



# Area 17

## Rudgegeway and Tytherington Ridge



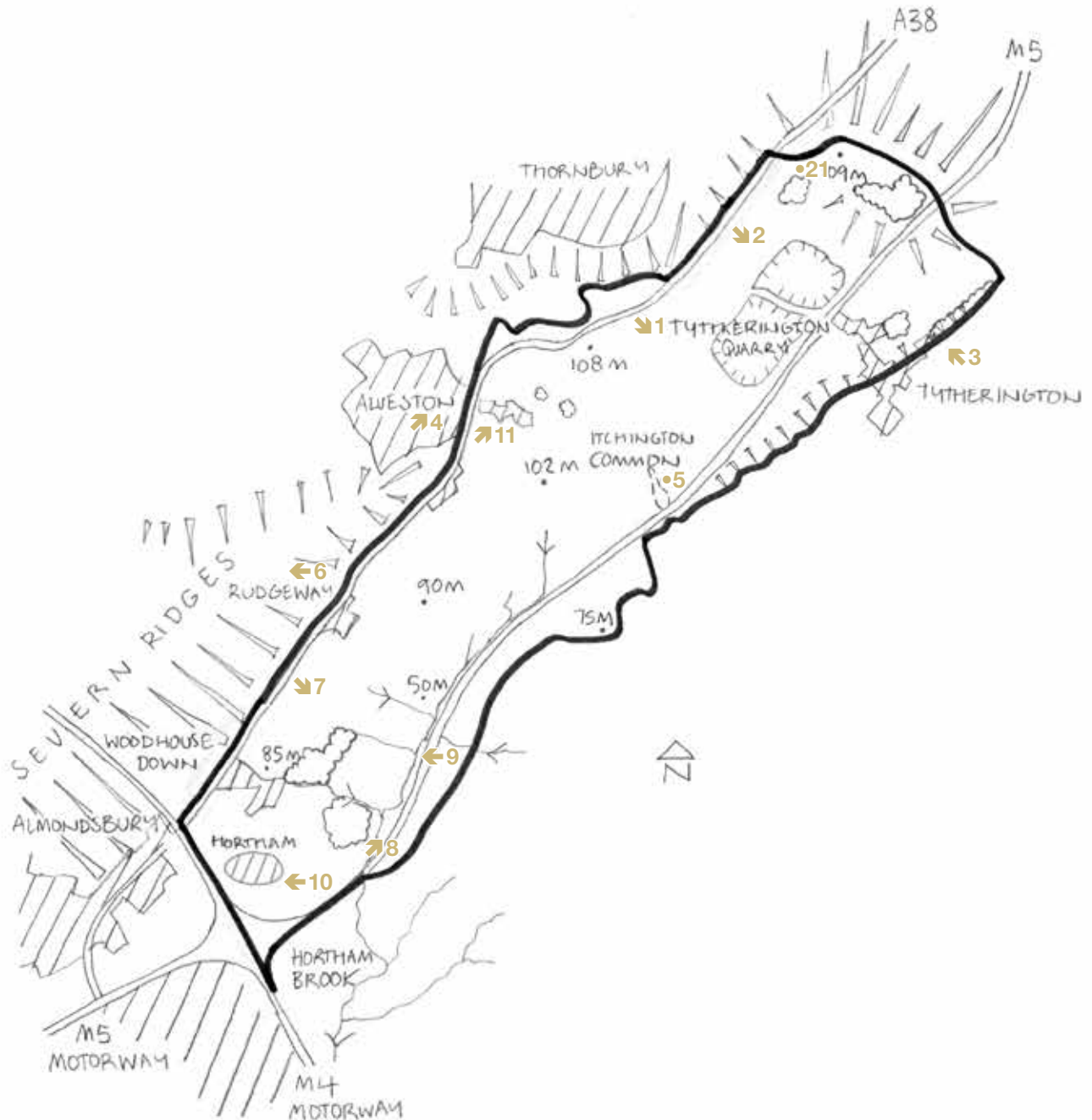
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Key

