

## *Welwyn Hatfield Landscape Character Assessment*



**WELWYN  
HATFIELD  
COUNCIL**



**THE LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP LTD**

APRIL 2005

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## THE LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP LTD

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This document could not have been achieved without the combined efforts of the staff of Welwyn Hatfield District Council, Hertfordshire County Council (notably the Head of Landscape who administered the respective contracts), the Living Landscapes Project and The Landscape Partnership Limited. It would not have been as effectively illustrated without the contributions from the public in the photographic competition.

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Following the adoption of the general principle of the Landscape Character Approach within the Hertfordshire Structure Plan (1991-2011) a more detailed landscape character assessment was commissioned by Hertfordshire County Council for southern Hertfordshire in 2000. While this study covered the majority of Welwyn Hatfield District in order to complete a district-wide landscape character assessment a small extension study was commissioned in 2002 by both authorities. In both studies, however, the work was carried out using the same methodology and by the same consultants, The Landscape Partnership Ltd.

This document brings together for the first time the results of the two studies into a single volume. This technical document will serve in support of Policy RA10 Landscape Regions and Character Areas within the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan April 2005

While most of the material is as previously published, it should be noted that this document does include a few minor changes, typically matters of fact or typography. It thus supersedes all previously dated work.

Both the 2000 and 2002 studies included consultation processes based on best practice and planning policy guidance. Details of these are set out more fully in the Introduction and on the County Council website, where fuller information about all aspects of the methodology may be found. The extent and coverage of the district wide study also formed part of the public consultation carried out during the preparation for and at the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan Inquiry held in 2003.

It should be noted that a complementary landscape character assessment was also carried out for North Hertfordshire Council between 2002-2004 using a similar methodology. Some Landscape Character Areas straddle the district boundary between North Hertfordshire and Welwyn Hatfield (Areas 34, 37, 132 and 133 a and 133b). For the avoidance of doubt, when considering landscape character for planning control purposes reference should always be made to that version of the character assessment published by the determining District.

At the time the studies were being prepared, the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan adopted in 1998, contained designated 'Landscape Conservation Areas'. This approach however was proposed to be replaced in the Revised Deposit version of the review of the District Plan 2002 by Landscape Character Assessment. This was accepted by the Inspector at the Local Plan Inquiry and adopted by the Council in the final version Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005. The character statements explain exactly what features of an area are key to its character, and thus worthy of conservation, and the strategy and guidelines sections within each area statement give a fuller explanation of those measures which will help develop the landscape's potential to contribute to sustainable development.

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## 1.1 Background

### 1.1 Background

In February 2000 Hertfordshire County Council commissioned The Landscape Partnership to undertake the preparation of a 'local authority scale' landscape character assessment and evaluation of the southern part of the county in accordance with the most current version of national guidance, with stakeholder input, and co-ordinated with existing landscape characterisations. The characterisation work was to enable a definitive classification of all landscape types and boundaries encountered to be made, for the purposes of

- advising on development control and policy development for future development plans, and
- providing a framework for other landscape planning, regulation, conservation and management activities in the county.

In 2001 an extension to the above Landscape Character Assessment was carried out to give full coverage within St. Albans District. In 2002 further extensions were agreed to provide complete coverage of Dacorum Borough and Welwyn Hatfield District. This volume brings together for the first time, all the Landscape Character Area Assessments within Welwyn Hatfield District providing a complete district wide assessment.

## 1.2 Context

The process of landscape characterisation and assessment has been spearheaded in England by the work of the Countryside Agency (formerly Countryside Commission) and is currently enshrined as a major planning tool in PPS7. In tandem with English Nature, parallel approaches were formulated and tested during 1995-97 to derive, on the one hand, a series of Natural Area profiles for the whole of England and, on the other, the Countryside Character profiles. While the Natural Area profiles<sup>SM</sup> highlighted the distinctive ecology of rural areas, the Countryside Character profiles analysed landscape character in fairly broad-brush terms via the assessment of physical influences, historic and cultural influences, buildings and settlement, land cover and changes in the landscape. Through this process 120 Natural Areas and 181 character areas were formulated and a joint map published, called 'The Character of England: landscape, wildlife and natural features' (see Figure 01). This map defines the county of Hertfordshire as lying within six Character Areas:

- Area 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland
- Area 87 East Anglian Chalk
- Area 88 Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands
- Area 110 Chilterns
- Area 111 Northern Thames Basin
- Area 115 Thames Valley

- **Figure 01**  
**The Character of England**  
© Countryside Commission/  
English Nature

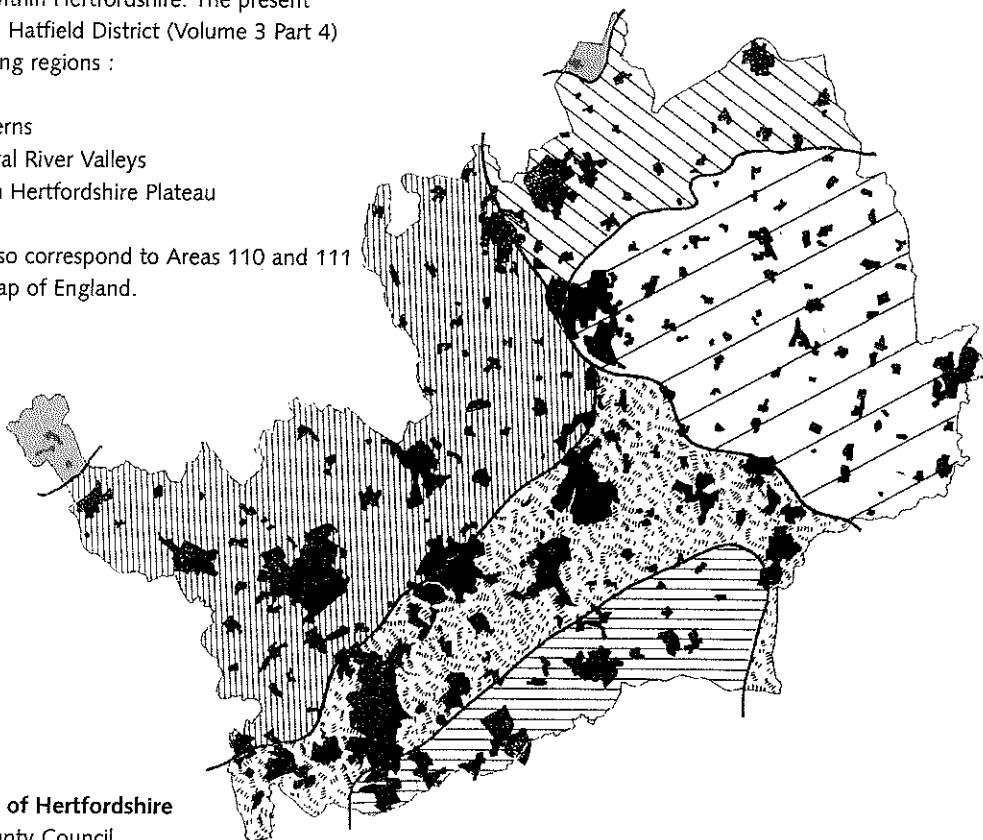


## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Hertfordshire County Structure Plan adopted in April 1998 embraced the concept of landscape character assessment. They refer to Volume 1 of A Landscape Strategy for Hertfordshire, which was published as background information in 1998. This first document identifies six regions within Hertfordshire. The present document for Welwyn Hatfield District (Volume 3 Part 4) falls within the following regions :

- Region 2: The Chilterns
- Region 5: The Central River Valleys
- Region 6: The South Hertfordshire Plateau

These three regions also correspond to Areas 110 and 111 from the Character Map of England.



• **Figure 02**  
**Landscape Regions of Hertfordshire**  
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- Region 1: The Northern Vale Salients.  
A transition zone between the Chilterns scarp face and the adjacent open plains (Oxfordshire and Bedfordshire).
- Region 2: The Chilterns.
- Region 3: The East Anglian Chalk (North Hertfordshire Ridge).  
A sub-section of the Chilterns.

- Region 4: The East Hertfordshire Plateau.  
(The South Suffolk and North Essex Clay Lands).
- Region 5: The Central River Valleys.  
A sub-section of the Northern Thames Basin.
- Region 6: The South Hertfordshire Plateau.  
A sub-section of the Northern Thames Basin.

Within these broad categories there are physical and cultural features that serve to distinguish sub-divisions within each area. Some of these divisions are not immediately obvious and require analysis of the basic landscape components and their relationship to each other. A single character area may contain different landscape types that combine to give it a unique character. Recent change within a landscape area may suggest a difference of character that is in fact superficial. Logical and consistent observation and analysis was therefore used to derive 30 Landscape Character Areas, as described in this report. Each character area is distinct. One of the intentions of this study is to highlight, conserve and reinforce this distinctiveness.

This study revisits the general landscape features of the county covered in the first volume of the Strategy before providing a detailed description, assessment and evaluation of each Landscape Character Area covered by the scope of this study.

### 2.1 PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

#### 2.1.1 *Geology and Soils*

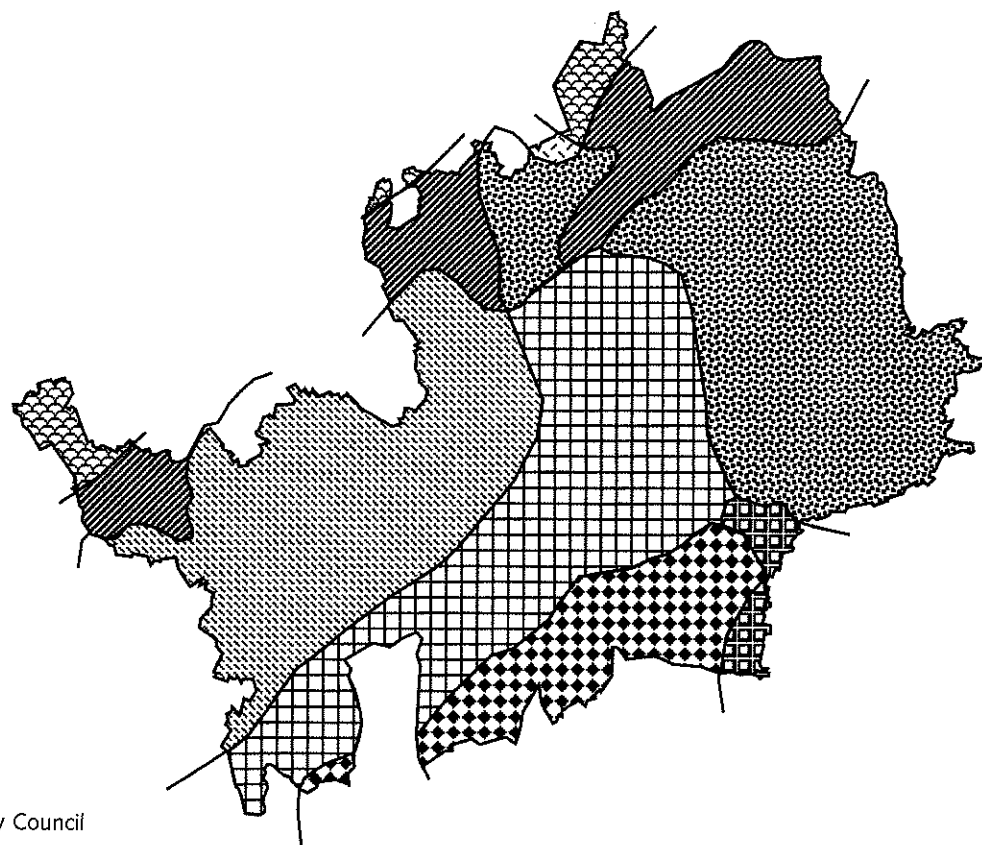
Hertfordshire is not old in geological terms. Its base stratum is heavy blue-grey gault clay, which forms an impermeable layer beneath the chalk, whose outward expression is best seen in the Chilterns, in the north west of the county. Over the chalk a thin layer of clays, sands and pebbles - the Reading Beds - was then deposited. In the south-eastern part of the county (Rickmansworth to Bishop's Stortford) a layer of thick London clay was later laid down. Still later (about 200,000 years ago during the last Ice Age) glaciers moved southwards over the chalk, depositing 'drift' - layers of broken rock from the areas further north over which the glacier had passed, which were then left behind as it melted. This is the chalky boulder clay found in the north-eastern part of the county. In the west of the county, where there were no glaciers, a natural weathering process produced the 'clay-with-flints' - a clay deposit containing frost-shattered flints and pebbles from the Reading Beds. Glaciation had one other significant impact on the county's geology - the proto-Thames. During the last Ice Age what is now the Vale of St Albans was the valley of a much larger Thames, with lakes at Wheathampstead and St Albans. Eventually the Thames cut itself a new valley further south and, when the ice melted, the earlier valley formed the Lea and Colne rivers.

Today the soils within the county are of two kinds: alkaline or neutral chalky soil (boulder clay) in the north and east of the county; and more or less acid leached soils over the centre and west of the county. These two soil types, which divide the county very roughly along a north-west/south-east line between Stevenage/Hitchin and Ware/Hoddesdon, have had a defining impact on vegetation, agriculture and development - that is, on fundamental aspects of the

landscape character of the county. The light chalky soils of the north west were easily cultivated, if not particularly fertile, and were possibly never heavily wooded in any event. Cultivation of the boulder clay seems to have been intense in the early medieval period, especially on sloping land where drainage could be more easily achieved.


On the heavy, poorly-drained London clay, south east of a line drawn roughly between Rickmansworth and Hertford, via Hatfield, cultivation proved very difficult, so it was long left to support oak and hornbeam forest and pasture. There is very little arable farming and, until comparatively recently, little settlement. North and west of this area lie the Lea and Colne gravel regions. The river diversion mentioned above left rich gravel deposits in the old Thames valley, which provided better-drained, more accessible routes through the county than the forested clays. Settlements grew up in these valleys, and most of the modern towns in Hertfordshire are on these gravels. The river valleys are therefore the areas most heavily affected by human interference, settlement throughout the centuries and, more recently, transport routes and gravel extraction.


Within Welwyn Hatfield District there is one predominant soil type, the Paleoargillic brown earths, which covers most of the northern and central areas. To the south on the South Hertfordshire Plateau there is a smaller area of Stagnogley soils which are associated with the Reading Beds and the wooded area around Northaw.





• Figure 04  
Soils


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 **RENDZINAS:** Associated - Brown Calcareous earths and argillic or paleo-argillic earths. Parent material: Chalk and associated drift. Character: Well drained, shallow chalky soils, with deeper loamy or clayey/flinty soils.


 **STAGNOGLEY SOILS:** Associated - Calcareous pelosols and brown earths and brown earth. Parent material: Jurassic or cretaceous clay and associated drift. Character: clayey soils and non-calcareous loamy or loamy over clayey soils.


 **BROWN EARTHS:** Associated - Argillic brown earths and alluvial gley soils. Parent material: River-terrace drift and associated alluvium. Character: Deep or moderately deep, well-drained loam soils, locally shallow over gravel, associated with clayey or loamy soils with high ground water.

 **STAGNOGLEY SOILS:** Associated - Argillic brown earths or brown earths. Parent material: Cretaceous or Tertiary clay and associated drift. Character: Clayey or loamy over clayey soils with impeded drainage, associated locally with better-drained mainly loamy soils.

 **PALEO ARGILLIC BROWN EARTHS:** Associated - Brown calcareous earths and argillic brown earths. Parent material: Plateau drifts (clay with flints) and associated drift over chalk. Character: Deep well drained to moderately well drained loamy (usually silty) over clayey or occasionally clayey soils with associated less clayey or calcareous soils.

 **CALCAREOUS PELOSOLS:** Associated - Stagnogley soils and argillic brown earths. Parent material: Chalky glacial drift. Character: Slowly permeable, well structured, calcareous clayey soils, associated with non calcareous clayey soils with impeded drainage or less clayey better drained soils, often stony.

 **PALEO ARGILLIC BROWN EARTHS:** Associated - Argillic brown earths and stagnogley soils. Parent material: Glacial, glaciofluvial or river-terrace drift and associated brick earth. Character: Deep well-drained to moderately well-drained loamy (often silty) or loamy over clayey soils, usually stony and locally shallow over gravel. Associated with loamy over clayey soils with impeded drainage.

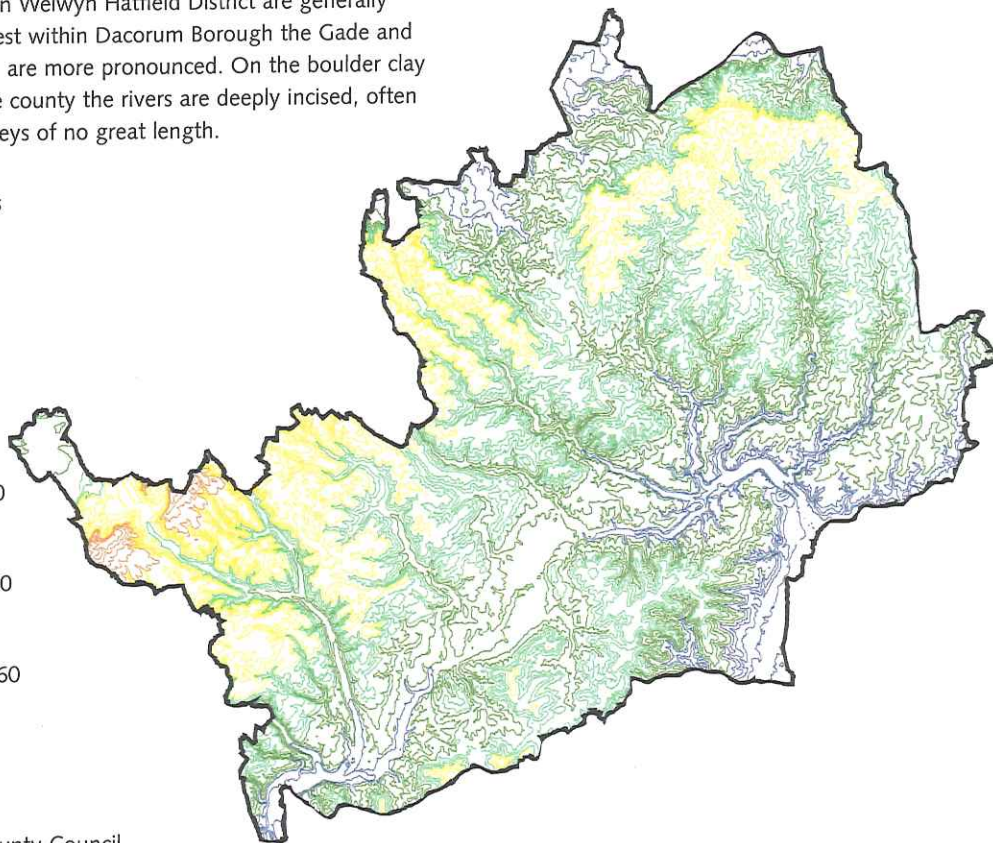
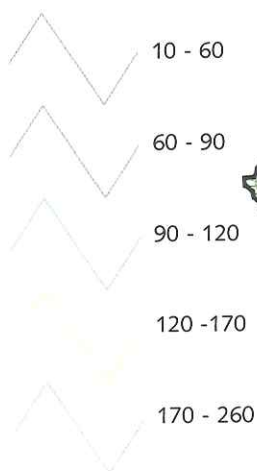
 **ARGILLIC BROWN EARTHS:** Associated: Paleo argillic brown earths and alluvial gley soils. Parent material: river-terrace drift, brick earth and associated alluvium. Character: Deep well-drained loamy (often silty) soils, locally stony or shallow over gravel, associated with poorly-drained and clayey soils with high ground water.

### 2.1.2 Topography

Hertfordshire contains three upland areas: the southern upland area of London clay; the north-east upland area of boulder clay; and the western chalk/clay-with-flints uplands. The first and last of these three areas fall within Welwyn Hatfield District, to the south and north respectively.

The upland areas in the county are divided by a number of river valleys and lowland areas. The valleys of the Colne, Lea and Stort form a broad belt from Rickmansworth to Ware, curving round to Bishops Stortford. The north-eastern and western uplands are divided by a narrow belt of lower ground stretching from Hitchin through Stevenage to Ware. The central river valleys including the Mimram and Lea, within Welwyn Hatfield District are generally shallow while to the west within Dacorum Borough the Gade and Bulbourne river valleys are more pronounced. On the boulder clay of the north east of the county the rivers are deeply incised, often within very narrow valleys of no great length.

Contour lines in metres  
above sea level



• **Figure 05**  
**Topography**

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### 2.2 HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

#### 2.2.1 History

Early activity in the county was focused on the river valleys and the lighter gravel soils, especially around the proto-Thames, although it may have been limited by swamplands. Significant areas of woodland were cleared from the mid to late Bronze Age onwards. This process accelerated during the Iron Age and was nearly complete by the Roman period.

Following an intense period of development during the late Iron Age, the Roman occupation had a strong impact on the landscape, linked to the development of existing settlements at Verulamium, (now St Albans), Welwyn, Braughing and Ware and the roads between these and other strategic locations. This was combined with 'industrial' activity at Berkhamsted and Verulamium and large-scale tile and pottery production, using local materials, at Elstree, Radlett, Bricket Wood and Verulamium. Many villas were built in Hertfordshire and the villa of Gorhambury, for example, shows evidence of the use of the landscape for recreational purposes, in that there was probably a covered walkway and an avenue of trees and shrubs.

The division of the country under Danelaw (the frontier ran approximately north west to south east across the county) led to a divergence in settlement patterns and associated landscape management. Evidence can be found in the pattern of place names and the contrast between villages and greens in the east and larger areas of commonland in the west.

The Normans built castles at strategic locations: Great Berkhamsted (guarding the Tring gap), Hertford (at the confluence of several rivers with the Lea) and Waytemore (the Bishop of London's stronghold at Bishop's Stortford). These were superimposed on an already well-settled landscape; by the time of the Domesday Book there were 168 settlements recorded for Hertfordshire, the majority in the north east. Medieval farming practices developed and the Abbey of St Albans, a major landowner, continued to have a widespread influence on land management. Hunting parks, more for food than ornament, became major features in the landscape in the medieval period and Hertfordshire probably has a higher density than any other county. Relic features from these are still present today in several areas

The Plague of 1348 reduced the rural population and a number of the villages and lands around were abandoned, especially in the north and east of the county.

On the Dissolution of the Monasteries, much of the land confiscated by the Crown from St Albans Abbey was conveyed to courtiers and businessmen, all keen for status and a healthy retreat from the capital. This change in ownership accounts for a growth in country-house building in the mid-16th century, for example at Hatfield, Cassiobury, Gorhambury, Knebworth and Theobalds.

The parks associated with these houses were increasingly ornamental as well as functional. Morden, writing in 1704, stated: 'This County has an incredible number of Pallaces and fair Structures of the gentry and Nobility...The rich Soil and wholesome Air, and the excellence of the County, have drawn hither the Wealthiest Citizens of London.' (R. Morden, *The New Description and State of England*, 2nd edn. (1704), p.71).

Hertfordshire's links with the London commercial centre grew in importance and there emerged a stronger radial force within the developing geography. Development was not consistent or uniform, with buildings constructed, altered, destroyed and rebuilt, lands emparked and later disemparked, and great houses built and later abandoned. This process continued throughout the following centuries and is still evident today. As Lionel Munby remarked, 'the surviving parks are among the most beautiful places in Hertfordshire', and Hertfordshire is often the first move out to 'the country' for many Londoners.

Hertfordshire shares much in common with other Home Counties in its pattern of development from the 17th century onwards, although the construction of the New River in the Lea Valley to supply London with water was notable. As elsewhere, lands were enclosed, creating the regular patchwork pattern of much of the landscape, and communications improved as canals, roads and later railways were built, most often along the river valleys. Town growth was slow, but for a time in the 19th century the scale of malting and brewing, and associated cereal growing in eastern Hertfordshire made it one of the largest centres of the industry in western Europe.

#### 2.2.2 Buildings and settlement

Since the middle of the 19th century there has been a major change in the landscape of the county. Until then it had no useable natural resources on which to base an Industrial Revolution (see transport section below). The development of modern Portland cement in 1900 made reinforced concrete viable, using the gravel deposits of the proto-Thames basin, with consequent effect on the local landscape. The arrival of the railway provided a focus for new settlements around stations and the development of light industry. Hertfordshire became a commuter belt; free first-class railway tickets were handed out to purchasers of the houses in the new garden cities. The development of the New Towns after WWII increased the demand for local gravels and perpetuates a seemingly natural division in the county. Most construction within the last century and a half has been in the southern and south-western parts of the county, while the north east, which was the most populated during the medieval period, remains sparsely populated and rural. This is probably the most obvious pattern in the landscape of the county.

### 2.3 TRANSPORT

#### 2.3.1 Roads

The prehistoric routes in the county are notable for their continuity. They result from topography and geology, following the chalk scarp and the river valleys. The Romans then constructed radial routes from their Thames crossing-place, which became Londinium. Their main roads went through the Tring Gap (Akeman Street), through Verulamium (Watling Street) and up the Lea Valley (Ermine Street). Other roads connected the towns to each other.

The poor state of roads through the county demanded significant financial input - the first successful toll-house in the country was at Wadesmill. A parallel system of drove roads - used for animals rather than vehicles - is still partly visible in the green lanes and footpaths, often with the name 'green', 'travellers' or 'bull' attached. It is recorded that in 1766, 992,400 head of beef cattle were driven to Smithfield, many of them through Hertfordshire, so these tracks were an important part of the transport network. Only in the 19th century was there a significant improvement in the county's roads - due chiefly to the efforts of John and James McAdam, sometime Hoddesdon residents.

The late-19th and 20th century growth of settlements in the county entailed a massive change in the road system, with ever more elaborate routes radiating out from London, compounded by the exceptionally high rate of car ownership in the county. One of the first bypasses in the county opened in 1928, round Welwyn and an upgraded A1(M) now forms the main north south route through Welwyn Hatfield District.

#### 2.3.2 Rivers

At a county scale the main rivers have been important transport routes, not least because of the poor state of the roads, which on the London clay became impassable in wet weather until the use of tarmacadam became widespread in the 19th century. The rivers provided the only industrial focus, with overlapping uses for the watermills as technology advanced. Flour production until the 16th century was contemporary with wool fulling (12th - 17th centuries) and paper milling (15th - 19th centuries), with malting from the 17th to the 19th centuries. At Hertford there was even a mill for grinding oak bark for tanning in the early 19th century. The river Lea linked the rich grain-producing lands of the north east and adjoining counties to the insatiable markets in London, its continuous programme of improvements regulated by Act of Parliament. The Lea Navigation canal and lock system is today part of a Regional Park and used for recreation rather than transport. To the west - the Grand Union Canal - is also used now for recreational purposes and has become in places a notable landscape feature. Within Welwyn Hatfield the Lea and the Mimram are not navigable but the Mimram is noted for its good water quality.

#### 2.3.3 Railways

Like the road system, the railway spread in a radial pattern from the capital. Welwyn Hatfield is currently served by two railway lines. The main east coast line passes through Hatfield and Welwyn. The most obvious industrial feature of the railway is the Digswell Viaduct - 475m long and over 30m high, constructed to avoid the parks of the gentry in the Mimram valley. A secondary loop serves to the east of the district passing Cuffley to Hertford.

### 2.4 LAND COVER AND LAND USE

Hertfordshire is an enclosed county. Sir John Parnell, writing in 1769, called it 'a most exquisitely Beautifull cultivated Hedgerow'ed country', while Walker described it in 1785 thus: 'The land is generally inclosed, though there are many small common fields, or lands, laying intermixed in small pieces, the property of different persons, which are cultivated nearly in the same way as inclosed lands; the large common fields lie towards Cambridgeshire.' (Quoted in Munby, *The Hertfordshire Landscape* (1977)).

Agriculture was the dominant source of employment. Additional factors were market gardening on the fertile alluvial land between Hoddesdon and Wormley and on the eastern side of the Lea valley and forest industries in the north-west and south. Patten and clog makers, coopers and stavemakers all used wood, and other woodland products included shovels, spoons, bowls and other 'hollow wares'. Significant and ecologically valuable areas of woodland remain, especially on the heavy London clay which is unfit for arable cultivation. Both woodland and hedges were an important part of the rural economy as well as of its landscape: 'I know of no part of England more beautiful in its stile than Hertfordshire: thro'out the oak and Elm hedgerows Appear Rather the work of Nature than Plantation, generally Extending thirty or forty feet Broad, growing irregularly in these stripes, and giving the fields the air of being reclaimed from a general tract of woodland.' (Thomas Fuller, *The Worthies of England*, ed. J. Freeman (1952), p.229).

Parliamentary enclosure was the last major transformation of the rural landscape before the ploughing-out of hedgerows of the mid-20th century. In the south and west, where piecemeal enclosure had already transformed the arable, enclosure was largely of the surviving commons. In the early 1960s some 5500 acres were common, almost all of it in the west of the county. In the north and north east enclosure was of open arable fields, generally after the General Act of 1845. Thus the present landscape of this part of the county has now, after the impact of 20th century arable intensification, largely reverted to its pre-enclosure pattern.

Before 1900 the major impact on the landscape other than agriculture was parkland. The gentry of Hertfordshire were pioneer gardeners, laying out a new landscape as a frame for the house and as a status symbol in its own right. Lord Burghley built himself a palace at Theobalds in 1564. His son, Robert Cecil, spent £40,000 on building Hatfield House and rearranged the entire landscape to give himself more privacy. Woodland and arable were switched around on a grand scale. Today there are still almost no views into the parkland from outside.

Country house building took place in waves: pre-1580 and between 1640s and 1660, with a lot of 'improvements' between 1680 and 1720. Another building boom took place between 1750 and 1780. The fashionable site for a country house changed, from proximity to remoteness, from hilltops to near water, with four grand houses built along the Mimram valley in the 18th century. But parklands could be destroyed even more quickly than they were made. The opportunities for profitable farming were such that medieval parkland was ploughed up whenever there was no permanent resident on the estate. Some parklands were first wooded, then cleared for farming, returned to open woodland as a deer park and then cleared and ploughed for farmland once again. In the 20th century the greatest threats to parkland were from housing development, the transport infrastructure and mineral extraction, whereas arable farming of former wood pasture at least retains woodland boundaries and the outline of the park.

### 3.1 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The guiding principles and format for this subset of the Hertfordshire Landscape Strategy: Landscape Character Assessment, Evaluation and Guidelines for Welwyn Hatfield District are set in the following documents:

- Landscape Character Assessment in connection with Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan Review, Contract Documents - Appendix A Landscape Character Assessment : Brief (Hertfordshire County Council, Environment Department).
- Landscape Character Assessment in connection with Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan Review Contract - Appendix A Landscape Character Assessment: Methodology Specification (Hertfordshire County Council, Environment Department).
- Landscape Character Assessment - Guidance for England and Scotland 2002 (Countryside Agency).
- Summary Specification for Extensions to Landscape Strategy from Hertfordshire County Council dated 10/1/02.

The key elements of the method used in the study, incorporating the above guidance, are set out below.

#### 3.1.1 Briefing and Familiarisation Tour

Following the award of the contract, an initial briefing meeting was held between the Contract Manager, and key members of the project team to discuss the project brief and programme. A familiarisation tour of the study area preceded the above meeting to gain a flavour of the range of landscape types involved.

#### 3.1.2 Project Administration

The project was monitored throughout the contract period by the County Council's Head of Landscape in liaison with the Head of Planning Policy from Welwyn Hatfield District Council. Monitoring included the use of the following:

- progress meetings
- liaison by phone
- work programme - consultant to provide and update a work plan identifying the main activities against the contract period
- correspondence - by letter, fax and e-mail

### 3.2 DESK STUDY

The initial desk study work was sub-contracted to The Living Landscapes Project, following guidance in the brief. This stage involved the division of the study area into a number of Landscape Description Units or LDUs and involved consideration of the following levels of detail.

#### 3.2.1 Level 1

Subdivision at a national/regional scale in accordance with the Joint Character Map of England combining both Landscape Character Regions and Natural Areas. This information provided a framework for analysis at a finer grain: levels 2 and 3.

#### 3.2.2 Level 2: Physiography and Soils (scale 1:50,000).

The following subjects were considered and a relevant category identified:

<b>Topography</b>	<b>Geology</b>
Flat - F	Fluvial-glacial and river drift - F
Low-lying - L	Till (glacial drift) - T
Rolling/undulating - R	Clay - C
Valley - V	Limestone/chalk - L
Sloping - S	Mixed - M
Upstanding/plateau - U	

#### **Soils**

- Sandy brown soils - S
- Brown free-draining soils - B
- Clay soils - C
- Gleyed (poorly draining) soils - G
- Mixed soils - M

The study area was divided into units based on a combination of the above three factors and a combined coding given, e.g. VLB denotes a limestone/chalk valley with brown free-draining soils.

#### 3.2.3 Level 2: Cultural Pattern (scale 1:50,000).

To the physiographic pattern the way that man has utilised the land, or the 'cultural pattern', was then added using the following categories:

<b>Land Cover</b>	<b>Settlement Pattern</b>
Urban - U	Nucleated - N
Cropland - C	Settled - S
Pastoral - P	Dispersed - D
Rough - R	Unsettled - U
	Planned - P
<b>Enclosure Pattern</b>	
Wooded - W	Secondary - S
Estate - E	Open - O
Unenclosed - U	Boundary trees - A

A separate three-letter code was then given to each LDU to express cultural pattern. This may have led to some sub-division of the physiographic units.

#### 3.2.4 Level 3: Land Cover Coding (scale 1:25,000).

This level of detail was derived from the historic landscape characterisation information made available digitally through the English Heritage project undertaken for Hertfordshire in 2000. This information provided a further level of resolution and sub-division of the LDUs. The following categories were given:

<b>Current Land Cover</b>	<b>Historic Field Pattern</b>
Urban - U	Irregular - I
Woodland - W	Sub-regular - S
Parkland - Pk	Regular - R
Rough - R	Geometric - G
Disturbed - D	Unenclosed - U
Other - O	
<b>Field Size</b>	
Small - 1	Small-medium - 2
Medium-large - 3	Large - 4

A glossary of the terms used by The Living Landscapes Project is included as Appendix 6.1.

The above data was collated as a series of overlays suitable for reading against a 1:25,000 scale OS base.

#### 3.3 FIELDWORK

##### 3.3.1 Fieldwork

The fieldwork was carried out at two stages. The majority of the District was covered between May and June 2000, while the extension work to the north was completed between March and June 2002. The survey teams consisted of a team of two, including a landscape architect, who was responsible for drafting the text and defining the boundaries of each landscape character area surveyed, and another landscape-related professional. The total survey team included a total of four people with qualifications from a variety of disciplines including geography, landscape architecture and landscape management. A moderation process was built in, to ensure consistency of appraisal across both the study area and the previous studies for Southern Hertfordshire in 2000 and St. Albans District in 2001.

##### 3.3.2 Recording

Each study area was systematically appraised by a survey team, who considered each LDU in turn. Field survey record sheets were used to record data. A sample of the two-page pro forma used is included as Appendix 6.2. The form was updated for the 2002 extension to allow for greater transparency in the completion of the Evaluation Matrix. The use of forms was supplemented by additional notes and photographic records. Both notes and photographs informed the process of drafting a description of and illustrating each character area in the final report.

#### 3.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

In parallel with the desk study and fieldwork a literature review was carried out. This provided background information and informed the process of defining character areas. The methodology specification in the contract documents provided an important list of suggested sources. This was supplemented by a number of other source materials. The Bibliography, section 5.0, lists all the sources used.

#### 3.5 DRAFT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

**3.5.1** Draft Landscape Character Areas were defined, using the survey data from the fieldwork. This process involved identifying which LDUs were character areas in their own right and those which required aggregating or splitting on the basis of consistent landscape character as identified in the field.

**3.5.2** The definition of boundaries required careful consideration. As the LDUs had been defined primarily on the basis of geology, soils or landform the boundaries,

although real, rarely accorded with fixed features on the ground, such as the edge of a woodland or a road or track. In defining boundaries for each character area, a decision was made to follow an identifiable feature visible on the ground wherever possible. It was considered that this approach would be both more comprehensible to a lay audience/reader and more defensible within the local authority planning process. However, in a limited number of situations there was no clear line on the ground. In these instances boundaries were drawn either along a contour line (where there is break in slope reasonably clearly visible in the field), or as a straight line between two fixed features.

**3.5.3** The boundaries arising from the foregoing methodology were also reviewed against previous studies involving aspects of landscape character assessment including the Landscape Conservation Areas (as defined by local authorities). Where possible, and particularly where there were only marginal variations, the boundaries established for this study were amended to match those previously defined. However, due to the different methodologies utilised, this was not always possible without compromising the integrity of this study. Furthermore the process was made more difficult where two different boundary lines were already present in a given area. This landscape character assessment followed best practice as defined in the methodology available at the time (Landscape Character Assessment -Guidance for England and Scotland (2002), published by The Countryside Agency), as suitable for the scale of study involved and as the most effective criteria of boundary definition.

**3.5.4** It should be clearly understood that although the drawing of boundary lines on a plan is an inevitable part of the process, this does not always mean that landscape character is dramatically different to either side of each and every line. Landscape character can suddenly change, e.g. at the interface of an historic parkland, at the foot of a steep scarp slope or at a settlement edge, but generally there is often a more gradual transition. In such cases the boundary line marks more a watershed of character, where the balance of the defining elements has shifted from one landscape type to another.

This should be understood when viewing the GIS version of the landscape character areas, as the lines are digitised against a 1:10,000 base and at a scale of accuracy of c.1:2,000. This level of detail suggests that a decision has been made about which side of a road defines a change in landscape character and whether one particular house is included in an area or not. In practice a reasonable decision has been made on the basis of the available OS data, existing boundary information and the fieldwork data and survey sheets, but will be subject to change over time and cannot in every instance be regarded as definitive, but rather as indicative of a transition.

### 3.6 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

An important part of the process of landscape character assessment in this study was the involvement of the local community. The details, results and further implications of the process are set out more fully in a supplementary report. The key elements involved are set out below:

#### 3.6.1 Tier A - Community of Interest

2000 study: The stakeholder group for this study included 56 different authorities and societies with a professional, statutory or local interest in the process. These were invited to become involved in the consultation process. An introductory meeting in June 2000 explained the purpose of the project and how participants could be involved. Contributions to the MORI questionnaire were invited. In August 2000 a copy of the Draft Landscape Character Areas map and accompanying 'work in progress' text was issued to all parties who had shown interest in the project, asking for their written comments by way of response. Contributions were sought on a range of topics, including boundary definition, character names, future guidelines and matters of detail/local knowledge. Representatives were invited to a further meeting in September 2000- for a presentation of the finished outputs and for a discussion on the project and its future uses.

2002 extension study: Given the limited geographical extent of the extension study and the contemporaneous assessment of North Hertfordshire District taking place immediately adjacent it a joint Tier A stakeholder consultation meeting was held for the two District projects on 31 July 2002. This included a full presentation of the assessment and mechanisms for stakeholders to provide feedback.

#### 3.6.2 Tier B - Community of Place

For both the 2000 and 2002 studies views of the local community were sought via the Hertfordshire Citizens Panel. The Citizens Panel is a strictly representative cross-section of the community who have agreed to participate in a number of sampling processes. It provided a way of securing community evaluation of landscapes unbiased by the agenda of local pressure groups. Members of the Citizens Panel were sent a questionnaire devised in conjunction with MORI. This included a relevant local map and the opportunity for respondents to mark up areas that they considered distinctive landscapes. Contributors' responses about landscape preferences were aggregated and analysed and an appropriate summary comment included in the community views section of each character area description. An analysis of the probable effectiveness of the process in capturing community views undertaken at the same time and concluded that while a good indication of the areas most valued by the community was being given a further round of community consultation, e.g. as part of the Local Plan process would be beneficial to ensure that no areas are unfairly described as having no or very little community support. It should be noted that the bulk of the work has also now had several years exposure with only a very few alterations being suggested.

Further information on the methodology used in this study may be found on the County Council's website and is included within the Hertfordshire case-study incorporated into the Countryside Agency's guidance on Landscape Character Assessment.

### 3.7 REPORT FORMAT

Following the receipt of inputs from the stakeholders and continuing literature review, the landscape character descriptions were developed into a final form. A consistent pattern was used to describe each of the 28 character areas that emerged. This took the form of a nominal four to five pages of text and illustrations as follows:

#### 3.7.1 Summary Page

Location- brief geographical description.  
Landscape character - summary statement of the area.  
Key characteristics - main elements defining the character.  
Distinctive features - individual features of note.

#### 3.7.2 Assessment Page

##### **Physical influences**

Geology and soils.  
Topography - including degree of slope and altitude range.  
Hydrology.  
Land cover and land use.  
Vegetation and wildlife.

##### **Historic and cultural influences**

Field pattern and field size.  
Transport pattern.  
Settlement and built form.

#### 3.7.3 Evaluation Page

Visual and sensory perception.  
Rarity and distinctiveness.  
Visual impact of built development.  
Accessibility.  
Community views.  
Condition and robustness matrix.  
Landscape and ecological designations.

The above topics were considered systematically for the evaluation section of the report. The entry for each topic was devised on the basis of professional judgement, input from HCC staff, responses from the public consultation process and the following specific criteria.

**Visual and sensory perception.** This included views to, from and within an area, the scale of elements, sense of enclosure, visual unity and noise/tranquility. Information was largely gleaned during the field survey process and recorded on the survey sheets.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** Rarity was assessed on the frequency of the landscape type within the study area (not for the whole county). Distinctiveness relates to those particular landscape characteristics or features that help distinguish one particular landscape character area from another and make it special. This may have referred to individual features or the overall character. The entry for rarity and distinctiveness was added later in the report process when an overview of the whole study area was available.

**Visual impact of built development.** This identified the magnitude and extent of the impact of built features on local landscape character. It included settlements, roads, railways, etc. Data was gathered during the field survey and presented on the survey sheets.

**Accessibility.** This was a qualitative assessment of the number lengths of rights of way, areas of publicly accessible land and the presence of associated recreational activities.

**Community views.** These were based on an aggregate statement from the Community of Place questionnaire returns, which were analysed by HCC Head of Landscape. The relative value of each landscape area from the returns was indicated by a five-point scale, with 'A' being the most valued and 'E' the least acknowledged. These ratings are included at the end of each community views section. Historic or literary quotations were added when available, to give a 'time depth' perspective. Some extracts from questionnaire responses may also have been included where apt or where there is little history of commentary.

**Condition and robustness matrix.** See section 3.8 below.

**Landscape and ecological designations** Relevant designations were collated from HCC, English Nature and English Heritage. These include Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Landscape Conservation Areas from the District Plan Alterations No.1 (adopted in March 1998), Scheduled Ancient Monuments (visible features), Special Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSIs), historic parks and gardens of the English Heritage Register. (NB Reference to Landscape Conservation Areas have subsequently been deleted in this document as they have now been omitted as a policy within the current Welwyn Hatfield District Plan.)

