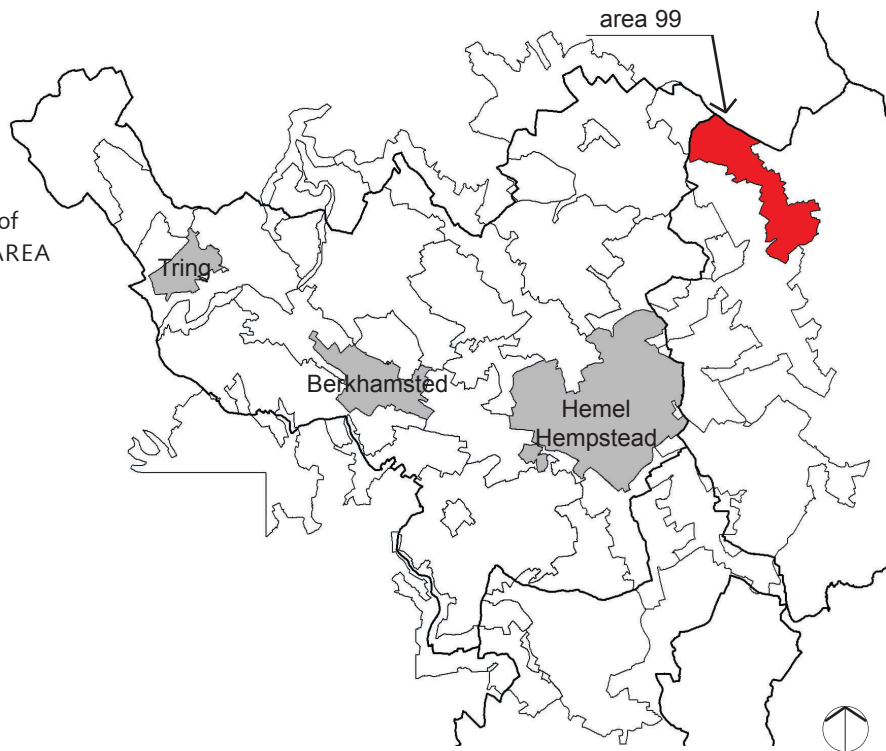


### District Map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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#### LOCATION

This area borders the south-western fringe of Harpenden town and includes Kinsbourne Green village to the north, Rothamsted Park and Hammonds End Farm to the south.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

A linear, gently undulating, predominantly arable plateau divided into three sub-sections. In the centre, the character is influenced by the land use around Rothamsted agricultural experimental station. Rothamsted Manor house is set in parkland, surrounded by small, geometric, field plots created for crop experiments. The southern tip of the plateau contains a smaller area of farmland, and urban fringe recreational uses as far south as the break of slope leading down to the Ver Valley. To the north of the plateau, mixed arable and pasture farmland around Kinsbourne Green becomes more open. The ornamental planting associated with White Walls forms a distinctive feature. There are longer views from the edges of the plateau to the north, over the surrounding lower land

towards Luton Hoo Estate. Views are generally framed and filtered by parkland planting and treed hedgerows.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- gently undulating plateau
- straight country lanes
- historic houses and parklands
- discontinuous field pattern
- urban fringe development and associated recreational activities
- isolated farms

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Rothamsted parkland and historic houses
- waymarked footpath and cycleway along the disused railway line
- Roman burial ground
- Kinsbourne Green common

White Walls •  
Kinsbourne Green  
(E.Staveley)



## PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** The bedrock chalk is overlaid by a drift of clay-with-flints. It is an acidic clay upland with neutral loams. Soils are stagnogleyic paleo-argillic brown earths - fine silty loamy with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging. There are some well drained clayey soils over chalk and variable quantities of flints (Batcombe association).

In the past the leached acid clay soil required marling and chalk was locally available from the adjacent valley slopes.

**Topography.** This linear plateau area stretches in a north west/south east direction for approximately 5.5km. The area to the north slopes gently away in two directions from Kinsbourne Green, forming the upper slopes of valleys to the north east and to the south west. The central area and Rothamsted Experimental Station are mainly flat with slight undulations while the area to the south, where a golf course is situated, has more marked undulations.

**Degree of slope.** The slopes down from Lady Bray Farm average 1 in 30. The gradient of the slopes to the north east from Rothamsted Manor House are 1 in 50 with the slopes to the south slightly steeper at 1 in 45. The rest of the area is mainly flat.

**Altitude range.** 155m at Lady Bray Farm in the north; 105m at the Sports Hall north of Rothamsted Experimental Station.

**Hydrology.** Free draining soils result in little standing water. There is a large field drain for agricultural land to the north of Kinsbourne Green and a large pond to the north of White Walls in the northern part of the area. Springs rise here as well, e.g. Jenny's Spring, Eight Acre Spring and Long Spring. There are small ponds associated with farmsteads and settlements, e.g. Faulkner's End Farm and Rothamsted Experimental Station.

**Land cover and land use.** The predominant land cover is arable farmland with secondary parkland and pastoral land use.s. Areas of grazing are typically closer to dwellings and farmsteads, e.g. Lady Bray Farm. Recreation uses lie adjacent to the urban fringe e.g. a rugby club and golf course off Redbourn Lane.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Woodlands are scarce on the plateau and the remnants are discrete and linear. This is a transitional area between oak/hornbeam woodland on the Chiltern dip-slope and acidic oak/beechness/holly woodland, with significant elm presence on the margins. Other species include pine, ash, sweet chestnut and sycamore with hazel and hawthorn understorey species. Ornamental tree planting is associated with the two manor houses in the area, Rothamsted Manor and White Walls. Planted Lombardy poplar trees to the south of Rothamsted Manor are prominent features as are the lime avenues that border the approach to the Manor. Stands of ornamental trees and conifers around White Walls stand out on the plateau. Hedgerow species comprise holly, rose, elder, elm, clematis and field maple with occasional oak, elm and ash as hedgerow trees.

## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Rothamsted manor house dates mainly from the 17th century. Pevsner considers that the formal gardens date from the alterations of the house in 1860 and later. Rothamsted park now houses the Institute of Arable Crop Research (IACR) formerly Rothamsted Experimental Station. A range of 20th-century buildings house laboratories and libraries bordering the eastern edge of the parkland. These have developed out of the experiments carried out by John Bennett Lawes, a former owner of the manor house. The parkland associated with Rothamsted is co-extensive with the demesne of land of the medieval manor owned by St. Albans Abbey.

**Field pattern.** The historic pattern has mainly been lost on the plateau due to agricultural intensification and crop patterns associated with the research station at Rothamsted. The field pattern is irregular with medium to large fields, particularly bordering Kinsbourne Green Lane. The exception to this are the fields around Rothamsted, where the fields are more regular in shape and are medium to small in size.

**Transport pattern.** A number of straight, rural lanes pass through the area, crossing each other at Kinsbourne Green. The lanes in the north of the area are generally defined by broken low hedgerows or narrow banks where hedgerows once grew. Rothamsted Manor house is approached by straight lime tree-lined avenues with wide verges and bordered to the south by Redbourn Lane (B487). A disused railway line crosses the area in a north east/south west direction and is defined by parallel mature hedges. The railway line is now used by walkers and cyclists and is known as the 'Nicky Line'.

**Settlements and built form.** Settlement is dispersed across the plateau and isolated farms and houses are key to the character of the area. The settlement of Kinsbourne Green is an unusual wayside development of large houses along the edge of a long linear common with no real centre. Rothamsted Manor House dates from the 17th century, was altered in the 1860s and thereafter. The remains of an early Roman mausoleum at Rothamsted are likely to be associated with Roman settlement in the area centred on a villa. The site is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument. White Walls, located to the west of Kinsbourne Green, is a large white house enclosed by ornamental woodlands and arable land.

## OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

English Heritage: Schedule entry

## VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

The Rothamsted park area of the plateau is concealed by a combination of access restrictions and the presence of vegetation in the form of field hedgerows and parkland avenues. Lower and gappy hedgerows to the north of this area, around Kinsbourne Green, allow longer views of a more open landscape, heightening awareness of the plateau location. The area around White Walls house becomes very exposed with glimpses out towards the M1 corridor and sounds of distant traffic becoming more apparent.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This character is typical of this area of Hertfordshire, however the field patterns created for trials by the Rothamsted IACR are unique.

## VISUAL IMPACT

The most dominant impact on the area is the development at Rothamsted park. The laboratories and facilities are widespread. The M1 corridor has an influence on the character to the west of Kinsbourne Green, detracting from the rural character of this area.

## ACCESSIBILITY

Total length of Public Rights of Way - 12,928m  
Total length of Other Public Access - 1,337m  
Total length of Designated Cycle Routes - 3,869m  
Total length of all public access - 18,134m  
Area of LCA in square metres - 7,235,411  
Length to area ratio - 1:399

## COMMUNITY VIEWS

The area around Rothamsted is frequently identified as distinctive, although less frequently extolled in praise (B).  
"An important public amenity...as well as being of immense historical and current scientific importance. Also it is a beautiful landscape." (6083)  
"Some of the abandoned experiments in the fields near Rothamsted need to be tidied up." (6306)

## LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

Conservation Area: Harpenden ( south east corner)  
SM: Rothamsted Romano-British site.

## CONDITION

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>localised</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>mature</b>
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	<b>fragmented</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>poor</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>interrupted</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>low</b>
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	<b>moderate</b>

## STRENGTH OF CHARACTER

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	<b>apparent</b>
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	<b>prominent</b>
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	<b>continuous</b>
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	<b>locally visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>partial</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>coherent</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>unusual</b>

CONDITION	GOOD	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	MODERATE	Improve and reinforce	<b>Improve and conserve</b>	Conserve and restore
	POOR	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
		STRENGTH OF CHARACTER		

## STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE: IMPROVE AND CONSERVE

- promote the creation of a network of new medium to large woodlands in the open arable landscape, particularly with a view to visually integrating the intrusive motorways and urban fringe development
- for existing woodlands, encourage the replacement of softwoods with indigenous native deciduous communities, hedgebank management and re-establishing a species-rich ground flora
- utilise ancient hedge and field boundaries to establish the most appropriate location for wood restoration and expansion
- encourage the reversal of habitat fragmentation and the creation and improvement of habitat links to create eco-corridors
- use native stock of local provenance wherever possible.
- survey and manage parkland and veteran trees for biodiversity value
- ensure new planting is encouraged to maintain age diversity. Ensure landscape improvements respect the historic context of existing features and the form and character of parkland and gardens. Ornamental species should only be used to replace damaged or over-mature specimens, where appropriate
- promote hedgerow restoration and creation throughout the area to provide visual and ecological links between existing and proposed woodland areas. Pattern to follow historic field boundaries where possible
- restore ditches and discourage enclosure of existing open drainage systems
- provide new uncropped or grass field margins to link areas of wildlife importance and/or existing and proposed rights of way
- restore arable land to permanent pasture and meadow. Priority will be given to land which buffers or links sites of existing wildlife importance
- new (and only necessary) buildings and structures to be in keeping with the primary age of the remaining historic character of the site (without resorting to pastiche)
- within golf courses a high proportion of the total area shall be dedicated to and maintained as wildlife habitat, building upon established areas of wildlife interest already present. Landscape management plans to be an integral part of the facilities
- Field trials Rothamstead Experimental Station( HCC)

