

# **Hertfordshire Landscape Character Area Statements**

## **St Albans District**

This document collates all the district-scale Landscape Character Area Statements that apply to the St Albans District. The statements were produced as part of the "Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment" undertaken between 2000 & 2005.

The full collation of published local authority landscape character statements in Hertfordshire can be found on Hertfordshire County Councils website:

<http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/leisculture/heritage1/landscape/hlca/lcacoll/>

Landscape Character Area Statements:

- Introduction to Landscape Character Statements
- Area 009 - Bedmond Plateau
- Area 010 - St Stephen's Plateau
- Area 017 - Ver Colne River Valley
- Area 018 - Bricket Wood
- Area 019 - Vale of St Albans
- Area 021 - High Canons Valleys & Ridges
- Area 028 - North Mymms Park & Redwell Woods
- Area 030 - Colney Heath Farmland
- Area 031 - De Havilland Plain (no longer representative)
- Area 032 - Symonshyde Ridge
- Area 033 - Upper Lea Valley
- Area 034 - Blackmore End Plateau
- Area 035 - Ayot St Peter Wooded Upland
- Area 094 - Buncefield Plateau
- Area 095 - Revel End Plateau
- Area 096 - Upper Ver valley
- Area 097 - Gorhambury Estate
- Area 098 - Verulamium
- Area 099 - Rothamsted Plateau & Kinsbourne Green
- Area 100 - Harpenden Common
- Area 101 - Childwick Plateau
- Area 102 - Ayres End Valleys & Ridges
- Area 103 - Nomansland Common
- Area 104 - Thrales End Plateau
- Area 200 - Peters Green Plateau (NHDC)
- Area 201 - Kimpton and Whiteway Bottom (NHDC)

**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 February 2002 a further extension was agreed to provide complete coverage of Dacorum District, which previously had limited geographical representation. This volume therefore comprises Part 2 of Volume 3 i.e. the Landscape Character Assessment for Dacorum District. For the purpose of providing a complete district wide assessment a number of the character descriptions from the previous studies are also included within this document.

**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 PPG7. 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 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

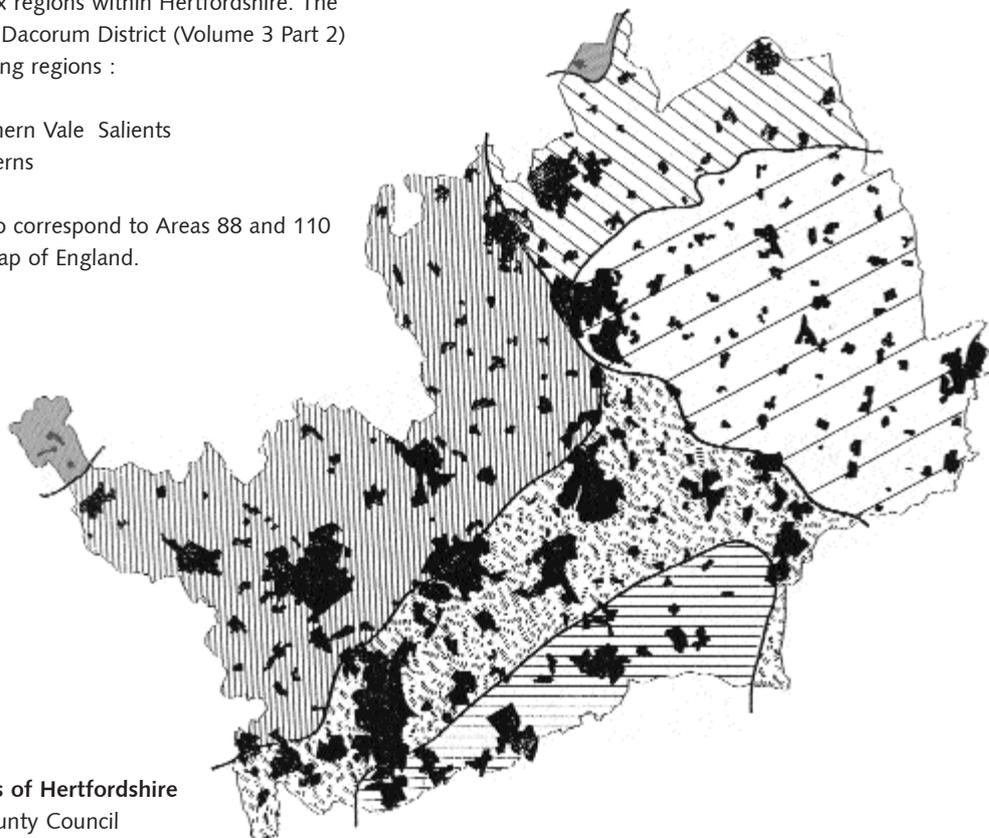


## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review adopted in April 1998 embraced the concept of landscape character assessment (see para 392 et seq.) and refers 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 Dacorum District (Volume 3 Part 2) falls within the following regions :

- Region 1: The Northern Vale Salients
- Region 2: The Chilterns

These two regions also correspond to Areas 88 and 110 from the Character Map of England.



• **Figure 02**  
**Landscape Regions of Hertfordshire**  
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 <p>Region 1: The Northern Vale Salients. A transition zone between the Chilterns scarp face and the adjacent open plains (Oxfordshire and Bedfordshire).</p>	 <p>Region 4: The East Hertfordshire Plateau. (The South Suffolk and North Essex Clay Lands).</p>
 <p>Region 2: The Chilterns.</p>	 <p>Region 5: The Central River Valleys. A sub-section of the Northern Thames Basin.</p>
 <p>Region 3: The East Anglian Chalk (North Hertfordshire Ridge). A sub-section of the Chilterns.</p>	 <p>Region 6: The South Hertfordshire Plateau. A sub-section of the Northern Thames Basin.</p>

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

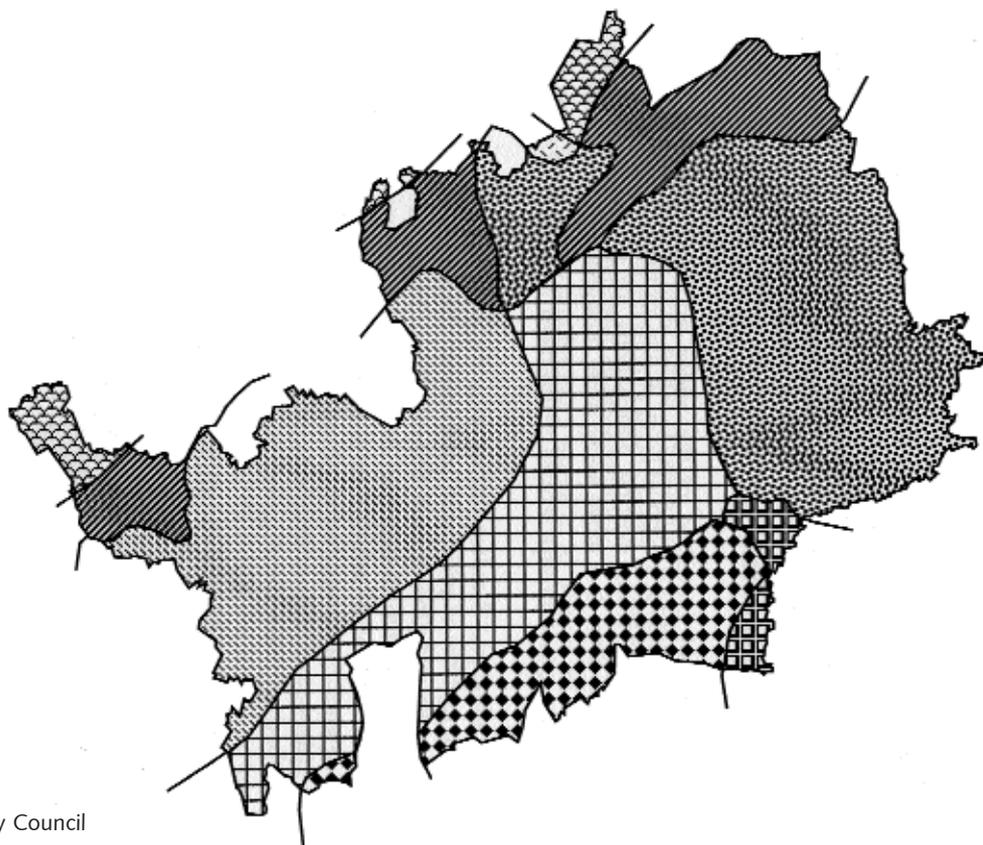
#### 2.1.1 Geology and Soils

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 Dacorum District there are 3 main soil types; Stagnogley Soils in the Vale of Aylesbury to the north west; Redzinas around the Chiltern scarp slopes and Paleo agrillic brown earths on the Chilterns dip slopes.



• Figure 04  
Soils

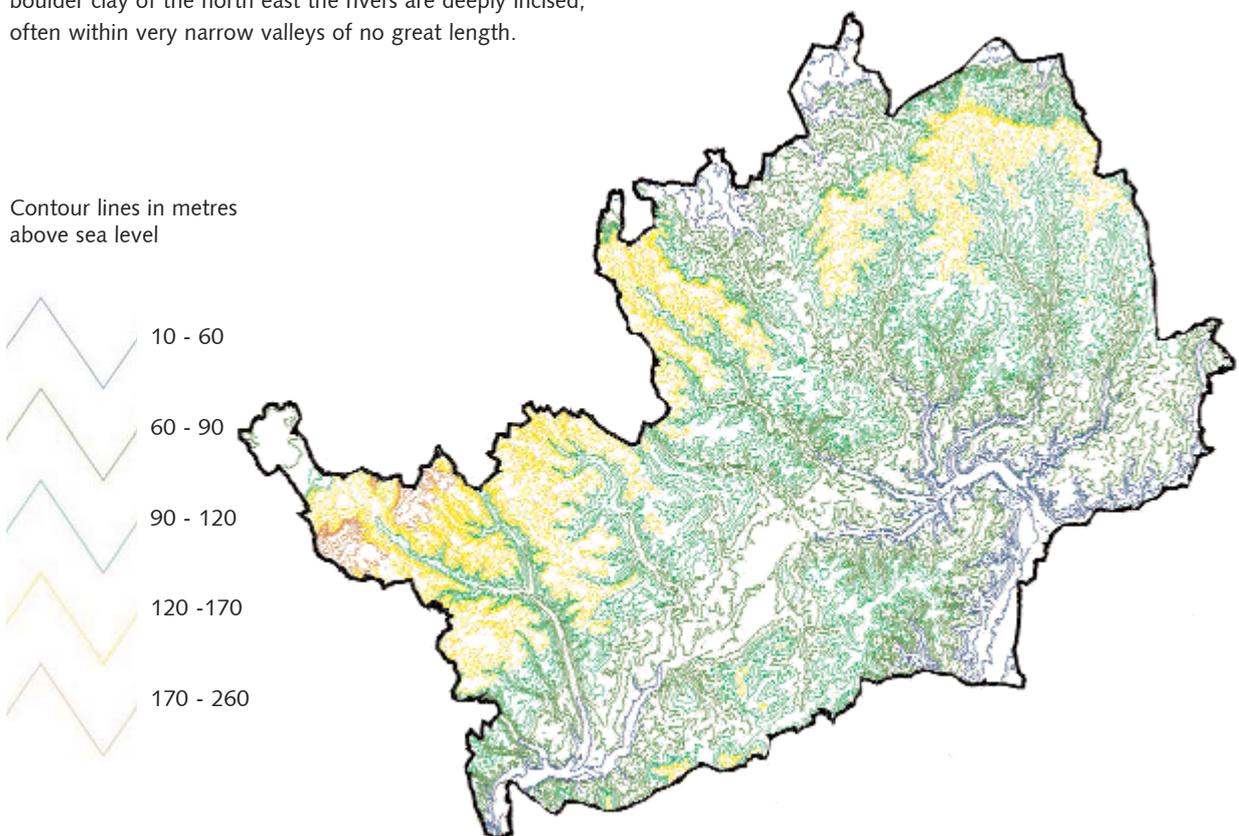
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	<p><b>RENDZINAS:</b> Associated - Brown Calcareous earths and argillic or paleo-argillic earths. Parent material: Chalk and associated drift. Character: Well drained, shallow chalky soils, with deeper loamy or clayey/flinty soils.</p>		<p><b>PALEO ARGILLIC BROWN EARTHS:</b> 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.</p>
	<p><b>STAGNOGLEY SOILS:</b> 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.</p>		<p><b>CALCAREOUS PELOSOLS:</b> 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.</p>
	<p><b>BROWN EARTHS:</b> 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.</p>		<p><b>PALEO ARGILLIC BROWN EARTHS:</b> 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.</p>
	<p><b>STAGNOGLEY SOILS:</b> 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.</p>		<p><b>ARGILLIC BROWN EARTHS:</b> 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.</p>

**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 latter of the three areas falls within Dacorum District and represents the maximum elevations within the county on the Chiltern Hills.

The upland areas 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 Lea are generally shallow while to the west within Dacorum District the Gade and Bulbourne river valleys are more pronounced. On the boulder clay of the north east the rivers are deeply incised, often within very narrow valleys of no great length.



• **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 Cassiobury,

Gorhambury, Knebworth and Theobalds. The parks associated with these houses were increasingly ornamental as well as functional. Status was an important motivator here and the gardens at Theobalds, created under James I, became very influential. 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. Puckeridge, for example, became a nexus of roads, on the route between Colchester and Sandy.

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. In 1959 the first motorway, the M1, was built through Hertfordshire. Now a long section of the M25 and an upgraded A1(M) are included, the former the first non-traditional route since the Roman occupation.