#### 3.7.4 Guidelines Page

In addition to the above each description is illustrated with a diagrammatic location plan and photographs of the area. The Landscape Character Areas are also identified on a map. This was done digitally as an ArcView 3.2 project set against a 1:10,000 scale OS base, at a resolution of 1:2000 scale. Some of the 30 Landscape Character Areas identified were further sub-divided to show a finer level of resolution. The text for the report was also provided as an Access database, to enable the GIS map data to be made interactive with the text. The data described above was

delivered to the client in both hard copy and on CD-ROM.

#### 3.8 ANALYSING LANDSCAPE CHANGE

Under section 3.7.3 above there is reference to a 'Condition and Strength of Character Matrix'. In order to assess any landscape's potential ability to adapt to change without losing its intrinsic character, it is necessary to analyse the functional integrity or condition of the landscape and balance this against the strength of character as demonstrated by the more permanent or robust elements of the landscape. Landscape condition is determined from an evaluation of the relative state (poor/moderate/good) of elements within the landscape which are subject to change, such as survival of hedgerows, extent and impact of built development. Strength of character is determined from an evaluation of the impact of relatively stable factors, such as landform and land cover, the apparent continuity of an historic pattern, the degree of visibility of and within the area and its rarity.

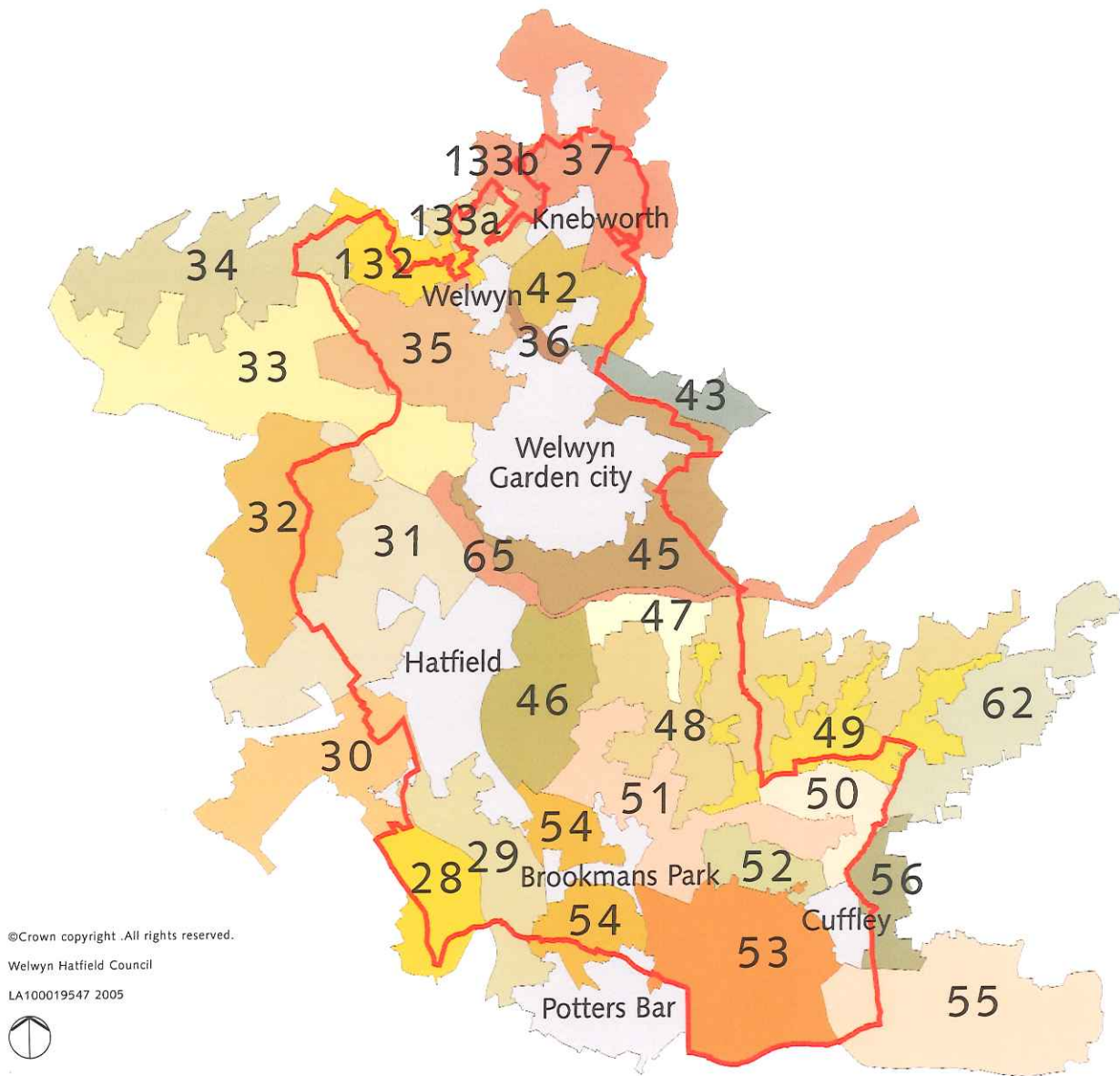
Seven factors were considered for each area (see matrix for any area). Each was evaluated in the field and an entry made on the survey sheet. They were then considered against a three-point scale and entered in the matrix table. Values for the factors on each axis were then aggregated and a majority total applied. The resulting intersection on the matrix determined the general strategy for each landscape character area (last page of each character area).

This evaluation via matrix enables a general guideline to be determined, such as, for example 'conserve and strengthen', where a landscape area is in good condition but only moderate robustness, or 'improve and reinforce' where a landscape area is in moderate condition and of weak robustness. Once this primary guideline has been established, specific guidelines can be put forward that will address issues within the particular area, with a view to improving both condition and strength of character as necessary to reinforce its distinctiveness.

#### 3.9 SENSITIVITY AND CAPACITY ISSUES

In accordance with national guidance landscape assessments of themselves do not indicate the suitability or capacity of the landscape to accommodate different types of development; this requires an additional stage. In the case of the 2000 study, however, an additional report is available from the County Council's County Development Unit which indicates the relative sensitivity of different character areas within the district to mineral extraction.

#### 4.0 INDIVIDUAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

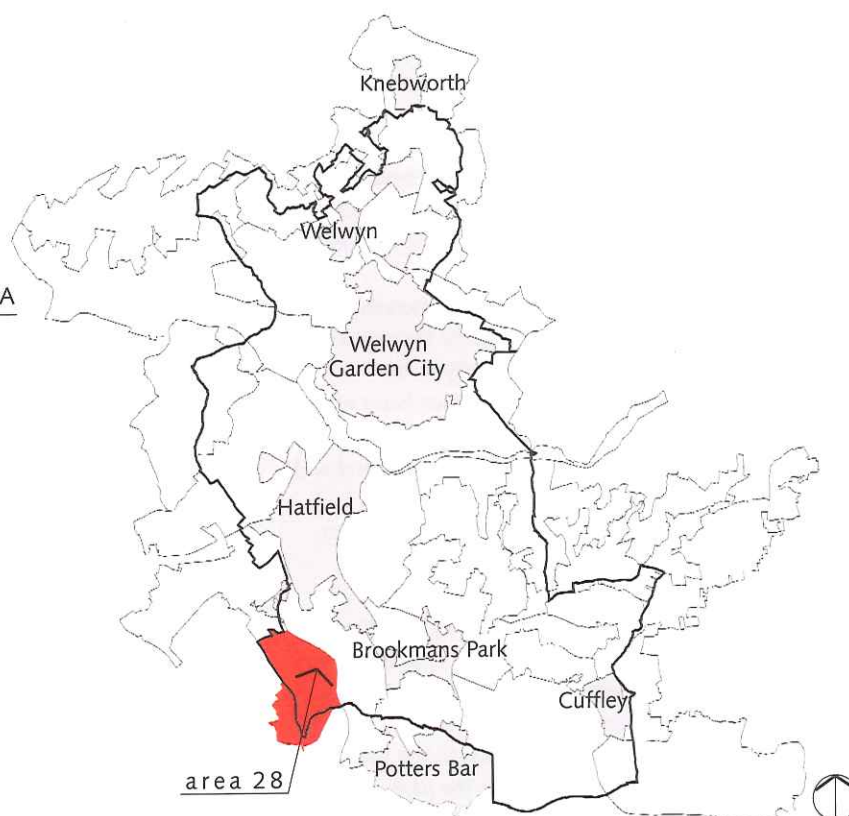


### District map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Welwyn Hatfield Council

LA100019547 2005



### LOCATION

This area is situated south of Colney Heath, west of the A1(M) and includes the section of the Shenley Ridge east of the M25.

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

An area with strong historic continuity, combining parkland on the lower slopes with extensive woodlands on the slopes and crown of a pronounced ridge. Area of arable estate farmland to the south east.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- pastoral parkland with mature trees
- extensive woodland cover at Redwell Wood complex
- Elizabethan house set in ornamental grounds
- estate farmland associated with Home Farm

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- bridge over seasonal upper Colne
- swallowholes on ridge



North Mymms parkland •  
(J. Billingsley)

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** The geology to the north of the area on the flatter vale comprises Aeolian silty drift and till, with a mix of deep stoneless well-drained silty soils over gravel (Hamble 2 series), and stoneless slowly permeable coarse loamy soils and silty soils over clay (Gresham series). On the elevated ridge the soils are slowly permeable and seasonally waterlogged with some brown subsoils (Windsor series) overlying Tertiary clay.

**Topography.** The northern area is gently undulating with a shallow valley to the upper River Colne. To the south west of the parkland the slopes rise significantly to the pronounced end of the Shenley Ridge, which has a number of secondary valleys.

**Degree of slope.** Less than 1 in 40 over the parkland and typically 1 in 14 on the wooded slopes.

**Altitude range.** 75-90m within the parkland and up to 30m on the wooded ridge.

**Hydrology.** There are a number of springs, streams and associated swallowholes on the wooded ridge. In the parkland there are a few ponds. The acidic Colne rises to the east as a seasonal overflow of the Mimmshall Brook, which disappears into a series of swallowholes near Water End. The Colne bed is normally dry through the parkland but there is a fine ornamental bridge at the park entrance.

**Land cover and land use.** The area comprises a mix of grazed parkland, woodland and arable. Within the parkland there are areas of ley and arable between woodland plantations.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The natural woodland type on the acidic wet ridge is oak/hazel. To the south-east at Mymmshall Wood there is a transition towards hornbeam. Redwell Wood is an SSSI and a number of the other woods are ancient, including Cobs Ash and Hawkshead Wood. Species include ash, sycamore, field maple, holly, sweet chestnut and stands of conifers which include pine. Some of the woodlands are semi-natural with areas of wood-pasture origin and heath species in some of the woodland rides. Banks and ditches mark historic boundaries within the woods. Potwells, in the centre of the wood complex, is an area of secondary grassland, having been previously ploughed for set-aside. Within the parkland there are a number of fine mature oaks, and an avenue of lime trees more closely related to the house. Most of the boundaries of the park are marked by timber and stock-proof fencing. Where present, hedges tend to be hawthorn, elder and elm with individual field oaks.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

There is a strong sense of historical continuity. North Mymms Park was recorded as a medieval deer park as late as 1766. The area extended up the slopes to the woods.

**Field pattern.** The arable area to the south east associated with Home Farm comprises mainly pre-18th century organic enclosure with some larger prairie fields which have been created since 1950. Fields are medium to large. The parkland is open with occasional wire fencing.

**Transport pattern.** The park is bounded by Tollgate Road to the north east. Elsewhere there are no public roads but a number of estate and woodland tracks.

**Settlements and built form.** The settlement pattern is dominated by the estate. North Mymms House is an 'H' plan Elizabethan house, set in the grounds of the medieval deer park. The main gardens were designed by Sir Ernest George in the 1890s, while the rose garden and pergola garden were designed by the influential Victorian garden designer, William Robinson. Other estate properties include Home Farm and the parish church of St Mary, around which there is a cluster of traditional properties. Within Redwell Wood isolated foresters' lodges have developed, e.g. Oak Lodge.

**OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

English Nature SSSI notification.

Pevsner, N., rev. Cherry, B., *Hertfordshire*, Penguin (2000).

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The woods are a prominent feature in this landscape, cloaking the horizon of the elevated ridge. The parkland is more locally visible, particularly from Tollgate Road where there are some longer views through to the more open Vale of St Albans to the west. This is a largely contained area, with the most open aspects to the north and on the lower arable slopes to the east. Ancient woodland and plantations frame views, and in places provide a sense of confinement. Despite the visual continuity of the vegetation and strength of landform the area is adversely affected by noise from the M25 and A1(M).

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** The combination of grazed parkland and extensive woodlands is rare in the county.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

There are a number of detracting features within the landscape, of which the adjacent motorways are perhaps the most significant.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There are few rights of way across the parkland. However there are a number of routes including bridleways up to and through the Redwell Woods complex. These become wet and muddy after rain.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

These are valued and distinctive parkland and woodland landscapes (C).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

SSSI Redwell Woods.

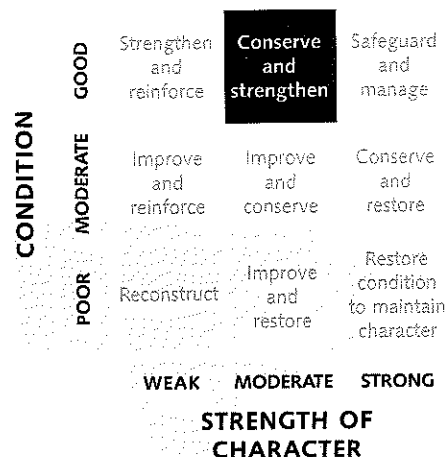
Watling Chase Community Forest.

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	insignificant
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	mixed
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	widespread
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	variable
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	intact
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	low
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	low

**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

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



## STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING

### CHANGE: CONSERVE AND STRENGTHEN

- prepare and implement a conservation and restoration plan for the historic parkland. Scheme to fully address landscape, historic and ecological issues
- restore historically appropriate and high-quality boundaries to parkland, e.g. metal estate railings
- promote recording and management of veteran trees for biodiversity value and visual amenity
- encourage new planting to maintain structural and age diversity of the parkland trees. Landscape improvements should respect the historic context of existing features and the form and character of the parkland and gardens. Ornamental species should only be used to replace damaged or over-mature specimens, where appropriate
- within parklands, encourage the reversion from arable to pasture
- restrict ploughing of grasslands within parklands
- encourage landowners to retain and increase ponds and wetland areas to enhance their visual and wildlife functions
- encourage appropriate management measures to benefit the upper reaches of the Colne
- promote hedgerow restoration and creation throughout the arable areas to provide visual and ecological links between existing and proposed woodland and parkland areas. Pattern to follow historic field boundaries where possible
- promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats
- support the Watling Chase Community Forest in the realisation of its objectives for the area
- promote appropriate woodland management for existing woodlands, including the replacement of softwoods with indigenous native deciduous communities and hedgebank management
- ensure that a wooded skyline is preserved
- promote the appropriate management of coppice woodland in order to re-establish a rich ground flora and the distinction between different management systems, such as high forest, coppice, coppice-with-standards and wood pasture
- promote the expansion of woodland beyond ancient woodland boundaries, especially where this will help in creating habitat links and will not disturb historic features or valuable wildlife habitats
- establish realistic and attractive countryside management schemes for sites with heathland and acid grassland communities
- review public access arrangements to woodlands and parkland including low-key but enhanced car parks
- maintain local patterns of species diversity within woodlands
- promote the continued use of stock grazing as the preferred management for the parkland
- promote crop diversification and the retention/restoration of mixed livestock/arable farming
- ensure a strong presumption against development within or adjacent to the area and in particular that which could lower the water table within river valleys and affect wetland habitats
- establish tree-planting measures to minimise the impact of the M25 and A1(M)



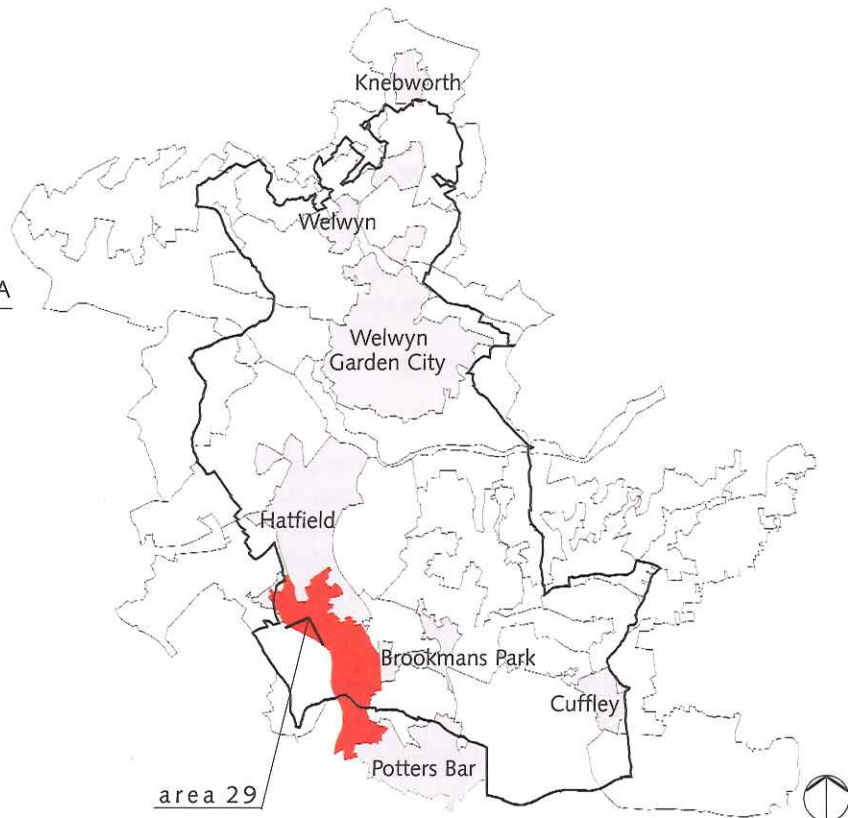
• Redwell Wood from the south  
(J. Billingsley)

### District map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Welwyn Hatfield Council

LA100019547 2005



#### LOCATION

Mimms Hall valley runs in a north/south direction around Welham Green. The area is confined in the east and west by major transport corridors (the A1(M) and the railway line) and higher ground. The settlements of Hatfield and Potters Bar form the north and south boundaries respectively.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Mimms Hall Brook valley slopes and floor have a wooded farmland character, with rectangular field compartments along the valley slopes. It is strongly influenced by the major transport routes and the surrounding settlement, which give it an urban-edge rather than a rural character. The Royal Veterinary College is located centrally and has a local impact. The roads down the slopes coincide with a series of high points and the meandering streams that feed the brook also mark the shallow valleys between.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- organic field pattern of small woodland blocks and fenced pasture
- mixed farming
- major transport corridor
- water related features
- valley slopes and floor
- urban influence

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES:

- Potterells Spew gravel slopes
- swallowholes
- Royal Veterinary College



Swallowholes in Brush Wood •  
(E. Staveley)

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** The area lies within the central river valleys, part of the northern Thames basin. The slowly permeable clayey soils mostly have brown subsoils and lie over Tertiary clays, giving rise to seasonal waterlogging (Windsor series). There are local areas of slight seasonal water logging on the slopes. Springs issue from a distinctive spew gravel bank at Potterells.

**Topography.** A string of high points runs centrally along the area and the land falls slightly away to the east at the boundary of the Hatfield estate.

**Degree of slope.** The average gradient is 1:30.

**Altitude range.** 80m to 110m

**Hydrology.** Water End swallowholes (SSSI) are major sinkholes in chalk and a permanent landscape feature. The site, which is the largest in England, consists of a group of more than 15 sinkholes where two streams drain from the London clay and sink very close to the boundary of a chalk outcrop. During heavy rainfall a lake accumulates in the basin but is only temporary. This flow is the spring source for Chadwell at Ware (New River), and overflows westwards into the Colne (the Mimmshall Brook at Water End). Ponds at Welham Green are connected underground. A number of small ponds on the higher ground are associated with the farms and woodlands.

**Land cover and land use.** Wooded farmland is prominent throughout the area. The farmland is predominantly arable, with small fields of pasture with fenced boundaries edging the settlement and surrounding the Vet College. The area is well used for informal recreation.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The willow carr/swamp community adjacent to the Water End swallowholes is of biological importance, with stands of wetland species. Field boundaries are generally treed hedgerows, with hedgebanks locally. Hawthorn is a common hedge species throughout the area, with elder and elm also frequent. Other species include ash, dogwood, field maple and blackthorn. Woodland blocks are relatively small and unconnected, generally an oak/ash mix with wetland species associated with watercourses. Hornbeam, field maple and the occasional beech can also be found. Bush Wood at Welham Green is a significant hornbeam woodland. Some remnant acid grassland can be found in association with the oak/hornbeam woodland. Immature woodland planting mixes edge the A1(M) corridor.

**HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Historically, the woods were used for a supply of timber for brick kiln furnaces. A moat is sited to the west of Welham Green. The transport corridors and regular configuration of lanes that cross the area have strongly influenced the landscape character and evolution of the settlements and have obliterated the historic/cultural pattern. For example, any links with North Mymms Park have been severed by the motorway corridor. Relics of the historic field pattern can be found further up the slopes away from the A1(M).

**Field pattern.** Small regular

**Transport pattern.** The A1(M) and the railway define this area to east and west

**Settlements and built form.** Linear 20th-century settlement borders Hawkshead Lane and the historic village of Water End follows the Mimmshall brook. Some infill development has occurred adjacent to the A1(M) corridor. Isolated houses and farms are scattered throughout the area. Mimmms Hall is located close to Potters Bar and has a flint and red-brick lodge house, which is unusual in the area.

**OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

English Nature SSSI notification.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

In general, dense hedgerows and woodland restrict visibility. Longer views are generally associated with the larger fields on the high ground. Vegetation and landform confine views within the Mimmshall Brook valley.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** The geological SSSI in this area, Water End swallowholes, is the best example of its type in England.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The site and sound of the A1(M), railway line and the surrounding settlements of Potters Bar and Hatfield cause a significant impact on the character of the entire area, while the Vet College has a localised impact. The pig farm only presents a very localised impact and is well screened by vegetation. At the southern end of the area views are marred by the leisure centre and Cranborne Industrial Estate, offset by the Furze field Local Nature Reserve.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Access is good and the landscape is well used by the local residents. Parking access is difficult for most of the footpaths in the area. Motorcycling, walking and riding recreational activities also occur.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

Elements in this landscape are regarded as distinctive (D). The Potterells slopes are perceived as being particularly significant: '*A pleasant walking area with many paths*' (Potters Bar Society). The Furze field Local Nature reserve is valued by local residents.

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

Mimmshall is recognised within the county Biodiversity Action Plan as a High Biodiversity area (HBA) for its woodlands.

Geological SSSI: Water End swallowholes.

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>localised</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>mixed</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>high</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>relic</b>
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	<b>locally visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>partial/mixed</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>incoherent</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>frequent (with SSSIs)</b>

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	<b>MODERATE</b>	Improve and reinforce	<b>Improve and conserve</b>	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>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		

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

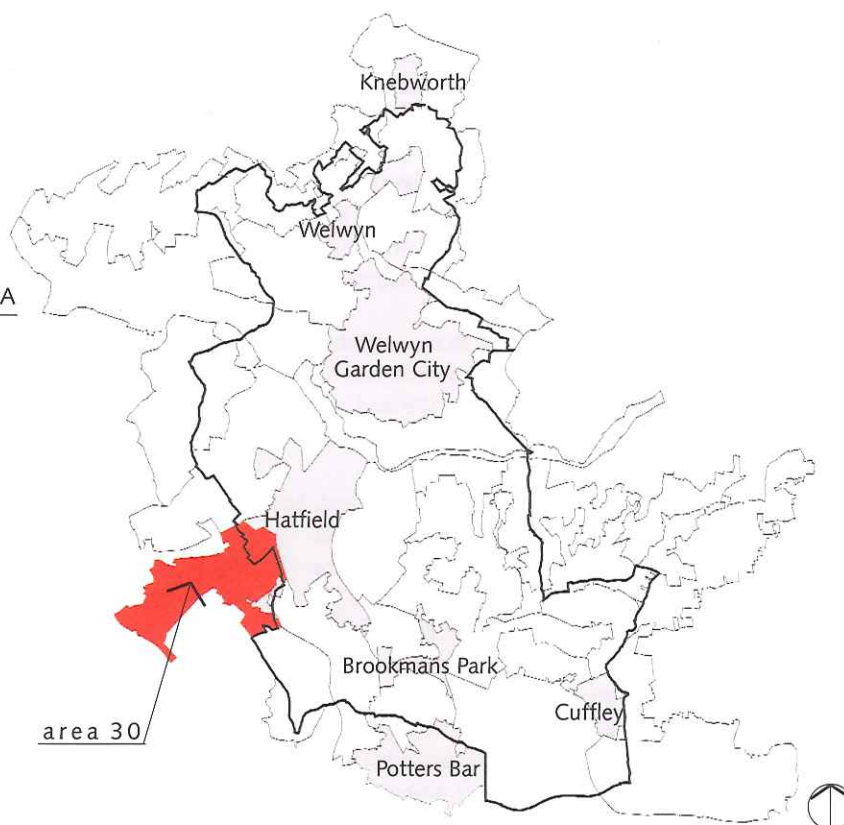
- encourage the reversal of habitat fragmentation and the establishment and improvement of habitat links to create eco-corridors
- promote the expansion of woodland, especially where this will enhance the distinctiveness of the area and help in creating habitat links
- encourage the planting of new woodlands to screen features that detract from the historic landscape character of this area, such as urban edges and roads
- ensure that only indigenous species of local provenance are used for new woodlands and hedges
- encourage the retention and replanting of hedges as field boundaries, rather than fences
- ensure that any change to horse rather than cattle/sheep grazing does not lead to a degradation of local landscape character via inappropriate fencing, structures and buildings
- protect wetland habitats of significant nature conservation value
- resist the targeting of redundant or derelict pasture for development
- resist development that could lower the water table within valleys and affect wetland habitats
- promote the creation of buffer strips along watercourses to prevent pesticide, herbicide and fertilizer run-off and to provide habitat for wildlife; encourage their linkage to eco-corridors within the wider landscape
- encourage the maintenance and retention of all ponds
- encourage the provision of small, informal car parks at access points along public footpaths
- promote woodland management to ensure age diversity and the retention of species-rich ground flora

### District map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Welwyn Hatfield Council

LA100019547 2005



#### LOCATION

This area is located between London Colney and St Albans in the west and Hatfield in the east. The A414 and Colney Heath mark the southern boundary and Hatfield aerodrome the northern limit.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

A medium-scale landscape contained by adjacent urban areas and transport routes. There is a good network of hedges, field trees and tree belts to the urban areas that visually contain the largely arable character. Mineral extraction has created a number of disturbed and new landscapes that are still young. Areas of heath and semi-natural grassland are locally important at Colney Heath and Smallford gravel pits.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- medium-scale arable farmland
- subtle gently undulating landforms
- severance by transport corridors, past and present
- areas of semi-natural restored mineral workings
- heath habitat at Colney Heath
- urban development contains area physically but visually largely concealed

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Smallford gravel pits
- Alban Way

Colney Heath •  
(J. Billingsley)



**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** To the east the geology comprises Aeolian silty drift and till. The soils are deep stoneless well-drained silty soils over gravel (Hamble 2 series). The gravels were laid down in glacial lakes during the Ice Age by the 'proto-Thames'. To the west around Tyttenhanger the soils overlie a chalky till geology with calcareous subsoils in places. Soils are deep, fine, loamy and clayey, with slow permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging (Hornbeam 3 series).

**Topography.** This is a subtle landform. To the west there are gentle undulations. To the east the landform is a continuation of the De Havilland Plain and the land is virtually flat. The past mineral workings have produced some minor local variations in landform.

**Degree of slope.** Typically less than 1 in 50 to the west, but locally up to 1 in 25. Virtually flat to the east, c.1 in 500.

**Altitude range.** 75-86m to the west and 70 to 74 in the east.

**Hydrology.** The young and seasonal River Colne flows into the south of the area at Colney Heath, where it has been artificially channelled across the common since the early 20th century. There are also a number of seepage lines and spring lines in the heathy woodland. The agricultural land to the north is drained by a series of field ditches and then into Butterwick Brook and Ellenbrook, both of which flow into the Colne within Tyttenhanger Park. There are a number of waterbodies associated with the former mineral workings, e.g. at Smallford gravel pits, and elsewhere there are scattered small ponds.

**Land cover and land use.** The primary land use is arable farming with a pattern of treed farmland. There is a significant area of disturbed land, within which restoration has been variable in its extent and quality. Pasture is limited in extent and confined to the edge of settlements.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Woodlands are discrete and comprise oak, ash and hornbeam. There are two ancient woods at Coppice Wood and Knight Wood that are a natural oak/hazel mix. Either side of the A414 is a dramatic avenue of hybrid poplars. On the north-west edge adjacent to St Albans there are a number of tree belts that conceal the extent of development behind, e.g. at the former Cell Barnes Hospital. Some mineral restoration sites have lakes and new plantation areas, often willows and poplars. Hedge species include hawthorn, elm and some holly. Field trees are mainly oaks.

- Colney Heath is an open area of common with both acidic woodland and acidic/neutral grassland communities. Species include hawthorn, gorse, bracken, foxgloves and oak, with alders lining the Colne.

- At Smallford gravel pits an interesting and valuable mosaic of semi-improved grassland, scrub, ephemeral ponds and pockets of undisturbed species-rich acidic/neutral grassland has developed on old mineral working sites that were 'poorly' restored with rubble. These areas have been grazed by gypsy horses to create an interesting 'common'. The ponds contain great crested newts, (BAP species).
- At Sleapshyde, where the pits have not been filled there is good marsh vegetation. There are also areas of naturally occurring bog communities.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

The open unenclosed heath of Colney Heath is the last remnant of the old manorial lands of Tyttenhanger, owned by the abbey until the dissolution of the monasteries. The heath lay just outside the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Police and was the haunt of highwaymen and the location of cockfights and prize fights. The inns around the heath were all connected by a series of footpaths.

**Field pattern.** The field pattern is mainly pre-18th century organic enclosure which has largely been retained in areas that have not been extracted. To the north of Colney Heath there is more evidence of parliamentary enclosure. In contrast to the adjacent character areas of the Vale of St Albans and the De Havilland Plain, fields are medium in size and irregular in shape. In areas that have not been subject to mineral extraction, hedgerows are medium to tall, particularly north of the A414, which creates a sense of enclosure from the adjacent urban areas and road corridors. The extracted area north east of Colney Heath is more open in character.

**Transport pattern.** The historic road pattern is of narrow winding lanes within the farmed landscape. This has been largely retained, although the area is divided by the linear A414 dual carriageway. The Smallford Trail follows the line of a disused railway and is also a valuable wildlife corridor.

**Settlements and built form.** The traditional pattern is of dispersed settlement. There are a number of clusters, including the older settlements of Tyttenhanger, Wilkins Green, Sleapshyde and Colney Heath. These have been added to and, together with ribbon development and expansion from the adjacent urban areas, there is a sense of urban pressure. There are a number of traditional buildings, using weatherboard, render and brick alongside 20th-century materials.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

Views both from outside and within the area are generally well screened by roadside vegetation along both the narrow lanes and the dual carriageways. The A414 and A1(M) provide a major source of noise and disruption.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** The landscape type is frequent with the heathy habitats being the most distinct features.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The extent of built development within and on the perimeter of the area is generally well concealed by vegetation. Exceptions are some of the large industrial units and glasshouses at Smallford and the A414. There is some localised fly-tipping which is visually detrimental.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There is open public access to Colney Heath and a good network of footpaths and the Albans Way/Smallford Trail within the area. Public access to Smallford gravel pits is present but not well signed. There is angling at Smallford gravel pits.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

The heathland landscapes are valued for their distinctiveness amidst an otherwise unremarked-upon setting (D).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

Watling Chase Community Forest.

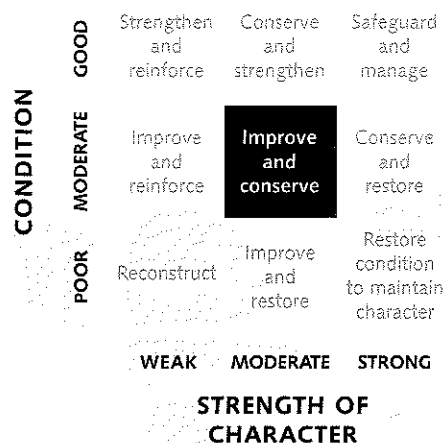
LNR: Colney Heath Common.

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>localised</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>mature or young</b>
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	<b>fragmented</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>good</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>interrupted</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>moderate</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>apparent</b>
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	<b>interrupted</b>
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	<b>locally visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>contained</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>incoherent</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>frequent</b>



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

- support the Watling Chase Community Forest in the realisation of its objectives for the area
- promote the appropriate management of ancient woodland, including Knights Wood, in order to maintain a rich ground flora and the distinction between different management systems, such as high forest, coppice and coppice-with-standards
- use ancient hedge and field boundaries to identify the most appropriate location for woodland restoration and expansion
- promote new woodland planting to maintain and improve visual separation from the adjacent urban uses and transport corridors, including A414 and A1(M). Scale of planting to typically comprise small woods, copses and shelterbelts
- encourage effective landscape management along transport corridors to ensure thinning, selective felling and replanting is undertaken to achieve a varied age structure and locally indigenous species
- reduce the visual impact of adjacent built areas, e.g. Smallford
- improve public access and signing to areas of interest including the Alban Way (Smallford Trail) and Smallford gravel pits. Provide stopping places along the Alban Way for sitting and picnicking
- encourage maintenance of the existing pattern and scale of hedgerows and field trees that provide enclosure
- 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
- encourage planting of new hedges adjacent to rights of way
- support the retention and management of heath habitats including Colney Heath. Encourage opportunities of extending this habitat
- develop appropriate management strategies to maintain and improve the mosaic of wildlife habitats areas including wetland and semi-improved grassland, in association with former mineral extraction sites. Include the continued use of grazing and management by wildlife organisations
- promote the creation of valuable new nature conservation sites, the restoration of degraded sites associated with mineral extraction and addressing areas of fly-tipping
- promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats
- promote crop diversification and the restoration of mixed livestock/arable farming where possible
- encourage the restoration of ditches and discourage the 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
- promote both the creation of new ponds and the retention/enhancement of existing ponds for wildlife
- where ancient lanes and their associated hedgerows fall within or abut a proposed development ensure that developers retain, protect, enhance and integrate such features into the new development with due regard to their historic, ecological and landscape value
- where hedgerow removal is deemed to be unavoidable, replacement planting should use locally native species of local provenance to maintain local distinctiveness



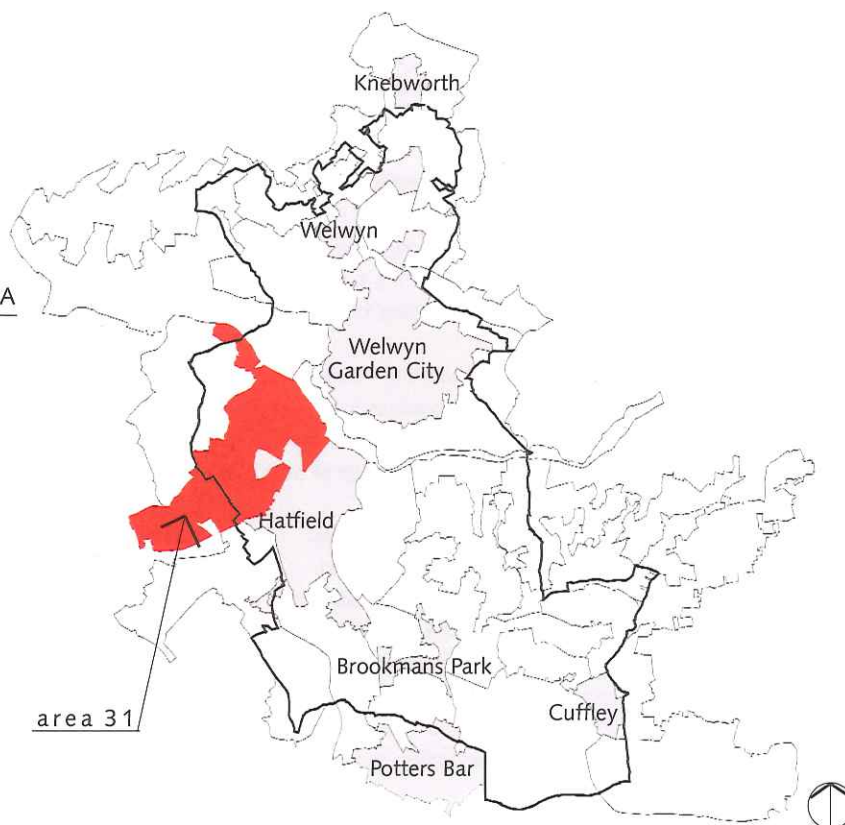
• From Tyttenhanger towards St Albans (J. Billingsley)

### District map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Welwyn Hatfield Council

LA100019547 2005



#### LOCATION

This area runs from Cromerhyde in the north, southwards across Hatfield Aerodrome and up to the grounds of Oaklands College on the edge of St Albans.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

An area dominated and unified by the level topography yet with a diverse mix of uses and an incoherent pattern. To the north, arable cropping dominates, with open views, very few hedges or trees and only isolated farms. To the centre, the disused Hatfield aerodrome and the new business park have visually dominant structures, together with areas of existing and redundant mineral extraction. To the south there is a mix of extraction, urban fringe development and Oaklands College, which has a disjointed and mixed character. There is generally poor access within and to the area.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- an extensive level plain
- large open arable landscape to the north on high quality agricultural land
- disused Hatfield aerodrome with associated industrial and commercial development and aeronautical structures
- parkland and horticultural landscape of Oaklands College
- existing and restored mineral workings
- urban-fringe development and glasshouses
- incoherent and jumbled landscape, particularly to the south and centre

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Oaklands College house
- restored arable fields
- mineral extraction plant



De Havilland Plain •  
(J. Billingsley)

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** The geology of the plain comprises Aeolian silty drift and till. To the centre of the area around the former airfield the soils are stoneless slowly permeable, coarse loamy and silty over clay (Gresham series). Elsewhere the soils are deep stoneless well-drained silty soils over gravel (Hamble 2 series).

**Topography.** The plain is virtually flat and represents a subtle watershed between the Colne and the Lea. Levels vary by as little as 2-3m over 6km. The land rises locally to the west and the south.

**Degree of slope.** Falls are often at less than 1 in 1000.

**Altitude range.** Typically around the 80m contour but falling to 70m at Ellenbrook and rising to 100m within the undulating grounds of Oaklands College on the edge of St Albans.

**Hydrology.** The area is drained by a number of streams: Astwick Manor Ditch, Nast (culverted), Ellen Brook and Butterwick Brook. These flow slowly to the east to connect with the River Colne in the south or the River Lea in the north east. Groundwater locally affects the soils and there are a few ponds within the agricultural landscape or the woods, e.g. Home Covert. Mineral extraction has led to the creation of a number of larger waterbodies, some with wildlife interest.

**Land cover and land use.** The major land cover to the north is arable cropping. There are active areas of sand and gravel extraction, e.g. Astwick Manor, together with areas that have been restored to pasture and arable. The airfield site has extensive areas of grassland and considerable built development. Oaklands College has a mix of land uses, including a small area of parkland.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** There is very limited woodland cover. Home Wood within Oaklands College is ancient natural oak/hornbeam woodland, with ash, sycamore and lime standards and some hazel. Some of the other woods support ancient woodland indicator species, e.g. Home Covert and Oak Wood. There are some younger plantings associated with mineral restoration sites which usually comprise willow and poplars. The modest parkland grounds of Oaklands have some mature specimen trees including lime, oak and copper beech.

Some of the former mineral workings support a mix of flooded gravel pits, scrub and marshland habitats, e.g. Oaklands gravel pit, and have a diverse flora including the southern marsh orchid. There are few hedgerows except to some of the roads, where they have often grown out and include hawthorn and elm. There are very few isolated field trees and these are generally over-mature. The open field pattern to the north is an important site for wintering golden plover.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

**Field pattern.** The area only contains small parcels of remaining pre-18th century enclosure. The vast majority of the land has been disturbed over the last century. To the north the extensive prairie fields are the result of agricultural intensification post-1950. To the south the enclosure pattern has been altered, either following or as a result of extraction and restoration, although some of the mineral sites have been successfully restored to arable. Field sizes are irregular and large to very large in size.

**Transport pattern.** The area is crossed by a modest number of sinuous secondary roads. Improved roads have been built to service the Hatfield Business Park.

