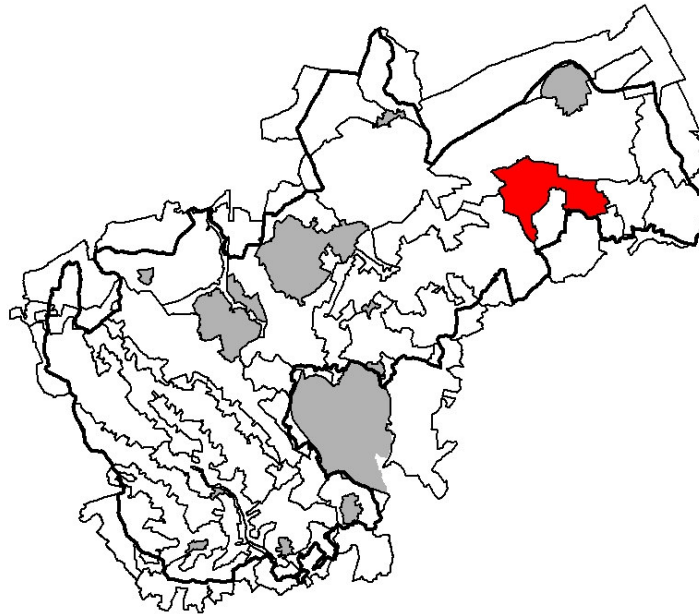


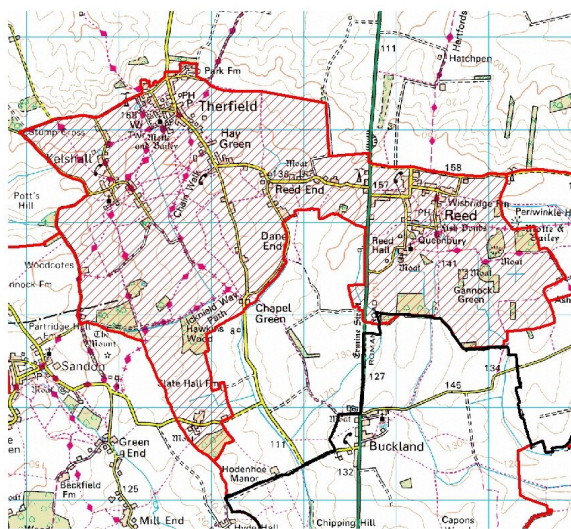
## LOCATION



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## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

A broad band extending between the villages of Therfield / Kelshall in the west to the village of Reed in the east. The Character Area extends northwards to the break of slope defining the scarp edge and also extends locally to the District boundary in the south.



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## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently rolling plateau landform. Predominantly arable but with grazing land adjacent to settlements. Generally well wooded with small pockets of ancient deciduous woodland and densely scattered hedgerow trees. Network of ancient winding lanes and an extensive footpath network especially around the settlements. Organic enclosure pattern associated with an irregular network of winding lanes. Field sizes to the south generally medium to large sized, however, between Therfield and Reed fields are small to medium sized. Scattered farmsteads and wayside dwellings.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Gently rolling landform
- Dominant arable land use
- Irregular pattern of field boundaries and ancient lanes
- Dispersed/scattered farmsteads

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Water tower at Therfield
- Telecommunications masts at Reed End
- Moated properties and fish ponds at Reed
- Upper Icknield Way

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

Glacial drift (till) overlying chalk. Calcareous loam soils, occasionally poorly drained.

**Topography**

Gently sloping plateau falling towards the south east.

**Degree of slope**

Typically 1:30.

**Altitude range**

125m to 165m.

**Hydrology**

Area drained by headwater drains of the River Rib which extends to the east of Therfield. Notable for ponds and moated properties.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

An area of high biodiversity is centred around the village of Reed typified by chalky boulder clay woodland and species-rich neutral grasslands. Unimproved neutral grasslands are a nationally scarce resource, but occur at several locations, eg Therfield Motte and Bailey and Fiddlers Green.

Ancient semi-natural woodlands of ash, maple and hazel coppice occur frequently with interlinking green lanes, the most notable being Reed, West and Philpotts Woods. Other examples include Hawkins Wood and Bush Wood.

Semi-natural grassland typical of the Character Area is a damp calcareous pasture with cowslip and pepper saxifrage but now limited to sites at Reed and Therfield. Locally important ponds occur at Reed End, Reed and Washingditch Green at Therfield. The scarce herb paris and fallow deer can be found in some woods.

Therfield and Reed End are important for great crested newts

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

To the north of the area is the medieval settlement of Therfield. Earthworks of a probable medieval Motte and Bailey Castle lie within the village. Cropmarks of enclosures, prehistoric ring ditches and linear ditches have been revealed by aerial

photographs. A medieval moated site lies to the southeast of Therfield. The Medieval settlement of Kelshall located to the southwest of Therfield was recorded in the Domesday Book as Cheleselle. The parish church of St Faith, Kelshall, dates to the 15th century. A Romano-British burial is recorded nearby.

To the east of the area lies the medieval settlement of Reed. The parish church of St Mary, Reed, dates from Saxon times. At least 10 medieval moated sites surround the settlement; two moated sites and a Holloway at Gannock Grove and Bush Wood, a double moat and fish pond at Queenbury, Moated sites at Reed Hall and Goodfellows. To the south of Reed there are cropmarks of an enclosure with associated linear ditches and a medieval moated site known as the Bull Moat.

