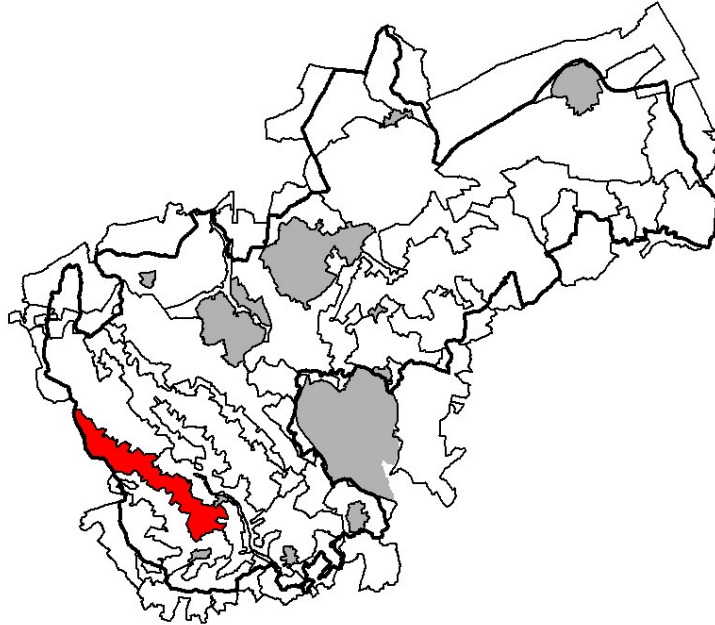


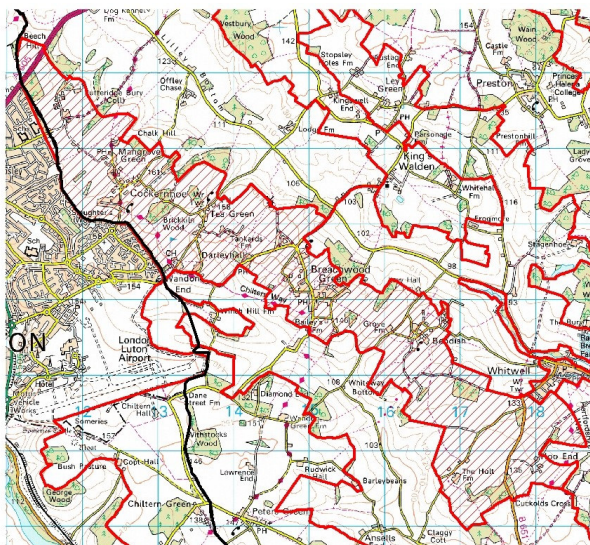
## LOCATION



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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.
- Narrow often sunken lanes with passing places

## 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. There are a number of Listed Buildings in Breachwood Green village including two farmhouses of medieval origins, several dwellings and barns of 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century origin and an early 19<sup>th</sup> century windmill of brick construction is located on Breachwood Ridge. 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, Breachwood Green and Darley Hall villages. Luton airport is also a source of light pollution. 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	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		

**EVALUATION**

**INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**

**Landscape Character Sensitivities**

- The historic settlement pattern within the Character Area is characterised by dispersed villages, hamlets and scattered farmsteads on the highest ground in the northern half of Breachwood Green Ridge, which would be sensitive to unsympathetic development not in scale with the villages
- Village greens and other important open spaces are found in most villages and would be sensitive to development on or adjacent to
- The southern part of the Character Area has a largely rural character, with a general absence of built development, which would be vulnerable to the addition of urbanizing features
- Small woodland blocks are present throughout Breachwood Green Ridge, several of which are ancient and would be vulnerable to lack of management, encroachment of development or to removal
- The strong cultural pattern of narrow and twisting minor lanes and historic woodlands would be vulnerable to improvements to/upgrading of the roads and variations to the traditional relationships between the elements
- Hedgerow removal, partly due to the loss of elms, has created large arable fields in parts of the Character Area and left hedge banks without their hedges. The landscape is sensitive to further removal of hedges
- Areas of surviving acid/neutral grassland at Mangrove Green, Tea Green, Breachwood Green and Bendish are vulnerable to further loss
- Putteridge Bury historic parkland is a registered garden that falls partly within this Character Area, which could be at risk from development pressure and inconsistent management
- Good public access through numerous rights of way radiating from the villages, including the Chiltern Way

- A very small part of the Character Area, north west of the A505, falls within the Chilterns AONB
- Remnant mature trees in hedgerows and within fields would be sensitive to further removal

Overall Breachwood Green Ridge is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. The historic cultural pattern remains within large parts of the Character Area but has been influenced by hedgerow removals and the adjacent presence of Luton and its airport.

