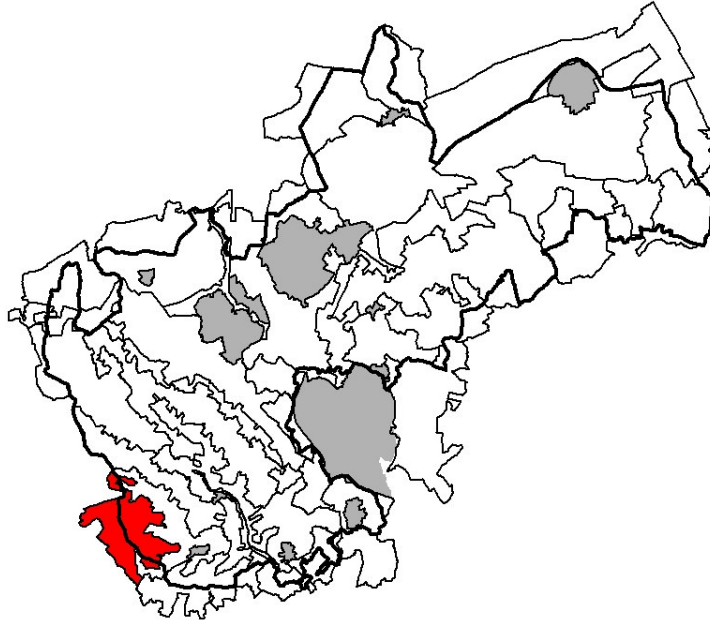


## LOCATION



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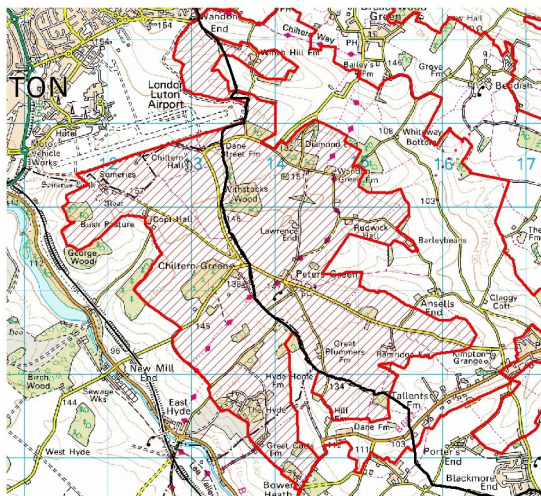
### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

Character Area extends from boundary of Luton Airport in the north to Kimpton valley in the south.

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently rolling elevated landscape plateau defined by steep sided incised valleys to east, west and south.

Many large exposed arable fields with smaller pockets of grazing around settlements. Occasional scattered dwellings. Field pattern degraded with relatively few remaining hedgerows. Remnant mature hedgerow trees. Mixture of woodland types, some mature, well-established, deciduous woodland interspersed with more recent mixed woodland plantations. Character Area truncated by the man-made landscape features associated with Luton Airport.



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### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Elevated plateau
- Predominantly large scale arable use
- Smaller pastoral fields closer to settlements
- Large to medium sized mixed woodland plantations
- Historic houses and associated parkland

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Lawrence End parkland
- Man-made landscape at Luton Airport boundary
- Water-tower at Peters Green

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

Soils are free-draining loamy acidic brown soils over glacial drift till.

**Topography**

The plateau covers a broadly rectangular area extending some 4km from north to south and 3km from east to west. The plateau appears flat to gently sloping to the southeast.

**Degree of slope**

Minimal, typically 1:200 across the plateau.

**Altitude range**

125m to 160m.

**Hydrology**

There are no significant water courses. There are, however, a number of small ponds associated with farms in the north.

**Land cover and land use**

The predominant land use is arable farming.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Scattered woodland in discrete parcels including both ancient deciduous woodlands and more recent mixed plantations. Species include hornbeam coppice, oak and ash. Regenerating elm in hedgerows also some holly is common. Lime is the dominant parkland tree at Lawrence End Park which is largely improved grassland.