**Settlements and built form.** There is a very dispersed estate settlement pattern with a small number of isolated farmsteads, e.g. Cromerhyde Farm in the north and Beech Farm in the south. Astwick Manor is a medieval moated site. The area is as empty as it is flat. To the south Oaklands College is centred on the Victorian house (1888) and modest parkland and now has a range of ancillary buildings. To the east the area is defined by the western edge of Hatfield, including the large aircraft hangers and residential areas including Hatfield Garden Village, Stanborough and Ellenbrook. Following the closure of the airfield, the Hatfield Business Park has established. Retail, horticultural and industrial premises dominate to the south of Oaklands. The major landmark to the north is Lemsford parish church of St John the Evangelist.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

This is largely an open and exposed landscape which nonetheless has a private and remote feel in places. It is clearly visible from a number of more elevated locations outside the area. Within the area there are views of the arable landscape from the local roads, including Coopers Green Lane and Green Lane. To the middle, tall hedges, crude earth bunds and modern built development restrict or frame views of this rather incoherent landscape. Within Oaklands many of the views are contained.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** The area is most unusual due to its flatness and open character.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The major intrusive built elements within the area are the Hatfield Business Park warehouses. Other significant features are to the eastern fringes and include the former De Havilland flight sheds and control tower. Localised items are the batching plant on Oaklands Lane, glasshouses and nurseries. Over much of the area there is a sense of semi-dereliction or poor management. There has been extensive land-use change and little of the original pattern remains. Changes have been from arable to mineral and also from mineral to arable and pasture. Some of the workings are poorly screened.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There are few rights of way across the area, partly due to aviation uses in the past.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

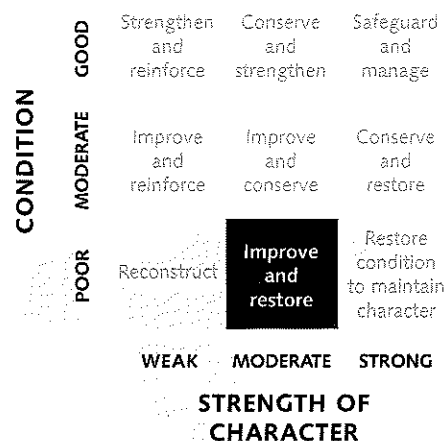
There is insignificant evidence from the MORI survey that this area is widely valued as a distinctive landscape. However, the area includes some features of value to the local community. A previous more detailed landscape character study of this area identified these to be associated with the history of aviation land use, hence the area name (D).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS****CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>widespread</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>over-mature</b>
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	<b>relic</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>poor</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>declining</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>high</b>
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	<b>moderate</b>

**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	<b>prominent</b>
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	<b>apparent</b>
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	<b>relic</b>
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	<b>widely visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>open</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>incoherent</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>unusual</b>



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

(It should be noted that part of this area is now subject to agreed extensive redevelopment proposals which will influence the achievement of the following guidelines)

- support the Watling Chase Community Forest in the realisation of its objectives for the area
- retain the characteristic large-scale openness to the north of the area (which is most unusual for the southern part of the county) but with a restored structure of hedges, ditches and woodland blocks
- retain long views where possible to appreciate the flat landform
- promote hedgerow restoration and creation throughout the area to provide visual and ecological links between existing and proposed woodlands. Pattern to follow historic field boundaries where possible. Hedges to include standard trees
- promote the appropriate management of existing woodland in order to maintain a rich ground flora and the distinction between different management systems, such as high forest and coppice-with-standards
- promote the planting of new small to medium woodlands, particularly on areas of restored mineral extraction to the centre and south
- promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats
- promote crop diversification and the restoration of mixed livestock/arable farming where possible
- encourage the restoration of ditches and discourage the 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
- promote the creation of buffer strips along watercourses to prevent pesticide, herbicide and fertilizer run-off and provide habitat for wildlife; encourage their linkage to eco-corridors within the wider landscape
- promote both the creation of new ponds and the retention/enhancement for wildlife of existing ponds
- develop a new landscape character in the disturbed and incoherent areas to the south
- screen/soften the visually intrusive built features on the perimeter and within the area including the Hatfield Business Park and the Hatfield aerodrome
- improve the poor existing network of rights of way over the area and develop opportunities for rights of way linkages alongside hedges, streams, water features, arable areas, airfield land and restored mineral workings
- develop a strategy to enhance the parkland setting of Oaklands College within the context of the existing horticultural uses. Remove urbanising features and inappropriate planting, e.g. Leyland cypress.
- improve the treatment of screen bunding to the perimeter of and within mineral sites by more sympathetic profiles, heights and the use of green mulches. Provide advanced planting where appropriate to provide a permanent contribution to the landscape framework
- focus attention to screen plant within minerals areas
- improve the restoration of past mineral sites
- develop appropriate management strategies to maintain and improve the mosaic of wildlife habitats areas, including wetland and semi-improved grassland, in association with former mineral extraction sites. Include the continued use of grazing and management by wildlife organisations



• Disused Hatfield aerodrome  
(J. Billingsley)

### District map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Welwyn Hatfield Council

LA100019547 2005



#### LOCATION

This area runs from the Lea Valley east of Wheathampstead, southwards to St Albans.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

An undulating north/south ridge with dominant arable land cover. To the north and east both extensive ancient and discrete plantation woodlands create a contained and coherent landscape. To the west and south the landscape is much more open with extensive and distant views to and from the area. There is a quiet and detached feel. The sparse farmsteads, narrow twisting lanes with hedgebanks and the wooded enclosure of Coleman Green add to the relaxed character.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- extensive woodland areas on eastern slopes
- small settlements and individual properties well assimilated into the landscape
- large arable fields with relic hedgerows
- narrow lanes (some sunken) with hedgebanks
- distant views to south east, west and north

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- wireless station masts on ridge to south
- massive Iron Age ditches (including Devil's Dyke)
- chalk pits
- pick-your-own-fruit farm

Devil's Dyke •  
(J. Billingsley)



**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** The local geology is a chalky till, with deep fine loamy over clayey and clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging (Hornbeam 3 series). Calcareous subsoils exist in places.

**Topography.** The area comprises a moderate ridge 4km in length from north to south and 2km from east to west. The landform gently undulates with some stronger valley features to the north. There are a number of chalk pits, e.g. Chalk Dell Farm.

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 25 to 1 in 40 on the slopes and less than 1 in 100 along the ridge.

**Altitude range.** 81-96m on the perimeter and 111-119m on the ridgeline.

**Hydrology.** A few springs rise on the slopes, e.g. Dogsheart Spring and Pearman's Spring. Local woods also suggest springs rising, eg. Long Spring Grove and Wet Grove. To the south east of the 'Belgic Oppidum' a series of linear ponds follow a shallow valley to the north and then part of the manmade earthworks at 'The Slad'. There are some ponds and wells associated with farmsteads.

**Land cover and land use.** The primary land use is arable farming on both the slopes and the narrow plateau. Woodland is the major secondary land use to the eastern and northern slopes. Small areas of pasture for cattle and horses remain in association with farmsteads, e.g. Fairfold's Farm and Symondshyde Farm. Poor hedges have often been replaced by fencing, which gives a temporary feel.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Extensive woods include Symondshyde, Furze Field, Chalk Dell and Titnol's Woods, many of them ancient with a natural acidic oak/hornbeam/birch mix. Sessile oak is also a feature of the woods, planted by the Gascoigne-Cecil Estate. Ash and oak form wood banks to the edges. Coppice is a feature to the north west of the area. At Symondshyde areas of botanically rich remnant heath survive in the rides. Plantations have also been added to either connect with the ancient woods or as discrete areas, e.g. David's Dingle. There is a large proportion of softwoods (both larch and pine) throughout and these are actively managed. The fine mature lime avenue from Bocket Hall terminates at Benstead's Wood.

At Coleman Green there are areas of heathy grassland, but much of the area has reverted to semi-natural woodland. The hedges are variable, being locally prominent on hedgebanks with the underlying gravels often visible in some of the lanes. In contrast there has been extensive hedge removal in the fields, and those that do exist are relic and in a state of decline. Hedgerow species are mixed and include hornbeam, field maple, holly, elm and some bracken to the small plateau area. Hedgerow trees include oak, ash and holly.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Just outside Wheathampstead are massive late Iron Age ditches including Devils Dyke. Symondshyde derives its name in part from a 'hyde', a 120-acre Saxon free tenement. John Bunyan is recorded to have visited a cottage at Coleman Green.

**Field pattern.** The historic field pattern varies. To the north and east the mainly pre-18th century organic enclosure pattern is largely intact, although hedgerow loss makes the area seem more open. Field units are generally irregular in shape and medium to large in size. There has been some limited enlargement to prairie fields. To the south and east there is an historic pattern of parliamentary enclosure, which has subsequently been extensively altered by both 20th-century enclosure and a loss of former boundaries from post-1950 enlargements.

**Transport pattern.** The transport pattern comprises narrow winding lanes twisting slowly across the landform.

**Settlements and built form.** The settlement pattern is sparse and scattered. There is one small hamlet at Coleman's Green which with its now regenerated wooded common has a secluded feel. There is a mix of building materials, including red and gault brick, timber frame and clay tile. There are no notable large houses and most are well integrated into the wooded arable landscape.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

This moderately elevated area is visible from the surrounding landscape with the woods forming a key feature from the east. The more open farmland to the south is particularly visible from the edge of St.Albans. Within the area the views are framed and generally contained by hedgerows, woodland and the undulating landform. From the south of the area near Nashe's Farm there are distant views across the Vale of St Albans and as far as the Shenley Ridge.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This landscape type is frequent. Its most distinctive feature is the quiet relaxed character.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

There has been a widespread shift from pasture to arable, but there are very few detracting elements in the landscape. The exceptions are the radio masts to the south, temporary earth bunding at Sutton's Farm and the built edge of St Albans to the south. Areas of fly-tipping at Symondshyde detract from the woods. Chalk Dell Fruit Farm off Marford Road has a strong visual impact with its ordered narrow plots contrasting with the surrounding arable areas.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There is a moderate network of rights of way, particularly to the east. The Hertfordshire Way passes through the area. Symondshyde Woods, run by Countryside Management Services provide informal recreation opportunities including parking and picnic facilities.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This area generally appears not to be valued for its distinctiveness, except for the wooded landscapes around Symonshyde (C).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

SAM: Wheathampstead earthwork (including Devil's Dyke and The Slad).

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>widespread</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>mature or young</b>
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	<b>fragmented</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>good</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>declining</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>moderate</b>
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	<b>high</b>

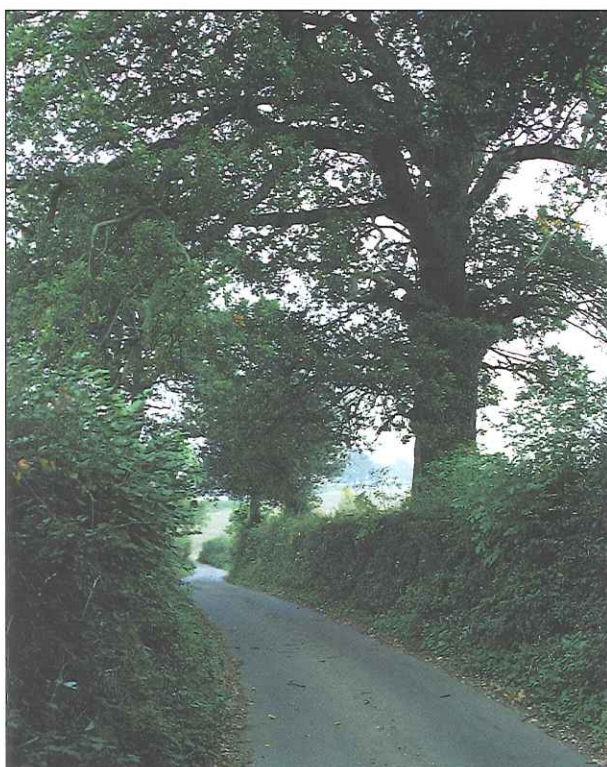
**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	<b>prominent</b>
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	<b>prominent</b>
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	<b>interrupted</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>frequent</b>

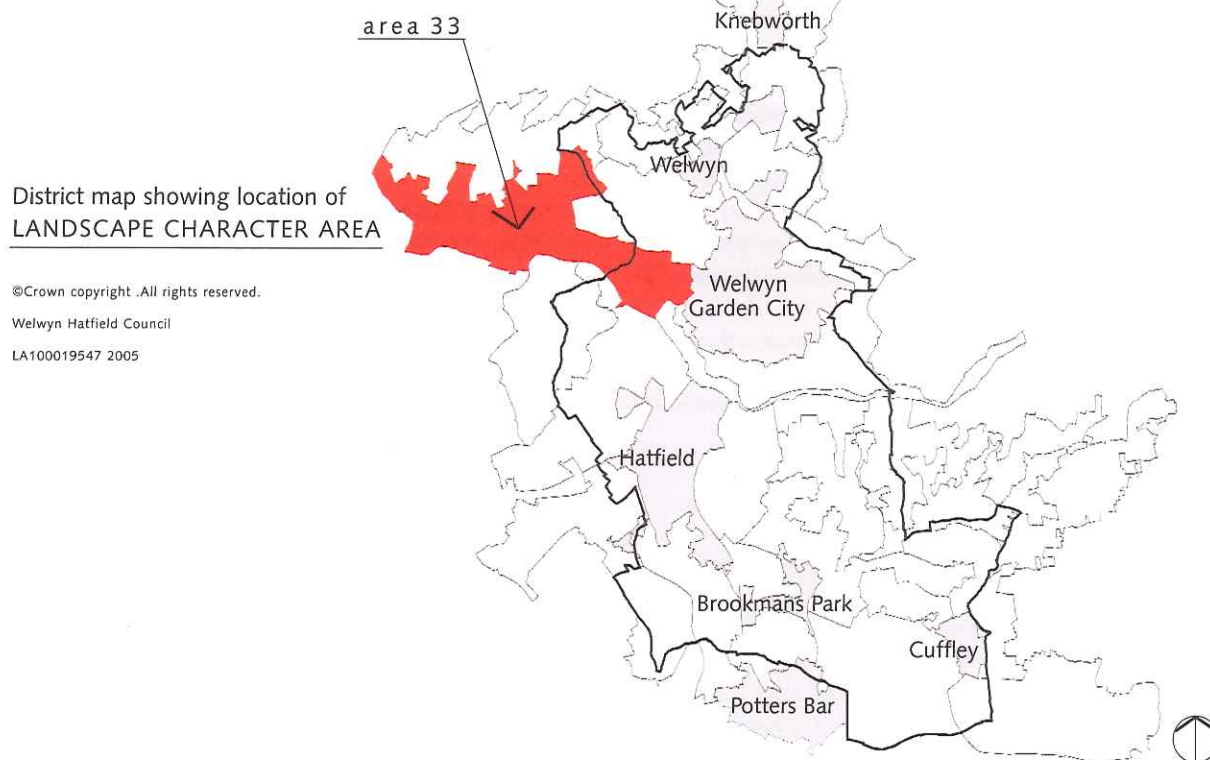
<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	<b>MODERATE</b>	Improve and reinforce	<b>Improve and conserve</b>	Conserve and restore
	<b>POOR</b>	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		<b>WEAK</b>	<b>MODERATE</b>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

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

- extend the network of woodlands to the south and west of the area, including plantations to screen the built edge of St Albans, reduce the impact of masts and mitigate the impact of mineral extraction
- within existing woodlands encourage the replacement of softwoods with indigenous native deciduous communities
- maintain and extend public access arrangements to woodlands with improvements to car park design and public safety
- promote the appropriate management of coppice woodland in order to maintain a rich ground flora and the distinction between different management systems, such as high forest, coppice, coppice-with-standards and wood pasture
- encourage heath habitats within woodlands by creating glades and maintaining open rides
- promote the expansion of woodland beyond ancient woodland boundaries, especially where this will help in creating habitat links
- promote management plans for Coleman Green to maintain a balance between wildlife and public access. Promote local initiatives for traditional management to create areas of acidic heath
- promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats
- 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 and/or rights of way and to include additional hedgerow trees
- promote crop diversification and the restoration of mixed livestock/arable farming where possible
- promote both the creation of new ponds and the retention/enhancement for wildlife of existing ponds
- promote the use of traditional hedged field enclosure in place of timber or wire fencing where land is converted to pasture
- protect the traditional pattern of local lanes, hedgebanks, verges and hedges as a local feature and wildlife resource
- maintain the peaceful qualities of the area and protect it from active recreation and development



• Lane near Coleman Green  
(HCC Landscape Unit)



#### LOCATION

This area follows the course of the River Lea between Harpenden in the west and Lemsford in the east.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

A marked valley form with a narrow river corridor. Arable cropping dominates on the slopes. A good number of estate woodlands creates a mature wooded feel to the east. Parklands are a notable feature making use of both slopes and the river valley. Conversion to golf courses has been successful, while there is visual impact from 20th-century settlements.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- narrow and meandering river corridor
- strong slopes to north and south, particularly west of Wheathampstead
- golf courses to the valley sides, including in parkland and woodland settings
- major historic park at Brocket Park
- discrete estate groupings of estate and plantation woodland
- Ayot Greenway footpath
- deep sunken lanes to valley sides exposing the chalk
- intrusive built edge of settlements

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- ford crossing Waterend House and cottage on Waterend Lane
- lime avenue from Brocket Park across Marlford Road (B653)
- former Blackbridge Tip mineral workings on Codicote Road
- Brocket Hall with veteran trees in parkland

Lea valley from David's Dingle •  
(J. Billingsley)



**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** The geology of the river corridor from Lemsford to Wheathampstead is glaciofluvial drift overlaid by deep well-drained fine loamy, coarse loamy and sandy soils, which are locally flinty and in places over gravel (Ludford association). There is a slight risk of water erosion. Upstream from Wheathampstead the geology is plateau drift over clay-with-flints. These soils are fine silty over clayey and fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils (Batcombe series). There are also some well-drained clayey soils over chalk and varying amounts of flint.

**Topography.** The narrow river corridor meanders through the area, typically only 50m wide. The slopes to the south are relatively consistent while to the north there are more marked undulations and a series of secondary valleys reaching up into the plateau landform.

**Degree of slope.** Less than 1 in 500 along river. Slopes vary between 1 in 12 and 1 in 18.

**Altitude range.** River corridor falls from 85m at Harpenden to 75m at Lemsford. Side slopes rise up to 120m.

**Hydrology.** The River Lea meanders along the narrow floodplain but is rarely very prominent. Upstream of the area the river quality is affected by outfalls from the Luton sewage works which cause eutrophication. However, the most diverse upper reaches of the Lea are close to Wheathampstead. The main areas of interest adjacent to the river are small areas of derelict land and wet/marshy grassland, the most important of these being Hyde Mill. To the east there is a medium to fast water flow over a gravel river bed which supports a range of coarse fish species including the barbel. The river is crossed by a ford of Roman origin at Waterend, and at Bocket Park it is dammed to create an artificial lake. There are few streams on the chalky side slopes, Marshall Heath Lane being the exception.

**Land cover and land use.** Arable cropping is the dominant land use. Secondary uses include pastoral near settlements, woodland, and recreation in the form of three golf courses. Within the narrow river corridor there is an almost continuous band of meadow pasture with grazing and groups of riparian trees, including poplars and willows. There are a number of parkland landscapes, mostly now used as golf courses, including those at Bocket Park and Aldwyckbury near Harpenden.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Woodlands are a mix of ancient woods, including Gray's Wood and Piggottshill Wood, and estate plantations, e.g. in association with Bocket Park. The main woodland type is oak/hornbeam. Other species include beech and ash, with pine and larch common in the plantation areas. At Lamer Park there are coniferous commercial stands on the lighter loamy soils, and at Blackbridge Tip heathy habitats are associated with the light soils, with gorse and bracken present.

There has been both loss and dereliction of hedgerows, particularly on the slopes north west of Wheathampstead, where field oaks are left stranded in a sea of crops. Where present, hedges are medium to tall and comprise hazel,

hornbeam, hawthorn, field maple, ash, elm and a number of distinctive holly standards. Semi-improved neutral to calcareous grasslands on the banks of the river provide good wildlife habitat and grazing. Water voles are present east of Wheathampstead, although they are in decline. Within Bocket Park there are areas of semi-natural alder along the river.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

The land around Wheathampstead was granted to Westminster Abbey by Edward the Confessor in 1060. The Abbey Manor controlled the open fields along the Lea. Within the vicinity there are numerous 'Ends' and 'Greens' which are hamlets created in the piecemeal clearances of the woodland reaching out from Wheathampstead, e.g. Mackerye End and Waterend.

The major house in the area is Bocket Hall, bought by Sir Matthew Lamb and rebuilt by James Paine between 1760 and 1775. The exterior is a simple large square of red brick. The grounds were laid out by Joseph Wood and contain a stable block, walled garden with octagonal greenhouses, entrance gates at Lemsford and a fine ornamental bridge and cascade over the dammed River Lea. The undulating grounds contain areas of wood pasture on the upper acidic slopes and many fine specimen trees in the parkland, including a cedar from the 18th century and many veteran oaks. Perimeter shelterbelts, still in good condition, contain the site and comprise sweet chestnut/oak, pine and beech. An impressive lime avenue extends south west from the house, which later became the home of two prime ministers, Lords Melbourne and Palmerstone.

**Field pattern.** The historic land-use pattern consists of a mix of pre-18th century organic, informal parkland and some co-axial enclosure along the line of the disused railway. This range still exists but there has been a move to field enlargement for arable production. Fields are large and irregular within the arable areas.

**Transport pattern.** Winding and often sunken lanes characterise the area with the underlying chalk and gravels partially exposed. Associated verges are generally narrow, apart from areas of former heath, e.g. Marshalls Heath, where there is secondary regeneration. Both the B653 and the Ayot Greenway follow the course of the river valley, on opposite sides, the latter following the line of a disused railway.

**Settlements and built form.** The historic settlement pattern is a sparse estate character. Traditional buildings are therefore scarce but varied and comprise good examples in brick, (e.g. the Jacobean manor house at Waterend), wattle and daub, knapped flint, and render. The exception to this pattern is Wheathampstead, which is an early nucleated village of Saxon origin. Wheathampstead church is an important landmark built in flint and with a narrow lead spire. Along the Lea valley there are also a number of 20th-century developments, many of which are poorly integrated visually, e.g. Lea Valley and parts of Wheathampstead.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

There are extensive views into the area from the adjacent plateau areas and in particular from the B653/Marford Road. Views along the valley are locally interrupted by belts of trees and small woodlands around the parks. The A1(M) (although outside the area) and the B653 create significant noise intrusion into Bocket Park and parts of the valley, but away from the roads this is a peaceful area.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This landscape type is frequent in the county. The distinctive feature is Bocket Park.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The major visual impacts are localised and comprise the built edge of the settlements including Wheathampstead, the Folly, Batford and Lea Valley. Locally intrusive features include the chainlink fencing to the golf course at Bocket Park and the poor and unwelcoming car park to the Blackbridge Tip on Codicote Road. The conversion of parklands and woodland areas to golf courses has generally been successful, with sympathetic new planting and management of the historic landscapes. The loss of field boundaries to arable has been more damaging.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There are two waymarked footpaths: the Upper Lea Valley Walk and the Ayot Greenway. The former partly follows the river corridor but also rises up onto the slopes. The latter follows the line of the disused railway and has a picnic site near Robinson's Wood. The remaining areas have moderate footpath provision including Bocket Park with two routes. Other facilities include Cherry Tree stables and angling.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

A variety of aspects are regarded as contributing to the value of this distinctive landscape, including the historical associations. The parkland and waterside landscapes are particularly valued (C).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

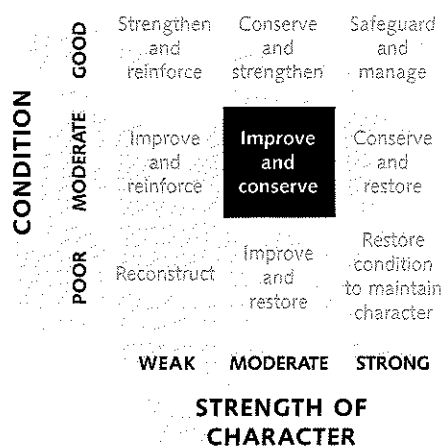
English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens*: Bocket Park (Grade II).

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>widespread</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>mature or young</b>
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	<b>fragmented</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>variable</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>low</b>

**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	<b>prominent</b>
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	<b>prominent</b>
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	<b>interrupted</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>frequent</b>

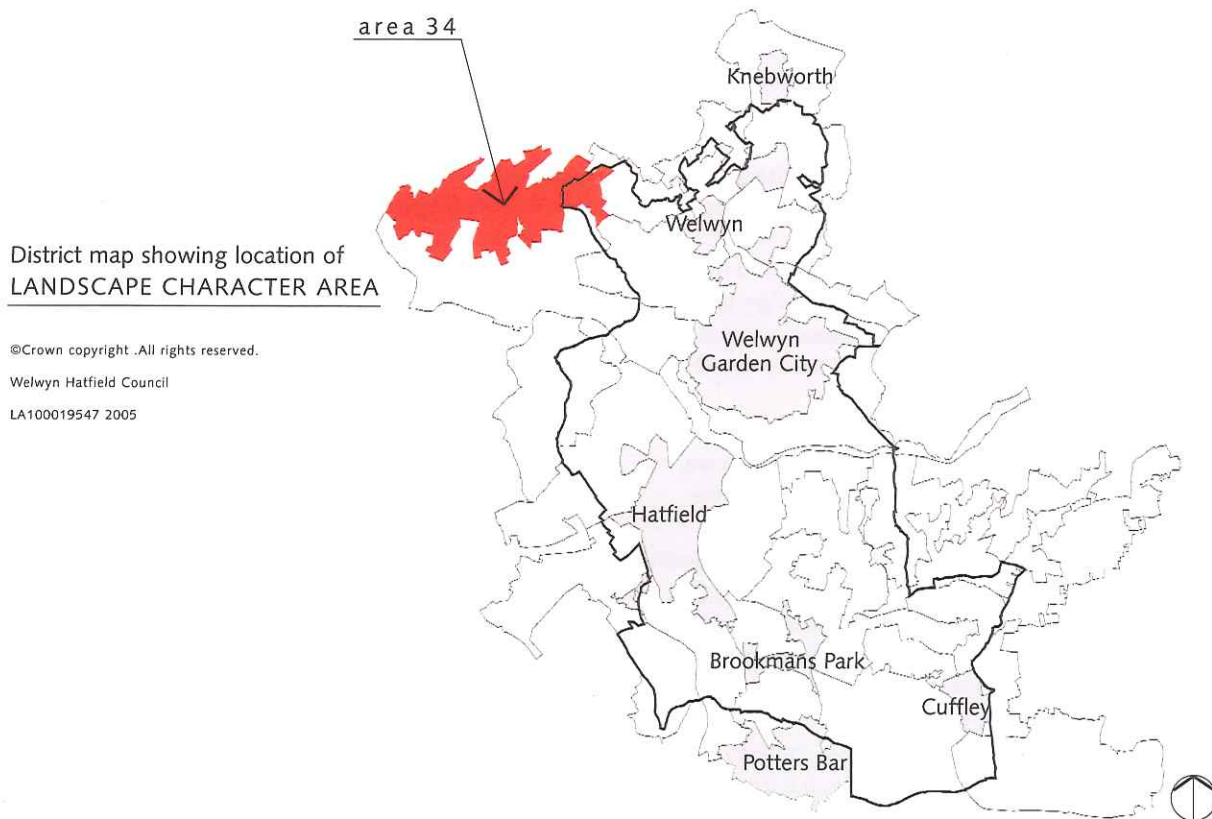


## STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE: IMPROVE AND CONSERVE

- improve the network of woods within the open arable landscape between Wheathampstead and Harpenden by planting on the tops of the slopes to emphasise the valley form and to screen the raw built edges of 20th-century development
- use ancient hedge and field boundaries to identify the most appropriate location for woodland restoration and expansion
- promote the appropriate management of woodland in order to maintain a rich ground flora and the distinction between different management systems, such as high forest and coppice-with-standards. Within Lamer Park maintain the distinctive pattern of coniferous plantations on the lighter soils
- provide a strategy for the enhanced restoration of Blackbridge Tip. Include enhanced parking, interpretation and links with the Ayot Greenway
- support the continued restoration and management of Bocket Park in conjunction with existing uses. Scheme to fully address landscape, historic and ecological issues. Ensure new planting is encouraged to maintain age diversity. Survey and manage parkland and veteran trees for biodiversity value. Ornamental species should only be used to replace damaged or over-mature specimens. Hard landscaping details such as steps, balustrades, pond copings, statuary and urns and boundary fencing should be conserved. Replacements should be in facsimile and in natural materials. Chainlink fencing to be discouraged
- resist the targeting of redundant or derelict pasture for development
- promote the re-introduction of permanent pasture and flooding regimes as normal agricultural practices along the Lea to increase landscape and habitat diversity
- promote the creation of buffer strips along watercourses, including the River Lea to prevent pesticide, herbicide and fertiliser run-off and to provide habitat for wildlife; encourage their linkage to eco-corridors within the wider landscape
- encourage the creation of wetland landscape features such as reed beds, ponds, scrapes, alders and pollarded willows
- improve the management of old meadows and pastures by ceasing fertiliser and herbicide application and introducing sensitive grassland management such as late hay cutting or low-density livestock grazing
- promote hedgerow restoration and creation in arable and pastoral areas 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 hedgerow restoration through locally appropriate measures including coppicing, laying and replanting/gapping-up
- support improved access along the river corridor with more links to the river itself
- ensure that the three golf courses in the area are designed and managed to respect their distinctive locations. Particular attention should be given to ensure earthwork proposals complement the natural landform patterns. A high proportion of the total area should be dedicated to and maintained as wildlife habitat, building upon established areas of wildlife interest already present
- maintain and develop the traditional pattern of roadside verges, sunken lanes and hedgebanks as a local feature and a wildlife resource



• Bridge and weir at Bocket Park (J. Billingsley)



#### LOCATION

This area lies between Harpenden in the west, Welwyn in the east and is north of the valley of the River Lea.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

An elevated plateau area with extensive arable fields. Despite recent landscape change there is a strong sense of continuity closer to the settlements and around some of the notable historic houses and parklands. The area has a tranquil and remote feel with good opportunities for informal recreation.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- elevated plateau area dominated by large arable fields
- smaller pastoral fields closer to villages
- linear and discrete woodlands, many ancient, scattered through area
- villages with strong vernacular architecture
- remote quiet area with few detracting features
- historic houses and modest areas of parkland
- areas of regenerated common

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Ayot St Lawrence ruined church
- Mackerye End and gardens
- Shaws Corner (National Trust)
- junipers on Gustard Wood Common golf course



Ayot St Lawrence ruined church •  
(J. Billingsley)

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** Soils are fine silty over clayey and fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging (Batcombe series). There are also some well-drained clayey soils over chalk and variable amounts of flint. The underlying geology is plateau drift and clay-with-flints. Locally, pockets of chalk have been recorded, e.g. at Priors Wood.

**Topography.** The plateau area extends for a distance of 6km from east to west with a series of secondary spurs pushing to the north and south. The plateau is almost flat.

**Degree of slope.** Minimal, typically less than 1 in 250 across the plateau.

**Altitude range.** 120-130m.

**Hydrology.** There are no significant streams. There are, however, a number of small ponds associated with the farms, houses or common areas.

**Land cover and land use.** The dominant land use is arable farming. Closer to the settlements there are smaller areas of pasture, mainly for horses, but also for sheep and goats. Woodlands are scattered, with concentrations around the settlements. Parkland is a more local feature of the land cover, e.g. Ayot Park and Lamer Park.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Woodlands are scattered and discrete and include both ancient woods, e.g. Priors Wood, Hall Wood and Marshall Wood, plantations and areas of regenerated common, e.g. Bower Heath. The main woodland type is oak/hornbeam, with some beech where the chalk is closer to the surface. Understorey species are mainly holly and hawthorn. On some of the ancient woodland boundaries enormous multi-stemmed beech pollards create imposing character trees. Within the woods there are natural colonies of native daffodils. Hedgerows are variable in condition and often gappy and occasionally infilled by fencing. Where present, hedges are medium in height and mixed in composition, including elm, hornbeam, field maple, ash, privet and holly. A particular feature of note is the number of holly standards that have been allowed to grow out. Also of particular note is Gustard Wood Common, an isolated unenclosed common currently managed by Mid Herts Golf Club. The acidic glacial gravel soils support acid grassland and a wide range of species, most notably juniper, including specimens over 6m tall.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Ayot St Lawrence dates from the late Saxon period. The most famous resident of the village was the playwright George Bernard Shaw, who lived at The New Rectory, now Shaw's Corner, for almost 50 years. From the small garden house overlooking the landscape he wrote many of his later works, including *Pygmalion* and *St Joan*. The property is now open to the public through the National Trust and each July a series of short plays are put on by the Shaw Society.

**Field pattern.** The historic agricultural landscape pattern consists of pre-18th century organic enclosure. This pattern is partly retained to the south, although field amalgamation has taken place in recent decades, particularly in the arable areas to the north. Field sizes are typically large and irregular in shape. Commons have either regenerated to secondary woodland or been used for recreation, e.g. Gustard Common.

**Transport pattern.** In the network of minor roads and lanes some are straight, e.g. The Slype, while the majority are narrow and winding.

**Settlements and built form.** This area has a dispersed and settled character with a number of mature country houses and farmhouses in traditional vernacular materials, including brick and timber frame.

- Ayot St Lawrence is a delightfully cohesive village with considerable variety in architectural styles, including timber frame, Tudor and diamond-paned windows. The largest house is Ayot House, a Queen Anne red brick building with a late-18th century parkland. A key feature of the park is New St Lawrence church, designed by Nicholas Revitt in 1778-89 in flamboyant neo-Classical style to face the west elevation of the house. The original parish church still stands as a picturesque ruin in the village, its complete demolition by Lionel Lyde having been halted by the Bishop of Lincoln.
- Mackerye End is a house of distinction, dating back to Tudor times. Its cupola bell tower is a local landmark. The essayist Charles Lamb described a nostalgic visit to the house that was one of his childhood haunts.

**OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

English Heritage *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens*.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

This area is only locally visible from surrounding areas due to the level and elevated landform. It is a generally coherent landscape with some areas unified and contained while others are downgraded by the impact of extensive arabilisation and with open and exposed views over the area. The area is particularly peaceful, a feature that drew George Bernard Shaw to the area.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This landscape type is frequent in the county. The most distinctive elements are the historic village of Ayot St Lawrence and Gustard Wood Common.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

There are very few built detracting features and a number of fine local buildings of note. The 20th-century Blackmore End is the largest settlement in the area but is visually well screened by perimeter tree belts.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There is a good network of local footpaths and bridleways to the south of the area. The quiet lanes also provide good opportunities for cycling and horse riding. Shaw's Corner is a popular destination in the summer.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This area contains landscapes that are very highly regarded for their distinctiveness and historical and literary associations, including the woods, fields, commons and villages at Ayot St Lawrence, Gustard Wood and Mackerye End/Marshalls Heath (B).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

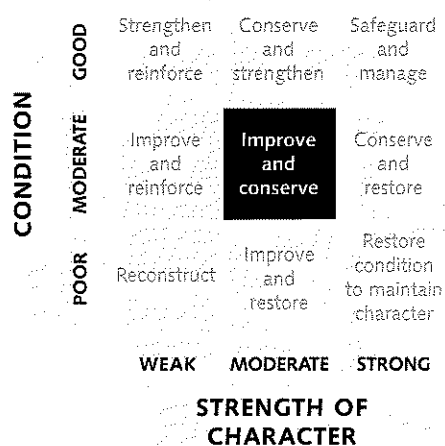
English Heritage Grade II listed: Ayot Park.

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>widespread</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>good</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>high</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>interrupted</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>frequent</b>



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

- extend the network of woodlands across the plateau. Promote the expansion of woodland beyond ancient woodland boundaries, especially where this will help in creating habitat links across arable areas
- maintain and extend the rights of way across the area
- promote the appropriate management of woodland in order to maintain a rich ground flora and the distinction between different management systems, such as high forest and coppice-with-standards
- promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats
- 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 and/or rights of way and to include additional hedgerow trees
- maintain the local pattern of hedgerows and species, including the presence of holly standards
- promote crop diversification and the restoration of mixed livestock/arable farming where possible
- support the continued management of Gustard Wood Common as both a golf course and an important acidic grassland
- promote the management of areas of acidic heath that have reverted to secondary woodland, e.g. Bower Heath. Maintain a balance between wildlife and public access and promote local initiatives for traditional management
- support the preparation of a restoration and management plans for the parkland landscapes including Ayot Park and Mackerye End, ensuring that schemes fully address landscape, historic and ecological issues. Ensure new planting is encouraged to maintain age diversity
- promote both the creation of new ponds and the retention/enhancement of existing ponds for wildlife
- promote the use of traditional hedged field enclosure for pasture in place of timber or wire fencing
- protect the traditional pattern of local lanes and the associated features, including hedgebanks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- maintain the tranquil qualities of the area while allowing access for visitors to focal points like Ayot St. Lawrence. Protect the area from further active recreational facilities and built development



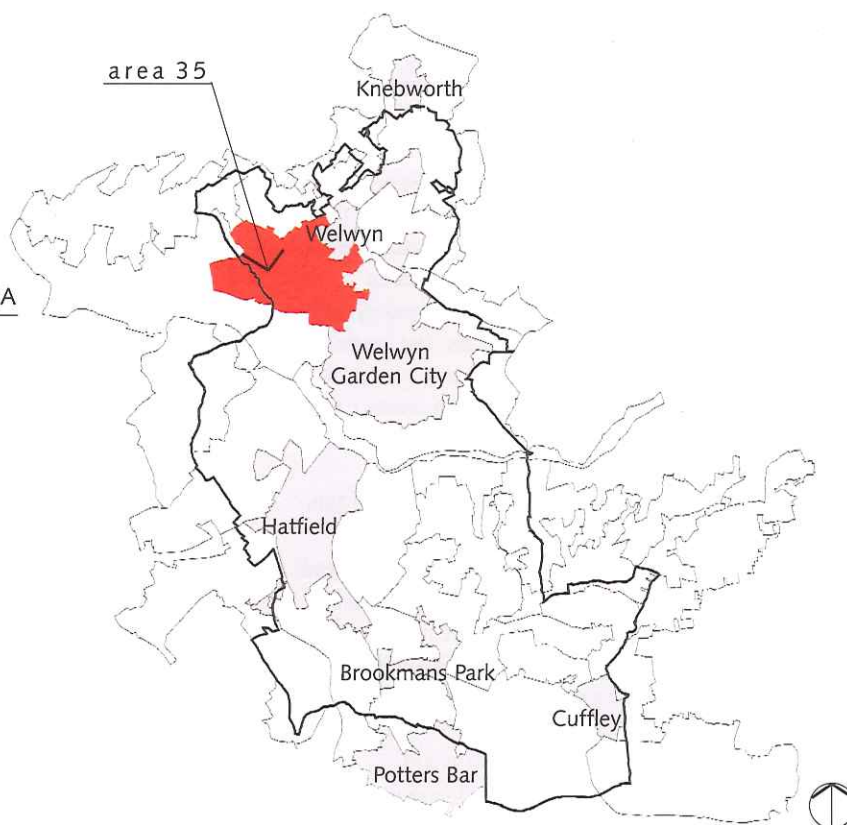
• Holly standards on The Slype  
(J. Billingsley)

District map showing location of  
**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA**

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Welwyn Hatfield Council

LA100019547 2005



#### LOCATION

This area lies north west of Welwyn Garden City, south of the River Mimram and south west of Welwyn.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

A modest plateau area and series of secondary valleys, with a high proportion of woodland enclosing historic villages and parklands. Arable cropping predominates between the woodlands and particularly as the slopes run down towards the Mimram valley in the north. There is a strong sense of historic continuity close to the settlements, woodlands and around historic houses and parklands. The area is disturbed physically and audibly by the A1(M).

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- elevated plateau area
- extensive woodlands and plantations
- arable fields predominate between woodlands and to the north
- small to medium pockets of pastoral fields close to and within villages
- villages with strong vernacular architecture
- historic houses and areas of wooded parkland, e.g. Sherrardspark

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Ayot Green village green with fine veteran oaks
- St Peters church.
- Ayot Greenway - former railway line, now footpath
- Ayot Mountfitchet gatehouse and pedestrian access

Ayot Green •  
(J. Billingsley)



**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** On the upstanding areas the soils are deep fine loamy over clayey and clayey with slowly permeable subsoils (Hornbeam 3 series). These overlie a chalky till. Calcareous subsoils exist in places, with some chalk pits. Locally at Sherrardspark Wood there is a mixture of soils including chalk and some acidic gravels.

**Topography.** The organic plateau area is approximately 3km east/west, and 1km north/south. The plateau undulates very gently, with a number of secondary valleys cutting into the plateau on the side slopes. The northern slopes to the Mimram are more pronounced.

**Degree of slope.** Less than 1 in 100 on the plateau. The side slopes are typically 1 in 10 but can be as steep as 1 in 6 in the secondary valleys.

**Altitude range.** Plateau areas range between 119-128m; slopes down to 70m at the Mimram.

**Hydrology.** There are a significant number of small ponds associated with the farms, houses or along the lanes, e.g. White Hill. A number of springs rise on the northern slopes, giving names to small woods such as Lincas Spring and Sanders Spring. There are a number of swallowholes in Sherrardspark Wood which are fed by woodland streams. A reservoir is also located in Sherrardspark Wood.

**Land cover and land use.** The dominant land use is arable farming. Closer to the settlements there are small areas of equestrian pasture. Woodlands are extensive. Open but private parkland areas exist around Ayot Montfitchet and Ayot Bury. Other parklands tend to be either heavily wooded, e.g. Sherrardspark Wood, or partly arable with isolated clumps of trees in the fields.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The main woodland mix is oak/hornbeam. Other species include ash, beech, lime and sycamore with an understorey of holly and hawthorn. Woodlands include a mix of ancient woods, e.g. Saul's Wood, Threegroves Wood and Rectory Wood, with others of later plantation origin. Dodswell Wood and Sherrardspark Wood contain strong patterns of radiating rides which are important habitats for invertebrates. At Dodswells conifer stands are present along with a mixed ground flora including bluebells and rock rose on the thin gravel soils over the underlying chalk.

- Sherrardspark Wood (SSSI and LNR) is located on the acidic gravel and sand Reading Beds, which support an extensive semi-natural sessile oak/hornbeam woodland. A large part of the woodland is dominated by mature stands of sessile oak high forest, which is a rare habitat in lowland England. Other species include downy birch, hairy birch, ash, cherry and field maple. The shrub layer is dominated by honeysuckle and holly. The underlying chalk comes to the surface in some locations, e.g. along the line of the disused railway, and here calcareous plant communities are supported, including spindle, dogwood and species of helleborine.

- Hedgerows are present along roads, yet seldom as field boundaries. They are medium in height and of mixed species, including elm, hawthorn, hazel, hornbeam and field maple, with some holly standards and boundary oaks. There are also a number of poplars within the villages.
- An area of particular note is Ayot Green which has some magnificent veteran oak trees and chestnuts.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

**Field pattern.** The historic agricultural landscape pattern comprised informal parkland, pre-18th century organic enclosure and parliamentary enclosure from the 18th century. This pattern is partially retained, but field amalgamation has taken place in recent decades, particularly in the arable areas to the north. Field sizes are medium on the plateau and larger on the northern slopes. There has been a shift from pasture to larger arable fields around the villages.

**Transport pattern.** The local pattern of winding minor lanes, some with hedgebanks, adds to the ancient feel of the landscape, e.g. Waterend Lane. The area is interrupted by the A1(M) corridor, which passes through in a substantial cutting.

**Settlements and built form.** There is a dispersed and settled character with small clusters of cottages and a few mature country houses and farmhouses in traditional vernacular materials, including brick and timber frame. The village of Ayot Green comprises a number of former estate workers' cottages set around a shady green. To the north east is Welwyn village.

- Houses include Ayot Bury (dating from 1672) and Ayot Place (1615), now 'Ayot Montfitchet'. The latter is a timber-framed farmhouse that includes a minstrels' gallery.
- Ayot St Peter's church is a distinctive gothic Victorian church (1874-75) in bold mixed brick patterns with a striking blue clock face.
- Sherrardspark Wood contains Digswell Place.

**OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

English Nature: SSSI notification.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The wooded skyline is widely visible from surrounding areas but the plateau areas themselves are relatively hidden. The village landscapes are contained, due to the level and elevated landform, while the northern slopes are open and visible from the Mimram valley. This is a locally coherent landscape but is often interrupted by large arable fields and the relentless drone of the A1(M).

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This landscape type is relatively frequent. The woodland at Sherrardspark is the most distinctive element.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The urban edge of Welwyn is prominent to the north east. East of the A1(M) the woodland is contained by the residential development of Welwyn Garden City along the majority of its perimeter. The A1(M) is mainly in cutting but locally visible.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There is an extensive network of local footpaths, particularly in Sherrardspark Wood where there is also an access land agreement. The local lanes also provide good opportunities for cycling and horse riding as does the Ayot Greenway, which follows the line of the old railway. There is a unique pedestrian access through the gatehouse at Ayot Montfitchet.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This area contains landscapes with significant value for their distinctiveness, including Ayot Green (C).

