made sounds across significant parts of the area and reflected in its dark night skies, which are some of the darkest in England.

3.2.10 For reasons of its special qualities, consensus and rarity and representativeness, the Inland Candidate Area is concluded to be of national significance.

3.3 Coastal Candidate Area

Special Qualities

3.3.1 A summary of the **special qualities** of the Coastal Candidate Area as illustrated on Figure 10 is set out below. Further details of what makes the coastal area special are laid out in the natural beauty assessment evaluation tables. Overall, it is the unique geomorphology of this striking peninsula with its chalk cliffs, foreshore, sea views and exposure which provides the context for the drama of the geomorphological features and wildlife, open patchwork farmland of crops and chalk grassland habitat with gorse, contrasting wooded ravines and narrow valleys (known locally as guts), and remnant defence structures. Collectively these elements combine to single out this landscape as outstanding within the national context.

This coastal Candidate Area forms the most northern outcrop of coastal chalk in England, the striking peninsular geology giving rise to towering rugged sheer white cliffs up to 50m in height, with stunning vantage points and sea views. Windy and exposed, this coastal area has a wild quality, providing a unique cliff environment for seabird colonies whose cacophony, along with the changing weather patterns and light conditions, contribute to a stunning seascape and fascinating natural environment. Natural processes are manifest in the complex geomorphology of the indented coastline, rockpools, sea caves and sea stacks, wave cut platform and high cliffs, and this combined with the contrasting colour of white chalk overlain with red sand and gravels, contribute significantly to the scenic qualities of the area. The gently undulating, exposed coastal fringe farmland that buffers the cliffs provides exhilarating, elevated views along the vertical cliff edge and out to sea, while the lush vegetation of the steep wooded valleys provide contrasting seclusion and shelter. Evidence of past defence structures add time depth and points of interest, reflecting the strategic importance of this peninsula.

Consensus

3.3.2 The designation history of this section of coastline (as set out in the Natural Beauty Assessment) provides clear evidence of the consensus that this landscape is deserving of recognition.

3.3.3 The area has been defined as a Heritage Coast since 1979 in recognition of the

outstanding coastline. Prior to this the National Parks Commission considered the area for AONB designation but discounted this for reasons of the qualifying area's small extent and the fact that its attraction focused solely on the cliff scenery. The decision to designate the wider coastal area as a Heritage Coast instead highlighted the impressive chalk cliffs but noted that the hinterland was affected by intrusive development. This remains a relevant consideration today.

- 3.3.4 The coastal area lying within East Riding of Yorkshire Council area has also been recognised as having High Landscape Value as defined in the Local Plan, although it was not identified as an '*area of highest quality*', presumably because it was covered by an existing Heritage Coast designation. In contrast, the coastal landscape, where it falls within the former Scarborough District Council, has not been recognised by any local landscape designation, though the Heritage Coast is referenced in the explanatory text for the local plan, as an area of particular sensitivity and importance.

Rarity and Representativeness

- 3.3.5 In terms of **rarity and representativeness** the Coastal Candidate Area is considered representative of coastal chalk landscapes found within England including the chalk cliffs of the South Downs National Park and Dorset coast. The protruding form of the peninsula on an otherwise straight section of coastline is highly distinctive, and the complexity of the indented coastline and its concentration of geomorphological features, formed by sea erosion and weathering, is unique within the family of chalk landscape nationally. Here there are a larger number and wider range of cave habitats than at any other chalk site in Britain (JNCC). This adds weight to the judgment that this area should be represented within the family of national landscape designations and is already reflected by its current status as Heritage Coast. A summary of the rare and representative qualities of the Coastal Candidate Area is set out below:

- The relatively hard chalk geology has given rise to this distinctive peninsula on an otherwise straight section of coast.
- The Yorkshire Wolds coastal chalk cliffs are the northern-most outcrop of chalk cliff in England.
- The complexity of the coastal geomorphology is greater and more varied than any other chalk coastal site in Britain.
- Flamborough Head is one of the most important seabird colonies in Europe, supporting the UK's largest and most accessible mainland seabird colony.
- Areas of flower rich chalk grassland are valued by butterflies and uncommon moths – they buffer the chalk cliffs and fill sheltered, narrow, coastal valleys.
- Flamborough Lighthouse is a unique survival of a 17th century octagonal lighthouse.

- 3.3.6 In conclusion, for reasons of its special qualities, consensus, rarity and representativeness, the Coastal Candidate Area is considered to be of national significance.

3.4 Overall Conclusions on National Significance

- 3.4.1 The above analysis demonstrates that both the Inland and Coastal parts of the Candidate Area express special qualities which are of national significance, and which together, reflect an exceptional landscape which is rare in the national context. Furthermore, there has been consensus both at a national and local level regarding the desirability of designating qualifying parts of the landscape as Heritage Coast, AONB, and/or as a valued landscape, for many years. In addition, within the Candidate Area, the relative national rarity of the particular and distinctive landscape features arising from the underlying chalk geology, adds further weight to this conclusion.
- 3.4.2 Taken individually, both the inland and coastal areas offer nationally significant special qualities. In accordance with Natural England Guidance, a conclusion has been reached that the Candidate Area as a whole, has special qualities which are of national significance.

4 Issues and Pressures Affecting the Candidate Area

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Having understood the significance of the proposed Candidate Area, a further and important aspect of determining whether designation is desirable is to consider the issues and pressures that have the potential to impact negatively on the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty of the Candidate Area. This is considered in relation to the Inland and Coastal parts of the Candidate Area in the tables below.

4.2 Issue Tables for Proposed Candidate Area

4.2.1 Not all landscape and management issues can necessarily be directly addressed by the management arrangements and mechanisms that follow from AONB designation. However, the scope for an integrated landscape-led and joined-up approach to the stewardship of the area is an important justification for the designation of land as AONB. Issues include both current issues known to affect the areas generally and also issues which may arise in the future. These have been drawn from existing material such as landscape character assessments, relevant management, strategy and Local Plan documents, as well as discussions with key stakeholders, desk study and site work.

Inland Area	
Special Quality	Issues affecting Special Quality
Distinct geomorphology and curvaceous compositions and views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate blocks of woodland planting which mask flowing topographic form and interrupt open views. • Changes in land use which erode traditional, pastoral valley management practices and diminish the scale of the valley, including ploughing of upper valley slopes. • Vertical industrial structures which disrupt smooth skylines and draw the eye. • Loss of distinctive woodland clumps on the scarp which emphasise landform. • New minerals extraction causing scarring of landscape and increased frequency of HGV traffic. • Increased demand for solar energy and siting of solar farms at all scales with risks of significant landscape and visual effects.
Intimate pastoral character to valleys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of appropriate grazing resulting in reduced biodiversity on remaining grassland. • Establishment of extensive areas of scrub and woodland, resulting in a loss of rare calcareous grassland and scenic quality.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spread of Tor grass within areas of calcareous grassland resulting in a much less species-rich sward and reduced grazing quality. • Inappropriate planting associated with shooting, close mown swards in valley bottoms and introduction of associated infrastructure e.g. rearing pens and shooting butt positions. • Cultivation of valley slopes leaving soils vulnerable to erosion. • Grazing of valley landscapes by horses with introduction of post and rail fencing, horse shelters and jumps, creating fragmentation and visual clutter. • Agricultural improvement of grassland areas through application of fertilizer and management for silage rather than hay altering landscape colours and textures and reducing biodiversity.
Tranquillity and remoteness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in traffic and tourism in the area causing verge erosion, congestion on narrow lanes, noise and activity. • Night light spill from adjacent urban areas beyond the Candidate Area. • Proliferation of domestic and farm scale turbines resulting in cumulative effects on rural qualities and natural beauty. • Overhead transmission lines including 132kV overhead lines and smaller telegraph poles which create visual clutter. • Road improvements that do not reflect the rural nature of the lanes/roads, including widening, introduction of roundabouts, kerbs, night lighting and signage, undermining rural qualities and loss of local distinctiveness. • Pressure for increased development and associated holiday accommodation which may be poorly sited and cause visual intrusion – including when sited beyond any potential AONB designation. • Increased access to valleys resulting in reduced tranquillity. • Increased visitor numbers associated with recreation with potential obstruction of farming practices. • Risk of excessive use of unmetalled highways by motorised vehicles causing erosion.
Upstanding Cultural Heritage and its connection to landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural activity which damages archaeological sites and reduced legibility of features within the landscape. • Increasing numbers of heritage earthworks on the heritage at risk register due to ploughing. • Growth of vegetation and lack of management causing damage to historic structures, and reduced legibility. • Further loss of 80% of dew ponds, a once distinctive feature of the area. • Loss of local vernacular buildings and small-scale features due

	<p>to lack of use/maintenance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of new modern structures which detract from local vernacular or disrupt the association of heritage sites and their landscape setting. • Loss of early enclosure patterns due to lack of traditional hedgerow management, over-trimming and limited up take of environmental stewardship in some areas. • Poorly sited vertical infrastructure such as masts and turbines which disrupt association of heritage landmarks from their landscape setting. • Extensions to rural villages affecting position of settlement in landscape and undermining local vernacular styles or unity of local building materials which contribute to sense of place. • Loss of parkland trees due to lack of management and succession planting and loss of permanent parkland grassland due to arable conversion. • Loss of vernacular buildings which reflect the underlying geology of the area due to lack of maintenance or positive use.
<p>Valued habitats of deciduous native woodland and chalk grassland and wet flushes supporting iconic species such as grey partridge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive arable farming which leaves little space for nature and fragments ecological corridors. • Lack of appropriate verge management reducing sward diversity and habitat networks. • Over extraction of water and climate change, resulting in low flow rates in streams and loss of wet flushes and riparian habitat. • Loss of ash woodland due to ash dieback. • Intensive agricultural practices leading to poor soil structure, run off and sedimentation of chalk streams and pollution of the chalk aquifer, affecting biodiversity across a wider area. • Planting of conifer plantation on open scarp slopes, creating a monoculture habitat, reducing scenic quality and causing visual scarring when felled. • Loss of parkland to arable farmland with a reduction in wood pasture habitat. • Poor water quality due to run-off from surrounding arable farmland. • Invasive species along watercourses including Japanese knotweed. • Increased visitor numbers and associated visitor/dog disturbance negatively impacting ground nesting birds. • Loss of grey partridge populations by 70%

Coastal Area	
Special Quality	Issues affecting Special Quality
Distinct and complex coastal geology and geomorphology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of vernacular buildings which reflect the underlying geology of the area due to lack of maintenance or positive use. • Introduction of new built structures which do not relate to the local geology or vernacular resulting in an undermining of local distinctiveness, and a distraction from unique geomorphological features.
Wild qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erosion of coast due to natural processes creating mud slides, rock falls and topples with possible implications for the coastal path and safety concerns regarding access to the foreshore. • Pressure for tourism related development including car parking, facilities and caravan parks which have both individual and cumulative effects due to the openness of the landscape. • Pressure to fence areas of eroding cliff due to safety concerns. • Development of on and offshore wind farm and other tall masts/vertical structures. • Pressure for change of use from agriculture land to that used for recreational purposes, resulting in a change in character and cumulative urbanisation over time. • Multiple small planning applications associated with tourism development resulting in gradual urbanisation and loss of special qualities. • Significant number of visitors at honeypot sites causing erosion and reduced tranquillity. • Significant car movements along coastal roads associated with tourists accessing the coast and significant populations associated with caravan parks, especially in summer.
Rare habitats and species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of climate change resilience of chalk grasslands habitat due to limited extent, fragmentation and isolation. • Invasion of bramble, scrub and bracken and tall ruderal vegetation causing grassland areas to become rank. • Spread of Tor grass in remaining areas of species-rich grassland. • Dumping of garden waste on cliff tops resulting in the spread of invasive species and reducing landscape quality. • Intensive arable farming on cliff tops squeezing coastal plant diversity on eroding cliffs. • Disturbance of wildlife/bird colonies due to visitor numbers.
Outstanding views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of primacy of landmark features such as church spires due to poorly sited/designed new development drawing the eye

	<p>away from them or creating visual clutter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism related development which impacts views out to sea/ along the coast or extends urbanising influences along rural lanes between Flamborough village and the headland. • Caravan and holiday park developments, which intrude on open agricultural qualities of the coastline and hinterland farmland, drawing the eye due to scale and light colour.
Historic defences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss/damage of archaeological earthworks such as Dane's Dyke and military infrastructure due to agricultural activity or vegetation growth. • Low legibility of features leading to lack of understanding. • Erosion of coast and loss of past defence structures associated with WWII.

4.2.2 This section has highlighted that the proposed Candidate Area is subject to a number of forces for change which have or continue to have the potential to affect the special qualities of the area. Of particular note are the pressure impacting on the coastal farmland areas which fringe the dramatic cliff scenery.

4.2.3 Statistical analysis of the Candidate Area and priority habitats has revealed that only c. 12% is priority habitat and that these habitats are fragmented. It also shows that approximately 50% of the area is already in countryside stewardship and that there are existing initiatives advocating sustainable farming practices. Whilst this is clearly positive, it indicates there is considerable potential to strengthen the area's natural capital and bolster nature-based enterprises which in turn can improve farm incomes and enhance the region's long-term economic resilience.

4.2.4 The next section considers the range of initiatives which currently seek to manage the forces for change highlighted above.

5 Current Management of the Yorkshire Wolds

5.1 Current Management of the Landscape

- 5.1.1 The Local Authorities of East Riding of Yorkshire and the historic authorities of Ryedale District and Scarborough Borough (now North Yorkshire Unitary Authority) undertake rural related work within their areas of jurisdiction. In the East Riding of Yorkshire this is through their Rural Development and Sustainable Development Services. Each local authority has its own landscape character assessment which details defining characteristics and guidance in relation to landscape management and development.
- 5.1.2 The relevant Local Authorities have no specific team focused on the Yorkshire Wolds landscape however, nor any dedicated budget for rural initiatives. Budgets are deployed as necessary and appropriate, and resources are provided in support of partnerships such as the Rural Partnership and the Local Nature Partnership (which are led by East Riding of Yorkshire Council), and to partnerships and forums where the Councils are a partner, for example the Yorkshire Wolds Way National Trail.
- 5.1.3 It is clear therefore that the relevant Local Authorities carry out effective management of the countryside through integration of environmental, social and economic issues and by joint working and a partnership approach between the public, private and voluntary and community sectors. Direct countryside management is limited to Local Authority owned sites and often undertaken in partnership with other organisations.
- 5.1.4 Examples of the current partnerships and initiatives operating within the Candidate Area are set out below.

5.2 Partnerships

The East Riding of Yorkshire Rural Partnership

- 5.2.1 This initiative is led by East Riding of Yorkshire Council. It was established in 1998 and has around 50 members. It brings together a range of key rural organisations across the East Riding including public and private sectors and community and volunteer sectors. It addresses economic, social and environmental issues. It has a number of 'affiliated' forums and groups, including a Farmer Working Group. The Partnership seeks to provide a forum for the exchange and dissemination of information and ideas through meetings, seminars, reports and events. It also produces and seeks to deliver the action plan set out in the East Riding of Yorkshire Rural Strategy 2022-2027 – this provides a strategic framework which draws together issues and identified ways to achieve effective management. As well as championing the needs of rural areas, it provides a rural voice and ensures the rural-proofing of plans, policies and programmes. It is therefore a good example of how the Council and its partners are working to ensure the wellbeing of rural communities and the

countryside. There are two part-time dedicated officers.

