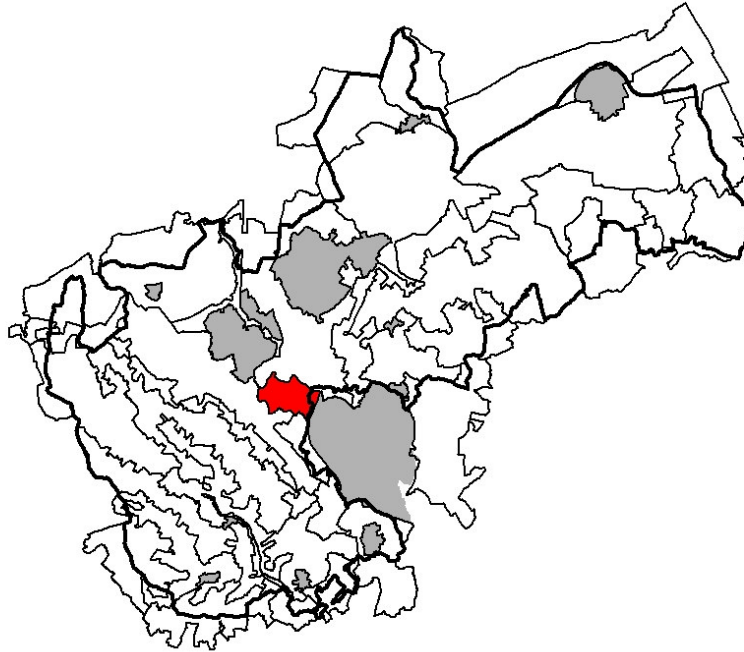


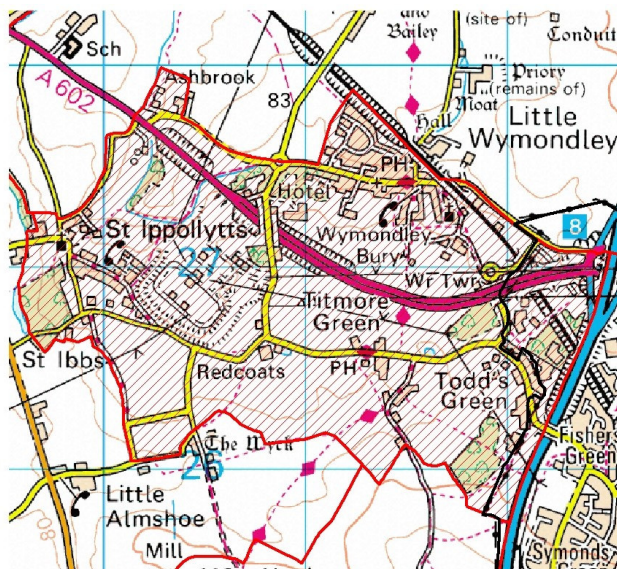
## LOCATION



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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.

Little Wymondley has important pipistrelle bat roosts.

**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**

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

**EVALUATION**

**INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**

**Landscape Character Sensitivities**

- The relatively small scale rolling landform landscape with small settlements and scattered farmsteads
- Patches and belts of mature/tall woodland of predominantly Oak and Ash including old specimen trees. The woodland is vulnerable to lack of management, incursion or removal
- Small fields and paddocks with well defined and vegetated boundaries surround the settlements. The area would be vulnerable to the removal of hedgerows and boundary vegetation
- The village of Little Wymondley, which lies to the north of the area would be vulnerable to inappropriate or unsympathetic development and any proposals, which are not in scale with the existing settlement
- The small settlements are characterised by village greens, which would be vulnerable to inappropriate development or unsympathetic management
- St Ippollytts church is located on upper ground and is a significant feature in the character area. The landmark would be vulnerable to unsympathetic development
- Enclosed farms and isolated settlements would be vulnerable to development or removal of associated boundary vegetation.
- There are limited public rights of way in the area. However the Hertfordshire Way does go through the character area and would be vulnerable to inappropriate or unsympathetic development
- The winding minor roads enclosed by hedgerows, which feed into the A602 and A1 would be vulnerable to improvements or upgrading.
- The character area consists of significant infrastructure including the A602, the

railway and it is bordered to the east by the A1. These elements are existing detractors to the character of the area.

- Wymondley transformer station and associated electricity pylons stride through the character area, creating an interrupted and fragmented character. They are an existing detractor to the landscape character.

Overall Wymondley and Titmore Green is considered to be of **low to moderate sensitivity**. The gently undulating arable farmland creates an enclosed character. However the area has been degraded by a number of factors including the infrastructure and the electricity transformer station.

**Visual Sensitivities**

- Views of St Ippollytts church on the skyline and views from the church into the valley
- Views from the character area into neighbouring parkland style character area (Langley Valley)
- Setting of the traditional villages and village greens

In visual terms, Wymondley and Titmore Green is considered to be of **low sensitivity**. Views within the character area are degraded by a number of factors including the infrastructure and the electricity transformer station.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE**

Overall Wymondley and Titmore Green is considered to be of **low landscape value**. Although there are a few isolated unusual views within the Character Area, the area has many incongruous elements including: the transport routes and high levels of human and urban influence on the landscape.

## 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 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.

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 appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural character. The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low.

#### Major transport developments/improvements

This type of development would only be appropriate for improvements of the existing A1 and A602 within this Character Area. However it would be imperative that existing shelterbelts and earthwork mitigation were maintained or replaced. Upgrading of existing rural roads could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the settlements in the Character Area.

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

#### 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.

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 should be balanced by woodland shelterbelts and hedgerows to reflect the existing character of the area.

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

#### Large scale open uses

The landform within Wymondley and Titmore Green 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 landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

#### Mineral extraction/waste disposal

Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction would not be in keeping with the character of Wymondley and Titmore Green. The minor roads would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. 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 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 in keeping with the rural character and incorporated into existing settlements such as Little Wymondley. However, due to the intimate scale of the landscape any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the rural character of Wymondley and Titmore Green.

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 existing urbanising elements within this Character Area at present. The Wymondley transformer station and associated electricity pylons are currently detractors in the area. New utilities developments would have an impact on the intimate scale and rural character of Wymondley and Titmore Green. Large scale developments and tall elements would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as potentially visible from surrounding Character Areas.

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

**GUIDELINES**

Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire

**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
- 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 managements of acidic neutral grassland areas
- Encourage the management of Oak and Hornbeam coppice
- Restore and enhance existing ponds, which provide valuable habitat for protected species e.g. Great Crested Newts
- Manage areas of paddocks and promote appropriate enclosures with hedges rather than wire fences

**Built development guidelines**

- Conserve the traditional character of the settlements, ensuring that any development located within or on the edge of the villages uses appropriate vernacular materials and features to avoid inappropriate visual impact
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- Encourage the retention and additional planting of vegetation along the A1 and A602 to enhance screening
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen any new development
- Retain the rural character and intimate scale of Wymondley and Titmore Green, 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 ground or where they would be visible on the 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
- Ensure that lighting associated with new development does not create additional urbanising influences on the Character Area
- Use the opportunity of any developments to create new accessible green infrastructure