↖11 Photograph viewpoints

Scale: not to scale



**Figure 52**

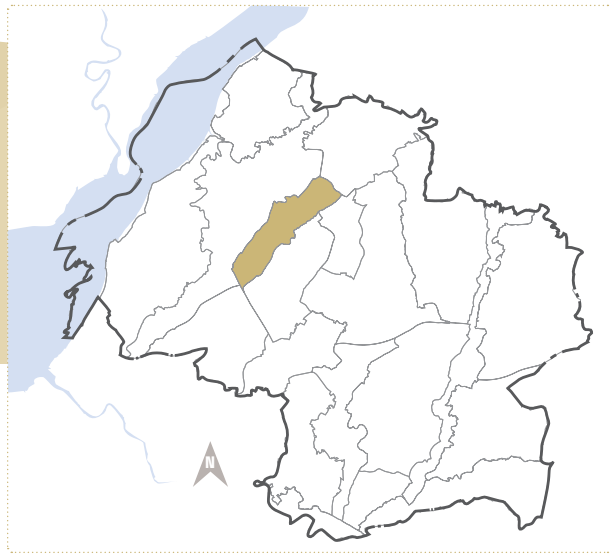
Ruggeway and Tytherington Ridge

Sketch Map

# Area 17

## Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge

**The Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge character area is a broad open ridge comprising a pastoral landscape, punctuated by woodland and copses and dissected and defined by roads.**



## Key Characteristics

- A broad linear ridgeline, with ridge/plateau and gentle slopes to the east, seen as a backdrop to the vale and plain beyond.
- Open to semi-enclosed predominantly pastoral landscape of regular, medium sized fields with a mix of thick, clipped and intermittent hedges and stock fencing.
- Limited common land at several sites to the north and east.
- There are a number of areas of calcareous grassland across this character area that add both visual interest and provide important habitat for a diverse range of flora including areas of species rich grassland.
- Regular dispersed pattern of copses throughout, with large areas of deciduous woodland in the south and north and containing sections of the western boundary along the A38, while also providing habitat for notable species including European Protected Species. Limited mature tree specimens are associated with some older farmsteads, occasionally within hedgerows or fields.
- Occasional extensive views from the western boundary include the Severn Estuary and beyond. The eastern slopes look towards the Cotswold Scarp.
- Extensive road pattern of M5, M4/M5 interchange and A38 define this area. B4427 and other minor roads connect and cross the area.
- Settlement is limited, with small villages/hamlets and ribbon settlement along roads. Stone walls line some roads, most notably sections of the A38 and roads adjacent to older farms.
- One large active quarry that includes a geological SSSI, and a number of powerlines lie to the north and one to the south.
- The Hortham hospital site has been redeveloped for housing, while retaining much of its strong and characteristic tree cover.

### Location

The Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge character area extends north eastwards from the M4/M5 interchange (adjacent to the northern edge of the Bristol conurbation) and is located centrally within South Gloucestershire.

The western boundary follows the often distinct landform change between the upper slopes of the Severn Ridges and open plateau/rolling ridgeline of this area. (Figure 55)

The eastern boundary marks a transition between the lower eastern slopes of this area and the landform of the Tytherington Plain and Earthcott Vale. (Figures 28 & 31)

The northern boundary defines the end of the ridge and its approximate skyline, the descending slopes beyond containing the Falfield Vale. (Figure 22)

The southern boundary follows the M4 and includes part of the M4 / M5 interchange. (See Figures 55).

### Physical Influences

The Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge area consists of Jurassic limestone, interwoven with a small proportion of alluvium and Carboniferous limestone. Soils are predominantly Pelostagnogleys.

This combination of geological strata creates a broad gentle ridgeline, on a north east-south west axis at approximately 100 metres a.o.d., with a small plateau to the east of Alveston. Descending, gently rolling, south east facing slopes fall towards and contain the Tytherington Plain and Earthcott Vale at between 50-65 metres a.o.d. Slopes are convex towards the south, with a small bluff forming Tytherington Hill to the north. The boundary of the area is located at the foot of the hill.

