

Views from eastern boundary – airport buildings in background



View looking s-w from eastern boundary demonstrating proximity of aircraft / Wigmore Park



Analysis

Quality/Condition

The landscape in this area is of a high quality, with few visible intrusions beyond the urban edge. Airport buildings are on the whole well screened.

However, tranquillity is only considered medium, despite the rural location. While the adjacent road creates a zone of low tranquillity along the edge, the main issue is the airport. While there are periods of high tranquillity, these are frequently interrupted by aircraft noise.

Sensitivity

High. The area is very sensitive to change, being such a stark contrast to the adjacent rural area, and also because it is relatively flat. The hedges, trees and small areas of woodland in the area serve an extremely useful purpose in screening the airport.

With part of the area being a well-used public park there is also a high level of sensitivity to change in terms of the impact upon users.

Issues

Aside from the airport, the major issue is the fact that part of this area has been allocated for business park type development – considering the prime location and demand for land this is not

surprising. However, this will have a severely detrimental effect on what is currently a very rural area.

Opportunities

While it would not serve any purpose to attempt to fit a local landscape designation to an area already allocated to development, the landscape should be preserved as far as possible. With Wigmore Valley Park having high landscape quality and warranting consideration for local landscape designation, it is suggested that the main hedgerow feature, extending right along the southern boundary, is also included in this consideration.

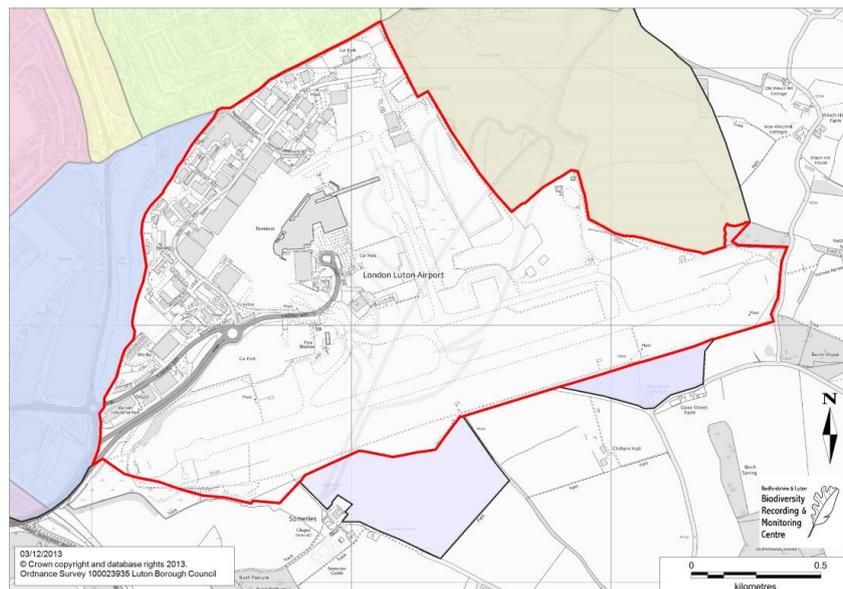
When the business park is developed, existing landscape features should be retained and where possible enhanced and linked into the wider landscape. Building design should take account of the very rural location.

Constraints

The allocation for the business park has already been made in the previous local plan.

The proximity of the airport will always be a constraint.

Character Area 14: Luton Airport



Sitting on top of what is an artificial cutting into the steep chalk valley side on the south-west of the town, this LCA is essentially an area of 'dipslope' – very flat and wide open (hence a good location for an airport). This location is actually quite well screened from the town – there are locations from which the taller buildings and control tower can be seen, but the runway is hidden by the landscape unless the observer is within this LCA.

The western boundary is the cutting into the valley side, below which the A1081 'Airport Way' runs, but does also include part of the cutting/slope where key roads feed in. The eastern boundary is

with LCA 13, and the southern boundary is the Luton administrative boundary, with the exception of LCAs 15a and 15b. Security fencing marks much of the airport perimeter – highly necessary but obtrusive. The majority of the area is featureless short grassland, with a long asphalt runway, and various related buildings, some in bright colours and including the prominent control tower. Aircraft not in use also stand close to the buildings. These are mainly in the north of the area. The airport complex also includes car parking and hotels.

Views from the southern edge are of a high quality, across the rolling Hertfordshire countryside as the land gently slopes away, with few buildings and roads visible, just trees, hedgerows and small woodlands. From the south-western corner it is possible to look down over part of Luton Hoo parkland. The area to the south was classified in the South Bedfordshire LCA as “11D: Luton Airport – Chiltern Green Chalk Dipslope”.



Analysis

Quality/Condition

Moderate. Although much of the area is open and well-managed, it is essentially sterilised and featureless.

Although the southern part of the LCA can be quite tranquil when aircraft are not taking off or landing, interruptions are frequent and therefore tranquillity is considered to be low.

Sensitivity

Being very open and flat the landscape is extremely sensitive to change, but given the nature of the use of this area this would be extremely unlikely. The northern part is much less sensitive.

Issues

Aside from the areas use as an airport, which is considered a necessary given, there are no issues.

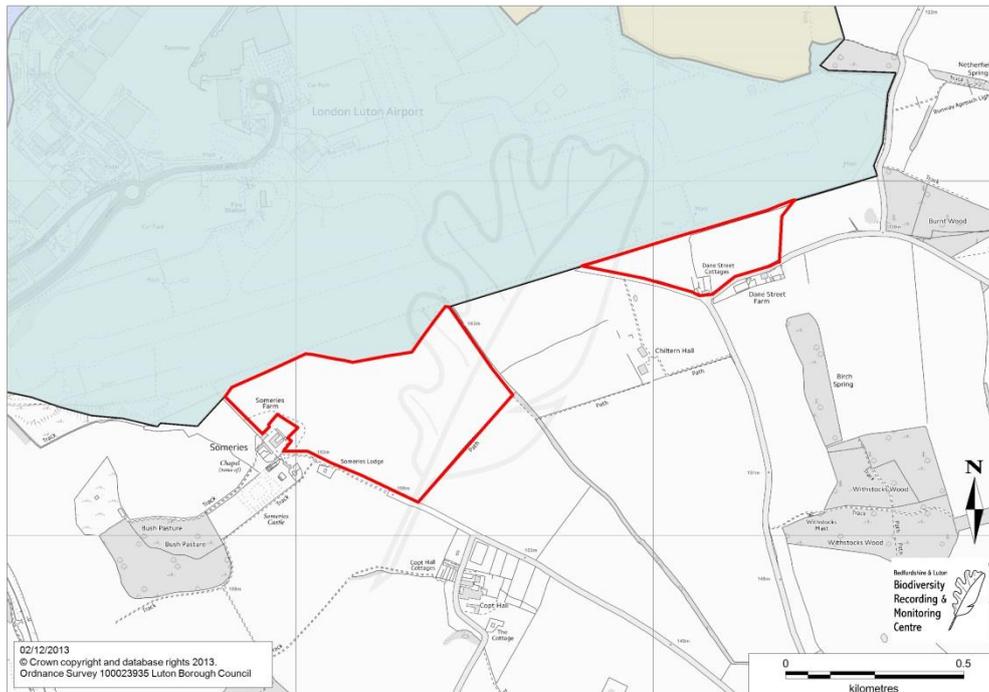
Opportunities

There are no opportunities for enhancing the landscape of the area that would not impact upon the airports function or security.

