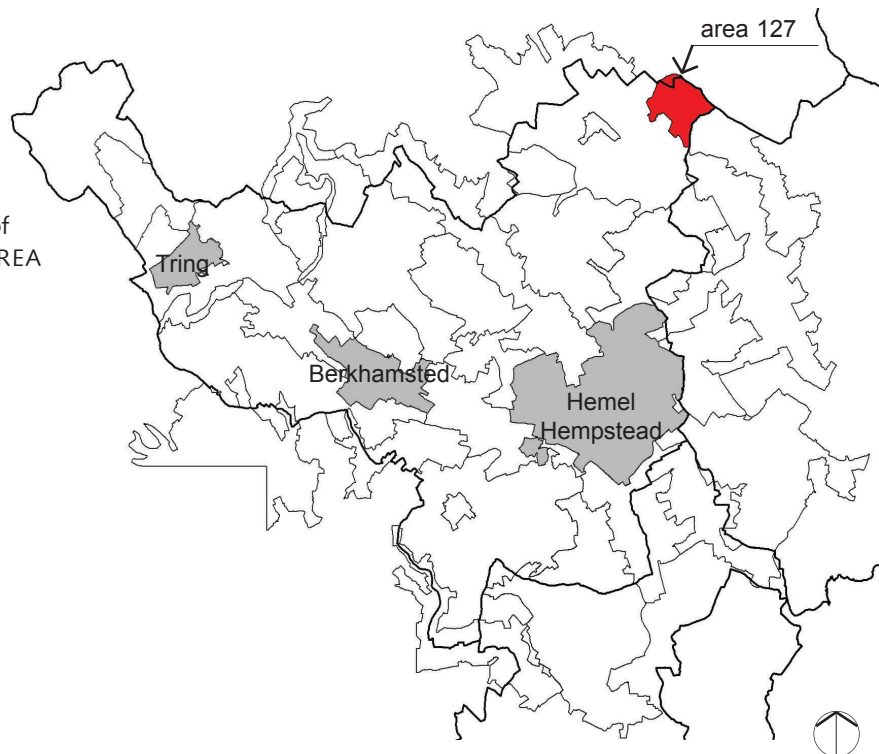


District Map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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LOCATION

The area is located to the north east of Markyate and Flamstead villages, on the slopes overlooking the Luton Hoo estate.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The slopes are characterised by open farmland with sporadic semi natural woodland and copse cover. Farmland is essentially mixed with a reasonable proportion given over to pasture. Field boundaries are characterised by treed hedgerows, that enclose medium to large sized fields, however the pattern is discontinuous. A prominent feature of the area is the view across to the parkland of the Luton Hoo estate, including a distinctive Lime tree avenue. The M1 corridor runs through the centre of the area. Other roads comprise B roads and winding country lanes. Settlement is fairly sparse / isolated, and displays a varied range of vernacular building styles, with red brick, diaper work and clay tile in evidence. Overhead power lines and

pylons detract from the character of the area and fly tipping and car dumping is a particular problem in the area.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- mixed farmland
- discrete woodlands - semi natural
- M1 transport corridor
- isolated/scattered settlement - vernacular buildings

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- views towards Luton Hoo parklands
- overhead power lines and pylons following the M1
- vernacular buildings at Pepperstock



- Minor Lane
(HCC Landscape Unit)

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology and soils. On the higher ground, the Upper Chalk bedrock is capped with variable depths of free draining clay-with-flints. At Pepsal End itself an isolated patch of Pebbly Clay drift, with a sandy soil, creates localised heathy conditions. There are chalk outcrops along the north east side of the area, where the plateau dips towards the River Lea catchment. The soils are predominantly fine silty and fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging, (Batcombe association).

Topography. The topography of the character area is that of gently undulating slopes, falling away to the north east towards the Luton Hoo Estate.

Degree of slope. The average slope ratio is 1 in 42.

Altitude range. Varies from 170m at Pepperstock to 150m at Bonners Farm.

Hydrology. Generally the topography and free draining geology have resulted in little standing water. There is almost no natural surface water.

Land cover and land use. The predominant land cover is open arable farmland with pasture and woodland uses being secondary. Areas of grazing are typically closer to dwellings and farmsteads e.g. Pepsalend Farm and Gibraltar Farm.

Vegetation and wildlife. Two principal ancient woodlands remain in the area: acidic oak/hornbeam at Birchin Grove on pebbly clay drift, and calcareous oak/ash/hazel woodland at Chalk and Heavens Woods, on the chalk. Old grassland is almost non-existent, except for a rough pasture by Birchin Grove, which was formerly species-rich acidic grassland, but also with some evidence of calcareous conditions in places, but which has recently been degraded. Other remnants exist on road verges, such as a relatively species-rich stretch to the east of Pepperstock.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The hamlet of Pepperstock displays an interesting range of vernacular building work, notably in the form of 16th and 17th century timber framing with brick infill and red clay tiled roofs.