This Character Area contains a few ancient semi-natural woodlands, which are typically dominated by oak and coppiced hornbeam. Bluebells are frequently a feature of the groundflora, but other ancient woodland indicators are also present. Withstocks Wood, Bishey Wood and Burnt Wood are examples of ancient semi-natural oak and hornbeam woodland. These woods have been replanted with conifers to varying extents, but their seedbanks of ancient flora are retained, as denoted by the presence of ancient woodland indicator species. Occasional ancient, species-rich hedgerows are another feature of this Character Area. Woodlands are important for bats (piprelle, brown long-eared). Evidence of Buzzards in the area. The Character Area has generally a sparsity of ecologically interesting sites.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

In the west are the remains of a chapel and Someries Castle.

**Field pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape pattern consists of a mixture of prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss, pre-18th century irregular enclosure, 18th century and later enclosure and ancient woodland. Today there are predominantly large irregular fields with smaller parcels of grazing land around settlements.

**Transport pattern**

Winding sunken lanes complement the more direct connecting roads. To the north the pattern of roads and lanes are truncated by the development at Luton Airport.

**Settlements and built form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by farms and villages.

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

The Character Area is only locally visible from the surrounding areas due to its elevated land form. The Character Area is generally peaceful, however, in the north aircraft noise is a particularly notable element. The landscape has been de-valued by extensive arable production and has open and exposed aspects. The parkland to the north is a more discrete landscape with unified features and contained views.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

This landscape type is frequent in the county.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

There are few built detractors.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

The local network of roads and public rights of way radiates out from the hub, which covers the Character Area between Peters Green to Chiltern Green. The Character Area is well served by footpaths and bridleways.

**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:	Good
Survival of cultural pattern:	Declining/Relic
Impact of built development:	Low
Impact of land-use change:	Moderate

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**Matrix Score:** **Good**

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**ROBUSTNESS**

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

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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**

- A gently rolling elevated landscape plateau, approximately half of which is outside of the district boundary. The plateau is incised at its margins by steep sided valleys and is of rural character. The character area would be vulnerable to further urbanizing features
- Variety of woodland blocks and smaller copses some of which are ancient with bluebell covered woodland floor and others more recent mixed plantations. The woodland is vulnerable to lack of management or to removal
- The character area includes Lawrence End Parkland and The Hyde, which create a parkland character in areas of Peters Green Plateau. This character could be at risk from development pressure and inconsistent management
- Peters Green Plateau is characterised by large scale, exposed arable fields. The field patterns are degraded, with many hedgerows having been removed. The area would be vulnerable to the further removal of hedgerows and boundary vegetation
- Small pockets of grazing land are present adjacent to settlements within Peters Green Plateau. The character area would be sensitive to the loss of this characteristic
- The roads within the character area are all minor but vary from more open linear routes with occasional trees, to rural, winding sunken lanes with hedgerows, hedge banks and occasional ditches. The character area would be vulnerable to improvements/upgrading of the roads
- Luton Airport abuts the north west of the character area and is a detractor to the character of Peters Green Plateau. The landscape is degraded and impacted by man made features, including the control tower and lighting. The movement and noise associated with incoming and departing aircraft reduce the tranquillity and rural character of Peters Green Plateau

- Good public access through rights of way, including Chiltern Way and quiet lanes

Overall Peters Green Plateau is considered to be of **moderate to low sensitivity**. The gently rolling elevated plateau, woodland blocks and copses and the winding lanes create a rural character. However Luton Airport and the associated man made elements are detractors to the area creating an urban influence, which juxtaposes with the character of Peters Green Plateau.