### 2.3.2 Rivers

The rivers have always 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 the Regional Park and used for recreation rather than transport. An aqueduct was constructed in 1609 to carry unpolluted water from Amwell to Stoke Newington, a distance of some 20 miles. This too is still a visible landscape feature (the New River) and a unique industrial relic, while the canal system to the west - the Grand Union Canal - is also used now for recreational purposes and has become in places a notable landscape feature.

### 2.3.3 Railways

Like the road system, the railway spread in a radial pattern from the capital. The London and Birmingham Railway followed the route of the Grand Junction Canal up the Tring valley. Its builders encountered similar problems with landowners to those of the canal builders - but railways '*cannot easily be turned into a landscape improvement*'. The most obvious industrial relic in the county is the Digswell Viaduct - 475m long and over 30m high, constructed to avoid the parks of the gentry in the Mimram valley.

### 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 the Hertfordshire Landscape Strategy Volume 3 Part 2: Landscape Character Assessment, Evaluation and Guidelines for Dacorum District are set out 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, staff of Dacorum District Council 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 a representative from Dacorum 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

#### **Enclosure Pattern**

- Wooded - W
- Estate - E
- Unenclosed - U
- Secondary - S
- Open - O
- 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	

#### **Field Size**

- 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 between May and August 2002. Each survey team 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 three 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 from that used in previous studies 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 Chilterns AONB and 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

This group included 97 different authorities and societies with a professional, statutory or local interest in the process, including most of those that had been involved in similar previous studies. Those who registered an interest in receiving further information were then sent draft area boundaries, draft text of the Summary Page and invited to a meeting on 22 July 2002 at Dacorum District Council Offices. At this meeting attendees received a presentation on the background to Landscape Character Assessment and details of the process underway within Dacorum District. Attendees were also given the opportunity to discuss their views and to make suggestions on the draft information previously circulated within small groups. Other information was made available on request. In the autumn of 2002 digital copies of revised work in progress were issued to all registered parties, asking for their written comments. Comments received up to Christmas 2002 were processed and conveyed to the consultants for incorporation as appropriate. The main contribution made by this category of stakeholders is to rigorously review and challenge the suggested area boundaries and to provide detailed information to populate the character statements.

#### 3.6.2 Tier B - Community of Place

As for Volumes 2 and 3a, 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. 924 members of the Citizens Panel living in north and west Hertfordshire were selected by. A similar but improved version of the previous questionnaire was then devised in conjunction with MORI and sent to the Tier B recipients, achieving just over a 20% response rate. As before, on the basis of maps in the questionnaire, (with an appropriate weighting factor to compensate for lower response rates), 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. Where both available and informative, individual views are quoted. These were selected on the basis of a professional review of published material and questionnaire responses, with references provided to aid audit ability and ownership. Although this round of Tier B consultation generated fewer responses than in the past (typically 20% per area rather than 33%), and thus fewer than required for strict comparability with previous work, it is considered that sufficient responses have been received

to have confidence that landscape areas identified as distinctive are indeed representative of community preferences. Where the current consultation may fall short is in not always identifying some of the minor valued landscapes. This view is supported by sensitivity analysis undertaken during previous studies. It is therefore suggested that 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.

### 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 30 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.
- Other sources of area specific information

#### 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 parts of Southern Hertfordshire, St Albans District and the study area (not 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 publically 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. A provisional five-point rating was given to each landscape area (or sub-area) 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 Strength of Character 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), Landscape Conservation Areas, , Scheduled Ancient Monuments (visible features), Special Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSIs), historic parks and gardens of the English Heritage Register.

#### 3.7.4 Guidelines Page

A general strategy and list of area-specific guidelines for managing change is included for each character area (see section 3.8 below).

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

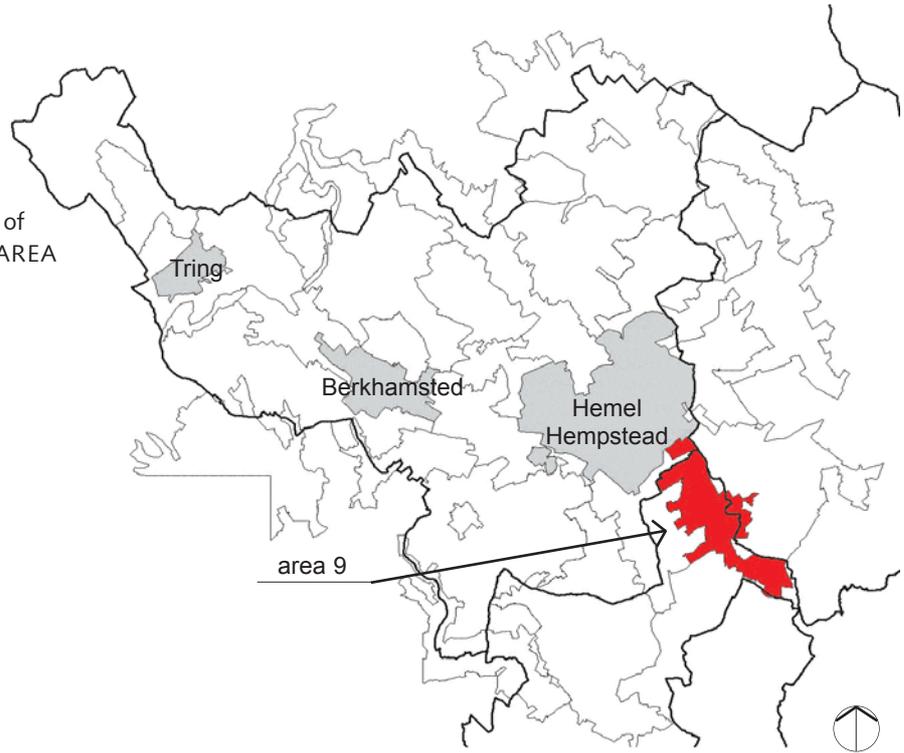
Under section 3.7.3 above there is reference to a 'Condition and Strength of Character Matrix'. In order to assess any landscape's potential ability to adapt to change without losing its intrinsic character, it is necessary to analyse the functional integrity or condition of the landscape and balance 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.

District Map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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LA076678 2003



**LOCATION**

This area is located in an upstanding area between Hemel Hempstead in the north and Watford in the south. The valley of the River Gade lies to the west and St Stephen's Bowl to the east.

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

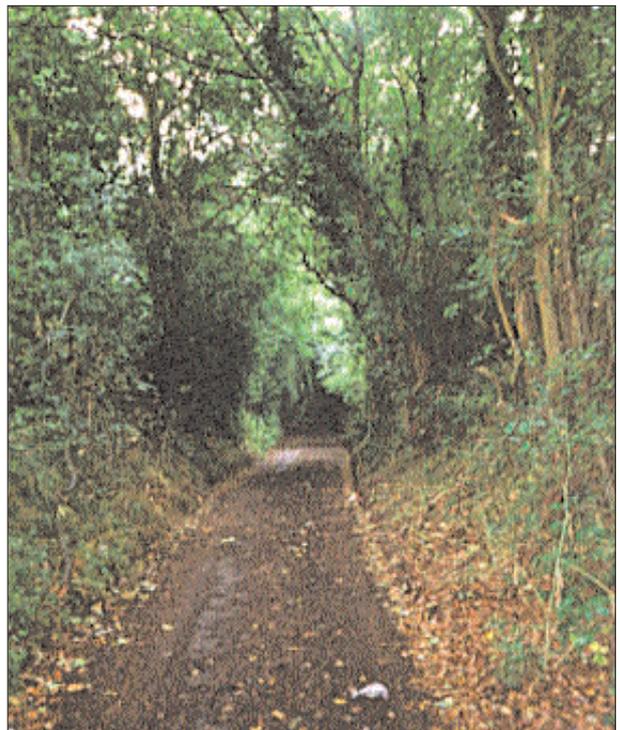
- thatched Ovaltine Dairy Farm
- pig-rearing
- wireless station on Hyde Lane
- mature treed cemetery on East Lane

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

A gently undulating plateau area of small to medium-sized fields that are predominantly pasture. Woodlands are discrete and modest except for Hanging and Piecorner Woods to the east of Bedmond. A visually contained and coherent landscape with a mature settled appearance arising from a number of traditional farms. Twentieth-century development is chiefly residential ribbon development with long gardens.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- gently undulating plateau with considerable pastoral and equestrian land
- narrow straight lanes to the west running parallel but not connecting
- winding narrow roads to the east
- discrete woodlands throughout the area including both ancient woodland and plantations
- coherent settled pattern of farms
- small parkland areas in educational and institutional use
- M25 severing the area, partly in cutting



East Lane hedgebank • (E. Staveley)

### PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** There is a combination of soils in this area. To the north the soils comprise well-drained flinty coarse loamy and gravelly soils (Sonning 2 association) over plateau gravel and river terrace drift. To the centre around Bedmond, soils contain some very flinty sandy and loamy soils with bleached sub-surface horizons in the woodlands (Hornbeam 1 series). These soils lie over plateau and glaciofluvial drift. Over the remainder of the area soils are a mix of well-drained fine loamy over clayey soils and coarse and fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils (Marlow series) over plateau and river-terrace drift.

**Topography.** The plateau is gently undulating and includes a number of fingers of land extending to the west and east. There is a gradual fall to the south east of the area.

**Degree of slope.** Typically less than 1 in 100 across the plateau. South-east slopes range between 1 in 12 and 1 in 16.

**Altitude range.** The plateau typically ranges from 140m in the north down to 125m in the south, towards Abbots Langley. To the south east the land slowly falls down to 75m.

**Hydrology.** There are no significant streams. However there are a number of ponds associated with farmsteads, woodlands or field corners. Scattered springs are also present.

**Land cover and land use.** The land-use pattern is wooded farmland to the east, with a mix of pastoral (both equestrian and livestock) and treed farmland to the west. The area supports two areas of extensive pig-rearing which is a rare sight in the county.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The woodland pattern on the plateau is of discrete blocks comprising beech, sycamore, and oak to the west. The ancient woodlands east of Bedmond include hornbeam and beech on the woodland edges and younger stands of sweet chestnut, ash, oak and pine. Hedges are of medium height with some on hedge banks or locally sunken, e.g. Millhouse Lane and East Lane. Hedge species include hazel, field maple, beech, bracken and holly, while field trees include oak, ash and beech. Fences are infrequent and confined to livestock areas. Verges are narrow in the lanes but wider on Bedmond Lane.

### HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Bedmond was the birthplace of the only English Pope, Nicholas Breakspear, known as Pope Adrian IV (1154-59). His birthplace was reputed to be a spring, the water of which was supposed to have healing properties.

**Field pattern.** There is a good continuity to the historic landscape pattern. The field layout varies across Bedmond Road. To the east it is largely organic pre-18th century origin with some subsequent field enlargement and meandering narrow lanes. To the west the pattern is pre-18th century co-axial enclosure where fields have parallel boundaries and secondary sub-divisions at right angles.

**Transport pattern.** This co-axial field pattern to the west is echoed in the road layout, with a series of parallel lanes including Bunker's Lane, Hyde Lane and Harthall Lane. To the east of Bedmond road, which connects Watford to Hemel Hempstead, the pattern is of narrow winding lanes with hedgebanks, e.g. East Lane and Whitehouse Lane. The M25, although in cutting for part of its route, severs the area.

**Settlements and built form.** The area has a planned and settled appearance with a number of dispersed farmsteads. Bedmond is the main village and dates back to at least 1100. Local materials include red brick, render, weatherboarding, flint walls with brick quoins and peg tiles. There is also the curious iron church, with unique spire, built as Bedmond received village status in 1880. There are no large houses, but Serge Hill House and Pimlico House are good examples of elegant domestic architecture. The thatched black-and-white framed Ovaltine Dairy Farm is a copy of Marie-Antoinette's model farm at Versailles. This has now been converted but is still a local feature, visible from the M25. Twentieth-century development has resulted in considerable ribbon development, particularly to Toms Lane, in association with long garden plots.

### OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

With the exception of the views from the M25, the area is generally well concealed due to the elevated landform. There are more open views to the wooded edge from the arable land to the east. The scale of fields and dense hedges mean the landscape is relatively well contained. The area has a coherent and unified character, although the M25 produces considerable noise intrusion.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** The landscape type is frequent in the county. The most distinct features are the narrow co-axial fields and parallel roads west of Bedmond Road.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The M25 and the radio masts on Hyde are the major detracting features to the area. Entrances to some paddocks are in poor condition. A caravan park is located off Toms Lane.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There is a good network of footpaths, and the attractive and contained character of the landscape adds to the enjoyment of the recreational facilities. There is an equestrian centre at High Herts, Pimlico. The Hertfordshire Way passes through the area, but is locally confined.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This area contains a number of places remarked upon by the community. These are mainly on the higher ground, such as Bunkers Hill and High Herts Riding School, but the Ovaltine farm is also cited (D).