The M4/M5 interchange, partly within this area to the south west, forms a large scale focus of

road infrastructure and accompanying man-made landform of earthworks, road embankments, prominent gantries and overbridges. The M4, to the north west of the interchange, cuts into rising ground of the Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge and Severn Ridge beyond this area.

Surface land drainage is minimal, with a few drainage ditches along field boundaries feeding the Hortham Brook to the south. A number of small ponds are scattered across the area, generally near farms.

### Land Cover

The character area is largely a pastoral landscape, with regular shaped, medium sized fields. The fields are divided by a mix of thick, clipped and intermittent hedges, with some areas of fencing around paddocks nearer to the A38 (Photo 7).

There are limited mature hedgerow trees. Mature tree specimens are often associated with old farmsteads and more limited elsewhere. Small regular shaped copses of deciduous woodland occur frequently scattered throughout the area. Large areas of woodland lie to the south in the vicinity of Woodhouse Down (Photo 9), to the north at Milbury Heath, with a cluster of smaller woodlands and copses around Tytherington (Photo 3).

Limited areas of common land lie to the north east of the area, with a concentration of small sites around Tytherington at Baden Hill, (site of a small disused quarry), Tytherington Hill (ancient woodland and open undulating ground) and Hilly Upman (open playing fields).

The larger area of Itchington Common falls within this area. The common is severed by the M5 and comprises rough grassland, with dense boundary vegetation (Photo 5).

Horse paddocks are generally limited in distribution, largely located off the A38 corridor.

Tytherington Quarry occupies an extensive area to the north, comprising a plant area (Photo

1) and areas of excavation which have been worked sequentially southwards, parallel to the M5. The edge of the site is largely contained by hedgerows and hedgerow trees, supplemented in places with earth mounds, and a developing woodland structure.

The Castle Hill Fort to the west of the village of Tytherington and partly quarried, is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Little Abbey Camp, to the west of Grovesend, is severed by the A38 and comprises a fortified enclosure which is also a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

### Biodiversity

The Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge's mosaic of grassland, woodland and farmland with the Hortham Brook and its tributaries to the south and hedgerows providing connectivity comprise important habitat for a diverse range of species.

This character area includes approximately 17.5 hectares designated as ancient woodland in two medium size woods, representing approximately 40 percent of the total woodland within this character area. Several areas of broadleaf woodland at Tytherington and Hortham are designated as SNCI. Key species likely to be associated with the broadleaved woodland include bats and dormice both of which are present across the District and are UK priority species with associated Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP).

There are seven sites within the Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge designated as SNCIs for the calcareous grassland present on the sites and includes species-rich grassland. This diverse habitat supports a range of invertebrates and ant hills are a regular feature. These invertebrates in turn provide a food source for mammals including bats

There appears to be good connectivity for species such as these between the wooded areas and other habitats via hedgerows and scattered trees.

As there are few watercourses within the Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge area, species within these habitats are likely to be sensitive to any changes impacting upon the water body, this could include water voles in this area. Ponds and pools within the area will support amphibians such as great crested newts (a European Protected Species).

The majority of the agricultural land use within this area is pastoral farmland with small areas of arable farmland. Arable farmland provides ground nesting and the winter stubble provides foraging opportunities for farmland birds including some listed as being Globally Threatened Red list species.

There are disused and working quarries across this area. A disused railway line is associated with the quarry and part of the line is tunneled. Underground quarries, mines and tunnels provide an ideal habitat for many species of bat including European Protected Species.

### Settlement and Infrastructure

Settlement is limited within the area to small villages or hamlets such as Tytherington, Woodhouse Down and Rudgeway, with small scale ribbon development, in places clustered at road junctions, or scattered farms and houses elsewhere. These are typically constructed from Pennant sandstone, with some limestone to the south west of the area. In addition there is the more recent residential development in the grounds of the former Hortham Hospital in the south of the character area.