Constraints

The use of the area as an airport is a major constraint, but the airport is a critical element of the town.

Character Area 15: Dane Street Farm and Someries Farm



This LCA consists of two separate but similar areas where the Luton administrative boundary extends beyond the southern boundary of the airport (LCA 14). Dane Street Farm is the eastern area, Someries Farm is to the west.

Both are bounded by the airport to the north, with the high chain link security fence an evident visible boundary and incongruity. Both consist of areas of large, open arable fields, gently sloping away to the south and including boundary hedgerows with landmark trees.

The hedgerows are gappy in places, but the area is generally highly attractive, especially when viewed from the airport boundary with the perimeter fence behind the viewer. While these two areas are identified as a distinct LCA for the purpose of this study, the reality is that they are part of the wider “Luton Airport – Chiltern Green Chalk Dipslope” LCA described in the South Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (2007).

The area adjacent to the airport is popular with aircraft enthusiasts, parking along the adjacent lane and walking along the fence line.

A small landfill operation adjacent to Someries Farm is a significant incongruity, having raised sides. It is active and machinery is evident, both working and stationary, and heaps of spoil are left along Someries Farm Lane, prominent in the open landscape.

To the west of Someries Farm Lane the countryside becomes more rolling with arable fields and hedges interspersed with areas of woodland as it drops away into the Lea Valley.

Just outside the area, but visible from it, is Someries Castle. It actually consists of the ruin of the gatehouse and chapel, and is Britain's oldest brick-built building of its type. It is an attractive ruin but is hemmed in on two sides by farm buildings and yard.

From Dane Street views across to Chiltern Hall are attractive. The eastern end of the Dane Street area, immediately adjacent to the airport, becomes progressively scrubbier and culminates in a small area of woodland. There are also good views west across to Luton Hoo, Crawley Green Business Park on top of the opposite chalk valley side across the Lea valley in southern Luton, and further beyond across Luton.

Views south from airport perimeter



View along southern perimeter fence of airport



Landfill operation at Someries Farm



Analysis

Quality/Condition

High – the countryside in this area is generally well managed with interesting field patterns, though some hedgerows have significant gaps.

Tranquillity is very difficult to assess in this LCA, as it is at times very high, and at others (when aircraft are approaching, landing, taking off) it is very low.

Sensitivity

High. Being very rural, open and relatively flat this landscape is extremely sensitive to change.

Issues

Other than the impact of the airport, the main issue is the landfill operation at Someries Farm, which stands proud of the landscape. There are also spoil heaps and machinery adjacent to the lane nearby. This severely detracts from the landscape.

Although just outside the area, it is unfortunate that Someries Farm was built with so little consideration of the setting of Someries Castle.

Opportunities

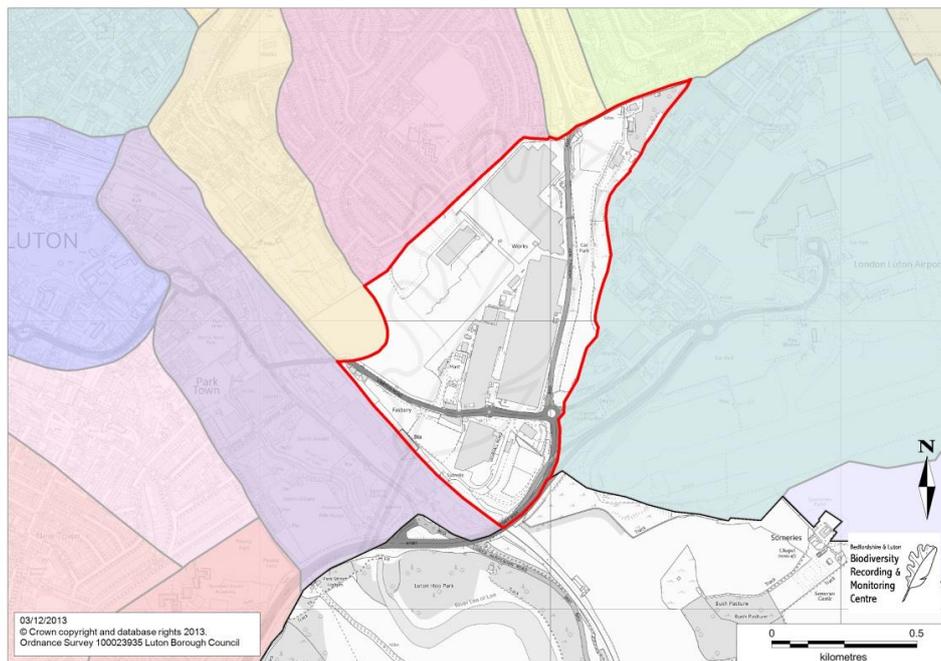
These areas were identified as 'Areas of great Landscape Value' in the previous Local Plan, and would merit consideration for a similar level of local landscape designation now.

Any opportunity to reduce the impact of the landfill operation and manage it more closely, removing spoil heaps and ensuring appropriate restoration, should be taken.

Constraints

The opportunity to reduce impact and influence restoration of the landfill operation is likely to be extremely limited as it will be covered by an existing permission. The only real opportunity would be to encourage enforcement action were the operators to be exceeding their permission.

Character Area 16: Luton South Industrial



This area is highly industrial and urbanised, and assessment is difficult and limited. The dominant features are the very large buildings of the Vauxhall plant, airport Car park areas, and major roads such as the A1081 Airport Way, which has been cut into the steep chalk valley side exposing the underlying geology.

Parts of the cutting have grassland or scrubby vegetation and create a narrow green feature running north-south. While this landscape is man-made it is still of great interest, and highlights the presence of the chalk bedrock.

There are views out over the Vauxhall plant and across the Lea valley, but these are very urban views. Airport buildings are also visible in places.



