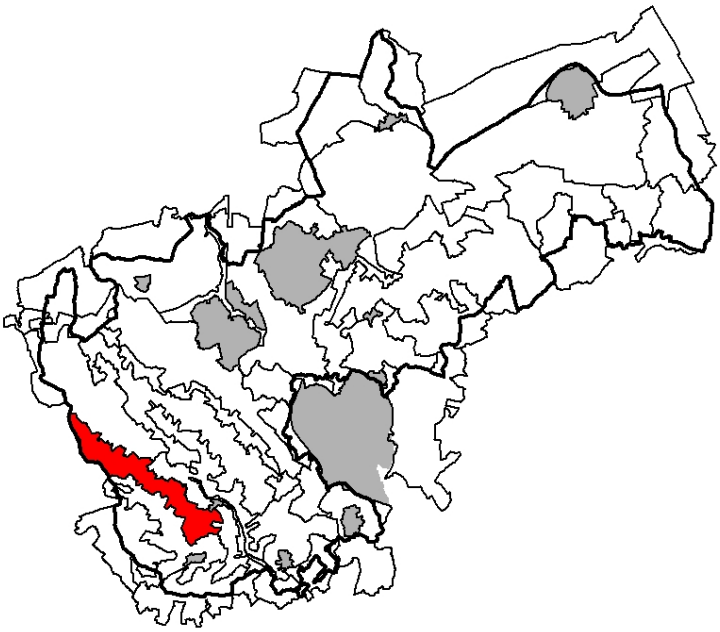
BREACHWOOD GREEN RIDGE

Area 202

LOCATION



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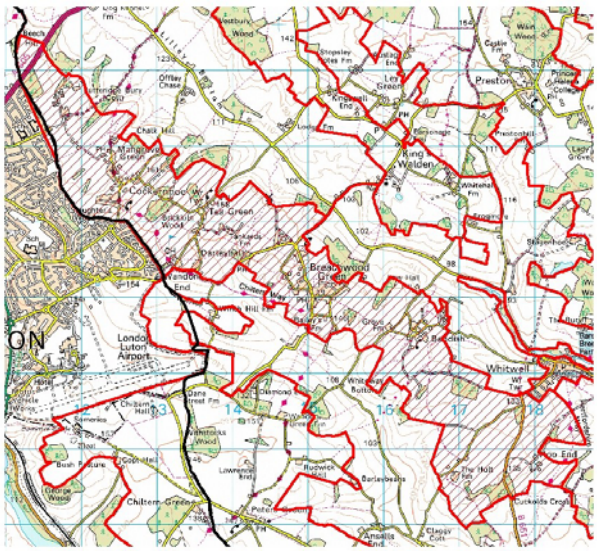
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

Character Area extends from northeast of Luton (Putteridge Bury College) to Hoo End Farm (north of Kimpton). The area is long and narrow separating the Lilley Bottom Valley to the northeast and Whiteway Bottom Valley to the southwest.



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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently rolling plateau ridge landscape. Mainly large arable fields with smaller pockets of grazing around settlements and occasional scattered dwellings. Field pattern degraded. Mature remnant trees, remaining hedgerows of diverse species. Woodlands old, established and some more modern mixed deciduous/evergreen plantations. Strong cultural pattern remains based on layout of lanes and older woodlands.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Gently rolling plateau landform
- Large scale arable fields with scattered farmsteads and dwellings
- Woodland is a mixture of ancient deciduous and recent mixed plantations.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Water tower at Tea Green
- Telecommunications mast at Hoo Park
- Parkland at Putteridge Bury

ASSESSMENT

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology & soils
Chalk at depth. Generally free-draining loamy acidic brown soils over glacial drift till. Some brickearth and superficial gravels near Breachwood Green.

Topography
Gently rolling plateau with incised valley to north and south edges.

Degree of slope
Varies typically 1:100.

Altitude range
137m to 167m.

Hydrology
No discernable water courses. Local ponds at Breachwood Green, Tea Green and Mangrove Green.

Land cover and land use
Predominantly arable production with smaller pockets of grazing land adjacent to settlements and farmsteads.

Vegetation and wildlife
Mature remnant hedgerow trees. Remaining hedgerows of diverse species including hornbeam, field maple, oak, ash and some regenerating elm, also hawthorn, hazel and blackthorn.

Ancient woodland sites, such as Thieving Grove, Christmas Wood and Rose Grove, are present within this Character Area. These woodlands contain a variety of tree standards including oak, hornbeam, ash, beech, with areas of coppiced hazel, cherry, ash or maple. The remains of old gravel pits can be found in several of these woodlands. Ancient oak/hornbeam woodlands, partially replanted with conifers are the most frequent woodland type. Several of these woodlands have a ground flora dominated by bluebells in the spring, but other ancient woodland indicator species are also present. Green lanes, such as Long Lane, are also a feature of this Character Area linking the ancient woodlands and are typified by ancient hedgerow communities, which may be acidic in nature.

Remnants of old acidic/neutral grassland remain at Mangrove Green, Tea Green and in paddocks at Breachwood Green and Bendish.

Tubular water dropwort is recorded from a pond at Breachwood Green and dormouse from some coppices.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

In the north of the Character Area lie shrunken village earthworks of medieval date.

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 relict elements. Patches of ancient woodland lie in the south and informal medieval parkland occurs in far north and far south. There are varying sizes of fields, however the pattern is locally degraded, especially where intensive arable production dominates.

Transport pattern
Winding lanes criss-cross the Character Area

Settlements and built form
The historic settlement pattern is sparse characterised by small villages and farms. There are larger settlements at Breachwood Green and Mangrove Green. Generally dispersed scattered farmsteads and clusters of wayside dwellings.

EVALUATION

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

Woodland areas help to provide a cohesive visual integrity to some parts, however, arable areas are bland and featureless. Tranquillity improves further away from the urban fringe of Luton however aircraft noise is an issue.

Rarity & distinctiveness
Character is not uncommon and has many similarities to adjacent plateau landscapes.

VISUAL IMPACT

Luton Airport infrastructure visible from Tea Green. Luton urban fringe.

ACCESSIBILITY

The Character Area is well served by the local network of footpaths, tracks and public rights of way.

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:	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:	High
Matrix Score:	**Poor**

ROBUSTNESS

Impact of landform:	Apparent
Impact of land cover:	Apparent
Impact of historic pattern:	Insignificant
Visibility from outside:	Locally visible
Sense of enclosure:	Partial
Visual unity:	Coherent
Distinctiveness/rarity:	Frequent
Matrix Score:	**Moderate**

CONDITION	WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
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
	ROBUSTNESS		

GUIDELINES

STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE:

Improve and Restore

- 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 policies for the planting of woodland along the sub-urban fringe of Luton
- Encourage preparation and implementation of restoration and management plans for parkland landscape at Putteridge Bury