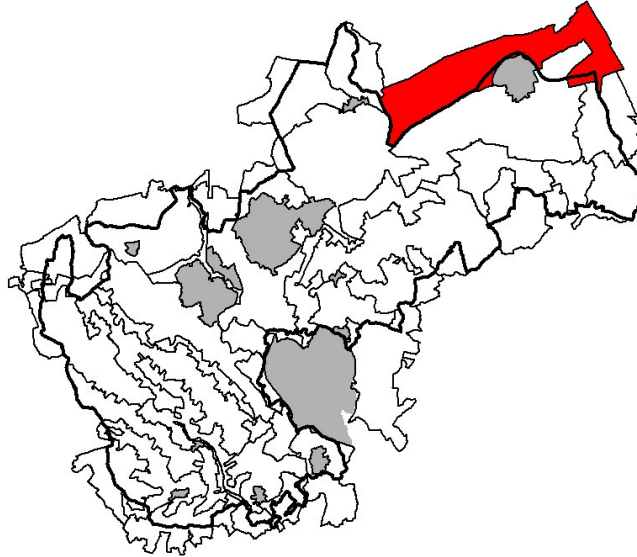


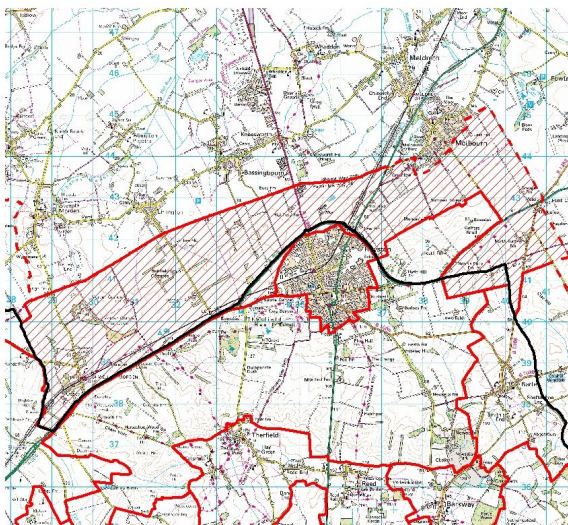
## LOCATION



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### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

Odsey lies just outside the District adjacent to Ashwell and Morden Station. The area extends in a band north of and parallel to the A505 and continues eastwards past Royston. Only small parts (south of Odsey and adjacent to Royston) fall within the District. Southeast of Royston the Character Area extends into the chalk scarp landscape as a local valley feature which is occupied by the Wardington Bottom Drain. The northern boundary is to be determined by further studies undertaken by South Cambridgeshire District Council.



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### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently rolling landform with localised chalk knolls (outliers). Large scale arable fields set out in an ordered pattern of rectilinear fields and lanes with straight boundaries. Extensive plantations around Ashwell and Morden otherwise linear tree belts along field boundaries. Remnant field boundaries.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Gently rolling chalk landform with chalk knolls
- Strong pattern of rectilinear fields
- Dominance of arable
- Linear tree belts
- Sparse settlement pattern
- Long distance views along straight roads

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- A505 dual carriageway runs along southern boundary
- Baldock to Royston railway running parallel to A505
- Abuts suburban boundary to Royston
- (Lower) Icknield Way (Ashwell Street track) runs along northern boundary

## ASSESSMENT

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

Chalk overlain by free draining loamy brown soils.

**Topography**

Low lying, gently rolling landform.

**Degree of slope**

Typically 1:60 but with localised undulations.

**Altitude range**

50m to 80m.

**Hydrology**

Network of local ditches draining generally northwards.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Ecological data is available only for the area within North Hertfordshire.

Remnants of chalk grassland on the A505 (Icknield Way) known to support purple milk vetch a rare chalk grassland species, are being lost to scrub. Road banks of the Royston Bypass include some secondary calcareous grassland and there are remnants of rough calcareous grassland on the edge of Royston with associated common lizard.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

A number of archaeological sites have been revealed by aerial photographs to the west near Royston. A Bell Barrow lies 500m south of Morden Grange plantation in the southwest.

**Field Pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape pattern is comprised of 18th century and later enclosure and post 1950s enclosure. The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosure incorporates some prehistoric boundary features like the Icknield Way and its associated trackways. A 20th century stud farm lies to the southeast of the area.

**Transport Pattern**

The A505 dual carriageway runs along the southern boundary and the Lower Icknield Way runs along the northern boundary. The railway line bisects the area running parallel to the A505.

**Settlements and Built Form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by sparse settlement consisting mainly of farmsteads.

**EVALUATION****VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

Vast scale open landscape with linear shelterbelts and dispersed farmsteads. Long distance views, long straight roads.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

This landscape type is comparatively uncommon within the District.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The A505 corridor and the parallel railway are the most notable features. Character Area abuts suburban fringe of Royston.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Well served by regular pattern of roads and tracks. Comparatively low level of footpath coverage.