**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>variable</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>intact</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>moderate</b>
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	<b>moderate</b>

**ROBUSTNESS**

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

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

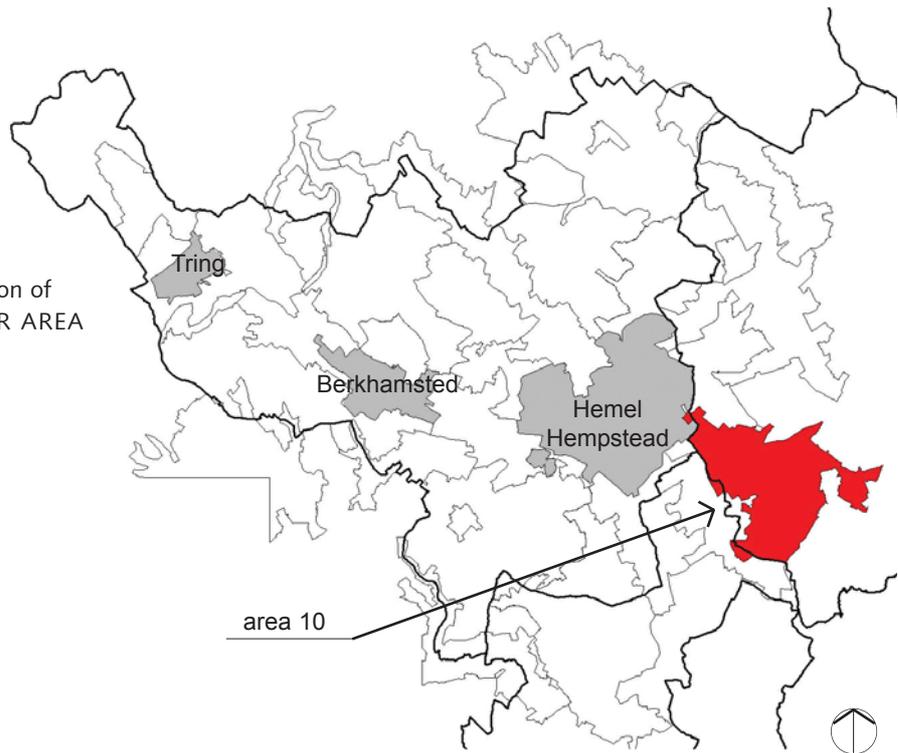
- promote the appropriate management of existing woodlands and hedgebanks. Develop a range of different management systems, such as high forest, coppice, coppice-with-standards and wood pasture and re-establish a species-rich ground flora
- use ancient hedge and field boundaries to determine the most appropriate location for woodland restoration and expansion
- promote the expansion of woodland beyond ancient woodland boundaries, especially where this will help in creating habitat links
- 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 the use of reservoirs for water storage and nature conservation interest, rather than groundwater abstraction. Ensure that reservoirs are designed to minimise impact on the character of the local landscape
- promote hedgerow creation throughout the area to provide visual and ecological links between existing and proposed woodland areas. Pattern to follow historic field boundaries where possible
- promote crop diversification and the restoration of mixed livestock/arable farming where possible
- promote both the creation of new ponds and the retention/enhancement for wildlife of existing ponds
- promote hedgerow restoration through locally appropriate measures, including coppicing, laying and replanting/gapping-up
- encourage the re-use of existing agricultural buildings for equestrian activity
- promote the use of locally traditional field enclosure where land is converted to equestrian pasture. Use hedging in preference to fencing
- ensure that, where ancient lanes and their associated hedgerows fall within or abut a proposed development, such features are protected and integrated into the new development with due regard to their historic, ecological and landscape value
- ensure that the surroundings of converted 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 to boundaries
- traffic-calming measures, where considered necessary, must be of a scale and design that relates to the local landscape character of the settlement. The use of unsympathetic materials, such as concrete paviors, coloured concrete and brightly coloured road markings should be avoided, and kerbing should be kept to a minimum
- protect the local pattern of roads, verges and hedgerows and manage the verges for wildlife
- ensure that any design proposals for minor roads fit the grain of the local landscape both horizontally and vertically; avoid significant impact on the local historic field pattern
- encourage effective management along transport corridors to ensure thinning, selective felling and replanting is undertaken to achieve a varied age structure and locally indigenous species mix
- improve public access arrangements to woodlands with low-key provision of car parking



• Pig-rearing on stony soils (E. Staveley)

District Map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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LA076678 2003



**LOCATION**

This area is located between St Albans, Watford and Hemel Hempstead. It is dissected by the M1, M25 and M10 motorways.

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

A working farmed landscape of predominantly open arable fields which slopes from north-west to south-east. To the north several large mixed woodlands create a local sense of enclosure. Elsewhere hedgerows are sparse with few individual field trees. The settlement pattern is dispersed, connected by a series of narrow winding lanes. The historic land-use pattern is overlaid by a strong network of motorways and junctions. Wooded horizons are common to the north, west and south, whilst to the east the built edge of St Albans and Chiswell Green is prominent.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- undulating plateau to north, gently sloping to south east
- medium/large open arable fields throughout
- visually interlocking mixed woodlands to north
- significant extent of motorways and interchanges with associated earthworks, lights and traffic
- narrow winding lanes with sparse clipped hedgerows
- built edge of urban settlements to east
- dispersed settlement with scattered farmsteads

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- Gardens of the Rose - Bone Hill
- recycling plant at Longfield Spring

Wooded farmland from •  
Bedmond Lane  
(E. Anderson)



### PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** To the north the plateau drift and clay-with-flints geology is overlaid by well-drained fine silty over clayey soils, often very flinty (Carstens series). On the southern slopes the geology is a flinty and chalky drift over chalk. The soils comprise well-drained flinty fine soils in valley bottoms and calcareous fine silty soils on the valley sides (Charity 2 series).

**Topography.** The wooded plateau area to the north undulates gently. To the south east there are a number of secondary valleys with steeper gradients which give a stronger landform. These valleys eventually run either side of Chiswell Green.

**Degree of slope.** On the plateau the slopes are less than 1 in 100, while on the south-east slopes they are typically 1 in 15.

**Altitude range.** 100-140m on the northern plateau and 82-100m on the southern slopes.

**Hydrology.** Surface water is rare, particularly on the limestone slopes. A number of small ponds are present on the higher ground, generally in association with the farmsteads.

**Land cover and land use.** The pattern of land cover is the prominent feature of the landscape. This is characterised by extensive areas of arable cropping, particularly to the south, with few low or relic hedges. The proportion of arable reduces on the plateau areas to the north where historically it has been more heavily wooded. There is a good mix of deciduous and conifer plantations defining the open arable fields. Small areas of pasture are located either around farmsteads, e.g. Potters Crouch, or on urban edges, e.g. Chiswell Green, where other suburban uses are present, including recreation grounds and allotments.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Woodlands are a combination of ancient woodlands, e.g. Birch Wood and Park Wood, and plantations, e.g. Potters Crouch Plantation. The main indigenous woodland community is acidic oak/hornbeam. Many woods were replanted in the 20th century with a high proportion of softwoods, including pine and larch, in the core, while the historic deciduous edges comprising birch, ash, oak and holly are generally retained. Old pollard beech and hornbeam are found at Park Wood and on other historic hedgebank boundaries. Hedgerow species comprise a wide mix including field maple, beech, hazel, holly, hawthorn and dog rose. Hedges are generally in a state of decline with some only relic. The visual effect of boundary loss is less marked to the north due to the presence of the woodland blocks. Hedgerow trees are mainly oak with occasional ash, but many are mature and over-mature. A number of isolated oak tree rows within fields ghost the line of removed hedgerows.

### HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Adjacent to the northern boundary of the area lies Prae Wood, an ancient woodland, within which is an important Late Iron Age (c.15BC to AD60) settlement.

**Field pattern.** The network of lanes, settlement and field patterns exhibits an organic pattern with pre-18th century origins. However, this pattern has been subject to considerable field amalgamation with the removal of hedgerows creating some large featureless prairie fields.

**Transport pattern.** There is a dual pattern of roads in the area. The historic lanes, which are relatively intact, are narrow and winding. Overlying, but distinct, are the major network of motorways including the M1, M10 and M25 and a large interchange.

**Settlements and built form.** The settlement pattern comprises a number of dispersed farmsteads throughout the area. There is one cluster of dwellings at Potters Crouch, but otherwise the area is sparsely settled up to the well-defined urban areas to the eastern and north-western boundaries. Most farmsteads are modest in scale and are of typical vernacular materials including brick, white render, weatherboard and claytile. A few examples of thatching are to be found near Park Wood. Holt Farm is a medieval timber-framed and moated farm.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The area is widely visible from outside, including open views from the urban areas to the east. The scale of the landscape is medium to large. From within the area there are extensive views from the motorways, particularly the M1 and M10, but also from some of the narrow lanes on the arable landscape to the south. To the north the woodland provides a stronger sense of enclosure. The noise of the motorways is relentless and discordant.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This landscape type is relatively common in the county. The most distinctive feature is the wooded farmland to the north on the plateau.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The motorways present a strong built element in the landscape. The M1 is generally poorly integrated with little in the way of screen planting and a locally dominant influence of vehicles and lighting gantries. The M25 and the interchange with the M1 are better integrated. Despite their size, considerable earthworks and new planting reduce the scale of the feature and its visual impact. There has been some localised movement towards new recreational uses, such as the golf course at Potters Crouch west of the M1, although steep perimeter bunding to the M1 has done little to integrate the change of land use. The raw built edges of Chiswell Green and How Wood represent significant suburban impact.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There are limited opportunities for recreation within the area. Rights of way often pass through large arable fields. Open views to the motorways and the associated noise detract. Specific features of interest are the Gardens of the Rose at Bone Hill, the new golf course at Potters Green, Chiswell Green equestrian centre and public access to Blackwater Wood.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

An area of some contrast. The landscape near the M1/M25 interchange seems to be of little regard, whereas the distinctive conifer plantations around Potterscrouch and West Furzeffield are valued by the community (D).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

Watling Chase Community Forest (east of the M1).

**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>variable</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>

**ROBUSTNESS**

<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>widely visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>open</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>	<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>ROBUSTNESS</b>				

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

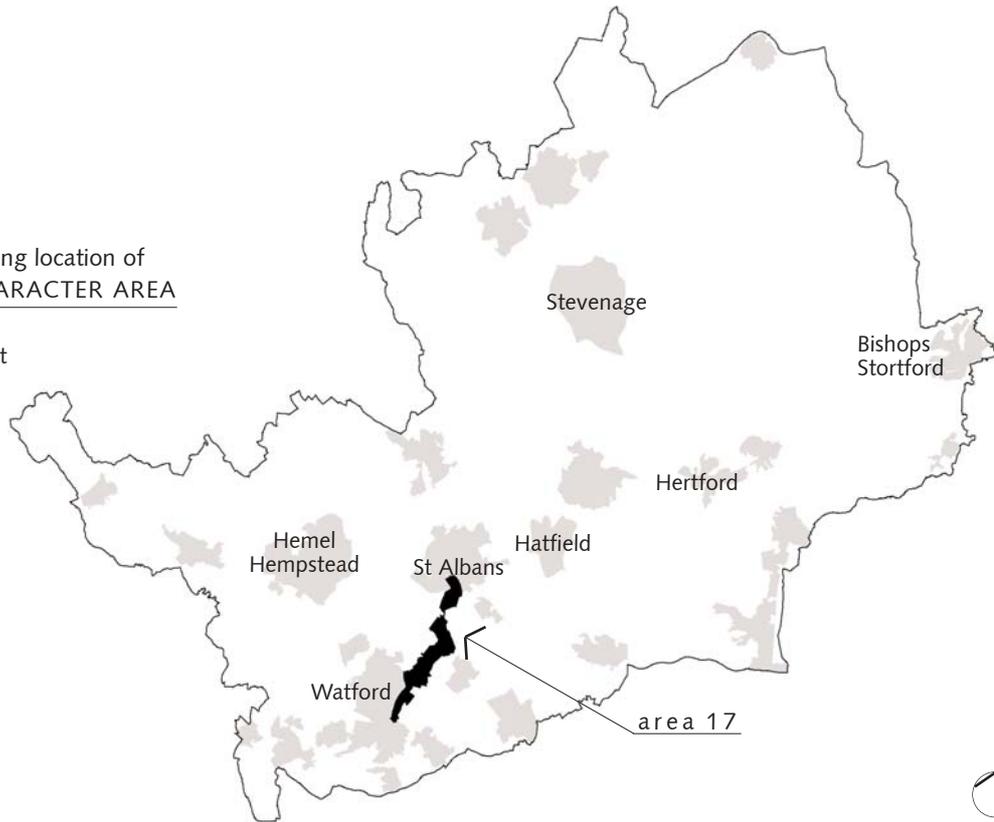
- support the Watling Chase Community Forest in the realisation of its objectives for the area
- promote hedgerow restoration and creation throughout the area to provide visual and ecological links between existing and proposed woodland areas. Pattern to follow historic field boundaries where possible
- promote the creation of a network of new woodlands in the open arable landscape, particularly with a view to visually integrating the intrusive motorways and existing urban fringe development. Develop a mix of medium to large woods near the motorways and urban areas (developing the existing pattern to the north ) and also smaller copses linking with hedgerow restoration on the open arable areas, emphasising topographical variation
- promote appropriate woodland management for existing plantation woodlands, including encouraging the replacement of softwoods with indigenous native deciduous communities, hedgebank management and re-establishing a rich ground flora
- improve public access arrangements to woodlands with attention to car park design and safety
- promote crop diversification and the restoration of mixed livestock/arable farming where possible. Include equestrian uses where feasible
- broaden the range of recreational opportunities
- ensure all existing and proposed recreational land uses include appropriate measures to manage and enhance the existing landscape setting and historical and ecological value. Particular attention should be given to ensure earthwork proposals complement natural landform patterns



- Open views towards the M1 (E. Staveley)

County map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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**LOCATION**

This area follows the River Ver south from St Albans to its confluence with the River Colne and then into Watford past the M1.

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

A narrow river valley corridor which skirts a mosaic of settlements, parkland, farmland and both active and restored mineral workings. The modest River Ver and upper Colne occupy a meandering floodplain which is grazed by livestock at a number of locations. Riparian willow plantations line the rivers along part of the course whilst south of Park Street restored wetland mineral workings provide recreational opportunities. A number of distinctive features punctuate the river landscape, including parkland, mills and fords. The valley is visually contained by side slopes and vegetation which generally conceal the presence of the adjoining settlements. The Ver-Colne Valley walk provides good pedestrian access.