Tytherington village is located at a confluence of roads on the lower slopes of Tytherington Hill, partly extending into the adjacent Tytherington Plain area. A Conservation Area covers the central village which includes key properties, a framework of tall boundary walls, all constructed of Pennant sandstone and, a vegetated area of disused quarry workings. At its heart and on the area's boundary, the church and public house are prominent. Acoustic fencing separates the western part of the village from the M5 motorway.

Outside, but adjacent to the boundaries of this character area, there are more significant areas of settlement: the large village of Alveston lies immediately to the west; ribbon settlement extends continuously between Rudgeway and Alveston along both sides of the A38 and is more scattered further south.

The edge of Alveston village abuts the character area to the north west, along the broad A38 corridor. It comprises older cottages of Pennant sandstone, limestone, some render and more recent brick houses (Photo 4). Linear ribbon settlement extends eastwards from Alveston, into this area, along a minor road. Extended car parks associated with hotels to the south east of Thornbury are located adjacent to the A38.

Woodhouse Down comprises a localised cluster of brick and rendered housing, abutting, but largely lying off the A38 in a regular pattern, laid out along a lane with cul-de-sacs.

Rudgeway comprises a smaller, denser concentration of housing, largely lining the A38.

The linear pattern of Rudgeway and Woodhouse Down frontages, together with frequent houses scattered along the A38, sometimes forms continuous ribbon development which has started to encroach along some of the minor roads to the east and west.

Pennant boundary stone walls, set back from the A38 road edge, are common between Rudgeway and Alveston.

The former Hortham Hospital site which is located in the south, adjacent to the M4/M5 junction has been redeveloped for housing that incorporates a structure of mature trees that had formed part of the hospital grounds (Photo 10). To the east is a relatively new playing field development.

The former manorial complex at Old Church Farm, off the B4427, is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and includes the disused church of St. Helen's.

Tockington Park Farm, to the south of Rudgeway, is built over a Roman villa and lies within a former deer park. Another former large deer park, south of Alveston, can also be identified through its field boundary pattern.

Major roads pass along the edges of this area, with a number of minor routes dissecting it at regular intervals. The M5 passes near the eastern boundary, largely at grade, with parts of the central and northern section in cutting (Photos 8 & 9). The A38 passes along the western boundary, connecting with the wider pattern of minor roads. The B4427, together with a number of minor roads and country lanes, typically climbs and descends the easterly slopes, running north west - south east, connecting isolated settlements to the A38.

The area is also dissected by numerous public rights of way, including two important recreational routes.

One of a series of Circular Rides comprises a circuit, taking in a larger area of the Severn Ridges to the west, which briefly crosses the area, descending along a lane east of Alveston, following lanes through Tytherington and climbing, via a track and lane, towards Milbury Heath.

The Jubilee Way climbs the ridge north westwards, crossing fields from Itchington in the adjoining area and following a lane towards the A38 and beyond this area, to the south of Thornbury.

A number of overhead powerlines ascend the ridge to the south of Tytherington, running across the area from the major sub-station within the adjacent Earthcott Vale character area. A further powerline passes across the area, to the north of Hortham Hospital.

A number of mobile phone masts are evident adjacent to the M5 and A38 road corridors within the area, with a couple near the A38's bridge over the M4 and adjacent to the M5, at a point to the east of Tockington Park Farm.



One mineral railway line crosses the area in cutting to the west of Tytherington, defining one edge of the Tytherington Limestone Quarry (Photo 2) and smaller disused quarry workings between the M5 and A38.

### Landscape Character

The Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge area is a rural, gently rolling and sloping landscape, its character largely influenced by the ridge/plateau and gentle easterly sloping landform. Land cover of pasture within regular fields defined by clipped or intermittent hedgerows, infrequent hedgerow trees and frequent dispersed copses or areas of woodland, produces a textured, simple, open to semi-enclosed landscape. This rural character remains largely intact, but is influenced variously by roads, a quarry and small settlement clusters.

The extensive, frequent pattern of roads and sloping landform of this area, provide opportunities to view much of this area and its features. These slopes also allow extensive views westwards, of the vale and plain landscapes and further, to Winterbourne, Yate and the Cotswold Scarp.

