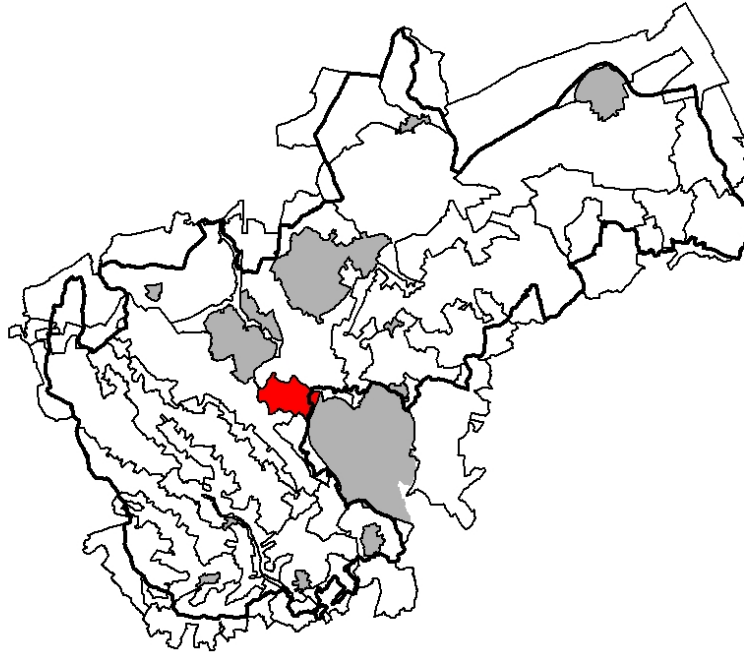


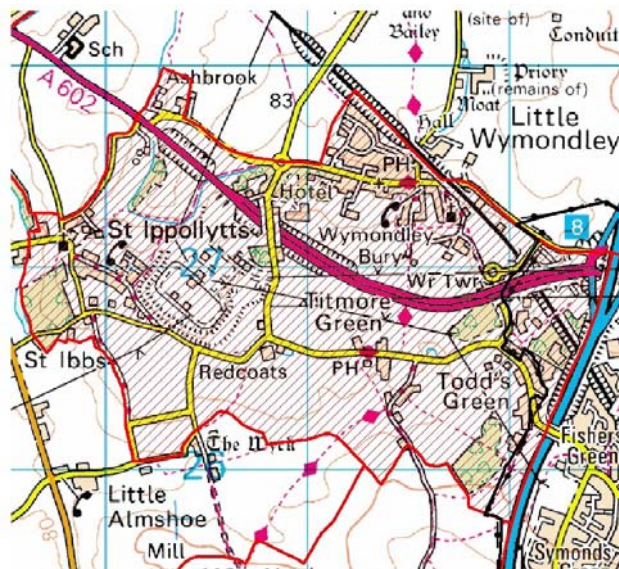
LOCATION



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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

Located to the southeast of Hitchin and the northwest of Stevenage.



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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Rolling landform disguised by mature enclosed character. Smaller scale more intimate historic landscape characterised by winding lanes, smaller settlements and scattered farmsteads in the local vernacular and historic place names. Land use mixed arable and grazing. High proportion of mature tree cover.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Rolling chalk landscape
- Irregular sized fields in arable with parcels of grazing adjacent to settlements
- Historic pattern of small winding lanes and historic place names
- Mature tree cover

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Flint church at St Ippollitts
- Wymondley transformer station
- Proximity of A1(M) and Stevenage to the east
- A602 crossing partly on embankment and partly in cutting

ASSESSMENT**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES****Geology & soils**

Graves, tills and sands derived from a glacial outwash channel produce mixed soils from calcareous on outcrops of the underlying Chalk to neutral or mildly acid on tills.

Topography

Gently rolling, domed land form, falls away to north, west and south boundaries.

Degree of slope

Side slopes fall away at between 1:10 to 1:20.

Altitude range

85m to 95m.

Hydrology

The spring fed Ash Brook runs across the northwestern part to the Ippollitts Brook. Random distribution of small ponds throughout.

Land cover and land use

Predominantly arable use but with parcels of grazing land associated with settlements. Woodland cover and land used by statutory undertakers. Former mineral extraction.