**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- well-defined linear river corridor from St Albans to Watford
- flat sinuous floodplain with ecologically important floodplain meadows
- steeper valley sides including arable conversions, golf courses and restored land
- parklands fronting river at Munden Hall and Wall Hall
- area of restored mineral workings in river floodplain
- fragmentation of linear valley form and a loss of tranquillity where crossed by the M25, M1 and A414
- sense of rural seclusion between Otterspool and Colne/Ver confluence with attractive riverside views
- visual intrusion from urban fringe development at Watford, Park Street, Colney Street and St Albans

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- mature beech avenue at Munden
- ford crossings of river
- stands of willows
- converted mills at Moor Mill and Sopwell
- vernacular 'Three Valleys' pumping stations
- threaded river course south of Munden Hall

- Sopwell meadows (J. Billingsley)

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** The floodplain comprises river alluvium covered in stoneless clayey and poorly drained soils (Fladbury 1 series). These are locally calcareous. On the valley slopes the underlying geology is a combination of plateau and river-terrace drift. The soils are well-drained flinty coarse loamy and sandy over gravels (Sonning 1 association).

**Topography.** The contrast between the locally steep side slopes and river floodplain are a strong characteristic of the area, e.g. north of Park Street and along Drop Lane. Elsewhere the side slopes are less marked.

**Degree of slope.** Valley floor falls at less than 1 in 500. Side slopes vary between 1 in 40 to 1 in 5.

**Altitude range.** 53m-75m along the valley floor over a length of 12km. The side slopes are generally up to 15m above the floodplain.

**Hydrology.** The Ver is a chalk stream which supports important grassland habitats. The Colne is more acidic with lower flows than the Ver. The river meanders within the floodplain and there are a number of threaded courses between Munden Hall and Bushey Mill. Associated wet areas within the floodplain are common and a number of tributary streams feed the watercourses from the slope. At Park Street restored wetlands create a contrasting character. Fish-spawning ponds have been created close to the M1.

**Land cover and land use.** The floodplain is characterised by a mix of pasture (with grazing cattle), arable conversion (between the M25 and the M1) and recreational areas. Land uses on the side slopes are a mix of arable cropping, golf courses, restored land and parkland. West of the M1 towards Watford there is a mix of pasture, semi-natural habitats and recreational uses, in significant contrast to the adjacent urban areas.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The river corridor lies at the junction of the clay with flints and the London Clay natural regions and consequently provides a varied range of habitats. North of the confluence with the Colne are several important unimproved floodplain meadow grasslands, e.g. Sopwell Meadows. Sedge marsh or 'rich fen' is found with important species such as bogbean present. The natural woodland type is floodplain alder but very little remains. Small riverine plantations and linear belts are present for both cropping and amenity, with distinctive silvery-leaved willow, poplar and ash. There is a good mix in age structure of trees and most of the floodmeadows are actively managed. Hedgerows contain the wider valley along lanes or to higher ground. Hawthorn is the main species, but locally at Drop Lane this is replaced by beech, reflecting the underlying chalk. There are many mature specimen trees and copses, including beech, sycamore, sweet chestnut, cedar and oak in the parklands at Wall Hall and Munden Hall. Some parkland trees are over-mature and in decline.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

- Wall Hall Park and Pleasure Grounds were laid out in the early 19th century following the advice of Humphry Repton who provided a 'Red Book' of suggestions in 1803, including alterations to the drives and the incorporation of a former quarry.
- The area around Munden Hall is relatively intact and comprises areas of informal medieval parkland and a complete section of meadow pasture. This section of the river corridor also contains the site of several Roman villas.

**Field pattern.** The floodplain was historically largely open in character but has been contained by both 18th-century parliamentary enclosure and more widespread 20th-century enclosure. The field pattern is discontinuous but, where present, fields are irregular in shape and medium in size. Many boundaries are fenced, with few hedges. Some former pre-18th century sinuous field patterns on the valley slopes have now been broken down to create post-1950 prairie fields.

**Transport pattern.** The Roman Watling Street crosses the Ver at Frogmore/Park Street, where its straight alignment deviates around what was probably locally wet ground. Watling Street first brought pilgrims to St Albans and then many travellers over the centuries. There are few other historic routes, with only the narrow Drop Lane following the edge of the floodplain. The area is, however, crossed by a number of motorways and trunk roads, including the M1, M25 and A414. The A4008 link road into Watford from the M1 follows the river corridor. The St Pancras railway line follows to the west of the area at Park Street.

**Settlements and built form.** A number of mills were built along the river, e.g. at Sopwell and Park Street. These mills are now converted to offices and restaurants.

- The two principal houses in the area are almost opposite each other. On the west bank is Munden Hall, an early 19th-century mansion, and on the east bank Wall Hall, a Gothick-style castellated turreted and cemented house of 1802 built for George Thelluson, which is now part of Watford University.
- Local building materials comprise brick and clay tile with weathered timber-framed barns. This style has been utilised in the distinctive 'Three Valleys' pumping stations.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

There are limited views of the river corridor from outside the area. The section from Otterspool to Colney Street has a strong visual unity and sense of rural seclusion. Parklands overlooking the floodplain add a further degree of cohesion to the area. Other sections to the north and south are more influenced by adjacent urban uses, or comprise restored land. The noise from local roads provides the major detractor in downgrading what otherwise would be a very pleasant area.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** One of a number of river valleys in the county. Certain lengths are important for the flood meadows.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The major roads which cross over the river corridor are significant detracting features by virtue of both the structures and the visual disturbance of the traffic. Pylons also disrupt the scenic value. West of the M1 the built edges of Watford and Bushey visually contain the area and the A4008 affects the otherwise relaxed riverine character.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There are few arterial routes along the valley apart from the Ver-Colne Valley Walk, for which there are two car parks, a picnic site and riverside walks near Drop Lane. Accessibility along the walk is generally good, but locally poorly signed and maintained. Opportunities for horse riding and cycling along the valley are limited. The river is crossed by a number of fords which are passable with difficulty during high water levels. Golf courses at St Albans and Aldenham occupy parts of the valley slopes. A 'Top Golf' centre is under construction west of the M1 close to Watford.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

The western end of the Ver Colne valley is valued for some distinctive elements, including 'lovely walks by woodland and streams'. These appeal even to those who would not rank these as their preferred elements in the landscape (D).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

Watling Chase Community Forest (most).  
 SAM: moated site at Bushey Hall Farm.  
 English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens*: Wall Hall (Grade II).

**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>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>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>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**

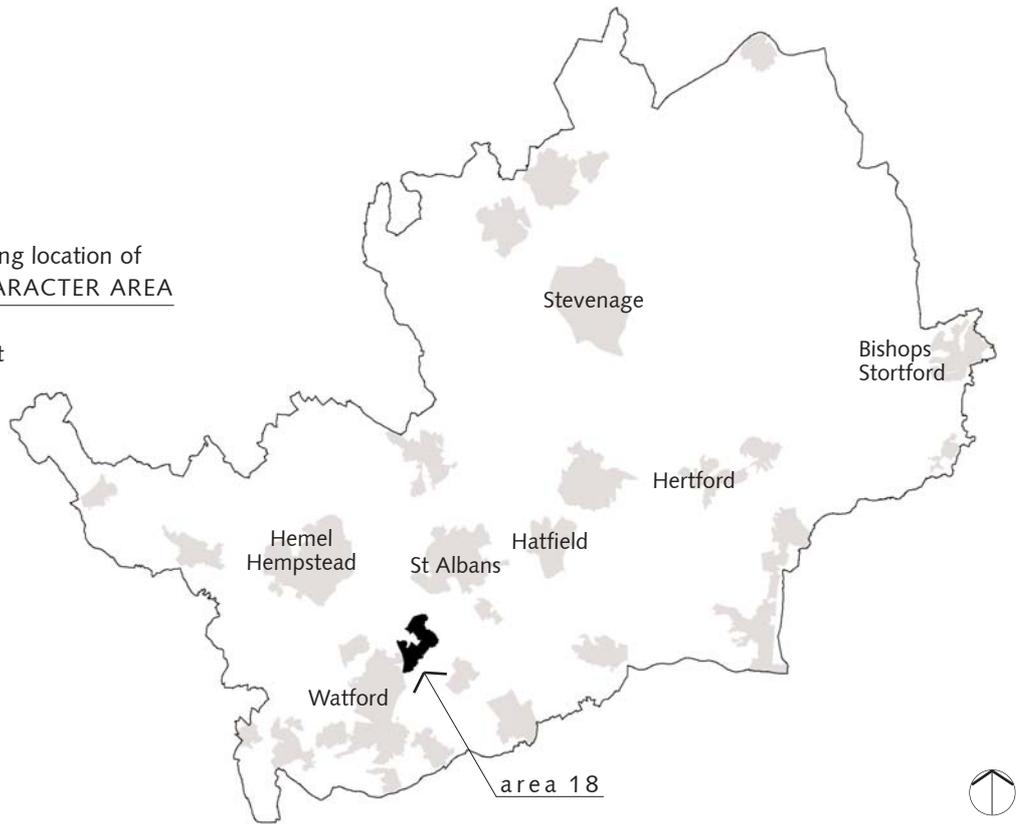
- support Watling Chase community forest in the realisation of its objectives
- support the traditional grazing patterns and natural seasonal flooding as a means of managing the important and sensitive floodmeadow grasslands
- control the use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides that could affect the river and meadow habitats
- promote the reversion of floodplain meadows from arable uses south of the Ver/Colne confluence
- encourage planting of small to medium-scale plantations to screen major roads (including the M1, M25), soften urban edges and emphasise the slopes and sense of seclusion along the valley floor
- restore and sensitively manage the historic hedgerow pattern and river valley field trees
- support the management of riparian willow plantations and look for opportunities to maintain a balanced age structure of plantations and individual trees
- encourage planting of floodplain alder woodland communities (NB check extent of water-borne diseases affecting alder)
- promote the establishment of buffer strips of semi-natural vegetation along all watercourses, avoiding potential conflict with recreational use
- protect river corridors and water meadows from development that would alter its character visually or environmentally, such as culverting, impact on a floodplain, loss of water meadows or storage ponds
- avoid the construction of flood management or retention features that would be difficult to integrate into the natural landscape of such areas
- promote improved access to the valley generally, and links and signing to the Ver-Colne Valley Walk in particular
- extend opportunities for access by bicycle and horse
- support the conservation and renovation of the parkland landscapes at Wall Hall and Munden House and enhance their riverside aspect
- restore and reinstate historic features in the floodplain, e.g. lily ponds at Wall Hall
- resist ploughing of grasslands within parklands and encourage reversion from arable to grassland
- promote a co-ordinated recreation, access and conservation strategy for the development and management of the area west of the M1



• River crossing, Drop Lane  
(J. Billingsley)

County map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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**LOCATION**

Between Bricket Wood, How Wood and the River Ver/Colne Valley.

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

An area of mixed land uses and transitional character, including considerable woodland, unrestored mineral workings, educational, industrial, horticultural and arable land. The area has undergone significant change in the 20th century and is impinged upon by settlement at Bricket Wood and How Wood, together with a marked severance by the M25. The historic pattern is well preserved in Bricket Wood Common, but eroded in many other locations, showing poor management and some dereliction.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- a number of ancient woodlands
- poorly or partly restored mineral workings
- strong severance by the M25 and railway line
- secretive and secluded character of Bricket Wood Common
- tall and poorly-managed hedgerows with significant dieback
- scattered industrial and residential properties

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- ornamental grounds of HSBC College and associated sports centre
- wells and ponds at Bricket Wood Common

Hornbeam coppice •  
at Bricket Wood Common  
(HCC Landscape Unit)



### PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** The geology comprises Aeolian silty drift and till. The soils are stoneless, slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged coarse loamy soils and silty over clayey soils (Gresham series). Bricket Wood Common is located on acidic boulder clay which leads to a wet heath habitat. Moor Mill Quarry SSSI is a site of gravels, silts and chalky till which helps trace the diversion of the proto-Thames.

**Topography.** The area is a gently undulating plateau except at the eastern fringes, adjoining minor tributary valleys next to the River Colne.

**Degree of slope.** Typically 1 in 80. Up to 1 in 12 on secondary valleys to Colne.

**Altitude range.** 83 - 75m.

**Hydrology.** Drainage on Bricket Wood Common is poor, particularly to the east of the railway. There are a number of small waterbodies and ponds scattered through the area, associated with either the Common, old farmsteads, old gravel workings or more ornamental lakes linked to the HSBC College. Minor streams flow along some of the local depressions.

**Land cover and land use.** Land cover can be broadly split between woodland, arable and disused minerals sites. Arable land, although present throughout the area, is not visually prominent due to the presence of tall though poorly-managed hedgerows. There are a few pasture fields remaining, associated with the settled fringe of Bricket Wood Common and adjacent settlement edges. Former mineral workings degrade the area, particularly adjacent to the M25, which itself is flanked by substantial earth bunds, thereby containing the area visually. A former minerals site on Lye Lane is to be restored for golf use.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Bricket Wood Common (SSSI) is an important example of lowland heath. Part of the site is ancient oak/hornbeam woodland but much has regenerated from the former open, wet, acidic heath to scrub woodland, including birch and oak. The Common merited three separate field studies in J.G. Dony's *Flora of Hertfordshire*. Significant areas of hornbeam coppice have developed into a series of eerie anthropomorphic forms. Active management maintains the mix of woodland habitats. Other tree species include hazel, aspen, alder buckthorn and sessile oak. The main elements of heathland flora still survive due to recent management and include heather, heath grass, heath milkwort and heath spotted orchid. The Common also contains the largest colony of violet helleborine in the county.

Many of the other woodlands, including Blackgreen Wood, Nottlers Wood and Mutchetts Wood are ancient, though poorly managed. Woodland edges are marked by deep ditches, banks and hornbeam coppice. The woods are relatively drier than the Common and species include hornbeam, beech, oak and ash. Hedgerow species include elm, hawthorn, hazel and holly, although much of the elm is dying back. There are some local areas of dry heath associated with areas of gravel capping.

### HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The traditional cohesion of the area has been disorientated by the extent of built development in the 20th century together with mineral extraction. The Common was historically managed by a combination of grazing, coppicing and burning.

**Field pattern.** Substantial areas of ancient woodland and common survive although much of the original field pattern has been affected by subsequent non-agricultural land use. Where present, fields are small/medium in size and irregular in form.

**Transport pattern.** The majority of original local roads are narrow sinuous lanes with no verges. The St Pancras railway line dissects the area, most noticeably on the Common. The M25 severs the area and the M1 lies to the west.

**Settlements and built form.** The traditional pattern of dispersed properties and small hamlets adjacent to the commons can still be locally seen, e.g. at Smug Oak. However, these are invariably submerged by 20th-century development, including the Building Research Establishment (at Garston), which seems to have infiltrated the area in both open and woodland habitats. The main residential areas of Bricket Wood commenced in the 1930s. The exception is at Bricket Wood Common, where a small hamlet including the Old Fox pub nestles at the end of a sinuous narrow lane through the wood. The HSBC College has an institutional character with strongly ornamental grounds. This was initially the American Ambassador College, founded in 1959 and planned around a stuccoed villa.

### OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

English Nature SSSI notification.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

Views are relatively contained both from outside and within the area. The jewel of the area is the Common, where there is a strong sense of seclusion and separation.

Although certain areas, notably the Common, are well maintained, elsewhere the area has a feeling of neglect and transition. Fly-tipping is a common detractor. Unrestored mineral workings are clearly visible from public roads, e.g. Smug Oak Lane and Lye Lane, and many of the residential properties display defensive boundary details.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** Although much of the landscape type is frequent, the Bricket Wood Common is unique within the county. The extensive wet acidic heath is a rare habitat and the area is classified as a High Biodiversity Area in the BAP.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The M25 is a major built feature through the area, although it is in cutting for most of its length. At Blackgreen Wood extensive new planting has been undertaken to create a new woodland edge.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There is an access land agreement over the extensive Bricket Wood Common. East of the railway line the Common can be very wet, which seasonally restricts access. There is limited parking available along School Lane. Although known to the local population the area is not well signed. Elsewhere there are localised footpaths and bridleways. Horse riding is a noted use, although some of the lanes are rat runs and potentially dangerous.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

The wooded landscape has some value for distinctiveness, including those for whom woodland is not their primary interest (D).

Re Bricket Wood Common: *'a most fascinating backwoods region. Here are morasses, thick undergrowth, rare orchids and trees of many types'* ('Elstree and the Colne Valley', *Hertfordshire Countryside* Vol.20, No.83, March 1966).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

Watling Chase Community Forest (All).

SSSI: Moor Mill Quarry (geological interest).

SSSI: Bricket Wood Common.

**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>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>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>concealed</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

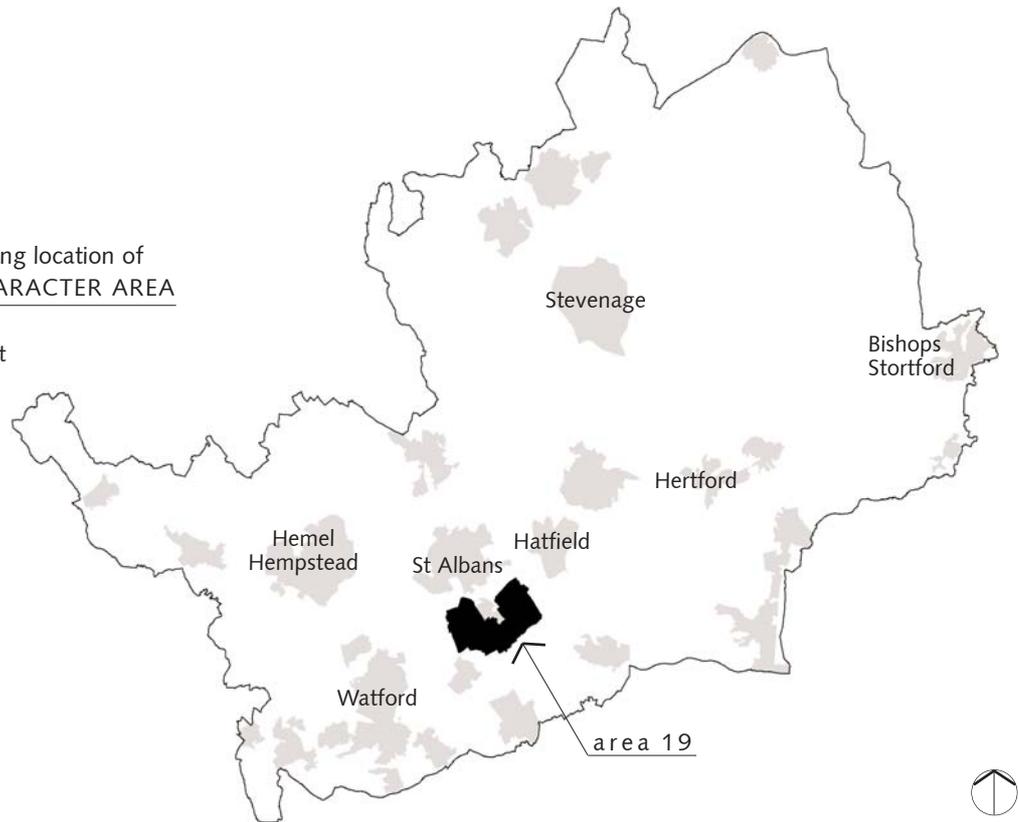
- support the Watling Chase Community Forest in the realisation of its objectives for the area
- continue the management of the Common to benefit restoration of wet heathland flora
- promote management on the Common to benefit restoration of coppice woodland
- promote the re-establishment of low-density stock grazing and management by rotational cutting, turf stripping and/or controlled burning as appropriate
- establish realistic and attractive countryside management schemes for all sites with heathland and acid grassland/scrub community potential. Create a mix of habitat types with a balance between wildlife and public access. Promote local initiatives for traditional management
- promote the creation of additional woodlands, particularly with a view to visually integrating the intrusive motorways, urban fringe development and former mineral sites
- improve public access arrangements to heaths and woodlands with attention 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
- use ancient hedge and field boundaries to identify the most appropriate location for wood restoration and expansion
- 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
- promote both the creation of new ponds and the retention/enhancement for wildlife of existing ponds
- promote hedgerow restoration through locally appropriate measures including coppicing, laying and replanting/gapping-up
- ensure that ancient lanes and their associated hedgerows, ditches and hedgebanks are retained, protected, enhanced and integrated into new development with due regard to their historic, ecological and landscape value
- traffic-calming measures, where considered necessary, must be of a scale and design that relates to the local landscape character of the settlement
- promote a clear strategy for the visual and noise mitigation of all motorways to positively integrate these corridors into the local landscape character
- encourage effective management along transport corridors to ensure thinning, selective felling and replanting is undertaken to achieve a varied age structure and locally indigenous species mix



- Clearing in woodland at Bricket Wood Common (HCC Landscape Unit)

County map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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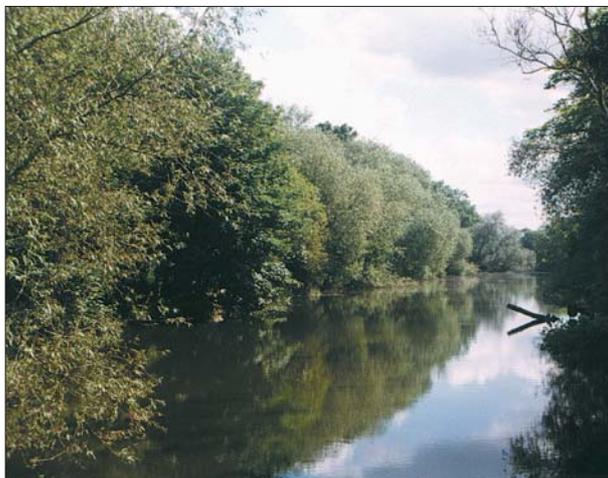


**LOCATION**

The Vale is situated south of St Albans and north of Shenley Ridge between the A5 and North Mymms Park.

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

A broad and shallow basin of the upper River Colne, with some extensive panoramas over arable fields, both along the Vale and up towards Shenley Ridge to the south. Mixed land uses include arable, extensive areas of active and restored mineral extraction and urban fringe development. Areas of wooded farmland estate characterise the north-eastern part of the area.



• Restored wetland, London Colney (J. Billingsley)

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- broad shallow basin varying by only 10m
- extensive views along the Vale and up to Shenley Ridge
- a predominantly arable landscape with few small or medium copses, and with some grazing on restored land
- areas of woodland and parkland to north east in association with Tyttenhanger Park
- active and restored mineral extraction sites along the course of the Colne and at Radlett aerodrome. Mix of wetland restoration and landfill sites
- institutional parkland landscapes associated with redundant Victorian psychiatric hospitals at Napsbury and Harperbury
- M25 corridor, overhead pylons and associated urban fringe development
- new planting associated with the road corridor and adjacent land uses

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- Harper Lane Quarry complex including rail aggregates depot and ready-mix concrete bagging plant
- historic houses at North Mymms, Tyttenhanger and Salisbury Hall
- recreational facilities on Bell Lane for UCL and Arsenal FC
- All Saints Pastoral Centre chapel is a visual landmark from the M25
- Napsbury Hospital water tower
- moated Salisbury Hall

## PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** The geology in the core of the Vale comprises Aeolian silty drift and till. These form deep stoneless well-drained silty soils over gravel (Hamble 2 series) with, to the east, stoneless slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged coarse loamy and silty soils (Gresham series, some Grade 2). To the base of the Shenley Ridge, brown earths (Marlow series) overlie plateau and river terrace drift and chalk. To the north around Napsbury sandy brown earths and clay soils (Hornbeam 3) overlie glacial drift.

**Topography.** Levels along the Vale are almost level. Gently undulating landforms towards St Albans and the lower slopes of the Shenley Ridge.

**Degree of slope.** Typically 1 in 400 along the valley floor and 1 in 100 across the valley. Side slopes increase to between 1 in 50 and 1 in 25.

**Altitude range.** 75 to 60m along a length of 6km. Across the centre of the Vale side slopes rise up to 95m at the foot of Shenley Ridge.

**Hydrology.** The broad valley is a product of the proto-Thames, which flowed north of its present course during the last Ice Age and covered the Central River Valleys region. The small acidic upper Colne flows in the area at Park Corner on the Tyttenhanger estate. Downstream four substantial waterbodies have been created through Tyttenhanger Park following mineral extraction. Between London Colney and the confluence with the Ver there are a number of disturbed habitats along the river including some species-rich chalky habitats associated with calcareous gravel pits. Lakes have also been created at Broad Colney where the site is managed for nature conservation. The Colne is fed by a series of smaller seasonal tributary streams. Isolated ponds are associated with farmhouses, parkland and a moated site at Salisbury Hall.

**Land cover and land use.** This area is mainly in arable production, the open landscape punctuated by a few small isolated copses. Extensive areas have been excavated for minerals, including both farmland and parkland, most notably at Tyttenhanger Park, where the setting of the Hall is encircled by mounds of overburden and spoil, with attendant conveyor belts and plant. Some sites have been used for landfill and then restored to sheep grazing, whilst others have been returned to wetland habitats along the Colne. The area is also subject to re-development pressure for commercial and industrial units on the former Handley Page site at Colney Street and at London Colney. Both Harperbury and Napsbury Hospital sites, with their mature Victorian parkland and associated exotic tree species, are earmarked for residential redevelopment and conversion.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Woodland areas are either associated with the parkland at Tyttenhanger or in more discrete and linear blocks, e.g. at the foot of the Shenley Ridge. Some of the woods at Tyttenhanger, e.g. Coppice Wood, comprise an oak/hornbeam mix, indicating lighter acidic soil conditions. Scots pine and sweet chestnut are also present on these soils, together with oak, ash, sycamore, field maple and some holly. Around some of the

restored water bodies there are areas of willow, alder, birch, cherry and oak.

Where present, hedges are hawthorn, field maple, hazel and blackthorn with occasional elder and elm. Oak is the most common standard tree with some ash, alder and willow. Some of the woods are in poor condition, e.g. Garden Wood, which has been cleared for war games. Wet acidic grasslands in the Tyttenhanger estate are important for birds. The large arable area south of Coursers Road attracts flocks of wintering golden plovers and is the home of a colony of tree sparrows. South of Napsbury Hospital there is an important area of rare arable weeds, including the largest colony of cornflower in the county.

## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The moated Salisbury Hall, once the home of Nell Gwynne, was used by the De Havillands during WWII. The prototype of the Mosquito was built there and it is now a museum to the aircraft.

**Field pattern.** Areas of pre-18th century origin enclosure survive, but the cultural pattern has been widely affected throughout most of the area due to land-use change over the last 100 years. Field boundaries have been removed and there are large prairie fields to the east. Mineral extraction and landfill have changed the local landscape character and landform patterns. Where present, field sizes are typically large and regular. Field boundaries often comprise ditches and tracks, rather than hedgerows.

**Transport pattern.** There are few historic roads through the area with the exception of Coursers Road. There are a number of busy modern roads, most notably the M25. The St.Pancras railway line crosses to the west.

**Settlements and built form.** The settlement pattern owes its origins to the estates in the area. The result is a dispersed pattern with just a few farms and cottages on the agricultural land and larger houses set in parkland.