The ridge and plateau area however varies between open and enclosed. Views from within this area are often curtailed by the slight hill and plateau landform, sometimes contained by settlement edge, stone walls along the A38 and wooded slopes of the Severn Ridge to the west, which line parts of the A38 or by the varying pattern and concentration of trees/ copses. The large areas of woodland of Tockington Park Wood, Hortham Wood and Gatten's Brake to the south of the area, overlying gentle slopes of otherwise arable fields, produce a simple and balanced large scale landscape feature. The ridgeline and elevated slopes continue north eastwards, forming a prominent landform within views from the M5 and a backdrop to the lower adjacent vale and plain (Photo 9).

Within this area the combination of built features, setting and vegetation, form areas of distinctive landscape character. The frequent distribution of

older stone farm houses, located on the ridge and along minor roads, is a common characteristic of the area, with notable features along Shellards Lane (east of Alveston) and Old Church Road (B4427):

- The complex of farms and out buildings, linked along The Street / Shellards Lane by stone walls, set within an open plateau of fields with mature specimen trees, forms a locally distinct feature (Photo 11).
- The manorial complex of Old Orchard Farm and adjacent tower of St Helen's Church along Old Church Road, forms a prominent landmark, visible from the M5 and adjacent vale character area.

The wooded slopes of Tytherington Hill, and setting of the village and common land at Tytherington are distinctive, with the church forming a prominent landmark. The village is largely well integrated, set above the wooded slopes of Tytherington Hill. However, an eastward extension into the adjacent Tytherington Plain character area is more prominent, due to the more regular shaped concentration of houses and little vegetation within or along its edge to provide integration. These features are visible largely from the adjacent plain area, forming a distinctive backdrop.

Settlement, structures, roads and non-agricultural land use, in places have a strong influence over the adjacent landscape. This is evident for example to the south of the area, where the housing edge of Woodhouse Down, with little vegetation to provide integration, breaches the otherwise rural skyline. Along lower slopes there is a scattering of dissimilar buildings, including glasshouses within a nursery complex, a disused farm with unmanaged fields and a farm with large modern agricultural sheds. These elements detract from the otherwise rural character of the locality.

The tall poplar trees within the adjacent Hortham Hospital site are distinctly different to the wider rural pattern of broadleaved hedgerow trees and woodland. However, the site is largely well

integrated, with new residential development and its roofscape generally being seen in the context of the pre-existing woodland and tree avenues around which the development is structured, and supplemented by further maturing planting (Photo 10). The road improvements associated with access to the site have however affected the character of Hortham Lane.

Tytherington Quarry is largely well integrated, given the containment of views in this locality as a result of the plateau landform, intervening hedgerow structure with occasional trees and mound/planting mitigation measures along the quarry's site boundary. The works' buildings are however prominent industrial structures, visible above the natural ground level, appearing within some local views on the skyline (Photo 1). When the quarry is active, lorry movements particularly affect properties at Grovesend.

The A38 is largely a well integrated and visually contained rural corridor. It has a linear framework of stone boundary walls between Rudgeway and Alveston and sections of broad roadside verges. The strong vegetation structure comprises occasional woodland fringe to the west, mixed with mature pine trees, and garden vegetation, which in combination with sections of ribbon development, in places has a suburban influence.

Occasional paddocks and pasture fields, enclosed by post and wire fencing, form more open pockets within the landscape along sections of the eastern edge of this road corridor.

The vegetation structure largely integrates the frequent scattered ribbon settlement. The combination of settlement and increasing traffic levels however, exerts a slight urban influence upon the adjacent landscape.

There are occasional extensive views from the A38, looking beyond this area to the west, over the steep descending slopes of the Severn Ridge (Photo 6), to the Levels and Severn Estuary beyond.

The town of Thornbury north west of this area's

boundary remains concealed from most of this area, set below the Severn Ridges scarp. However, it is prominent within views of the Levels and Estuary from the edge of the scarp on the boundary of this area south of the town.