Analysis

Quality/Condition

The majority of the landscape has been heavily modified and is of either low quality or it is not possible to assess. The exception is the narrow green corridor/cutting, which is in moderate condition as development is very close to it.

Tranquillity is low throughout.

Sensitivity

Low, with the exception of the green corridor along the cutting, which is high.

Issues

Blighted by industry and development, road and aircraft noise.

Opportunities

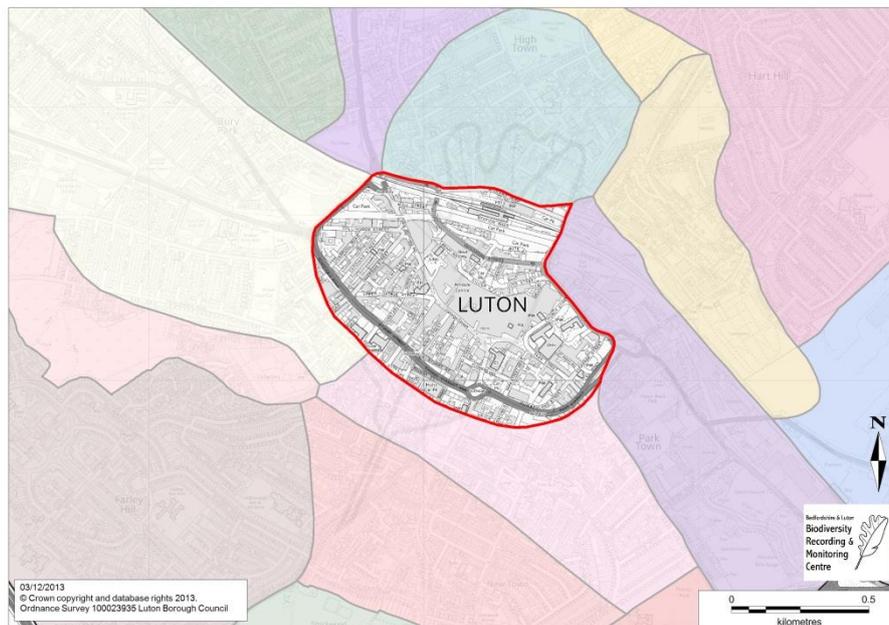
There are few opportunities to enhance this area, although every effort should be made to ensure that any future planning consents require landscape enhancements.

Despite the nature of the wider area, the green corridor, particularly along the 'ridge' in the north, is worthy of protection and should be considered for local landscape designation.

Constraints

General constraints of industrial landscape.

Character Area 17: Town Centre



Description and Characteristics

A small completely urbanised area in the central-southern part of town. It is low lying but has a big impact on the landscape due to the concentration of large mostly modern buildings including the main shopping centre and multi-storey car park, university buildings, railway station, cinema and others. The High Street is wide and pedestrianised, with tall buildings and the Town Hall dominating the northern end. The railway line passes through the north of this area, and the elevated, wide and busy Park Viaduct road runs through close to the southern and western borders (beyond which the land begins to rise).

In places, where elevation can be gained or beyond tall buildings there are good views, particularly across to Hart Hill which overlooks the town centre. Historically the River Lea would have run through this area.



Analysis

Quality/Condition

Not applicable due to built-up nature.

Tranquillity is low, except in the High Street which is pedestrianised and closed to traffic where it is moderate.

Sensitivity

Low.

Issues

The River Lea has been completely buried below this part of town.

Opportunities

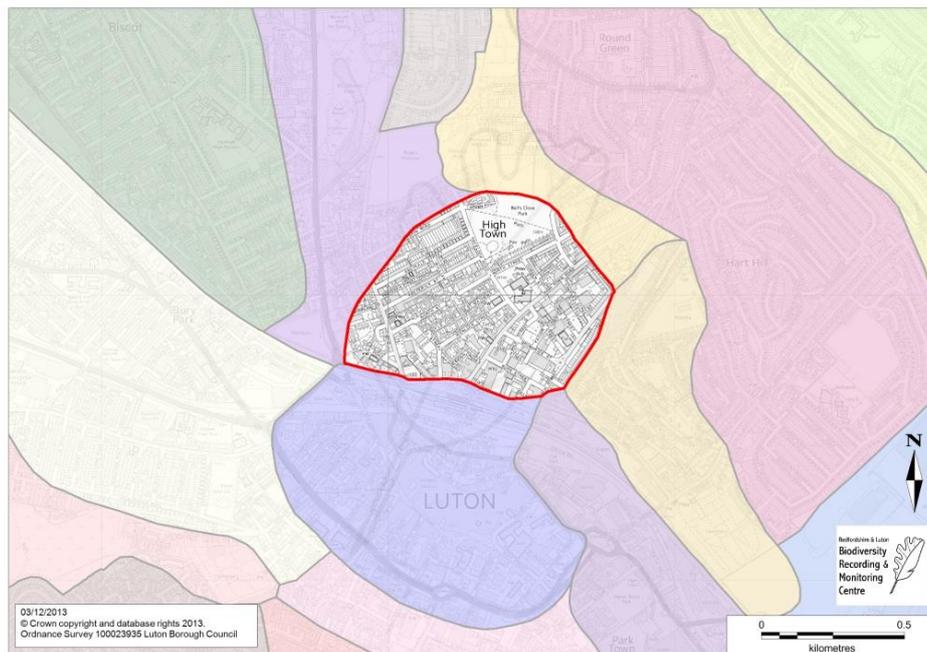
The Lea should be brought back up to ground level to make it a key feature of the urban landscape again. This would only be achievable as part of major future re-developments.

With green or open areas very limited, the quality of civic spaces should be maximised – it was noted that creating a turfed area within such a space adjacent to the northern end of the main shopping centre made a significant positive impact.

Constraints

Highly built up nature of the area and costs of any enhancements.

Character Area 18: High Town



Description and Characteristics

Another highly urbanised area to the north of the town centre (LCA 17), with a higher elevation towards the north (hence the name). Largely residential, there is also industrial/commercial use, especially in the south and west of the area.

There is little green space, the notable exception being the relatively large recreation ground at Bells Close. This rises up from a flat base, influenced by the chalk valley side (LCA 8a), and links to People's Park and Popes Meadow beyond (in LCA 4c) with a wooded backdrop. Views across town are possible looking south and west. Good views across to the 'wooded' landscape of Hart Hill, for example from areas east of the High Town Road.

Residential areas largely consist of close knit Victorian terraces within regular road patterns and narrow streets. There are also small areas of more modern development, including 3-4 storey flats, on the eastern side.

Bells Close Recreation Ground



Analysis

Quality/Condition

Not possible to assess due to urban nature.