The Hull and East Yorkshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP)

- 5.2.2 This initiative was started in July 2012 and seeks to pull together different strands of the natural environment, supporting landscape-scale working and creating resilient ecological networks across the Hull and East Yorkshire area. The LNP aims to support sustainable development, promote the value of landscape and create a healthy natural environment. It works in partnership with 40 interested groups and organisations. The LNP is led by East Riding of Yorkshire Council. There is one part-time dedicated officer (who also manages the North Yorkshire and York LNP part-time).

North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Partnership (LNP)

- 5.2.3 Like the Hull and East Yorkshire LNP this was started in July 2012. This LNP covers the County of North Yorkshire and the City of York, excluding nationally protected landscapes of North York Moors National Park, Nidderdale and Howardian Hills AONBs. The LNP has four main objectives around conserving, restoring and creating habitats to support species, creating connections between the economy and nature, increasing access to nature and increasing engagement in nature as well as strengthening climate change mitigation and adaptation through natural solutions. Significantly the Yorkshire Wolds is not identified as one of the rural landscape priority areas¹⁰. As noted above there is one part-time dedicated officer (who also manages the Hull and East Yorkshire LNP part-time).

The Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership

- 5.2.4 This initiative covers the whole of the Yorkshire coast and includes specific resource to facilitate and lead appropriate management of the Flamborough Head European Marine Site (FHMS). It brings together relevant organisations to work together to uphold their legal duty to protect species and habitats of the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Special Protection Area (SPA). A Management Plan (2022-2026) for the Flamborough Head EMS has been prepared. The Management Plan focuses on the natural heritage of this section of coast, although it acknowledges and recognises the importance of the Heritage Coast. East Riding of Yorkshire Council provides the Accountable Body status for the Partnership. There is one dedicated officer.

Hull and East Riding Catchment Partnership

- 5.2.5 This partnership is leading an initiative called 'Chalkshire' with funding from the Water Environment Improvement Fund (WEIF). It promotes a catchment-based approach to river management and covers the whole of the area where chalk underpins and influences the way in which we live, work and interact with landscape – it therefore covers a wider area than the Yorkshire Wolds NCA. It was launched in 2019 and is still active, seeking to develop an overarching vision for 'Chalkshire', as well as a suite of community-generated projects, to explore and champion chalk landscapes and

¹⁰ North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Partnership Strategy, page 21.

promote participation and enjoyment. The aim is to bring significant investment into the area through a diverse, landscape-scale programme of work.

East Riding of Yorkshire and Kingston Upon Hull Joint Local Access Forum

- 5.2.6 The Local Access Forum is a statutory advisory forum established in accordance with the CROW Act 2000, working closely with local authorities and other organisations to improve public rights-of-way and outdoor recreation across the East Riding and the City of Hull. The Forum is led by East Riding of Yorkshire Council. Members are predominantly independent volunteers appointed to represent a range of countryside interests. Forum members also help to develop East Riding of Yorkshire Council's policy for managing unmetalled highways and are consultees on a range of public access matters relevant to the Yorkshire Wolds. There is one part-time dedicated officer.

Yorkshire Wolds Way National Trail Partnership

- 5.2.7 This is a partnership which includes East Riding of Yorkshire Council, North Yorkshire Council, the North York Moors National Park Authority and Natural England. It oversees management of the 79-mile trail across the Wolds. The lead authority is the North Yorkshire Moors National Park Authority. Representatives of the Local Access Forum (see above) sit on the Yorkshire Wolds Way National Trail Partnership which oversees the management of the 79-mile National Trail. Volunteers work with the relevant partners on this project.

Humber Archaeology Partnership

- 5.2.8 This partnership provides historic environment advice to East Riding of Yorkshire Council and Hull City Council. It holds the Historic Environment Record and provides advice on planning, development and site management. It is led by East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

Yorkshire Wolds Heritage Trust

- 5.2.9 Formed in 1991, the Yorkshire Wolds Heritage Trust works to promote an integrated approach to safeguarding and promoting the environment of the Wolds. It brings together representatives with a wide-range of expertise. The Trust contributes to the preparation of a range of plans and policies through consultation, holds occasional seminars and events and produces regular newsletters. It works with relevant local authorities.

Humber Forest

- 5.2.10 Humber Forest is the community forest for Hull, East Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire. The accountable authority is East Riding of Yorkshire Council working in partnership with Hull City Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council and North Lincolnshire Council, DEFRA, the Forestry Commission, the Woodland Trust, the Community Forest Trust and others to create a 'one team approach' to tree planting in the Humber region. The partnership works together with communities, businesses and landowners to increase tree cover and maintain existing woodland. It aims to

connect people and woodlands for happier and healthier communities, helping tackle climate change and improving the local environment for all. Humber Forest manages various funding including that supplied by Defra and provides help and guidance from dedicated staff. It forms part of the Northern Forest Initiative which aims to plant 50 million trees between the East and West coast by 2032.

5.3 Project Initiatives

Country Mile Project

- 5.3.1 This initiative is led by East Riding of Yorkshire Council and seeks to promote a greater appreciation and regard for the wildlife value of verges through engagement of local communities to help preserve, maintain and enhance ecological and cultural value. Geographically the project covers most of East Riding of Yorkshire and the Yorkshire Wolds.

Yorkshire Wolds and Coast Focus Area

- 5.3.2 This initiative is led by the RSPB in collaboration with Natural England and Campaign for the Farmed Environment (CFE). It focuses on providing advice to farmers as well as undertaking surveys on farmland (identifying breeding opportunities for wildlife) and assisting landowners in grant applications.

Yorkshire Farm Fora

- 5.3.3 This initiative is part of a wider Farm Clusters Initiative hosted by the Game and Wildlife Conservancy Trust. It comprises the creation of a number of Farm Cluster Groups within the Yorkshire Wolds and wider area (there are three farms within the Proposed Candidate Area). It seeks to deliver the following Countryside Stewardship top priorities:
- Biodiversity – arable field margins, lowland meadow and lowland calcareous grassland.
 - Landscape – field margins & buffers, hedgerows, trees, permanent grassland and stubbles.
 - Water – Water quality, reducing soil erosion & run off.
 - Priority species – corn buttercup, pheasant’s eye, red hemp-nettle, shepherd’s needle, turtle dove, lapwing and corn bunting.
 - Wild pollinator and farm wildlife package – sowing nectar mixes and winter bird food mixes, increasing flowers on grassland, managing hedgerows and arable margins.
- 5.3.4 The group delivers these key priorities seeking to increase species diversity and abundance in arable plants, grasslands and pollinators. The project also delivers benefits for other priority species such as turtle dove, lapwings, grey partridge and pollinators as some of the plant species provide feed sources.

Sustainable Landscapes

- 5.3.5 This is an initiative being led by Future Food Solutions involving pea growers and

endorsed by Yorkshire Water. The programme has been working across 40 sites in Humber and the Wolds, promoting the use of cover crops to trap CO₂, improve moisture retention and increase organic matter in soil.

Food for Thought

- 5.3.6 This initiative was led by Historic England and is now complete. It explored the different aspects of settlement and land uses across the Yorkshire Wolds with a focus on the production of food and how it has influenced the appearance and identity of the landscape. The Food for Thought project aimed to create a vision for the wider heritage of the Wolds, for the whole community, as well as for the specialist archaeological sector. In particular, the project connected the Wold's buried archaeology with the contemporary meaning and expression local communities give it through art and storytelling.

Wolds Water: A Revival of the Heritage of Dew Ponds

- 5.3.7 This initiative has been led by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust focusing on dew ponds, which are estimated have reduced in number by approximately 80% between 1950-1980. The initiative restored 19 dewponds and also mapped existing and former dewponds across the Yorkshire Wolds NCA (and recorded condition) providing a valuable dataset. The project ran from 2017-19 and is now finished.

5.4 Conclusions

- 5.4.1 The various partnerships and project initiatives detailed above demonstrate that there has been, and continues to be, a range of conservation activity operating within and around Yorkshire Wolds, including within the proposed Candidate Area.
- 5.4.2 Overall, these initiatives make a material difference to the conservation and enhancement of the Wolds landscape. However, it is also clear that they have a range of varied objectives and apply to different often discrete geographical areas/topics. This is reinforced in the East Riding of Yorkshire Rural Strategy 2022-2027 which identifies the environment as a policy objective, noting the high quality of the landscape, but goes on to highlight in annex 4 page 27 that there are a number of issues affecting the conservation and enhancement of the landscape, including:
- A currently fragmented strategy
 - A lack of shared understanding
 - A lack of agreement between parties over a vision for a functional landscape, and
 - A lack of resources
- 5.4.3 Furthermore, budget cuts and significant pressures and demands on council budgets mean that resources are frequently tight, and not always guaranteed over consecutive years, bringing a level of uncertainty longer term. Designation would not replace the partnerships and initiatives set out above, which could continue to operate across any

future AONB and wider Local Authority areas. However, designation would have the potential to assist existing partnerships and initiatives through close working with Local Authorities and other organisations, as well as the ability to attract additional funding and resources and achieve a more integrated, collaborative approach which provides an overarching objective of conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the landscape. These are significant benefits and are explored further in Section 6.0 below, utilising the existing Howardian Hills and Lincolnshire Wolds AONBs as examples.

6 Structure and Activity of AONBs

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 This section sets out in generic terms the way in which AONBs are commonly structured including their administration and remit and covers the following themes:

- Legal Powers and Duties
- Management Structure
- Staff Resources
- Funding
- Management Plan
- Activity and Initiatives
- Planning

6.1.2 Reference is made to specific examples in the Howardian Hills AONB (204 sq km) which lies adjacent to the proposed Inland Candidate Area, and the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB (c.560 sq km), which has a similar landscape to the Yorkshire Wolds and is located south of the Humber. Both the Howardian Hills and Lincolnshire Wolds AONBs were rebranded as National Landscapes in 2023.

6.2 Legal Powers and Duties

Legal Powers

6.2.1 The statutory framework for protected landscapes in England was first established in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside (NPAC) Act 1949. The legislation has been amended and added to many times since then. Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 consolidates much of the legislation in relation to AONBs, bringing it together and updating various references.

6.2.2 Sections 82 and 83 of the CROW Act 2000 relate to the designation process for AONBs. Section 84 clarifies that some further provisions apply to AONBs including powers to make access agreements and access orders, as well as consultation in connection with the development plan.

6.2.3 Section 84 (4) specifically provides for a local authority whose area consists of or includes the whole or any part of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to *'have the power to take all such action as appears to them expedient for the accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.'*

6.2.4 Most recently the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA 2023) has come into force further amending the CROW Act and providing stronger provision for the delivery of the statutory purpose by relevant partners.

Duties

- 6.2.5 Following the changes in the LURA Act 2023, Section 85 (A1) of the Crow Act 2000 now confers a general duty on relevant authorities to seek to further the purpose of AONB designation as follows:

“In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England, a relevant authority other than a devolved Welsh authority must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.”

- 6.2.6 Section 85 (1A) of the Crow Act 2000 also states that “The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision about how a relevant authority is to comply with the duty under subsection (A1) (including provision about things that the authority may, must or must not do to comply with the duty).

- 6.2.7 Section 85 (2) states that: “The following are relevant authorities for the purposes of this section—
- (a) any Minister of the Crown,
 - (b) any public body,
 - (c) any statutory undertaker,
 - (d) any person holding public office.

- 6.2.8 Section 85 (3) states that:

...“public body” includes

- (a) a county council, county borough council, district council, parish council or community council;*
- (b) a joint planning board within the meaning of section 2 of the M1Town and Country Planning Act 1990;*
- (c) a joint committee appointed under section 102(1)(b) of the M2Local Government Act 1972;*
- (d) ...;*

“public office” means—

- (a) an office under Her Majesty;*
- (b) an office created or continued in existence by a public general Act; or*
- (c) an office the remuneration in respect of which is paid out of money provided by Parliament*

“statutory undertaker” means a person who is or is deemed to be a statutory undertaker for the purposes of any provision of Part 11 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

6.2.9 The Section 85 (A1) duty requires all public bodies, statutory undertakers (such as water and electricity companies) and holders of public office to seek to further the AONB purpose when carrying out functions in relation to or affecting land within an AONB. The Government is currently preparing new regulations and Guidance on the new duty but this was not yet in place at the time of writing (February 2024). The new Regulations and Guidance will explain how the Government expects the new duty to be delivered. The additional focus provided by this new duty to seek to further the purpose of an AONB does not apply in areas which are not designated as AONB.

6.2.10 Examples of how this duty may be put into effect in AONBs include:

- Planning management;
- The Environment Agency preparing and formally consulting with an AONB Joint Advisory Committee or Partnership on flooding, coastal defence and other related projects;
- The Highways Agency preparing and formally consulting on new road schemes;
- Electricity distribution network companies and telecommunications companies consulting an AONB at the pre-application stage and when consulting on proposals for infrastructure and other work.

6.2.11 Although this new statutory duty does not override other statutory duties, particular obligations or considerations which must be taken into account by relevant authorities in carrying out their core functions, it does require relevant authorities to ensure that seeking to further the AONB purpose is recognised as an essential consideration in reaching decisions and when undertaking activities that impact on a designated area.

6.2.12 Section 89 (2) of the CRoW Act 2000, places a duty on relevant local authorities to prepare and publish a plan (refer section 6.5 below), in partnership, which formulates policy for the management of an AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it and a further duty to review the plan at "intervals of not more than five years". An AONB Management Plan sets out the policy for the management of an AONB and includes an action plan for carrying out activity in support of the purpose of designation. The production of a Management Plan on a statutory basis is a major benefit that flows from designation; allowing as it does for an integrated and place-specific approach to ensuring that the natural beauty of the area is conserved and enhanced^[3].

6.2.13 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA 2023) enhances National Park and AONB Management Plans by placing a stronger requirement on partners to contribute to their delivery.