- Tyttenhanger Park is recorded as a remnant deer park. The house, by the architect Peter Mills, and its distinctive cupola date back to 1660.
- Salisbury Hall is one of few moated sites in the south and west of the county.
- All Saints Pastoral Centre (1899) is a distinctive neo-Tudor red brick and stone building.
- Napsbury Hospital opened in 1905 and is an example of the echelon-style mental asylum. The grounds, now listed, were designed by William Goldring in an informal parkland style, incorporating a number of exotic trees. Isolated clusters of attendant cottages sprang up later in the 20th century.
- Recreational facilities have developed off Bell Lane, including the UCL Sports Grounds and the new Arsenal School of Excellence.

## OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens*.

English Heritage *Register of Scheduled Ancient Monuments*.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

There are extensive views both into and within most of the area, particularly where the M25 comes off Shenley Ridge. The area has lost a large part of its historic character and is now an open and disjointed area with road and rail noise being a detracting feature. The parkland areas have a strong sense of neglect.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** The area is rather unusual by virtue of its openness and flatness.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Although there are a number of detracting features within the landscape, bunding and roadside planting have ensured they are at least partly concealed from many public views. However, some of the bunds create their own impact, especially around many of the mineral sites. Prominent detracting features include the M25 and industrial and commercial buildings on the perimeter of London Colney and Colney Street, which exert a considerable visual influence on the surrounding area. Local treasures include All Saints Pastoral centre and Napsbury water tower.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There is a moderately good network of rights of way across much of the area. However, many of the routes are uninviting and forbidding, directly affected by active or recent mineral extraction, whilst others are over large open arable areas affected by views of major roads. Noted recreational uses include horse riding and walking. Local centres for recreation include the De Havilland Aircraft Museum at Salisbury Hall, Bowmans Green Open Farm and Broad Colney restored lakes.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

There is little evidence that this area is valued for distinctiveness (E). Some features, including the parkland, are valued as distinctive (D).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

Watling Chase Community Forest.  
 SAM: Colney Chapel moated site (London Colney).  
 English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and gardens: Napsbury Hospital (Grade II).

**CONDITION**

*Land cover change:* **widespread**  
*Age structure of tree cover:* **mature**  
*Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:* **mature or young**  
*Management of semi-natural habitat:* **fragmented**  
*Survival of cultural pattern:* **variable**  
*Impact of built development:* **high**  
*Impact of land-use change:* **high**

**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

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

- support Watling Chase Community Forest in the realisation of its objectives for the area
- promote the creation of extensive areas of new large-scale woodlands to reflect the scale of the area, particularly in the open arable areas and mineral sites away from the river corridor
- woodlands should cater for public access, conservation and economic productivity
- woodland planting should provide screening for motorways, roads and intrusive built development at London Colney and Colney Street
- provide ecological and visual linkage via a substantial network of hedges between woodlands and hedgerow trees. Include links to adjacent areas at North Mymms Park and Redwell Woods
- encourage the development of a network of small woods, copses and hedges on the lower slopes of the Shenley Ridge
- ensure that all existing and future mineral and aggregate-related operations in the Vale cause minimum visual impact through the careful use of earthworks and planting. Restoration proposals should look for opportunities to maximise biodiversity potential and enhance public access
- give priority to the continued management and upgrading of restored mineral sites, including improved earthworks profiles, removal of over-mature trees and the introduction of new planting schemes
- ensure that the mature 'institutional parkland landscapes' are retained in redevelopment proposals and that public access is encouraged
- promote the restoration of the wooded farmland and parkland setting of Tyttenhanger Park and the creative incorporation of the restored wetlands for recreation and wildlife
- promote the management of semi-natural woodlands, e.g. Coppice Wood and Garden Wood
- maintain framed views to attractive natural and built features, including Shenley Ridge, Napsbury water tower and All Saints pastoral centre chapel
- develop the network of rights of way within the area and improve accessibility from local settlements and over major obstacles, e.g. motorways and railways
- ensure that any new built development is visually integrated into the landscape with minimal impact
- encourage the promotion of the existing and new tourist and recreational facilities
- encourage the creation of acidic grassland habitats along the Colne corridor
- encourage the development of wetland habitats along the River Colne
- encourage the retention and management of areas of rare arable weed banks including the cornflower
- protect important wildlife habitats



- Open arable fields towards Shenley Ridge (J. Billingsley)

County map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA



**LOCATION**

The area lies between Shenley Ridge to the north, Borehamwood to the south west and the A1/M25 to the south east.

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

An undulating series of close ridges and valleys. The ridges have a well-treed character due to a combination of woodland blocks, scattered trees and tall hedges. Individual houses, farms and small settlements occupy the narrow fingers of plateau overlooking the surrounding slopes of both arable and pastoral landscapes, which often have a contained character.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- a series of narrow settled ridges of sinuous form
- slopes to the south east comprise mainly medium to large arable fields and more open character
- slopes to the west and north east comprise a more intact landscape of small/medium pasture and numerous field oaks
- woodland blocks and copses scattered throughout the area, both around houses and more extensively to the west where they combine with mature parkland landscapes at the edge of Shenley Park and Porters Park golf course
- prominent built edge to Borehamwood and associated pylons dilute the rural character
- good range and use of local building materials

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- exposures of Hertfordshire 'puddingstone' (2 RIGS sites)
- Rabley Park



• Holmshill Lane (HCC Landscape Unit)

### PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** The underlying geology of the slopes is Tertiary clay overlaid by slowly permeable and seasonally waterlogged soils with some brown subsoils (Windsor series). Locally, there are areas of fine loamy and silty soils over the clays. On the narrow plateau areas the geology is plateau and river-terrace drift. This is overlaid by slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged coarse loamy, fine loamy and fine silty over clayey soils (Essendon association).

**Topography.** The narrow and sinuous plateau is almost level. Side slopes and narrow intervening valleys vary in steepness.

**Degree of slope.** Side slopes typically 1 in 20 but locally 1 in 15. Plateau less than 1 in 150.

**Altitude range.** Ridge range 125-132m. Slopes fall to 80m at Harper Lane in the north-west and 100m in south-east at the A1.

**Hydrology.** The clay soils support numerous ponds on the plateau area, e.g. Wood Hall Farm, Kitwells Farm and High Canons. There are also a series of wells in association with these pond features. A number of streams rise on the clay and follow the series of valleys and slopes radiating from the areas in all directions to join the tributaries of the Colne or Mimms Hall Brook. These include Catherine Bourne to the north-east, which is dammed at Rabley Park to create various ornamental water features.

**Land cover and land use.** The predominant land use is pastoral, particularly on the plateau areas and the western slopes. Pasture is primarily for horses, and often associated with stud farms, e.g. Wood Hall Farm. Arable land use is stronger on the slopes, particularly to the south east and south running down to the Arkley Plain. Although not extensive, woodland is often visually interlocking and serves to emphasise the narrow ridges. Areas of informal parkland strengthen the landscape character between the larger houses on the ridges and within the recreational land uses to the north west, including Porters Park golf course.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** Natural woodland communities comprise an oak/hazel mix on the higher and wetter ground, with an oak/hornbeam mix where the ground is locally drier. Other local species of note are aspen in the valleys, and ash. There are both ancient woodlands, e.g. Hound's Wood, Big Pursley and Little Pursley Wood, and more recent plantation woodlands where softwood species are predominant, e.g. The Gorse. Hedgerows are generally mixed and along the ridge areas. Species include field maple, hazel, hornbeam, hawthorn, elm and lime. Standard and hedgerow trees, mainly oak, are a particular feature of the area, e.g. south-west of Shenley. The London clay supports a number of species-rich neutral and neutral to acidic grasslands, e.g. at Lyndhurst and High Canons, with species including Ragged Robin.

### HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Areas of informal medieval parkland survive, e.g. at High Canons and Wood Hall where the parks roll over ridges and valleys.

**Field pattern.** Much of the area to the west still retains its pre-18th century organic enclosure pattern with medium/small field sizes. Fields are often regular in form. Although in decline, the historic network of hedges and hedgerow trees is a strong feature, with rows of mature oak trees often retained although the hedge has been removed. To the south east the pattern has been partially eroded with the creation of some 'prairie' fields, where the combination of the loss of hedgerows, hedgerow trees, and lack of new planting makes the landscape more open and visually degraded.

**Transport pattern.** The pattern of narrow local sinuous lanes and roads has been largely retained with few 20th-century distractions. Verges are generally narrow but there are some locally wide verges on Silver Hill.

**Settlements and built form.** The majority of settlement is located on the ridges and plateau areas in the form of villages, e.g. Ridge and Shenley, or isolated houses and farms. The exception is Rabley Park, where the settlement pattern lies in the valley. Buildings utilise a wide range of vernacular materials including brick, clay tile, knapped flint, whitewash, black weatherboard and some thatch. These include a number of sympathetic modern conversions. The buildings are generally well assimilated into the treed landscape. Orchard Mead is a group of almshouses by George Gilbert Scott at Ridge.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The slopes and wooded skyline of the area are widely visible from outside. Locally the area has a strong sense of enclosure, both within the settled, well treed plateau and in some of the more intimate valleys. To the south east there is a more open and exposed character. The area has a strong sense of cohesion and is relatively peaceful.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** The landscape type is relatively frequent in the county. The most distinctive elements are the treed and settled ridges.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The core of the area has suffered little from incursion of modern built development. There are a number of features on the perimeter. The northern edge of Borehamwood and the associated pylons represent a raw edge to the rural landscape. Institutional developments on the ridge are prominent from the south. Shenley Hospital water tower, although outside the area, is also a strong local landmark.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There is a good network of footpaths through the area and no disruption from 20th-century roads. Horse riding is a major activity with frequent use of some bridleway routes, e.g. Packhorse Lane. This is likely to create seasonal problems for pedestrians on the heavy soils. Porters Park golf course lies to the north west.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

The greenbelt farm and parkland landscapes to the east and south of Shenley are valued for their distinctiveness (C). Otherwise, generally unremarked upon, this area includes some aspects valued for distinctiveness (D).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

Watling Chase Community Forest.  
Landscape Conservation Area (south of Radlett Lane and north of Buckettsland Lane).

<b>CONDITION</b>	
<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>high</b>
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	<b>high</b>

<b>ROBUSTNESS</b>	
<i>Impact of landform:</i>	<b>prominent</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>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

- support the Watling Chase Community Forest in the realisation of its objectives for the area
- reinforce and emphasise the topography and pattern of woodland and tree cover to the fingered ridgeline by new planting. Encourage extending planting along the ridges to the east and the provision of habitat linkage between isolated woodlands
- create woodland copses adjacent to intrusive features including the A1 and the built edge of Borehamwood. Proposals should not emphasise the linear nature of the existing boundaries but make use of field corners to give a natural character
- improve public access arrangements to woodlands and links with rights of way
- 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 and coppice-with-standards
- within historic informal parklands encourage reversion from arable use to pasture and grassland, e.g. north of High Canons
- 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
- resist ploughing of grasslands within parklands
- 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
- promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats
- encourage the establishment of wet native woodland species along watercourses to emphasize the features and improve biodiversity. Use locally indigenous species including aspen
- 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 and to reconnect rows of isolated field 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
- encourage the re-use of existing agricultural buildings for equestrian activity
- promote the use of traditional hedged field enclosure where land is converted to equestrian pasture or where fences have been introduced
- conserve unimproved and semi-improved neutral to acidic grassland wherever possible, avoiding agricultural improvements and overgrazing to maintain their nature conservation value
- traffic-calming measures, where considered necessary, must be of a scale and design that relates to the local landscape character of the settlement
- promote the development and implementation of a landscape management plan for Porters Park golf course and other recreational areas. 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



• View north from Strangeways Farm (HCC Landscape Unit)

County map showing location of  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA



**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.

<b>CONDITION</b>	
<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>variable</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>

<b>ROBUSTNESS</b>	
<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>locally visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>partial</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>coherent</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>unusual</b>

<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

- 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)

County map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Hertfordshire  
County Council  
LA076678



**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>

<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>				

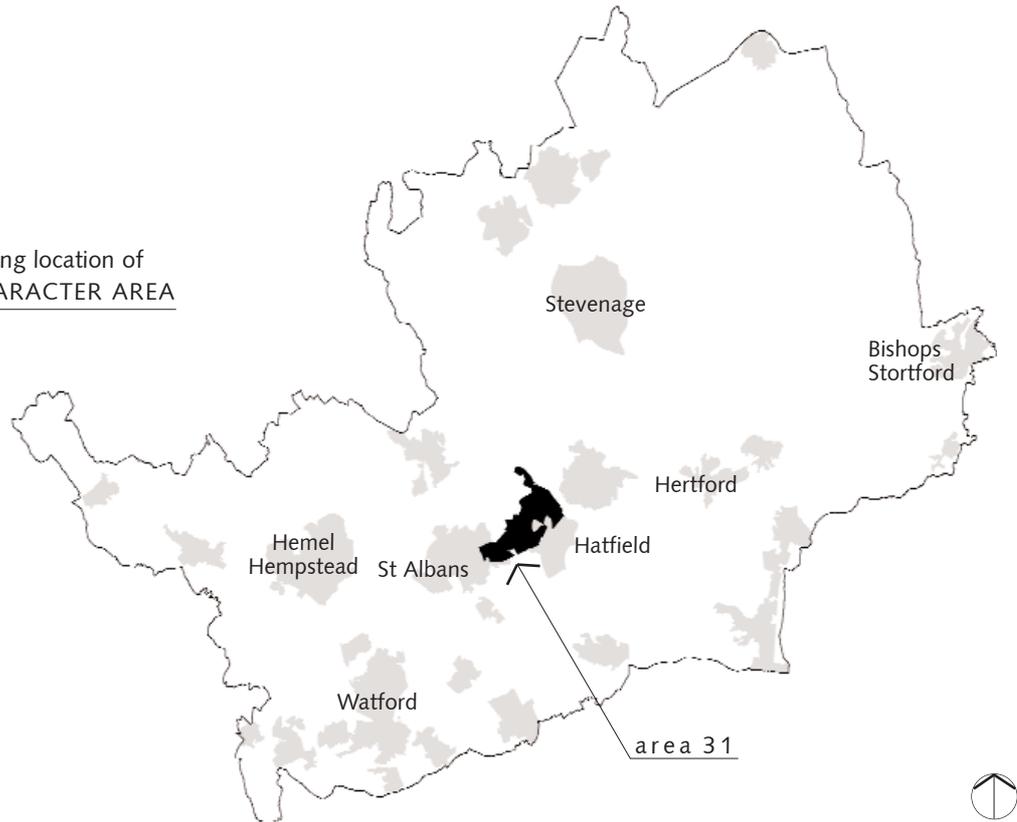
### STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE: IMPROVE AND CONSERVE

- support the 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)

County map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA



**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 • (HCC Landscape Unit)

### 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**

The area north west of Coopers Green Lane is a Landscape Conservation Area.