Tranquillity is generally low, moderate in some of the quieter residential areas.

Sensitivity

Low, except in existing greenspaces where it is high, particularly due to the scarcity of greenspace.

Issues

Highly urbanised.

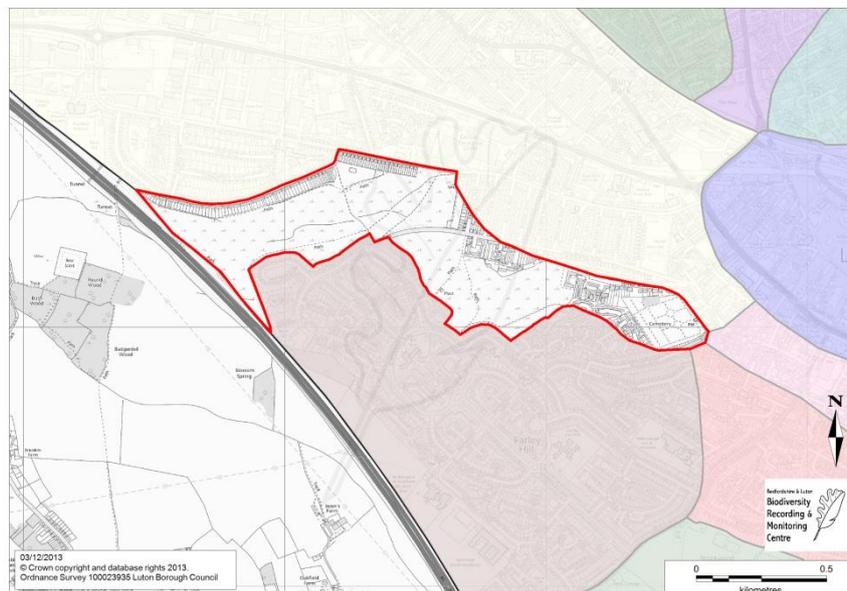
Opportunities

Few opportunities for landscape enhancement. The key opportunities are around engaging people with their local landscape, for example at places like Bells Close/Peoples Park.

Constraints

Urbanised nature of area.

Character Area 19a: Dallow Downs Valley Side



Description and Characteristics:

A narrow, moderate to steep chalk escarpment running east-west through the southern part of the town. Significantly more open and natural-looking than the surrounding areas. It includes Dallow Downs CWS and Winsdon Hill CWS, an almost continuous green space (separated by a non-arterial road) with extensive areas of chalk grassland and scrub. It also includes the Napier Road cemetery.

It is bordered by the M1 to the west (with an embankment and acoustic fencing) and a mix of residential residential and light industrial areas to the north. The M1 effectively severs it from the remainder of the chalk escarpment, including Blows Downs. On the plateau to the south is the residential area of the Farley Hill estate (Character Area 21).

The escarpment is clearly visible from areas to the north and east. A former hedgerow, now spreading into scrub covers part of Dallow Downs, and thickens into scrubby woodland at the western end (Runley Wood) where mediaeval strip lynchetts are visible, with a terraced feel despite the wooded nature of the area. Winsdon Hill is more scrubby/wooded in general, with a prominent mobile communications mast.

The western boundary is adjacent to the Chilterns AONB.

Accessibility is good, with networks of footpaths and marked trails serving Dallow Downs and Winsdon Hill, though several are steep in nature. A hard-surfaced path crosses Dallow Downs. There is access to the wider countryside west of the M1 through a tunnel, though this offers no landscape connectivity.

Dallow Downs in particular offers stunning panoramic views of much of the conurbation, though these are blocked to the south and west by the landform. Tranquillity is higher than elsewhere due to the elevation and areas of tree cover, despite the proximity of the M1.

View of Dallow Downs from town centre



View of Dallow Downs from Runley Road



View from Dallow Downs looking north



View of Runley Road Rec from Dallow Downs



View from Kingsway Rec

View across Winsdon Hill



Analysis:

Quality/Condition

Moderate. Dallow Downs is a prominent landscape feature with expansive open areas, with strong visual unity. The escarpment-like form is evident, though tree cover is to a degree detrimental as it obscures the chalk downland, strip lynchets and the ancient hedgerow (former manorial boundary dividing Dallow and Farley, extending into Winsdon). It also reduces the scope and quality of views, though it should be noted that trees and scrub help soften the boundary at the foot of the escarpment. A mobile telephone mast at Winsdon Hill is a visual intrusion visible from some distance.

Ecological integrity is relatively high, although Dallow Downs is disconnected from Winsdon Hill by Longcroft Road. The two units (and to a degree the adjacent strip running alongside the M1 south of Runley Downs, within the Farley Character Area) do still form a reasonable sized ecological unity within the town, providing habitat for a range of species. It is noted that there are good quality, informative interpretation panels on Dallow Downs and Winsdon Hill.

Sensitivity

Moderate across the whole area, the Dallow Downs/Winsdon Hill part of the area is highly distinctive and sensitive. While the remainder of the area contains some urban development its landform still shows through. It is large enough to give a sense of 'landscape', despite being severed from the majority of the chalk valley side (Blows Downs). It is highly visible from many parts of the town, and the natural and historic environment features help provide a sense of place.

Issues

Scrub encroachment on Dallow Downs has swallowed up a key landscape feature (ancient hedgerow) and areas of chalk grassland. If this continues further value will be lost.

Poor quality entrances to Dallow Downs – e.g. Runley Road Recreation Ground and large areas of scrub/woodland can create a sense of danger.

Severance by M1 – visually and in terms of ecological connectivity

Opportunities

Dallow Downs was designated as an AGLV in the previous Local Plan, and a large part of this area is of sufficient quality to be considered for a similar level of designation now.

Selective thinning/clearance of scrub on Dallow Downs, restoring the original hedgerow feature and opening up more views.

Runley Wood is used, as evidenced by paths, but includes quite a lot of thick scrub and would benefit from some opening up for visual amenity and safety reasons.

Continued improvements to entrance areas to Dallow Downs, reducing incongruity between urban area/play areas/downland.

