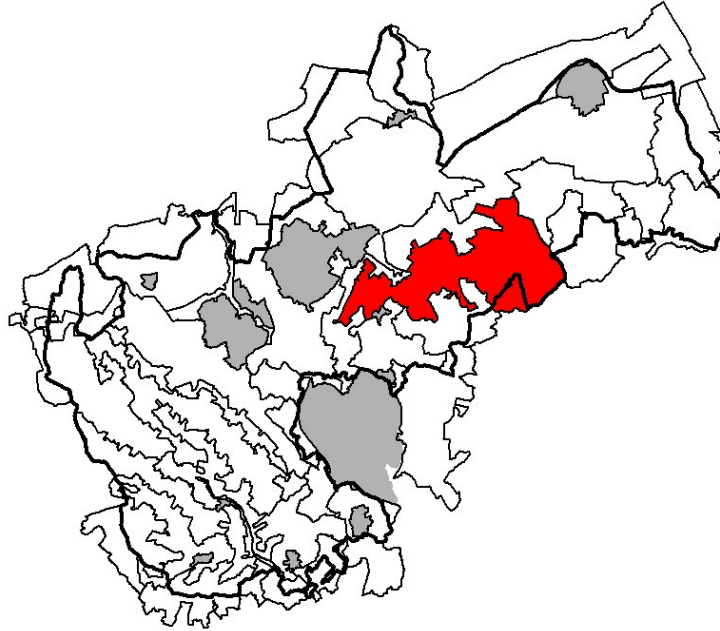
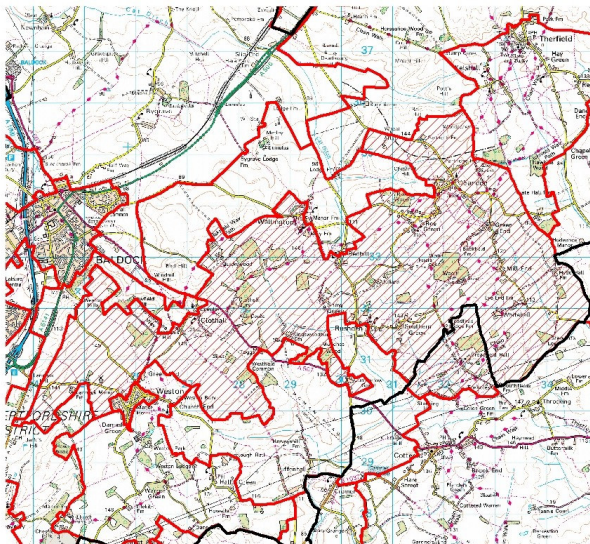


LOCATION

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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The area extends from the Stevenage Gap scarp in the west to a line running east of the settlements of Sandon, Green End and Mill End.



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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Flat, gently sloping chalk plateau with some gentle undulations overlain by clay soils. Predominantly arable land use but with extensive blocks of ancient deciduous woodland cover. Density of woodland cover creates a sense of enclosure and enhances the mature character of the landscape. Pockets of grazing land adjacent to settlements. Character Area crossed by a network of winding lanes, densely scattered hedgerows and clusters of wayside dwellings and small dispersed settlements or farmsteads.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Plateau landform
- Predominantly arable land use
- Extensive mature woodland cover and hedgerow trees
- Organic pattern of field enclosures associated with irregular network of winding lanes

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Icknield Way crosses at Sandon

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

Glacial drift: calcareous/neutral Boulder Clay with some Clay-with-Flints overlying Chalk. Clay soils (Pelosols).

Topography

Plateau landscape, gently falling in a south easterly direction.

Degree of slope

Gentle crossfall of approximately 1:50.

Altitude range

115m to 145m.

Hydrology

A number of tributaries of the River Beane cross the Character Area - the Kingswoodbury Tributary, the upper reaches of the River Beane north of Rushden and a local water course running south from Green End. Additionally the Weston Tributary also takes water from the land to the east of Weston village. Ponds are frequent.

Land cover and land use

Predominantly arable cover with pockets of grazing adjacent to settlements and ancient semi-natural woodland.

Vegetation and wildlife

Two high biodiversity areas are included, one centred around the villages of Sandon and Green End and the other around the villages of Clothall, Wallington and Weston. These areas are typified by chalky boulder clay woodland and neutral meadows. The most abundant woodland habitats are ancient stands of ash and maple. Such woodlands have been covered with trees since at least the 17th century, when the planting of woodland was first recorded. Examples include Coldash Wood, Bachelors Wood, Munches Wood, Great Wood and Middle Wood.

Ancient woods composed primarily of oak and hornbeam also occur, but less frequently. Green lanes with species-rich hedgerows occur at a number of locations as do areas of unimproved neutral grassland, such as Notley Green Common.