"There are a few big houses around, discreetly hidden among the trees such as Ayot Bury and Ayot Place. And there are trees, hundreds of them - firs, elms, sycamores, oaks, chestnuts and all but a very few clean of parasitic ivy", Eric Rayner, "Ayot St Lawrence", Hertfordshire Countryside, v20 No.85, p408-409, May 1966.

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

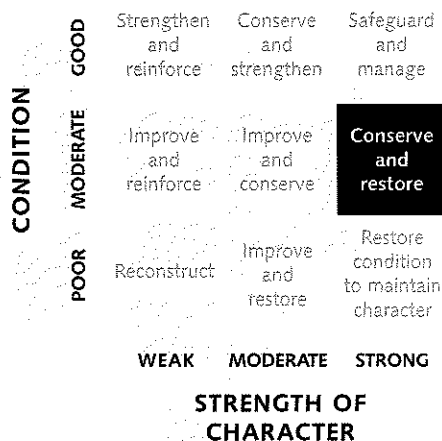
SSSI: Sherrardspark Wood.

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>localised</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>mature or young</b>
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	<b>widespread</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>good</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>prominent</b>
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	<b>prominent</b>
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	<b>interrupted</b>
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	<b>locally visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>contained</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>coherent</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>frequent</b>



**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING****CHANGE: CONSERVE AND RESTORE**

- create new woodlands to the north east to soften the visual impact of Welwyn
- within existing woodlands encourage the replacement of softwoods with indigenous native deciduous communities
- maintain and extend public access arrangements to woodlands and throughout the area. Support the maintenance of the Ayot Greenway and safe access routes through Sherrardspark Wood
- promote the appropriate management of woodland in order to maintain a rich ground flora and the distinction between different management systems, such as high forest, coppice, coppice-with-standards and wood pasture
- maintain glades and rides for both calcareous and acidic plant communities and associated wildlife
- promote the expansion of woodland beyond ancient woodland boundaries, especially where this will help in creating habitat links across arable areas
- support the survey and management of veteran trees throughout the area, including those on Ayot Green
- promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats
- 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 and/or rights of way and to include additional hedgerow trees
- promote crop diversification and the restoration of mixed livestock/arable farming where possible
- promote both the creation of new ponds and the retention/enhancement of existing ponds for wildlife
- promote the use of traditional hedged field enclosure for pasture in place of timber or wire fencing
- protect the traditional pattern of local lanes, hedgebanks, verges and hedges as a local feature and wildlife resource
- maintain the rural qualities of the area and protect it from active recreation and development
- promote a strategy for the maintenance and improvement of the woodland cover along the A1(M). Seek to provide measures to reduce noise intrusion into the area from the road



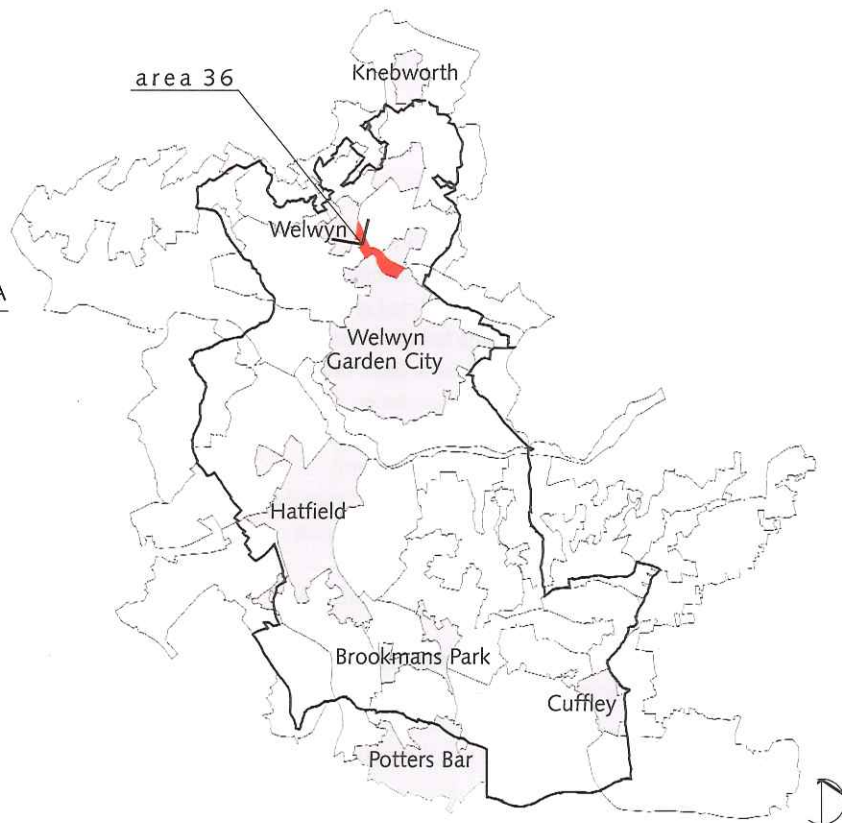
• Sherrardspark Wood  
(HCC Landscape Unit)

### District map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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#### LOCATION

The Mimram valley between Digswell Water and Welwyn

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

River valley intertwined with modern road network and partly confined by housing development. Similar in character to the river valley to the east, but with stronger urban influence

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- wetland vegetation screens river from view, so not major feature within the landscape
- parkland aspects, especially around Lockleys school (waterfall)

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Digswell Viaduct
- impact of roads and housing



Mimram Valley aerial view •  
from Digswell Viaduct  
(HCC Landscape Unit)

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** Stoneless mainly calcareous clay soils over river alluvium (Thames series)

**Topography.** Shallow south-facing slope of river valley

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 7 on steepest valley slopes, with as fall of 1 in 1500 along this reach of the river

**Altitude range.** 61m to 72m

**Hydrology.** The Mimram is a relatively fast-flowing, gravel-bedded chalk stream within a mainly rural catchment. The water quality is suitable for species such as trout and grayling and the dominant species is the brown trout, although sections upstream of Digswell have been dry in recent years. In some sections terrestrial vegetation has taken over from aquatic, but channel improvements have been carried out at Digswell and Whitwell to prevent impoundment and remove accumulated silt. The riverbanks are mostly less than 1m high, with good shallow margins and varied marginal flora.

**Land cover and land use.** Mainly pastoral, with extensive wetland vegetation.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Mainly willow and alder, which make a significant contribution to the local landscape. There is some classic riverside pasture with limited improvement. The more interesting areas for wildlife are the riverside margins and damp areas.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

The Digswell Viaduct is apparent at the eastern end of this area, as is the 17.5 acres of ornamental parkland now run by a local society. It comprises woodland and ornamental trees around a small lake, made in 1810 as part of Digswell House Park. It is marred by the noise of the nearby A1000 and A1(M). The western section of this area lies within the parkland around what is now Lockleys School.

**Field pattern.** There is no apparent field pattern in this area, due to current and historic land use as amenity, pasture and parkland.

**Transport pattern.** The river valley in this area is contained by the road network, with the A1000 weaving across the river and a continuation of the B1000 forming a boundary to Digswell village. The river disappears beneath the A1(M) but is a notable feature within old Welwyn village.

**Settlements and built form.** This section of the river valley is confined by the southern edge of Digswell and mid-20th century development within Digswell Park, now part of the development of Welwyn Garden City. Digswell Viaduct was built in the late 1840s to carry the new railway, out of bricks manufactured on site. It is a Grade II listed structure 450m long and 25m high, with 40 arches. Originally built of red brick, it was refaced with blue engineering bricks in 1935.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The overall parkland character of this area has been masked by 20th-century development, in particular the road network, which has destroyed its former tranquillity and adds constant noise to the intermittent rush of trains over Digswell Viaduct. It is a rather confined area, with a sense of offering a retreat from its urban surroundings.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** There are several unusual features in this area. Digswell Viaduct is 'probably the most widely recognisable structure in the county' (Landscape Strategy Vol.1)

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Some people find the Digswell viaduct is gloomy and oppressive, as well as impressive, but is matched for impact by the road network around it.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Footpath from Digswell, otherwise quite inaccessible, especially the western section. There is unrestricted access to the parkland around Digswell Lake for members of the Digswell Lake Society.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This area includes some valued elements (D).

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>localised</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>mixed</b>
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	<b>fragmented</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>not obvious</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>declining</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>high</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>interrupted/relic</b>
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	<b>locally visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>confined</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>incoherent</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>unusual</b>

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	<b>MODERATE</b>	<b>Improve and reinforce</b>	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>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		

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

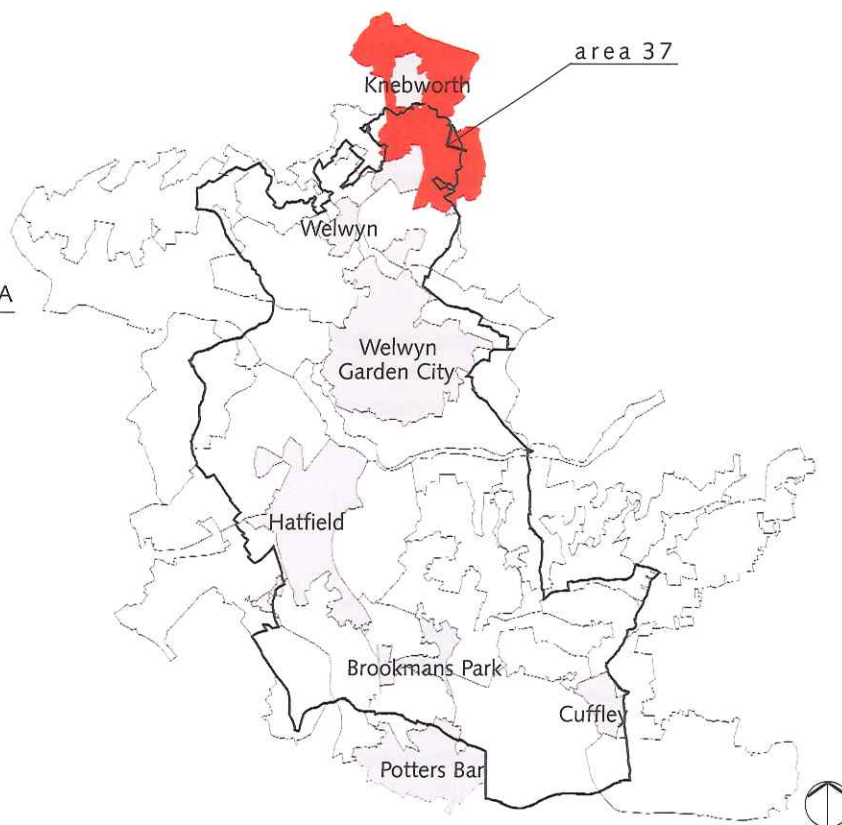
- promote the value of biodiversity and the use of locally native species
- promote the maintenance of semi-natural habitats along the river, with buffer zones where necessary to prevent agricultural run-off
- encourage the retention of ditches running into the river
- promote the maintenance of pasture within the river valley
- promote the planting of trees as a buffer between rural and urban zones in this area, to provide visual and noise screening and to absorb pollution from road traffic.
- encourage the use of native species in rural areas and the retention of ornamental and semi-ornamental species for urban situations
- promote an increase in public access to the river, especially from the urban areas
- ensure that the value of veteran trees and dead wood is fully recognised and that appropriate management techniques are implemented and maintained
- encourage a diversification of mowing regimes in areas of open space, to increase biodiversity, create visual interest and reduce maintenance costs
- manage ponds and lakes so as to avoid enriching habitats with debris
- avoid damage to riverbanks and over-widening of the open water channel as a result of agricultural or other practices
- do not clear vegetation from river bank, but retain shrubby vegetation, where there is no conflict with public rights of way, for perching and nesting.
- should a second viaduct be constructed near the existing Digswell Viaduct, care should be taken to ensure that the design of the new structure is informed by the proximity and style of the existing. Should lighting of either structure be considered, care should be taken to ensure that bat colonies are not disturbed. Consideration could be given to low-UV lighting to highlight this notable local landmark.



• Digswell Viaduct with grazing meadow (HCC Landscape Unit)

District map showing location of  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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#### LOCATION

North-west and west-facing slope south of Stevenage, between the Datchworth plateau and the linear urban development associated with the A1(M) between Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Undulating and gently sloping, west-facing, open arable farmland. An ancient landscape with modern settlements. Large blocks of woodland (Harmergreen Wood) screen views of some of the urban development and block views to the south. This is very much an 'in between' area, still rural but exhibiting a stronger urban influence than the adjoining areas to the east and south.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- sloping intermediate area with extensive views up to Datchworth plateau
- farms and villages linking the plateau settlements to the urban edges - a curving link between Knebworth and Digswell
- large-scale open arable farmland, lacking hedges
- large area of woodland and a few scattered blocks
- small semicircular greens along winding lanes and sunken ways

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- sinuous open lanes, some very narrow and steeply banked
- extensive views towards Stevenage
- proximity of urban settlements (Oaklands, Knebworth)
- veteran hornbeams west of Burnham Green

Hempstall Spinney •  
hornbeam coppice woodland  
(P. Shears)



**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** Deep fine loam and clay over slowly permeable clay subsoils, over plateau drift (Hornbeam 3 series). Superficial deposits of clay-with-flints at Woolmer Green.

**Topography.** Undulating west-facing slope with local variations - slight valley formation running north-south and now containing a railway, often in tunnel.

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 50

**Altitude range.** 85m to 120m

**Hydrology.** There is little water in this area; one ditch drains westwards to Hempstall Spinney but the local topography discourages any northwards drainage into Stevenage Brook. There are some springs. Mardleybury Pond is one of the few waterbodies in this area.

**Land cover and land use.** Open arable farmland and woodland

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Although the cropped fields generally lack hedges, the woodlands are of interest, being generally oak/hornbeam with holly. Hempstall Spinney is coppiced hornbeam with hornbeam standards, with a ground flora of bluebells and mixed hornbeam and holly around the perimeter. Nearby lanes lie between steep hedgebanks supporting a wide range of chalk-loving wildflowers. Remnants of old commons (Barns Green) and isolated greens with old grasslands (Sedge Green) are typical of the area, with remnant pasture and little grazing greens as semi-circular verge details along the lanes. To the west of Burnham Green there are several veteran hornbeams.

**HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Pevsner refers to a site at Six Hills, south of Stevenage, with Roman barrows. This area of arable farmland with associated farm buildings and of hamlets developed as outliers of the plateau or valley settlements and enlarged during the 20th century.

**Field pattern.** Most of the former field pattern has been lost as fields have been enlarged during arable intensification.

**Transport pattern.** Within this area there is a strong network of winding lanes linking the villages to the larger plateau settlements. The B197 runs parallel to the railway on the western edge, between Mardley Heath and Knebworth, through Woolmer Green. The Roman road between Welwyn and Watton has dwindled here to a lane and a footpath.

**Settlements and built form.** Datchworth, Woolmer and Harmer Greens are the settlements in this area and the 'green' suffix denotes their evolution as outliers of larger settlements.

- Woolmer Green benefits from natural springs, around which the manor of Mardley Bury developed. Its population was swelled by railway workers after 1851 and it has a more urban character than most of the villages in this part of Hertfordshire.
- Datchworth Green consists of 19th and 20th-century cottages around an extensive green, but is a considerably older settlement than this suggests.
- Harmer Green is similar in character to Burnham Green, on the plateau, but changes noticeably where it becomes Digswell. The former is small scale, domestic and rural, while the latter is gradually larger in scale, still in woodland but with a much denser, more urban character, linking with Welwyn.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The variable topography and extensive woodland in this area serve to block long-distance views within and outside this area, adding to its character as an 'in between' area, remote yet close to the urban centres along the A1(M), rural yet influenced by the proximity of the 20th-century developments around Welwyn. There is a certain uneasiness to this area, a conflict between old and new.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** Hempstall Spinney is a good example of hornbeam coppice with standards. The UK contains nearly 25% of the world total of bluebell woods, of which this is a good example. The impact of housing on the rural landscape is very typical of the county.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Much of the urban impact of the A1(M) and associated development is screened in this area by topography and woodland. Despite this there is an underlying sense of the encroachment of urban influence.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Noted recreational land uses: none

There are footpath links between Harmer Green and Oaklands, but little elsewhere.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

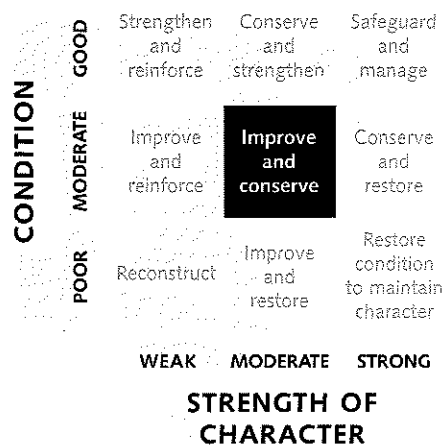
This area is valued as a distinctive landscape (C).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS****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>not obvious</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>declining</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>high</b>
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	<b>low</b>

**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	<b>prominent</b>
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	<b>prominent</b>
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	<b>interrupted</b>
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	<b>concealed</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>contained</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>incoherent</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>unusual</b>



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

- integration of new development within the historic landscape fabric is a priority in this area. The use of woodland planting to screen new/recent development as well as to create ecological corridors linking to existing woods should be carefully considered
- any proposed development in this area should respect its character and reflect current land use.
- encourage landowners and tenant farmers to reinstate historic hedges and maintain relic hedges where appropriate, preferably alongside public rights of way and significant field boundaries rather than along roadsides. The open views within this area are part of its distinctiveness.
- encourage landowners and tenant farmers to create and manage verges for their biodiversity and wildlife interest. Similarly, where the reinstatement of former hedges is held to be inappropriate, consideration could be given to the creation of beetle banks, nature conservation headlands and other biodiversity initiatives. Advice and possible grant aid may be available.
- proposals for new woodland planting should focus on existing woodlands with a view to creating buffer zones around them and links to other woodlands or areas of nature conservation interest (grasslands, etc.). All woodland planting should be of native species of local provenance, to reinforce local distinctiveness.



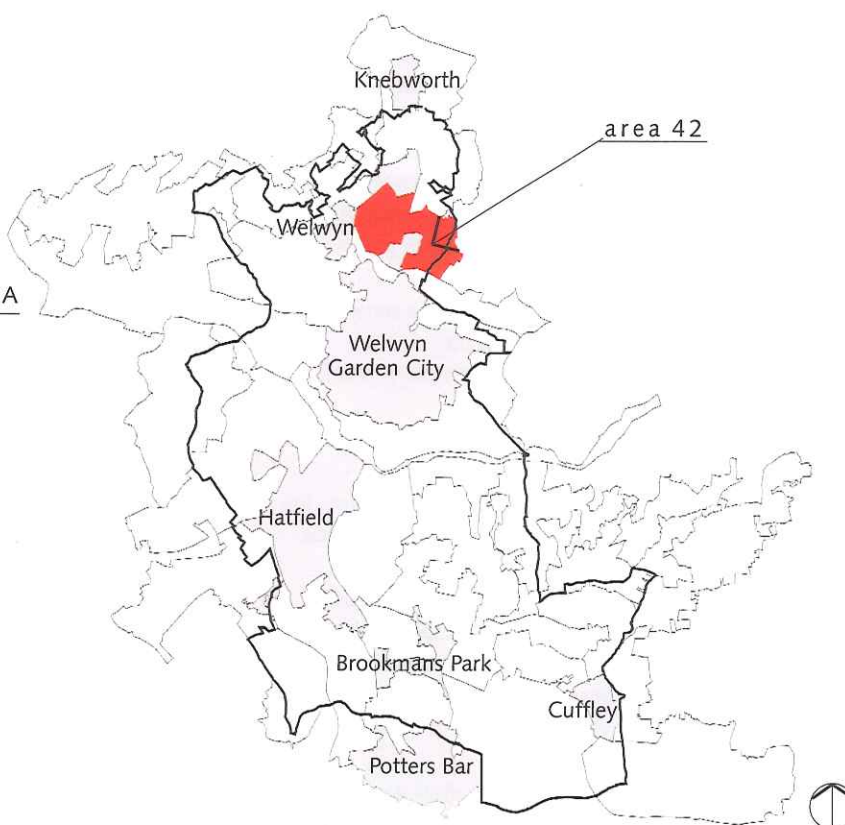
- Datchworth Green Post Office historic building reflecting age of settlement (P. Shears)

District map showing location of  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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LA100019547 2005



#### LOCATION

A rectangle bounded by the A1(M) to the west, Oaklands and the Datchworth plateau to the north, the B1000 to the south and Bramfield to the east. It is divided into three sub-areas: Lockley estate farmland, Dawley Wood farmland and Tewin village.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

This area is a south-facing, strongly undulating rural slope consisting of mixed arable farmland and woodland, readily distinguishable from the surrounding urban and suburban settlements associated with Welwyn. The Lockley estate farmland and Dawley Wood farmland share the settlement of Digswell as a boundary, while Dawley Wood and Tewin share the Mimram valley parkland boundary. Although each sub-area has distinguishing characteristics, they are unified by their over-riding shared physiographic characteristics. Lockleys has a strong pattern of arable farmland and woodland blocks, with some parkland features around the farm on its summit and many mature oaks. Dawley Wood farmland is less unified by management and has south-facing views over the Mimram to the Haldens part of Welwyn Garden City, so that it is less remote than Lockleys. Tewin village's views to the south are filtered by vegetation along the river and around the edge of the Panshanger part of Welwyn Garden City. The village is a strong feature within the arable farmland around it, contained by woodland on three sides.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- strong pattern of woodland and arable farmland on a strongly undulating canvas
- three enclosed, discrete areas on a south-facing slope
- extensively wooded
- well managed farmland partly fringed by urban development
- retains some tranquillity, especially to the east, despite constant motorway and frequent railway noise

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- mature parkland oaks within Lockleys

View of Lockleys Farm from Lockleys Wood (P. Shears) •



**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** The eastern part of this area, around Tewin, consists of deep fine loamy soils over clay, with slowly permeable subsoils over plateau drift (Hornbeam 2 series). The Lockleys estate and farmland east of Digswell lie on soils of the Marlow series, being well-drained loams and clays over plateau and river-terrace drift. Chalk is evident on the surface at Dawley Warren, with gravel present on the minor ridges.

**Topography.** South-facing undulating slope; a series of minor parallel dry valleys into the Mimram.

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 20 (Lockley and Dawley); 1 in 35 (Tewin).

**Altitude range.** 65m to 122m (Lockley and Dawley); 55m to 115m (Tewin).

**Hydrology.** The River Mimram (with the A1000) forms the southern boundary of this area. There appears to be little drainage into it from these slopes.

**Land cover and land use.** This area is a mix of arable farmland and woodland, with some mixed farmland in the Dawley sub-area, with pasture around the farmhouses. Lockleys has a unified estate character and limited parkland around the house. Tewin village shares some characteristics with the plateau settlements above.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Extensive broadleaf woodland cover on the gravel interfluvies, consisting of hornbeam coppice with occasional sweet chestnut standard, holly, silver birch, ash and oak, with bluebells and dog's mercury in the understorey, as well as chalk flora in some places. There are some conifers within Dawley Plantation and an orchard/nature reserve at Tewin. The whole area generally lacks hedges and verges, although there are some wet ditches and individual relic hedgerow oaks (mature). At Lockleys there are also mature parkland oaks, avenues of mature oaks and some grassland. Dawley Warren, now within Dawley Wood, was formerly a firing range where surface chalk was used to form firing platforms. It is now rough ground with chalk flora.

**HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

This is a distinctive planned landscape which bears the traces of man's influence over many centuries. On the south-western edge of Lockleys the remains of a Roman bath house has been preserved beneath the A1(M), and a Roman villa have been excavated nearby. Both are now Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The earliest record of a deer park at Lockleys is 1766 and it was a warren (for breeding rabbits) until the early 19th century. It lost some coherence from later enclosure. The village of Tewin is ancient but strongly influenced by the Cowper family, who owned the Panshanger estate and much of this farmland from 1720 to 1953. The Cowper estates in Tewin and Digswell were sold in 1919 to pay death duties and were subsequently developed as settlements. Tewin also has a Grade II listed house by Cecil Kemp, built in 1936.

**Field pattern.** Within the farmland the field pattern is regular and medium to large in scale, while the woodlands provide a consistent geometric pattern.

**Transport pattern.** Although the area is bounded by a strong road and railway transport network (the A1(M) and the A1000), within it there are few roads, all of them linking Tewin to other areas. The main access within this area is via footpaths.

**Settlements and built form.**

- Tewin is a scattered village of 16th to 20th-century houses around a pleasant elongated green. Its church is partly 11th century and it has a yellow brick school dating from 1823. Visual continuity is derived from the unified style and colour of the 19th-century estate cottages within and beyond the settlement. Yellow brick estate dwellings and red brick farmhouses often bear the Cowper family crest and their date of construction.
- Lockleys is a fine brick house of 1717, now part of Sherrardswood School. It is described thus in *The Mystery of George Edward Dering*: 'a beautiful house in a beautiful setting, and it still looks like "an enchanted castle" as you come upon it through the trees'. (*Hertfordshire Countryside*, Vol. 22, No. 102, October 1967). The plan of an important Roman villa in its grounds is marked out in turf and brick.

**OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

Pevsner, N., rev. Cherry, B., *Hertfordshire*, Penguin (2000).

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

From outside, this area is concealed by development and transport and enclosed by vegetation. Access is difficult, with few roads within the area, and it appears to be a very contained landscape. Within the area there are extensive southerly views, generally limited to east, west and north by woodland. It is of a medium scale, with a match between the scale of the woodlands and the field pattern which contributes to its visual unity. Dawley Wood is somewhat smaller in scale than the other sub-areas. Its apparent remoteness is belied by the lack of tranquillity due to the ever-present road traffic noise and occasional train over the viaduct. This impact diminishes further east within the area, but is never entirely absent.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** The evident historic continuity of this area is quite unusual. The Roman villa at Lockleys is currently unique.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

There is a widespread visual impact within the area from built development and the transport corridor in the west. Although the A1(M) is not visible, there is a permanent noise impact. There are extensive views southwards over Welwyn and Digswell, although Oaklands and the plateau villages are well screened. It is likely that there has been some loss of parkland around Lockleys to arable cultivation, but the relic hedgerow oaks remain.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There are local footpaths through the arable areas and the woodland. They tend to be narrow and unsurfaced.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

The landscape around Tewin is regarded as distinctive and within the village Tewin Orchard is one particular place that is highlighted (C). Some aspects of the Dawley landscape are valued for their distinctiveness (D). The Lockleys landscape includes some valued and distinctive aspects (D).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS****CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>insignificant</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>mixed</b>
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	<b>fragmented</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>good</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>interrupted</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>high</b>
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	<b>low</b>

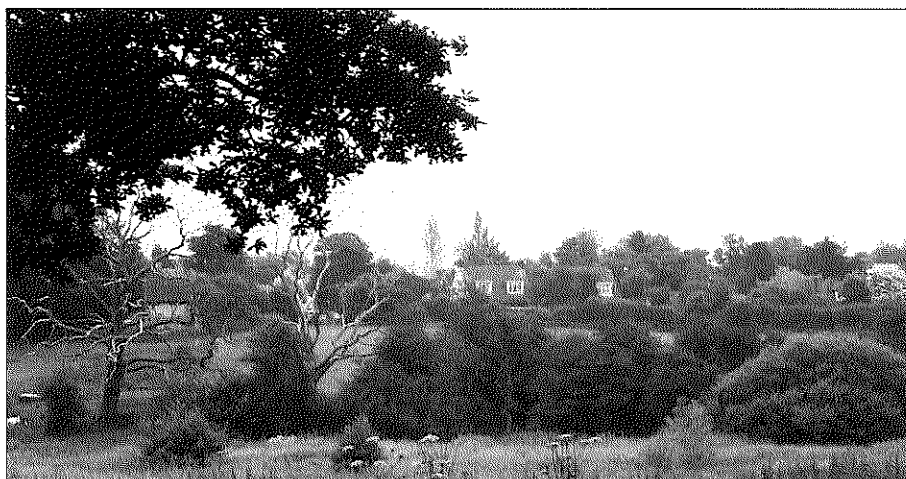
**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	<b>prominent</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>widely visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>partial</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>unified</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>unusual</b>

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	<b>Conserve and strengthen</b>	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>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING  
CHANGE: CONSERVE AND STRENGTHEN**

- encourage landowners to conserve veteran trees and to replant as necessary. Ensure that information on grant aid and advice is readily available
- encourage the retention of mixed farming around farm buildings, particularly where this cannot be linked to eg ESA payments
- ensure that further development of the surrounding settlements is adequately screened by vegetation so as not to diminish the local distinctiveness of this area
- ensure that any development within the Tewin envelope respects the existing settlement pattern and form and is adequately screened from within the area
- consider the implications for views from this area when assessing development proposals on the northern edge of Welwyn
- encourage landowners to safeguard existing hedges, increase hedged field boundaries, create permanent grass strips around field margins and prevent spray drift, using financial incentives as available
- disseminate information on the importance of chalk grassland, to encourage its retention in this area
- encourage natural regeneration or the planting of native trees of local provenance when plantations are being replanted
- protect ancient woodland by planting buffer zones of native species around them, where possible respecting historic woodland boundaries and linking discrete woods to provide ecological corridors
- build on existing local knowledge of ancient hedgerows to encourage their retention and new planting where appropriate, especially around settlements



• Edge of Digswell village  
from south west  
(P. Shears)

### District showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Welwyn Hatfield Council

LA100019547 2005



### LOCATION

Variable band on south-facing slope of Mimram valley between Digswell Water and the western edge of the Panshanger estate, west of Hertford. It is bounded to the south by the A414 and B1000 and includes part of the course of the river Mimram.

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

A consistent parkland character overlies any change in topography throughout this sinuous ribbon of floodplain pasture and woodland. Twentieth-century development and the busy transport network mask this character in some places.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- narrow ribbon of floodplain pasture and woodland
- isolated farms and mills along length and at foot of slope
- dense boundary parkland generally precludes any views in
- limited diversification to commercial activity in river valley outside parklands
- pasture in river valley with some arable. Arable on gentle valley slopes
- abrupt transition to urban edge

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- parkland boundary planting
- river Mimram
- fish ponds and associated evergreen vegetation at Tewin Bury
- veteran sweet chestnut at Tewin Water
- Digswell Viaduct at western end
- pollarded hornbeam on hillside at Marden Hill

Tewin Meadows bridge •  
(HCC Landscape Unit)



**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** Deep, well-drained fine loamy and sandy soils, locally flinty, over glaciofluvial drift (Ludford series).

**Topography.** River floodplain and gentle south-facing valley slopes.

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 40 (max).

**Altitude range.** 44m to 76m.

**Hydrology.** The Mimram is a relatively fast-flowing, gravel bedded chalk stream with a wide range of species and extensive marginal growth. It is one of the most natural rivers in the county, being least affected by abstraction and discharges, and is regarded by English Nature as the best chalk stream in East Anglia/Midlands. Fed by chalk springs, it flows mainly through parkland and agricultural land. Its middle reaches flow through several important wetland habitat complexes and the river is designated 'salmonid', indicating its suitability for trout and grayling.

**Land cover and land use.** This area consists of parkland, with a mix of pasture and wetland vegetation in the floodplain and arable and broadleaf woodland on the valley slopes. The primary land use is arable wooded farmland, while the secondary land uses include commercial ventures and pasture (cattle in parkland). There is evidence of significant farm diversification in ventures within this area, such as a change from farming to a hotel/conference centre and from watercress to fish farming.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The woodland cover is very extensive, especially around the perimeter of the individual parklands, and the hornbeam at Marden Hill includes parkland pollards. Within the floodplain the dominant species is willow with alder; elsewhere the main mature species are hornbeam, oak and sweet chestnut. There are several notable veteran sweet chestnut at Tewin Water. In addition there are many mixed and variable young plantings, including conifers, generally associated with mineral extraction screening but in some instances likely to be relic game coverts. A series of alluvial meadows and marshes bordering the Mimram at Tewinbury is designated SSSI. It consists of mixed glyceria and reed swamp with associated carr developed in old cressbed lagoons; alder carr with rich ground flora; and neutral grassland (at Archers Green) with associated conservation species of green-winged orchid, snakeshead fritillary and corncrake. This is one of the most important species-rich river valley complexes in Hertfordshire. Rare invertebrates, otters and many bird species can be found in this area.

**HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

The historic pattern of this area is still apparent and widespread. It should be noted that the history of this area has been one of destruction and renewal since at least the mid-18th century, when the Earls Cowper bought up the notable houses around Tewin and demolished them, before building Panshanger. The modern road pattern tends to follow the historic park boundaries to north and south and there are no accessible internal roads or tracks within the parklands.

- Tewin Water was the home of the Beit family (diamond magnates, philanthropists and associated with Cecil Rhodes) during the 19th and early 20th century. It is now a school within the remains of a late 18th-century landscape park of some 30ha, now affected by institutional development.. There was a deer park here in 1766. Repton was consulted on the grounds and produced a Red Book in 1799. His plan related to his general scheme for landscaping the Mimram valley and the Panshanger landscape. The river was dammed below the house to create a lake and woodland was planted along the northern shore.

- Marden Hill: significant gardens show on all maps from 1766 onwards.

**Field pattern.** Field boundaries are either estate fencing or overgrown hedgerows, usually of oak or ash. Boundaries are more often oak or ash copses or plantation, to screen views in, frequently mature or over-mature. Field sizes vary from small (pasture) to medium (arable).

**Transport pattern.** The boundaries of the parklands are defined by the road network, with the B1000 marking the southern boundary of the area against the outskirts of Welwyn Garden City. Digswell Viaduct, at the western end of this area, marks the advent of the railway in the 19th century and is 'sometimes called one of the seven wonders of Hertfordshire' (*Hertfordshire Countryside*, Vol. 19, No.77, p.229).

**Settlements and built form.** There are no settlements within this area, which is characterised by country houses and isolated farms. Eighteenth-century red brick former stables can be found at Marden Hill Farm, together with a 16th-century weatherboarded barn and octagonal brick stockhouse. At Tewin Water Farm there is a brick lodge of oval plan, with a rustic portico of four tree-trunk columns.

- Marden Hill was built in 1790-94 as a plain block of yellow brick. In 1819 Sir John Soane added a four-column porch.
- Tewin Water is described in Pevsner as 'a new and handsome house' in 1819, having been rebuilt in 1798 in neo-Greek style with a west front of seven bays
- The Digswell Viaduct was constructed of bricks that were fired on site. It is 1,560 feet long and nearly 100 feet high.

**OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

Pevsner, N., rev. Cherry, B., *Hertfordshire*, Penguin (2000).  
English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens*.  
*Biodiversity Action Plan for Hertfordshire*, pp. 54/55.  
English Nature SSSI notification.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

From outside, this area is largely concealed by boundary woodlands, with very limited views from the A414. Views within the area are very limited, due to lack of access, and are generally framed by wetland vegetation. The scale of the landscape elements is small to medium and it has a very contained, coherent character. It is not tranquil, with constant distant noise from road traffic.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** Unusual area for its scale and the unity and completeness of the focus of the parkland on the river. This stretch of the Mimram has been highly regarded for its scenic beauty since at least the end of the 18th century (see below). The SSSI contains some county rarities.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Although new roads have in general followed old park boundaries, there is still a strong local impact from road transport and built development, such as farm diversification within the floodplain. The impact of land-use change within the area is less palpable. There has been some change from pasture or parkland to arable

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Noted recreational land uses: fishing (signs for).

Waymarked routes and footpaths are localised rather than widespread and there is no access to the private parklands.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This is a distinctive and valued valley landscape(C).

*'The whole of the beautiful valley from Welwin (sic) to Hertford, including Digswell, Tewin Water, Panshanger and Cole Green, belonging to the same noble family...while each possesses its independent privacy and seclusion, their united woods and lawns will by extending through the whole valley, enrich the general face of the county.'* Repton in his Red Book of suggested improvements to Tewin Water for Henry Cowper, 1799

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

The lower Mimram is recognised as a High Biodiversity Area (HBA) for its wetlands and woodlands.

SSSI: Tewinbury.

Tewin Water is Grade II listed in the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

**CONDITION**

Land cover change:	insignificant
Age structure of tree cover:	mixed
Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:	extensive
Management of semi-natural habitat:	not obvious
Survival of cultural pattern:	widespread
Impact of built development:	localised
Impact of land-use change:	moderate

**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

Impact of landform:	apparent
Impact of land cover:	prominent
Impact of historic pattern:	continuous
Visibility from outside:	concealed
Sense of enclosure:	contained
Visual unity:	coherent
Distinctiveness/rarity:	unusual

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	<b>Safeguard and manage</b>
	<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>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE: SAFEGUARD AND MANAGE**

- ensure that future development proposals within this area reflect and protect its historic parkland character
- ensure that future development proposals for adjoining areas are adequately screened to prevent impact on the character of this area
- encourage local landowners to retain and manage pasture
- encourage local landowners to maintain the existing high quality of the Mimram watercourse and banks and to manage its riverbanks to increase biodiversity
- encourage linkages between the different wetland habitats along the Mimram, to increase biodiversity
- support the establishment of agri-environmental schemes within ESAs and CHAs (Countryside Heritage Areas)



- Tewin Meadow  
(HCC Landscape Unit)



- Footbridge over Tewin Water  
(P. Cullens)

### District map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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LA100019547 2005



#### LOCATION

Curving belt between Welwyn and Hatfield, bounded by the A1(M) to the west, the River Lea valley to the south beyond Hatfield and the Mimram valley parklands and Coles Green to the east.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

An urban fringe belt around the eastern flanks of Welwyn, with a wide range of land uses, from recreation through arable cultivation to mineral extraction. While the western end of this area, squeezed between Welwyn and Hatfield, has very obvious urban-fringe land uses, the area to the east is more rural, with arable cultivation and some blocks of woodland.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- mainly gently undulating land on the northern valley slopes of the river Lea
- proximity of large settlements very obvious, via transport network and land uses
- open, with large woodland blocks
- disturbed or restored mineral extraction sites

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- railway, pylons and major road transport network: A1(M), A414, A1000, A6129
- fly-tipping

Fishing lake from former mineral workings •  
at Holwell Court Farm  
(P. Shears)



**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** Mainly deep, well-drained fine loamy and sandy soils, locally flinty, over glaciofluvial drift (Ludford series), with deep fine loamy over clay soils over chalky till to the east (Hornbeam 3 series).

**Topography.** Gently undulating with localised mounding. Flat around Panshanger aerodrome.

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 70

**Altitude range.** 65m to 80m

**Hydrology.** There is some drainage into the river Lea, not significant enough to be named, and many ponds and lakes associated with former mineral workings.

**Land cover and land use.** Mainly arable cultivation and recreation, with a small aerodrome, golf course, fishing lake, sewage works, woodland and small areas of pasture. Part of The Commons is a local nature reserve, but there appears to be no public access to the remainder of the woodland. The extensive mineral extraction site at Holwell Hyde has been restored to pasture, arable and a well-used fishing lake. The surrounding land is in large-scale arable cultivation.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The south-western part of this area was formerly alluvial floodplain pasture with alder woodland, with arable cultivation on the upper slopes, but is now an area of mainly urban fringe development. The Commons is a unique area of totally secondary woodland, of elm and sycamore, with very mixed plantation flora. The Holwell Park estate supports ancient semi-natural hornbeam woodlands with an associated spring system. In addition to the woodland blocks the southern edge of Welwyn (Hatfield Hyde) is well screened by mature trees and the local network of lanes is well hedged, with tall thorn hedges and many medium hedges with ash or hornbeam standards, as well as individual mature oaks. Other species found in this area are hazel and blackthorn, while Great Captain's Wood is hornbeam with silver birch and cherry. Some former field boundaries have been planted with poplar and white poplar.

**HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Much of the historic alluvial floodplain and estate pattern of this landscape has been disturbed or lost, to development, mineral extraction or WWII disturbance. In 1919 Ebenezer Howard bought 1,458 acres of the Panshanger Estate, which became the first part of Welwyn Garden City. The relics of WWII depots and army camps are still visible at the western end of this area and the aerodrome at Panshanger was used as an RAF training field. Starting in the 1930s, a vast artificial plateau was created at Holwell Hyde, using London waste to infill a massive gravel extraction complex. It has since been returned to secondary grassland and arable use. There are no settlements within the area. Holwell Court Farm, Holwell Manor, Holwellpark Wood and Holwell Hyde Farm indicate a formerly extensive estate. (A 'hyde' is a Saxon land measurement (120 acres) used as part of the process of assarting, that is, enlarging the area of cultivated land around the edge of a manorial settlement).

**Field pattern.** The remaining field pattern is large-scale and regular.

**Transport pattern.** The few lanes are sinuous and level, while the major road transport pattern (A1000, A6129, A414) is modern.

**Settlements and built form.** There are no settlements within the area and very few isolated dwellings and farm buildings. The aircraft hangars at Panshanger aerodrome are quite well concealed by woodland.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

This is a rather bleak and seemingly forgotten area, useful for hiding utilities necessary to the nearby urban centres and providing low-key recreation on former minerals sites. It is rather large in scale, with large individual elements such as the aerodrome, the minerals sites, etc. and the areas of woodland, but lacks coherence due to the variety of land uses. On the southern edge of Welwyn Garden City an area bounded by the A6129 and the A1000 now has so many urban-edge land uses as to have lost any rural character.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** The Commons is regarded as a unique area ecologically, although the local landscape could not be described as distinctive.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The southern edge of Welwyn is well screened by vegetation and the main visual impacts are from utilities and transport, with busy traffic on the A414 and pylons overhead.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

The Lea Valley Walk/Cole Green Way and chain cycle track links Welwyn and Hertford. There is a byway (farm track) between Holwell Hyde Farm and Hertford Road (A414), with a link across disused workings to the Lea Valley Chain Walk; also a circular walk within and to the east of the Panshanger part of Welwyn Garden City.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

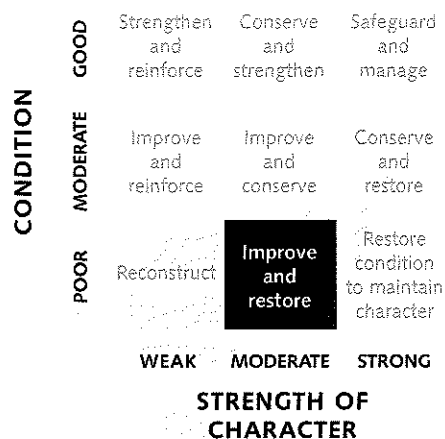
This area includes a significant range of elements valued for their distinctiveness (C) (possibly due to their proximity to large settlements).