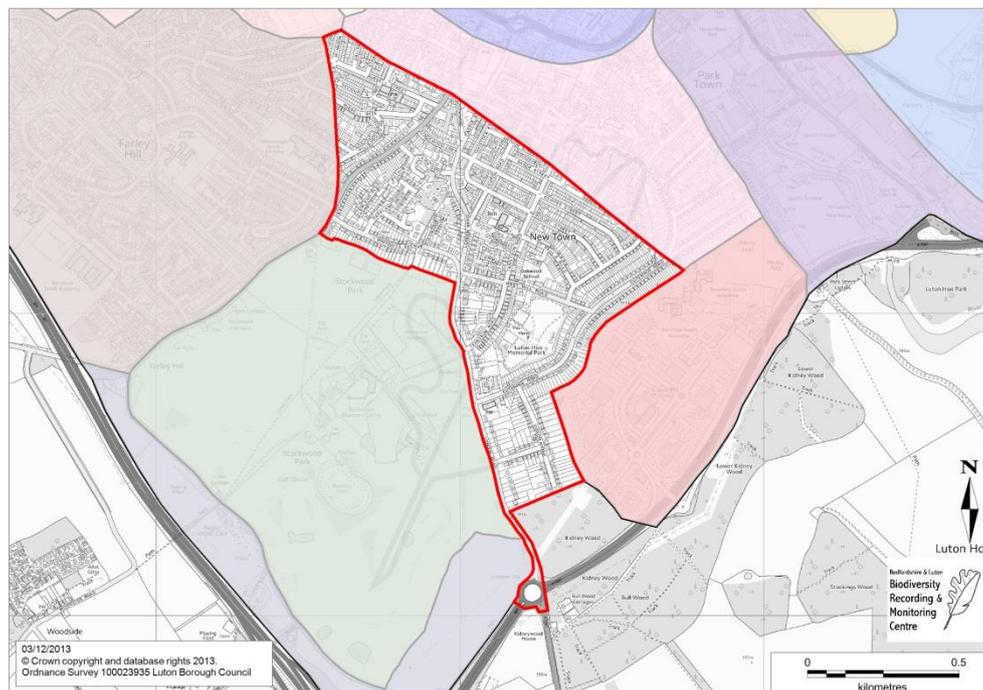
Constraints

It is noted that the M1 is a considerable constraint, with any improved access or re-connection with the landscape to the west severely limited by it. Urban development across much of the escarpment to the south-east of this Character Area further constrains any future restoration.

Scrub removal on Dallow Downs would result in increased management costs, as ongoing management would be required to maintain open areas. This would have to be via an extension of existing mowing, as the more cost-effective grazing is not considered a practical solution in this urban area.

Any interpretation, whether it be panels, public art or other, would need to be carefully considered in terms of this highly urban location (with high levels of deprivation), though it is noted relatively new panels delivered through the Chalk Arc initiative have survived well (and are extremely useful and informative).

Character Area 19b: Dallow Valley Side Urban



Description and Characteristics

A largely residential area occupying the steep valley side – a continuation of same prominent chalk valley side in LCA19a.

Stockwood Park is to the south-west (LCA 22), Farley to the north-west (LCA 21), Capability Green Business Park to south (19c) and LCA 20 to the north-east as the valley side bottoms out. It contains the area known as ‘New Town’.

London Road runs alongside Stockwood Park to the east and runs north through this LCA – a wide open street with prominent tree avenues. The Cutenhoe Road in the south is perhaps typical of this part of the area. It follows the slope down, offering good views across town to Hart Hill and the airport. A wide open street, it has some avenue trees and mid 20th century houses with large front gardens. Generally further north and downslope in this area streetscape changes to older, narrower, 19th century terraces.

There is little open space, the exception being the Luton Hoo Memorial Park which nestles in at the top of the plateau. An attractive designed open space, trees and surrounding buildings give an enclosed feel and largely obstruct views. Capability Green buildings are visible nearby, as is the view across to the airport from the bottom corner of the park. The Bailey Hill Water Tower is a prominent feature in this area, standing at the top of the valley side adjacent to the park.

Tennyson Road is another that runs up/down the slope, offering views across to Hart Hill, though not as expansive as views from some of the wider streets in this area. In the foreground is the town centre with various tall buildings, and the high rise flats (located at the foot of the slope in LCA 20) are extremely prominent.

View eastwards from Cutenhoe Road

Dominant high rise flats



View of Bailey Hill Water Tower from Luton Hoo Memorial Park

View N-E down Tennyson Road



Analysis

Quality/Condition

Not applicable – wholly urban area.

Tranquillity is generally moderate, with busier roads having low tranquillity.

Sensitivity

Low due to urban nature of the area. Existing greenspaces are very sensitive to landscape change, particularly the Luton Hoo Memorial Park, which provides some of the visual context for the Bailey Hill Water Tower – note in the picture above how the development of flats adjacent to it has detracted from it.

Issues

The steep chalk valley side landscape has been almost completely obscured.

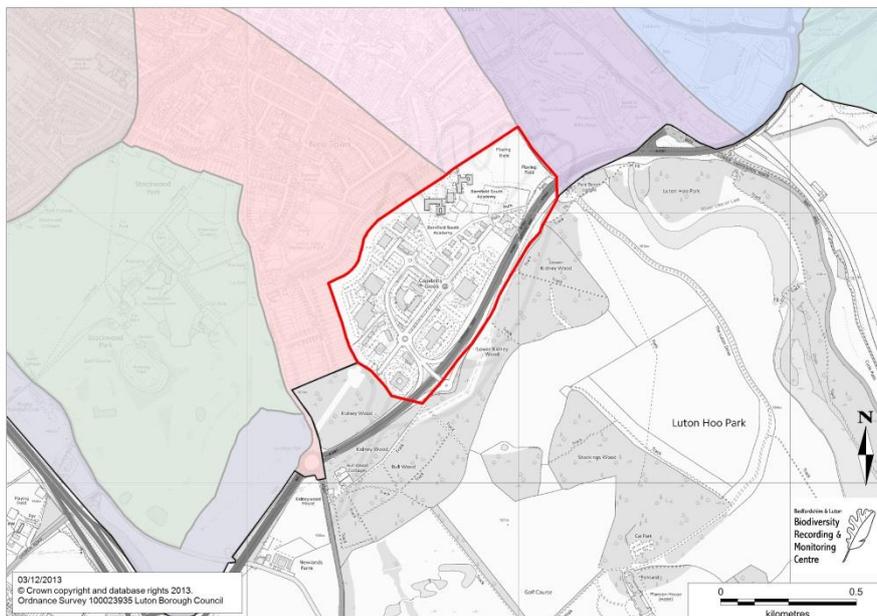
Opportunities

No specific opportunities have been identified.

Constraints

The built up nature of the area is the key constraint.

Character Area 19c: Capability Green Business Park



A completely designed/artificial landscape on the top and side of the same steep chalk valley side that forms LCAs 19a and 19b, but yet not unattractive.

Kidney Wood, an isolated block of ancient semi-natural woodland (cut off from woodland across the A1081) forms the boundary (and backdrop) to the south-west at the top of the slope. To the north-west is Cutenhoe Road (residential, LCA 19b), to the south Park Avenue, an isolated element of the Luton Hoo estate that separates this area from the floodplain of the Lea below (LCA 4c). The entire south-eastern boundary is the A1081 Airport Way, which is in part raised up until it meets the higher valley side.