The M4/M5 interchange close to Bristol, comprising large scale earthworks and elevated interchange structure, in combination with the M5 at grade (Photo 8 & 9), introduce structures and traffic volumes which visually and audibly prominent in the south east corner of this area.

The M5 traffic also influences the adjacent landscape to the north west of Itchington and, has a wider influence to the north west of Tytherington, where it passes on embankment and at grade. The latter location permits extensive views eastwards along Tytherington Hill and over the Tytherington Levels below.

The interchange and large scale earth bunds around Woodlands Golf Course, immediately to the south east beyond this area, largely screen the north eastern commercial development edge of Bristol, although the roofs of some buildings remain evident as a skyline feature, with the RAC tower forming a prominent landmark.

The concentration of a number of powerlines to the east of Alveston are prominent linear features ascending the ridge within an otherwise agricultural framework. Where they cross the edge of the ridge/plateau area, these powerlines and towers are particularly prominent on the skyline.

The mobile phone masts adjacent to the M5 and A38 are generally evident within local views, their prominence locally dependent upon the individual requirements of each installation, which influences the size of the mast and need for associated infrastructure, such as buildings, compounds, access tracks and fencing.



### The Changing Landscape

The Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge character area is an predominantly agricultural area with significant transport and settlement influences and pressures on its fringes. Much of the existing landscape framework of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodland is in good condition and intact, however there is evidence of a loss in hedgerows adjacent to the A38 corridor, with some land use changes from agriculture to horse grazing. This has resulted in a more open character locally.

Throughout the area, there is generally little new planting to provide succession and sustain the landscape structure and biodiversity in the future. In the long term this could result in a decline or loss of features, which may increase the openness of the area. Exceptions are at Tytherington Quarry and the relatively recent development at Hortham, where new planting is helping to integrate development with its landscape setting.

Pools and ponds and their associated aquatic species, including Great Crested Newt, are vulnerable to any loss of habitat including the terrestrial habitat around ponds as well as the ponds themselves.

The introduction of urban features within a rural landscape has the potential to erode the rural character. The tall poplar trees adjacent to Hortham Hospital are in contrast with the local agricultural framework and the character of the pre-existing tree cover within the former hospital site.. The replacement of hedging with close boarded fencing, paving and to a lesser extent ornamental planting in gardens along the A38 corridor are significantly eroding the rural character of the area.

The presence of key transport routes around the boundaries of this area, together with the proximity of the urban edge of Bristol to the south, increases the pressures for change within this area.

The road corridors themselves and the existing ribbon development along the A38, already affect the character of the adjacent rural landscape. A further increase in traffic or additional built development could potentially result in a significant change in local character.

Further built development, fencing or tree planting along the western fringe of the A38 also has the potential to further urbanise the road corridor and conceal the existing, extensive views towards the Severn Estuary, which are a distinctive and characteristic feature along parts of this route.

The M4/M5 interchange, M5 and, to a lesser extent, the A38 corridor, with associated traffic noise and lighting, have a wide visual and audible influence, eroding the local rural character.

The proliferation of mobile phone masts in rural, elevated and visible locations has the cumulative effect of eroding rural characteristics.

The increasing prevalence of horse paddocks is evident within the area, particularly along the edge of the A38, which in places has led to the loss or erosion of hedgerows with a resultant reduction in connectivity of habitats. The cumulative effect of this and the associated infrastructure of stables, access tracks, exercise areas, jumps and floodlighting, can result in a marked change in landscape character and disturbance to wildlife.

The more recent housing development at the site of the former Hortham Hospital has altered the character of this site, intensifying its use and substantially increasing built form. However the structure of the development in generally incorporating significant open areas and key landscape features that also provide important wildlife habitat, has resulted in a high quality development that generally integrates well with its setting. The sports pitch facility to the east of this is less well integrated, lacking a landscaped setting it erodes the rural character of the local landscape.

Tytherington Quarry presently comprises a significant area of disused quarry and areas that at the time of writing are dormant. Potential future operations, identified in the Minerals & Waste Local Plan, could include the extension of the quarry to the south west. This would require the removal and realignment of Tytherington Road, with the loss of field boundaries and hedgerow trees, affecting the character of the locality. Recent planting at the quarry has however had a beneficial effect in reducing impact on the rural character of the surrounding landscape.

