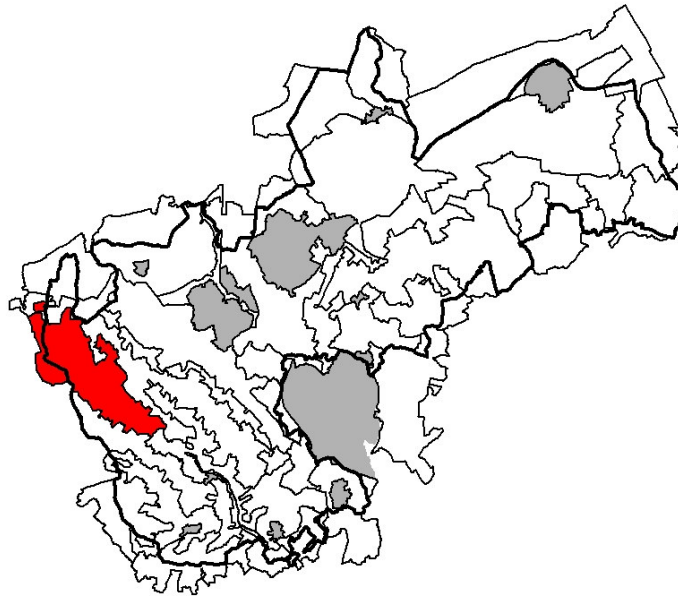


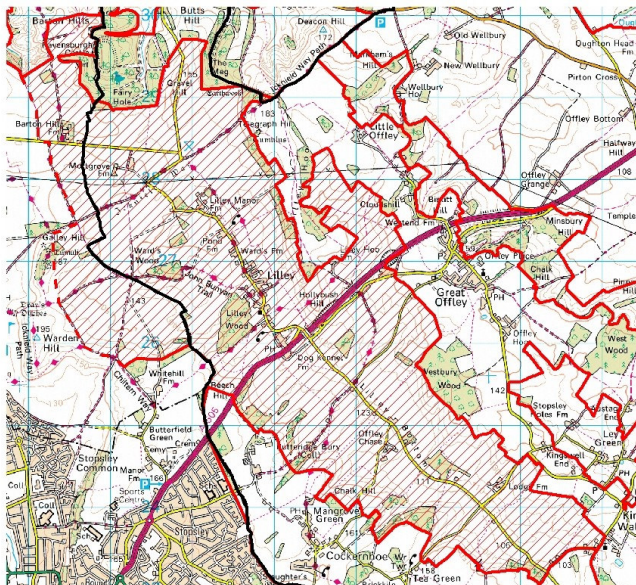
LOCATION



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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

Character Area extends from the Chilterns scarp at Hexton to Kings Walden in the south. The valley is up to 2 km wide to the west of Great Offley, gradually narrowing down to approximately 0.5 km at Kings Walden.



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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently undulating arable landscape, defined by sloping valley sides. Fields enclosed by closely cropped patchy hedges. Views generally filtered by patchy vegetation although some longer panoramic views from higher ground. Woodlands/plantations particularly on higher fringes, but generally scattered across the area. Red brick village settlements follow the line of the road in the valley bottom. Localised pasture and horse-grazing paddocks on fringes of settlements.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Predominantly arable land use
- Medium to large scale fields
- Mixed woodland blocks scattered along valley sides
- Ribbon development at Lilley follows road in valley bottom
- Remnant hedges and scattered mature hedgerow trees

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Church at Lilley
- Church at Kings Walden
- A505 cutting

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

Free-draining loamy calcareous brown soils over Chalk, but more acidic where Clay-with-Flints overlies the Chalk on the upper valley sides.

Topography

Broad dry valley with gently undulating valley bottom.

Degree of slope

1:40 to valley sides.

Altitude range

100m to 140m over the 7.5km length of the valley.

Hydrology

No discernable watercourse in valley bottom. Local ponds adjacent to settlements. 'Dene holes' produced by solution effects in the chalk at Lilley.

Land cover and land use

Predominantly arable landscape, with small plantations typical of Chilterns dip slopes. Small paddocks for horse grazing associated with local settlements.