6.3 Management Structure

- 6.3.1 AONBs are managed through the creation of an AONB Partnership. This partnership can comprise a Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) or an AONB Committee. These are formally a sub-committee of the accountable Local Authority for the AONB¹¹. Under some circumstances it may be preferable to create a Conservation Board if the issues affecting a designation are particularly complex. The majority of AONBs comprise a Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) made up of the Local Authorities within which the AONB designation lies, and key stakeholders. A wider partnership with other stakeholders is also a key component of AONBs and partnership working remains a core principle and strength of the way that AONBs are managed. The Partnership acts as a catalyst and facilitator, preparing and leading the implementation of the AONB Management Plan (see below). It also acts as an advisory body, particularly with regard to policies and the allocation of resources in relation to the protection and enhancement of the AONB.
- 6.3.2 This is the arrangement for both the Howardian Hills AONB and the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB, where the powers and duties noted above are overseen by a Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) made up of relevant Local Authority representatives and key partners. For the Howardian Hills this includes Natural England, Forestry Commission, National Farmers Union (NFU), Country Land and Business Association (CLA) and the Ramblers while for the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB it includes the relevant Local Authority representatives, Natural England, Historic England, Heritage Trust for Lincolnshire, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, and NFU and CLA. This illustrates that the membership of the JAC varies depending on the designated area and the issues affecting it.
- 6.3.3 Similarly, the wider partnership between the AONB and delivery partners also varies depending on the size and issues pertinent to the designated landscape. For example, the Lincolnshire Wolds has up to 18 organisations represented and the Environment Agency has been a key partner supporting the Lincolnshire Chalk Streams Initiative.

6.4 Staff Resources

- 6.4.1 The staff team within an AONB Unit are frequently small (in comparison to National Parks) and reflect the focus and issues affecting each area and their financial resourcing. By way of example, the current staff team within the Howardian Hills AONB Unit consists of:
- **AONB Manager** (full time post).
 - **Project Officer** - part time post reflecting a 0.48 full time equivalent (FTE),

¹¹ AONBs are not a 'body corporate', ie existing in their own right, unless they are formally set up as a Conservation Board. Only the Cotswolds and Chilterns AONBs are formally constituted as Conservation Boards.

focussed on education, arts, volunteers.

- **Project Officer**, part time post (0.41 FTE), focussed on policy, Nature Recovery, woodland, ecology, historic environment.
- **Project Officer**, part time post (0.32 FTE), focussed on environmental site management, ecology, communications.
- **Farm Conservation Officer**, (full time post), 100% funding from Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL).
- **Conservation Grants Administrator**, part time post (0.8 FTE), 60% FiPL-funded.

6.4.2 Similarly staffing in the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB comprises a range of posts including:

- **AONB Manager** (full time post)
- **Project Officer** – focused on advice and grant aid to farmers, landowners and community groups (full time post)
- **Project Officer** – focused on advice and support to communities and developing heritage and cultural/arts projects (full time post)
- **Project Officer** – focused on Farming in Protected Landscapes including grant aid to farmers, landowners and community groups (full time post).
- **Administration and Technical Assistant** for core AONB Team and Partnership (0.8 FTE)
- **Business Support Assistant** – funded through the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (FiPL) (0.5 FTE)¹².

6.4.3 In addition, the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB includes two officers (Project Officer and Monitoring Officer) who work on the Lincolnshire Chalk Streams initiative as part of a separate project which the AONB supports. The AONB has also established a separate Lincolnshire Chalk Streams Trust.

6.4.4 Where planning pressures are more acute, AONBs may include a dedicated planning officer as part of their team. This is the case within the Surrey Hills AONB, while in Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONBs, the dedicated planning officer is shared between the two AONBs, given the geographical proximity of both designations and a joint management team working across the two AONBs. However, neither the Howardian Hills nor Lincolnshire Wolds AONBs have a planning officer and in both cases the Manager deals directly with planning issues which affect the AONB, although the volume of planning applications can make this difficult to balance with other management tasks.

6.4.5 The engagement of students, graduate trainees and volunteers can also boost staff resources for an AONB. In 2023 the Howardian Hills AONB initiated a number of new activities related to placements for students and graduate trainees. These initiatives are at an early stage but the AONB is seeking over time to build up:

¹² This post is via secondment from Lincolnshire County Council's wider business support team.

- A partnership with the new University of York to deliver an optional module on sustainable tourism. There are currently 12 students completing a project to develop sustainable itineraries for the area.
- Through North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC), the AONB had a student spending one week shadowing the team during the summer 2023.

6.4.6 Similar activity is undertaken by the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB who have provided support to two undergraduate research projects and a Schools Outreach Project, raising awareness in the special qualities of the AONB. Furthermore, both AONBs co-ordinate an active volunteer group which engage in training, surveying, monitoring as well as practical conservation work.

6.5 Management Plan

6.5.1 As noted above, Section 89 (2) of the CRow Act 2000, places a statutory duty on relevant local authorities to prepare and publish a plan which formulates their policy for the management of an AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it and a further duty in Section 89 (9) to review the plan at "intervals of not more than five years".

6.5.2 An AONB Management Plan sets out the policy for the management of an AONB and includes an action plan for carrying out activity in support of the purpose of designation. Natural England is currently developing new and updated guidance on producing a Management Plan which takes on board aspects of the Glover Review^[4]. The production of a Management Plan on a statutory basis is a major benefit that flows from designation; allowing as it does for an integrated and place-specific approach to ensuring that the natural beauty of the area is conserved and enhanced. The emerging new Guidance highlights the opportunity for greater collaboration between Protected Landscapes, especially those facing similar issues in Management Plan preparation and project collaboration and implementation. This may have implications for a new Yorkshire Wolds AONB, given its proximity to the Howardian Hills AONB and shared issues with the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB.

6.5.3 As a result of the LURA 2023, a new sub-section (2A) has also been inserted into CRow Act 2000, Section 90, Supplementary Provisions relating to Management Plans:

(2A) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision—

- (a) requiring a plan under section 89 relating to an area of outstanding natural beauty in England to contribute to the meeting of any target set under Chapter 1 of Part 1 of the Environment Act 2021;
- (b) setting out how such a plan must contribute to the meeting of such targets;
- (c) setting out how a plan under section 89 relating to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England must further the purpose of conserving and

^[4] As noted in paragraph 1.4.1 above

enhancing the natural beauty of that area.

6.5.4 New regulations are currently being drafted by Defra to make clear what provisions will be required. These changes are not available yet so this assessment has been unable to confirm their likely impact on the area, but they are likely to strengthen the potential for delivery of the AONB purpose within designated landscapes.

6.5.5 In the case of the Howardian Hills AONB, the current Management Plan is for the period 2019 to 2025^[5]. It contains a series of objectives and actions under the themes of:

- Natural capital and ecosystem services
- Natural environment
- Historic environment
- Local communities
- Agriculture
- Forestry and woodland
- Development and rural economy
- Roads, transport and traffic management
- Recreation, access and tourism
- Awareness and promotion
- Implementation
- Monitoring

6.5.6 For the Lincolnshire Wolds, the current Management Plan is for the period 2018-2023. The five themes of this management plan include:

- Protecting the Wolds
- Living and Working in the Wolds
- Discovering the Wolds
- Developing the Wolds
- Partnership in the Wolds

6.5.7 These management plans provide an important strategic framework for the work of all the AONB partners within the designated area.

6.6 Funding

6.6.1 AONB funding comes from a number of sources and is negotiated with funding partners each year. Central government is the major financial contributor to AONBs' core costs. In general, Defra provides 75% of the core funding for AONBs with Local Authorities contributing the remainder. The overall amount of core funding is usually

^[5] This is an agreed 12 month extension of the AONB Management Plan in line with national Government recommendations.

based on the size of the AONB and the complexity of its management structure.

6.6.2 Significant funding can also come from other sources including grant schemes such as Farming in Protected Landscapes known as FiPL (Defra-funded) and active application to grants such as Heritage Lottery (Landscape Partnership Schemes) or the Esmée Fairburn Trust for example. AONB Partnerships can also secure funds through joint working with other protected landscapes, examples being the Ryevitalise and Birds on the Edge projects, which are both joint initiatives between the Howardian Hills AONB and the North York Moors National Park.

6.6.3 The table below sets out the funding streams for both the Howardian Hills and Lincolnshire Wolds AONBs as examples.

Table 1: Funding streams for Howardian Hills and Lincolnshire Wolds AONBs

Funding Source	Howardian Hills	Lincolnshire Wolds
Defra 2022-2023	£144,520k	£190,056k
Local Authorities 2022-2023	North Yorkshire CC = £48,500 Hambleton DC ¹³ = £5,800 Ryedale DC = £5,066	Lincolnshire CC = £30,920 East Linsey DC = £17,750 ¹⁴ West Linsey DC = £17,830 North East Lincs Council = £3850
FiPL 2022-23 2023-24 2024-25	£190k £266k £348k	£425-£486k £631,394
Other grants	Scheduled monument grant scheme	Heritage Lottery Landscape Partnership Schemes

6.6.4 A further funding stream accessible to protected landscapes is the Landscape Enhancement Initiative or LEI which is a grant scheme aimed at reducing the impact of National Grid's existing electricity transmission lines on AONBs and National Parks in England and Wales. This provides funding to protected landscapes for the specific purpose of mitigating the effects of overhead transmission lines. Examples of enhancements include a new bridleway within the North York Moors National Park ensuring those who visit the park (including cyclists) no longer need to cross underneath the transmission line. The project has also delivered a new surface to the route so it is accessible all year round and enhanced biodiversity and improved aesthetics within the landscape. Since its inception, this scheme has funded

¹³ The recent change to a unitary council will combine all three contributions into one from 2023-24 onwards. It is anticipated that the total contribution will be maintained (Howardian Hills AONB Pers Comm)

¹⁴ East Linsey District Council provides support to the AONB beyond financial, including tourism and office accommodation.

improvements to natural beauty in a range of designated landscapes and can be a significant potential benefit to an area from AONB designation.

- 6.6.5 Other private funding may also include private companies required to invest e.g. landfill/utility companies, philanthropic investment, legacies or carbon markets and offsetting, for example.

6.7 Activity and Initiatives

- 6.7.1 Both the Howardian Hills AONB and Lincolnshire Wolds AONB staff teams have a focus on delivery 'on-the-ground', using land management, ecology, woodland, natural environment and historic environment knowledge and expertise to provide advice and lead on projects. Furthermore, FiPL is allowing the AONB teams to increase this level of support to landowners, land managers and farmers and to increase links with these stakeholders. The Lincolnshire Wolds have helped to establish a number of farm clusters for specific areas e.g. scarp landscapes or where there is a specific issue to address. In some cases, they support the engagement of a soil consultant to prepare a soil management plans for landowners.

- 6.7.2 AONB funding may also enable the delivery of projects which exceed standard service levels by a local authority. For example, the Howardian Hills AONB have used an additional Defra 2022-23 Access for All¹⁵ grant to deliver the following:

- Essential match funding for a larger bridge, delivered through the Ryevitalise Landscape Partnership.
- Boardwalk to improve a path through a bog.
- A new, small bridge to allow a closed footpath to re-open.
- New footpath fingerposts to improve route signage.
- New gates to replace styles, allowing improved access for visitors with limited mobility.

- 6.7.3 This indicates that AONBs can often deliver benefits related to recreation, visitor management and access despite the fact that recreation is not a specific purpose of designation. Similarly, the Lincolnshire Wolds, through joint working with the relevant local authorities, have been instrumental in the delivery of heritage signs and in influencing verge cutting regimes.

- 6.7.4 Both AONBs work closely with the AONB partner organisations either individually or through project and topic working groups, including:
- Environment Agency
 - Internal Drainage Board
 - Yorkshire and Lincolnshire Wildlife Trusts
 - National Landscapes Association
 - Other national and Yorkshire-based Protected Landscapes, particularly North York Moors National Park Authority
 - Local Nature Partnerships

¹⁵ Funding from this source is not insubstantial comprising £26k for 2023-24 and £48k for 2024-25.

- Landscape partnerships e.g. Lincolnshire Chalk Streams
- National Trust
- Schools and universities
- Natural environment topic groups, e.g. Yorkshire Crayfish Forum
- Local environmental groups, e.g. Hovingham Project Purple, Ryedale Environmental Group
- Historic England
- Tourism Networks¹⁶

6.7.5 Specific national initiatives targeted at protected landscape in England also bring opportunities. These include electricity regulator, Ofgem's initiative to grant electricity network operators a special allowance to replace overhead cables with underground cables to enhance the appearance of designated landscapes. Proposals to underground overhead lines can originate from local communities however all proposals are assessed by the relevant AONB team and technical feasibility is undertaken by UK Power Networks. Under the Ofgem Visual Improvement Scheme, the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB has had some 37km of overhead wirelines undergrounded and over 400 electric poles removed, to reduce the rural widescale and enhance natural beauty.

6.7.6 Initiatives and activity may also be influenced by the opportunity to work collaboratively with other protected landscapes or partners. For example, the Howardian Hills AONB works closely with the North York Moors National Park Authority and shares office space with the National Park in Helmsley. Partnership working takes the form of:

- A shared FiPL Panel and admin costs
- Howardian Hills AONB Manager chairs the Ryevitalise Landscape Partnership project
- Involvement in the National Park dark skies work, with plans to extend their Dark Skies Reserve into the Howardian Hills
- Monitoring activities, e.g. recent Natural Capital mapping and dark skies recording project
- AONB staff sitting on relevant local working groups, e.g. for woodland management
- Preparation of external funding applications where NYMNP take a lead and HH AONB act as a partner.

6.7.7 AONBs spend the majority of their time and funding within their AONB boundary, in line with the AONB's statutory duty to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape. Nevertheless, many AONBs also regularly undertake work beyond their boundaries, including to conserve and enhance areas within their setting and elsewhere. In the Lincolnshire Wolds, the AONB undertakes work beyond its boundaries such as its involvement and support for the Chalk Stream Project which is catchment based. It has also provided support for the gateway Market Towns

¹⁶ For example, Love Lincolnshire Wolds and Visit Lincolnshire

ensuring footpath and cycle route connectivity from where people live on the margins of the designation, into the AONB.

6.7.8 In the case of the Howardian Hills, the AONB works beyond its boundaries in order to promote opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the countryside and to further the interests of those who live and work in the area, even though this is not a purpose of AONB designation. The AONB has also taken note of the recommendations of the *Glover Landscape Review*, which made a number of wider recommendations, e.g. related to education and diversity. As a result, it has:

- Supported local AONB communities within or on the immediate edge of the area through provision of project funding for community projects, e.g. the Howardian Hills AONB recently helped with restoration of a village pond in the area and restoration of a historic cultural asset (a maypole) in a village lying on the AONB boundary.
- Delivered a school twinning project, bringing school children from deprived urban areas into the AONB.
- Plans to work with local tourism businesses to develop a sustainable tourism strategy, to guide visitor activities in the area.

6.8 Planning

National Planning Policy Framework

6.8.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF December 2023) sets out the underpinning principles and policies for the operation of the planning system in England, and is pertinent to all authorities in England, including in relation to AONBs. Paragraph 182 refers specifically to AONBs as follows:

“Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads”.

6.8.2 It goes on to state in relation to development:

“The scale and extent of development within all of these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.”

6.8.3 In terms of major development, it states at paragraph 183:

“When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can

be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.”

National Policy Statements

- 6.8.4 Furthermore, in relation to National Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) and especially electricity provision, National Policy Statement EN-3¹⁷ and EN-5¹⁸ provide the primary basis for decisions on applications for electricity network infrastructure. EN-5 makes it clear in paragraph 2.11.4 that in nationally designated landscape (i.e. National Park, Broads or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) *‘the general presumption in favour for overhead lines should be reversed to favour undergrounding’*.