**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>

**ROBUSTNESS**

<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>

<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**

(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 landscape-led 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)

County map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA



**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 Brocket 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**

Landscape Conservation Area (part).  
SAM: Wheathampstead earthwork (including Devil's Dyke and The Slad).

**CONDITION**

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

**ROBUSTNESS**

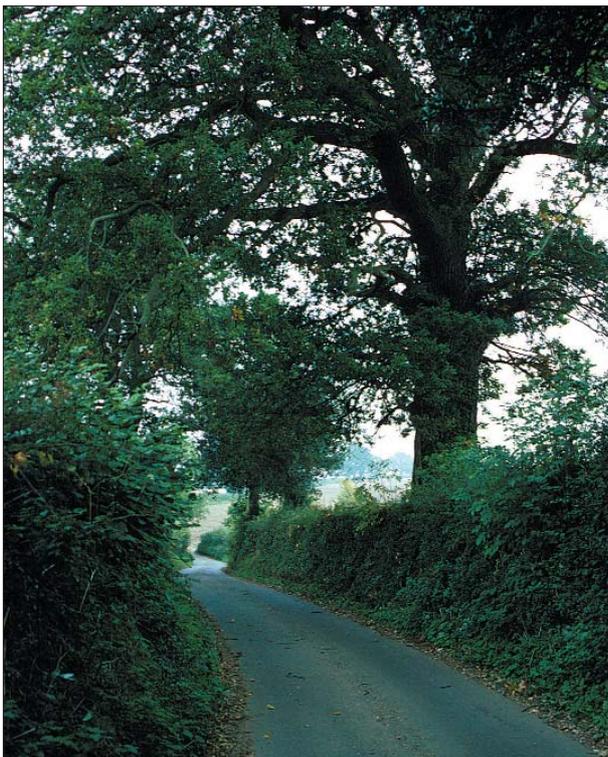
*Impact of landform:* **prominent**  
*Impact of land cover:* **prominent**  
*Impact of historic pattern:* **interrupted**  
*Visibility from outside:* **locally visible**  
*Sense of enclosure:* **partial**  
*Visual unity:* **coherent**  
*Distinctiveness/rarity:* **frequent**

<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**

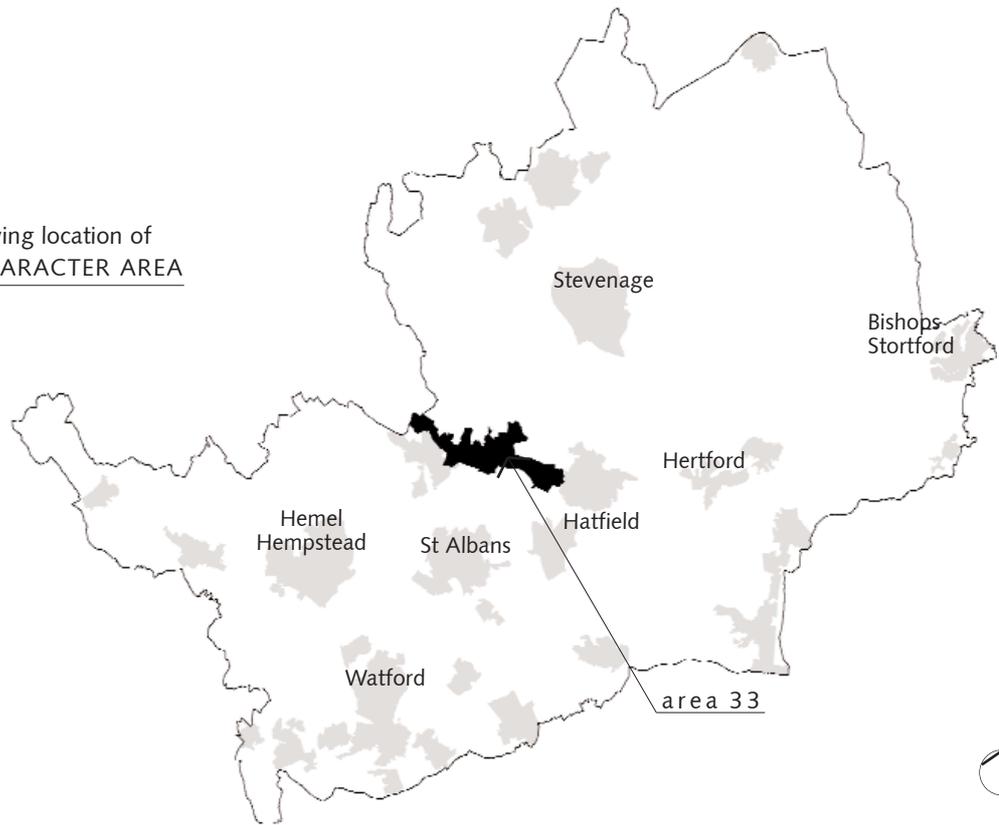
**CHANGE: IMPROVE AND CONSERVE**

- 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)

County map showing location of  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA



**LOCATION**

This area follows the course of the River Lea between Luton Hoo 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 this section of river corridor 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 Brocket Park it is dammed to create an artificial lake. There are few streams on the chalky side slopes, Marshall Heath Lane being the exception. The Environment Agency's River Quality classification for the River Lea at New Mill End is "Fairly Good" and at East Hyde it is "Good". The classification for the River Lea at Wheathampstead is "Good".

**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 Brocket 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 Brocket 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 Brocket 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 Brocket 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 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 Brocket 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 Brocket 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 Brocket 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 Brocket 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**

Landscape Conservation Area.  
English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens*: Brocket 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>

**ROBUSTNESS**

<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>

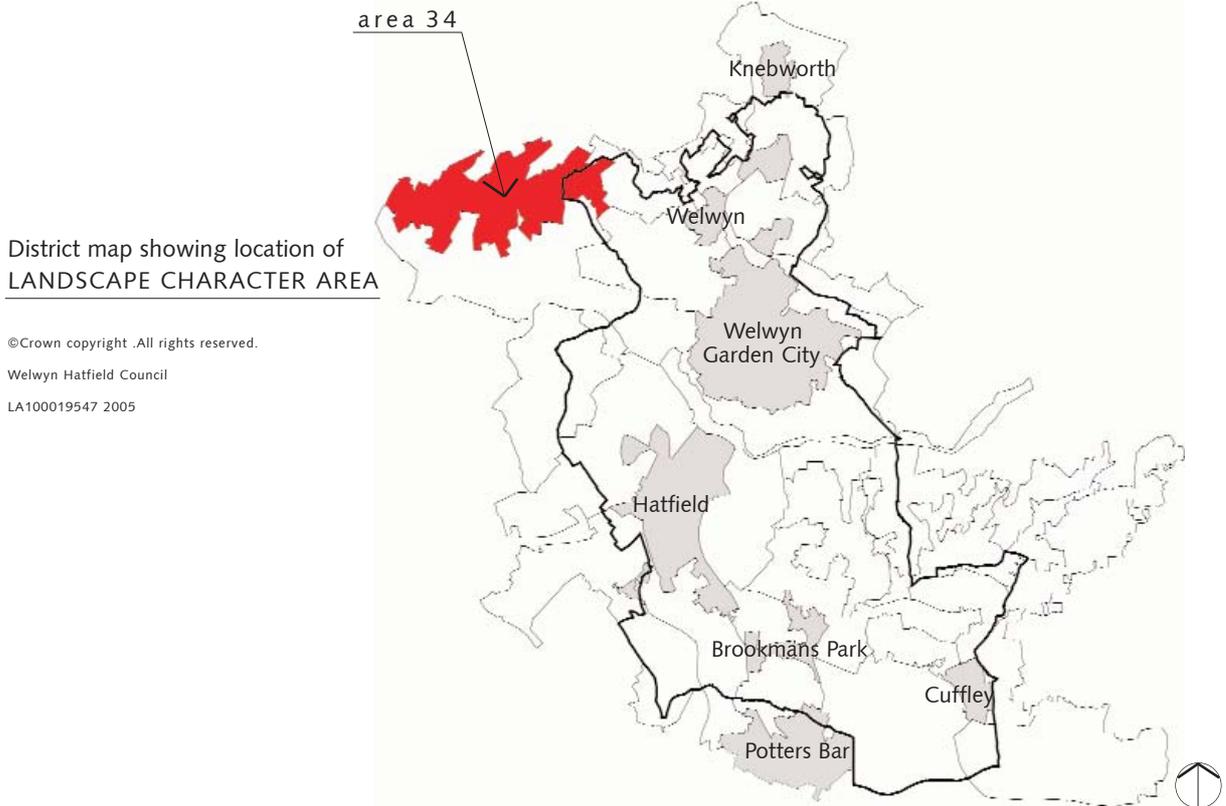
<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	<b>MODERATE</b>	Improve and reinforce	<b>Improve and conserve</b>	Conserve and restore
	<b>POOR</b>	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		<b>WEAK</b>	<b>MODERATE</b>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

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

- 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 Brocket 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 Brocket 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**

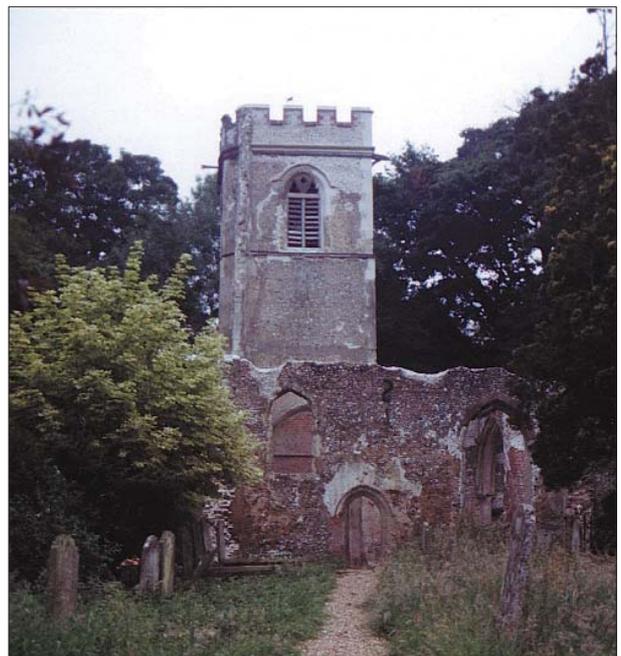
An elevated plateau area with extensive arable fields. Despite recent landscape change there is a strong sense of continuity closer to the settlements and around some of the notable historic houses and parklands. The area has a tranquil and remote feel with good opportunities for informal recreation.

**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>

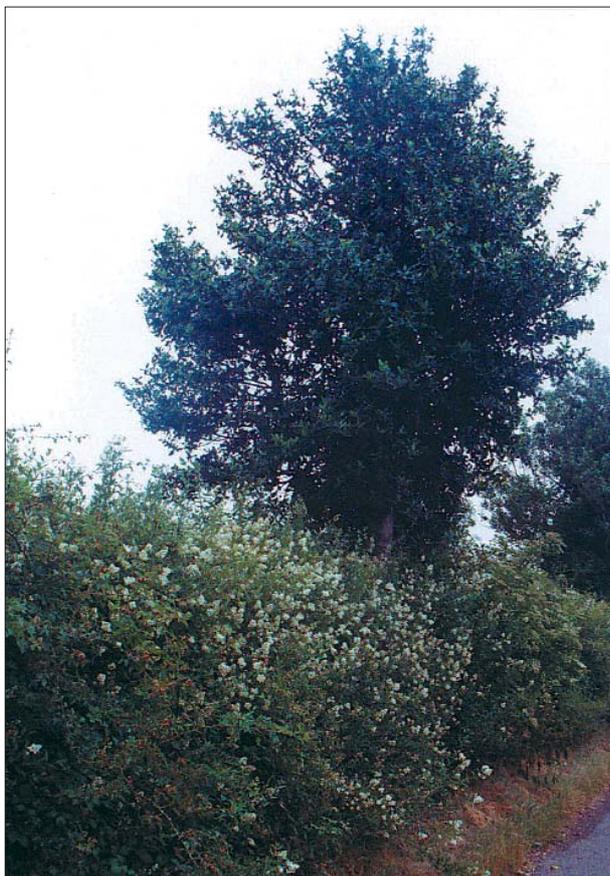
**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

<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>

<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 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)

County map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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LA076678



**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 Linces 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).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

Landscape Conservation Area (majority).  
SSSI: Sherrardspark Wood.

