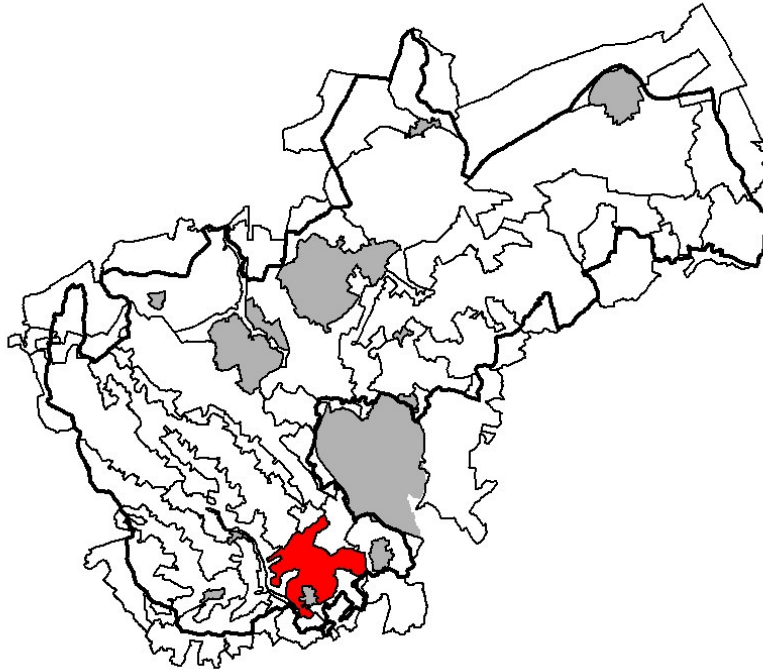


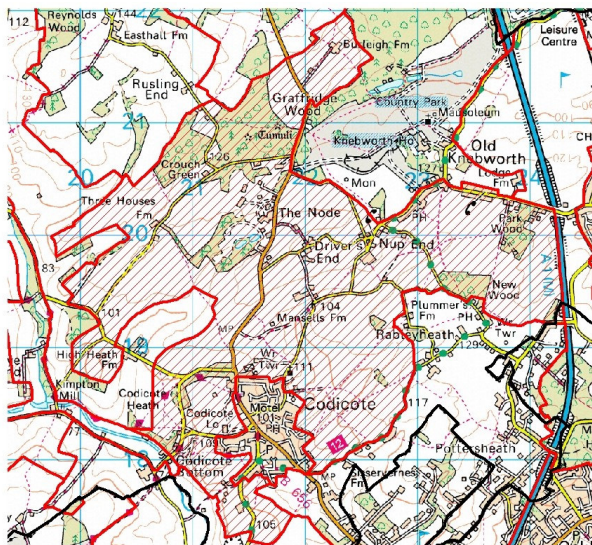
LOCATION



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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
- Tower at Node Court

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. Hornbeam is an abundant component.

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.

Codicote is important for pipistrelle and Natterer's bats

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
GD 1098	Homewood
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**

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**

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

- A gently rolling upland, landscape plateau, incised by smaller valleys and of rural character. The character area would be vulnerable to further urbanizing features
- Scattered deciduous woodland blocks some of which are historic including ancient coppiced hornbeam with bluebell covered woodland floor. The woodland is vulnerable to lack of management or to removal
- The character area merges into Knebworth to the north, which creates an extended area of significant parkland character in areas of Codicote Plateau for example the area surrounding The Node. This character could be at risk from development pressure and inconsistent management
- Codicote Plateau is characterised by large scale, regular shaped arable fields but with small paddocks and grazing land adjacent to settlements. The area would be vulnerable to the removal of hedgerows and boundary vegetation
- The character area includes a significant presence of horsiculture, including Laundry Cottage Stud. Such areas are characterised by post and rail fences and the removal of boundary vegetation. This practice is detrimental to the landscape character of Codicote Plateau. The character area is vulnerable to further horsiculture activity and any associated removal of boundary vegetation
- Apart from the B656 Codicote Plateau is a tranquil area, with the remaining roads being narrow and winding. These rural roads are enclosed by hedgerows and hedgebanks often with bluebells in the verges. However some of the hedgerows are becoming gappy, with over mature trees and grown out woodland

hedgebanks. They would be vulnerable to improvements/upgrading of the roads

- Existing pockets of acid heathland habitat are vulnerable to loss
- The A1 abuts the east of the character area and is a detractor to the character of Codicote Plateau.
- Good public access through numerous rights of way, particularly around Codicote

Overall Codicote Plateau is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. The gently rolling upland plateau, historic character and woodland blocks create a rural character with limited urban influence.

Visual Sensitivities

- Expansive views out of the character area, where there are limited woodland blocks or hedgerows
- In areas of woodland the views are framed and a sense of enclosure is created

In visual terms, Codicote Plateau is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. Views within the plateau and towards the adjacent countryside are relatively open, or framed by woodland, both of which would be sensitive to the introduction of additional development or urbanizing features.

LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Codicote Plateau is considered to be of **moderate landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Codicote Plateau are the historic character, a recognisable sense of place, and the relatively tranquil character.

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 and undeveloped character. 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 expansive views currently experienced. 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 entirely appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. Visual impacts could be high, due to the expansive 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 only be appropriate for improvements of the existing A1, which abuts the Character Area. However it would be imperative that any work was mitigated through earthworks and the planting of shelterbelts. 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 moderate.

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 upgrading of the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character.

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 and historic character of Codicote Plateau.

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

Large scale open storage

Despite the presence of the A1, the rural character of Codicote Plateau would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without significant impact. This would not be in keeping with the rural or historic character of the area and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics.

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

EVALUATION**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 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.

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 limited capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were to the periphery of Codicote village and of rural character. However, due to the existing character any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the rural and historic character of Codicote Plateau.

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

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

There are very few urbanising elements, such as these within this Character Area at present. Excluding the proximity of the A1, there are currently few detractors in the areas. New utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines would have a major impact on the rural and historic character of Codicote 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 low.

GUIDELINES**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE****Strategy: Improve and Conserve****Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote management of ancient woodland, particularly using techniques such as coppicing to encourage a diverse woodland flora
- 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
- 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 or horsiculture areas
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Ensure modern enclosure, often for horsiculture around settlements, does not change the character of the farmed landscape
- Protect and encourage management of remnant acidic heathland

Built development guidelines

- Retain the rural and historic character of Codicote 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 the loss of acid heathland habitats and ancient hedgerows
- Conserve the traditional character of Codicote Plateau, ensuring that development uses appropriate vernacular materials and features to avoid inappropriate visual intrusion
- Protect and preserve the pattern of the rural lanes and associated hedge banks, verges and hedges
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in expansive 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
- Use the opportunity of any developments to create new accessible green infrastructure
- Ensure redundant agriculture 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, often with wide verges and strong hedgerows