**Visual Sensitivities**

- Views up to the plateau edge are possible from adjacent Character Areas, particularly Lilley Bottom
- The urban edge of Luton is partially well contained by vegetation and landform. However, Luton Airport is more visually intrusive within the Character Area, particularly the control tower, planes and large buildings
- The presence of settlement and vegetation in the north of the Character Area contains wider views
- More extensive panoramic views are possible from the more open areas in the south of the Character Area
- Water towers at Tea Green and near Whitwell form landmarks in the Character Area

In visual terms, Breachwood Green Ridge is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. Breachwood Green Ridge is already visually influenced by Luton Airport, but less so by the built up areas of Luton. Woodland areas provide containment to views in the northern part of the Character Area.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE**

Overall Breachwood Green Ridge is considered to be of **moderate low landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Breachwood Green Ridge include the sense of remoteness.

## EVALUATION

### CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT

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

This type of development would not be entirely appropriate within this Character Area, due to its strong cultural pattern of minor lanes and historic woodlands. It would be of an inappropriate scale and would be likely to result in the coalescence of Luton and the villages and hamlets within Breachwood Green Ridge. Visual impacts could also be high, due to the elevated position of the Character Area on a ridgeline plateau, particularly if near the plateau edge. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing narrow, twisting lanes, which could erode the character of the landscape. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and could reduce accessibility to the countryside.

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

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

This type of development would not be entirely appropriate within this Character Area, due to the rural and undeveloped character of the fringe of Luton and the limited visual impact that the urban area currently has. Planting would need to be used to soften the visual impacts of any consented development. Proposed development should also be set back from the edges of the plateau to prevent visual intrusion into Lilley Bottom and the Chilterns AONB. Some small scale expansion of the villages, carefully designed and in keeping with the existing character, could possibly be accommodated.

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

#### Major transport developments/improvements

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the largely rural character of most routes at present. Upgrading of existing narrow, twisting lanes 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 the majority of this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Large scale structures would be prominent on the plateau. The existing minor roads that form part of the strong cultural pattern could be affected by any proposed improvement schemes, which would erode an important element of this landscape. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside.

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, if they were in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings could be highly visible on the plateau and from adjacent Character Areas, if not carefully located, and could erode the existing strong cultural pattern.

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

**EVALUATION**

**Large scale open storage**

The strong cultural pattern of winding minor roads and woodland blocks would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and likely to be open to view. The existing minor roads could be affected by any proposed improvement schemes, which would erode an important element of this landscape. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside.

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

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively undisturbed and rural in appearance. Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction or waste disposal would not be in keeping with the character of Breachwood Green Ridge. The existing minor roads that form part of the strong cultural pattern could be affected by any proposed improvement schemes, which would erode an important element of this landscape. Larger scale extraction could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside. Restoration proposals for any consented schemes should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low. 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 of a vernacular style and in keeping with the rural character. However, coalescence of settlements and visual intrusion into adjacent Character Areas should be avoided.

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

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

Despite the close proximity to Luton, there are currently few urbanising elements within this Character Area. New utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines would have an impact on the rural character of Breachwood Green Ridge. Large scale, tall structures such as these would be highly visible, particularly in surrounding Character Areas. There may also be concerns about proximity to Luton Airport and its flight path, which crosses the area.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low.

## **GUIDELINES**

### **STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE**

#### **Strategy: Improve and Restore**

##### **Landscape management guidelines**

- 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
- 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

##### **Built development guidelines**

- Conserve the traditional character of the villages and hamlets within Breachwood Green Ridge, ensuring that any development located on the edge of the village 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 retention and enhancement of vegetation along the A505 to ensure that its visual impact on the landscape is minimised
- Avoid the location of new development on sensitive greens and open spaces and protect their settings from adjacent development
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in panoramic rural views
- Retain the largely rural character of Breachwood Green Ridge, 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, such as on the edges of the plateau or where they would be visible on currently undeveloped skylines
- Retain the separate identity of the existing settlements and do not cause coalescence
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or the loss of surviving acidic/neutral grassland habitats
- Conserve and enhance the registered parkland at Putteridge Bury
- Ensure that lighting associated with new development does not create additional urbanising influences on the Character Area