**Field Pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape pattern consists of a mixture of 18th century and later enclosure, pre-18th century irregular enclosure, prairie fields with post 1950s boundary loss, ancient woodland, post 1950s enclosure, prairie fields with relict elements within. There are pockets of 19th-20th century plantation and small areas of enclosed meadow pasture.

**Transport Pattern**

Network of ancient winding lanes and an extensive footpath network especially around the settlements. The Character Area is crossed by the Upper Icknield Way.

**Settlements and Built Form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by villages, estates and dispersed/scattered farmsteads. There are a number of traditional buildings in the villages of Therfield, Reed and Kelshall. There are many good examples in the village of Therfield, these date from the 15th century. The Rectory, a former Manor House originally dates to the 15th century with later additions in the early 18th century. Elm House dates to the 16th century and Limes, a timber framed building with later additions dates to the 17th century. In Kelshall, a late Georgian five bay fronted Old Rectory lies close to the parish church. The village of Reed is unusual in plan with a number of buildings scattered around three greens and includes a large number of medieval moated sites. A Tudor chimney is all that remains of the original Reed Hall when it was altered in the 18th century.

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

Complex area of arable farmland mixed with grazing and woodland cover. Tapestry of varying sized fields and corridor network of winding lanes.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

Landscape type comparatively common within the District.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Local visual impact on northern edge caused by water towers and telecommunications masts.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Well covered by network of lanes, tracks and rights of way. The very straight and busy Roman Road – Ermine Street (A10) cuts across the Character Area.

**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
SAM 20603	Double Moat and fishpond Queenbury: Reed
SAM 20605	Moated Site Goodfellows: Reed
SAM 20672	Motte and Bailey Castle and associated earthworks 100m south of Tuthill Farm: Therfield
SAM HT11513/1	Gannock Grove Moated Site and Hollow way: Reed
SAM HT11514	Bush Wood Moated Site and Hollow way: Reed
SAM HT11569	Reed Hall Moated Site; Reed

**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: Dominant  
 Visibility from outside: Locally visible  
 Sense of enclosure: Partial  
 Visual unity: Coherent  
 Distinctiveness/rarity: Frequent

**Matrix Score:** **Moderate**

<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**

- The historic settlement pattern within the Character Area is characterised by dispersed villages and scattered farmsteads, which would be sensitive to unsympathetic development not in scale with the villages
- Traditional materials of black weatherboarding, painted render or pargeting, flint infill panels and thatch common to buildings throughout the Character Area
- Mediaeval moated sites and other historical features are present throughout the Therfield-Reed Plateau and would be vulnerable to loss
- Village greens and other important open spaces are found in most villages and hamlets and would be sensitive to development on or adjacent to
- Ancient winding lanes, many of which are classified as green lanes and lined with hedge banks, and would be vulnerable to any 'improvement' schemes
- The linear alignment of Ermine Street Roman Road (the A10)
- Small scattered woodlands are present throughout the Character Area, several of which are ancient, and would be vulnerable to further fragmentation or impact
- Good public access through numerous rights of way, including the Icknield Way, The Hertfordshire Way, Chain Walk, lanes and tracks should be maintained
- A small number of incongruous elements have been introduced into the Character Area, including telecommunication masts and water towers along the northern boundary of the Character Area near Therfield and near Reed End, which currently act as detractors

Overall Therfield-Reed Plateau is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. The loosely settled Character Area has a number of important greens and historic features that would be sensitive to the introduction of unsympathetic elements.

**Visual Sensitivities**

- The Character Area is generally set back from the skyline of the Scarp Slopes South of Royston
- Views within the Character Area are complex due to the tapestry of land uses and field sizes
- Closer to the villages views are more enclosed as the landscape is of a smaller scale
- The skyline when looking towards the Character Area from the north has in part been degraded by telecommunications masts and water towers

In visual terms, Therfield-Reed Plateau is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. Views within the Character Area are relatively enclosed. However, some incongruous features have impinged on views into the Character Area.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE**

Overall Therfield-Reed Plateau is considered to be of **moderate landscape value**. Although there are a minimal number of incongruous elements and relatively few transport routes within Therfield-Reed Plateau, the landscape is not particularly distinctive in terms of views or landform and historical features are not prominent.

## 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 tapestry of land uses and field sizes. 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 affect accessibility to the countryside.

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 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 and avoid the erosion of important greens and open spaces that characterise Therfield-Reed Plateau.

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

#### Major transport developments/improvements

This type of development would generally 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 or affect the historic alignment of the A10. 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 upgrading of the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character. 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, particularly if they were of an agricultural nature or vernacular in form and style and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings, if not carefully located, would erode the intimate character of Therfield-Reed Plateau.

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

#### Large scale open storage

The complex small scale of Therfield-Reed 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 the smaller scale landscape and open spaces that characterise Therfield-Reed Plateau. 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.

**EVALUATION**

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively rural in appearance with small scale dispersed development. 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 Therfield-Reed 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 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 an agricultural nature or vernacular in form and style and in keeping with the rural character. However, any proposals would need clear justification and should avoid impacts on important greens, open spaces and the historic settlement pattern that characterise Therfield-Reed 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 on the skyline in views into the Character Area from the north. Further utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines are likely to have a major impact on the rural but settled character of Therfield-Reed Plateau. Large scale tall elements such as these would be highly 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**

### **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
- Encourage the development of species-rich neutral grasslands on chalky boulder clays
- Encourage planting of new woodland of ash and maple species
- 

##### **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 Therfield-Reed 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, such as on the edges of the plateau where it would be visible on the currently largely undeveloped skyline
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or hedgerows
- Conserve the historic features of Therfield-Reed Plateau, such as moated sites and motte and bailey castles
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area