Local Plan Policy

- 6.8.5 Local Plans produced by local authorities with land in AONBs, contain specific policies in relation to AONBs which give effect to NPPF paragraphs 182 and 183 and other relevant sections of the NPPF. In any circumstance where an existing local development plan diverges from the NPPF, decision making authorities are required to afford great weight to the provisions in the NPPF framework. This serves to limit the influence of any out-of-date local policy.
- 6.8.6 The AONB Management Plan does not form part of the statutory development plan but may contain information which is relevant when preparing plan policies, or which is a material consideration when assessing planning applications.
- 6.8.7 In the case of the Howardian Hills AONB, all relevant Local Authorities contain planning policy relating to AONBs within their respective Local Plans. With the creation of the North Yorkshire Unitary Authority there will be a single Unitary Plan in future which will contain an AONB policy which will apply to the Howardian Hills and Nidderdale AONBs. The current East Riding Plan does not include any existing AONBs and therefore there are currently no AONB policies within the Local Plan, although the Plan does include policies relating to the Flamborough Headland Heritage Coast and Locally Valued Landscape (see appendix 1).
- 6.8.8 As noted under staffing in section 6.4 above, neither the Lincolnshire Wolds nor the Howardian Hills AONB have a dedicated planning advisor. Nevertheless, relevant Local Authorities may consult the respective AONB team in relation to planning applications within the AONB, and the AONB advise on the effects of development on the purpose of designation i.e. the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty, in order to inform planning decisions.

Permitted Development

- 6.8.9 Permitted Development Rights are also relevant considerations in nationally

¹⁷ National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) March 2023

¹⁸ National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5) March 2023

designated landscapes. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (the GPDO) sets out thresholds below which permitted development can occur subject to various limitations and conditions. These are referred to as Permitted Development Rights (PDRs). Within AONBs, Conservation Areas, National Parks, the Broads and World Heritage Sites, certain PDRs are withdrawn. These areas are referred to as 'Article 2(3) land' within the GPDO. Schedule 2 sets out the specific PDRs which currently do not apply on Article 2(3) land including AONBs in England, or where restrictions to specific PDRs apply in such areas. These are summarised in Appendix 2 of this report.

- 6.8.10 With the exception of the listed exclusions and restrictions set out in Appendix 2 of this report, the remaining PDRs generally apply equally within AONBs as elsewhere. In the circumstances where PDRs do not exist or are withdrawn, the standard planning application process applies. The PDRs that are withdrawn within AONBs are withdrawn in the context of the statutory AONB purpose, namely the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area. The restriction on PDRs does not prevent the types of development listed in Appendix 2, but it does provide an opportunity for local authorities to seek to ensure that such developments take into account the special qualities of the AONB, in line with current planning policy.

6.9 Conclusion

- 6.9.1 This section sets out the structure, governance, resourcing and activity of AONBs. Through the examples of the Howardian Hills and Lincolnshire Wolds AONBs, it is clear that the designation of land as AONB can provide a greater focus for conservation work, dedicated resources and access to additional funding which would otherwise not be available. Partnership working to achieve the objectives of a bespoke management plan and greater certainty and continuity of approach over time, are benefits which can come from AONB designation.

7 Effects of Designating the Yorkshire Wolds as AONB

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 This section considers what it might mean specifically for the Yorkshire Wolds if the Candidate Area was designated as AONB.

7.2 Legal Powers and Duties

- 7.2.1 If a designation Order is made and confirmed by the Secretary of State, the relevant parts of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 would immediately apply to the designated area. In particular, the purpose of designation in Section 82 and the powers and duties outlined in Section 84 and the parts of Section 89, 90 and 92 which apply to 'relevant local authorities' would immediately apply within the areas concerned as outlined in section 6.2 above.
- 7.2.2 Confirmation of an AONB designation would also mean that the Section 85 (A1) duty placed on these relevant authorities and other public bodies and statutory undertakers to seek to further the statutory purpose of the AONB in the area would also apply to the designated area.
- 7.2.3 Based on the Candidate Area, any legal Order would include land within North Yorkshire and East Riding Councils. The relevant powers and duties associated with AONB designation would thus apply to these Local Authorities.

7.3 Governance Structure

- 7.3.1 If an AONB is designated, then both North Yorkshire and East Riding of Yorkshire Councils would have the responsibility for agreeing and setting up the Governance structure for an AONB. Natural England can provide advice on appropriate governance structures if an AONB is designated. One local authority would take a lead role as the accountable body for the AONB, managing its finances, as AONBs are not a body corporate. This lead local authority would also be responsible for recruiting and employing any staff for an AONB Unit to help co-ordinate delivery of the AONB purpose in the area. The number and range of staff recruited to form the AONB unit will depend on the identified issues affecting the AONB and the scope for collaborative working with the Howardian Hills and Lincolnshire Wolds AONBs in terms of shared specialist resources (see Section 8.0 below) as well as the degree of funding available.
- 7.3.2 Within three years of designation, the local authorities would also be responsible for the preparation and publication of the first statutory Management Plan for the AONB, which would formulate their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it. Defra and Natural England can provide advice and guidance on appropriate management structures and management plans for AONBs, in line with current Government Policy at the time.

7.4 Core Funding

- 7.4.1 It is anticipated that 75% of the baseline core funding for an AONB Unit and its work would come from Defra, matched by 25% from the local authorities (North Yorkshire and East Riding of Yorkshire Councils). The degree of core funding for a new AONB is in the gift of Defra; but has historically been based on the size of the AONB and the degree of complexity of the Governance arrangements. The local authorities may also identify additional funding for specific local priorities.
- 7.4.2 In addition, a Joint Advisory Committee/Partnership consisting of the local authorities (and potentially a range of relevant local partner organisations) would be set up to help produce the Management Plan and help deliver integrated management and delivery of the AONB purpose throughout the new AONB. Formally, a JAC is a sub-committee of the lead local authority, not a body in its own right.

7.5 Additional Resources (Finance and Volunteers) and Certainty

- 7.5.1 Designation of the Yorkshire Wolds AONB would define an area which can then potentially attract additional resources including specific Government funding for protected landscapes such as the existing Farming in Protected Landscapes Scheme. This can also be assisted by the practical administration of grants by an AONB Team, as well as the targeting of other funding initiatives. These funding advantages can be difficult to replicate in the wider countryside. Designation of the Candidate Area as AONB would provide greater certainty to these landscapes than would otherwise exist, both in terms of the future focus on conservation and enhancement, and of the likely financial commitments available to undertake this work.
- 7.5.2 The future potential for a Yorkshire Wolds AONB to generate other funds from charitable or other sources could also benefit the areas proposed for designation. This was demonstrated by an independent review of the activities of charitable bodies supporting AONBs in England and Wales (Rural Focus Ltd, May 2017) which concluded that over half of the 38 AONBs in England and Wales now have charities which are working to safeguard and support the designation and its purpose.
- 7.5.3 Furthermore, designation may provide access to funds and initiatives which would otherwise be unavailable such as the undergrounding of overhead electricity lines. This may be particularly relevant to the northwestern part of the proposed Candidate Area where a 132Kv line extends north-south close to the existing Howardian Hills AONB. It could also be relevant to the smaller overhead lines which impact the dry valley east of Fordon, the line between Nunburnholme and Great Dug Dale, as well as the line to the south through Londesborough.
- 7.5.4 Access to the wider family of UK and European landscape designations means that AONBs can share experience and expertise on how to make the most of this emerging

funding, such as Green Finance, to deliver environmental outcomes. Designating a Yorkshire Wolds AONB would help to ensure that such resources are secured in the future and available to the AONB Partnership and Team for the benefit of natural beauty and local communities throughout the proposed area, providing a higher degree of certainty and continuity.

7.6 Integrated Management

- 7.6.1 Within three years of designation, North Yorkshire and East Riding of Yorkshire Councils would be responsible for the preparation and publication of the statutory Management Plan for the AONB, which formulates their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it. Defra and Natural England provide advice and guidance on the preparation of management plans for AONBs, in line with current Government Policy at the time. AONB designation ensures that policies and objectives set out in the AONB Management Plan, apply to the designated land, ensuring greater unity and an alignment of priorities across both local authorities. As noted in paragraph 6.7.6 above, integrated management in AONBs is achieved through an AONB team developing a leadership approach and working in partnership. Examples from the Howardian Hills and Lincolnshire AONB demonstrate the difference which can be achieved on the ground through working in partnership. These include, channelling resources to a range of conservation bodies and forming partnerships with those who are involved in active management on the ground, as well as ensuring that the full range of factors contributing to natural beauty are conserved and enhanced. This can include initiatives which seek to assist and address recreational pressures which may affect natural beauty, as well as having negative effects on local communities. This is likely to be of value to some parts of the Wolds and especially the narrow valleys, where the effects of visitors on land management activity and car parking is already noted as an issue as the area has become more popular to visitors, such as areas like Millington and Thixendale.
- 7.6.2 The AONB designation provides a specific focus for initiatives and activity, ensuring the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape. Without designation it would be unlikely that an integrated focus on the special qualities of the area would be achieved. This is important given the linked agendas of nature recovery and climate change adaptation both of which require operating at a landscape scale and where linking habitats can improve resilience. It is particularly relevant to the chalk valleys within the Wolds which are often narrow and limited in extent, sitting within a broader intensively farmed landscape. Designation as AONB would provide the focus and commitment to enhance biodiversity and habitat connectivity, and encourage climate resilience, carbon sequestration and regenerative farming. It could also benefit the area in terms of addressing issues arising from fragmentation and loss of tranquillity due to transport infrastructure, problems associated with recreation pressures and visual intrusion from development, mineral extraction and small hobby farming and horsiculture.

- 7.6.3 In particular, conservation work could focus on the species/habitats which are iconic to the Yorkshire Wolds including native (including ash) woodlands, species-rich calcareous grasslands, coastal birds and arable birds such as wild grey partridge.

7.7 Regulation

- 7.7.1 As demonstrated during the Better Regulation Initiative previously undertaken by the Government, designation of any area as AONB would not represent an increase in regulation beyond differences in policy and permitted development relevant to the specific planning management functions of the local authorities which are referred to above in section 6.8. The existing regulatory functions of the local authorities for example, would remain with these local authorities and would operate in exactly the same way, albeit taking into account their duties and powers under s84 and s85 of the CRoW Act. The differences in planning, as provided for by the NPPF and local planning policy, would however assist with the conservation and enhancement of the area's natural beauty in a way which would not necessarily happen if the area were not designated.
- 7.7.2 Apart from the changes to planning management outlined above, designation as an AONB would not impose any additional regulation on agriculture. Environmental regulations (e.g. pollution control and waste), protected areas (such as Nitrate Vulnerable Zones) and other agricultural regulations would remain the same inside and outside of a new AONB. The lack of impact on agricultural regulation was confirmed by the findings of the Report of the Farming Regulation task force, 2011¹⁹. This report contained 200 recommendations for cutting 'unnecessary bureaucracy' in farming, but none of these related to designated landscapes.
- 7.7.3 Activities which further the AONB purpose are generally achieved through partnership and persuasion, rather than by regulation. Local authorities do not have power to, for example, compel a particular type of land management on farmland, and the AONB Team cannot work on land without the permission of the landowner. Work is undertaken by agreement (sometimes with financial incentives) or by advising and persuading others to act in a manner which contributes to the conservation and enhancement of the area. Financial incentives for farmers and land managers to undertake work beneficial to the environment, through agri-environmental schemes have historically given some priority to AONBs and National Parks, in recognition of the national importance of these areas. The current Farming in Protected Landscapes Scheme is an example of this.
- 7.7.4 Although it is not possible to predict how such schemes will operate in the longer term, given past history, it is reasonable to assume that land within an AONB may well continue to be given some priority relative to undesignated areas in future, even if future agri-environmental schemes contain multiple objectives that may not be

¹⁹ Striking a Balance: A report on better regulation in farming and food business – Summary of Recommendations, Independent Farming Regulation Task Force, May 2011

specifically relevant to the AONB purpose.

- 7.7.5 Furthermore, experience in the Howardian Hills AONB and Lincolnshire Wolds AONB demonstrates the value of appointing a specialist and dedicated farm advisor to liaise directly with landowners and help them access agri-environment support. This support is for small farmers as well as land agents and farm managers of large estates. Potential AONB designation offers a similar opportunity to the Yorkshire Wolds area and would complement the work of the Yorkshire Farming and Wildlife Trust, Yorkshire Wolds and Coast Focus Area (RSPB) and Farm Clusters led by the Game and Wildlife Conservancy Trust.
- 7.7.6 Examples of what dedicated farm advisors within an AONB frequently help with include:
- Assessment of what is currently on a farm, what it needs to survive and thrive and how it may influence decisions on how to farm.
 - Professional advice which is easily accessible.
 - Support in finding and applying for funding including greater and wider uptake of stewardship.
 - Helping farmers turn their ideas into meaningful projects.
 - Connecting farmers so they can share their tips and successes.
 - Monitoring to prove that action being taken is delivering tangible results including increased yields, better soils and increased biodiversity.
- 7.7.7 Therefore, a new Yorkshire Wolds AONB could potentially offer end to end support in a more coordinated way and help farmers collaborate more than is currently the case.

7.8 Economic Growth

- 7.8.1 Designation of the Yorkshire Wolds as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) offers a significant opportunity to boost economic growth across the rural area in ways that strengthen, rather than compromise, its special character. Management is shaped by the statutory management plan for the AONB, which is developed through partnership working with local stakeholders. As such the management can emphasise that, rather than relying on new development, AONB status can support a carefully managed approach to tourism that increases visitor spend while protecting the landscape qualities people come to enjoy. Crucially, such management also helps safeguard the interests of local communities and landowners by ensuring that any rise in visitor numbers is planned, responsible, and supported by appropriate infrastructure, access arrangements, and codes of conduct.
- 7.8.2 At the same time, designation provides a strong framework for accelerating nature-recovery initiatives—improving habitat connectivity, enhancing biodiversity, and securing the natural capital on which many rural businesses depend. It can also help cultivate a stronger local identity, including the development of distinctive food and craft brands that add value to local produce and open new market opportunities.

Taken together, these measures can diversify the rural economy, sustain local livelihoods, and ensure that the Yorkshire Wolds thrives through conservation-led, community-focused growth.