**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>relic</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>not obvious</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>declining</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>high</b>
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	<b>high</b>

**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	<b>apparent</b>
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	<b>apparent</b>
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	<b>relic</b>
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	<b>widely visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>open</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>incoherent</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>frequent</b>



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

- encourage landowners to safeguard existing hedges, increase hedged field boundaries, create permanent grass strips around field margins and prevent spray drift, using financial incentives as available.
- where further mineral extraction is proposed, ensure that restoration proposals conform to existing landform and land use; if restoration to arable cultivation is proposed, especial care of topsoil will be essential
- encourage the use of low-density grazing as a management technique and maintain unimproved pasture wherever possible
- restore distinctive rural features where possible, especially along the cycle track. This could include new hedge and tree planting (where historically appropriate), using locally distinctive species of local provenance, and restoration to pasture in the floodplain.
- encourage the reversal of habitat fragmentation and the creation and improvement of habitat links to create eco-corridors. This could be particularly appropriate along the southern edge of this area, where new golf courses could be managed to provide semi-natural habitat and a link between riverside and woodland habitats.
- promote the expansion of woodland beyond ancient woodland boundaries, especially where this will help in creating habitat links and could assist in providing vertical elements to balance the large-scale horizontal elements in this landscape area.
- promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats
- encourage woodland planting of native species local to the Character Area on poor quality agricultural land, where this is in keeping with local landscape character, is on the site of former woodland or can provide an ecological link to other woodlands or habitats.



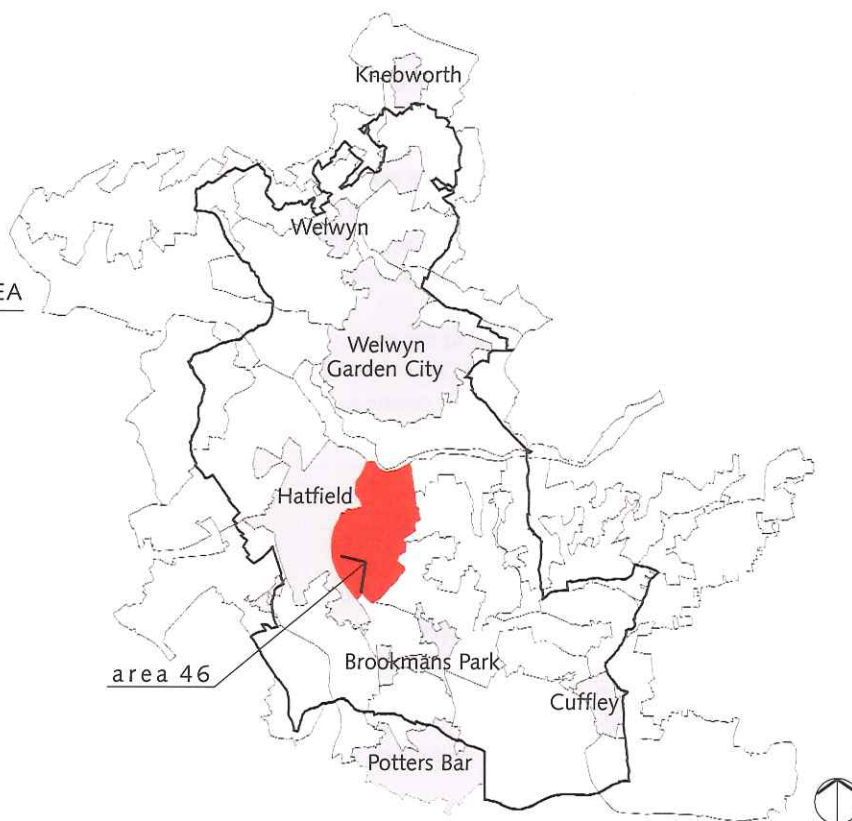
- Poplars Green. Boundary with Mimram Valley parklands (HCC Landscape Unit)

### District map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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LA100019547 2005



#### LOCATION

Hatfield Park lies to the east of Hatfield and a large arc of urban development enforces its western boundary.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

An extensive area of parkland with large woodland blocks and pockets of farmland with parkland trees. Two main axes cut the Park into four large compartments. The house is located on the north-west boundary and is the focus of the area, being one of the finest Tudor buildings in England. Peripheral lodges and estate architecture enforce the parkland character and define its strong boundary. Landscape features such as the walled vineyard bridging the river Lea and the formal gardens around the house are nationally important treasures.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- strong estate boundary
- estate architecture - manor, lodges, walls, grand entrances and ancillary buildings
- restricted views and access
- ornamental water features
- forestry plantations
- farmland with parkland trees
- framed vistas/avenues

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Jacobean style of main house and historical associations with Elizabeth I
- walled vineyard bridging the river Lea
- the 'wilderness' to the south west of the house
- parallel clipped holm oak walks
- a massive rectangular maze (1841)



Pines on Hatfield Park boundary •  
(HCC Landscape Unit)

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** This area lies in a sub-section of the northern Thames basin. Tertiary clays, associated with the slopes in the north and south of the area, are slowly permeable, mostly with brown subsoils. Some fine loamy and fine silty soils are found locally over clayey soils with only slight seasonal waterlogging. The central upland plateau and river terrace drift coincides with most of the farmland and is also seasonally waterlogged and slowly permeable.

**Topography.** Hatfield Park slopes gently to the north, with the lowest level at The Broadwater and an area of upland in the south-east. The undulating slopes in the west have an average gradient of 1 in 25.

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 33.

**Altitude range.** 60m to 121m.

**Hydrology.** This area has been shaped by the former presence of the Thames, with the river Lea and The Broadwater both flowing eastwards near the northern boundary. Parallel streams run down the regularly undulating slopes to the south west. There is a network of streams and small ponds on the plateau to the south east of the house and two ornamental ponds are perched on the slopes. Springs emerge from the higher land in the area, particularly around the dairy farm.

**Land cover and land use.** Parkland is the dominant land cover throughout the area, characterised by the extensive range of formal planting and landscape features. The land is also used for mixed forestry plantations and dairy farming. Large areas of forestry plantations conceal some of the historic parkland trees at Millwards Park. Field boundaries were not noted due to access restrictions.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The ancient wood pasture common of Hatfield Heath has long been enclosed and comprises several discrete parks. They contain an important complex of pollarded and veteran trees, possibly the most important in the county. The 'Elephant Oak' is the biggest pollard in Hertfordshire, possibly the oldest. The presence of gorse on the woodland edge at Millwards Park is notable. Millwards was originally a hunting park which went to forestry in the early 19th century and was replanted in the 1960s. It is quite open in parts, with conifers among the oaks, bracken and some ornamental species. Within Home Park there are many veteran oaks and some veteran sweet chestnut.

**HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

The house and gardens date from the 16th century and were built to replace the Quadrangle Palace in Hatfield that was given to Robert Cecil, the first Earl of Salisbury, in exchange for Theobalds. Three sides of the palace were demolished in 1608 and the remaining side forms an important feature in the parkland landscape. The gardens were redeveloped and extended in the early and late 19th century. Saxton's county map of 1577 shows 'Hatfield Wood' extending as far as Northaw and Cuffley, with a smaller circular park on the site of the present park. This suggests that there may have been two deer parks, one for fallow and one for red deer, as was the medieval habit.

**Field pattern.** Irregular, medium to large within the farmland, elsewhere parkland.

**Transport pattern.** There are no public routes through the park, which is bounded to the west by the A1(M). One lane marks the south-eastern boundary, which elsewhere runs through the woodlands that are such a distinctive feature of the area.

**Settlements and built form.** The area is sparsely settled and all of the buildings in the character area serve the estate. The main buildings are clustered on the north-western boundary, linked to the remains of the Bishop's Palace and Old Hatfield. Two-storey red brick and stone lodge houses mark the four main entrances at the ends of the two axes. The main house is sited on slightly elevated ground, facing south, and is one of the most important Jacobean mansions in England. It is built predominantly of red brick with stone dressings. A stone loggia and clock tower, attributed to the architect Inigo Jones, were added to the front of the building in c. 1609. Elsewhere in the parkland, castellated red brick walls and an 18th-century tower enclose 30,000 vines in the vineyard that abridges the Broadwater (part of the river Lea) in the north of the estate. An early 19th-century flint-faced summerhouse with Gothic windows also survives.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

Public views into Hatfield Park are limited by strong boundaries and dense woodland blocks. Internally, long vistas are framed by double avenues and woodland rides. Farmland with parkland trees provides picturesque views across the estate from within.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This is the largest remaining area of woodland and parkland in the county. The house is the best remaining example of Tudor architecture in the country and is Grade I listed in the English Heritage Register.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Beyond the area boundary to the west, the urban development and transport infrastructure present a major impact on the character of the parkland. Within the park, the extensive forestry plantations create a coniferous skyline which is locally prominent.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Within the park and woodland of the 212ha estate there is no informal public access, but the house and gardens are occasionally open to the public.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

The distinctiveness of this area is highly valued (B). Samuel Pepys on 11 August 1667: *'fine walk through the Park was of as much pleasure as could be desired in the world for country pleasure and good air'*.

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

Hatfield Park is recognized under the Biodiversity Action Plan for the county as a High Biodiversity Site (HBA) for its oak-hornbeam woodlands, grasslands and heaths. It is also Grade I listed in the English Heritage *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens*.

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	insignificant
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	mixed
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	widespread
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	good
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	intact
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	low
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	low

**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	insignificant
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	prominent
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	continuous
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	concealed
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	contained
<i>Visual unity:</i>	unified
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	unique

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

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING****CHANGE: SAFEGUARD AND MANAGE**

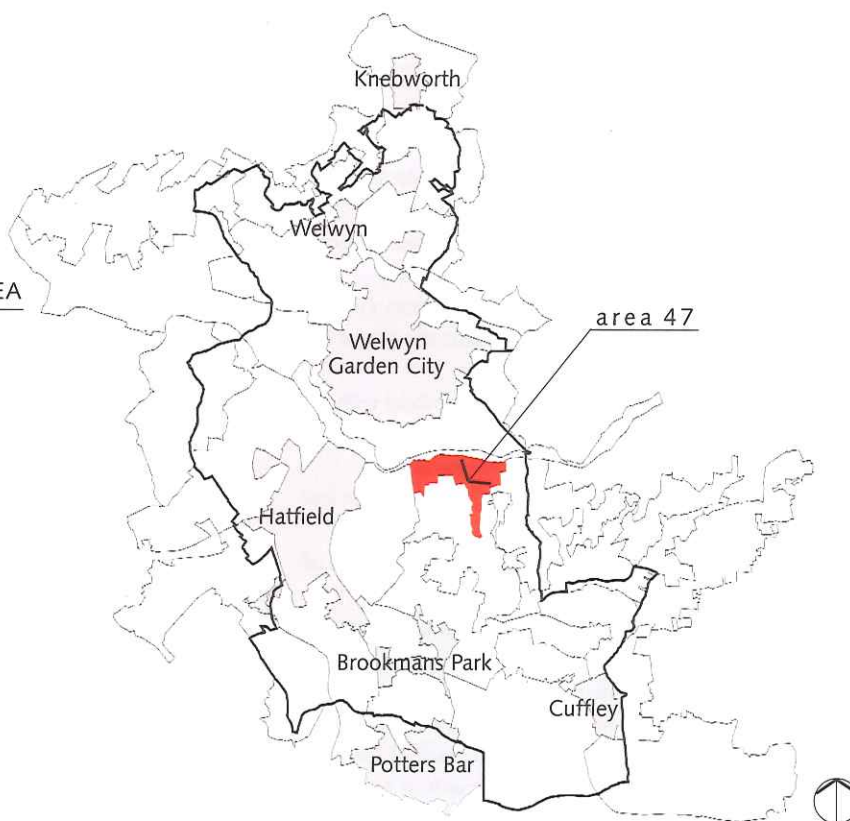
- encourage the replacement of softwoods in plantations with indigenous native deciduous communities and management to re-establish a species-rich ground flora
- use ancient wood, hedge and field boundaries, including banks and ditches, to identify the most appropriate location for woodland expansion
- use only indigenous species of local provenance wherever possible
- survey and manage parkland and veteran trees for their biodiversity value
- encourage new planting to maintain age diversity. Landscape improvements should respect the historic context of existing features and the form and character of parklands and gardens. Ornamental species should only be used to replace damaged or over-mature specimens, where appropriate
- hard landscaping details such as steps, balustrades, pond copings, statuary and urns should be conserved. Replacements should be in facsimile and in natural materials. Gazebos, temples, follies, grottoes, obelisks, park bridges, ice houses, terraces, ha-has, boundary walls, gates and gate piers should contribute to the planned landscape and its setting. Replacement, renovated or new features should be architect-designed and in keeping with their original setting
- encourage reversion from arable use to pasture and grassland
- discourage the ploughing of grasslands within parkland
- encourage landowners and developers to retain and increase ponds and wetland areas to enhance their visual and wildlife functions.
- promote the use of low-density stock grazing as a management technique
- initiate discussion on public access to woodland areas on fringes of the estate for informal recreation

### District map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Welwyn Hatfield Council

LA100019547 2005



### LOCATION

Linear area south of Lea Valley (West) between the eastern edge of Hatfield Park and the south-western edge of Hertford, bounded to the south by wooded upper slopes and the plateau. Divided into two sub-areas by the change of character caused by 20th-century land use at Bedwell Park.

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently undulating north-facing arable slopes, interrupted locally by extensive mineral workings. Generally unsettled, with isolated farms and tiny hamlets within hidden valleys. Dwarfed by the steeper wooded slopes to the south but with good views out over the river Lea.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- gently undulating arable slopes between the Lea floodplain and the small arable plateaux and associated steep slopes to the south
- north facing
- separated from river valley by B158 just above floodplain
- extensive mineral extraction
- parkland converted to golf course bisects this area
- narrow wooded valleys cut back into steeper slopes above

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- impact of mineral extraction and 20th-century recreational use is locally severe

View over Lea Valley •  
from Bedwell Park golf course  
(P. Shears)



**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** Deep fine loamy over clay soils over chalky till (Hornbeam 3 series).

**Topography.** Gently undulating north-facing slope with intermittent stream valleys.

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 65 (locally 1 in 30 to 1 in 100)

**Altitude range.** 55m to 75m.

**Hydrology.** Upper valley slopes of river Lea, with streams (Essendon Brook) flowing north to river and many ornamental lakes within an extensive golf course. Gravel bournes or summer-dry 'brooks' occur naturally across this area, with very steep banks.

**Land cover and land use.** Treed arable farmland with discrete woodlands. Extensive golf course in former parkland at Bedwell divides area. East of Bedwell a considerable amount of the arable farmland has been lost to mineral extraction. Limited pasture.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Variable, discrete woodlands of oak/ash and some hornbeam, with a mix of ancient woodland and plantations. Mainly in arable cultivation, with some former pasture gone to scrub. Hedgerow species are oak and ash with hawthorn. There are also hawthorn hedgerows with oak and ash standards. Pollards Wood contains many veteran trees and is a remnant of formerly more extensive woodland cover. The growth of secondary woodland on common strips on the edge of settlements is particularly notable around Brickendon.

**HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

This is a landscape with a regular post-1800 medium to large-scale field pattern with consistent hedgerow boundaries, except where these have been disrupted by 20th-century land uses such as golf courses and mineral extraction. This area is sub-divided by remnant parkland on the lower slopes of Bedwell Park (now an extensive golf course). The hidden valleys that run back into the steeper wooded slopes to the south have retained their historic landscape and buildings.

**Field pattern.** The field boundaries are of variable size and content. In the main they are treed hedgerows, that is, overgrown hedgerows which now consist mainly of trees with some shrubs, but they have been heavily degraded by mineral extraction.

**Transport pattern.** From the B158 in the valley small sinuous sunken lanes with treed hedgebanks, some of them mown, climb the slopes to the south. There are no verges along these roads.

**Settlements and built form.** There are no large settlements within this area, simply small groups or isolated houses or farms, generally in vernacular style and well screened from the road, tucked up into the narrow valleys. Howe Green, for example, is an old settled linear hamlet of domestic and large-scale houses within a narrow valley of treed hedgerows nestling between arable fields. Building materials in this area are red brick or black weatherboard with tiled roofs. Farm buildings are small in scale and frequently of black weatherboard.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

This area is widely visible from the upper slopes to the south and from the northern slopes of the Lea valley, particularly along the A414. Within the area, views are generally filtered by vegetation, particularly the dense hedgerows and treed hedgerows. It is a tranquil area, apart from occasional noise from the B158 and is a medium-scale contained landscape of generally coherent visual unity. Locally this is disrupted by young planting within the golf course which does not reflect the historic avenues and other planted features within the former parkland.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** The degradation of the historic integrity of parkland via change of use to golf course is not unusual in Hertfordshire. Arable farmland on shallow slopes is a fairly typical feature of the county.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

This area suffers from the localised impact of 20th-century land use, not built development but mineral extraction and golf courses, both dominant land uses with high impact. In general, the mineral extraction land use is contained within the landform and by vegetation, but golf course use can be widely visible, distinguished by superficial changes in landform and non-indigenous vegetation. In particular, the large mineral extraction site within the Lea valley is widely visible within the lower part of Bedwell Park. Although that site lies outside this area, this is where its impact is most visible.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

The B158 is not suitable for use as a footpath, although it is an extension of the Lea Valley footpath. There are several lateral footpaths linking to the settlements on the plateau above.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This area is hardly remarked upon (E).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS****CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	extensive but localised
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	mature
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	fragmented
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	not obvious
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	declining
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	low
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	high

**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

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

<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>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		

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

- no development that would result in permanent damage to the historic landscape fabric of this area will be permitted. This applies particularly to ancient woodland and parkland
- encourage landowners to safeguard existing hedges, increase hedged field boundaries, create permanent grass strips around field margins and prevent spray drift, using financial incentives as available
- ensure that any future proposals for mineral extraction include progressive and prompt restoration proposals that reflect local landscape character, especially in terms of their scale. Restoration could be to grassland or arable, but efforts should be made to re-create the historic hedgerow and woodland pattern
- ensure that the brooks are managed in such a way as to maintain their ecological interest and biodiversity, i.e. that they are not taken into arable cultivation or mineral extraction
- ensure that proposed improvements to the landscape within Landscape Conservation Areas will reinforce and contribute to the distinctiveness of the local landscape character, by reflecting the scale and land use of the area
- golf courses should only be permitted within historic parklands where:
  - i) the original layout and features of the grounds are retained;
  - ii) existing trees are retained and adequate provision is made for their maintenance and management;
  - iii) fairways and greens are designed to complement the historic designed landscape with regard to their location and extent;
  - iv) all new tree and shrub planting either uses species already present within the parkland, in similar designs, proportions and mixes, or uses locally native species where these would be more appropriate;
  - v) a high proportion of the total area should be dedicated to and managed as wildlife habitat, building upon established areas of wildlife interest already present;
  - vi) all new waterbodies should be designed to be either naturalistic or in keeping with historic waterbodies already present;
  - vii) all (and only) necessary buildings and structures are designed to be in keeping with the primary age of the remaining historic character of the site;
  - viii) a long-term management plan should be submitted with the planning application and adhered to. Plans to be reviewed periodically via meetings of interested parties (liaison groups).



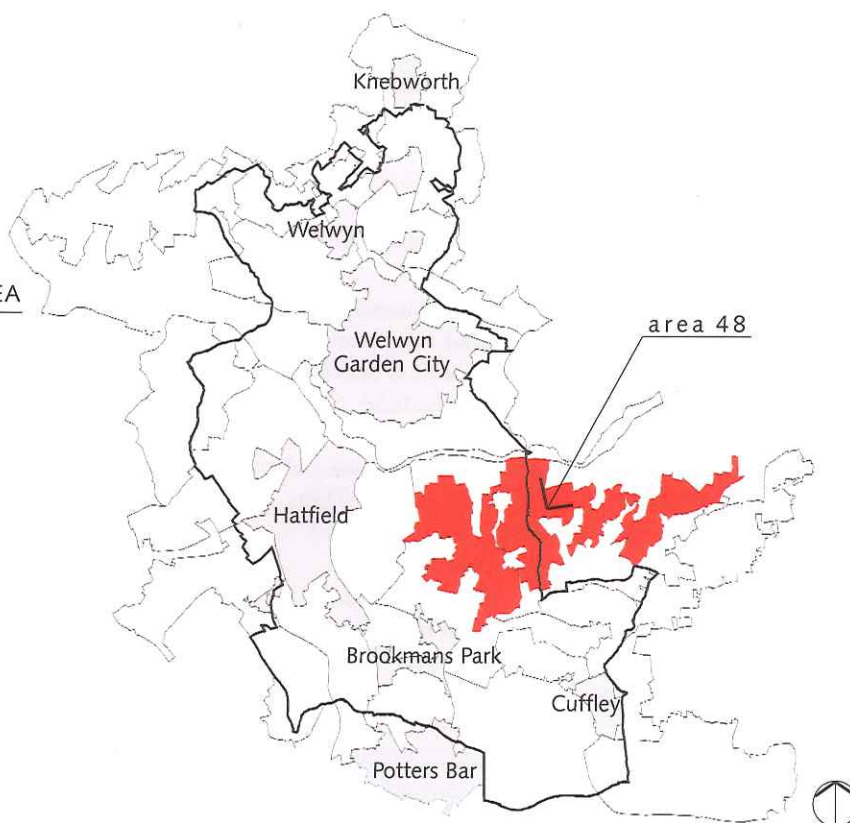
• Bedwell Park golf course  
(P. Shears)

District map showing location of  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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**LOCATION**

Amorphous area between West End in the west and the southern edge of Hertford Heath in the east, and between the arable, north-facing slopes of the Lea valley to the north and the small plateau to the south.

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

Steeply undulating wooded slopes, clearly differentiated by topography, woodland and age of settlement from both the arable slope to the north and the small plateau to the south. Very articulated and complex topography, with parkland and ancient settlements strung out along winding undulating lanes. An 'old' landscape pattern, remote and enclosed, with a small, domestic scale. Densely wooded and treed, with a clear pattern of irregular fields with tall treed boundaries and good views across the Lea valley. Here arable conversion does not appear to have had a negative impact on hedges.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- small ancient settlements
- intricate road system
- extensive broadleaf woodland
- strongly undulating north-facing landform
- small woodland blocks and tall dense hedges
- very private area, with discreetly concealed parkland

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- flint houses and walls
- mature hedgerow oaks, young mature hedgerow ash
- ancient settlements with 16th-18th century cottages
- lodges and boundary woodland associated with parkland

View of West End Farm from  
A414 showing double slope  
(P. Shears)



## PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** Slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clay soils over Tertiary clay (Windsor series).

**Topography.** Very undulating north-facing slope with many minor valleys.

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 35.

**Altitude range.** 75m to 120m.

**Hydrology.** A few hidden streams in woodland; artificial lakes and ponds in parkland.

**Land cover and land use.** This area is predominantly wooded farmland and parkland. Most land uses are well screened from view, except for the golf course in Bedwell Park. The farmland consists mainly of pastoral fields, often in equine occupation, with some arable.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Woodland cover is extensive and interlocking, particularly with the screening woodland belts around parkland. It is complex in origin, a mix of ancient and secondary woodland as a result of late medieval clearance. The dominant species are oak/hornbeam and ash, with some elm. Field boundaries are prominent and of several types: low to medium thorn hedges with oak or ash standards; tree rows, ie., overgrown hedges, again of thorn, oak and ash; very tall elm hedges; or a low hedge on a bank, usually mixed with hornbeam. Hedgerow trees are either mature oak standards or young mature ash standards. North of Little Berkhamsted there are some veteran oak pollards, while Great Groves contains the locally rare wild service tree. There is some wet rush pasture towards the summit; elsewhere most cattle pasture is now equestrian grazing.

## HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

This area appears to have remained largely untouched by the 20th century. Most of the settlements are small and medieval in origin, with few modern developments. Deer parks (Camfield pre-1766; Bedwell pre-1406) have evolved into parklands and the pattern of fields and woodlands appears to have changed very little over time. In Stocking Lane, Bayford, just east of the village, there is a moated site which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Parklands include:

- Camfield Place (home of the late Barbara Cartland and previously frequently visited by Beatrice Potter). It is 19th century Italianate with a water tower, a small 18th-century stable block and early 19th-century lodges and gates to Hatfield Road.
- Bedwell Park is a late 17th-century building in extensive parkland, which was formerly a medieval deer park. It is now a golf course with tree belts, an avenue, clumps, ponds and lakes and a walled kitchen garden. Repton is thought to have worked there but there is no Red Book. The exterior of the house is gabled Tudor with a battlemented tower and ornate lodges dating from 1861.
- Culverwood House parkland is well screened and the house is set on the plateau above.
- Essendon Place, now in institutional use, but marked by very fine early 18th-century wrought iron gates.

**Field pattern.** The field pattern is irregular, with small to medium size fields.

**Transport pattern.** This area has a very organic pattern of winding, undulating and sunken roads linking small villages, hamlets and isolated farms. Verges tend to be narrow, and some are ditched.

**Settlements and built form.** Dwellings in this area are notably older in origin and style than those on the plateau, and feature soft red and blue brick (often in a chequerboard pattern), black weatherboard and clay pegtile roofs. They are found only at the western end of the area (West End and Wildhill). Farmhouses are of white weatherboard or white render and there is considerable use of flint (with red brick) for buildings as well as walls.

## OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Pevsner, N., rev. Cherry, B., *Hertfordshire*, Penguin (2000), p.141.

HCC data on historic parks and gardens.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

Although the topography and location of this area make it widely visible from the north, it is not possible to discern details within the area, due to the dense woodland and hedgerows. Similarly, within the area views are short and limited by vegetation, with few views out. This small-scale, very contained landscape of woods, treed field boundaries and irregular fields, has a coherent and distinctive common pattern. It is a tranquil area, with comparatively little road traffic on minor roads and no railway.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This is a very unusual area by virtue of the combination of landform, settlement and land cover. The parklands are not/no longer considered to be of especial historic value.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The impact of built development within this area is negligible - the older linear settlements sit well in the landscape. There is some apparent land-use change, from pasture to arable, but this is one of the few areas within which this change to arable appears to have had little impact on field boundaries.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Footpaths, bridleways and waymarked routes are widespread throughout the area. Their condition is fair; they are of variable width, usually with a mud surface.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

*'In the woodland, where the sunlight splashes from leaf to leaf, spangling a moist earth carpeted with rusty leaves, dead sticks and creeping moss, and along the lanes, narrow and winding with many a hill and blind bend, you could feel yourself 100 miles from anywhere, yet the rim of London is only half-a-dozen miles away.'* A description of Bedwell Park in 'Essendon - the village on a hill', *Herts. Countryside*, Vol. 19, No.77, pp.206-09.

There is little evidence that this area is valued for its distinctiveness but some local sites within it are mentioned (E).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS****CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>insignificant</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>mixed</b>
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	<b>extensive</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>good</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>intact</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>prominent</b>
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	<b>prominent</b>
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	<b>interrupted</b>
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	<b>widely visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>contained</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>unified</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>unusual</b>

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	<b>Conserve and strengthen</b>	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>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		

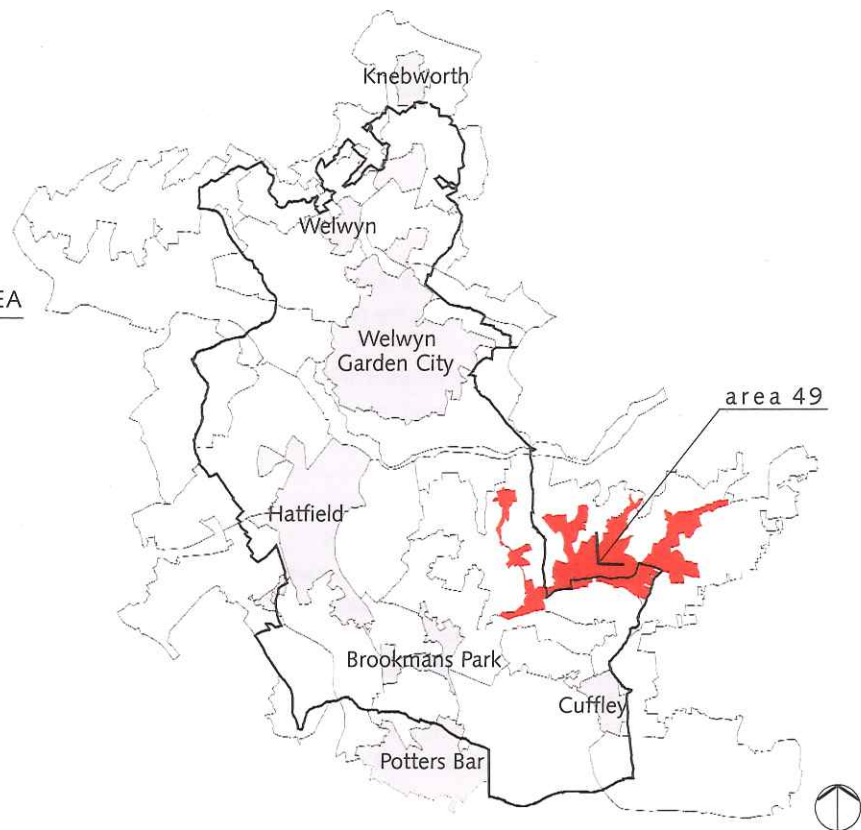
## STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING

### CHANGE: CONSERVE AND STRENGTHEN

- encourage local farmers to resist further change from pasture to arable
- encourage local farmers to retain unimproved pasture and grazing animals other than horses
- ensure, via SPG if necessary, that developments in equine recreation respect the character of the area, especially in the detail of boundary treatments and buildings
- development proposals that would result in permanent change to the historic landscape character of this area will not be permitted
- promote woodland/farm management as a means of increasing biodiversity, by maintaining a 5-20m rough grassland strip around arable field margins and woodland edges
- golf courses should only be permitted in historic parklands where:
  - i) the original layout and features of the parkland can be retained;
  - ii) existing trees are retained and adequate provision is made for their maintenance and management;
  - iii) all new tree and shrub planting either uses species already present within the parkland, in similar designs, proportions and mixes, or uses locally native species where these would be more appropriate;
  - iv) a buffer zone can be created around any historic artefacts, to protect their historic integrity;
  - v) a long-term management plan is submitted with the planning application and adhered to. Periodic review with interested parties will be necessary.
- promote through education and access the multiple uses of ancient woodland and woodland products
- encourage the management of woodland to ensure age diversity, a species-rich ground flora and a variety of management types, such as high forest, coppice, coppice-with-standards and wood pasture
- promote the planting of locally indigenous species only, of local provenance where possible
- encourage the provision of better surfaced rights of way, to encourage greater use of the rights-of-way network. Consider separate provision for pedestrians and equestrians
- consider the provision of small, low-key car parks to improve access to the footpath network

### District map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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#### LOCATION

Small plateau south the of the Lea Valley West, surrounded by steep slopes.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

A small settled plateau of several very narrow 'finger' ridges, each of which has a settlement at its extreme end, with extensive views out over wooded valleys and the Lea valley to the north, where vegetation permits. Around each settlement pasture gives way to arable and views out are frequently screened by small blocks of woodland or hedges.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- gently undulating narrow plateau
- settlements at extreme end of each 'finger'
- some older buildings, but mainly 19th and 20th-century in style
- limited views out due to density of vegetation
- pasture around settlements gives way to small to medium arable fields

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Bedwell Park house and lodges
- Stratton's Folly
- settlement at ridge ends

Transmitter •  
near Little Berkhamsted  
(C. Bailey)



**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** Slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged coarse loamy over clayey soils, over plateau and river terrace drift (Essendon series). Variable London clay with Reading gravels and boulder clay over.

**Topography.** Gently undulating plateau.

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 80 to 1 in 120.

**Altitude range.** 89m to 126m.

**Hydrology.** Only artificial ponds and lakes, but this is a wet plateau because of the poor drainage through the London clay and there are many ponds.

**Land cover and land use.** This is a lightly wooded and very settled area, with mixed farmland, chiefly small pasture fields and odd small copses. Some woodland appears to be poorly managed.

**Vegetation.** Locally tall elm hedges around the villages, elsewhere medium hawthorn hedges with oak, ash and sycamore, often untended, and hybrid Midland thorn, hazel and hornbeam, with some holly. Tree rows. Lime avenues associated with parkland. Brickendon Green is a key acid grassland site and Dalmonds Farm Meadows is a key neutral grassland site, with additional species-rich heathy grasslands around Bayford and at Ashdene and Claypits, where butcher's broom is a rare indicator of wood pasture origins.

**HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

The pre-20th century pattern of this area is apparent throughout, in the settlements and field pattern and the density of tree cover. There is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, Coldharbour Moat, in woodland at the junction of Tyler's Causeway and Woodfield Lane and a deer park is recorded at Little Berkhamsted in 1337 and at Bedwell in 1406. The county's Record Office holds a record dating from 1475 about the export of 62 loads of charcoal from Little Berkhamsted to London.

**Field pattern.** Field sizes are mixed - medium to large arable, often lacking field boundaries, plus small pasture fields around settlements, usually well hedged or fenced.

**Transport pattern.** The villages in this area are linked by narrow winding lanes on the plateau and to the wider landscape by straight roads which plunge off the plateau into the dense woodland below.

**Settlements and built form.** The settlements in this area, Essendon, Little Berkhamsted and Bayford, occupy a position at the extreme end of each finger of the plateau, overlooking the valley below, while Brickendon occupies a wider upland area.

- Brickendon is an archetypal English village, with black-painted weatherboard farm buildings and red brick cottages clustered around a large village green, on which five oaks have been planted to celebrate each sovereign from Victoria to Elizabeth II. Some buildings date from the 17th century, and there are many examples of black weatherboard, clay tile and red brick, plus 20th-century non-vernacular design and materials.
- Essendon is a medieval settlement at the ridge end with vernacular building styles and extensive use of vernacular materials, such as white and black weatherboard and some flint, as in the church.
- Bayford village also occupies a ridge end position and extends slightly downhill, with red-brick estate cottages with large dormer windows and some mid-18th century red brick private houses of substance.
- Little Berkhamsted has several large red-brick Georgian houses near the church and a red brick Folly Tower erected in 1789 by John Stratton, with classical cornices and battlements. It has the appearance of a lookout and is visible over a wide area.

**OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

*A Biodiversity Action Plan for Hertfordshire*, p.82.

Pevsner, N., rev. Cherry, B., *Hertfordshire*, Penguin (2000).

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

There are many views up to but not into the plateau, while from within there are occasional extensive views over the valley to the north, but by no means from every point. This makes it quite a contained landscape, despite its open character. It is tranquil, unified by the pattern of settlement, the topography and the land cover, and is of small to medium scale.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** There are other areas within the county which have this pattern of ridge-top settlements, but they lack both the historic character of this area and the surrounding belt of dense vegetation on the upper slopes.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The settlements make an important contribution to the local landscape but are generally not very visible from outside. There is a clear distinction in land cover and scale between the pastoral and the arable farmland, with a gradual increase in scale with increasing distance from each settlement.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Some Chain Walks and byways are linked to the local road system, providing good access to all the settlements.

Condition: fair to poor - often impassable to pedestrians in wet weather due to equine use.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

Of Essendon: 'in a pocket of deeply rural country almost unique in south Hertfordshire' (W. Branch Johnson); 'In Essendon itself, with its views all ways where the trees part...' (Herts. Countryside, Vol. 119, No. 77).

This large area is recognised as having various locations of value for their distinctiveness, especially the villages (D).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS****CONDITION**

Land cover change:	insignificant
Age structure of tree cover:	mature
Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:	widespread
Management of semi-natural habitat:	not obvious
Survival of cultural pattern:	intact
Impact of built development:	low
Impact of land-use change:	low

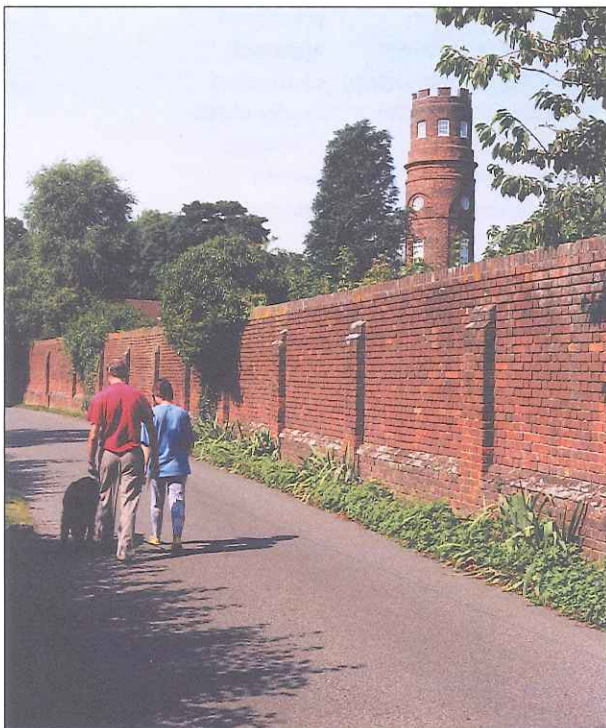
**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

Impact of landform:	prominent
Impact of land cover:	apparent
Impact of historic pattern:	continuous
Visibility from outside:	locally visible
Sense of enclosure:	contained
Visual unity:	unified
Distinctiveness/rarity:	unusual

CONDITION	GOOD	Strengthen and reinforce	<b>Conserve and strengthen</b>	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
		<b>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		

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

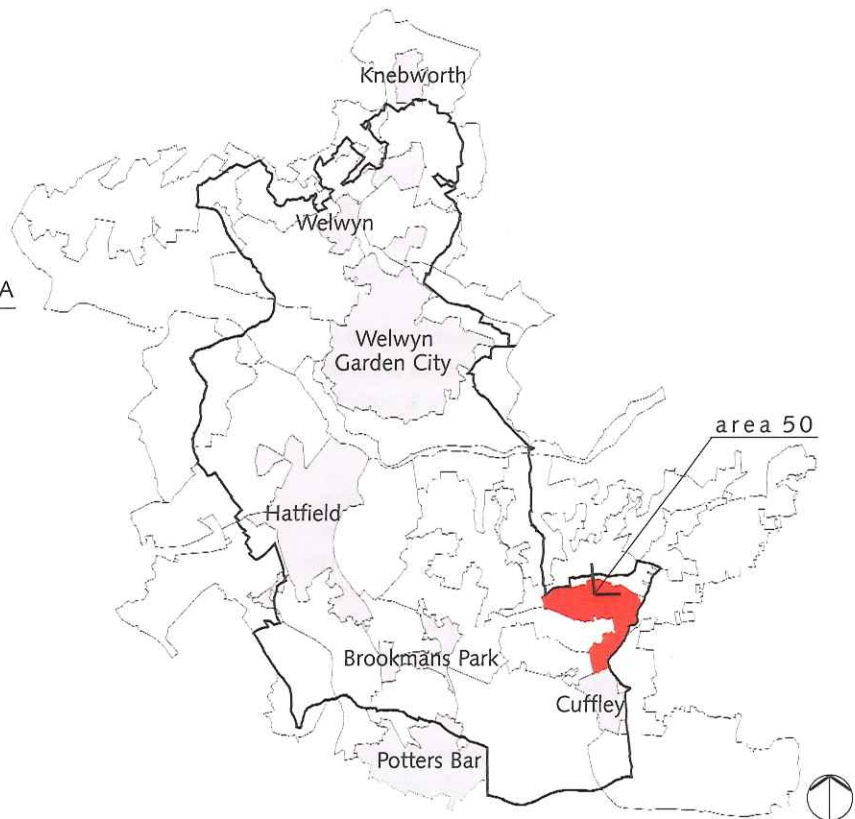
- proposed development within the settlements will need careful consideration to ensure that local landscape character is not compromised by a change of scale or inappropriate non-vernacular design
- encourage the planting of woodland on poor quality agricultural land, using locally native species of local provenance, where this is on the site of former woodland or can provide a link to other woodlands or habitat. Do not encourage woodland planting on former grassland areas, rather encourage their reversion to heathy grassland
- ensure that any proposed woodland planting will contribute to the local landscape rather than impoverishing or destroying an existing and valued habitat or historic artefact
- consider clearing some of the secondary woodland from common edges, especially the narrow bands frequently found on the edge of settlements, and encourage their reversion to heathland/acidic grassland and possible use for recreational purposes. Cut timber could be sold to local inhabitants and the cleared areas managed by grazing. Issues of animal safety/welfare would have to be addressed near public highways
- ensure that any proposed improvements to the landscape within Landscape Conservation Areas will reinforce and contribute to the distinctiveness of local landscape character
- promote the retention of mixed farming in this area
- establish realistic and attractive countryside management schemes for all sites with heathland and acid grassland/scrub communities



• Walking near The Folly (Stratton's Tower) at Little Berkhamsted (C. Bailey)

### District map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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### LOCATION

North of Cuffley Woods to Epping Green and eastwards to Hammond Hill. Partly bisected by Newgate Street ridge.

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

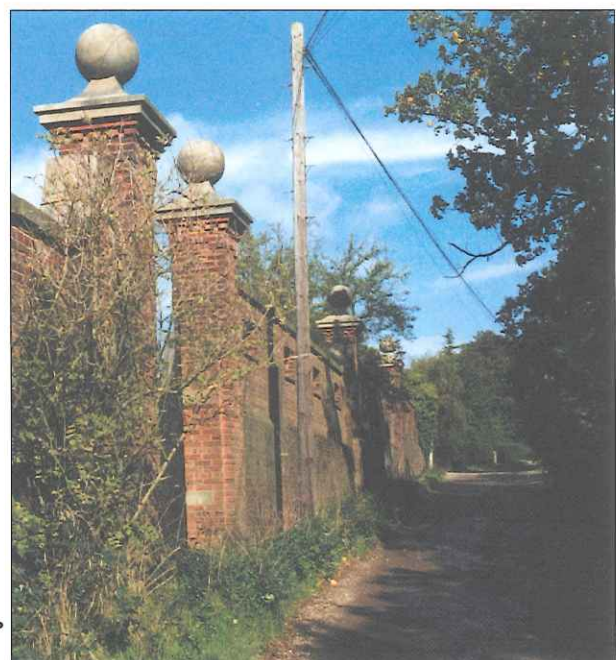
Medium-scale strongly undulating parkland, pasture and arable farmland, with notable mansions and linked woodland.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- strongly undulating generally open farmland
- views framed by trees and woodland
- parkland pasture
- exotic tree species within parkland, associated with houses

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- view of Tolmers Park mansion and parkland from Darnicle Hill
- view of Ponsbourne from Newgate Street



Wall of Old St.Dominics School •  
(HCC Landscape Unit)

## PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** Slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clay soils over Tertiary clay (Windsor series).

**Topography.** Strongly undulating.

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 15.

**Altitude range.** 65m to 100m.

**Hydrology.** An eastward flowing stream in Ponsbourne Park has been dammed to create a lake and is interrupted by the railway in the valley. ('Bourne' means stream and the Pons-stream is part of a spring system.)