Vegetation and wildlife

Mature beech are common as hedgerow or roadside trees, but with a higher proportion of oak, elm and hazel in the south. Remnant mature trees within fields where hedges have been removed. Holly and hazel are frequent components of hedges.

Some important road verge communities occur within this Character Area. The Icknield Way follows green lanes in some places. These may have interesting calcareous grassland communities, as well as ancient hedgerows. Other old trackways have similar combinations of chalk groundflora and ancient hedgerows, the latter supporting species indicative of a long continuity of woody cover. Gravel Hill at Hexton has unimproved calcareous grassland communities on road verges, others occur at Chalk Hill near Mangrove Green.

Woodlands are typically ash/beech/hazel. There are also frequent transitional stands to oak/hornbeam on more acidic soils. Nationally scarce great pignut occurs at Gravel Hill and native whitebeam is occasionally found in the hedgerows. The open farmland is frequented by brown hare and buzzards have recently become re-established

in the area. Lilley Park Wood is listed on the ancient woodland inventory and has a variety of woodland habitats present, dominated by oak and cherry, with an understorey of hazel coppice. Some coniferous replanting has also occurred. Stubbocks Wood is also an ancient woodland site. Woodland at Telegraph Hill is important for dormice.

Key area for declining farmland birds: turtle dove, linnets, yellowhammer, corn bunting and quail.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

During the reign of Edward the Confessor the manor of Lilley was held of Earl Harold by Leuera and by 1086 was in the possession of Geoffrey de Bech. There is a medieval settlement at Lilley. Prehistoric sites include ring ditches and linear ditches to the east and west of Lilley and a possible barrow cemetery to the southeast.

Field patterns

The historic agricultural landscape consists of a mixture of prairie fields with relict elements within, prairie fields with post-1950 boundary loss and 18th century and later enclosure. There is pre-18th century irregular enclosure and informal medieval parkland on the margins of Lilley and small areas of ancient woodland to the southeast. The parish of Lilley was enclosed by an Act of 1768.

Transport pattern

The local road (Lilley Bottom) follows the valley from Kings Walden to Lilley village. A number of local lanes cut down the valley side and act as feeder or distributors linking Lilley Bottom to areas outside the valley. The area is also crossed by the A505 dual carriageway.

Settlements and built form

The historic landscape pattern is sparse characterised by a village and farmsteads. The village of Lilley extends in a ribbon development along the head of the valley. Additionally there are scattered farmsteads or dwellings accessed from Lilley Bottom Lane. Generally the valley lacks development. The church of St. Peter at Lilley was built by Thomas Jekyll in 1870-71. The early 19th century windmill on Breachwood Ridge is visible on the skyline from Lilley Bottom.

EVALUATION**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The Character Area is generally visually contained by the valley sides and has a peaceful rural character. Patchy hedgerows filter views in the valley bottom. Panoramic views are common from the higher valley slopes.

Rarity & distinctiveness

The valley is typical of the Chiltern character albeit that its scale and comparative openness is unusual when compared to the narrower more incised valleys elsewhere in Hertfordshire.

VISUAL IMPACT

The cutting formed by the A505 has not been integrated into the landscape.

ACCESSIBILITY

The valley is crossed by a number of rights of way. These include the Ickniel Way and the John Bunyan Trail in the north of the Character Area.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

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

AONB	The Chilterns
LC1	Landscape Conservation Area
GD 1914	Putteridge Bury
SSSI	Barton Hills (Beds)

EVALUATION

CONDITION

Land cover change:	Widespread
Age structure of tree cover:	Mature
Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:	Relic
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:	Prominent
Impact of land cover:	Prominent
Impact of historic pattern:	Insignificant
Visibility from outside:	Locally visible
Sense of enclosure:	Contained
Visual unity:	Coherent
Distinctiveness/rarity:	Frequent

Matrix Score: **Strong**

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				

EVALUATION

INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Landscape Character Sensitivities