7.9 Planning

- 7.9.1 AONB designation would also help address planning issues affecting the area, for example pressures associated with demand for tourism development along the coast, visitor management and congestion on rural lanes, cumulative effects of wind farm and solar developments, provision of new infrastructure including roads and overhead power lines and potential for new minerals extraction, or housing, through clarifying and articulating the wider context of the nationally important landscape within which they are located.
- 7.9.2 As previously noted, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places great weight on conserving landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, giving them the highest status of protection. Designation of an AONB within the Yorkshire Wolds would mean that this provision applies to areas which are not currently protected in this way. Furthermore, this area would benefit from the additional protection the Permitted Development Rights (PDR) restrictions afford, eg by ensuring that planning officers have the opportunity to ensure that planning proposals do not conflict with the purpose of AONB designation.
- 7.9.3 The majority of the land within the Candidate Area is currently recognised as either a locally valued landscape (with the majority also being defined as Areas of Highest Quality within the local landscape designation in East Riding) or as nationally valued Heritage Coast and the area has thus benefitted from associated local plan policy which recognises this. However, none of the current landscape designations (including the Heritage Coast) have a statutory basis, and designation as AONB would provide the security, permanence and strength of protection that statutory national designation affords. Furthermore, it may also result in the designation of some small areas not previously designated as Important Landscape Areas in Ryedale District or East Riding of Yorkshire such as north of Fordon or small parcels of land along the western fringes of the scarp. It would therefore provide increased security, permanence and strength of protection for those small areas. It would not however provide statutory protection for locally valued landscape outside of the designated area (see section 8 below).
- 7.9.4 Designation of the Candidate Area would also enable greater clarity regarding development within the wider landscape. Paragraph 182 of the NPPF highlights the importance of the 'setting' of nationally protected landscapes. Post designation, land surrounding the AONB will form the setting to the AONB and where development falls within the setting of the AONB, it may affect the special qualities of the AONB. This adds to the case for designating the qualifying areas so that the AONB duties can be applied effectively in these circumstances, especially on land adjacent to and beyond

the chalk scarp faces to the north and west of the Inland Candidate Area and land adjacent to the dramatic cliffs at the coast.

7.9.5 The Candidate Area is covered by different administrative areas. The former North Yorkshire County Council and Ryedale District Councils as well as East Riding of Yorkshire Council (but not Scarborough Borough Council) have historically recognised the Yorkshire Wolds landscape as a valued landscape. The slightly differing approaches in each local authority area have led to some differences in the evaluation of landscapes, definition and naming of local landscape designations, planning policy wording and potentially decision making within the different historic authority areas. The creation of a Yorkshire Wolds AONB within the proposed Candidate Area will help to ensure a common approach to policy development and decision making between the new North Yorkshire Council and the East Riding of Yorkshire Council who would manage and deliver planning policy within any future AONB. This would ensure greater coordination and consistency of approach across the whole area, ensuring focus on the purpose of designation, namely the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.

7.9.6 The newly created North Yorkshire Council already has experience of and expertise in, determining planning casework within nationally protected landscapes given it contains the Nidderdale AONB and Howardian Hills AONB. However, where land proposed for AONB designation falls within East Riding of Yorkshire, which has had no previous experience of AONB designation, there will be a need for local plan documents to be updated to include relevant AONB landscape policy.

7.10 Conclusions

7.10.1 The analysis above demonstrates the specific statutory responsibilities and duties, the management mechanisms and the resource opportunities that would follow from the designation of the Yorkshire Wolds as an AONB.

7.10.2 Designation of the Candidate Area as AONB would provide a clear focus on the special qualities of the landscape and natural beauty. It would not replace current initiatives as set out in section 5 above but would draw in additional resources and provide a strategic framework for conservation, thereby adding value to current work. Furthermore, as funding streams for current initiatives run out, it is possible that a new AONB partnership may be able to secure funding from elsewhere and ensure continued delivery of their work. Designation of the Yorkshire Wolds as an AONB would make a material difference providing a focus on the natural beauty of the landscape and a long-term commitment to conservation work. Given the range of issues affecting the landscape as set out in Section 4.0 above, it is concluded that AONB designation is a suitable and appropriate model for the long-term management of the area and could potentially deliver a range of benefits to the area.

7.10.3 The designation of the Candidate Areas as AONB would however give rise to a

number of specific issues unique to the Yorkshire Wolds and these are considered in more detail in Section 8.

8 Desirability Issues Specific to the Yorkshire Wolds

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 The definition of a proposed Candidate Area for designation arising from the natural beauty assessment, raises three issues pertinent to the desirability of designating the Yorkshire Wolds as an AONB. These issues potentially have a bearing on the overall extent of any formally proposed designation and preferred management arrangements which would apply. They were identified through discussion with the Management Advisory Group (MAG) and through research into current initiatives and partnerships operating in the area as well as through Local Plans. They include the three themes as outlined below and which are discussed in more detail in the rest of this chapter:

- The potential designation of the Heritage Coast as AONB and issues relating to the management of this area as an outlier separate from the main bulk of the Candidate Area.
- The distinct identity of the Yorkshire Wolds and whether collaborative management arrangements with the Howardian Hills and Lincolnshire Wolds AONBs might be beneficial.
- The designation as AONB of only part of the Yorkshire Wolds National Character Area and the ramifications of this in relation to management of the wider area. This is discussed in the context of current initiatives such as Chalkshire and proposals for Geopark status, and also examples of AONB work beyond designation boundaries.

8.2 Heritage Coast

8.2.1 The natural beauty assessment identified an area along the coast between Reighton and Sewerby Cliffs which is likely to qualify for designation as AONB as a result of its natural beauty. This area has a relatively large foreshore consisting of a wave cut platform and rocky/sandy beach, backed by high vertical chalk cliffs in the north and lower chalk cliffs with softer cliffs above in the south and west. Along the coastline is an array of impressive coastal geomorphological features and inland from the cliffs a fringe of elevated coastal farmland comprising arable and pasture as well as wooded incised gullies and wet flushes/fen. The area included within the proposed Candidate Area was defined along the coast including the cliffs and foreshore and only coastal inland farmland which has not been impacted by development or detracting elements. The Candidate Area is therefore a smaller area than the existing Heritage Coast which does contain significant areas of development which preclude it from meeting the criterion for designation as AONB.

Existing Heritage Coast

8.2.2 Heritage Coasts are not a statutory designation, they are defined areas. They were

formally proposed in the 1970s and define coastlines of ‘exceptionally fine scenic quality’. In order to be defined as Heritage Coast, in addition to exceptional scenic quality, an area is required to exceed one mile in length (c. 1.6km), be substantially undeveloped and contain features of special significance and interest whether natural or manmade. Originally the adoption and definition of Heritage Coasts was the responsibility of the then Countryside Commission and the relevant local authorities. The management of Heritage Coasts, following definition, is the responsibility of the Local Authorities and local partners.

8.2.3 Following the decision of the Countryside Commission in 1973 that Flamborough Head should be considered for definition as Heritage Coast rather than designation as an AONB, (for reasons of it being too small and its attraction focusing solely on the cliff scenery), Flamborough Head Heritage Coast was defined laterally in 1979 to cover a length of coast which is approximately 22.4km in length. However, its full inland definition was not completed until years later, when an inland boundary including the whole peninsula around Flamborough village was defined for reasons which are no longer clear. Importantly Heritage Coasts have no outward sea boundary. This contrasts with the definition of AONB boundaries which, in accordance with Natural England Guidance, are drawn to follow the mean low water mark, since this forms the limit of the jurisdiction of the planning authorities managing the AONB.

8.2.4 The purposes of a Heritage Coast are to:

1. “Conserve, protect and enhance the natural beauty of the coastline, the terrestrial, coastal and marine flora and fauna and the cultural heritage features;
2. Encourage and help the public to enjoy, understand and appreciate these areas;
3. Maintain and improve the health of inshore waters affecting heritage coasts and their beaches through appropriate environmental management measures; and
4. Take account of the needs of agriculture, forestry and fishing and the economic and social needs of the small communities on these coasts.”

8.2.5 In 2006 and again in 2022²⁰ Natural England undertook a review of Heritage Coast designations to determine if they had achieved their original objectives and the impact they have had on the management of coastlines. The 2022 review noted that Flamborough Head Heritage Coast is one of only five Heritage Coasts in England which lie wholly outside an AONB and that those Heritage Coasts which were not in AONBs were less likely to still be receiving special management to deliver the Heritage Coast Objectives.

²⁰ Heritage Coast Review 2022: An assessment of the current status and activity in England’s Heritage Coast and a forward look with future-proofing recommendations (unpublished).

Management

- 8.2.6 Following definition of the Flamborough Head Heritage Coast, a Heritage Coast Partnership (including East Riding of Yorkshire Council) was established, and a strategy was prepared (2003-2005 Heritage Coast Action Plan). This was run in parallel and collaboratively with the emerging Flamborough Head European Marine Site (FHEMS) Management Scheme, which manages the statutory nature conservation designation around the headland. Many of the actions in the Action Plan were pursued either through the Heritage Coast or subsequently through other initiatives/ projects, however shortly after the Heritage Coast Action Plan was developed, there was a decline in specific funding for Heritage Coast activities at a national level. This has resulted in reduced dedicated resources, and whilst conservation activity has taken place within the area, it has not necessarily been focused on the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.
- 8.2.7 The Management Plan for the FHEMS focuses on the natural heritage of this section of coast, although it acknowledges and recognises the importance of the Heritage Coast and seeks to work with partners to maintain the landscape characteristics of the area (page 12 of FHEMS). In section 1.4.5 it acknowledges the work to consider the coast as part of a new Yorkshire Wolds AONB. It specifically notes that AONB designation would *'complement and support existing management measures for the Flamborough Head EMS and could provide opportunities for greater collaboration with authorities and stakeholders. An AONB designation would not change any current responsibilities towards the existing marine protected areas.'*
- 8.2.8 It goes on to state at section 2.4.1 *'The proposed Yorkshire Wolds AONB would also require local planning authorities to take the beauty and character of the landscape into account when proposing or agreeing to development plans. The AONB is in the early stages of development, however if it is designated, it is expected to include the distinctive chalk cliffs of Flamborough Head; adding a new layer of protection for the site.'*
- 8.2.9 It is clear therefore that the designation of the Flamborough Coastline as AONB would be seen as a positive addition to the management of the area rather than a hindrance or duplication of the conservation work currently being undertaken both as part of the FHEMS or in relation to the various land management agreements associated with the National Nature Reserve at Flamborough Cliffs (managed by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust), Bempton Cliffs (managed by RSPB) or three Local Nature Reserves along the southern coastline (managed by East Riding Countryside Access Team).
- 8.2.10 Furthermore, any proposed AONB boundary would not extend out to sea (only to low mean water mark) and would have a greater focus on the coastal hinterland/farmland, providing a different and yet no less important focus to the FHEMS management plan.

Planning

- 8.2.11 The conservation of the Heritage Coast is currently led by local authorities through

their planning policies, as directed by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and presented in the area's Local Plans. The NPPF provides a degree of planning protection for Heritage Coasts in recognition of their nationally significant scenic quality. Paragraph 184 of the NPPF states:

'Within areas defined as Heritage Coast (and that do not already fall within one of the designated areas mentioned in paragraph 176), planning policies and decisions should be consistent with the special character of the area and the importance of its conservation. Major development within a Heritage Coast is unlikely to be appropriate, unless it is compatible with its special character.'

8.2.12 Clearly the wording in the NPPF for Heritage Coasts is not as strong as that in para 182 of the NPPF in relation to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, in that it lacks reference to *'great weight to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty'* and *'to the scale and extent of development being limited'*. Furthermore, Permitted Development Rights are not withdrawn as for other national-level protected landscapes (see para 6.8.10 above).

8.2.13 Nevertheless, both the former Scarborough Borough and East Riding Local Plans reference the Heritage Coast in their local plans with specific policies and recognise the protection the NPPF affords to the landscape of Flamborough Head²¹. The North Yorkshire County Council Minerals and Waste Joint Plan also references the Heritage Coast (Policy DO6). Local planning authorities therefore take into account the sensitive nature of a particular stretch of coastline in reaching planning decisions. However, they have to balance planning decisions with other policies aimed at supporting tourism and economic development of the area. Coastal landscapes of high scenic quality inevitably experience significant pressure regarding tourism related development and in these circumstances there may be policy conflicts where a difficult balance needs to be reached.

8.2.14 This pressure, and need for balance, is evidenced in examples given in the 2022 Natural England Heritage Coast review in relation to Flamborough Headland (Box 9, page 29). The review highlights that since the 2012 NPPF, Local Plan policy has helped to minimise adverse effects on heritage coasts. However, within the Flamborough Head Heritage Coast, a review of recent planning applications in the area indicates multiple minor planning applications (which can have an ad hoc adverse effect on natural beauty over time) and some significant approved development in relation to holiday parks. The resulting visual and physical fragmentation of the landscape is especially evident between Flamborough village, North Landing and Flamborough Head.

8.2.15 The above analysis demonstrates that the issues which affect the special qualities of this coastal landscape often relate to development pressure. Although this area of

²¹ With local authority reorganisation and incorporation of Scarborough into North Yorkshire Council, it is unclear if new Local Plan policies will continue to reference the Heritage Coast – an issue raised in the findings of the 2022 Heritage Coast Review (page 48, last bullet).

qualifying coastline is recognised for its landscape, natural and cultural heritage, there is currently no other designation or partnership actively directly managing the natural beauty of the landscape in an integrated manner or which gives this aspect of landscape great weight in planning decisions. Given the pressure on the coast from recreational and other types of development, designation of the coastal area as AONB would give it additional statutory status and protection in planning compared with Heritage Coast status, which would be a distinct advantage over the current situation. The area would also benefit from the requirement to develop a statutory management plan, and from the fact that the duty to further AONB purposes, for public bodies and statutory undertakers, would also apply to approximately half of the Heritage Coast area. It would also offer a distinct advantage over the FHMS as it would have an inland focus as well as seaward focus, ensuring that the role of the clifftops, fringing farmland and wooded gullies are given consideration both in terms of management and development.

8.2.16 The above analysis indicates that the designation of the coastal landscape as AONB could bring some significant benefits over and above those that currently apply through the FHMS, Heritage Coast and other designations. Designation of part of the area as AONB would not have any implications for the current Heritage Coast designation which would remain in place. This is the case in other AONBs which coincide with a Heritage Coast e.g. Northumberland Coast. This precedent (and others) demonstrates that there is no need for the AONB to be continuous or the same as the Heritage Coast. Natural England does however encourage AONB Partnerships to work throughout Heritage Coast areas, including any areas that lie outside an AONB, in order to help deliver objectives and to conserve and enhance the setting of the AONB.

8.2.17 Designation of the whole Candidate Area identified during the natural beauty assessment would result in the inclusion of a separate coastal outlier from the main Yorkshire Wolds Designation (inland area). The two areas would be separated by an area of land which has been identified as not meeting the natural beauty criterion during the natural beauty assessment. The implications of this are discussed further below.

Outliers

8.2.18 AONBs with outliers occur in a number of existing AONBs in England, especially those associated with coastal landscapes. They vary in extent, width and also in distance from the main body of the designation. The following table sets out statistics associated with other areas of coastal AONB and demonstrates that a number are small in area, narrow in places and separated from other areas of the same AONB i.e. outliers. This should not be seen as a justification for having many outliers as part of a designation, rather it demonstrates that where a landscape is exceptional in a national context, and there are benefits derived from designation, the inclusion of a qualifying outlier may be desirable. In relation to other existing AONB outliers, the proposed Yorkshire Wolds Coastal Candidate would not be the smallest, narrowest

or located at greatest distance from the main body of the AONB.