**Land cover and land use.** Wooded parkland, which is generally equine pasture, with some arable to the south. Woodland is a notable feature locally. There is a small golf course within Ponsbourne Park and equestrian activity around Tolmers Park.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The exotic species planted in Tolmers Park (Wellingtonia, etc., representative of 'new' landscaping in the 19th century) spill over into the wider landscape, with massed horse chestnut at the bottom of Darnicle Hill. Elsewhere the local species are oak and ash, with hawthorn, field maple and blackthorn as hedgerow species. Hedges are variable in height rather than species, either medium with trees, as tree rows (i.e. overgrown/unmanaged hedges) or very tall, mixed species hedges without standards. The pastures are mainly acid/neutral wet grassland (some now lost to the golf course within Ponsbourne Park) and are probably of complex origin, possibly semi-natural ancient hornbeam wood pasture. The wetlands along the stream system are ancient and contain many ferns in the understorey.

## HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The historic parkland pattern of this area is very apparent. Ponsbourne Park and Tolmers Park abut each other.

Ponsbourne had a deer park in 1577, was a school in the early 1960s (St Dominic's Priory) and now has a golf course. There is a suggestion that both mansions are in institutional use at the time of writing (unconfirmed).

**Field pattern.** This is a designed landscape of medium-sized regular fields except within the more open parkland.

**Transport pattern.** There are few roads within this area, only the dramatically swooping road linking Newgate Street and Hammond Street via Darnicle Hill. The railway is set within the valley bottom and serves to separate this area from the next.

**Settlements and built form.** There are no settlements within this area, which is fringed by urban development (Cuffley, Goffs Oak) and Newgate Street on the ridge above to the west.

- Ponsbourne Park has a Victorian exterior dated 1876, concealing a house built c.1761. It has a large domed winter garden, an early 19th-century Greek Doric dairy and a lodge on Little Berkhamsted road.
- Tolmers Park, which is more visible, has a 19th-century stucco front with a four-column Ionic porch, facing east within its parkland.

## OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Cuffley library Local Studies section.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

There is a spectacular view of Tolmers Park from the upper slopes of Darnicle Hill and of Ponsbourne Park from the track north of Newgate Street, but elsewhere there are only glimpsed views from outside this area. Within the area views are screened or filtered by topography and vegetation. This is a medium scale, contained landscape, but the variable topography and lack of viewpoints makes it difficult to assess. It is generally tranquil, with some road traffic noise associated with the urban developments.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This is in some ways a curious rather than a distinctive area, although the parkland is significant. It exhibits disturbed parkland, with utilities on Darnicle Hill juxtaposed with equestrian and recreational activities within the parkland.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

There is significant visual impact from the urban edges of Cuffley and Goffs Oak/Hammond Street, but little within the area, due to the absence of built development. Within the parklands there has been a change of land use from pasture to golf course.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Noted recreational land uses are the golf course at Ponsbourne and horse riding at Tolmers. Footpaths are localised rather than extensive.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

Significant value is attached to Ponsbourne and Tolmers Park and their historic and cultural associations (C).

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>localised</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>mixed</b>
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	<b>fragmented</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>not obvious</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>interrupted</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>moderate</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>interrupted</b>
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	<b>locally visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>contained</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>incoherent</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>unusual</b>

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	<b>MODERATE</b>	Improve and reinforce	<b>Improve and conserve</b>	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>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		

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

- ensure that long-distance views of country houses are retained, as originally intended
- encourage landowners to safeguard existing hedges, increase hedged field boundaries, create permanent grass strips around field margins and prevent spray drift, using financial incentives as available to encourage biodiversity
- encourage/enable the construction of a safe viewpoint on Darnicle Hill
- discourage further conversion of parkland or grassland to golf courses
- ensure that new developments, such as golf courses, are designed and managed to reflect the historic parkland landscape by the use of a similar range of tree and shrub species, the retention of existing woodland and parkland trees and careful consideration of the impact of any earthworks
- encourage the development of wildlife habitats within the roughs and un-mown areas of new golf courses
- ensure that new equestrian activities do not entail a weakening of local landscape character from the intrusion of uncharacteristic structures, buildings and fences
- disseminate information about the value of parkland and veteran trees for their historic and ecological associations
- encourage reversion from arable to pasture within parklands, where practicable; discourage ploughing-up of pasture
- encourage appropriate management of woodland to maintain mixed-age plantings and species-rich ground flora, plus management as high forest, coppice, coppice-with-standards or wood pasture
- encourage an extension of the local footpath network through or alongside the parklands, by negotiation



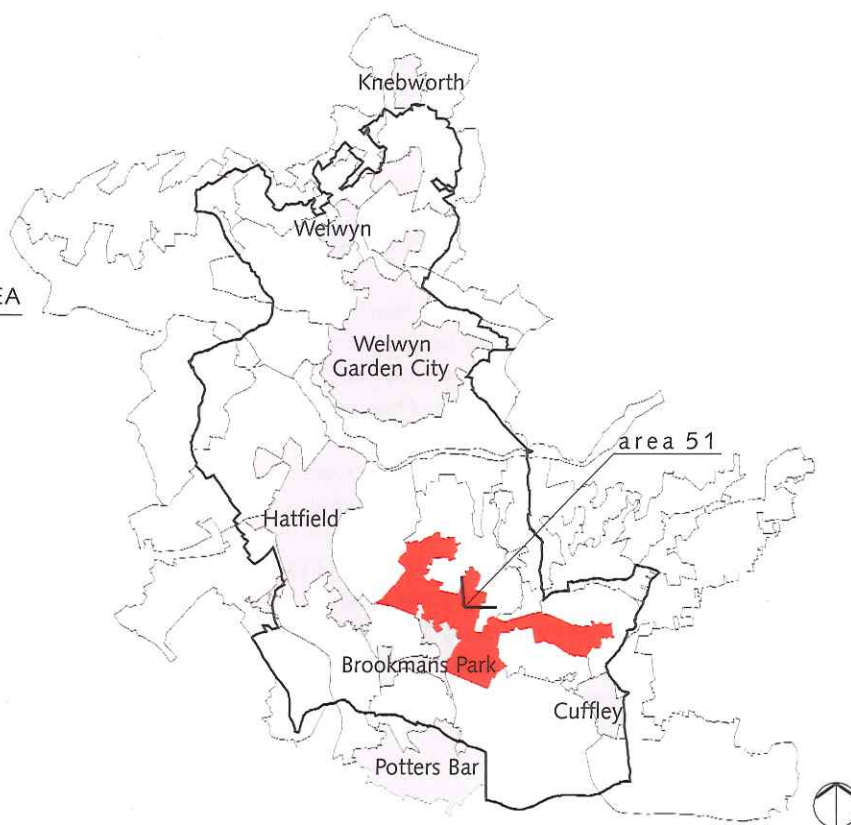
• Ponsbourne Park  
(HCC Landscape Unit)

District map showing location of  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Welwyn Hatfield Council

LA100019547 2005

**LOCATION**

Narrow curved area extending from north-eastern edge of Hatfield Park southwards to Bell Bar then eastwards to Newgate Street, including the farmland around the northern and western edges of Great Wood.

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

Flat-topped, open narrow arable ridge above steeply undulating wooded valleys to the north, and arable slopes with dense hedgerows to the south, with linear 19th and 20th-century settlement. Generally small to medium-scale farmland, with arable and pasture (horses) and some small, late parkland influence. Frequent long-distance views. Contrast between small scale of ridge-end settlement and medium-scale open arable fields.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- very narrow flat ridge above strongly undulating slopes
- open and settled, surrounded by well-treed arable fields, with pasture around settlements
- less settled and more farmed than northern plateau
- more parkland than northern plateau, usually associated with southern edge of Hatfield Park, but less parkland than area to the south

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- focus of development is at extreme end of the ridge, with narrow lanes plunging down the slopes into woodland
- large private houses in extensive grounds (Woodside)
- heavily treed field boundaries, with views beneath canopy
- transmitting station and water tower in southwestern quadrant
- pylons

Plateau arable farmland and woods •  
(HCC Landscape Unit)



## PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** Gleyed (poorly draining) soils over till (glacial drift).

**Topography.** Gently undulating.

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 270.

**Altitude range.** 116m to 129m.

**Hydrology.** Small stream flowing westwards into Mimms Hall Brook and bournes contributing to the swallow holes in Northaw Great Wood.

**Land cover and land use.** This area is mainly treed arable farmland with some pasture and isolated farmhouses or small parklands. Newgate Street is the only settlement.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The arable farmland has medium elm hedgerows with standard oaks, ditches and medium verges. Some hedgerows are unmanaged and overgrown, now treed, with low-level views beneath the canopy but blocked long views. Other hedges are low and in poor condition. There are a few small woodlands but most of the vegetation in this area is to be found in the hedges and around the parklands. Species found locally are hawthorn, field maple and blackthorn hedges with ash and oak standards and relic hornbeam. Holly and gorse are also found in small patches. Ponsall Farm Pastures at Newgate Street is a key acid grassland site.

## HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The New Gate was on the edge of the Hatfield Estate. Popes Farm had a deer park before 1645, while that at Wood Hall was first recorded in 1577. New Park Farm indicates the former New Park, north of Great Wood, which was enclosed from North Mymms Common c.1790. The former parkland is now mainly in arable cultivation, with some remnant damp acid grassland.

**Field pattern.** Much of this area was former common land between the two great parks of Hatfield and Theobalds. Parliamentary enclosure resulted in the current rectilinear field pattern with pre-dating woodland scraps over much of the area. The scale is generally small to medium, occasionally larger.

**Transport pattern.** The verged lanes which wind along the plateau suddenly plunge off the edge in straight densely hedged lanes. On the plateau the lanes are densely hedged or treed, with a confined aspect.

**Settlements and built form.** There are few settlements in this area, rather large farmhouses and small private parklands or large private houses with extensive gardens, all of which are well-wooded on their boundaries, to prevent views in. Newgate Street is a 19th/20th-century linear settlement with older buildings at its hub. It is surrounded by small farms, mainly equine, often with extensive views over the surrounding landscape from the rear of houses.

## OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

A Biodiversity Action Plan for Hertfordshire, p.82.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

This area is largely concealed from outside view by both the vegetation within it and the extensive woodland on the slopes below. From within there are occasional extensive long-range views, but they are more often filtered by vegetation. It is a nonetheless a high and open landscape, contained at a distance by large woodland blocks and closer-to by small discrete woodlands and hedges. It is a medium scale landscape, tranquil and coherent.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This is not a notably unusual landscape. The landform suggests that significant development would be difficult to achieve unless arable land were to be taken out of production. The current balance between farmland and built form should be retained if possible, due to its contribution to the coherence and scale of the landscape.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The settlement makes an important contribution to the landscape locally, although it is not visible over a wide area. The change from pastoral to arable cultivation is marked here by a widespread deterioration in the condition of hedges. In the south-western part of this area pylons are locally prominent and there is a transmitting station and water tower, which are quite well concealed by woodland.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Noted recreational land uses are footpaths and a bridleway (used by a horse and trap). Both are in good condition being wide and sometimes well surfaced, with aggregate on some tracks.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

North of Queenswood this is a hardly remarked upon landscape (E).

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>insignificant</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>intact</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>low</b>
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	<b>low</b>

**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	<b>prominent</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>concealed</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>open but contained</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>coherent</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>frequent</b>

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

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

- encourage landowners to safeguard existing hedges, increase hedged field boundaries, create permanent grass strips around field margins and prevent spray drift, using financial incentives as available
- promote crop diversification and the restoration of mixed livestock/arable farming
- promote the creation of links between semi-natural habitats in this area by ensuring that hedges and field margins are in good condition
- encourage woodland planting on poor-quality agricultural land, especially where this is on the site of former woodland or can provide a link to other woodlands or habitat; be aware that large woodlands would be inappropriate in this landscape area
- encourage the reversion of arable land and secondary woodland on common edges to grassland/heath. This could help redress the loss of heathland within the county, maintain the distinctiveness of local landscape character and provide firewood for local inhabitants. Consideration should be given to management of these reclaimed grasslands - grazing would be appropriate, but issues of animal welfare and safety would need to be addressed near highways
- manage existing woodland to encourage good age diversity and a species-rich ground flora; encourage management as coppice or coppice-with-standards
- encourage the planting of new woodland around existing, to increase biodiversity and provide links to other woodlands, without changing the scale of this area



• Pasture and woodland near Newgate Street (HCC Landscape Unit)

### District map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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LA100019547 2005



### LOCATION

Discrete woodland on north-western edge of Cuffley

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Extensive broadleaf woodland managed for recreation and nature conservation.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- ancient woodland with plantations to north-west and east
- strong boundary to arable fields to north
- strongly undulating terrain
- tranquil
- east-facing slope with eastward flowing streams

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- gravel soils apparent underfoot
- swallowholes in northern part of woodland
- good signage and information boards



Northaw Great Wood •  
(HCC Landscape Unit)

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** London clay. Slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clay soils over Tertiary clay (Windsor series)

**Topography.** Strongly undulating with slight eastwards slope, forming two valleys dissecting the London clay plateau.

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 36

**Altitude range.** 63m to 129m

**Hydrology.** Grimes Brook runs eastwards towards the river Lea, with another stream to the north, where there are swallowholes. These are caused by water percolating through gravel to reach the chalk beneath and arise from seasonal streams in the woodland.

**Land cover and land use.** This is an area of ancient woodland used as a country park, with occasional glades and a low-key infrastructure associated with extensive recreational opportunities. Part of the woodland was replanted in the early 19th century, cleared in 1930 and allowed to go to scrub - this is now the area of public open space. There are no field boundaries, but an extensive network of well-signed tracks through the woodland.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** All the habitats associated with Northaw Common are derived from wood pasture. Great Wood and Well Wood (see Area 53: Northaw Common Parkland) together comprise one of the county's most extensive area of ancient hornbeam-dominated woodland. Northaw Great Wood is a SSSI for its oak/hornbeam community, wood pasture, heathland and swallowholes. It is managed as coppice-with-standards with some pollards and contains at least three veteran trees. Other species include oak, silver birch, sweet chestnut, aspen, beech and ash, with rowan, hawthorn, holly and hazel. Hook Wood is also hornbeam pollard. Blackthorn occurs locally in dense thickets and there is a good varied ground flora, with abundant bluebells, heather and other heathy relic species. Some exotic species (conifers and rhododendron) occur on the southern edge, presumably relic parkland estate planting. Home Wood on the eastern edge is plantation dating from before 1880, while Broombarns Wood and Coldharbour Plantation date from before 1950.

**HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

There is a strong historic pattern to this area, given the maintenance of the ancient woodland of Great Wood, albeit with a modern use as a country park. Historically it relates to Northaw Common, part of the belt of common or heathland which divided the hunting grounds of Hatfield Park and Theobalds. This is an area of natural mineral springs and wells - Cuffley became briefly a fashionable spa, but the waters are now only visible as bournes after flashfloods.

**Field pattern.** Not applicable

**Transport pattern.** The B157 fringes the wood on its southern edge while Carbone Hill divides Great Wood and Home Wood, without altering the overall character of the area.

**Settlements and built form.** The small linear settlement between Great Wood and Home Wood is not part of this area but relates rather to Cuffley. The only buildings are those associated with the country park, which are low-key in style and tend to be of timber construction where practicable.

**OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

English Nature SSSI notification.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The woodland is visible from Newgate Street and from the linear settlement along the B157. Within the area views are very limited by thick woodland. The scale of the woodland is very large and it is very unified. Apart from an infrequent aircraft, there is no sound to disturb the woodland tranquillity and the birdsong.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** Although less extensive than the Broxbourne Woods complex, this tract of woodland is one of the county's most extensive areas of ancient hornbeam-dominated woodland. Public access to large areas of woodland offers an unusually large scale of recreational opportunity to many people, in this case close to significant urban populations.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

There is a slight impact from the country park building and associated car parks, but this is low-key and designed to be in keeping, therefore insignificant.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Noted recreational land uses: rambling, walking, picknicking  
There is a widespread network of footpaths throughout the woodland, clearly signed.

Condition: fair, wide; muddy in places, suggesting problems with combined pedestrian/equestrian use in wet weather.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This is one of the most highly valued landscapes in the county for its distinctiveness (A).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

SSSI: Northaw Great Wood.

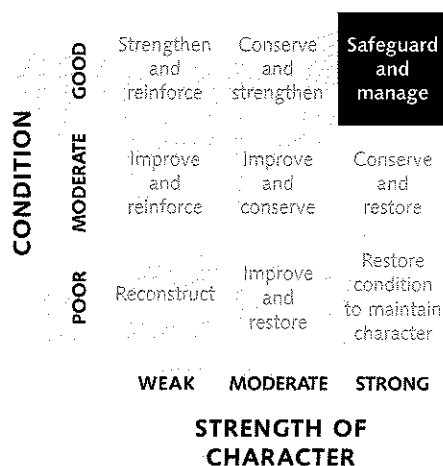
Country Park.

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>insignificant</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>mixed</b>
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	<b>widespread</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>good</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>low</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>widely visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>contained</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>unified</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>unusual</b>



## STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE: SAFEGUARD AND MANAGE

- promote an understanding of the appropriate management of coppice woodland to create a rich ground flora and the distinction between different management systems, such as high forest, coppice, coppice-with-standards and wood pasture.
- promote the establishment of markets for woodland products, training to provide a skilled work force and adequate protection from damage
- support the establishment of deer management groups
- ancient hedge and field boundaries are often associated with ancient woodland. Where woodland restoration and expansion are considered appropriate, use them to assist in the most appropriate location for such initiatives
- promote through education and access the multiple uses of ancient woodland
- promote the expansion of woodland beyond ancient woodland boundaries, especially where this will help in creating habitat links
- promote the use of only native species of local provenance for all planting schemes
- support the Hertfordshire Woodland Strategy objectives
- encourage the dissemination of information about the historic importance and appropriate management of woodland features such as banks and ditches
- seek to resolve conflicts arising from competing uses and activities in woodland
- promote sympathetic management for dormouse (BAP species)
- give consideration to separate provision for pedestrians and equestrians, on alternative surfacing materials, to ensure that footpaths remain accessible throughout the year.



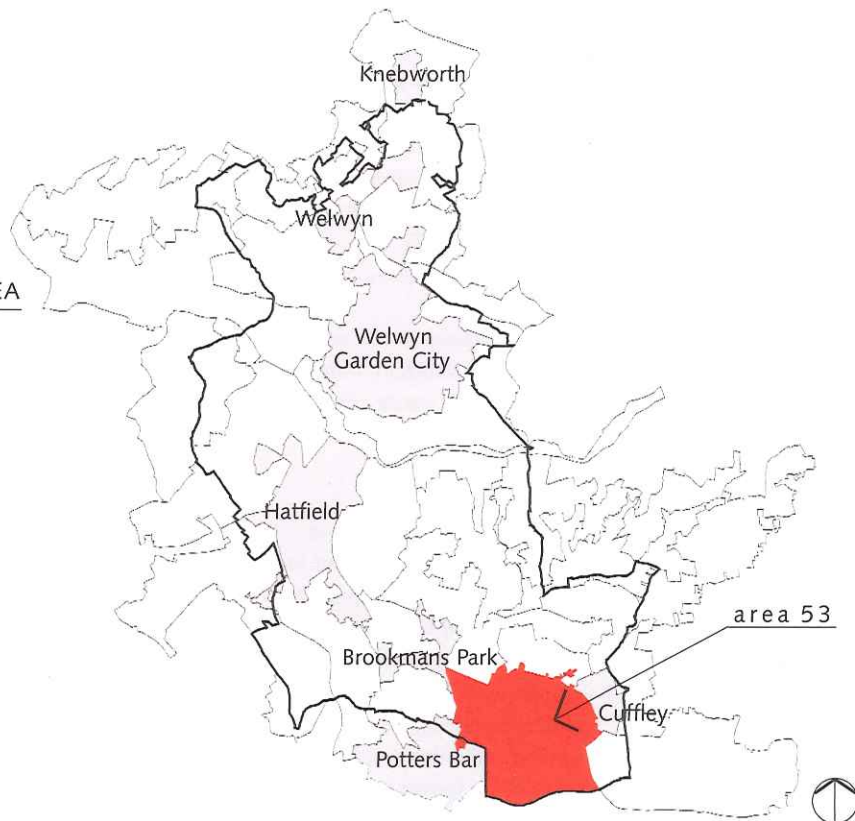
- Distinctive switchbacks by Northaw Great Wood (HCC Landscape Unit)

### District map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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LA100019547 2005



### LOCATION

Northaw Common Parkland lies to the east of Potters Bar. The area borders the M25 and the southern boundary of Hertfordshire, less than 13 miles (20km) from the heart of London, and includes several country houses and estates. The village of Northaw lies on a ridge in the middle of the area and The Ridgeway at Cuffley defines the northern boundary.

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

A strong historical and cultural pattern is evident in the landscape and parkland features are common throughout. Fenced estate boundaries, large blocks of woodland and high hedgerows create a strong sense of enclosure. The settlement is generally confined to defensive sites on the higher ground. The parklands vary in enclosure size and shape but the landscape elements are consistent throughout. Access throughout the area is limited. Horse pasture with fenced boundaries is widespread.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- tight circles of Scots pine, limes and oaks planted in open parkland
- lodge houses and grand entrances to mansions
- restricted views and limited public access
- horse grazing in fenced pasture
- mixed architectural influences
- ridgelines and valley 'bowls'
- hornbeam pollards

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- evidence of deer park boundaries
- swallowholes
- forestry plantation
- sequoia and cedar avenue at Leggatts Park

Leggatts Park •  
view west from Well Road  
(E. Staveley)



**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** The area is a part of the gently undulating South Hertfordshire plateau, a sub-section of the North Thames basin. The large 'bowls' of land defined by narrow ridgelines, such as at Nyn Manor Farm north of Northaw and the ridge and dips further south at Barvin Hill, and narrow uplands of calcareous clay-with-flints are indicative of glacial drift. The soils are generally base-poor overlain with fine loamy soils and some calcareous clays (Windsor series).

**Topography.** Slopes are a prominent feature of this area. Ridgelines cross the area in an east-west direction, forming a series of parallel dips or valley bowls that create contained spaces.

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 10 to 1 in 30

**Altitude range.** 65m to 124m

**Hydrology.** Areas of wet ground are associated with the underlying geology. A number of small ponds are linked to the parklands. Springs issuing water on the higher ground at Well Wood and Northaw House flow into the field ditches and Northaw Brook in the east. The presence of a pumping station and Wells Cottages near Wells Farm is evidence of the presence of underground water supplies.

**Land cover and land use.** Parkland is the dominant land cover. Large areas of forestry engulf the formal landscape features of Nyn Park but the oak avenues and oak and pine circles can still be seen in the plantations. Land use is primarily horse pasture, associated with the proximity to settlement and the poor quality of the land for arable production. Fences are prominent throughout the area.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Extensive woodland includes a combination of woodland types, such as hornbeam coppice, birch woodland and oak/hornbeam woodland in Well Wood and Leggatts Wood. Vast areas of hard and softwood plantations have been planted across Nyn Park. Elm is a common hedgerow species, with ash, hawthorn, bramble and dog rose locally significant. Hedgerow oaks are less significant in the area than the tree avenues and lines that mark the approaches and boundaries of the estates, such as the sequoia and cedar avenue to Leggatts Park and oak avenues at Nyn Park. Field trees are also common in the area. Well Wood (with Northaw Great Wood to the north) is designated SSSI for its oak/hornbeam community, wood pasture and heathland.

**HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCE**

The influence of London on the history and culture of the area is significant. Large country houses have been located in the area for centuries and the landscape pattern has evolved accordingly. Boundaries have been marked by estate architecture (lodges, walls and fences), distinctive vegetation types (avenues and hedge banks) and noticeable changes in landcover pattern. The strong oval shape of the boundary at Nyn Park, clearly evident on aerial photographs, demonstrates the historic use of the park for deer, for which the earliest record is 1766. Northaw Common was wood pasture and heath until the early 19th century, when it was enclosed and the land use changed to woodland and farmland.

**Field pattern.** Fields are generally medium sized and along the southern boundary of the area the boundaries form a distinct linear pattern, associated with the arable land. The field pattern becomes more organic further north and fields are smaller, associated with the historic parkland boundaries and settlement edges. These smaller, often linear fields are used for horse grazing and their boundaries are a mixture of ancient relic hedgerows and post-and-wire fences.

**Transport pattern.** Winding lanes follow the ridgelines with a mixture of woodland and hedgerow margins.

**Settlements and built form.** Settlement is predominantly confined to the narrow ridgelines, such as the village of Northaw and 'The Ridgeway' at Cuffley, which forms a linear strip of large individual houses set well back from the road, quite typical of 20th-century development in the county. Large houses and manors are generally sited on elevated ground with a north/south aspect. Building materials vary and the use of red brick is noticeable. The manors of Northaw House and Northaw Park are of rendered Georgian style.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

Visibility in the area is limited or framed by topography, vegetation and access restrictions. Enclosed pockets of parkland are consistent throughout the area and public long distance views are rare.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This area is quite typical of the south-western part of the county, in which the influence of settlement out of London is very evident.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The site and sound of the M25 and the settlement of Potters Bar present a major impact on the south of the area. New housing developments, such as Barvin Park, have a more localised impact on its setting. The influence and taste of the local abundance of wealthy landowners continues to have a significant impact on the evolution of this landscape character.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Informal recreation is limited and some of the public footpaths are impassable in places. Much of the land is used exclusively for the enjoyment of the private landowners and public use of the land is discouraged for security reasons. In an area where car use is high, parking to enable access to some of the more remote public footpaths is almost non-existent, limiting the range of path users to the immediate vicinity of their home. A number of brushwood fences can be seen in the dip to the north from Northaw Road West indicating the use of a large area of land for equestrian activities.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

The Swedish traveller Peter Kalm wrote the following in 1748: *'between Cheshunt and Bell Bar a great plain, yet not even, but having ridges and hollows...This plain extended nearly four English miles across. An abundance of common ling grew upon it, between which were found a great quantity of bracken and mosses, but only some isolated blades of grass. Sheep were pasturing there. In some places grew hornbeam enough, six feet high and totally thick. The tops were cut off for fuel...This was common land.'* Kalms' Account of his visit to England on his way to America in 1748, Macmillan (1892) in *So that was Hertfordshire* by M. Tompkins, (1998).

*'The National Trust estate at Morven makes a pleasant entry into the countryside'* (Potters Bar Society, September 2000)).

This area appears to be valued for some distinctive aspects (C).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

SSSI at Well Wood.

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>insignificant</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>mixed</b>
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	<b>widespread</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>good</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>intact</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>high</b>
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	<b>high</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>contained</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>coherent</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>unusual</b>

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	<b>Conserve and strengthen</b>	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>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE: CONSERVE AND STRENGTHEN**

- encourage landowners to replace and maintain the historic hedged field boundary pattern, to restore both the landscape pattern and ecological corridors
- ensure that equestrian development reflects and enhances local landscape character. Special care should be taken over fencing, structures and buildings. Use hedges wherever possible in preference to fences
- encourage dissemination of information about the value of parkland and veteran trees for their historic and ecological significance
- encourage landowners to revert from arable to pasture within parklands, wherever possible
- encourage the appropriate management of woodland to establish a rich ground flora and a distinction between different management systems, such as high forest, coppice, coppice-with-standards and wood pasture
- survey and manage parkland and veteran trees for biodiversity value
- ensure new planting is encouraged to maintain age diversity. Landscape improvements should 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
- resist development that could lower the water table within valleys and affect wetland habitats
- resist the targeting of redundant or derelict pasture for development
- promote the creation of buffer zones around wetland habitats to prevent pesticide, herbicide and fertiliser run-off and to provide habitat for wildlife; encourage their linkage to eco-corridors within the wider landscape
- golf courses should only be permitted within historic parklands where:
  - i) important layout and features of the grounds are retained;
  - ii) existing trees are retained and adequate provision is made for their maintenance and management;
  - iii) fairways and greens are designed to complement the historic designed landscape with regard to their location and extent;
  - iv) all new tree and shrub planting uses species already present within the parkland, in similar designs, proportions and mixes, or uses locally native species where these would be more appropriate;
  - v) a proportion of the total area is dedicated and maintained as wildlife habitat;
  - vi) all new water bodies are designed to be either naturalistic or to complement existing artificial historic features;
  - vii) an appropriate buffer zone can be created around historic artefacts within the parkland;
  - viii) all and only necessary buildings and structures are designed to be in keeping with the primary age of the remaining historic character of the site;
  - ix) a long-term management plan is submitted with the planning application, adhered to and updated annually.
- support the practice of creating ornamental parkland features to reflect the 21st century
- provide car park spaces at the ends of public footpaths
- provide interpretation of the complex landscape history of this area and its evolution



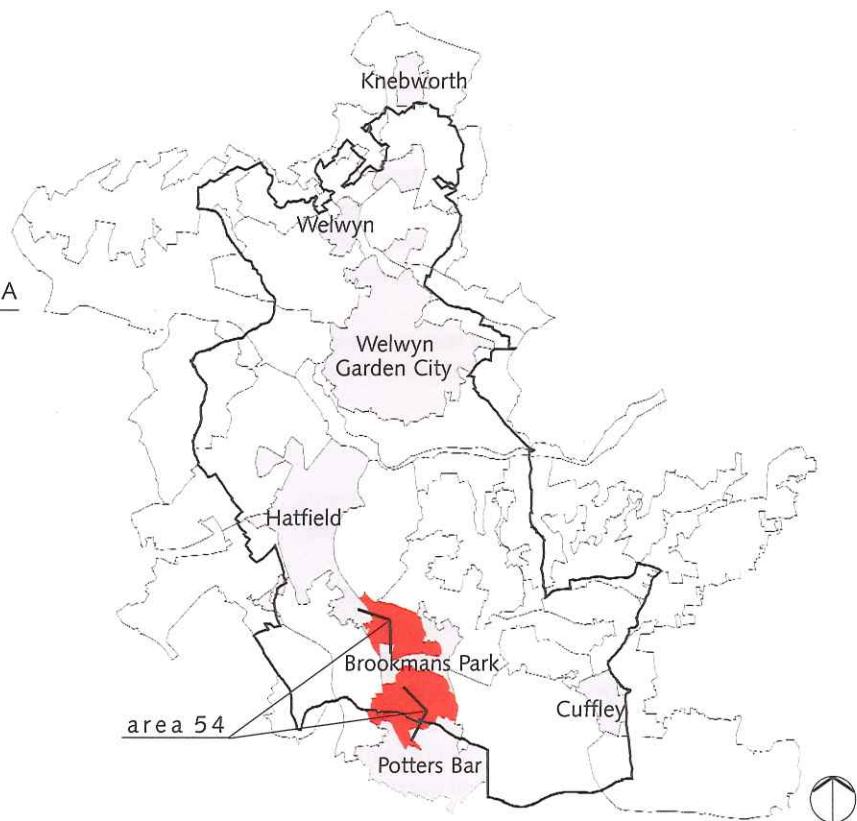
- Leggatts Park with sequoia and cedar avenue on horizon (E. Staveley)

### District map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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LA100019547 2005



#### LOCATION

Potters Bar Parkland borders the northern side of Potters Bar and encloses the distinctively shaped linear settlement of Brookmans Park that stretches between the railway in the west and the Great North Road in the east. The area includes the relic parkland of the Brookmans and Gobions Estates. Part of the Royal Veterinary College accommodates Bolton's Park farm and uses the surrounding facilities and pasture for the treatment of dairy cattle. The area includes the small settlements of Bell Bar and Swanley Bar that lie close to the Great North Road in the east.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

A strong historical and cultural pattern is evident in the landscape and parkland features are common throughout, although the landscape has evolved to accommodate modern urban fringe uses, such as recreation. This is a fragmented landscape, with a strong urban influence. The area has a more rural character further north, along Bulls Lane, where it is relatively open with good access and long views. There are relic parkland features at Gobions Park within the public open space and nature reserve, while the more informal estate farmland with parkland trees is used for dairy farming associated with the veterinary college. The Brookmans Park golf course contains historic parkland trees. Fenced and walled estate boundaries can still be found and the ornamental garden planting can still be seen in the linear wood called The Legg, west of Bell Bar.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- relic estate planting and landscape features
- relic estate architecture
- extensive areas of recreation
- urban edge influences
- ridgelines and valleys
- open views
- mixed farming

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- evidence of estate boundaries
- Gobions Folly arch
- Repton landscape at Brookman's Park
- historic settlement at Bell Bar
- swallowholes

Brookmans Park golf club, •  
Repton planting (E. Staveley)



## PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** The area is a part of the gently undulating South Hertfordshire plateau, a sub-section of the North Thames basin. While the narrow uplands are calcareous clay-with-flints, the localised ridges and shallow valleys are typical of glacial drift, overlying a layer of chalk that gives rise to the swallowhole formations in Deep Bottom and Gobions Woods. The soils are generally base-poor overlain with fine loamy soils and some calcareous clays (Windsor series).

**Topography.** Minor ridgelines cross the area in an east-west direction, forming a series of parallel dips and slopes that create contained spaces.

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 15 to 1 in 30

**Altitude range.** The historic mansions of Gobions, Brookmans and Bolton were all located at the high points, between 110m and 125m. The land drops to 85m in the dips between.

**Hydrology.** Intermittent small ponds are scattered through the area. Much of the land is drained by field ditches and there is remnant wetland vegetation along the stream courses. A number of large, ornamental ponds are present in the area, relics of the 18th-century pleasure grounds.

**Land cover and land use.** Parkland is the dominant land cover around the north of Potters Bar and has provided the framework for a variety of recreational pursuits.

Intermittent mixed woodlands provide a mature setting for settlement and recreation. Two extensive golf courses make use of the historic landscape structure. Other land uses include the public open space of Gobions Park, low intensity farming around White Lodge Farm and dairy farming comprising fenced pasture around the dairy farm at the Royal Veterinary College.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Elm is a common hedgerow species, with ash, hawthorn, bramble, blackthorn and dog rose locally significant. Field oak trees are also common in the area and the parkland trees at Brookmans Park continue to be an important landscape feature. Oak, Corsican pine and field maple trees are apparent in the discrete woodlands. Gobions Wood is species-rich along the stream course and contains relic 17th-century gardens. Mature vegetation borders the watercourses and osier beds can be found around the water at Gobions open space. Neutral to acid grassland is also a local feature, with saw-wort a characteristic plant.

## HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCE

The influence of London on the history and culture of the area is significant. Land boundaries have been marked by estate architecture (lodges, walls and fences), distinctive vegetation types (species and pattern) and noticeable changes in land cover. The Gobions and Brookmans Park mansions have both disappeared; although elements of their parkland landscapes are still clearly evident. Repton worked on the grounds of Brookmans Park, part of which survives as a golf course. Gobions Park was built in the 16th century for the family of Sir Thomas More. In 1740 it was enlarged for Sir Jeremy Sambroke and a guidebook to England published in 1762 noted that the place had been made '*one of the most remarkable curiosities in England*'. The parkland included features such as a grotto, temple, canal, statues and bowling green. Once the most visited park in the area, the grounds are now an important public open space and wildlife reserve although the house has been demolished. It is now marked only by a red-brick 'Folly Arch', a very early example of a medieval revival and the last remnant of the 16th-century estate.

**Field pattern.** Irregular field shapes are predominantly enclosed by fences, particularly on the land used for dairy cattle around the veterinary college and paddocks along Bulls Lane. Field sizes are generally small to medium in size. A cluster of small fields to the north of Bulls Lane is associated with the smallholdings and nurseries. Hedgerows without trees and tree lines also define field pattern.

**Transport pattern.** The railway line that generally defines the western boundary of the area is lined by vegetation that has established along the slopes of the cutting. The sinuous route of the A1000, also known as the Great North Road, marks the eastern boundary and settlement from Brookmans Park has spread along its length. Hawkshead Lane runs along the ridge from Bolton's Park. Bulls Lane in the north of the area is a winding, partially sunken lane with mature hedgerow verges arching over it.

**Settlements and built form.** Historically the country houses were built on the elevated ground with a southern aspect. The modern settlement of Brookmans Park spreads down the slope and stops at the railway line. The small settlements of Swanley Bar and Bell Bar originated from the tollhouses along the Great North Road and have retained their pre-20th century character. Many of the houses in these settlements date back to the Tudor and Georgian periods and are of locally traditional construction, such as half-timber and red brick.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

Topography and vegetation limit visibility in the shallow valleys, while long-distance views are good from the higher land. Discrete woodland belts along the dips divide the landscape, separating Brookmans Park Village from the settlements to the north and south. The sound of the trains and road traffic either side of the area increase the impact of these transport corridors on the character area.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This area is rather typical of the impact of development on the former parkland areas of the county. Distinctive elements of the former parklands are discrete elements within the predominantly 20th-century landscape.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Potters Bar presents a major impact on the south of the area. Brookmans Park has a localised, but significant impact on the historic parkland to the north and south of it. The transmitting stations to the east can be seen throughout the area. The parkland features of Brookman's park have a very localised impact.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Access is generally good but public access to the countryside for informal recreation is limited to Gobions open space and the public footpaths. Two extensive golf courses utilise the historic parkland setting that is exclusively used by their members.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

The distinctiveness of this area, and in particular the Gobions site, is highly valued (B).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

Public Open Space.

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>widespread</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>not obvious</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>declining</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>high</b>
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	<b>high</b>

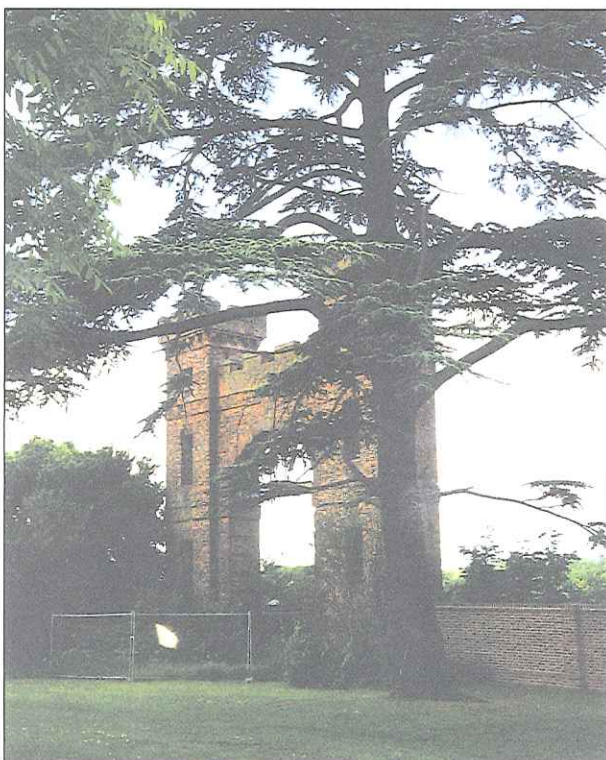
**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	<b>apparent</b>
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	<b>prominent</b>
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	<b>interrupted</b>
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	<b>variable</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>partial</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>incoherent</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>unusual</b>

<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	<b>Improve and restore</b>	Restore condition to maintain character
		<b>WEAK</b>	<b>MODERATE</b>	<b>STRONG</b>
		<b>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		

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

- in existing woodlands encourage the replacement of softwoods with indigenous native deciduous communities, hedgebank management and management to encourage the re-establishment of a species-rich ground flora
- improve public access arrangements to woodlands, with attention to car park design and safety
- use ancient hedge and field boundaries to select the most appropriate location for woodland expansion
- encourage the reversal of habitat fragmentation and the creation and improvement of habitat links to create eco-corridors
- replant hedges along former hedge lines, especially where they can replace fencing, as a means of building up eco-corridors
- when replanting woodlands use indigenous stock of local provenance wherever possible.
- 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 parklands and gardens. Ornamental species should only be used to replace damaged or over-mature specimens, where appropriate
- encourage the establishment of buffer strips of semi-natural vegetation along all watercourses, to prevent pesticide, herbicide and fertiliser run-off and provide habitat for wildlife, avoiding potential conflict with recreational use and linking in to ecological corridors within the wider landscape where possible
- encourage landowners and developers to retain and increase ponds and wetland areas to enhance their visual and wildlife functions.
- improve the management of old meadows and pastures by ceasing fertiliser and herbicide application and introducing sensitive grassland management such as late hay cutting or low-density livestock grazing
- ensure that the surroundings of converted and new buildings are designed and maintained to be in keeping with their agricultural surroundings by ensuring that 'garden' details are screened from view where possible and native species are used for hedging and tree planting around the perimeter. Exotic/ornamental species should only be used in close proximity to the dwelling
- encourage effective management of planting along transport corridors to ensure thinning, selective felling and replanting is undertaken to achieve a varied age structure and a species mix that reflects local landscape character.
- provide public interpretation of the complex landscape history and evolution of the area and more informal public access



• Gobions Park folly arch  
(E. Staveley)

### District map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Welwyn Hatfield Council

LA100019547 2005



### LOCATION

Theobalds Estate is located in the south east of the county, parallel to and slightly overlapping the M25 and the southern boundary of Hertfordshire, less than 13 miles (20km) from the heart of London. It includes a small part of the Lea Valley flood plain.

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Complex layers of history are evident in the cultural pattern of the landscape, in which mixed farmland and parkland are a dominant feature. A strong pattern of discrete woodland blocks and medium to large open arable fields create an unusual patchwork of ecologically rich and sterile patches across the undulating landform. Low, managed hedgerows allow long views across the arable slopes to the M25 in the south. Isolated settlement is generally confined to defensive sites on the higher ground. Small farms are scattered across the estate.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- discrete woodlands and estate farmland
- geometric field pattern
- undulating landform
- horse grazing
- mansions and isolated farms
- transport infrastructure
- long straight boundaries

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Temple Bar and Theobalds Palace (SAMs)
- Soper's Viaduct
- waymarked routes and linear 'rides'
- Theobalds Park College
- Gunsite Stud Farm
- Roman road / Ermine Street
- evidence of deer park boundaries
- the New River

Theobalds Estate •  
(E. Staveley)



**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** This area is a part of the gently undulating South Hertfordshire plateau, which is a subsection of the North Thames basin. There is a change of soils across the area from slowly permeable clay over Tertiary clay in the west (Windsor series), via loamy or clayey soils over chalky till ((Beccles 3 series) to deep stoneless well-drained silty soils over Aeolian silty drift in the east (Hamble 2 series).

**Topography.** This area is a south-east facing slope with a high point near Woodgreen Farm.

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 10 to 1 in 30

**Altitude range.** 27m to 95m

**Hydrology.** A network of springs and streams feed into the New River in the east and areas of wet ground are concurrent with the underlying geology. Northaw Brook enters this area in the west, passes under the viaduct and links in to Cuffley Brook. A number of ornamental water bodies are located around Theobalds Park College and Temple House.

**Land cover and land use.** Wooded arable farmland is widespread across the area, especially in the west. The influence of Theobalds Park and Temple House can be seen to the east, with more parkland and the use of land for pasture rather than arable cultivation. The farmland is compartmentalised by geometric woodland blocks, with prominent fences around pasture fields in the east.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Evidence of ornamental planting and landscape features can be found within the woodlands of Theobalds Estate, e.g. lime, horse chestnut and rhododendrons. A high percentage of common elm in the hedgerows is consistent across the area. Thorns, brambles and dog roses are also significant local hedgerow species.

**HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

The influence of London on the history and culture of the area is omnipresent. Large country homes have been located in the Enfield Chase area for centuries and the landscape has been shaped substantially by wealthy landowners and visiting royalty. Land boundaries have been marked by estate architecture (lodges, walls and fences), distinctive vegetation types (avenues and hedge-banks) and noticeable changes in landcover pattern.

- Theobalds Park was created by James I as a hunting park, the largest known in England. It enclosed a large part of southern Hertfordshire within a park pale or wall, but was shortlived (see below). In 1564 Sir William Cecil, Queen Elizabeth I's leading statesman, bought the manor of Theobalds and parts of the surrounding manors. In 1608 James I persuaded Sir Robert Cecil to exchange it for Hatfield Park and the manor became a Royal Palace. A process of enlargement culminated in 1650 with a park covering 2,508 acres, enclosed by a 9-foot high wall. In that year 15,608 trees within the park were marked as being suitable for naval use, indicative of its use for timber production, as well as fishing and hawking, although its primary use was for hunting. On the execution of Charles I the estate passed into the hands of

Parliament, which demolished the palace, deforested the chase and installed several tenant farmers. A patchwork of discrete woodland blocks and relatively rectangular fields of arable land was introduced, a process that removed most traces of the former deer-park. After the Restoration, Charles II granted the estate to the Duke of Albemarle, complete with the tenancy arrangements. Thus within the span of 90 years the second largest building in England and the largest deer park were created and destroyed. Boundary banks to the former estate can be found at Hammond Street and south of the M25.

- Woodgreen hamlet, which was on the edge of the park in 1611, was moved to a new site in 1620. The site was later deserted and then emparked in 1782, a reverse of the pattern with Theobalds.

**Field pattern.** Since the destruction of the park, the large geometric pattern and size of fields has remained fairly constant, with the organic woodland shapes breaking up the regularity. The pattern is especially noticeable on the Theobalds Estate, around Burnt Farm, highlighted by the cruciform shape of the waymarked routes.

**Transport pattern.** The M25 is a major influence along the southern boundary of this area, with permanent noise, movement and light intrusion.

**Settlements and built form.** Settlement is dispersed across the area. The manor houses are located on the river valley slopes in the east.

- Theobalds Park, a red brick mansion dating from 1763 and much added to in the 19th and early 20th centuries, faces south east. Its Edwardian tower can be seen across the lower ground of the Lea Valley. Within its grounds stands the triumphal arch known as Temple Bar (SAM), designed by Sir Christopher Wren, erected in Fleet Street in 1672 and moved to its present site in 1888.
- Temple House is a restored 18th-century manor house.
- Gunsite Stud is a new stable building nestled into a fold of the southern slopes, finished with white rendered walls and terracotta roof tiles.
- Theobalds Manor is a red brick Queen Anne style house adjacent to the stud buildings. Of Burghley's palace only a window and a strip of brickwork remain (now a Scheduled Ancient Monument).

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

Visibility is unusually good for the south east of Hertfordshire. Views become more restricted around the country houses on the eastern slopes, limited by access restrictions and vegetation. There are long views over low hedges and more open arable land from the waymarked route across the Theobalds Estate. It is not a tranquil area.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** Farmland and parkland are very typical of the stretch of landscape to either side of the M25 corridor. Although this area is rich in historic interest, much of it is not immediately obvious within the landscape

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The site and sound of the M25 presents a major impact on the south of the area, with the A10 bisecting the area on its eastern edge. Sopwell's Viaduct is a distinctive feature. The manor houses are well sited and only have a local impact.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

The waymarked routes across the area are well used and access is good for walkers. The paths are wide and well surfaced. Camping facilities are located on Ermine Street adjacent to the M25.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

While variable, overall this is a highly regarded area, particularly around Theobalds Park, and might have even higher value if the interests of people in North London were also considered (B).

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>insignificant</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>good</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>intact</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>low</b>
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	<b>low</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>interrupted</b>
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	<b>widely visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>partial</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>coherent</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>unusual</b>

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	<b>Conserve and strengthen</b>	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>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING  
CHANGE: CONSERVE AND STRENGTHEN**

- encourage landowners to safeguard existing hedges, increase hedged field boundaries, create permanent grass strips around field margins and prevent spray drift, using financial incentives as available.
- encourage the planting of new hedges along historic field boundaries to conserve the landscape character of the area and reinforce ecological corridors
- encourage the planting of only locally indigenous trees and shrubs, of local provenance if possible
- consider the provision of interpretation and amenity space around Temple Bar

### District map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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#### LOCATION

Rectangular area between Cuffley and Goff's Oak, south to boundary with Theobald's Estate

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Open arable farmland squeezed between two urban areas and linking two areas of former parkland - Ponsbourne to the north and the Theobald's Estate to the south. The local topography is very noticeable, swooping down from the north and made more obvious by the lack of woodland, hedges and settlements.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- strongly undulating open arable farmland
- only one farm
- Cuffley Brook runs north-south, rather than east-west like most watercourses in this area
- the railway extends the urban edge of Cuffley to north and south, providing a very strong western boundary to this area

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- the monoculture and lack of incident reinforce the drama of the landform

Cheshunt Common •  
from Cuffley Hill  
(HCC Landscape Unit)



**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** Slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged clay soils, mostly with brown subsoils, over Tertiary clay (Windsor series)

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 12 to 1 in 24

**Altitude range.** 55m to 100m

**Hydrology.** Cuffley Brook flows southwards through most of this area and eventually joins the river Lea

**Land cover and land use.** This area is almost exclusively arable farmland, with a few scattered blocks of woodland.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** In the northern part of this area there is one block of woodland plus a few associated fragments and one area on the north-western edge of Goff's Oak. There are very few field boundaries.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Formerly common land.

**Field pattern.** Where a field pattern is visible, it is regular to geometric and medium scale, with some irregular fields on the south-western edge of Goff's Oak.

**Transport pattern.** The only road in this area is the B156 which links Cuffley and Goff's Oak and from which extensive views of the area can be gained both north and south. There is only one footpath in the area, linking the eastern edge of Cuffley with Brook Farm.

**Settlements and built form.** There are no settlements within this area and very few dwellings - two farms and a cottage. However, it serves as a buffer between the two urban settlements of Goff's Oak and Cuffley.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

This is quite a dramatic landscape, particularly when viewed from the swooping B156 between Cuffley and Goff's Oak, when the open, undulating arable farmland can be clearly seen. It is a unified, simple landscape with strongly defined boundaries to east and west, a breath of rural fresh air between the dense urban settlements.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This is a most unusual area in this part of Hertfordshire, much more open and unwooded than any areas nearby.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The urban settlements to east and west hem in the area and give it a confined character, reinforced by the only road in the area cutting across at a narrow point, so that the full extent of the area cannot be seen.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There is only one public footpath in this area, linking the B156 to the northern boundary of the Theobald's Estate.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This is a valued landscape (C).

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	localised
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	N/A
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	relic
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	poor
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	declining
<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>	insignificant
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	relic
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	widely visible
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	open
<i>Visual unity:</i>	unified
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	unusual

<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	<b>Improve and restore</b>	Restore condition to maintain character
		<b>WEAK</b>	<b>MODERATE</b>	<b>STRONG</b>
		<b>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		

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

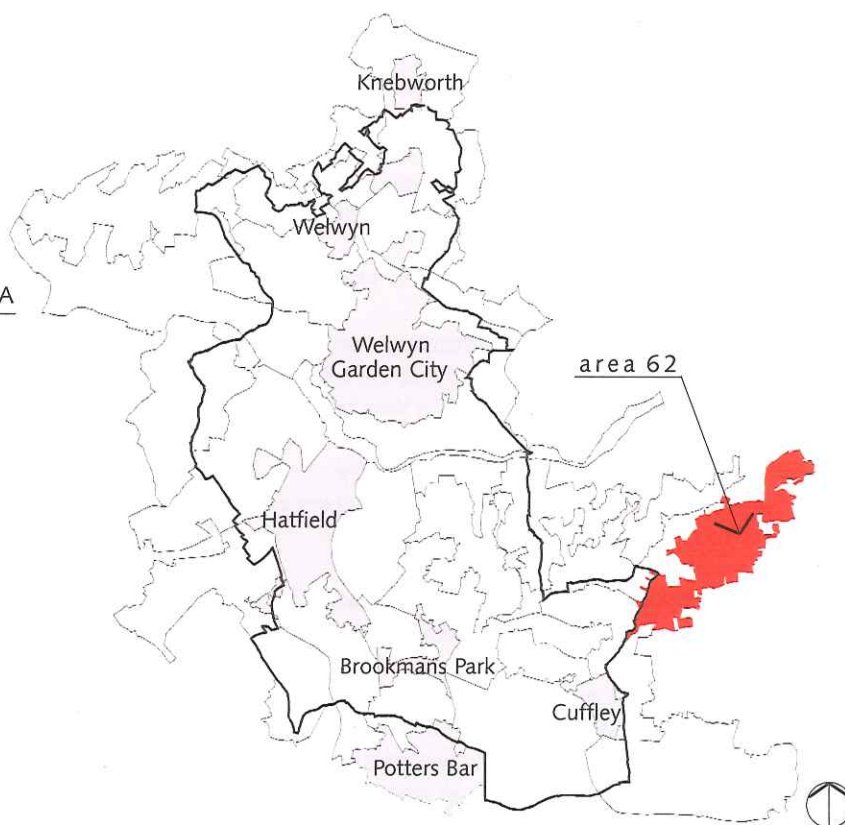
- discourage the planting of new hedgerows or woodland within the open farmland, which would conflict with its distinctive landscape character
- encourage the extension of existing woodlands to retain the simplicity and scale of this character area
- encourage the establishment and management of conservation headlands around field boundaries, beetle banks and other low-key means of improving biodiversity
- seek to create more public access to this valued landscape, especially from the adjoining urban settlements
- seek reversion from arable to grassland where appropriate and possible, to restore its historic character, but to cattle or sheep grazing rather than horse pasture, which is of low ecological potential
- should the re-establishment of grassland prove possible, ensure that it is managed to maximise its ecological potential

### District map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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#### LOCATION

Extensive area of woodland to the west of Hoddesdon, between Hammond Hill and Hertford Heath, divided into two sub-areas, Wormley-Hoddesdon Park Wood South and Wormley-Hoddesdonpark Woods North (sic). The northern area is further sub-divided by Ermine Street.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Dense and extensive hornbeam coppice and forestry plantations in a linked series of woodlands on strongly undulating terrain. A very unified landscape with few other features. The north-south line of the ancient Ermine Street through the woodland is a strong historic feature.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- dense hornbeam coppice ancient woodland with forestry plantations
- strongly undulating landform
- few roads within woodland; narrow lanes, typically north-south and east-west, along some perimeters
- no settlement
- small pasture fields within or on edge of woodland
- surrounded by pasture and arable land

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- relic laid hedges on woodland perimeter of some woodland blocks
- nature reserves (Hoddesdon Park Wood, Wormley Wood)
- Ermine Street
- extensive possibly Iron Age grid pattern of former field boundaries within woods



Anemones in Hoddesdonpark Wood •  
(J. Crew)

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** Acid gravel deposits over London clay. Slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged fine loamy over clay soils, over chalky till (Beccles 3 series)

**Topography.** Strongly undulating and sloping slightly towards the east. The rather dramatically incised undulating landform, together with the hydrological influence of the streams, is masked by the vegetation.

**Degree of slope.** Locally 1 in 15; generally 1 in 110

**Altitude range.** 55m to 112m

**Hydrology.** Meandering high-quality streams run eastward along the shallow valleys (Wormleybury Brook and Spital Brook). There are several ponds, especially in Westfield Grove.

**Land cover and land use.** Broadleaf woodland is the overriding feature of this area, with a secondary land use as recreation. The woodland cover is extensive. There are several car parks and picnic areas, all in reasonable condition but rather gloomy, and very localised evidence of former mineral extraction in the woodland near Hoddesdonbury.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Broxbourne Woods has been designated a proposed Special Area of Conservation under the EC Habitats Directive as one of only two areas in the whole country of extensive hornbeam/oak woodland. It is now a Management Zone of over 320 ha. The northern area consists of a series of discrete woodland blocks which have developed from ancient wood pasture and heath and retain many large oak and hornbeam pollards along the boundaries. It exhibits a varied woodland structure, wide habitat diversity and rich ground flora. Despite extensive clearance and conifer replanting, the remaining semi-natural woodland is of national importance as an example of lowland south-eastern sessile oak/hornbeam woodland. Hoddesdonpark Wood is particularly well structured, with a wide age-range of oak over a varied shrub layer including coppiced hornbeam and hazel, with widespread silver birch, downy birch and aspen.

The southern area is also sessile oak/hornbeam woodland, with pedunculate oak, birch and ash, hazel, elder, field maple, dogwood, hawthorn and blackthorn. The dominant ground flora species include bluebell, wood anemone, honeysuckle and dog's mercury. Along the deeply cut streams alder has developed with a characteristic rich flora, including some uncommon species. Other habitats include marsh and semi-improved acid grassland on relic areas of old commons/greens. Bencroft Wood has a relic laid edge on a bank. The pockets of pasture on the southern edge of the woodland are possibly relics of former mineral extraction. There are a few pollarded hornbeams on Ermine Street.

**HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Wormley Wood has been mapped as a major woodland block for 500 years. Most of the remaining woods were wood-pasture acidic oak/hornbeam/bracken/heath communities until relatively recently. Hoddesdonpark Wood was probably converted to high forest in the 18th century from wood pasture and contains a moated site which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The whole area is predominantly ancient woodland, of high historic significance, with blocks of more modern plantations within it. Ermine Street is of national importance as a good example of a surviving Roman road.

**Field pattern.** There are extensive relic field boundaries within the woodland, indicative of very ancient field systems predating the woodland cover.

**Transport pattern.** Ermine Street is a pre-Roman road which maintains its integrity in this area. The more modern transport pattern exists mainly on an east-west axis along woodland edges, such as White Stubbs Lane, Pembridge Lane and Lord Street. These lanes are narrow and winding, with tall hornbeam hedges and no verges. There are also many tracks through the woodland.

**Settlements and built form.** There are no settlements or country houses, and few areas of open land.

**OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

English Nature Natural Area Profile: London Basin.

English Nature SSSI notification.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The area is widely visible as an extensive block of woodland from high points to the south. Within the area, views are limited by the dense vegetation. The extensive nature of the woodland is very apparent, giving a large-scale aspect to the landscape. Within much of the woodland there is an apparent lack of recent management, with overgrown coppice and dying silver birch, and an air of confinement, contrasting with more open areas of recent coppice management.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** The Broxbourne Woods complex includes two SSSIs, an NNR and a proposed SAC, designations that reflect its rarity and importance. Hertfordshire has a particular responsibility for oak-hornbeam woodlands, with a large proportion of the national total. The complex also contains some key wood pasture and heathland SSSI sites. It is most unusual to have a unified block of ancient woodland of this size, representing an invaluable resource (Annex 1 of the EU Habitats Directive).

**VISUAL IMPACT**

There is neither visual impact from built development nor land-use change and the sole distinctive feature of the entire area is its use as hornbeam coppice. At a very local level there is limited evidence of mineral extraction in the woodland near Hoddesdonbury.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Noted recreational land uses: walking (nature reserve). The chainwalk runs north/south through the western edge of the woodland. Footpaths are actually fairly limited within the woodland and wet conditions can make them very heavy going. There are several car parks and picnic areas, some better managed than others.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This is one of the most valued areas in the county for its distinctiveness (A).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

SSSIs at Wormley-Hoddesdon Park Wood South and Wormley-Hoddesdonpark Woods North.

National Nature Reserve (NNR) in part.

Proposed Special Area of Conservation (pSAC).

Broxbourne Woods are recognised as a High Biodiversity Area (HBA) within the Biodiversity Action Plan for the county, for its woodlands.

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>insignificant</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>mature</b>
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	<b>widespread</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>good</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>intact</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>prominent</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>widely visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>contained</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>unified</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>unique</b>

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	<b>Safeguard and manage</b>
	<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>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		

## STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE: SAFEGUARD AND MANAGE

- promote the development of natural woodland, via natural regeneration or the use of seed/plants of local provenance, as a buffer around large blocks of ancient woodland and ensure that developers and landowners are aware of this objective
- design and manage woodland car parks to maximise public access, perceptions of personal safety and the use of woodland products.
- focus woodland management around major points of public access
- seek to improve footpath surfaces through the woods, without bringing in unsuitable hard detailing; provide segregated routes for pedestrians and equestrians, since the latter often make routes impassable for the former in wet weather
- promote initiatives to reintroduce traditional woodland management and to encourage new markets for wood products
- diversify the structure of existing woodland to increase its nature conservation and landscape value by creating a varied age structure
- enhance plantation woodland by encouraging a more semi-natural character by eg. diversifying species, retaining some standard trees, allowing some neglected coppice to develop into high forest
- promote the restoration of degraded sites associated with former mineral extraction to maximise their nature conservation potential
- ensure that any proposed woodland planting will contribute to the local landscape rather than impoverishing or destroying an existing and valued habitats or historic artefact, such as a bank or ditch or, in this area, relic field pattern within the woodland
- resist any development or mineral extraction within woodland
- ensure that adequate consideration is given to the use of Tree Preservation Orders as a protective mechanism
- address the issue of the provision of additional local footpath and recreational networks, ensuring a separation where possible between footpaths and bridleways within the woodland



• Oaks in Hoddesdonpark Wood  
(J. Crew)

District map showing location of  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Welwyn Hatfield Council

LA100019547 2005



#### LOCATION

Linear east-west area between the A1(M) in the west (Lemsford) and the western urban edge of Hertford

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Pastoral farmland within a flat valley landform. Grazing marshes along both banks of the river (which is not a prominent feature) and parkland which is well integrated and locally prominent. Mineral extraction tends to be on the valley side rather than in the valley bottom, so there are few extensive waterbodies except at the western end between Hatfield and Hatfield Hyde.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- flat pastoral valley of the river Lea, with derelict meadows, scrub and trees.
- open in parts; in others masked by wetland vegetation.
- parkland is a dominant local feature.
- the river is not a dominant landscape feature.
- shallow valley slopes are screened by wetland and associated vegetation

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- floodplain marked to south by parallel hedged road, which screens views in
- mansion and parkland at Woolmer's Park, parkland at Holwell Court
- Cecil Saw Mill
- Stanborough Lakes

North bank, River Lea, •  
near Water Hall Farm  
(HCC Landscape Unit)



**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** In the valley floor the soils are stoneless mainly calcareous clay soils over river alluvium, with deep, well-drained fine loamy and sandy soils, locally flinty, over glaciofluvial drift on the shallow slopes (Ludford series)

**Topography.** Flat valley floor

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 400 fall along the river between Stanborough and Hertford

**Altitude range.** 45m to 70m along length

**Hydrology.** Valley of river Lea. In this area the river valley consists of a broad suite of habitats, within which agricultural improvements to floodplain meadows and gravel extraction have had a significant impact, although some gravel pits now provide a significant habitat in their own right. The physical habitat of the Lee between Welwyn and Hertford is good, with medium to fast water flow over a gravel riverbed. It supports 15 coarse fish species, including barbel (*Barbus barbus*), which is a noted species within the EC Habitats Directive. Stanborough Lake, to the south of Welwyn Garden City, is a 14-acre stillwater lake much used for fishing. It is now home to the zander, an illegally introduced predatory fish.

**Land cover and land use.** Pastoral farmland and parkland, with limited mineral extraction, some of which has been restored to fishing lakes (viz. Stanborough Lake). Derelict meadows are a feature of the area, with scrub and trees giving it a well-vegetated appearance.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Consists of discrete woodlands, mainly oak and ash with some willow and poplar, and treed thorn hedgerows where the valley has been enclosed. Wetland species, such as willow, poplar and alder, can be found around those minerals sites restored to wetland use, either planted as part of the restoration or developing in the new habitat. The Lemsford-Stanborough and Water Hall-Hertford stretches of the river are of reasonable water quality and support a good flora, while at Stanborough the reedswamp derived from old cress beds adjacent to the Lee and the old willow carr associated with it are noted in the Biodiversity Action Plan for Hertfordshire. Most of the floodplain grasslands of this area have been lost to mineral extraction or have been 'improved' and are therefore of reduced biodiversity.

**HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

The main influences on this area are the parklands on both north and south-facing slopes which were established to take advantage of the river valley landform and views. It is an area with a long history of settlement, viz. the moated site at Roxford (SAM), which is within the present floodplain.

**Field pattern.** The field pattern in this area is not obvious because much of the grazing marsh is not confined by hedgerows. Around the parkland the field pattern is more distinctive; elsewhere it is screened by vegetation or disturbed by mineral extraction. Where the field pattern is evident the field sizes are large.

**Transport pattern.** The few river crossings are over unobtrusive brick bridges. This area is bounded to the west by the A414 along its northern edge and to the east by the B158 along its southern edge. Elsewhere there are no roads, although the Lea Valley Walk continues the line of the B158 west of Essendon. The road to the south lies on the edge of the floodplain and is used as a commuter route. It is narrow, twisting and well hedged, permitting few views over the valley, and has no verges. The A414 lies above the floodplain.

**Settlements and built form.** The settlement pattern in this area is of isolated houses or farms and parkland, with the associated mansion on higher ground to the north. The building style is vernacular and dates from at least the 17th century. It consists mainly of brick-and-tile and some timber-framed buildings (Water Hall). Bridges across the river Lea are generally of yellow brick of late 19th or 20th century nondescript design. At the western end of this area, towards the boundary with Hatfield Park, there is a Victorian brick sawmill.

**OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

Pevsner, N., rev. Cherry, B., *Hertfordshire*, Penguin (2000).  
*Biodiversity Action Plan for Hertfordshire* (p.54).  
 English Heritage *List of Scheduled Ancient Monuments*.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

This area is widely visible from the valley slopes to either side. Within the area views are filtered by trees within the river valley. This is a small-scale landscape contained by the landform of the opposing valley slopes and the vegetation. It has a unified character. It is not, however, completely tranquil due to the noise of traffic on the B158 and the A414.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This is not a unique landscape but the historic interest of the parklands and the ecological value of the river corridor should be conserved and improved where possible.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

There is little visual impact upon this area except from traffic on the A414 at its western end and this has only a localised impact. Within the river valley there appears to be little mineral extraction, which has taken place on the lower slopes of the areas to either side and is occasionally visible from within the area. The distinctive features of this area are the lack of development and the occasional large houses such as Woolmer's Park and Water Hall.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

No recreational land uses were noted although there are footpaths and waymarked routes along part of the river. Their condition is fair with narrow footpaths and poor surfacing and maintenance.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This stretch of the Lea or Lee Valley appears not to be valued as a distinctive landscape (E).

**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>relic</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>not obvious</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>declining</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>low</b>
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	<b>high</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>interrupted</b>
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	<b>widely visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>partial</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>unified</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>unusual</b>

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	<b>MODERATE</b>	Improve and reinforce	<b>Improve and conserve</b>	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>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		

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

- support the Environment Agency's initiative in encouraging a partnership approach to habitat management in the Lea at Bayfordbury
- encourage habitat protection within the Upper Lee to safeguard the survival and dispersal of notable species, including the barbel
- ensure that any proposals for development within this area pay due regard to safeguarding its important associated historic and ecological features
- promote the use of low-density stock grazing as a management technique
- ensure that any further proposals for mineral extraction in this or adjoining areas avoid areas of historic or ecological importance and are adequately screened from view
- encourage the development of best-practice guidelines to safeguard existing nature conservation interest in working mineral extraction sites to create suitable conditions for maximising nature conservation potential and to minimise management needs within restored sites
- ensure that all landowners and developers are aware of the BAP objective of creating a 'necklace' of inter-connected wetland habitats along the river valleys
- resist the targeting of redundant or derelict pasture for development
- resist development that could lower the water table within river valleys and affect wetland habitats



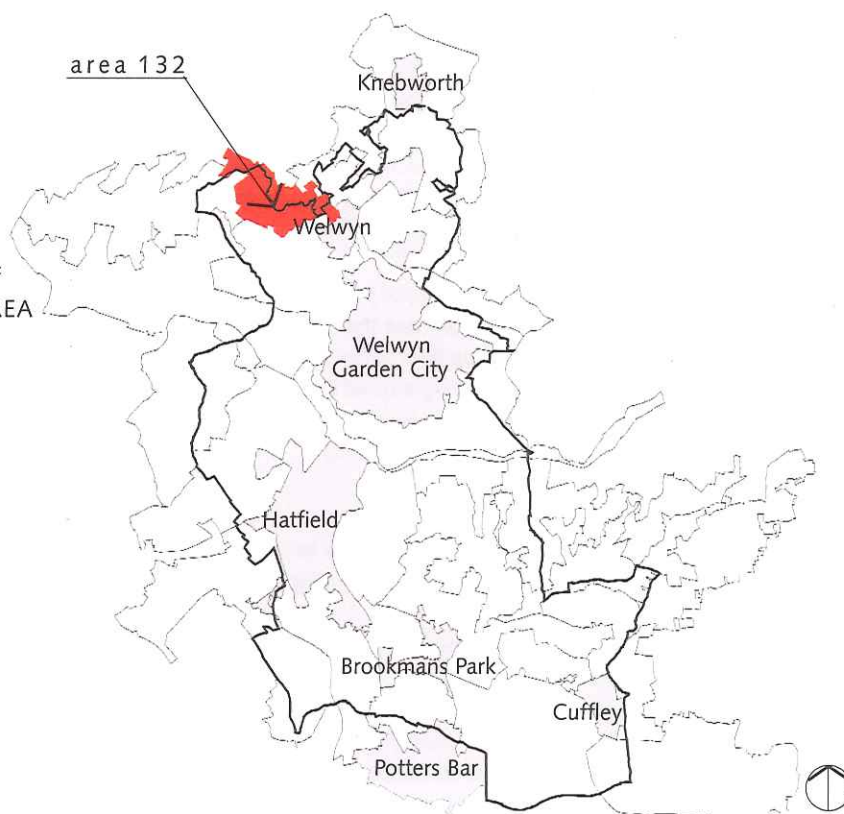
• Woolmer's Park  
(HCC Landscape Unit)

District Map showing location of  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Welwyn Hatfield Council

LA100019547 2005



#### LOCATION

The area stretches approximately 4km along the upper course of the Mimram valley, to the south of Codicote Bottom, encompassing the broad valley slopes to the north and south of the water course.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

A broad curving open valley, with gently undulating slopes and a flat open valley floor. West of Pulmer Water the valley floor is flat and agricultural cultivation has been taken right up to the water's edge in places, rendering the watercourse almost invisible. In contrast to the east a narrow sub area of pasture follows the flood plain of the River Mimram which begins to braid and then sharply turns a 90 degrees corner southwards. The settlements of Old Welwyn and Danesbury enclose the eastern end of the valley and a distinct change in land cover and vegetation associated with the underlying geology and soils forms the north western end. The southern slopes of the valley are much broader and more gently undulating than the

northern slopes. Arable crops and the lack of hedgerow vegetation create a uniform character, texture and colour to the majority of the landscape. The area feels open and light with many opportunities to take views right across the valley. Despite its proximity to settlement, the area has a fairly remote character.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- gently undulating broad valley slopes
- sinuous country lanes
- isolated residential and farm buildings in red brick
- regular field pattern
- flood meadows and wetland habitats adjacent to River Mimram east of Pulmer Water
- arable cropping
- lack of hedgerows and woodlands

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- pollarded and coppiced willows at Singlers Marsh wildlife site
- informal recreational activities in Singlers Marsh area
- forded river crossings
- open cast lime quarry and associated planting



- Arable valley, Kimpton Road (E.Staveley)

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** The soils are mainly shallow well drained calcareous coarse and fine loamy soils over chalk rubble, (Aberford association). Striped and polygonal soil patterns exist and there is locally a slight risk of water erosion. To the valley edges and near Singlers Marsh there are some deep fine loamy over clay with flints soils with seasonal waterlogging, (Hornbeam 2 association).

**Topography.** A gently sloping valley bowl focused on the course of the river Mimram and the Kimpton road that follow the valley floor. This unusual curving river valley feature has been created by the water flowing around a solid glacial plug on which the village of Codicote is located. The slopes undulate particularly around Ryefield farm in the south of the area.

**Degree of slope.** Slope gradients range from 1 in 10 on the slopes around Ryefield farm to the south of the area to 1 in 30 on the broader more open slopes to the west. Along the Mimram the levels drop by as little as 1 in 400

**Altitude range.** Levels range from 120m near Tanyard Lane to 65m along the river valley floor.

**Hydrology.** The River Mimram flows along the bottom of the valley although to the west it is barely perceptible as the arable landscape continues right up to its banks. The river becomes more evident to the east of the area where minor roads cross the river by fords. Land around Pulmers Water and at Singlers Marsh becomes seasonally water logged and shallow pools of water become apparent on the surface. This renders the land unsuitable for arable crops and the land is instead managed by periodic grazing. The River Mimram is one of the main tributaries of the River Lea which it enters within the confines of the county town of Hertford.

**Land cover and land use.** Land cover and land use is prominent in the valley due to the openness of the area caused by the lack of hedgerows, woodland vegetation and settlement. Land cover comprises open farm land, with land use being primarily arable. The secondary land use is pastoral with areas of informal recreation at Singlers Marsh. Woodland cover is fragmented and insignificant but there is some new tree planting associated with the northern part of the estate of Ayot House. Some localised areas of settlement bordering the Singlers Marsh sub-area.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Small islands of woodland and scrub vegetation border the river Mimram in the east. Oak, weeping willow and pussy willows have grown in these wet areas and coppiced and pollarded willows can be found in the Singlers marsh area. Hawthorn and blackthorn scrub mixed with willow can be found further along the river Mimram to the west.

The valley slopes are dominated by intensive farmland, whilst areas of unimproved marshy, neutral and calcareous grassland still exist along the course of the river and support a varied flora including cowslips, despite the increase in horse grazing.

Singlers marsh is an important area of wetland habitat and Longhorn cattle used to graze the area. Locally scarce flora found here include the Meadow Saxifrage and Bistort and other less rare species such as Pond sedge, Yellow Flag Iris,

Meadow Sweet, Lesser Stitchwort, Wood Rush, Dog's Mercury, Sorrel and Germander Speedwell.

Hedgerow species include privet and holly with occasional oak, holly and ash as hedgerow trees. A screen of Leyland Cypress have been planted around the area of a disused chalk quarry on the northern slopes of the valley.

Associated areas of scrub and rough grassland can be found and fossils and flints have been exposed by the former excavations.

Fauna local to the area include birds such as Black Caps and White Throats and mammals such as Water Shrew and Harvest Mice. The valley is noted for its resident population of Water Voles, which seem to be surviving the continuing threat from mink.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

A much visited area by passing travelers using the old Great Northern Road linking Welwyn and the village of Codicote. Reverend Joseph Spence a traveler in 1743 noted that the corn was thriving well in the area around Welwyn (Welling) and there were 'sweet woods' and fields planted with Walnut trees. The mills that used to work along this stretch of the river may have been used for fulling, milling flour or the pulping of rags for paper. There are several archaeological sites on the north facing slopes of the valleys and around Singlers bridge.

**Field Patterns.** The historic field pattern is predominantly pre 18th century irregular enclosure, subsequently rationalized by 19th century parliamentary enclosure and then by late 20th century enlargements. The valley is dominated by the medium to large arable fields in a largely regular formation. There is evidence of historic field boundaries such as the bare raised banks where a hedgerow once grew and the occasional hedgerow tree now standing in isolation in the carpet of cropland. Headlands are non-existent, creating a strong scene of intensively farmed fields with over managed hedgerows.

**Transport pattern.** The transport pattern is largely dictated by topography and the hydrology of the area. Kimpton road follows the base of the valley which is a narrow road, bordered in part by low and intermittent hedgerows, banks and narrow verges. The road is joined occasionally at right angles by smaller lanes and tracks that climb the slope towards isolated farms and settlements. Codicote village lies on the route of the old Great North Road (the Hitchin road) which divides the unsettled arable land of the Codicote Bottom valley in the west from the settled incised slopes to the east. The road was historically well used by traders and merchants and those taking spring waters at Welwyn (Welling).

**Settlements and built form.** Settlement is very sparse in the valley contributing to the rural character of the area. At the eastern end of the valley, around the Singlers Marsh water meadows, the landscape becomes confined by the

roman settlement of Welwyn and the spread of development along either side of the river. The mill is a black timbered building. Other houses in the locality are generally 20th century and comprised of a mixture of brick, render and timbered construction types. A cemetery borders the valley on the western gentle slopes. The house at the ford crossing and crossroads at Pulmers water comprise a two storey red brick building. The lodge house and remnant tree avenue along the carriage drive to Ayot House, (see Area 34) lies within the valley.

The Hertfordshire way clips the south west corner of the area, following the Avenue from Ayot lodge up the slopes to Ayot House.

**Other sources of area-specific information**

Brian Waters: Thirteen Rivers to the Thames

Malcolm Tomkins: So That Was Hertfordshire - Traveler's Jottings 1322-1887

Nikolaus Pevsner: The Buildings of England - Hertfordshire

Jeffery W. Whitelaw: Hidden Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire's Federation of Women's Institutes: The Hertfordshire Village Book

Tony Rook: The History of Hertfordshire

- Singlers Marsh (A.Tempany)



**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

A contained valley of medium scale landscape elements. Views are limited by topography and vegetation on the horizon. Views to the east of the area are confined more by vegetation and settlement close to the edges of Welwyn.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This area is unusual in Hertfordshire due to the shape and confinement of the valley, skirting the southern boundary of Codicote village.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The most dominant impact on the area is the lime quarry on the south facing slopes and its surrounding screening by tall ornamental fir trees. The road and settlement has an influence on the eastern tail of the valley. Management techniques at the Singlers marsh wildlife site increases the contrasting scale of visual impact and landscape change further along the river valley.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

The Singlers Marsh Nature Reserve is a valuable local amenity for public access. Access to the countryside along the floor of main arable valley is poor however there are a number of routes that cross the valley, including fords over the river and one route through the historic park and garden of Ayot Place.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

The MORI survey indicates that this area is not widely regarded for its distinctiveness although this conceals an entirely different local picture (E). A survey of 1500 households in adjoining Welwyn, undertaken in 2000, with a 37% response rate, yielded 80% support that the river Mimram and its wildlife was the village's greatest asset. "The river Mimram always had an attraction for us children. In summer we would build dams to deepen the water so we could swim. In winter, Singlers Marsh would freeze and we could slide or skate on the ice" Tony Jones. "Welwyn in the 1930's and 40's" Codicote Historian No. 35 Nov 1991.

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

Areas of Archaeological Significance (5No.)

Wildlife Site: Singlers Marsh

Welwyn Conservation Area (adjacent)

Historic Park and Garden: Ayot Park

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	widespread
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	mature/young
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	relic
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	poor
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	declining
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	low
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	high

**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	prominent
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	dominant
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	insignificant
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	concealed
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	contained
<i>Visual unity:</i>	coherent
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	unusual

<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	<b>Restore condition to maintain character</b>
		<b>WEAK</b>	<b>MODERATE</b>	<b>STRONG</b>
		<b>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		

### STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE: RESTORE CONDITION TO MAINTAIN CHARACTER

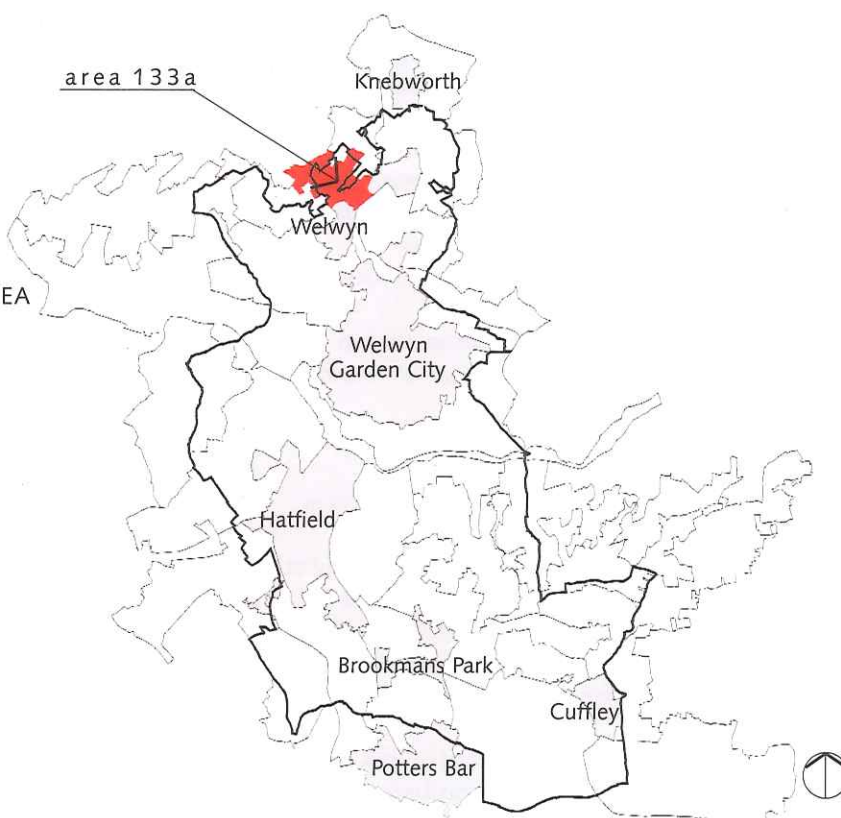
- promote the creation of a network of new medium to large woodlands in the open arable landscape, particularly with a view to visually integrating the intrusive elements
- utilise ancient hedge and field boundaries to locate the most appropriate location for wood restoration and expansion
- encourage the reversal of habitat fragmentation and the creation and improvement of habitat links to create eco-corridors
- encourage reversion from arable uses to pasture and grassland along the valley floor to link Singler's Marsh with other areas of pasture to the west
- encourage the eradication of invasive non-native species
- 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
- maintain and develop the traditional pattern of roadside verges as a local feature and a wildlife resource
- restore arable land to permanent pasture and meadow. Priority will be given to land which buffers or links sites of existing wildlife importance
- protect remaining river valley habitats of significant nature conservation interest
- resist the targeting of redundant or derelict pasture for development
- resist development that could lower the water table within river valleys and affect wetland habitats
- promote the use of low-density stock grazing as a management technique
- promote the re-introduction of permanent pasture and flooding regimes as normal agricultural practices, to increase landscape and habitat diversity
- promote the creation of buffer strips along watercourses to prevent pesticide, herbicide and fertilizer run-off and provide habitat for wildlife; encourage their linkage to eco-corridors within the wider landscape
- enhancement and creation of wetland landscape features such as reedbeds, ponds, scrapes and pollarded willows
- for areas of semi-improved acid grassland avoid over-grazing, heavy public pressure, damage from vehicles, pollution and invasion by alien species such as Japanese knotweed
- promote the creation of uncropped or grass field margins to link between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and along rights of way
- encourage the establishment of wet native woodland along watercourses, including black poplar and pollarded willow
- ensure that the surroundings of converted and new buildings are designed and maintained to be in keeping with their agricultural surroundings by ensuring that 'garden' details are screened from view where possible and native species are used for hedging and tree planting to the perimeter
- 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 pavings

• Pulmer Water (E.Staveley)



District Map showing location of  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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#### LOCATION

An area of south west facing slopes between Codicote and Danesbury. The A1(M) corridor and dense urban settlement forms the area's south eastern boundary.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

An undulating slope with localised deep depressions and dry valleys creating an enclosed character in places. Much of the slopes have been sparsely settled by detached residential properties set within large garden plots. Views are limited by topography and boundary vegetation. The land use reflects the urban fringe location. The influence of the former Danesbury Estate is evident. Some areas of the parkland are still very dominant in the area and include formal and informal recreational uses.



#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- deeply incised dry valleys
- south west facing slopes
- parallel roads at right angles to contours
- urban fringe recreation
- scattered residential settlement in large garden plots
- underlying historic cultural patterns prominent although poorly preserved and managed
- variety of property styles and boundary treatments, including ranch fencing to paddocks
- areas of horsiculture

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Danesbury house and associated parkland architecture and former estate cottages
- springs on the higher ground, including Arnold's and Reynard's Springs
- A1(M) corridor to east
- Danesbury golf course
- mature and over mature parkland trees

- Golfcourse in Danesbury parkland (E.Staveley)

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** Soils are deep fine and loamy over slowly permeable clayey subsoils with slight seasonal waterlogging. There are also some well drained fine loamy and fine silty soils and some are very flinty, (Hornbeam 2 association). There are similar soils over calcareous subsoils and chalky till south of Codicote, (Hornbeam 3 association).

**Topography.** Southwest facing undulating slope punctuated by three incised dry valleys than run south-west north-east.

**Degree of slope.** The slopes undulate and are steep in places. The average gradients range between 1 in 13 and 1 in 16.

**Altitude range.** The highest point is 123m near the nursery at Pottersheath and the lowest point is 60m in the floodplain of the River Mimram towards the south west of the area adjacent to the B656.

**Hydrology.** A line of springs mark the change in gradient at the top of the Danesbury slopes between the 100 and 120m contours. A tributary of the River Mimram emerges at 'First Spring' to the west of the area and joins the River Mimram as it takes a 90 degrees bend, flowing towards Old Welwyn to the south.

**Land cover and land use.** The primary land cover is a combination of parkland residential and grassland. Land uses comprise suburban properties, small pastoral fields, small woods and recreation. Almost half of the former historic parkland of Danesbury House has been turned into a golf course, retaining the remaining parkland trees and interplanting with new specimen stock. The remainder of the parkland is either retained as ecologically and visually valuable pasture or as to south east has been developed in the late 20th century for a residential housing estate.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Danesbury Park consists of a mosaic of neutral/acid semi-improved grassland, scrub and woodland habitats of county significance. Plant species include cowslips, bluebells, wood anemones, the uncommon Pepper Saxifrage, Ladies Smock, the scarce Woolly-Headed Thistle and Adders Tongue Fern. Yellow Meadow ant hills are frequent, being typical of older grasslands.

The historic parkland supports mature oaks, ash, hornbeam and holly and one ancient cherry. Dead wood in the park supports important populations of invertebrates and Pipistrelle Bats and a pond contains Smooth Newts. Long horn cattle were introduced in 1996 to graze the grassland. Other grasslands of the area consist of a mixture of improved and semi-improved neutral and marshy sites. Typical species are timothy, rye grass, creeping bent and creeping buttercup.

Woodlands in the area consist of ancient semi-natural pedunculate oak and hornbeam standards with hazel coppice. Ground flora comprises bluebell, cow parsley and dog's mercury.

Danesbury, formerly St. John Lodge, was described in 1775 as a new house built by Mary, the wife of the Honorable Henry St. John. A drawing of c.1800 shows a Palladian house of three storeys and of seven bays facing south west with semi-octagonal bay windows of full height to north west and south east. Its overall plan was square and set within a 200 acre park. During WWII Danesbury House became the first army bakery to produce bread for the forces and baked 32,000 2lbs per day. Since 1945 Danesbury was a hospital until it was converted to 22 private luxury residences in the late 1990's.