The undisturbed rural skylines of the ridge/plateau are sensitive to change, particularly from the encroachment of built and vertical forms of development, due to its visually prominent location.

The undisturbed areas of the easterly facing slopes which comprise much of the area, are similarly sensitive, being visible from the adjoining vale and the Wickwar Ridge to the east. Within this area, the introduction of large modern sheds to farmsteads could significantly change the visual prominence of these building groups, which are currently low key rural features, as already seen at Hortham Farm. Similarly significant vertical elements could have wide visibility and erode the rural characteristics of the locality.

A number of distinctive areas of older settlement contribute greatly to local character and are potentially sensitive to change resulting from infill, or built development which would erode their intrinsic character or setting. The buildings at and adjacent to the Grove Farm complex, Old Church Farm and Tytherington village are particularly sensitive to such change.

## Landscape Strategy

- Active management of the landscape structure, including hedgerows, hedgerow trees, copses and woodlands to help to ensure the conservation of the particular landscape character and biodiversity value of the locality for the long term.
- Promote an increase in tree cover on eastern facing slopes and along the principal road corridors to reinforce landscape structure and mitigate impact on views from higher ground to the east.
- Ensure sensitive management of the mosaic of calcareous grasslands into the future.
- Ensure that any new development respects the particular and distinctive landscape character within settlements such as Tytherington as well as within groupings of farm buildings. Such developments should also include landscape schemes that reinforce this objective.
- Ensure that recreational development including horsekeep is located and designed to protect, conserve and strengthen the local pattern of hedgerows and tree cover and includes adequate landscape proposals to protect the particular rural character of the locality. Avoid the use of floodlights that can also disturb wildlife.
- Careful consideration must be given to the location and design of development including vertical structures to ensure the protection of the rural character and appearance of undisturbed rural ridges and skylines, and open views across the estuary.
- The loss of boundary treatments that contribute to the particular character and biodiversity connectivity and value of the locality should be resisted. New boundary treatments should reinforce the particular and distinctive character and appearance of the locality, and fencing should be avoided.



**Landscape Character Areas**



**1** View along Abbey Lane, east of the A38. A green lane and part of the Jubilee Way footpath.



**2** Tytherington Quarry and railway tracks servicing the quarry. Originally the main line between Thornbury and Bristol, opened in 1872, closed in 1972.



**3** Wooded Tytherington Hill, viewed across Tytherington Common (LCA9). Row of modernised ex-poorhouses feature on the skyline.



**4** View from St. Helen's Church Tower, Alveston. The village edge lines this section of the A38. The fields and buildings of Grove Farm within the middle distance to the right of the A38, falls within LCA17.



**5** Itchington Common. Common grazing land with a steep drop to the stream, bounded by a variety of trees.



**6** View west from Rudgeway across the Sheepcombe Valley, with wooded Severn Ridge at Tockington Hill and in the middle ground and the Levels and Severn Bridge within the distance.



**7** Dense hedgerow and post and wire fencing field boundaries. Looking south east from the A38 towards Gatten's Brake woodland.



**8** Looking north along the M5, noting ground and ridge to the north east of Rudgeway. Scattered farms are a typical feature along this gentle landform.



**10** Hortham Hospital from Hortham Lane, crossing over the M5.



**11** A cluster of stone farmhouses, associated buildings and stone walls form a distinct feature, along The Street/Shellards Lane. The A38, along the edge of Alveston is just visible to the left.



