

5. East and West Ayton

5.1 Location, Landscape Context and Setting

The settlements of West Ayton and East Ayton are divided by the River Derwent. The National Park boundary follows the line of the former Pickering to Scarborough railway line and only the northern part of West Ayton and the western part of East Ayton lie within the National Park.

The settlements lie at the foot of the gently rolling Tabular Hills on the southern edge of the National Park (Landscape Character Type 5: Limestone Hills). The River Derwent, which is aligned within the core of the settlements, forms an important component of their landscape setting. The ruinous 14th century Ayton castle is located on the western slopes of the more defined valley formed by the Derwent as it cuts into rising ground and is prominent from Castlegate in East Ayton. The busy A170 is aligned through the settlements at the break in slope. Flatter farmland with large, hedged fields surrounds these settlements to the south of this road. Landform rises to the north of this road to a more defined and gently rolling ridge which backdrops the settlements and is another key feature of their landscape setting. The deeply incised and densely wooded Forge valley (Landscape Character Type 6) runs into Castlegate on the northern edge of the settlements.

5.2 Settlement form and character

The historic cores of both West and East Ayton are closely associated with the River Derwent. More recent extensive residential development to the north-east and south-west has influenced the amorphous form of the settlement. Newer housing lying in the south-west part of West Ayton has little connection to the river but occupies an area of flatter ground set well away from the more visually prominent scarp slopes within the National Park.

West Ayton comprises a cluster of historic stone buildings located north of the A170 and west of the River Derwent. This includes a houses and a former mill. The part of West Ayton located to the south of the A170 includes some older residential buildings dating from the 17th and 18th centuries but also a concentration of late 19th century villas, largely constructed in brick, close to the former railway station. The Station House and station buildings remain although the wider station area is currently used as a NYCC depot. Many of the larger residential properties within the settlement stand in sizeable gardens planted with fine mature trees.

The historic core of East Ayton is focussed on Castlegate which sits above the Derwent valley and also the church of St John the Baptist which occupies a prominent position on the main A170 road through the village. The majority of this settlement comprises 20th century housing extending either side of the A170.

5.3 Key views, approaches and gateways

The key approaches to the settlements are from the well-used A170 and also from the Forge Valley road from the north. Visibility of the settlement is reduced from the south where views from minor roads are substantially filtered by thick, high hedgerows and field boundary trees. There is little sense of a gateway to the village perceived from the west from the A170 due to linear built development along the road, and absence of a landform or vegetation feature to form a definitive

threshold. Undistinguished and largely unscreened modern development on the eastern edge of East Ayton similarly influences the less emphatic approach to the settlement from the east experienced from the A170. The approach to the settlements from the north, however, is notably attractive as views over the open grassland of the small valley of the River Derwent to Ayton Castle are suddenly revealed at Castlegate after traversing the deeply incised and densely wooded Forge valley.

5.4 Settlement edges

The western edge of West Ayton, north of the A170, is formed by a minor road lined by thick hedges and mature ash and beech. The A170 and the many mature trees in the gardens of the 19th Century villas lying west of the former railway station form a robust settlement edge. A small group of early 20th century residential buildings lie either side of the A170 at the western extremity of West Ayton. These buildings are conspicuous and appear dislocated from the main settlement. The western boundary of the more recent areas of residential expansion south of the former railway line is weak with little mature planting or landform to provide a degree of screening and integration. The eastern boundaries of newer buildings in East Ayton are similarly hard and abrupt.

5.5 Heritage and nature conservation sites

Most of the part of West Ayton lying within the National Park is designated as a Conservation Area. This includes the late 19th Century villas along the A170. The historic core of East Ayton centred on Castlegate is also covered by a Conservation Area. There are 21 listed buildings and structures within the Conservation Area, including the Grade 1 listed castle, the Church of St John the Baptist and 18th century Ayton Bridge.

Ayton Castle is a Scheduled Monument which includes the ruinous 14th century castle and its setting within the Derwent valley. Forge Valley Woods National Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest border the northern part of the settlements.

There are a number of Tree Protection Orders, including a cluster in the grounds of the East Ayton Lodge Hotel between Castlegate and Moor Lane, and a cluster around West Acres Close.

5.6 Summary of key elements and features which may be sensitive to development

- The ridge lying to the north of the settlement, which is an important part of the setting to West Ayton and which is principally visible from Castlegate, the A170, and from Ayton Castle and its surrounds. Built development visible on the top of the ridge would be visually intrusive on the skyline and would diminish the setting of the settlement.
- The proximity of nearby Hutton Buscel (which has a strong architectural integrity and is a Conservation Area). Development on the north-western edge of West Ayton could appear to coalesce and affect the sense of separation and identity between the settlements.
- The Derwent valley which is a key feature aligned through the core of the settlement and provides an attractive resource for nature and recreation as well as being of cultural heritage importance.

