

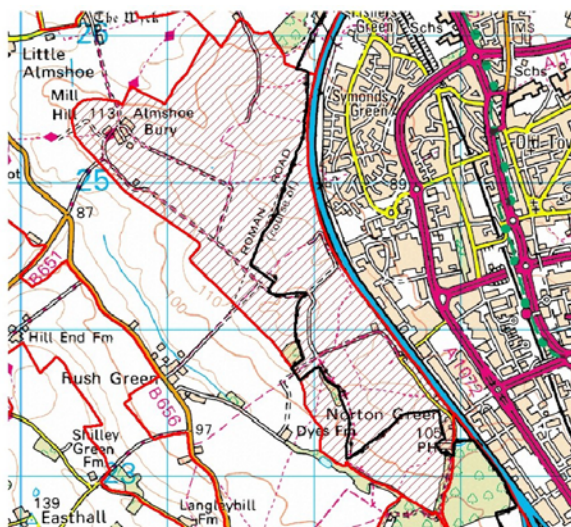
## LOCATION



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### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The area lies immediately to the west of Stevenage and the A1(M). It extends from Titmore Green in the north to Knebworth woodlands in the south.



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### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently undulating plateau. Open, exposed landscape with views out in all directions. Very large arable fields with localised remnant sections of hedgerow. Character Area includes small deciduous woodland copses. Almshoe Bury farmstead located on exposed promontory to north.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Upstanding open plateau landscape
- Large arable fields
- Small deciduous woodland copses

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Kitching Lane recreational route
- Landfill site to north of Norton Green
- Almshoe Bury Farm on local promontory

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

Free draining loamy brown soils over Chalk to north. Chalk overlain by Boulder clay to south.

**Topography**

Generally flat plateau dipping to north west and south.

**Degree of slope**

Generally 1:40.

**Altitude range**

112m to 122m.

**Hydrology**

There are no significant water courses, however, there are a number of small ponds within copses.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable land use with some land lying fallow. Small number of copses. Area to north of Norton Green is a former landfill site, which has not been restored to agricultural use.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Remnant hedges include blackthorn, hawthorn and field maple. Woodland species include oak, ash and field maple.

A few ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodlands are present within this Character Area. They are typically dominated by hornbeam, which may be coppiced. A range of ancient woodland indicators is also present.

Green lanes such as Kitching Green Lane are ecologically interesting, as they frequently have unimproved or semi-improved grassland flora, scrub, old banks and ancient hedgerow communities. Some species rich and essentially unimproved meadows are located west of Norton Green. These meadows support plant communities typical of acidic conditions.

The open fields are of local value for farmland birds including grey partridge.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Aerial photographs of the north of the Character Area demonstrate evidence for a circular enclosure with a single entrance and a prehistoric ring ditch.

At the time of the Domesday Survey The Bishop of Bayeux held 1 hide of land in Almshoe (Almshoe 1086). It is thought that Isabella, wife of Edward II, and her daughter hunted in the vicinity.

**Field pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape pattern consists of a mixture of pre-18th century irregular enclosure and prairie fields with both post-1950s boundary loss and with relict elements within the north of the Character Area. The central part is dominated by pre-18th century unenclosed common arable while the southeastern termination contains pre-18th century enclosure and commons with an open margin. To the east only smaller fragments of the field pattern remain. The western and northern fringes are open and unenclosed.

**Transport pattern**

Area not crossed by any roads, however, the A1(M) forms the eastern boundary.

**Settlements and built form**

The historic settlement pattern is sparse with no documented traditional buildings. Small group of comparatively recent houses at Norton Green. Almshoe Bury farmstead on local promontory to the northwest is listed Grade I. There is also an early 17<sup>th</sup> century barn listed Grade II.

**EVALUATION**

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The plateau landscape lies at an elevated level in the surrounding landscape and provides long distance views across the Langley valley to the west and towards the townscape of Stevenage to the east.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

The landscape type is frequent in the county.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

There are a few low key detracting features, namely the landfill site north of Norton Green and the gypsy caravan site. Both features are close to the A1(M). Traffic on the motorway and the urban edge of Stevenage dominate the eastern edge of the Character Area.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There are a number of footpaths and bridleways that cross the Character Area, however, access from the east is limited to bridges or underpasses crossing the motorway. Kitching Lane is now a leisure route, excluding vehicular access. Part of the Hertfordshire Way long distance path crosses 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**

LC1 Landscape Conservation Area

**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: Interrupted  
 Impact of built development: Low  
 Impact of land-use change: High

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

**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: Frequent

**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 Restore**

- Promote management of woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Encourage the restoration of the landfill area (Stevenage) north of Norton Green
- 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 restoration of traditional field hedges
- Protect and preserve the character and ecological diversity of Kitching Green Lane
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network