- A largely rural character throughout the Character Area, with an absence of both development and other detractors, which would be vulnerable to the addition of urbanizing features
- Scattered deciduous hanging woodlands along the sides of the valley, which are vulnerable to lowering water tables, lack of management or to removal
- The pattern of narrow and twisting minor lanes crossing the valley and feeding into the local road in the valley bottom would be vulnerable to improvements to/ upgrading of the roads
- The traditional character of Lilley village would be vulnerable to inappropriate or unsympathetic development and any form of development not in scale with the village
- Areas of surviving chalk grassland and ancient hedgerows, particularly along green lanes, are vulnerable to further loss
- Putteridge Bury historic parkland is a registered garden that falls partly within this Character Area, which could be at risk from development pressure and inconsistent management
- Good public access through numerous rights of way, including the Icknield Way and the John Bunyan Trail
- Part of the Character Area falls within the Chilterns AONB

Overall Lilley Bottom is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. The gently undulating arable farmland creates an enclosed valley with limited urban influence.

Visual Sensitivities

- Cross valley views are an important feature of the Character Area
- Undeveloped skylines are present on both sides of the valley
- Panoramic views are common from the higher valley slopes

In visual terms, Lilley Bottom is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. Views within the valley and towards the undeveloped, wooded skylines are relatively open and would be sensitive to the introduction of urbanizing features.

LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Lilley Bottom is considered to be of **moderate high landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Lilley Bottom are the intactness of the valley, the lack of incongruous elements, a recognisable sense of place, the striking landform, the visual interest, memorable uninterrupted views, and the perceived distance from settlement, the sense of openness and visible expressions of the local geology.

EVALUATION

CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT

Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. It would be of an inappropriate scale and would introduce elements that would urbanise the landscape, altering the character and removing the existing key characteristics. Visual impacts would also be high, due to the panoramic and cross valley views currently experienced. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing narrow, twisting lanes, which could erode the character of the landscape. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and could reduce accessibility to the countryside.

The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)

This type of development would not be entirely appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. Visual impacts could be high, due to the panoramic and cross valley views currently experienced. Some small scale expansion of Lilley, carefully designed and in keeping with the existing character of the village, could possibly be accommodated.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be moderate to low.

Major transport developments/improvements

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the largely rural character of most routes at present. Upgrading of existing narrow, twisting lanes could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low.

Commercial/warehouse estates

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. There would also be restricted areas of level land for this type of development and substantial earthworks would be likely to be required. Existing minor roads would be inappropriate for any significant larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs. Any upgrading of the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

Individual large/bulky buildings

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings could be highly visible within the Character Area if not carefully located would erode the rural and intimate character of Lilley Bottom.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

Large scale open uses

The landform within Lilley Bottom would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without considerable ground modelling. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics. The minor roads are unlikely to have capacity to accommodate development or would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs, which would further dilute the landscape character. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

Mineral extraction/waste disposal

This Character Area is currently relatively undisturbed and rural in appearance. Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction or waste disposal would not be in keeping with the character of Lilley bottom. The minor roads would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. Larger scale extraction could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside. Restoration proposals for any consented schemes should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low to moderate. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

Incremental small scale development

There may be some very limited capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of a vernacular form or style and in keeping with the rural character. However, due to the existing open and undeveloped character any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the rural and contained character of Lilley Bottom.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low to moderate.

Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines

There are very few urbanising elements within this Character Area at present. There are currently few detractors in the areas. New utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines would have a major impact on the rural character of Lilley Bottom. Large scale developments, tall elements such as these would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as potentially visible in surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low.

GUIDELINES	Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire
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STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE

Strategy: Conserve and Restore

Landscape management guidelines

- Promote management of ancient woodland 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
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Encourage the planting of beech woodlands on the steeper valley sides
- Encourage the development of new calcareous grassland habitats
- Where appropriate for sites on the ancient woodland register encourage the management of hazel coppice understorey
- Encourage the replanting of existing coniferous woodland with deciduous species

Built development guidelines

- Conserve the traditional character of Lilley village, ensuring that any development located on the edge of the village uses appropriate vernacular materials and features to avoid inappropriate visual intrusion
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- Encourage the retention of vegetation along the A505 to ensure that it remains screened
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in panoramic rural views
- Retain the rural character of Lilley Bottom, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area
- Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations, such as on upper valley slopes or where they would be visible on the currently undeveloped skyline
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or the loss of surviving calcareous grassland habitats and ancient hedgerows
- Conserve and enhance Putteridge Bury
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area