**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**

LC2	Landscape Conservation Area
SAM CB99	Sites revealed by aerial photographs: Royston
SAM CB244	Mile Ditches: Royston
SAM 24419	Bell Barrow 500m South of Morden Grange Plantation (Cambs)
SAM 24420	Bowl Barrow on Goffers Knoll

**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

Land cover change: Widespread  
 Age structure of tree cover: Mixed  
 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival: Relic  
 Management of semi-natural habitat: Poor  
 Survival of cultural pattern: Declining/Relic  
 Impact of built development: Low  
 Impact of land-use change: High

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**Matrix Score:** **Poor**

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**ROBUSTNESS**

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

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**Matrix Score:** **Moderate**

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<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 Character Area as a whole is relatively flat to the east and more undulating to the west. However, the parcels of land within North Hertfordshire are generally relatively flat.
- Roadside shelterbelts and small blocks of woodland are characteristic of the wider Odsey - Royston Character Area and would be sensitive to removal. Some new woodland belts have been created in parts of the North Hertfordshire area.
- Hedgerows within the wider Character Area are generally intact and well managed. This is less the case within the parts of Odsey – Royston that are in North Hertfordshire, where less characteristic post and rail fences are more likely to form boundaries.
- Roads throughout the Character Area are generally open, allowing views across the Character Area. However, within North Hertfordshire this is less common, with tree belts along some roads.
- Land use within the Character Area is generally arable farmland. Smaller scale pasture and horsiculture has been introduced in some locations. Areas within North Hertfordshire have been left as rough grassland.
- Built form and business park/industrial development on the edges of Royston have a strong influence on the character of the areas within North Hertfordshire. The edges to these developments are generally intrusive and not softened by vegetation.
- The A505 and the Baldock to Royston railway line have disturbed and fragmented the parts of the Character Area within North Hertfordshire, particularly where the elevated A505 creates a physical barrier to the rest of the Character Area. These elements require more careful integration.

Overall the areas of Odsey - Royston within North Hertfordshire are considered to be of **low sensitivity**. The parcels of land that remain in North Hertfordshire are greatly influenced by the urban area of Royston and fragmented from the remainder of the Character Area.

## Visual Sensitivities

- The Character Area as a whole provides the setting for the adjacent Therfield Heath, which is located within the Scarp Slopes South of Royston Landscape Character Area.
- Whilst there are open, long distance views within much of the Character Area, the parcels of land within North Hertfordshire are partially contained by vegetation or landform.
- The areas of land within North Hertfordshire are not visually linked to the rest of the Character Area.
- There are views into the North Hertfordshire parts of the Character Area from properties and developments on the edges of Royston.
- Elevated views from the A505 where it is on embankment.

In visual terms, the areas of Odsey - Royston within North Hertfordshire are considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. Views into these areas are more limited than into the Character Area as a whole but they still play a role in the setting of Therfield Heath.

## LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Odsey - Royston is considered to be of **low landscape value**. Although there is a sense of openness within the Character Area, there is a lack of memorable views, the area is heavily influenced by significant habitation, there are high levels of human intervention in the landscape, a lack of distinctive landform and a lack of vernacular built form to contribute to a sense of place.

**EVALUATION****CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT****Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its urban fringe location and the fact that it is already disturbed and influenced by built form and infrastructure. Careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edges of the development would be required and the effect on the setting of Therfield Heath.

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

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its urban fringe location and the fact that it is already disturbed and influenced by built form and infrastructure. Careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edges of the development would be required and the effect on the setting of Therfield Heath.

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

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would not be relatively appropriate within this Character Area, due to the presence of both the A505 and the railway line at present. Improvements to these transport links could present the opportunity to improve their fit within the landscape and soften their appearance and the effect on the setting of Therfield Heath.

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

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would be in keeping with existing land uses adjacent to some parts of this character area. Careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edges of the development would be required and the effect on the setting of Therfield Heath.

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

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

This type of large scale development would be in keeping with existing land uses adjacent to some parts of this character area. However, more intensive development of the Character Area may be more appropriate when surrounding land uses are taken into account. Careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edges of the development would be required and the effect on the setting of Therfield Heath.

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

**Large scale open uses**

It would be possible to accommodate large scale 'open' uses within this Character Area. However, this would be less in keeping with other surrounding land uses.

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

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

Mineral extraction would not be appropriate in Odsey – Royston due to the close proximity to built up areas.

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

**EVALUATION****Incremental small scale development**

Incremental small scale development could be in keeping with existing land uses adjacent to some parts of this character area. However, more intensive development of the Character Area may be more appropriate when surrounding land uses are taken into account. Careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edges of the development would be required.

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

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

It may be possible to accommodate some forms of utilities developments in Odsey – Royston. However, due to the close proximity to built up areas many forms of utilities developments would not be appropriate.

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

<b>GUIDELINES</b>	Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire
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**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE**

**Strategy: Improve and Restore**

**Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote creation of new woodland and for existing woodlands encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Promote the creation of buffer zones between areas of intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas
- Promote hedgerow restoration to create visual links between existing woodland areas
- Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire fencing 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

**Built development guidelines**

- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in rural views
- Avoid the location of new development in locations where it may intrude into the setting of Therfield Heath
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing vegetation or the loss of surviving hedgerows or shelterbelts
- Ensure that lighting associated with new development does not create additional urbanising influences on the wider Character Area or Therfield Heath
- Promote the softening of the existing edge of Royston
- Encourage enhanced integration of the transport corridors in the Character Area