Table 2: Comparisons with other existing coastal AONB outliers

Name of Existing Coastal AONB/Part thereof	Total area of whole AONB (sq km)	Area of specific outlier	Narrowest section outlier (m)	Nearest distance between outlier and main AONB (km)
Cornwall (Lizard Peninsula-Marazion)	964.03	192.36	c.23	c. 2.5
Cornwall (Rame Peninsula)	964.03	7.79	c.709	c. 17.2
Cornwall (St Agnes)	964.03	6.26	c. 245	c. 4.6
Norfolk Coast (Winterton Sea Palling)	445.9	17.28	c. 316	c. 12.5
North Devon (Welcombe-Northam)	171.82	93.53	c. 21	c. 0.3
Northumberland Coast (Core Area)	133.35	132.18	c. 170	n/a
Solway Coast (Maryport-Beckfoot)	122.55	18.1	c. 251	c. 3.3
Yorkshire Wolds (Coastal Candidate Area)	465.07	17.56	c. 33	c. 5.71

8.2.19 The existence of coastal outliers raises three questions:

- 1) ***Does the size and distance of an outlier relative to the main body of the designation make a material difference to governance and practical management issues?*** Consultation with the North Norfolk Coast AONB revealed that the relatively small, narrow and distant outlier at Winterton to Sea Palling does not present any significant management issues for the AONB. However, communities in outlying areas may perceive that they are 'not as important' as the main body of the designation.
- 2) ***Is there a minimum width of coastal AONB below which designation becomes meaningless?*** There are some sections of coastal AONB where the extent of land designated is relatively narrow, such as the coastal cliffs west of Porthleven which is c. 0.02km wide or just one field deep. In this instance two observations are made. Firstly, that this narrow section is connected to areas of coastal AONB which are wider and secondly the narrow section nevertheless contains outstanding coastal cliff scenery and views out to sea, where a sense of scale and space is readily appreciated. Unlike inland AONBs, where the inclusion of an area just one field deep could be perceived as meaningless, a narrow section of land associated with the coast is less affected by land width, due to the direct connection of the areas provided by the open sea as well as visual connections along an indented coastline.
- 3) ***Are there examples where existing coastal outliers 'washover' small areas of tourist related development?*** There are a number of locations where coastal AONBs include some areas of tourist related development that do not contribute to the natural beauty of the landscape and may also be regarded as incongruous. In these instances, the AONB designation has 'washed over' discrete areas of

development along the coast e.g. at Lands End. Where wash over occurs consideration must be given to the size of the area to be washed over, its location in relation to qualifying land and the benefits which would derive, in accordance with Natural England guidance.

8.2.20 On the basis of the above analysis, it is considered that there is a case for designating the coastal landscape as AONB where it meets the natural beauty criterion despite the fact that it would create an outlier from the main body of the designation. It is also considered that designation could address current shortfalls in management and protection. The definition of the detailed boundary will however raise additional issues. It is clear from the natural beauty assessment that any designation should not include the more inland areas of landscape which form part of the Heritage Coast, neither should it extend close to, or include, built-up areas such as Flamborough and holiday parks such as Reighton Sands Holiday Park in the north and Thornwick Holiday Park near Flamborough, both of which have encroached on the immediate setting of coastal cliffs in those areas. Any area identified for designation would therefore be narrow, especially between North Landing and the headland due to development and fragmentation.

8.2.21 On this basis, and to remove the need for a narrow stretch of AONB between two wider qualifying parts of the heritage coast, consideration was given to excluding the coastal cliffs and foreshore between Close Nooks and Cough Hole where there is recreational development close to the cliff fringes. This would result in the definition of two small and separate coastal outliers for designation. This option was quickly discounted on the basis it would result in the exclusion of a section of coastline which is especially valued for its complex geomorphology, and because it would make little sense in terms of scenic quality and natural beauty along the coast, especially when viewed from the sea. The definition of a boundary which included all of the exceptional coastal and cliff landscape as a single area was therefore preferred, even though this meant the definition of the AONB would be especially narrow between Close Nooks and Cough Hole. The area proposed for designation therefore ensures the purpose of designation would apply to both the coastal cliffs and qualifying fringing farmland which exhibits strong coastal influences and contributes to the area's special qualities, and that areas of incongruous coastal development are excluded. Any future development adjacent to the proposed AONB would fall within the setting of the designation and would be subject to paragraph 182 of the NPPF requiring it to be sensitively located and designed to avoid and minimise adverse impacts on the designated area.

8.3 Distinct identity of the Yorkshire Wolds

8.3.1 The proposed Candidate Area has a strong local and national identity as a distinct area of chalk landscape.

8.3.2 The proposed Candidate Area has been defined as contiguous with part of the

Howardian Hills AONB in the northwest where the landscape extends from the chalk scarp slope down towards the River Derwent valley at Kirkham (within the Howardian Hills AONB). Whilst the landscape in the part of the Candidate Area which lies adjacent to the Howardian Hills AONB shares some characteristics and qualities with this largely limestone AONB, as it moves further south and east it becomes increasingly influenced by the chalk which defines the Yorkshire Wolds and which clearly sets the Yorkshire Wolds apart from the Howardian Hills in terms of its character and special qualities. Furthermore, the issues and pressures impacting on the Howardian Hills landscape and Candidate Area for the Yorkshire Wolds, whilst similar, also express some strong differences and are likely to require some different management approaches and or emphasis.

- 8.3.3 These findings lend weight to the argument that pursuing a separate AONB designation for the Yorkshire Wolds, even if its boundary is drawn contiguously with the Howardian Hills, is desirable. A separate AONB would ensure that both the Howardian Hills and Yorkshire Wolds retain their individual identity, and a separate management plan is prepared to tackle their different issues and priorities.
- 8.3.4 Nevertheless, this does not mean that the management of the two AONBs has to be entirely separate. An example where AONB units have been combined to share resources is the Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONBs. These two AONBs are very different and have contiguous boundaries. They continue to have their own management plan, priorities and funding, but share a single AONB team which operate out of one office, building efficiencies and pooling resources.
- 8.3.5 On the face of it, this model appears to have some potential relevance to the Howardian Hills and Yorkshire Wolds. However, the Howardian Hills AONB team already share office space with the North York Moors National Park, in Helmsley. This is some distance from the Yorkshire Wolds and therefore raises issues regarding practicalities, as well as the potential to disrupt already good working relationships between the Howardian Hills AONB and North York Moors National Park.
- 8.3.6 The collaborative working between Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast & Heaths and that of the Howardian Hills and North York Moors National Park illustrates that sharing resources, skills and knowledge can be beneficial, but the increased use of technology post Covid 19 also demonstrates that collaborative working can happen between teams which are located remotely too. This also raises the possibility of a new Yorkshire Wolds AONB working collaboratively with another AONB which shares some similar landscape issues, even where that AONB is located some distance away e.g. Lincolnshire Wolds. Such an arrangement might enable a new Yorkshire Wolds team to be supported by the skills and resources established within the Lincolnshire Wolds which would be directly relevant to tackling the issues highlighted in Section 4 above within a Yorkshire Wolds AONB.
- 8.3.7 Ultimately it is not for this desirability assessment to resolve detailed issues of

governance and administration. These would need to be developed by the statutory local authorities responsible for any new AONB designation in liaison with Natural England. Nevertheless, the above analysis points to the potential benefits of having a separate Yorkshire Wolds AONB designation with the establishment of its own AONB team and management plan but also collaborative working and potential for some shared resources with the Lincolnshire Wolds and/or Howardian Hills.

8.4 Management of the Wider Yorkshire Wolds

- 8.4.1 The designation history of the Yorkshire Wolds landscape, as set out in the natural beauty assessment, highlighted the past conflation of landscape character with landscape value which happened during the identification of the areas of local landscape value. This was also reflected in the findings from early engagement on the provisional Candidate Area which revealed that a number of stakeholders felt the whole of the Yorkshire Wolds was worthy of special recognition. They felt it would be desirable for the whole of the Yorkshire Wolds National Character Area to be designated as AONB, as it all shared the same character. As such, stakeholders made recommendations to designate the whole of the National Character Area as AONB, in part because it stands out from the different landscapes which surround it, as well as suggestions to include the whole chalk dip slope and nearby larger settlements with a history of association with the Yorkshire Wolds such as Driffield (which is regarded by local communities as the 'Capital of the Wolds').
- 8.4.2 However, the natural beauty assessment revealed that only part of the Yorkshire Wolds landscape merited designation as AONB for its outstanding natural beauty. This would leave a considerable part of the Yorkshire Wolds NCA outside the AONB designation. Much of this wider landscape (but not all) has been recognised as a valued landscape by Ryedale District and East Riding of Yorkshire through identification of areas of local landscape value. Designation of a more discrete area of the NCA as AONB would not however preclude the remaining local landscape designations remaining in place, so long as there is sufficient robust evidence to support their continued definition as local landscape designations recognised for their local value rather than their character, as per the current NPPF (Dec 2023).
- 8.4.3 Furthermore, designation of some landscapes and not others, should not be considered as leaving undesignated areas unsupported. Although not common place, existing AONBs can work beyond their designation boundaries in landscapes which share similar characteristics and suffer similar issues and pressures. In these circumstances the expertise and access to resources that an AONB can bring can ensure that positive land management and decision making occurs in land beyond the AONB boundary. An example of such an arrangement occurs in Dedham Vale AONB. Adjacent to the designated area is a defined Stour Valley Project Area which extends along the remainder of the Stour Valley upstream of the designation. This Additional Project Area is defined on a map in the AONB Management Plan and there are specific policies which relate to it. A detailed valued landscape assessment has

also been undertaken for the area. The evidence base this provides, along with status of the area as noted in the AONB Management Plan, means that in NPPF planning terms the Additional Project Area is considered a locally valued landscape, providing a degree of protection from inappropriate development. Furthermore, in the Dedham Vale, additional funding from the relevant local authorities for this purpose also ensures that the AONB Team can regularly work in this wider non-designated landscape, such that it benefits from the expertise and resources which the AONB and its project staff bring. It is possible that a future AONB designation for the qualifying part of the Yorkshire Wolds could operate in a similar fashion in parts of the Yorkshire Wolds which are not designated as AONB. This would be a matter for the relevant local authorities and any new wider AONB JAC/Partnership to discuss.

- 8.4.4 Even if this approach was not pursued, there are current proposals for a UNESCO Geopark called The East Yorkshire Geopark - which if ratified might include the Yorkshire Wolds NCA as well as the Derwent Valley, Vale of Pickering and Holderness and coast as far as Spurn Point.

UNESCO Global Geoparks are places certified by UNESCO where outstanding geological heritage is used to support sustainable development, through conservation, education, interpretation and nature tourism. Within the Global Geoparks Network, Geopark staff and partners collaborate to share ideas, raise funds, promote each others' areas and carry out projects. A geopark is defined by UNESCO as *"single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development"*²². A voluntary working group has recognised the value of the area for its geology and is exploring how a geopark might be established in the area. They consider that the Yorkshire Wolds are one of the most northerly chalk landscapes in Europe, in some ways a landscape more typical of southern England, but nevertheless distinctively Yorkshire. They consider it warrants Geopark status owing to its unique geological and geomorphological structures, with the relatively low, smooth hills, eroded by glaciation and aeons of freeze-thaw weathering, divided by its series of remarkable dry, grassy valleys or dales. In addition, the area also contains a wealth of Geobiological, Geoheritage and Geohistorical sites associated with the high concentrations of prehistoric and medieval archaeological features.

- 8.4.5 If certified by UNESCO, geopark status would recognise the international importance and educational value of the geological science of the area and in particular, of the predominantly chalk landscape, its geomorphological features, the complex water and river systems including the ecology of the chalk streams. In addition, it would also include many crucial aspects of the cultural landscape of the wider Wolds, including the area's rich archaeological heritage.

- 8.4.6 This initiative is however at an early stage and a significant amount of work/research

²² <https://en.unesco.org/global-geoparks>

will be involved in bringing together evidence to satisfy the UNESCO criteria. If successful, the East Yorkshire Geopark would join other established Geoparks within the UK such as the North Pennines AONB which became a Geopark in 2003. In this latter example, the AONB boundary and Geopark boundary are the same and the geopark is managed by the North Pennines AONB Partnership staff unit with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, NE and others. There the AONB uses the Geopark status to support sustainable economic development, primary through geological and responsible tourism. This demonstrates that should Geopark status be awarded to the Yorkshire Wolds (including the proposed AONB Candidate Area) and the wider landscape, it could be complementary to the purposes of an AONB and can help improve access both physically and intellectually, as well as understanding and enjoyment.

- 8.4.7 In any event, the Yorkshire Wolds landscape is currently subject to the initiative called 'Chalkshire' as noted in Section 5 above. A document setting out the Chalkshire initiative was published in October 2020 by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and East and North Yorkshire Waterways Trust on behalf of Hull and East Riding Catchment Partnership. It states that:

'Whilst the landscape supports rich pockets of biodiversity, they can occur in isolation, making them vulnerable to climate change, pests and pathogens. Through better landscape connectivity and by looking at a river catchment scale, improvements such as flood plain reconnection to improve water storage will help restore natural functions. Ecological corridors and new habitat creation would help to connect wildlife populations that have been fragmented by human activity and enhance species abundance and distribution. Connectivity, resilience and recovery are key aspects of this biodiversity theme. Stakeholders agree that, whilst there is already good work being done to conserve, restore and improve the chalk environment, better coordination and more data, skills, consensus and collaboration are needed.'

- 8.4.8 On page 34 it goes on to comment on the proposed AONB designation stating that:

'An AONB for the Yorkshire Wolds would sit between two existing designated areas: the Howardian Hills and the Lincolnshire Wolds. This potential designation would have a strong bearing on the development of 'Chalkshire' given Natural England's prioritisation of landscape quality, scenic quality, relative wildness, relative tranquillity, natural heritage features and cultural heritage for these areas. There are direct links between these priorities and the themes and ambition of 'Chalkshire', which will need to be assessed should the designation be confirmed... The list of the people, partnerships, place and projects with which the 'Chalkshire' initiative has an affinity will continue to grow and develop as the work progresses and new opportunities arise. Currently however, it helps to put 'Chalkshire' in a wider context and highlights some of the opportunities and issues that will need to be taken into account going forwards.'

- 8.4.9 Therefore, current initiatives (Chalkshire and Geopark status) illustrate the value

placed on the wider Wolds landscape and the active steps which are being taken to give recognition and positive management to the area. There is no reason to conclude that these initiatives could not continue in the wider Yorkshire Wolds landscape and indeed within a newly created Yorkshire Wolds AONB. Such initiatives could be actively supported by a new AONB, the creation of which could bring added resources and continuity in the longer term.

9 Conclusion

9.1 Is it desirable to proceed with designation?

9.1.1 This report sets out the findings of the desirability assessment which has been undertaken in accordance with Natural England Guidance. This sets out the questions that Natural England considers when making this judgment. Having addressed these questions in this assessment, the conclusion reached is that there is sufficient evidence that designation of the Candidate Area would be desirable.