Luton Hoo, has a strong visual and historic influence on the area. The classical early 19th century house and associated estate architecture are clearly visible, as is the lime avenue an arboretum of mature parkland exotics, such as cedar and wellingtonia.

Field Patterns. The area comprises large prairie fields with much of the discernable field pattern lost, partly due to the area being disturbed for the construction of the M1 motorway. Remnants of a regular pattern can be defined at Pepsalend Farm. Field boundaries are usually marked by good mixed hedgerows and wide 'common land' verges.

Transport pattern. The M1 slices through the area in a north/south direction either at grade or in a shallow cutting. The minor roads including Pepsal End Lane are sinuous to winding in pattern and some are sunken and semi sunken lanes. Half Moon Lane is an ancient Byway. Verges are variable to absent.

Settlements and built form. Generally the slopes do not have a strongly settled character. Where settlement does occur it is generally small in scale and ancient in terms of character and built form such as Pepperstock, which displays some interesting vernacular building work. Most other settlement is largely farming related and/or affiliated to the estate at Luton Hoo.

OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Pevsner N: Buildings of England - Hertfordshire

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

The character area is essentially open, widely visible from outside and with extensive views across and within the area. The large scale of the landscape elements in terms of field size contributes to the open, unenclosed feel which characterizes the area and contributes to its visual coherence.

The visual and sensory impact of the M1 has a significant effect on the character of the area.

Rarity and distinctiveness. The landscape character is common in Hertfordshire.

VISUAL IMPACT

The main impacts on the area are the M1 and its associated earthworks and the wooded parkland of Luton Hoo, which, although outside the area, are clearly visible. The visual and sensory impact of Luton to the north of the area is significant.

ACCESSIBILITY

The public footpath network in this area is good, despite the interruption of the M1 corridor.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

Although data for community views of this area is limited this area appears to be unremarkable (E).

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

Areas of Archaeological Significance: East of Hogtrough Wood, Flamstead

CONDITION

<i>Land cover change:</i>	localised
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	mixed
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	relic
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	not obvious
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	interrupted
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	high
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	high

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	prominent
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	prominent
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	insignificant
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	locally visible
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	partial
<i>Visual unity:</i>	incoherent
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	frequent

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
		STRENGTH OF CHARACTER		

STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING**CHANGE: IMPROVE AND REINFORCE**

- conserve and enhance the distinctive character of traditional settlements and individual buildings by promoting the conservation of important buildings and high standards of new building or alterations to existing properties, all with the consistent use of locally traditional materials and designed to reflect the traditional character of the area
- promote a clear strategy for the visual mitigation of all Motorways, Trunk roads and to positively integrate these corridors into the local landscape character
- utilise ancient hedge and field boundaries for the most appropriate location for woodland restoration and expansion
- encourage reversion from arable uses to pasture and grassland
- promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats
- encourage the retention of key views across to Luton Hoo in the creation of new woodlands
- 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
- promote crop diversification and the restoration of mixed livestock/arable farming where possible
- promote the restoration of hedge improvement and planting adjacent to rights of way, green lanes and along parish boundaries
- provide new uncropped or grass field margins to link areas of wildlife importance and/or existing and proposed rights of way
- conserve unimproved and semi-improved grassland wherever possible, avoiding agricultural improvements to reduce their acid or calcareous nature, in order to maintain their nature conservation value
- maintain and develop the traditional pattern of roadside verges as a local feature and a wildlife resource. Where development is likely to affect verges and damage is unavoidable, development should include details of protection of the remaining verge and replacement of its nature conservation value within the proposed scheme. This is particularly important where verges include hedgebanks, sunken lanes, ditches and hedges
- hard detailing should be kept to a minimum, with an emphasis on the use of natural materials such as gravel for drives etc. rather than concrete or paviers
- native tree species only should be planted on boundaries, with exotic/ornamental species only in close proximity to the dwelling
- encourage effective management along transport corridors to ensure thinning, selective felling and replanting is undertaken to achieve a varied age structure and appropriate species mix
- enhance the landscape by promoting the removal of existing eyesores, repairing damage and mitigating the effects of existing intrusive developments
- change that is likely to contribute to further suburbanisation of the landscape, to undermine its distinctive character should be firmly resisted

- M1 motorway (HCC Landscape Unit)