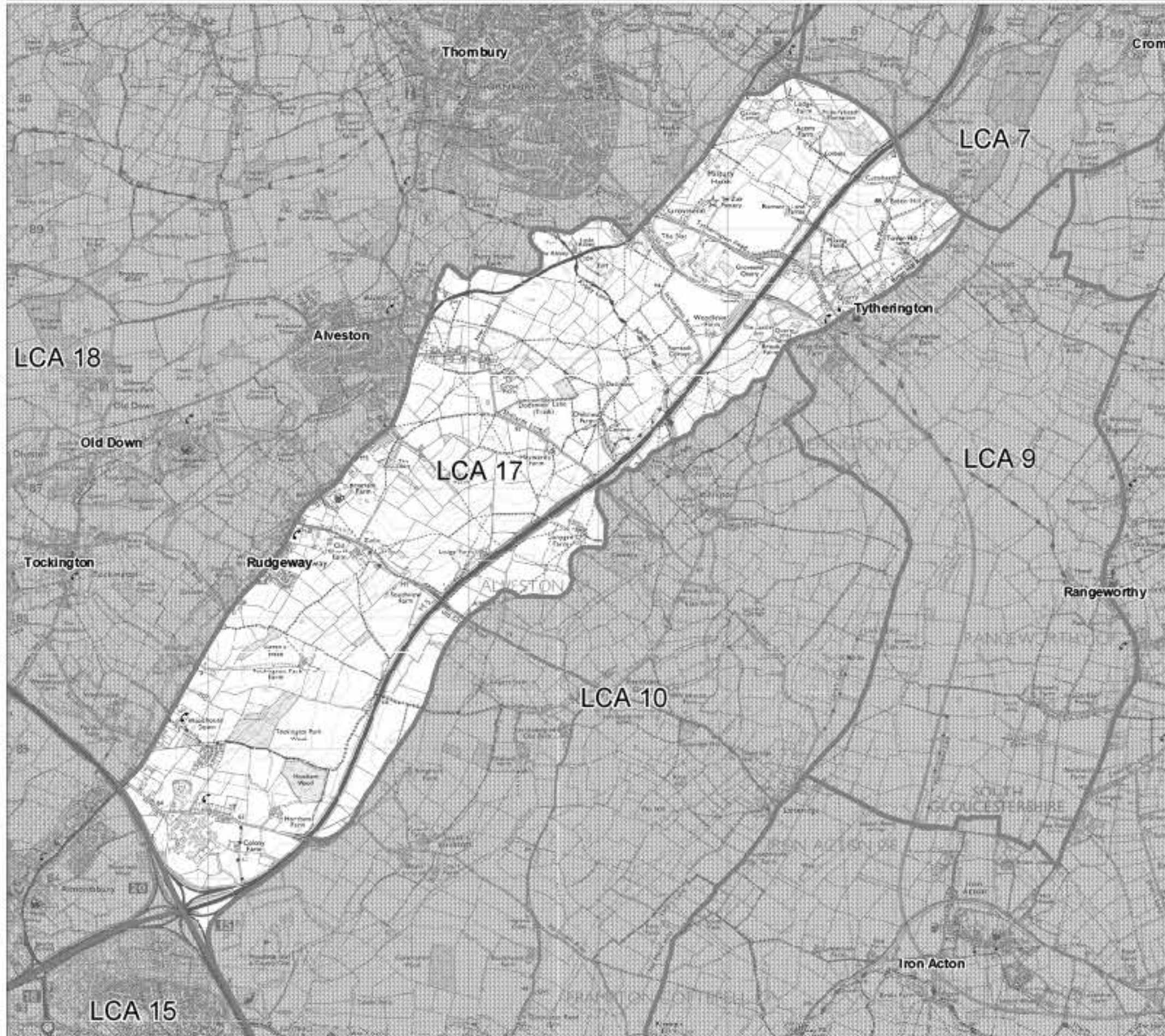
**12** The restored pond at Millbury Heath.

Photo out of date & needs replacing.

**Figure 53 – Area 17**  
Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge



**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS**



**Legend**

- South Gloucestershire Boundary
- Landscape Character Area

The Landscape Character Area boundary shown on this map is indicative, sometimes marking a distinct change, but more often representing a transition in character with adjacent areas.

Similar attributes may therefore be evident within adjacent areas. (For further information refer to Report Section 4.1)



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**Figure 54**

**Area 17**

Rudgeway Ridge and Tytherington Ridge