On the plateau and upper part of the slope the Capability Green Business Park has a large central avenue with a series of fountains, tree avenues and green strips. Trees are still relatively young, but these, hedges and grass areas are all well managed. Buildings are generally large and modern, with significant expanses of glass.

The chalk valley side continues south, but is separated visually by the A1081.

An older hedgerow with oak trees has been retained, though a linking corridor walkway between two buildings either side penetrates it.

Road patterns are regular and linear but with some curved roads softening the angles.

From various points there are panoramic views across town to the airport, industrial parks, the lower Lea Valley and Hart Hill (and its Victorian water tower – the ‘twin’ to the nearby Bailey Hill water tower.). The views are often framed by buildings, looking down roads. Road design and the steep embankment largely prevent views to the Luton Hoo parkland directly adjacent. It is possible to see across to the Hart Hill Water Tower

The lower part of this LCA includes an open area of playing fields near the foot of the slope, with some associated buildings (the Barnfield South Academy).

Kideny Wood backdrop



View down avenue with fountains



Example of building style



View N-E to Hart Hill



Retention of hedgerow as feature



Analysis

Quality/Condition

The landscape here is of high quality, but in an artificial sense.

Moderate tranquillity, though the A1081 Airport Way running through the edge of the site is busy and noisy – generally less noticeable immediately away from it. General background noise from town and airport evident.

Sensitivity

Moderate – the landscape in this LCA would be sensitive to change, but is already very heavily modified. Green spaces and avenues are important to the overall design.

Issues

No specific issues other than the fact it is an unnatural landscape occupying a natural landscape feature.

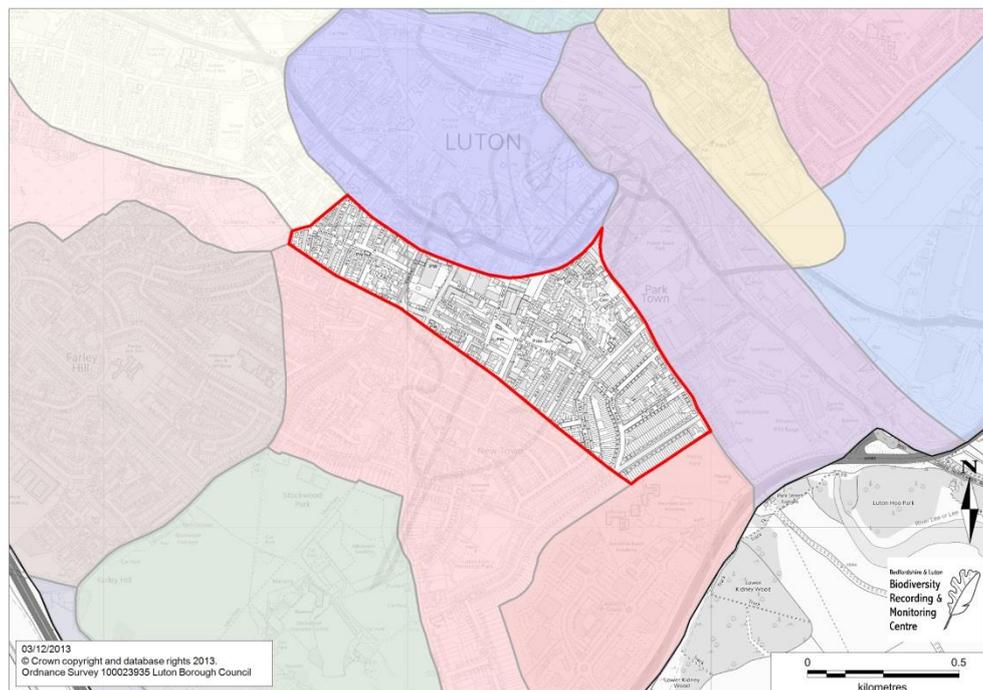
Opportunities

The current landscaping should be allowed to mature further before considering further enhancements.

Constraints

Any change would need to be in the business park context.

Character Area 20: Town Centre Transition



Description and Characteristics

As the title suggests, this is an LCA occupying a transitional area between the low-lying Lea valley (LCA 4d) and town centre (LCA 17) and the climbing chalk valley side to the west. It is a largely residential area, with mostly Victorian terraces in regular street patterns, but with some pre-/inter-war development in the west with wider more open roads. While the majority of buildings are low, 2 or 3 storeys, there is a group of 3 high rise flats in the west that dominate the skyline (see description for LCA 19b for photograph of these).

There are very few greenspaces.

Analysis

Quality/Condition

It is not possible to assess quality due to the highly urbanised nature of the area.

Tranquillity is generally low, with road and occasional aircraft noise, moderate in some of the quieter streets.

Sensitivity

Low

Issues

A highly urbanised area. Tall buildings dominate some views (high rises within and town centre nearby).

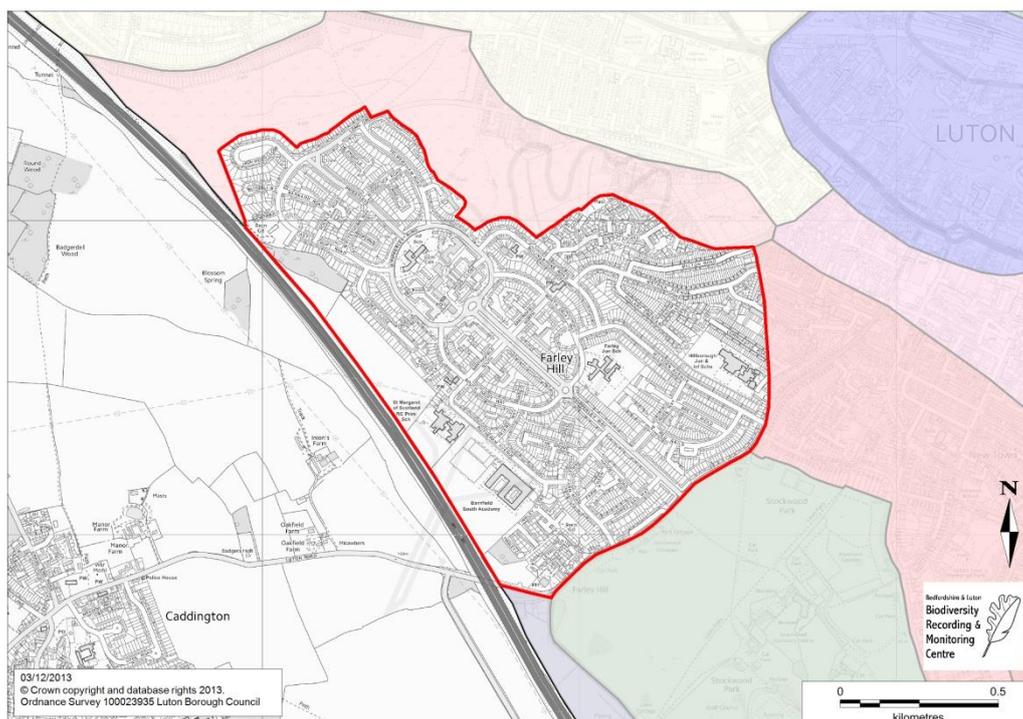
Opportunities

No opportunities to significantly enhance the landscape were apparent, though every opportunity to create greenspaces in this area should be pursued, and these should be used to help engage people with the landscape.