9.1.2 Designation as AONB provides formal statutory recognition of the national importance of the natural beauty of the areas concerned, and as a consequence, provides the basis for a more coordinated and integrated approach to management which would give specific focus and priority to the natural beauty of the area. Areas which are designated would formally come within the ambit of the statutory AONB Management Plan and benefit from the incentives, powers, duties, responsibilities and resources that designation brings.

9.1.3 The issues affecting the Candidate Area are considered to be of a scale and significance to merit active management intervention. They include effects from development on the coast or inland through *ad hoc* changes which may occur in a piecemeal fashion over time, as well as the effects of changes in agriculture and farming practices, and pressures from visitors. These types of issues and pressures currently, or may in future, present a real threat to the special qualities of these landscapes.

9.1.4 The extent that designation as AONB would better enable the effective management of issues, over and above current mechanisms, has been demonstrated. In summary, AONB designation of the Candidate Area would bring the following:

- Greater certainty regarding a more coordinated and integrated response to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area. This is reflected within the track record of positive management and working of the Howardian Hills and Lincolnshire Wolds AONBs, including beyond their boundaries.
- Access to additional resources, both financial and also advice and staffing, particularly where they are targeted at designated landscapes such as FiPL and access²³.
- Greater statutory weight in decision making which comes from AONB designation in terms of National Planning Policy Framework and subsequent Local Plan Policy.

²³ This is currently new funding from Defra comprising an uplift in core grant in order to make National Landscapes more accessible to people of all ages and abilities and from all backgrounds.

- A more robust and defensible recognition of the special qualities of the qualifying areas which is greater than that which currently exists for both the locally valued landscapes and the Flamborough Headland Heritage Coast.

9.2 Satisfying the Legislative Test

- 9.2.1 The detailed consideration of the desirability of designation of the Candidate Area comprising the qualifying inland and coastal areas has demonstrated that there is a clear weight of evidence that when taken together they form 'an area of land' of outstanding natural beauty. It has also demonstrated that it is desirable that the qualifying land identified within the Candidate Area should be designated in order to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and that an appropriate boundary should be defined within it.
- 9.2.2 Following the definition of a proposed boundary to the qualifying land (and thus the completion of all the technical assessments), it will be for Natural England to make a decision on whether or not to proceed with the statutory and public consultation and later parts of the designation process.

Appendix 1: Current Local Plan Landscape Policies

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Local Authority	AONB/Local Landscape Policy
<p>East Riding of Yorkshire and Hull²⁴</p>	<p>Joint Minerals Local Plan (adopted 21 November 2019)</p> <p>Minerals Safeguarding Area (EC6). The majority of the Candidate Area is recognised as a Mineral Safeguarding Area.</p> <p>Supporting text states that:</p> <p><i>‘3.11 Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSA) draw attention to the existence of the underlying mineral when proposals for surface development are being planned. This allows the existence of deposits of local or national importance to be adequately and effectively considered in land use planning decisions.....</i></p> <p><i>3.12 It is important to note that the safeguarding of mineral resources is not an indication that the resource will necessarily be worked at some time in the future.....</i></p> <p>Policy EC6: Protecting mineral resources</p> <p>A. <i>‘Mineral Safeguarding Areas for sand and gravel, crushed rock, limestone, industrial chalk, clay and silica sand are identified on the Policies Map.</i></p> <p>B. <i>Within or adjacent to Mineral Safeguarding Areas, non-mineral development, which would adversely affect the viability of exploiting the underlying or adjacent deposit in the future, will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Underlying or adjacent mineral is of limited economic value;</i> <i>2. Need for the development outweighs the need to safeguard the mineral deposit;</i> <i>3. Non-mineral development can take place without preventing the mineral resource from being extracted in the future;</i> <i>4. Non-mineral development is temporary in nature; or</i> <i>5. The underlying or adjacent mineral deposit can be extracted prior to the nonmineral development proceeding, or prior extraction of the deposit is not possible.</i> <p>Policy AGG4: Area of Search for Crushed Rock</p> <p>This policy is relevant as Greenwich Quarry is an Area of Search for chalk and falls within the Candidate Area</p> <p>A <i>‘Planning applications for the extraction of crushed rock in the Area of Search listed below will be supported provided:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. In the case of new quarry sites, there is a need for additional crushed rock reserves to be permitted; and</i> <i>2. The proposals meet the requirements of the Development Management Policies (DM1 to DM6) and the identified area site brief set out for the Area of Search.</i>

²⁴ Recent Local Authority reorganisation has resulted in the creation of the new Hull & East Yorkshire Combined Authority.

Local Authority	AONB/Local Landscape Policy
	<p><i>Crushed Rock Area of Search</i></p> <p>a. <i>CR-A: Greenwick Quarry, Huggate.</i></p> <p>Policy DM1: Impacts of Minerals Development</p> <p><i>‘A Mineral development will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. There is a clear need for the development proposed;</i> <i>2. The development would avoid harm to the environment or communities. Where harm is outweighed by the need for the development, the impacts on communities and the environment can be mitigated to within acceptable levels, both individually and cumulatively (including the impact of the factors in part B below) with other existing and proposed mineral and other forms of development; and</i> <i>3. Enhancement opportunities are taken as part of development or its restoration.</i> <p><i>B. In determining applications for minerals development, including the proposed order and method of working, the overall programme of extraction and the proposed restoration and aftercare of the site, the following must be addressed where relevant:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Greenhouse gas emissions reduction and resource efficiency. Proposals that reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions and improve resource efficiency during construction, operation, and restoration will be supported;</i> <i>2. Noise, dust, fumes, illumination and visual intrusion;</i> <i>3. Surface and groundwater pollutant emissions. Proposals that do not have an unacceptable adverse impact on water quality or achieving the targets of the Water Framework Directive will be supported;</i> <i>4. Effects of climate change, including flood risk;</i> <i>5. Character, quality, distinctiveness, sensitivity and capacity of the landscape and any features which contribute to these attributes;</i> <i>6. Green infrastructure, biodiversity (including protected habitats and species) and geodiversity assets. Proposals that promote these, including to create carbon sinks, will be supported;</i> <i>7. Historic landscape, sites or structures of existing or potential archaeological, architectural or historic interest and their settings;</i> <i>8. Land stability, contamination, and soil resources;</i> <i>9. Open space, public rights of way, and outdoor recreational facilities;</i> <i>and</i> <i>10. The local economy.’</i>
East Riding of Yorkshire	Local Plan Strategy Document Adopted 2019

Local Authority	AONB/Local Landscape Policy
	<p>Policy ENV2 Promoting a High Quality Landscape</p> <p>Part B states:</p> <p><i>‘Proposals should protect and enhance existing landscape character as described in the East Riding Landscape Character Assessment, in particular, within the following Important Landscape Areas as shown on the Policies Map:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. The Yorkshire Wolds, with special attention to ensuring developments are of an appropriately high quality and will not adversely affect the historic and special character, appearance or natural conservation value.</i> <i>2. The Heritage Coast designations at Flamborough and Spurn Head.</i> <i>3. The Lower Derwent Valley, which includes the River Derwent Corridor and Pocklington Canal.</i> <i>4. The Thorne, Crowle and Goole Moors.’</i>
	<p>Draft Strategy Update May 2021 Chapter 8 - High Quality Environment</p> <p>Policy ENV2 Promoting a High Quality Landscape</p> <p>Part B states:</p> <p><i>‘Proposals should protect, enhance and be compatible with the existing landscape character as described in the East Riding Landscape Character Assessment, in particular, within the following Important Landscape Areas as shown on the Draft Policies Map Update:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. The Yorkshire Wolds, with special attention to ensuring developments are of an appropriately high quality and will not adversely affect the historic and special character, appearance or conservation value.</i> <i>2. The Heritage Coast designations at Flamborough and Spurn Head.</i> <i>3. The Lower Derwent Valley, which includes the River Derwent Corridor and Pocklington Canal.</i> <i>4. The Thorne, Crowle and Goole Moors.’</i> <p>The explanatory text at para 8.25 goes on to state:</p> <p><i>‘Proposals are also expected to consider and take forward the conclusions of the Landscape Character Assessment Update (2018) and Important Landscape Areas Boundary Refinement (2014) which identified a number of important landscapes in the East Riding (Figure 12). These Important Landscape Areas include landscape areas that are valued locally.’</i></p> <p>Paragraphs 8.32 – 8.36 describe the landscapes of the coast and Yorkshire Wolds as follows:</p> <p><i>8.32 Along the coast it will be important that development protects the character of the undeveloped coastline, particularly in the two national Heritage Coast designations, Flamborough Headland northeast of Bridlington and Spurn Head to the southeast of the East Riding on the Humber Estuary. These are recognised as being among the most beautiful undeveloped coastlines in England, and are managed to conserve, protect and enhance their natural beauty, marine flora and fauna, and heritage assets. This character must be maintained, although adequate provision is made for limited development in Flamborough (which is identified by Policy</i></p>

Local Authority	AONB/Local Landscape Policy
	<p><i>S3 of this Plan as a Primary Village) and Bempton (which is identified by Policy S4 as a Village), both of which fall within the Heritage Coast designation. The NPPF states that major development within a Heritage Coast is unlikely to be appropriate, unless it is compatible with its special character.</i></p> <p><i>8.33 There are no statutory landscape designations in the East Riding, although there are the two areas identified as Heritage Coast, which are recognised as being of particular importance. In addition, there are a number of distinctive landscapes that are valued locally and are recognised as being of a high quality within the context of the East Riding. These are the Yorkshire Wolds, the River Derwent Corridor, Pocklington Canal and Lower Derwent Valley and the Thorne, Crowle and Goole Moors. The boundaries of these Important Landscape Areas are shown on the Draft Policies Map Update.</i></p> <p><i>8.34 The Yorkshire Wolds form an arc of high, gently rolling ground extending from the Humber Estuary west of Hull, to the North Sea coast at Flamborough Head. They comprise a prominent chalk escarpment and foothills rising from the Vale of York to the west, the Vale of Pickering to the north (outside of the East Riding in Ryedale and Scarborough Districts), and falling to the plain of Holderness to the east. The vast majority of the Wolds is agricultural with woodland planting restricted to small, scattered woodland comprising shelterbelts around farmsteads with larger woodland and plantation areas located on the sides of the valleys. The gently, rolling landscape instils a sense of openness and tranquillity provided by expansive views, sparse populations and agriculture.</i></p> <p><i>8.35 'Much of the East Riding's boundary with Ryedale District falls within the Yorkshire Wolds, and the landscape quality of this area is also recognised in the Ryedale Plan as an Area of High Landscape Value. It is, however, recognised that not all of the Yorkshire Wolds is of the same quality and the Landscape Character Assessment Update (2018) identifies 6 different landscape character types and 27 landscape areas. Those parts of the Yorkshire Wolds that are considered to be of highest quality tend to be concentrated on the western scarp slope and around Sledmere. On the western scarp slope the landscape is particularly diverse, characterised by a series of dry valleys resulting in a complex landscape made of contrasting characteristics (such as enclosed valleys and open hill tops). The varied landform also results in a sense of enclosure and isolation in the valleys where fields tend to follow contours with hedges marking the upper extent of the steepest area. The areas of lesser quality tend to be less diverse in their characteristics, have fewer features and may have some detractors, such as an urban edge around a larger settlement, which also serves to reduce tranquillity '</i></p> <p><i>8.36 'Despite the varying degrees of quality, the entire area of the Yorkshire Wolds is shown on the Draft Policies Map Update as it is the interactions between the different character types and areas that contribute to character and make the Yorkshire Wolds distinctive. Within the Yorkshire Wolds it is important that development is of an appropriate scale and design that conserves landscape value, and protects and enhances those features which contribute to the character of the area.</i></p>

Local Authority	AONB/Local Landscape Policy
<p>North Yorkshire County Council²⁵</p>	<p>Minerals and Waste Joint Plan (adopted Feb 2022)</p> <p>Policy D06: Landscape</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>'All landscapes will be protected from the harmful effects of development. Proposals will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that there will be no unacceptable impact on the quality and/or character of the landscape, having taken into account any proposed mitigation measures.'</i> 2. <i>'For proposals which may impact on nationally designated areas including the National Park, AONBs, and the adjacent Yorkshire Dales National Park, a very high level of protection to landscape will be required. Development which would have an unacceptable landscape impact on these areas will not be permitted.'</i> 3. <i>'Protection will also be afforded to the historic character and setting of York and to areas defined as Heritage Coast. Permission will only be granted where it would not lead to an unacceptable impact on the historic character or setting of York or on the undeveloped character of Heritage Coast, unless the need for, or benefits of, the development outweigh the harm caused.'</i> 4. <i>'Where proposals may have an adverse impact on landscape, tranquillity or dark night skies, schemes should provide for a high standard of design and mitigation, having regard to landscape character, the wider landscape context and setting of the site and any visual impact, as well as for the delivery of landscape enhancement where practicable.'</i> <p>The policy justification states:</p> <p><i>'The variety of landscapes in the area adds much to its overall distinctiveness. A large part of the area is designated or defined nationally (as either National Park or AONB or Heritage Coast) for the quality of its landscape, and some District and Borough Councils have identified local areas of landscape value in their own local plans. A range of other designations are of relevance to landscape considerations, including heritage land which is conditionally exempt from inheritance tax because of its national significance⁴⁴. Unlike National Parks and AONBs, Heritage Coast is not classed as a nationally designated landscape. Its definition is non-statutory, and can only be made with the agreement of local authorities and landowners, and agreed by Natural England..... A small part of the Flamborough Head Heritage Coast also falls within the Plan area. The NPPF (para 114) requires local planning authorities to 'maintain the character of the undeveloped coast, protecting and enhancing its distinctive landscapes, particularly in areas defined as Heritage Coast, and improve public access and enjoyment of the coast'. Such areas are</i></p>

²⁵ In 2023 a new North Yorkshire Council unitary authority was created.

Local Authority	AONB/Local Landscape Policy
	<i>therefore afforded a relatively high level of significance in national policy terms.'</i>
Ryedale District ²⁶	<p>The Ryedale Local Plan Strategy (Adopted September 2013)</p> <p>Para 2.18 states:</p> <p><i>'A large proportion of the District is covered by national landscape designations, including that part of Ryedale that falls within the North York Moors National Park and the Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Fringe of the Moors and the Yorkshire Wolds are also valued locally for their scenic and historic landscape character. Farming and sensitive land management practises play a vital role in maintaining these landscapes, much of which are managed by a number of larger landed Estates who have owned land across Ryedale for many generations. Indeed, this pattern of land ownership is a very distinctive feature of Ryedale.'</i></p> <p>Para 7.11 states:</p> <p><i>'Longstanding local landscape designations have existed for the area of the Yorkshire Wolds within Ryedale and for the Fringe of the Moors in reflection of their natural beauty and scenic qualities. In preparing this Plan, the Council has given considerable thought as to whether this remains the most appropriate approach. The Council considers that all landscapes and the quality of all landscapes matter. However, it is concerned that a character-based approach to protecting the Wolds and the Fringe of the Moors may not be sufficient on its own to help manage particular pressures, notably pressures arising from wind energy generation, a very specific 'driver of change' in the landscape. For the most part and for most development proposals a character-based approach will be used to inform the decision making process across Ryedale, including in the Wolds and the Fringe of the Moors and the retention of the designation would make little difference in practice to the way in which the character of these areas is used to inform decision making. However, the retention of the Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV) designations would help to reinforce the landscape quality and local value attached to these landscapes when it comes to accommodating forms of development which, by their very nature are more difficult to assimilate in the landscape.'</i></p> <p>Policy S13 covers Landscape and states:</p> <p><i>'The quality, character and value of Ryedale's diverse landscapes will be protected and enhanced by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• Encouraging new development and land management practises which reinforce the distinctive elements of landscape character</i>

²⁶ Whilst the Local Authorities of Ryedale District and Scarborough Borough no longer exist, and were subsumed into the new North Yorkshire Council unitary authority in 2023, their Local Plans remain the adopted Local Plans until such time that North Yorkshire Council prepares and adopts a new plan.