Spring systems at Green End are of county significance and supporting calcareous mire habitats such as Blagrove Common and Sandon Moor. Blagrove Common is a SSSI, an unimproved marshy grassland on Boulder Clay. It is a rare example of such a habitat in the county. Important ponds occur at Wallington Meadow, Roc Green and Southern Green

at the sources of streams feeding the river Beane.

Southern and early marsh orchids occur at some mires. Ash, maple and hazel woodlands may contain herb paris and greater butterfly orchids. Fallow deer are frequent. Sandon and Wallingford are important for pipistrelle, brown long-eared and serotine bats. Southern Green is important for great crested newts. Herts BAP is seeking to re-establish stone-curlew as a breeding species in this area.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

A moated mound, Sandon Mount, lies in the north, to the east of Sandon. It was originally constructed as a prehistoric burial mound. In the late 14th - early 15th century the site was used for a windmill, of which today no trace is remaining. To the south of Sandon Mount the ruins of medieval buildings are known to have existed. They probably formed part of a now deserted, medieval hamlet. Sandon is a medieval settlement and contains the 14th century church of All Saints. The remains of a medieval moated site lies to the south of the church at Danyells Farm. A medieval settlement at Green End lies to the south east of Sandon. A well-preserved post-medieval decoy pond lies at Hyde Hall, to the east of the area where there are also Romano-British earthworks.

Roe Green is a medieval settlement. To the South of Roe Green lie three well-preserved moated sites; Hankins, east of Friars Grange and north of Wood Farm.

Earthworks lie at Wallington in the northwest. The parish church of St Mary, Wallington, is 15th century. Bronze Age and Neolithic flint has been unearthed in the vicinity. To the west of Wallington, a Roman settlement and a Neolithic or Bronze Age settlement have been located. Cropmarks of ditches and fields belonging to the deserted medieval village of Quickswood lie to the west of the area.

Enclosure and earthworks lie southeast of Clothallbury House, probably remains of a medieval manorial site. Earthworks of a prehistoric burial mound and a well preserved medieval moated site and associated earthworks lie to the southwest of Clothallbury. Three medieval moated sites also lie to the south east of Clothallbury.

ASSESSMENT

The Roman Villa of Lammas Field lies to the northeast of Weston with finds of Romano British pottery and building materials spread over a wide area.

To the far west of the area lie earthworks, which possibly represent medieval house platforms. There are cropmarks of a possible Neolithic henge site 500m northwest of Bush Wood.

Rushden, to the south, is a medieval settlement recorded in the Domesday Book as Risendene. The parish church of St Mary, Rushden, dates to the 14th century. Earthworks are present within the settlement. Earthworks representing remains of Cumberlow Manor House lie to the southwest of Rushden.

Field Pattern

The agricultural landscape is mixed, including 18th century and later enclosure, prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss, post-1950s enclosure, prairie fields with relict elements within. Woodlands include ancient woodland, informal medieval parkland (Julians - designated Historic Park and Garden), 19th – 20th century plantation and pre 18th century 'irregular' enclosure, with small pockets of later enclosure – 18th century or later.

Transport Pattern

There is a network of winding lanes. The Icknield Way (prehistoric trackway) crosses at Sandon.

Settlements and Built Form

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by clusters of wayside dwellings and small dispersed settlements or farmsteads. To the north lie the historic settlements of Sandon, Green End and Roe Green. Traditional buildings date from the 17th century and include the 17th century brick house of Sandonbury.

The historic settlement of Rushden lies in the centre. Traditional buildings date from the 16th century and include a plastered timber building formerly a post office with a tiled roof and one overhanging gable. The Old Rose and Crown dates to the end of the 16th century with a tiled roof and built plastered timber, decorated with combed work. Many 17th century thatched cottages and farm buildings lie within this scattered village.

EVALUATION

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

Complex area of arable farmland interspersed with blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland, which frames local views. Plateau area locally exposed.

Rarity & distinctiveness

Landscape type common in North Hertfordshire.

VISUAL IMPACT

Limited development well integrated into the landscape.

ACCESSIBILITY

Served by locally dense network of winding lanes, tracks and 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

- LC2 Landscape Conservation Area
- GD 1911 Julians
- SAM HT18 The Mount: Sandon
- SAM HT109 Site of Cumberlow Manor House: Clothall
- SAM 111 Enclosure and earthworks southeast of Clothellbury House: Clothall
- SAM HT11512 Hankins Moated Site, Roe Green: Sandon
- SAM HT 11517 Moated site and associated remains west of Hooks Green Farm: Clothall
- SAM 20764 Henge 500m northwest of Bush Wood: Weston
- SAM 27917 Lammas Field Roman Villa 680m northeast of Weston Bury: Therfield