**Visual Sensitivities**

- In the parkland landscape area and areas of woodland the views are framed and contained creating a sense of enclosure.
- Open and exposed views within the character area, which has been degraded by extensive arable production.
- Views across the plateau are enclosed by wooded horizons
- Luton airport to the north is a visual detractor for the character area
- Views from Luton Hoo west of the River Lea

In visual terms, Peters Green Plateau is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. Views within the plateau are open towards the wooded horizon. The parkland and woodland areas frame views and create a sense of enclosure, which would be sensitive to the introduction of additional development or urbanizing features.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE**

Peters Green Plateau is considered to be of **moderate landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Peters Green Plateau are the condition of the landscape elements, the relative sense of remoteness and the presence of locally distinctive settlements and landscapes. However Luton Airport introduces incongruous elements adjacent to the character area, which dilutes the value of Peters Green Plateau.

**EVALUATION**

**CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT**

**Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural character and lack of connectivity to Luton. It would be of an inappropriate scale and would introduce elements that would urbanise the landscape, altering the character and removing the existing key characteristics. Visual impacts would also be high, due to the open views currently experienced across the plateau. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing rural roads, which could erode the character of the landscape.

The landscape capacity for large urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

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

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its isolated and rural character. Visual impacts could be high, due to the open views currently experienced.

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

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would not be appropriate for the Character Area. Upgrading of existing rural roads could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area.

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

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Existing minor roads would be inappropriate for any significant larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs. Any 'improvements' to the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character. The existing airport boundary forms a natural limit to such development to the south.

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

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings could be highly visible within the Character Area if not carefully located would erode the rural character of Peters Green Plateau. Any large or bulky buildings should be balanced and screened by the planting of woodland copses and shelterbelts in keeping with the character of Peters Green Plateau.

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

**Large scale open storage**

The rural character of Peters Green Plateau would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without significant impact in much of the area. This would not be in keeping with the character of the area and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics. There may be scope in locations with good visual enclosure, closer to the airport, subject to suitable mitigation.

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

**EVALUATION**

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively rural in appearance. Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction would be more prominent and not be in keeping with the character of the area. If proposals were consented, any restoration proposals should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns. Loss of parkland and woodland should be avoided.

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

**Incremental small scale development**

There may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were to the periphery of existing settlements and of rural character. However, due to the existing character any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the rural character of Peters Green Plateau.

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

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

Luton airport, which abuts the character area, includes such developments in close proximity of the character area and within views from Peters Green Plateau. New utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines would have a further impact on the rural character of Peters Green Plateau. Large scale developments, including tall elements would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as being potentially visible in surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be 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: Conserve and Strengthen**

**Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote management of ancient woodland, particularly using techniques such as coppicing to encourage a diverse woodland flora and encourage the management of hornbeam, oak and ash coppice
- Conserve and enhance ancient woods as distinct historic landscape features within their original shapes and boundaries
- Promote other woodland planting and where historically appropriate, link up small remnants of ancient woodland
- Restore known lost woods or portions of woods, or create and manage new small to medium sized woods, particularly on the plateau/plateau edges
- Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas
- Maintain trees that provide features in the agricultural landscape such as hedgerow trees and pollards, small copses and scattering of ancient semi-natural woods, some hornbeam
- Encourage policies for safeguarding of existing hedges and the creation of new boundaries at appropriate locations, consistent with agricultural management practices, particularly restoration along the lines of historic field boundaries and for the creation of visual links between existing woodland areas
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Encourage the preparation and implementation of restoration and management plans for parkland landscapes including Lawrence End
- Ensure modern enclosure, often for horsiculture around settlements, does not change the character of the farmed landscape

- Maintain and extend the rights of way network

**Built development guidelines**

- Retain the rural character of Peters Green Plateau, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area
- Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations where they would be visible on the skyline
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or ancient hedgerows
- Conserve the traditional character of Peters Green Plateau, ensuring that development uses appropriate vernacular materials and features to avoid inappropriate visual intrusion
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in open rural views
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area
- Ensure applications for replacement dwellings, communication infrastructure, utility infrastructure have minimal impact on the landscape character and visual quality of the area
- Ensure redundant agricultural buildings subject to applications for change of use are monitored to ensure that they reflect the local building style
- Protect the dispersed settlement pattern – scattered farmsteads and small settlements in isolated hamlets with a road pattern that is winding
- Contain and minimise the effect of Luton Airport and any associated development on the wider Character Area