Constraints

The wholly urban nature of the LCA is a key constraint.

Character Area 21 = Farley Hill Plateau



The Farley Hill Estate forms the majority of this LCA, sitting on a plateau above the steep chalk valley side on the west of Luton. Built immediately after WWII, to replace houses bombed during the war, it was a bold and forward thinking design at the time. It is centred on two adjoining circular estate roads and two central perpendicular straight avenues forming a cross shape, with wide streets and verges and avenues of street trees. The 'vertical' road of the cross, the Whipperley Way, runs from a roundabout at the centre right through to the edge of Stockwood Park. While the estate has become a little run-down the design is still attractive at its core.

The northern boundary is with LCA 19a, chiefly Dallow Downs, Runley Wood and Winsdon Hill, while the M1 forms the western boundary. To the south is Stockwood Park.

There are few green spaces other than the verges and amenity strips in the estate, with the exception of the western fringe where woodland, scrub, grassland, a play area and school playing fields are sandwiched between the estate and the M1. Bluebell Wood (CWS) provides a significant backdrop to part of the estate, and screens it from the M1. It is a particularly important buffer, as

although M1 at this point is low down the noise is significant – some stretches have no acoustic fencing. The Recreation area (196) adjacent to Bluebell Wood is an important continuation of green corridor adjacent to M1. More planting along M1 boundary would create visual and noise reduction benefits – **opportunity**. Links on to Runley Wood and then to Dallow Downs.

Views are often limited to those within the estate (the view down the central Whipperley Way being the most attractive), although there are stunning views over Dallow Downs in the north of the area. From the open space between Bluebell Wood and the M1 it is possible to look out at the wider landscape of rolling countryside with occasional woodlands with which this area was once joined.

Bluebell Wood as a backdrop



View west from area adjacent to Bluebell Wood to woodland beyond

Whipperley Way



Analysis

Quality/Condition

Moderate. In general not possible to analyse due to urban nature of the area, but the strip of connecting greenspace along the eastern edge is possible to look at in this context. While it is an important green corridor there are issues with condition. There were areas of litter and fly-tipping in and around Bluebell Wood – while such issues are often temporary and do not have a long-lasting impact on landscape quality, it is evident here that these are long-term issues. It is evident from pathways within the wood that it is relatively popular.

The majority of this corridor, while screening the M1 visually and in terms of sound from the adjacent estate, suffers from noise levels and has low (or even very low) tranquillity. Acoustic fencing is inconsistent/has not been erected in areas south of Runley Wood, where the motorway is also close to ground level.

The areas of landscaping within the estate, such as tree avenues and grassed areas, are in reasonable condition.

Sensitivity

High. The green corridor along the eastern side is particularly sensitive to change. Any further development adjacent to it would isolate and reduce its effectiveness, while any loss of trees would have a massive impact visually and in terms of screening the noise of the M1. These issues are compounded by the fact that there is little other significant greenspace in the LCA.

Issues

The key issues are the impact of the M1, the relative isolation of the green corridor, and ongoing fly-tipping/litter.

Ongoing development in the southern part of the corridor (at the time of survey) has further eroded its value.

Opportunities

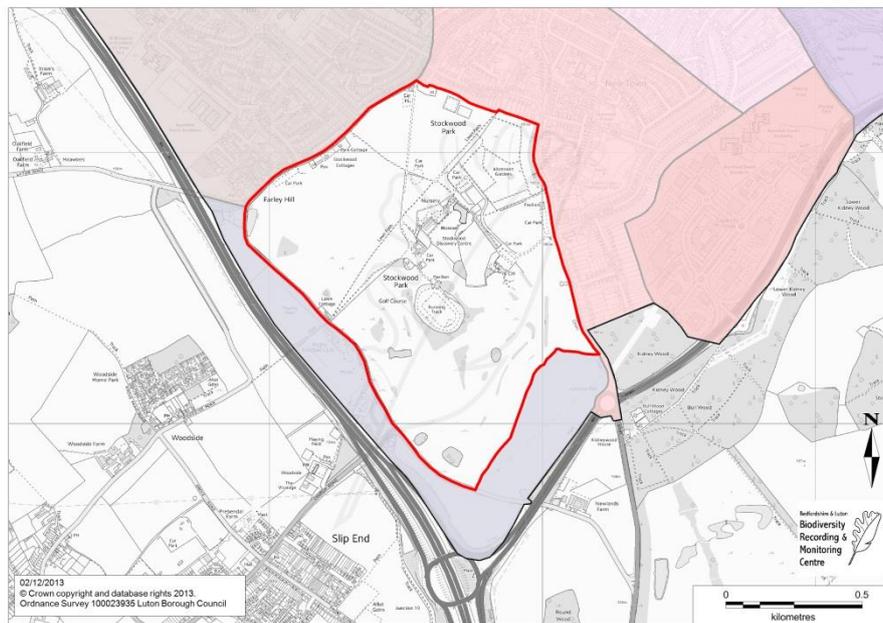
While possibly not quite of a standard to warrant consideration for local landscape designation in its own right, the green corridor could be considered as part of a wider area including Dallow Downs.

Planting along the boundary, alongside additional acoustic fencing, could reduce noise (and visual) disturbance in key locations, for example at the recreation ground between Bluebell Wood and Runley Wood. This could also have ecological benefits.

Constraints:

The green corridor is constrained physically by the urban edge and the M1.