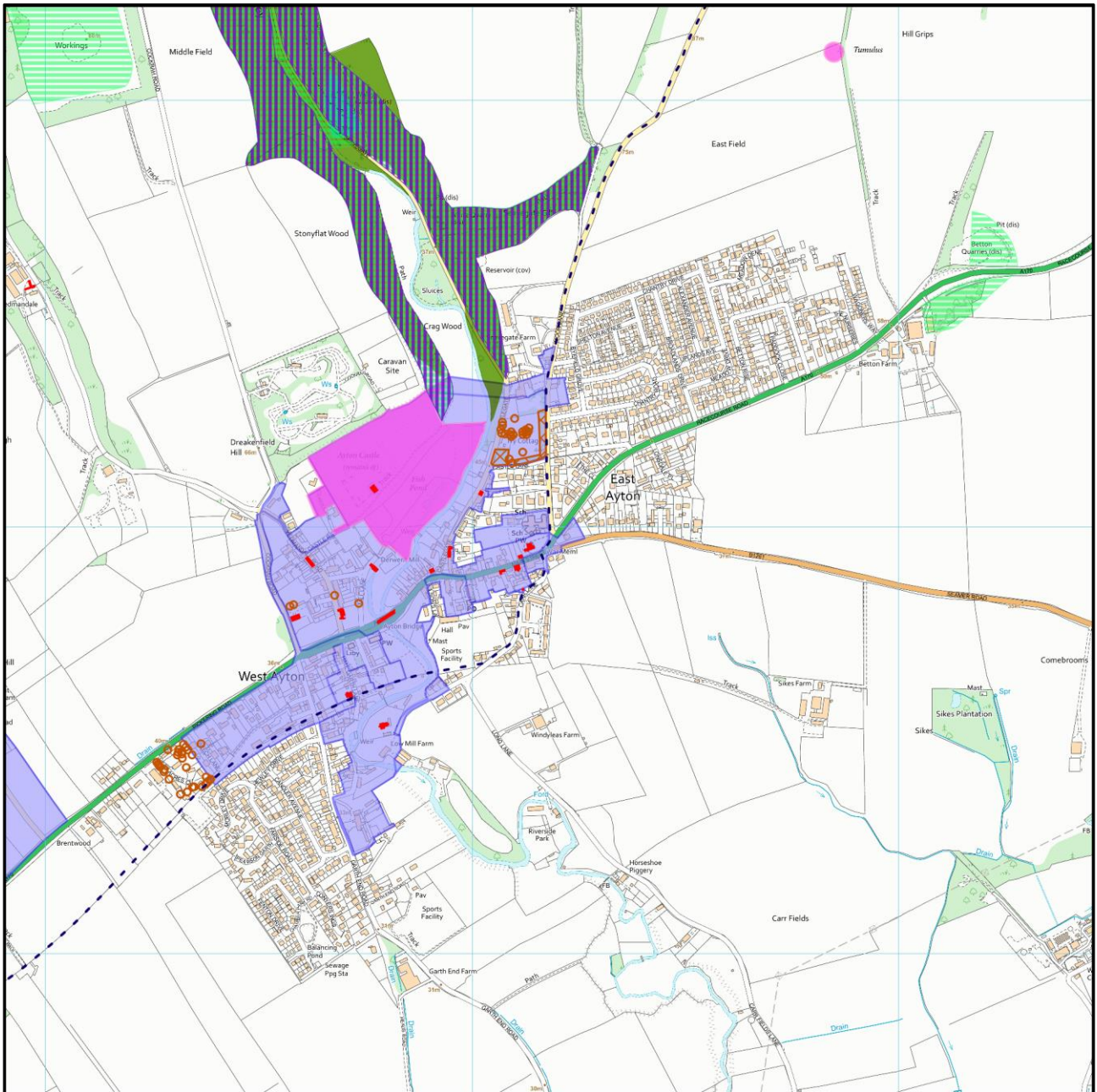
- Ayton Castle and its environs which together comprise a Scheduled Monument and also provide a diverse area of green space into the heart of the settlements.
- The many mature specimen trees, tree belts and thick hedgerows which soften settlement edges and filter views of built development. Individual trees (which include many mature purple beech) found on garden boundaries and roadsides contribute to the character of the settlement.
- Protected trees; Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and their settings.



View north-west from Castlegate of the River Derwent, with Ayton castle on the valley side. The elevated ridge forms a treed skyline



Approach from the west along the A170. The historic core is behind the trees visible over the field of oil-seed rape. Late Victorian/ Edwardian villas line the southern side of the A170



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North York Moors Landscape Character Assessment Update 2021

Settlement Sensitivity Study
 East and West Ayton



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| - - National Park Boundary | Conservation Areas | Ancient Semi-natural Woodlands |
| Scheduled Monuments | National Nature Reserves | Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites |
| Listed Buildings | Sites of Special Scientific Interest | Tree Preservation Orders |
| | | Tree Preservation Orders (Parcels) |

Map showing designated sites in East and West Ayton and its environs