Local Authority	AONB/Local Landscape Policy
	<p><i>within the District's broad landscape character areas of: North York Moors and Cleveland Hills, Vale of Pickering, Yorkshire Wolds, Howardian Hills, Vale of York.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Protecting the special qualities, scenic and natural beauty of the Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the setting of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the setting of the North York Moors National Park.....'</i> <p>National Landscape Designations and Locally Valued Landscapes</p> <p><i>'The natural beauty and special qualities of the Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will be conserved and enhanced and the impact of proposals on the AONB, its setting or the setting of the North York Moors National Park will be carefully considered.</i></p> <p><i>Proposals will be supported where they:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do not detract from the natural beauty and special qualities of these nationally protected landscapes or their settings</i> • <i>Seek to facilitate the delivery of the Howardian Hills AONB Management Plan Objectives</i> • <i>Are considered appropriate for the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area or are desirable to support the understanding and enjoyment of the area</i> <p><i>The District Council and Howardian Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee will resist development proposals or land management practises that would have an adverse impact on the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB unless it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh any adverse impact and the proposal cannot be located elsewhere in a less damaging location.</i></p> <p><i>Major development proposals within the AONB that would result in a significant adverse impact on the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB will be considered within the context provided by national policy and only allowed in exceptional circumstances.</i></p> <p><i>Outside of those landscapes protected by national landscapes designations, the Council will carefully consider the impact of development proposals on the following broad areas of landscape which are valued locally:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Wolds Area of High Landscape Value</i> • <i>The Fringe of the Moors Area of High Landscape Value</i> • <i>The Vale of Pickering</i> <p><i>The Yorkshire Wolds and Fringe of the Moors are valued locally for their natural beauty and scenic qualities. As well as protecting the distinctive elements of landscape character in each of these areas, there are particular visual sensitivities given their topography and resulting long distance skyline views within Ryedale and further afield.</i></p> <p><i>The Vale of Pickering, the Wolds and the Fringe of the Moors are of significant historic landscape value and loss or degradation of the elements that are integral to their historic landscape character make these landscapes particularly sensitive to change.'</i></p>
Scarborough	<p>Adopted Local Plan (July 2017)</p> <p>Policy ENV 7: Landscape Protection and Sensitivity</p>

Local Authority	AONB/Local Landscape Policy
District ²⁷	<p><i>'Proposals should protect and where possible enhance the distinctiveness or special features that contribute to the landscape character of a particular area and take into account the sensitivity of the landscape to change in terms of</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. the sense of openness or enclosure;</i> <i>b. the pattern and complexity of the landscape;</i> <i>c. the experience derived from a particular landscape character;</i> <i>d. the relationship to existing settlement edges and the cultural pattern;</i> <i>e. the visual sensitivities and intervisibility of the landscape.</i> <p><i>Proposals should have regard to the landscape between settlements and should prevent harmful development which results in the loss of the individual characteristics of settlements and/or the unacceptable coalescence of settlements or the wider landscape including the setting of the North York Moors National Park.'</i></p> <p>Explanatory Text states:</p> <p><i>'8.62 Some parts of the Local Plan area and adjoining areas are particularly sensitive to change. The North Yorkshire and York Landscape Characterisation Project included assessments of visual(12) and landscape(13) sensitivity within defined landscape character types.</i></p> <p><i>Drawing on this work, the following areas of landscape are considered to be of particular importance and development should respond to the particular characteristics of these distinctive areas:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• North Yorkshire and Cleveland and Flamborough Headland Heritage Coasts;</i> <i>• The landscapes bordering the North York Moors National Park;</i> <i>• The Vale of Pickering and the Yorkshire Wolds escarpment;</i> <i>• The landscape settings of Scarborough and Whitby; and</i> <i>• Areas on the edge of other settlements and 'gaps' between neighbouring settlements.</i> <p><i>8.63 In addition to landscapes within the Local Plan area, high importance will be given to protecting the landscape setting and scenic beauty of the North York Moors National Park, by ensuring inappropriate development that would result in a significant adverse impact on these features does not take place within the Local Plan area. Any proposals that may impact upon the National Park should be considered in accordance with Paragraph 003 of the National Planning Practice Guidance.'</i></p>

²⁷ Ditto

Appendix 2: Permitted Development Rights

Permitted Development Rights and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
September 2024

1. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (No. 596) (the GPDO) (as amended) sets out thresholds below which permitted development can occur subject to various limitations and conditions. These are referred to as Permitted Development Rights (PDRs) See legislation [here](#).
 2. AONBs along with Conservation Areas, National Parks, the Broads and World Heritage Sites are referred to as 'Article 2(3) land' within the GPDO. Schedule 2 sets out the PDRs which are excluded from Article 2(3) land including AONBs in England or where restrictions to specific PDRs apply in such areas. In some instances AONB are referred to directly, rather than as article 2(3) land and these instances are also included in this note.
 3. Annex 1 provides list of the PDRs where specific reference is made to Article 2(3) land in Schedule 2 (the relevant clauses are highlighted in bold). Please refer to Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (the "GPDO") for the details of the specific restriction referred to.
 4. This note takes into account amendments to GPDO made since the publication of the original 2015 GPDO. The Statutory Instrument number and year is included for reference, and a list of these are included at the end of the document. Note there are additional amendments to the GPDO that are not relevant to article 2(3) land.
 5. Please be aware that PDRs are likely to be subject to change in future and that the GPDO should be checked for any further amendments and appropriate advice sought before using permitted development rights in individual cases. It should also be noted that minor amendments to the GPDO 2015 appear periodically and that certain PDRs only continue for a limited period of time.
 6. With the exception of the exclusions and restrictions listed below, PDRs generally apply equally within AONBs as elsewhere. In the circumstances where PDRs do not exist, the standard planning application process applies.
 7. It is important to note that Local Planning Authorities can tailor Permitted Development Rights to their own local circumstances and may expand PDRs via a [Local Development Order](#) or [Neighbourhood Development Order](#); or withdraw PDRs via an [Article 4 direction](#).
 8. Furthermore, some PDRs require 'prior approval' from the local planning authority. The relevant parts of Schedule 2 to the GPDO set out the procedures which must be followed when advance notification is required.
 9. Natural England advises that anyone considering undertaking building works, alterations or a change of use of land or buildings within AONBs consult their Local Planning Authority beforehand. Planning Practice Guidance related to PDRs is available [here](#).
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Annex 1

List of PDRs in the GPDO 2015 (as amended) where specific reference is made to Article 2(3) land or specifically to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Part 1: Development within curtilage of a dwelling house

- Class A enlargement and improvement of a dwelling house: **A.1 (g) restrictions to particular works to a dwelling house set out at A.1 (g) A.2, AA.1 (b)(i) (SI 2015/596)**
- Class B additions etc to the roof of a dwelling house: **exclusion specific to B1(f) (SI 2020/632 and SI 2020/755)**
- Class E buildings incidental to the enjoyment of a dwelling house: **more restrictive conditions with specific regard to E2 and E.3. (SI 2015/596)**
- Class G Chimneys etc on a dwelling house: **more restrictive conditions with specific regard to G1(c) (SI 2015/596)**
- Class H microwave antenna on a dwelling house: **restriction with specific regard to H1(e) siting of installation. (SI 2015/596)**

Part 3 Changes of Use

- Class M certain uses to dwellinghouses (covering launderette, betting office, pay day loan shop or hot food takeaway **specific exclusion at M.1 (g) (i) (SI 2016/332 and 2021/814)**
- Class N, specified sui generis uses to dwellinghouses (covering amusement arcades or centres or casinos)- **specific exclusion at N.1 (e) (SI 2015/596)**
- Class P, storage/distribution to dwellinghouses- **specific exclusion at P.1 (g) (SI 2015/596)**
- Class Q, agricultural buildings to dwellings and associated building operations- **specific exclusion at Q.1 (k) (SI 2015/596)**

Part 4 Temporary Buildings and Uses

- Class E temporary use of buildings/land for film making- **specific exclusion to E.1 (d) (SI 2015/596)**

Part 7: Non-domestic extensions, alterations etc

- Class A extensions of commercial, business or service premises: **A1(a) (i) (aa) specifies smaller thresholds and restrictions (c)(i)(bb) and (e) and material choice at A.2 (b) (SI 2015/596 name amended by SI 2021/814)**
- Class C click and collect facilities- **exclusion specific to C1 (f) (i)) (SI 2015/596)**
- Class D modification of shop loading bays: **exclusion specific to D1(i)) (SI 2015/596)**
- Class F deleted (SI 2021/814)
- Class H extensions etc of industrial and warehouse: **size specific restriction set H1(a) (i) and extension size criteria at H.1(b)(i) and material choice conditions at H.2(d) and (e) (SI 2015/596)**
- Class L development at waste management facilities: **exclusion specific to L1(g) (i)(SI 2015/596)**
- Class M erection, extension or alteration of a school, college, university, prison or hospital building **includes additional conditions on material choices at M2(c) and (d) (orig except addition of 'prison' (SI 2021/428)**

Part 9 Development relating to roads

- Class D toll road facilities **subject to specific conditions to be met in D.2 (a) to (e)** (SI 2015/596)

Part 14 Renewable energy

- Class H Microgen wind turbines on dwelling houses etc: **exclusion specific to H2(I)** (SI 2015/596)
- Class I Stand-alone wind turbine on domestic premises etc: **exclusion specific to I.2(I)** (SI 2015/596)
- Class J Installation or alteration of solar equipment on nondomestic premises: **specific restrictions set out in J.1.(d) J.2 (c)** (SI 2015/596)
- Class K Installation or alteration of stand-alone solar equipment on nondomestic premises: **specific restriction set out in K1 (b) (ii)** (SI 2015/596)
- Class N installation etc of a flue for a biomass heating system: **specific restriction set out in N 1(e)** (SI 2015/596)
- Class O installation etc of a flue for a combined heat and power on a non-domestic building: **specific restriction set out in O.1(e)** (SI 2015/596)

Part 15 Power Related Development

- Class B electricity undertakings – the extension or alternation of buildings on operational land **specific size restriction at B.1 (c)(ii) and (iii)** (SI 2015/596)

Part 16: Communications

- Class A electronic communications code operators: (name amended SI 2016/1040)
 - **Ground Based Apparatus - specific height restrictions for stand-alone in A.1 (1)(c)(ii) (d)(ii)** (heights amended SI 2022/278)
 - Building based apparatus other than small antenna and small cell systems **height restrictions A.1(c)(i) and specific conditions A.1(2)(f)** (heights amended SI 2022/278)
 - Criteria for antennas and supporting structures installed, replaced or altered on article 2(3) **specific conditions A.1 (4)(a)** (SI 2015/596)
 - Electronic communications apparatus installed, replaced or altered on a dwelling house **specific exclusions A.1 5(e)** (SI 2015/596)
- Conditions related to visibility of electronic communication apparatus and development ancillary to radio equipment housing (Class A(a) and A(c)) **A.2 (1) (c)** (SI 2015/596).
- Development in article 2(3) land is permitted (**A.2 (3)(a)**) subject to prior approval conditions set out in **A.3** (SI 2015/596).
- Prior approval is not required for fixed-line broadband **A.2 (5)** (SI 2018/343)
- Class B other electronic communications development (name amended by SI 2017/1286) installation on a building etc. over 15m of a microwave antenna **specific restrictions B.1(i)** (SI 2015/596)
- Class C installation etc. of microwave antenna on a building etc. of less than 15m **specific restriction C.1(g)** (SI 2015/596)

Part 17 Mining and minerals exploration

- Class J, temporary use for mineral exploration-**exclusion specific to J1(c)** (SI 2016/332)
- Class JA, temporary use of land for petroleum exploration- **exclusion specific to J A.1 (b)** (SI 2015/596)

Part 19 Development by the Crown for national security purposes

- Class B extension or alteration of an operational Crown building **extension size restrictions B.1 (c)(i) and d(i)** (SI 2015/596)
- Class T electronic communication apparatus etc. for national security purposes – **specific exclusions at T2 and conditions to T(a)** (installation of electronic communications apparatus) at T(2), development in article 2(3) is permitted subject to conditions in T.5 (NB T.5 could not be found) (SI 2015/596)
- Class TA development by the Crown on a closed defence site **specific exclusion TA.1 (1)(d)(i)** (SI 2021/1464)

Part 20 Construction of New Dwellinghouses (SI 2020/756)

- Class ZA Demolition of buildings and construction of new dwellinghouses in their place **specific exception ZA1 (a)(ii)** (SI 2020/632)
- Class A New dwellinghouses on detached blocks of flats **specific exclusion A.1 (o)(i)**
- Class AA New dwellinghouses on detached buildings in commercial or mixed use **specific exclusion AA.1 (o)(i)** (SI 2020/755)
- Class AB New dwellinghouses on terrace buildings in commercial or mixed use **specific exclusion AA.1 (p)(i)** (SI 2020/755)
- Class AB New dwellinghouses on terrace buildings in use as dwellinghouses **specific exclusion AC.1 (n)(i)** (SI 2020/755)
- Class AB New dwellinghouses on detached buildings in use as dwellinghouses **specific exclusion AD.1 (n)(i)** (SI 2020/755)

Annex 2

Relevant Legislation

[The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) Order 2015](#) (SI no. 596) (updated with all amendments)

Amendment Legislation (only includes SI where reference is made to article 2(3) land or AONB):

- [The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development etc.\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Order 2024](#) (SI no.579)
- [The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Order 2022](#) (SI no. 278)
- [The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development etc.\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) \(No. 3\) Order 2021](#) (SI no. 1464)
- [The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development etc.\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) \(No. 2\) Order 2021](#) (SI no. 841)
- [The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development etc.\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Order 2021](#) (SI no. 428)
- [The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) \(No. 2\) Order 2020](#) (SI no. 755)
- [The Town and Country Planning \(Permitted Development and Miscellaneous Amendments\) \(England\) \(Coronavirus\) Regulations 2020](#) (SI No. 632)
- [The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Order 2018](#) (SI no. 343)

- [The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) \(No. 2\) Order 2016](#) (SI no. 1040)
- [The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Order 2016](#) (SI no. 332)