

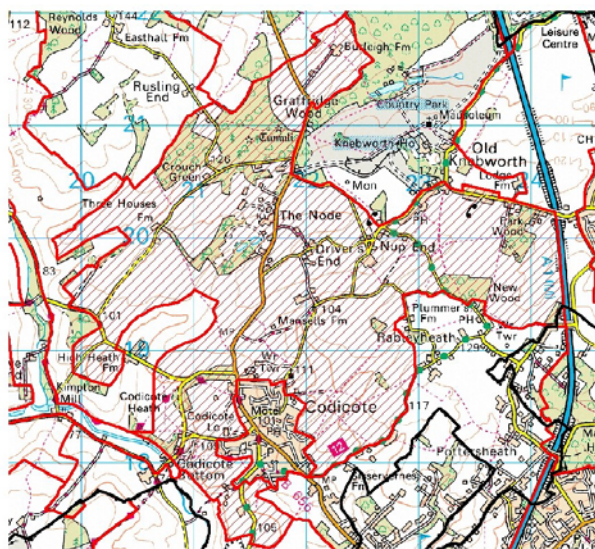
LOCATION



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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The Character Area extends in a broad fan to the north of and including the settlement of Codicote.



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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently rolling upland landscape plateau defined to the south and west by the River Mimram. To the north the area merges into the Knebworth Parkland. Plateau is incised by smaller valleys creating a locally undulating landform. Large sized regular shaped fields mainly used for arable production but with parcels of grazing land and paddocks adjacent to Codicote. Larger blocks of ancient woodland in the north adjacent to Knebworth, smaller copses further south. Localised pockets of acid heathland habitats.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Gently rolling upland plateau landscape
- Large arable parcels with grazing land adjacent to Codicote
- Varying sized blocks of woodland

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Codicote Heathland

ASSESSMENT

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology & soils

Generally glacial gravel and tills overlying the Clay-with-Flints producing generally acidic wet and dry soils. Elsewhere loamy brown soils over Chalk.

Topography

Incised plateau landscape.

Degree of slope

Typically 1:30 over plateau area and 1:10 slopes within incised valleys.

Altitude range

80m to 125m.

Hydrology

No discernable water courses. Small number of local ponds adjacent to settlements.

Land cover and land use

Predominantly arable farming with larger blocks of deciduous woodland in the north. Parcels of grazing land adjacent to settlements.

Vegetation and wildlife

Traditionally managed hay meadows and marshy grassland such as Crouch Green are a scarce commodity both within this Character Area and within North Hertfordshire as a whole. Some important heathland habitats occur within this Character Area. Codicote High Heath encompasses a gravel pit with associated remnant acidic heath flora, gorse scrub and wooded areas. Hertfordshire has lost approximately 97% of its heath habitats since 1940 (Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan) and hence these fragments of heath are of high ecological importance.

Ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodlands occur within this Character Area. Some, such as Crouch Green Woods are dominated by stands of ancient hornbeam coppice. Others, like Graffridge Wood have a climax community of oak and hornbeam. New Wood is notable for its acidic substrate and plant communities. Ancient woodland features such as pits and ditches are also present in several woodland areas.

The area features woodland birds, rare aquatic plants and invertebrates in ponds such as water violet and five-leaved water drop-wort and scarce species, eg lousewort, petty white and snakeshead fritillary associated with old grassland and heath.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Codicote is a medieval settlement recorded in the Domesday Book as Codicot. The parish church of St Giles, Codicote, dates from the 12th century and lies in the edge of Codicote. A Roman barrow and Bronze Age bowl barrow are situated to the north at Gafridge Wood.

Field Pattern

The historic agricultural landscape is composed of a mixture of 18th century and later enclosure, prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss, pre-18th century irregular enclosure, prairie fields with relict elements within and post-1950s enclosure. There is a concentration of informal medieval parkland to the northeast of Coldicote (Homewood designated a Historic Park and Garden). There is also a high frequency of ancient woodland, particularly in the southeast. Today smaller more regular geometric field patterns are common especially on the fringes of sub-urban settlement. Less frequent are large scale arable fields.

Transport Pattern

The Character Area is well covered by a network of old winding and often sunken lanes.

Settlements and Built Form

The historic settlement pattern is composed of estates and villages. The traditional buildings of the Character Area survive from the 16th century. Red brick houses can be found at Codicote Bury (1655). The village centre of Codicote retains some timber framed and chequerwork brick houses.

EVALUATION

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

Historic and mature landscape character interspersed with areas of intensive arable production. Small interlocking blocks of woodland framing views.

Rarity & distinctiveness

The integrity and mature character have not been eroded by the intensification of arable production.

VISUAL IMPACT

Codicote suburban fringe dominates some of the local views. Particular features such as the water tower on the north side of the settlement have a local impact. Extensive mature grounds at Codicote Lodge.

ACCESSIBILITY

Character Area well served by the network of roads and rights of way which radiate out from Codicote

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
SAM 27906	Roman Barrow and Bronze Age Bowl Barrow in Gaffridge Wood
SAM 27907	Bell Barrow in Gaffridge Wood

EVALUATION

CONDITION

Land cover change:	Localised
Age structure of tree cover:	Mature
Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:	Scattered
Management of semi-natural habitat:	Good
Survival of cultural pattern:	Interrupted
Impact of built development:	Moderate
Impact of land-use change:	Moderate

Matrix Score:	Moderate
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ROBUSTNESS

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

Matrix Score:	Moderate
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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 Conserve

- Promote management of ancient woodlands 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 management of marshy grassland typically as found at Crouch Green
- Protect and encourage management of remnant acidic heathland
- Encourage and support management of hornbeam coppice woodland