EVALUATION

CONDITION

Land cover change: Localised
 Age structure of tree cover: Mature
 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival: Widespread
 Management of semi-natural habitat: Not obvious
 Survival of cultural pattern: Interrupted
 Impact of built development: Low
 Impact of land-use change: Low

Matrix Score: **Moderate**

ROBUSTNESS

Impact of landform: Apparent
 Impact of land cover: Prominent
 Impact of historic pattern: Weak
 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 is characterised by dispersed clusters of roadside dwellings and small settlements. This would be sensitive to inappropriate or unsympathetic infill development and any form of development not in scale with the villages and clusters of dwellings
- Village greens and other important open spaces are found in most villages/settlement clusters and would be sensitive to development on or adjacent to them
- Traditional materials of black weatherboarding, painted render or pargeting, flint infill panels and thatch are common to buildings throughout the Character Area
- Numerous ancient ash and maple or oak and hornbeam woodlands within the Character Area, which are vulnerable to lack of management, removal or introduction of non-native species
- Julians historic parkland is a registered garden that falls within this Character Area, which could be at risk from development pressure and inconsistent management
- Numerous areas of historic interest, particularly medieval moated sites, tumuli and the Roman villa site of Lammas Field, are vulnerable to loss
- Narrow winding lanes, many of which are lined with hedge banks and some lined with trees, and would be vulnerable to 'improvement' schemes
- Hedgerows are generally tall and well maintained, with hedgerow trees present. These would be vulnerable to lack of management
- Good public access, particularly focused around Sandon, Roe Green and Wallington. This includes numerous rights of way, the Hertfordshire Way, the Icknield Way, Chain Walk, lanes and tracks
- The irregular field pattern, which is of a small to medium scale

Overall Weston-Green End Plateau is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. The dispersed settlement pattern throughout the Character Area, with large greens and open spaces, would be sensitive to the introduction of unsympathetic elements.

Visual Sensitivities

- Views are generally enclosed due to presence of woodland blocks and would be sensitive to woodland removal
- Woodland blocks also create localised framed views
- Areas of the plateau are locally visually exposed, particularly to the west of the Character Area
- Lannock Mill forms a localised landmark to the west of Weston

In visual terms, Weston-Green End Plateau is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. Views within the Character Area are relatively enclosed. However, the western part of the Character Area is more open and exposed.

LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Weston-Green End Plateau is considered to be of **moderate landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Weston-Green End Plateau are the intactness of the landscape, a minimal number of incongruous elements, the sense of remoteness, the uninterrupted views and relative lack of human influence.

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 small scale nature. It would introduce elements that would alter the character and affect the existing key characteristics such as the dispersed settlement pattern and important greens and open spaces. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing minor roads, 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.

Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)

This type of development would not be entirely appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural character and dispersed settlement pattern. Some small scale expansion of villages, carefully designed and in keeping with the existing character, could possibly be accommodated. However, any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of important greens and open spaces that characterise Weston-Green End Plateau.

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

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 roads and lanes could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area. However, some limited upgrading of the A507 may be possible, if accompanied by landscape enhancements.

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 upgrading of the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character. Extensive development could also disrupt the extensive rights of way network.

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, if not carefully located, would erode the intimate character of Weston-Green End Plateau. The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

Large scale 'open' uses e.g. car storage

The complex small scale of Weston-Green End Plateau would make it more difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without potential loss of hedgerows and woodland blocks. This would not be in keeping with the intimate character of the area and could lead to the erosion of important greens and open spaces that characterise Weston-Green End Plateau. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network.

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

EVALUATION

Mineral extraction/waste disposal

This Character Area is currently relatively rural in appearance with small scale dispersed settlement. 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 Weston-Green End Plateau and would be difficult to accommodate between small settlements. The minor roads would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. Larger scale extraction could also disrupt the rights of way network. If schemes were consented, 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 capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of an agricultural nature or in keeping with the rural vernacular character. However, any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of important greens and open spaces that characterise Weston-Green End 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 currently a small number of detractors in the areas. These include existing telecommunications masts, which are visible locally within the Character Area. Further utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines are likely to have a significant impact on the rural character of Weston-Green End Plateau. Large scale tall elements such as these would be locally visible within the Character Area, as well as in surrounding Character Areas.

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

GUIDELINES

Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire

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

- Promote management of ancient woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Encourage diverse woodland management practice
- 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
- Maintain the ecological diversity and use of green lanes and associated species-rich hedgerows
- Maintain and encourage the development of marshy grasslands on pockets of boulder clay

Built development guidelines

- Conserve the traditional character of villages within the Character Area, ensuring that any development within or located on the edge of the villages uses appropriate vernacular materials and features
- 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 mitigate new development
- Retain the rural and complex character of Weston-Green End 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 sensitive greens and open spaces between settlements and groups of dwellings
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or hedgerows
- Conserve Julians registered parkland
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area