Vegetation and wildlife

Mainly oak and ash. Scattered mature hedgerow trees and relic patches of ancient woodland. Lucas Wood is listed on the ancient woodland inventory and is primarily composed of oak and hornbeam coppice, with frequent ash. Other area of similar coppice occur at Bury Wood and Margarets Wood.

Interesting grassland habitats are present in the region of Wymondley transformer station, reflecting acid, neutral and calcareous communities. The site is located within an old gravel pit. Semi-improved acid/neutral grassland occurs rarely eg at near Lucas Wood, calcareous grassland occurs at St Ippollitts.

Small-leaved sweet-briar rose, a nationally rare plant is recorded at Wymondley transformer station the only location in Hertfordshire where there are also important colonies of pyramidal and bee orchids.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The 11th century church of St Ippolyts (Church of S Ypollitus 1283 dedicated to St Hippolytus) stands in St Ippollitts village. The northern part of the Character Area is dominated by the village of Little Wymondley which in 1086 was divided between William of Robert Gernon and Adam Fitz Hubert of the Bishop of Bayeux. Medieval components of the village are the 12th century church of St. Mary and evidence for a medieval village and a moated site at Wymondley Bury. A Roman cemetery is also documented in the vicinity of the village.

Field pattern

The historic agricultural landscape pattern is comprised of pre-18th century irregular enclosure to the south and informal medieval parkland to the west. The area immediately to the south of Little Wymondley is post 1950s enclosure. The 1816 estate map of the parish of Ippollitts and 1st edition OS 6" map demonstrates considerable developments in the landscape. Of particular interest is the disappearance of almost all the woodland and the loss of many field boundaries by 1881. Ippollitts common was enclosed under an Act of 1881.

Transport pattern

The pattern of winding lanes is interrupted by modern roads such as the A1(M) and the A602. The mainline railway cuts across the north east corner of the area.

Settlements and built form

The historic settlement pattern is one of villages and farms. Dispersed, scattered farmsteads and strings of wayside dwellings such as Todds Green and Titmore Green. Larger, more recent settlements at Little Wymondley. Ecclesiastical architecture in the area is represented by the 11th century church of St Ippolyt and the later medieval church of St Mary, both constructed using flint with stone dressings. Traditional buildings in the area date from the 15th-16th century and include the close studded and jettied Olive Branch (previously Olive Branch Inn) at Ippollitts. Later buildings are represented by the late Georgian Wymondley House.

EVALUATION

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

The generally mature, well wooded quality of the area helps to integrate the existing settlements into the landscape, contrasting with landscape 'engineered' for highway infrastructure purposes or to support statutory undertakers plant.

Rarity & distinctiveness

Well established, historic landscape character, comparatively unusual for its distinctive quality.

VISUAL IMPACT

Notable detracting feature is the Wymondley transformer station and associated distributor pylons. The A602 dual carriageway linking Hitchin to Junction 8 of the A1(M), crosses the Character Area.

ACCESSIBILITY

The Hertfordshire Way long distance footpath crosses on a broadly north-south axis. Other footpaths cross and connect local settlements. The A602 has been designed to allow continuity of rights of way where paths have been crossed by the road.

COMMUNITY VIEW

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) have undertaken Tier B (Community of Place) consultations. Views of the local community have been sought and contributor's responses to each of the Character Areas will be analysed and a summary of the responses provided by HCC.

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

None

EVALUATION

CONDITION

Land cover change: Localised
 Age structure of tree cover: Mature
 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival: Scattered
 Management of semi-natural habitat: Not obvious
 Survival of cultural pattern: Declining/Relic
 Impact of built development: Moderate
 Impact of land-use change: Moderate

Matrix Score: Moderate

ROBUSTNESS

Impact of landform: Apparent
 Impact of land cover: Prominent
 Impact of historic pattern: Apparent
 Visibility from outside: Locally visible
 Sense of enclosure: Partial
 Visual unity: Coherent
 Distinctiveness/rarity: Unusual

Matrix Score: Moderate

CONDITION	GOOD	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	MODERATE	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
	POOR	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
ROBUSTNESS				

GUIDELINES

STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE:

Improve and Conserve

- Promote management of ancient woodlands to encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas
- Promote hedgerow restoration along the lines of historic field boundaries and for the creation of visual links between existing woodland areas
- Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire enclosures to new grazing areas
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Encourage the management of acidic neutral grassland areas
- Encourage the management of oak and hornbeam coppice