**Field Patterns.** The historic field pattern is predominantly a mix of pre 18th century irregular enclosure and informal medieval parkland with some smaller pockets of irregular sinuous enclosure. The fields on these slopes are small-medium sized with pockets infilling the land to the backs of the properties at Rolls Wood and around Sisservernes Farm. Many of these fields have been restructured in the late 20th century. Larger tracts of open land can be found at the golf course and parkland at Danesbury. The pattern of fields is irregular, interrupted by the settlement on the slopes.

**Transport pattern.** The area is dominated to the east by the sights and sounds of the A1(M) which follows one of the dry valleys.

Two steeply sloping roads climb the slopes from the Hitchin road to the plateau settlements of Rableyheath and Pottersheath. Other no through roads rise up the slopes many of which serve the large number of individual properties set within large plots. Some of the minor narrow lanes are private unsurfaced roads such as the one to Danesbury.

**Settlements and built form.** Settlement across the area is widespread mainly comprising 20th century detached residential developments set in larger gardens. The area is bordered on the three sides by the settlements of Codicote to the north west, Old Welwyn to the south and Oaklands to the east. The former hospital at Danesbury has been recently converted and extended to become luxury residential apartments.

**Other sources of area-specific information**

Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust: Danesbury Hospital, Danesbury, Old Welwyn, Hertfordshire - An initial archaeological evaluation

Brian Waters: Thirteen Rivers to the Thames

Malcolm Tomkins: So That Was Hertfordshire - Traveler's Jottings 1322-1887

Nikolaus Pevsner: The Buildings of England - Hertfordshire

Jeffery W. Whitelaw: Hidden Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire's Federation of Women's Institutes: The Hertfordshire Village Book

Tony Rook: The History of Hertfordshire

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The area is locally visible with short filtered views limited by wooded boundaries, topography, hedgerows and settlement. The scale of the landscape elements is small in a contained and visually coherent character type. There is audible intrusion from the A1(M) motorway to the east.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** The landscape character is unusual with its deeply incised valleys overlaid by combination of sparse yet even coverage of residential settlement and the historic parkland of Danesbury.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The impact of built development is moderate and widespread through the scattered housing. The A1(M) is intrusive to the east as seen from the east facing slopes of Danesbury and the late 20th century residential estate to the edge of Welwyn creates another adverse impact on the parkland.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Public access to the slopes is poor with only two footpaths. The Rableyheath to Welwyn path crosses the area but this is affected by the A1(M). The parkland may be unofficially used by local residents for dog walking. Access to other parts of the historic parkland is only via membership of the local golf club.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

From the results of the MORI survey undertaken in 2000 and 2002, this area currently appears not to be of regard as a distinctive landscape, although there is little evidence that the parkland at Danesbury is still of some wider interest (D/E).

"One of the most picturesque districts of Hertfordshire....with thriving specimens of forest trees. Fine views of the surrounding scenery can be obtained....the cedars looked weather beaten, the winds sweeping evidently with great violence over the open tract of country with which Danesbury is associated" The Garden (magazine) October 22 1881.

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

Local Nature Reserve: Danesbury Park

Wildlife Sites (8 no.)

Area of Archaeological significance: Rollswood Road

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>widespread</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>over mature</b>
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	<b>scattered</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>poor</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>declining</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>moderate</b>
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	<b>moderate</b>

**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

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

<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>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		

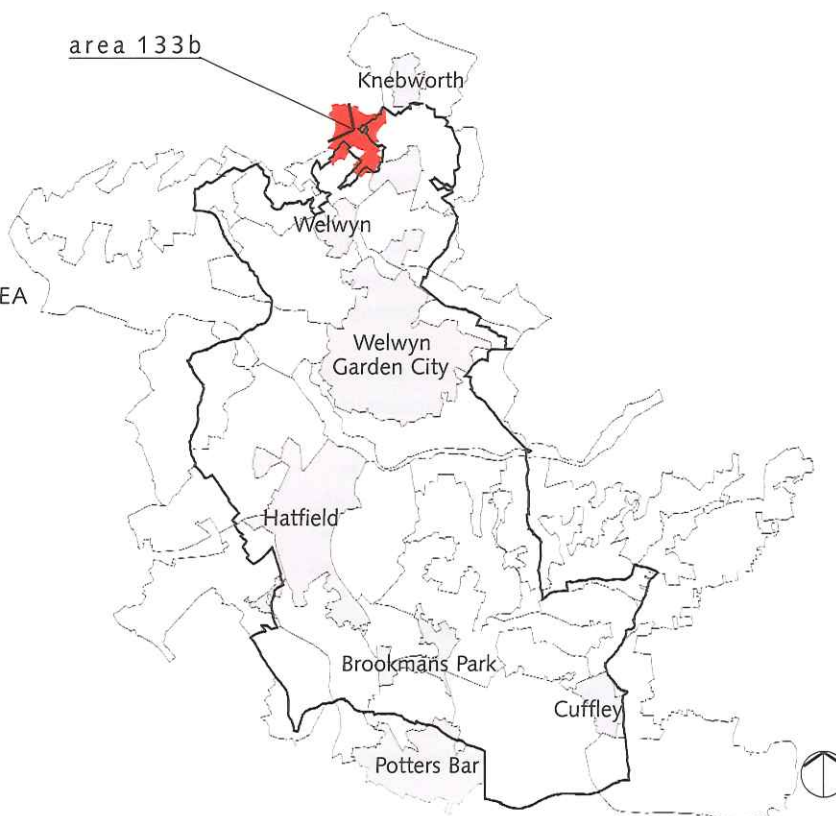
**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE: IMPROVE AND CONSERVE**

- encourage hedgebank management and re-establish a species rich ground flora within pockets of vegetation found on the slopes
- utilize ancient hedge and field boundaries to locate the most appropriate location for the restoration of woodlands
- encourage the reversal of habitat fragmentation and the creation and improvement of habitat links to create eco-corridors
- promote a clear strategy for the visual and noise mitigation of motorways and positively integrate these corridors into the local landscape character
- encourage the dissemination of information about the historic importance and appropriate management of woodland features such as banks and ditches
- 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 the re-introduction of permanent pasture as normal agricultural practice, to increase landscape and habitat diversity
- use locally provenance plants to reinforce character
- encourage the reuse of existing agricultural buildings for equestrian activity
- where hedgerow is deemed unavoidable, replacement planting should use locally native species of local provenance to maintain local distinctiveness
- ensure that the surroundings of converted and new buildings are designed and maintained to be in keeping with their rural surroundings by ensuring that 'garden' details are screened from view where possible and native species are used for hedging and tree planting to the perimeter
- enhance and restore hedgerows as characteristic field boundary patterns
- promote the use of traditional field enclosure where land is converted to equestrian pasture
- encourage the retention and enhancement of existing rights of way and the creation of new recreational routes
- ensure that new and restored buildings are in keeping with the local vernacular
- 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.
- within the golf course encourage the dedication of some of the total area 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
- hard detailing should be kept to a minimum, with the emphasis on the use of natural materials, such as gravel for drives. Gates and entrance details should be sympathetic to historic, rural context and the use of engineering bricks and imposing metal work to be avoided
- Impact of built development on parkland edge (E.Staveley)



District Map showing location of  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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#### LOCATION

An area of upland located between Codicote and Knebworth. This area focuses on the dispersed settlements of Rableyheath and Pottersheath.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

An area of gently undulating upland with a pattern of small to medium fields, bordering the A1(M) corridor. Discrete woodlands visually combine to screen the motorway. Arable farmland and isolated patches of pasture linked to the farmsteads are the predominant land uses with scattered small nurseries and widespread and low density settlement providing secondary land uses. Paddocks are scattered across the upland. Some have well maintained and diverse hedgerows bordering sinuous lanes while others are bounded by poor quality post and wire fencing. The wooded horizons create an enclosed character with limited views creating pockets of privacy and some areas of locally derelict land and scrub.



#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- arable farmland
- discrete woodlands and wooded horizons
- dispersed residential settlement
- A1(M) transport corridor
- urban fringe land uses including pasture with stables
- isolated farms
- ditches and narrow verges
- narrow private roads
- variety of vernacular styling and materials

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- water tower
- small market gardening plots and greenhouses
- mature hedgerow oak trees
- signs marking toad and frog crossing areas
- Heath in local place names associated former heath

- Arable fields (E.Staveley)

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** Soils in the character area are deep fine and loamy over slowly permeable clayey subsoils with slight seasonal waterlogging. They overly calcareous subsoils and chalky till, (Hornbeam 3 association). There are smaller pockets of sand and gravel mainly around Pottersheath.

**Topography.** The Rableyheath area sits on the shoulder of an extensive area of upland. The area evenly and gently tips away towards the south west towards Danesbury House.

**Degree of slope.** The plateau falls at approximately 1 in 70 from Rableyheath to the break in slope at Pottersheath to the south.

**Altitude range.** There is a modest altitude range from 123m at Pottersheath rising up to 130m at Rableyheath.

**Hydrology.** There is no evidence of surface water in the area and water only emerges from the ground via springs on the margins of the upland.

**Land cover and land use.** The primary land use is pastoral including equestrian, with the secondary use being residential and nurseries scattered throughout the area. Woodland cover is primarily restricted to wooded field boundaries creating a largely intimate and small scale landscape.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The area is predominantly farm land with small, scattered areas of ancient semi-natural woodland consisting of pedunculate oak/hornbeam standards with hazel coppice. Ground flora comprises bluebell, Dog's Mercury, Wood Millet and Yellow Archangel. Hedges comprise a high proportion of holly and mature hedgerow trees.

Wildlife species include badgers and bat species; of particular note, Brown Long Eared bats.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

The historic information for the area is limited however parts of the former estate of Danesbury are still evident in the area including the single line of majestic boundary oaks follows the road from Pottersheath to Rableyheath.

**Field Patterns.** The historic field pattern is predominantly pre 18th century irregular sinuous enclosure with some smaller pockets of irregular enclosure and common land. Much of this has now been converted to 20th century enclosure for equestrian uses and some large prairie fields. Fields are typically small to medium in size in a regular and sub-regular pattern.

**Transport pattern.** The narrow roads and lanes of the Rableyheath area are winding and sunken in part. Many of the roads around Pottersheath are private and unadopted creating access difficulties in the area. The area is bordered to the east by the A1(M) motorway which although in cutting for most of the route is a prominent feature.

**Settlements and built form.** The settlements of Pottersheath and Rableyheath are continuous, low density and scattered along the lanes and roads of the plateau. Buildings comprises a mixture of historic and recently constructed houses using a variety of materials. The older buildings such as the Public House (Robin Hood and Little John) at Rableyheath use red brick, terracotta roof tiles. There is occasionally flint detailing in walls with brick coining. A number of houses feature white render with black framed windows, and others pargetting while converted barns favour timber cladding and brick.

**Other sources of area-specific information**

Brian Waters: Thirteen Rivers to the Thames

Malcolm Tomkins: So That Was Hertfordshire - Traveler's Jottings 1322-1887

Nikolaus Pevsner: The Buildings of England - Hertfordshire

Jeffery W. Whitelaw: Hidden Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire's Federation of Women's Institutes: The Hertfordshire Village Book

Tony Rook: The History of Hertfordshire

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The area is concealed, particularly from the east by woodland. Views within the area are framed and filtered by hedges, copses and residences. The landscape elements are generally small to medium in a contained and coherent landscape. There is audible intrusion from the A1(M) motorway to the east.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** The landscape character is unusual.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Old and new residential settlement throughout the area has a distinct impact on the rural character. The settlements of Rableyheath and Pottersheath are almost continuous with a network of private and unadopted roads to the south of the area. Adverse impact is limited to temporary fencing, nurseries and isolated storage areas.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There is a good network of footpaths within the area.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This whole area is of some regard (D).

"The problematic heavy clay soil of Rabley Heath....has given modern day residents of this little rural area....plenty of drainage problems but once provided the raw material for the most beautiful hand-made bricks in the district" D Wyn Hughes in 'The Brickfields of Rabley Heath' Herts Countryside v.34 No. 245 1979 p.19.

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS****CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>widespread</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>mixed</b>
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	<b>linked</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>not obvious</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>interrupted</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>moderate</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>apparent</b>
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	<b>apparent</b>
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	<b>concealed</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>contained</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>coherent</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>unusual</b>

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	<b>MODERATE</b>	Improve and reinforce	<b>Improve and conserve</b>	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>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		

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

- promote the creation of a network of new small to medium woodlands in the more open arable area, particularly with a view to visually integrating the intrusive motorways and urban fringe development into the area
- encourage hedgerow and hedgebank management to restore habitat links throughout
- improve public access arrangements to woodlands and areas of open space with attention to car park design and safety
- utilize ancient hedge and field boundaries to locate 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
- encourage the dissemination of information about the historic importance and appropriate management of woodland features such as banks and ditches
- encourage the use of native stock of local provenance wherever possible and encourage the eradication of non-native species
- provide new uncropped or grass field margins to link areas of wildlife importance and /or existing and proposed rights of way
- promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production to the west of the area and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats
- promote hedgerow restoration and creation throughout the area to provide visual and ecological links between existing and proposed woodland areas
- survey and manage veteran trees for biodiversity value
- promote the creation of new ponds
- 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
- promote the re-introduction of permanent pasture as normal agricultural practice, to increase landscape and

## habitat diversity

- promote the use of traditional field enclosure where land is converted to equestrian pasture
- encourage the reuse of existing agricultural buildings for equestrian activity
- ensure that the surroundings of converted and new buildings are designed and maintained to be in keeping with their agricultural surroundings by ensuring that 'garden' details are screened from view where possible and native species are used for hedging and tree planting to the perimeter
- encourage planting native species on settlement boundaries, with exotic/ornamental species only to internal faces
- promote a clear strategy for the visual and noise mitigation of the A1(M) to positively integrate the corridors into the local landscape character\*
- encourage effective management of woodlands to ensure thinning, selective felling and replanting is undertaken to achieve a varied age structure and appropriate species mix
- Rough pasture and woodland enclosure (E.Staveley)



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## GLOSSARY

Refer also to section 3.0 Methodology, pages 9-12.

**field boundary**

defining perimeter structure, such as hedge, tree row, fence, ditch or bank.

**hedge**

High - >3m.

Medium - above eye level (1.8 -3m).

Low - below eye level ( >1.8m).

**field pattern**

a description of the boundaries around fields and the areas they enclose, frequently indicative of date of enclosure.

**irregular:** piecemeal enclosure pattern associated with an irregular network of winding lanes.

**subregular:** interlocking pattern of fields and lanes with curving boundaries.

**regular:** rectilinear pattern of fields with mainly curving boundaries.

**geometric:** ordered pattern of rectilinear fields and lanes with straight boundaries.

discontinuous: field pattern is so disturbed or destroyed that a pattern is no longer apparent

**field size**

denotes relative/average size of fields within a given LDU, as follows.

- 1 - small: more than 50% of fields less than 2 ha in size.
- 2 - small-medium: more than 50% of fields 2-8 ha in size.
- 3 - medium-large: more than 50% of fields greater than 8 ha in size.

**geology**

the underlying structure and origin of the land, described as follows:

**(Fr) river alluvium:** unconsolidated silty/clayey material laid down by a river in its floodplain.

**(Fs) river terrace:** unconsolidated sand/gravel laid down by a river in its floodplain.

**(Ts) sandy drift:** unconsolidated sand/gravel laid down by streams derived from the meltwater of ice sheets. Also includes sandy plateau drift.

**(Tc) clay-with-flints:** a residual clayey deposit (formed from chalk solution) covering the higher levels of some chalkland areas in southern England and giving rise to damp, acid soils.

**(Tb) till/boulder clay:** unsorted clayey material laid down by ice sheets, comprising a mixture of clay, sand, gravel and boulders.

**(Mc) clay:** a soft, fine textured sedimentary rock laid down mainly in the Jurassic and Tertiary periods. Usually gives rise to heavy, often poorly draining clayey soils.

**(Ml) chalk:** moderately hard, white sedimentary rock derived from calcium-rich shelly material.

**(Mm) mixed:** interbedded sedimentary rocks of varied age, usually comprising alternate layers of clay, siltstone and/or sandstone, but may also include limestone.

**LCA**

landscape character area: one or more LDUs (see below), derived from both desktop study and field survey and defining a unique individual geographical area.

**LDU**

land description unit. a discrete unit of land with specific constituent physical, biological and historic elements which distinguish it from its neighbours at a desktop study level.

**land cover**

a description of the permanent or semi-permanent features upon the earth's surface, such as: open farmland, treed farmland, wooded farmland, parkland, woodland, open water or wetlands. Not to be confused with land use, which refers to current but impermanent features (see below). The relative extent of land cover is as expressed below:

- dominant - >60%
- frequent - <30%
- occasional - <10%
- absent - not visible

A further distinction is made as to the relative extent of the wood/tree component of land cover, as follows:

**tree cover:** an expression of the nature and spatial pattern of the tree and woodland component of the cultural landscape.

**Ancient Woodland:** wooded landscapes characterised by mixed broadleaved woodlands, mainly of ancient origin (as defined on the ancient woodland inventory), which pre-date the surrounding enclosure pattern. This pattern typically displays clear signs of piecemeal woodland clearance, such as irregular woodland outlines, densely scattered hedgerow oaks, woodland place names, etc. Two types are distinguished:

**(w) wooded:** well wooded landscapes (usually greater than 20% cover) characterised by large, irregularly shaped blocks (may be discrete or interlocking) of ancient woodland, often associated with areas of heavy clay soil or steeply sloping ground.

**(a) trees and woods:** landscapes characterised by a mixture of scattered, often dense, hedgerow trees (typically oak) and small irregularly shaped woods, mostly of ancient origin. Typically associated with areas of settled/dispersed settlement.

**estate:** wooded landscapes characterised by an ordered pattern of estate plantations, coverts and/or groups of trees which were planted at the same, or which post date the surrounding enclosure pattern.

**(e) wooded:** well wooded estate landscapes (usually greater than 20% cover) characterised by frequent, often large plantations and/or belts of trees with regular outlines and usually comprising a limited range of even aged, non-native tree species.

**recent:** wooded landscapes with a dynamic tree cover pattern, characterised by recent (in historical terms) secondary and/or plantation woodlands. Typically associated with sandy (lowland heath), or wetland (disturbed river valley) soils in the soft rock zone.

**(s) secondary:** marginal wooded landscapes characterised by transitory patches of secondary woodland/scrub interspersed with tracts of 'open', often uncultivated land. Associated with former mineral extraction sites along river corridors in Hertfordshire.

**trees:** unwooded landscapes characterised by thinly scattered trees associated with hedgerows, watercourses and other linear features, typically associated with Parliamentary type enclosure from arable field, wetland, or waste.

**linear trees:** non wooded landscapes characterised by continuous, or intermittent lines of trees associated with streams and other linear features.

#### **landform**

an expression of the basic shape and structure of the land surface, as determined by the underlying geology (see above):

**(L) lowland vales & valleys:** low-lying level, or gently rolling land, generally below 90 metres/300 feet, associated mainly with glacial and soft rock sediments in clay vales and broad valley bottoms.

**(R) rolling lowland:** intermediate areas, generally below 90 metres/300 feet, with a pronounced rolling/undulating topography. May include low hills, or areas of low-lying land at a greater level of detail. Associated mainly with glacial and soft rock sediments but can also occur in hard rock zone.

**(V) 'upland' valleys:** tracts of lower lying, in places steeply sloping land in an 'upland' setting (ie. surrounded by higher ground). Mainly found in hard rock zone, but elsewhere also associated with limestone and sandstone escarpments (eg. Chiltern valleys).

**(S) low hills and ridges:** distinct, often steep sided tracts of elevated relief, generally well defined by clear breaks in slope. May be in the form of discrete hills/ridges, or as rising ground (eg. scarp slopes) on the edge of higher land.

**(U) low plateau:** uniformly elevated tracts of gently rolling relief, usually bounded on one or more sides by steeper slopes which drop to lower land. Often dissected by narrow, steep sided valleys at a greater level of detail, especially where associated with limestone.

#### **land use**

the broad pattern of primary land uses, as related to the inherent physical and economic constraints within a particular area.

**commercial:** built up, often urban edge

**farmland:** this can be arable, pastoral or mixed:

**(A) arable:** settled agricultural landscape, generally below 300metres/1000 feet, in which cultivation in order to produce crops is dominant.

**(C) cropping:** settled agricultural landscapes generally below 300 metres (1000 feet), which are dominated by arable cultivation, often in combination with livestock farming. Also known as mixed farming.

**forestry:** can be broadleaf, conifer or a mix of both.

**industrial:** built up, usually zoned away from residential areas.

**mineral extraction:** in Hertfordshire confined to sand and gravel extraction in river valleys and on slopes.

**recreation or amenity:** areas of public or private open space for formal or informal games, walking, bird-watching, sailing, horse-riding, etc.

**(Ur) urban:** cities, towns and other large built up areas greater than 5 km<sup>2</sup> in extent.

**settlements**

an expression of the present day pattern of rural settlement in the context of its historic evolution.

**(S) settled:** rural landscapes characterised by multiple settlement nuclei (hamlets and/or wayside clusters) associated with a moderate to high scattering of farms and outlying dwellings. Typically distinguished by frequent place names ending in 'Green', 'End', 'Heath', 'Houses', etc.

**(D) dispersed:** rural landscapes characterised by a moderate to high level of dispersal, comprising scattered farmsteads and frequent clusters of dwellings usually strung out along roads and lanes.

**(P) waste:** sparsely settled rural landscapes characterised by isolated farmsteads and occasional rural dwellings. Frequently distinguished by place names indicating late enclosure from common and waste (eg. 'Moor', 'Heath', etc).

**(U) unsettled:** unenclosed land, or areas of former meadowland and grazing marsh characterised by an absence of human habitation.

**(Ur) urban:** extensive areas of predominantly built land where the rural settlement pattern has been completely subsumed by built development

**soils**

the nature of the loose material covering the land surface in which terrestrial plants (natural and cultivated) grow. Derived from interpretation of Soil Survey data.

**wet mineral soils:** mineral soils affected by groundwater and supporting wetland (swamp, marsh and wet pasture), or relic wetland vegetation - almost always associated with fluvial (marine/riverine) drift. May be seasonally, or perennially wet, but in many cases groundwater is controlled by ditches and pumps.

**(WG) poorly draining:** deep, stoneless clayey and fine loamy soils developed in river and marine alluvium. Includes soil associations 813b, 813d.

**(WB) free draining:** deep, free draining loamy, silty and sandy soils developed in river and marine alluvium. Includes soil association 812a.

**heavy (clay) soils:** slowly permeable mineral soils, typically developed on glacial tills and soft clays. Seasonal waterlogging is the main constraint on agricultural production, especially in areas of high rainfall. Used extensively for cereal growing in the East Midlands and East Anglia.

**(CG) base-rich gleyed:** poorly draining clayey soils, typically developed on soft (Jurassic/Tertiary) clays. Includes soil association 712c.

**(CB) base-rich clayey:** heavy clayey soils, typically developed on chalky till. Includes soil associations 411d, 582d.

**(B) base-poor clayey:** heavy/poorly draining clayey soils, typically developed on clay-with-flints, or glacial drift derived from hard (Palaeozoic) rocks and supporting damp heathland/woodland habitats. Includes soil associations 582a, 582c.

**(PG) base-poor loamy:** poorly draining loamy/sandy soils, often with clayey sub-soils, typically developed on plateau/glacial drift. Includes soil association 714d.

**brown soils:** reddish/brown, free-draining mineral soils developed on permeable rocks (limestone, sandstone, siltstone and mudstone), or drift at elevations below about 300 metres. There are few constraints to agricultural production, other than those imposed by slope, and in most areas these soils are intensively cultivated

**(LB) base-rich loamy:** deep, free-draining loamy soils developed on chalk and chalky drift. Includes soil associations 511e, 571x.

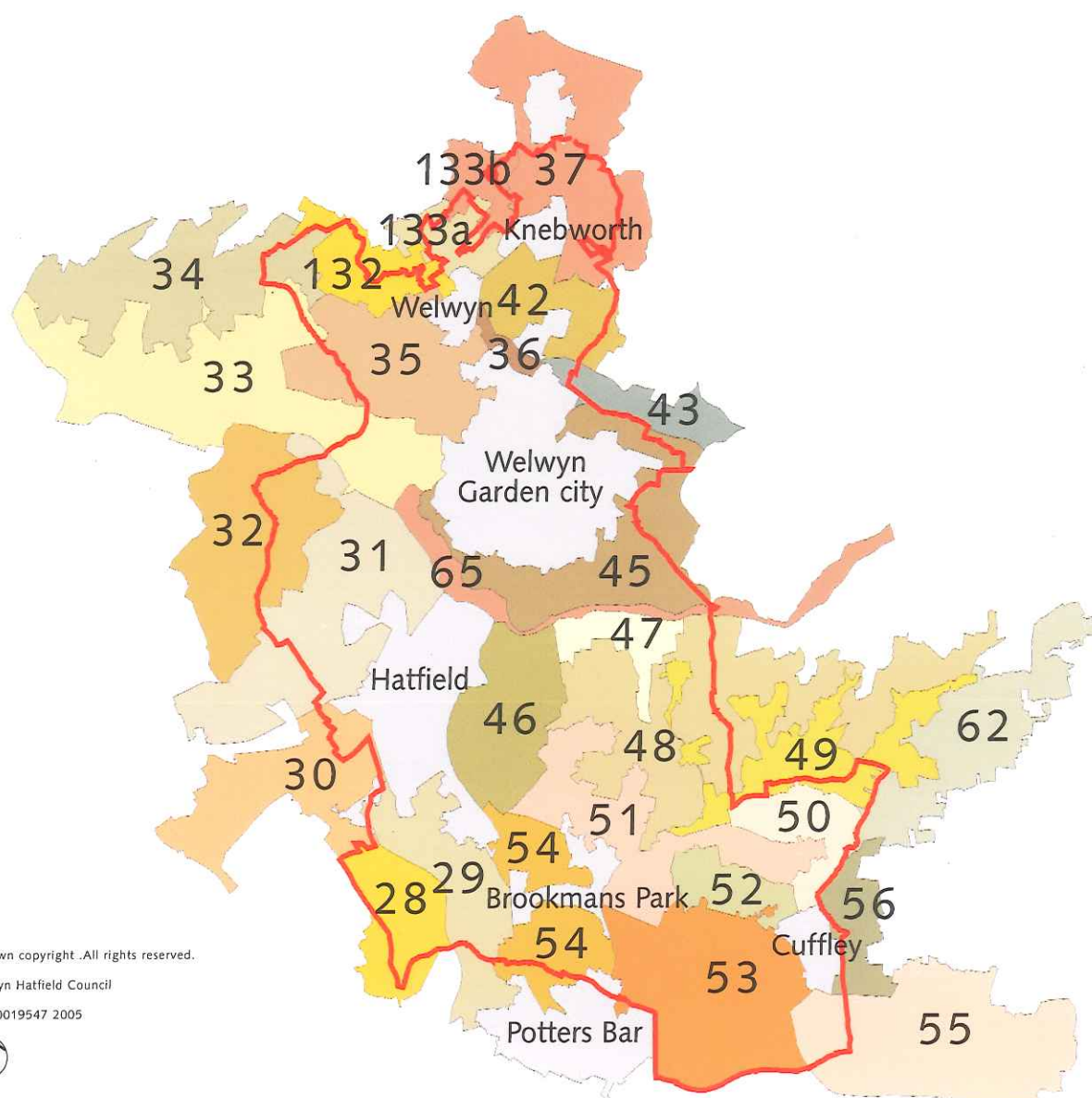
**(SB) base-poor sandy:** light, free-draining sandy and coarse loamy soils developed on soft sandstones and sandy drift. Includes soil associations 581d, 581e.

FIELD SURVEY RECORD SHEET										
Date :		Surveyors' Refs :				Area code:				
Location :						Photo Nos:				
Conditions:										
<b>LANDFORM</b> <span style="float: right;">dominant prominent apparent (widespread/localised) insignificant</span>										
<b>Description:</b> flat gently undulating strongly undulating steep broad valley narrow valley plain plateau upland sloping					<b>Hydrology:</b> river stream ponds lakes reservoir winterbourne wetlands other			dominant prominent apparent widespread apparent localised insignificant		
					Degree of slope:		Altitude range:			
<b>LANDCOVER</b> <span style="float: right;">dominant prominent apparent (widespread/localised) insignificant</span>										
<b>Description:</b> open farmland treed farmland wooded farmland parkland woodland moor/heath grassland / common open water or wetlands			dominant prominent apparent widespread apparent localised insignificant		<b>Primary land use:</b> urban / suburban / commercial / industrial farmland: arable/pastoral/mixed forestry: broadleaf/conifer/mixed common or green: grassed/treed recreation or amenity: type reservoir rough grazing nursery / allotments / orchard disturbed			dominant prominent apparent widespread apparent localised insignificant		
<b>Associated features :</b> e.g. glasshouses/ marina.					<b>Secondary land use</b> (select from above )			dominant prominent apparent widespread apparent localised insignificant		
<b>Woodland cover:</b> extensive interlocking linear discrete fragmented	<b>Species :</b>		dominant prominent apparent widespread apparent localised insignificant		<b>Field boundaries (in order of prominence):</b> hedgerow (with/without trees) tree rows hedgebank fence wall/wet ditch other (high/medium/low)		<b>Species :</b>		dominant prominent apparent widespread apparent localised discontinuous insignificant	
<b>HISTORICAL PATTERN</b> <span style="float: right;">dominant prominent apparent (widespread/localised) insignificant</span>										
<b>Description :</b> organic planned unenclosed										
<b>Field pattern:</b> geometric (ordered) regular (rectilinear) subregular (interlocking – curved boundaries) irregular (organic, winding lanes) discontinuous (no discernable pattern)				dominant prominent apparent widespread apparent localised fragmented insignificant		<b>Transport pattern:</b> motorway A road B road track / lane canal railway straight winding sinuous sunken		dominant prominent apparent widespread apparent localised insignificant		
<b>Field size:</b> 1- small < 2ha 2- small/medium 3- medium/large 4- large > 8ha				dominant prominent apparent widespread apparent localised insignificant		<b>Settlement:</b> Form: village / hamlet / isolated house or farm/ other Building style: vernacular / non -vernacular Age: Tudor/Stuart/Georgian/ Victorian/Edwardian/20thC Materials: walls and roof		dominant prominent apparent widespread apparent localised insignificant		
<b>Verges:</b> absent variable uniform wide / medium / narrow ditched				dominant prominent apparent widespread apparent localised insignificant		<b>Country houses:</b> Age: Tudor/Stuart/Georgian/Victorian/Edwardian 20thC Materials :		dominant prominent apparent widespread apparent localised insignificant		
<b>Other built features (function, age and materials):</b>								dominant prominent apparent widespread apparent localised insignificant		

FIELD SURVEY EVALUATION				2
<b>VISUAL IMPACT</b>		low      moderate      high		
Impact of built development :	dominant prominent apparent widespread apparent localised insignificant	Impact of land use change: pasture to arable mineral extraction parkland to amenity	dominant prominent apparent widespread apparent localised insignificant	
Magnitude of impact: high/moderate/low	Extent of impact : widespread/localised/insignificant	Magnitude of impact : high/moderate/low	Extent of impact : widespread/localised/insignificant	
Distinctive features : treasures		eyesores		
Notes:				
<b>CONDITION</b>				
<b>HISTORICAL INTEGRITY</b>		strong      moderate      weak		
Extent and type of landcover change: farmland to built devt. change in extent of woodland/tree cover on farmland loss of field boundaries parkland to farmland, extraction or other commons to secondary woodland other	widespread localised insignificant	Survival of cultural pattern : intact and well managed intact but poorly managed interrupted ( gen. intact but locally interrupted) declining (boundaries poorly managed) relic	Age structure of tree cover: over mature /mature/young mature/young/N.A.  dominant prominent apparent (W/L) insignificant	
<b>ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY</b>		strong      moderate      weak		
Extent of habitat patch survival: Widespread Linked Scattered relic	Management of habitats: Good Not obvious Poor	Evidence of degradation Pollution Erosion Noise Light Traffic Intensity of use Other	Survival of ecological corridors: intact and well managed intact but poorly managed interrupted ( gen. intact but locally interrupted) declining (corridors poorly managed) relic	
Notes:				
<b>ACCESSIBILITY</b>				
Noted recreational land uses:				
Types of public access noted: footpaths bridleways waymarked routes county/regional parks commonland with public access	Frequency/density of public access  widespread      localised	Condition: good      wide      Surface: fair      narrow      Disabled access? poor not known		
<b>CHARACTER SUMMARY</b>				
<b>CONDITION</b>		<b>POOR</b>	<b>MODERATE</b>	<b>GOOD</b>
1 Landcover Change 2 Age Structure of Tree Cover* 3 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival* 4 Management of semi-natural habitats 5 Survival of cultural pattern (fields and hedges) 6 Impact of built development* 7 Impact of land use change * Prime condition categories if tie		Widespread Overmature Relic Poor Declining/Relic High High	Localised Mature or young Scattered Not obvious interrupted Moderate Moderate	Insignificant Mixed Widespread/Linked Good Intact Low Low
Totals * Prime condition categories if tie				
<b>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		<b>WEAK</b>	<b>MODERATE</b>	<b>STRONG</b>
1 Impact of landform* 2 Impact of landcover* 3 Historic pattern* 4 Visibility from outside 5 Sense of enclosure 6 Visual unity 7 Distinctiveness/rarity		Insignificant Insignificant Insignificant Widely visible Open/exposed Incoherent Frequent	Apparent Apparent Apparent Locally visible Partial Coherent Unusual	Dominant/Prominent Dominant/Prominent Dominant/Prominent Concealed Contained/confined Unified Unique/rare
Totals * Prime robustness categories if tie				
Boundary notes:				
<b>MATRIX</b>		Good		
CONDITION		Moderate		
		Poor		
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
STRENGTH OF CHARACTER				

## Map Showing Landscape Character Areas

- |    |   |      |  |
|----|---|------|--|
| 28 | North Mymms Park and Redwell Woods        | 48   | West End - Brickendon Wooded Slopes                  |
| 30 | Colney Heath Farmland                     | 49   | Little Berkhamsted Ridge Settlements                 |
| 29 | Mimmshall Valley                          | 50   | Ponsbourne and Tolmers Parkland Estates              |
| 31 | De Havilland Plain                        | 51   | North Mymms Common and Newgate Street Farmed Plateau |
| 32 | Symondshyde Ridge                         | 52   | Northaw Great Wood                                   |
| 33 | Upper Lea Valley                          | 53   | Northaw Common Parkland                              |
| 34 | Blackmore End Plateau                     | 54   | Potters Bar Parkland                                 |
| 35 | Ayot St Peter Wooded Upland               | 55   | Theobalds Estate                                     |
| 36 | Upper Mimram Valley                       | 56   | Cheshunt Common                                      |
| 37 | Datchworth Settled Slopes                 | 62   | Broxbourne Woods Complex                             |
| 42 | Tewin, Dawley and Lockley Estate Farmland | 65   | Middle Lea Valley West                               |
| 43 | Mimram Valley Parklands                   | 132  | Codicote Bottom Arable Valley                        |
| 45 | Welwyn Fringes                            | 133a | Danesbury Settled Slopes                             |
| 46 | Hatfield Park                             | 133b | Rableyheath Settled Upland                           |
| 47 | Essendon - Brickendon Farmed Slopes       |      |  |




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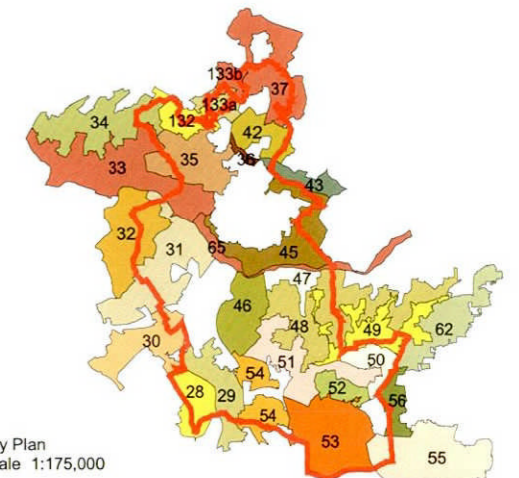
# KEY

 District Boundary

 Character Area Boundaries

- 28 North Mymms Park and Redwell Woods
- 29 Mimmshall Valley
- 30 Colney Haeth Farmland
- 31 De Havilland Plain
- 32 Symondshyde Ridge
- 33 Upper Lea Valley
- 34 Blackmore End Plateau
- 35 Ayot St Peter Wooded Upland
- 36 Upper Mimram Valley
- 37 Datchworth Settled Slopes
- 42 Tewin, Dawley and Lockley Estate Farmland
- 43 Mimram Valley Parklands
- 45 Welwyn Fringes
- 46 Hatfield Park
- 47 Essendon - Brickendon Farmed Slopes
- 48 West End - Brickendon Wooded Slopes
- 49 Little Berkhamsted Settled Plateau
- 50 Ponsbourne and Tolmers Parkland Estates
- 51 North Mymms Common and Newgate Street Farmed Plateau
- 52 Northaw Great Wood
- 53 Northaw Common Parkland
- 54 Potters Bar Parkland
- 55 Theobalds Estate
- 56 Cheshunt Common
- 62 Broxbourne Woods Complex
- 65 Middle Lea Valley West
- 132 Codicote Bottom Arable Valley
- 133a Danesbury Settled Slopes
- 133b Rableyheath Settled Upland

1 0 1 2 3 Kilometers



Key Plan  
Scale 1:175,000



**WELWYN  
HATFIELD  
COUNCIL**

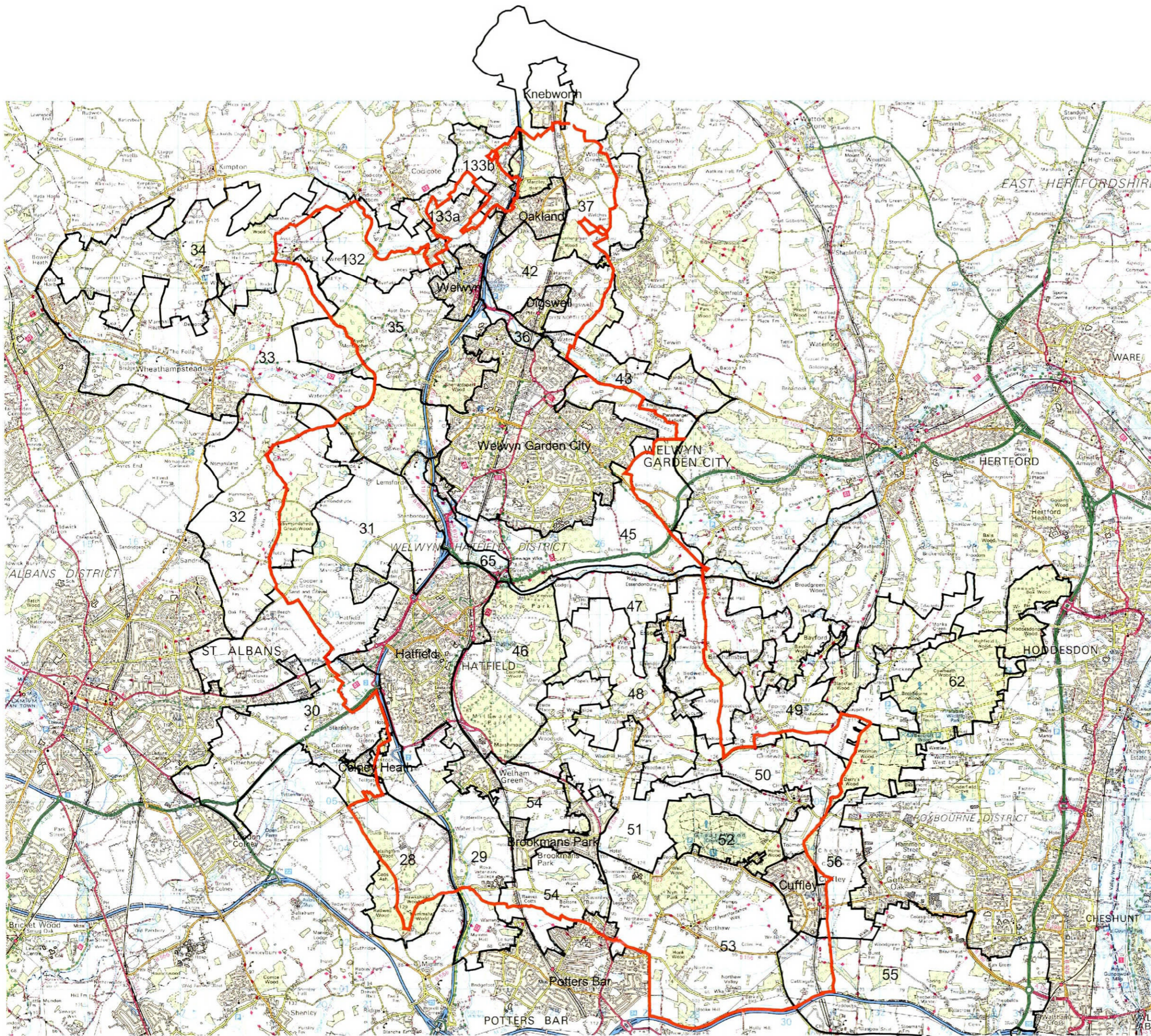


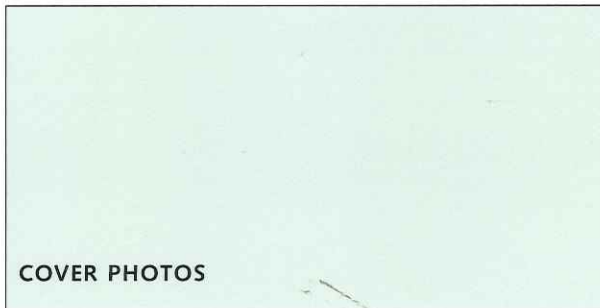
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<input type="checkbox"/> PLANNING	Mar 05	Welwyn Hatfield Landscape Character Assessment
<input type="checkbox"/> TENDER	DRAWN	Appendix 6.4 - Landscape Character Areas
<input type="checkbox"/> CONSTRUCTION	YV	
<input type="checkbox"/> AS BUILT	CHECKED	
	JB	

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□ WOODBRIDGE  
01394 380509



the landscape partnership  
landscape architecture urban design environmental planning





## COVER PHOTOS

### BACK FACE

*top*

View of Lockleys Farm from Lockley Wood (P Shears)

*middle*

Sherrardspark Wood (HCC Landscape Unit)

*bottom*

Sawmill Pool (HCC Landscape Unit)

### FRONT FACE

*top*

North Mymms parkland (J.Billingsley)

*middle*

Mimram Valley aerial view from Digswell Viaduct  
(HCC Landscape Unit)

*bottom*

Tewin Meadows bridge (HCC Landscape Unit)