Character Area 22: Stockwood Park



A very well defined LCA, with its boundaries being the boundary of Stockwood Park, a historic park (18th Century) associated with Stockwood House (demolished in the 1960s). An estate wall runs along parts of the boundary, which is enclosed by London Road to the east, Farley Hill (and the Farley Hill estate) to the north, Newlands Road (and LCA 23, with the M1 a short distance beyond) to the west and agricultural land (also part of LCA 23) to the south. The area is largely open with parkland, walled gardens, sports pitches, allotments and tree avenues, belts and clumps – elements of the original design remain, but with a variety of other uses. Various buildings from the estate remain, including stable blocks and gateways, with other newer buildings and car parks. The ‘Stockwood Discovery Centre’ is close to the entrance on the eastern side, plus there is an entrance in the north-west corner. Around the perimeter there are occasional small buildings relating to the estate. Just across London Road, on the south-eastern side, is Kidney Wood, a block of ancient semi-natural woodland. The adjacent part of Stockwood Park is one of very few areas in Luton where soils are slightly acidic, and there is a small area of heathland type habitat.

There is an athletics track in the centre, clearly visible from the air but well-screened at ground level. Approximately half of the overall area is taken up by a golf course, which nestles into the well-designed landscape populated by a variety of mature and attractive tree specimens. Large open expanses provide views through the site, and beyond to the wider countryside to the west of the M1 and to the south. A significant line of pylons is visible to the south.

The land is highest on the eastern half, forming a plateau, dropping away towards the western side. The western boundary is relatively well wooded, providing a visual screen from the (embanked) M1.

Views across northern part of the site



Analysis

Quality/Condition

High. A strong feel of the designed landscape is still evident, other elements generally blend in well and there is also a strong sense of naturalness. The area is managed to a very high quality.

Tranquillity is moderate around the edges, with the influence of busy roads, but higher towards the centre of the area – although occasional noise from aircraft, often flying low, does punctuate the relative calm.

Sensitivity

High. Surrounded on two sides by residential areas and roads, the motorway on another and a road improvement/re-alignment scheme taking place to the south, this green oasis with high historic/cultural value is highly sensitive to change. While the western boundary is relatively well screened by trees, others are more open. The boundary to the south is less pronounced and not well screened.

Issues

While the Park itself is relatively static and safe, a proposed road re-alignment scheme to the south (not started at the time of survey but due to start during 2014) could have negative impacts, affecting land close to the Park. Efforts have been made to minimise the potential impacts at the planning stage.

Opportunities

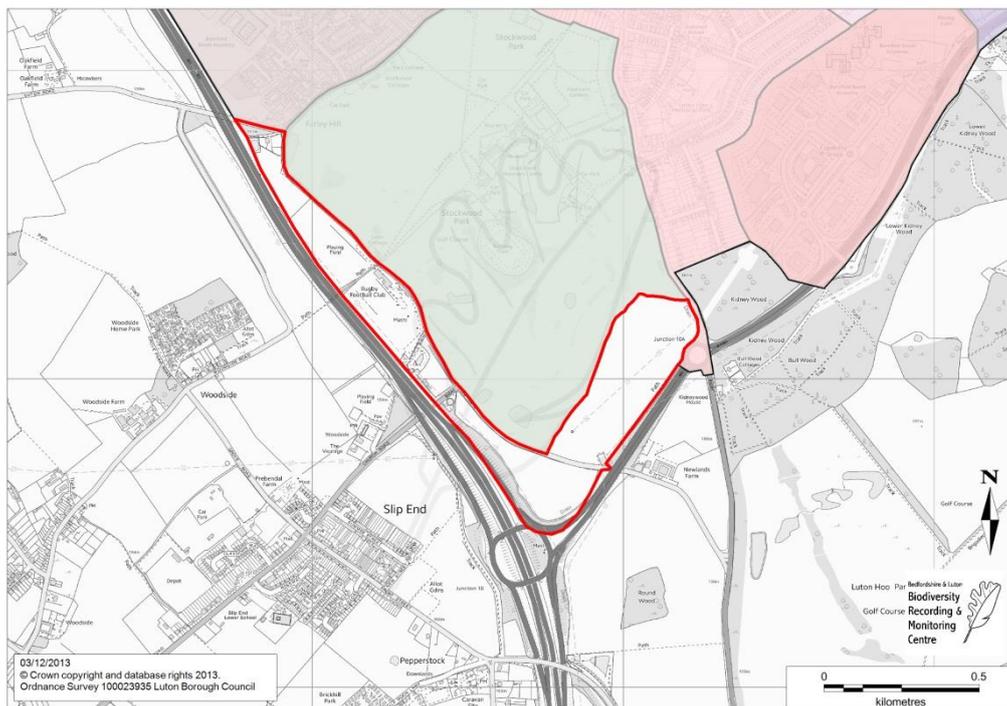
The area had AGLV status in the previous Local Plan and is of such landscape quality to warrant consideration for similar designation now.

The road re-alignment scheme does present opportunities for improvements to the southern part of the site, including potential increase of the small heathy area.

Constraints

Existing uses such as sports facilities and allotments currently restrict any further restoration of the historic landscape.

Character Area 23: Stockwood Fringe



A narrow 'L' shaped area to the south and west of Stockwood Park (LCA 22), separated from it by the Park wall/boundary. It includes Newlands Road in the longer western part, which runs along the bottom of a narrow 'valley' as the land slopes up to the embankment of the M1 which forms the boundary (also the administrative boundary of Luton). To the south it falls away to a low point near the southern tip of the area, but generally slopes up again towards the east. Largely open, the main land uses in the western part are sports pitches, with some buildings along the roadside and some floodlights. A line of pylons runs through the area. To the south it is farmland (arable) with a visually detracting line of pylons. The south-east boundary is the large busy road linking the A1081 Airport Way to the M1, with junction 10 just outside the southern point of the area. Newlands Road bends to the east after leaving the boundary of Stockwood Park, passing under the link road which is raised above the landscape creating a strong visual boundary.

From high points (such as the bridge across the M1) it is possible to view the wider rolling countryside to the west, though even with elevation views into Stockwood Park to the east are restricted by the wooded boundary.

View west towards M1

View east from M1 footbridge



View south towards A1081/M1link road

View north (M1 in distance)



Analysis

Quality/Condition

Moderate. Although an open, green corridor, there is a degree of visual clutter in the form of sports buildings, floodlights, pylons and roads.

Tranquillity is unsurprisingly low with the close proximity of the M1, junction 10 and link road.

Sensitivity

The area is highly sensitive, being open and providing a buffer to Stockwood Park.

Issues

The road re-alignment due to take place in 2014 will have a significant impact on the southern part.

Pylons are a major detractor.

Opportunities

Mitigation for the road re-alignment scheme is believed to include measures to reduce landscape impact and create habitats.

The whole area would benefit from better integration with the adjacent Stockgrove Park landscape, along with the removal of incongruous features.