<b>CONDITION</b>	
<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>

<b>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>	
<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>

<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**

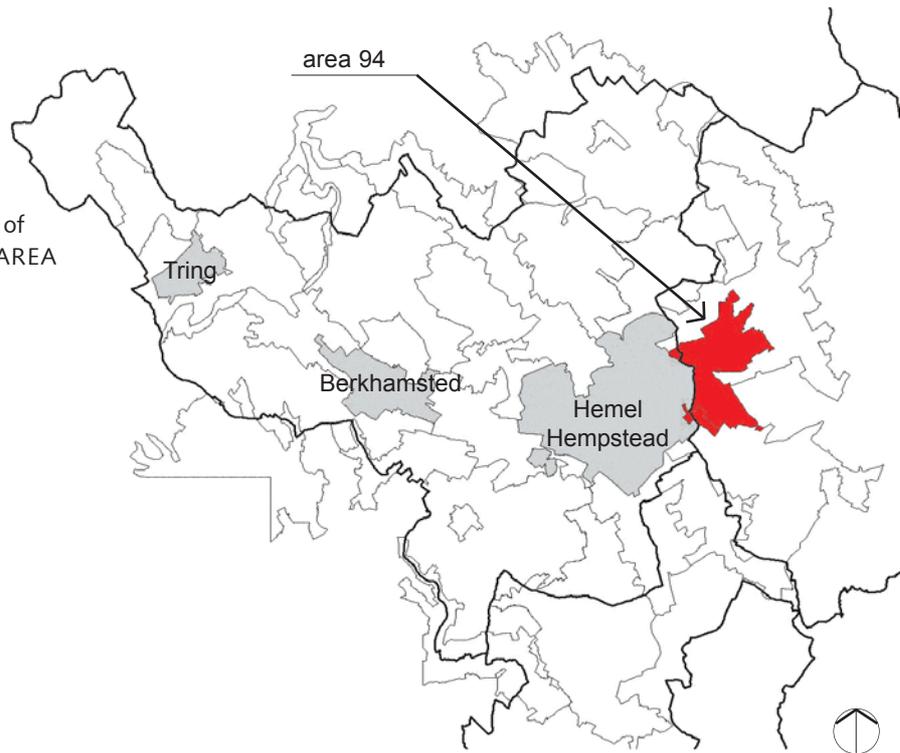
- create new woodlands to the north east to soften the visual impact of Welwyn
- within existing woodlands encourage the replacement of softwoods with indigenous native deciduous communities
- maintain and extend public access arrangements to woodlands and throughout the area. Support the maintenance 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**

This area lies on the eastern fringes of Hemel Hempstead, stretching from Westwick Row in the south and following the route of the M1 up to the dry valley between Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead to the north.

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

An extensive, linear, undulating plateau confined to the west by the urban settlement of Hemel Hempstead. The M1 motorway dominates the plateau's length and the industrial urban edge also strongly influences the character of the area. The plateau is crossed by dry valleys, creating an undulating topography. Much of the cultural pattern has been lost or interrupted by the motorway. The industrial sector of Hemel Hempstead is clearly visible from the higher open ground.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- arable farmland
- upland and dry valleys
- M1 transport corridor
- discontinuous cultural and field patterns
- commercial and industrial urban fringe influence
- long views
- narrow lanes and isolated properties

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- Buncefield industrial development
- oil depot
- overhead power lines



Buncefield Oil storage Depo. Hemel Hempstead (HCC Landscape Unit)

### PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** The bedrock geology is chalk which is overlaid by clay-with-flints drift on the plateau areas with undifferentiated solid rock on the dry valley slopes. Soils are stagnogleyic paleo-argillic brown earths which are fine silty and oamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging (Batcombe association). Some are well drained clayey soils over chalk, variably flinty. The dry valley slopes in the very south of the area are typical paleo-argillic brown earths which are well drained fine silty and clayey soils, often very flinty (Carstens association).

**Topography.** This is a mainly flat area of high ground between Hemel Hempstead and the Ver Valley. To the south there is the dry valley which runs on eastwards through Gorhambury Estate to the Ver Valley. There is a similar, less marked feature in the centre of the area. The edges of the plateau fall away to form the upper slopes of secondary valleys associated with the Ver Valley and the Ver Valley itself. To the west it is bounded by the edges of Hemel Hempstead.

**Degree of slope.** In the north east where the land slopes down towards the Ver Valley the gradient averages 1 in 90. In the southern dry valley the slopes average 1 in 25. The rest of the area could be described as flat.

**Altitude range.** 135m on two of the highest plateau areas - one west of Gorhambury Estate and the other to the east of Hemel Hempstead Industrial Estate.; 95m in the very south east of the area where the dry valley crosses into Gorhambury Estate

**Hydrology.** There is little natural standing water on this area of high ground, however, there are a number of reservoirs/balancing ponds associated with the oil depot and industrial areas on the fringes of Hemel Hempstead. There are drainage ditches associated with the M1 and a number of small ponds associated with farmsteads.

**Land cover and land use.** Open farmland is the dominant land cover with arable farming the dominant land use. Around the settlements there are small pockets of pasture, mainly for horses, e.g. at Westwick Farm. There is very little woodland on the plateau and the few trees that remain are concentrated around the settlements.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The plateau has no significant areas of woodland. The woodlands should be a mix of oak, ash, beech and cherry with bluebell on the woodland floors. The remaining treed hedgerows are dominated by hazel, elm and hawthorn with some elder and are most noticeable immediately east of Hemel Hempstead around Cherry Tree Lane and Punch Bowl Lane. The hedgerow trees are oak, ash and field maple. There is almost no natural grassland remaining and hedgerow verges are narrow. Grassland species such as Common Bent and Sweet Vernal Grass should be growing in the area, however the grassland remnants are dominated by False Oatgrass.

### HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The strongest cultural influence is the M1 motorway (the UK's first official motorway) and the development of a sprawling industrial area along the fringes of Hemel Hempstead. Historically the area was sparsely settled and therefore the historical influence is not noticeable in the light of the existing influences.

**Field pattern.** Over much of the area the original field pattern was the relatively rare pre 18th-century co-axial system. There are some areas where this has survived, however most has been removed by the late 20th-century field enlargements. To the south of the plateau, fields around Westwick Row Farm are regular and rectangular and here the nature of the topography makes this pattern more apparent. Much of the historic field pattern has also been disrupted along the route of the M1. A more sub-regular pattern re-emerges in the north of the area with increasing distance from the M1 corridor.

**Transport pattern.** The M1 runs north/south across the plateau and becomes elevated where it crosses the dry valleys. Minor straight lanes cross the M1 such as Punch Bowl Lane and Hoggs End Lane, which tend to follow minor valleys.

**Settlements and built form.** The area was relatively sparsely settled in the prehistoric period, though there is evidence of a Roman villa close to the junction of the M1. Isolated farms are scattered over the plateau e.g. Westwick Hall. In the medieval period, Westwick Row, in the south of the area, developed as one of the small hamlets characteristic of the plateau areas in the district. There are also buildings associated with the M1 corridor e.g. the depot at Junction 8.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The area is only locally visible because of its plateau location and the views within the area are extensive across the open arable land. It is a medium to large scale landscape bordered by settlement to the west and with a sense of openness caused by the combination of flat topography and the lack of vegetation and hedgebanks. The dry valley of Westwick Row feels slightly less open, however the M1 still has a major impact on this sub area. The motorway is elevated across the dry valleys, which without vegetation screening increases its dominance. The area generally has an inhospitable and neglected image, dominated by the major adjacent industrial influences, the ever present drone of the motorway traffic and the unsightly incidences of fly tipping on the minor lanes. **Rarity and distinctiveness.** The plateau landscape is common in Hertfordshire as is the interruption of character areas by major transport routes and settlement.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The M1 and its attendant traffic is visible throughout the plateau area. More visually dominant than the motorway however is the industrial development along the eastern periphery of Hemel Hempstead. Breakspear's Park buildings also have a major impact on the landscape and can be seen from many viewpoints.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Total length of Public Rights of Way - 11,732m  
 Total length of Other Public Access - n/a  
 Total length of Designated Cycle Routes - 3,402m  
 Total length of all public access - 15,134m  
 Area of LCA in square metres - 7,134,549  
 Length to area ratio - 1:471

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This area is not regarded as a distinctive landscape (E)

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

**CONDITION**

*Land cover change:* **widespread**  
*Age structure of tree cover:* **mature**  
*Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:* **relic**  
*Management of semi-natural habitat:* **not obvious**  
*Survival of cultural pattern:* **declining**  
*Impact of built development:* **high**  
*Impact of land-use change:* **high**

**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

*Impact of landform:* **prominent**  
*Impact of land cover:* **prominent**  
*Impact of historic pattern:* **interrupted**  
*Visibility from outside:* **locally visible**  
*Sense of enclosure:* **open**  
*Visual unity:* **incoherent**  
*Distinctiveness/rarity:* **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	<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**

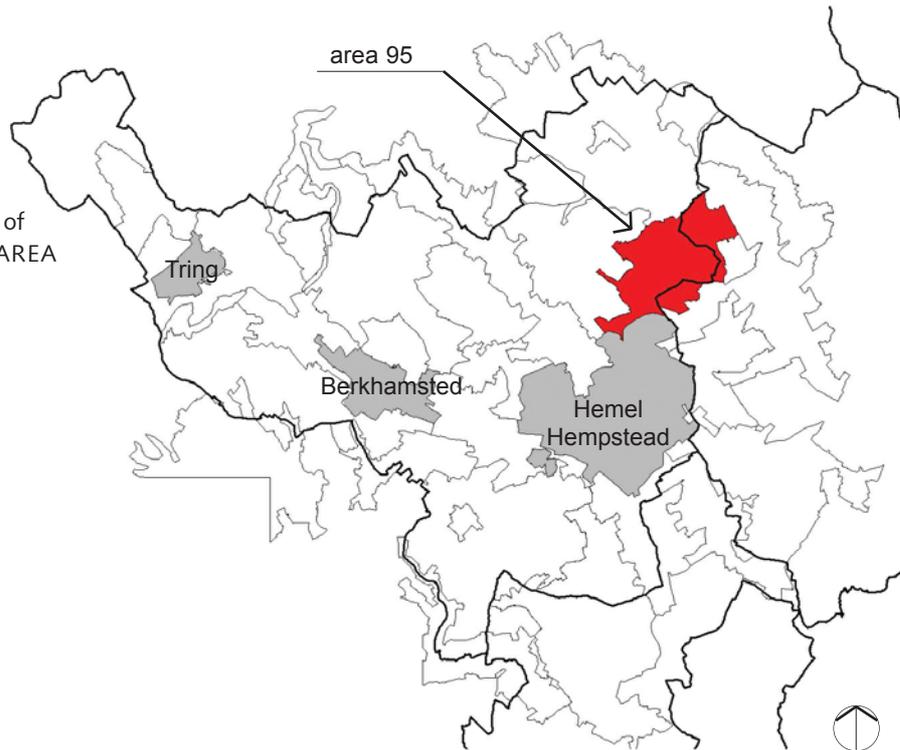
- promote the creation of a network of new medium to large woodlands in the open arable landscape, particularly with a view to visually integrating the intrusive motorways and urban fringe development
- within existing woodlands, encourage the replacement of softwoods with indigenous native deciduous communities, provide hedgebank management and re-establish a species-rich ground flora
- utilise ancient hedge and field boundaries to establish the most appropriate location for wood restoration and expansion
- encourage the reversal of habitat fragmentation and the creation and improvement of habitat links to create eco-corridors
- 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 where possible.
- promote crop diversification and the restoration of mixed livestock/arable farming where possible
- provide new uncropped or grass field margins to link areas of wildlife importance and/or existing and proposed rights of way
- restore arable land to permanent pasture and meadow. Priority will be given to land which buffers or links sites of existing wildlife importance
- native tree species only should be planted on boundaries, with exotic/ornamental species only in close proximity to development
- ensure that landscape proposals for the context of roads and other developments fit the grain of the local landscape both horizontally and vertically; avoid significant impact on the local field pattern and use only locally native tree and shrub species for associated planting. It should not be axiomatic to enclose any new road with dense hedging on both sides – due reference should be made to local character and roads should be left open where appropriate
- promote a clear strategy for the visual and noise mitigation of all motorways, trunk roads and to positively integrate these corridors into the local landscape character
- ensure that ancient lanes and their associated hedgerows are retained, protected, enhanced and integrated into new development with due regard to their historic, ecological and landscape value
- encourage the replacement of existing poor quality field gates and fencing with gates and fencing of a material and style that reflects the rural character of the locality
- promote measures to reduce the incidences of unsightly fly tipping along minor roads.



• Plateau view  
(HCC Landscape Unit)

District Map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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**LOCATION**

This area borders the west of Redbourn, including Norringtonend, St. Agnells, Nicholl's, Hillbury and Great Revel End Farms to the east, and in the west, Holtsmore End, Little Lovett's End and Eastbrookhay Farms.

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

An area of gently undulating upland with a discontinuous field pattern bordering the M1 corridor. Discrete woodland blocks help to screen the motorway. Surrounding gentle slopes define the character area boundary. The limit of the settlement of Redbourn coincides with the edge of the plateau to the east. Arable farmland and isolated patches of pasture linked to the farmsteads are the predominant land uses. A nursery, recreation ground and school playing fields influence the area's character on the northern edges of Redbourn and the M1 corridor interrupts the area's unity.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- arable farmland
- discrete woodlands and plantations
- urban fringe recreation
- M1 transport corridor
- urban fringe land uses including pasture
- isolated farmsteads
- field copses

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- Flamsteadbury Farm
- overhead power lines
- Great and Little Revel End Farms



Dry valley • Gaddesden Lane ( HCC Landscape Unit)

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** The bedrock geology is predominantly chalk. This is overlaid by clay-with-flints on the plateau areas, undifferentiated solid rock in the dry valleys and some clay with sand and gravel in the lower dry valley west of Redbourn. On the plateau the neutral loams are stagnogleyic paleo-argillic brown earths which are fine silty and loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging (Batcombe association). There are some well drained clayey soils over chalk, variably flinty. In the dry valley west of Redbourne, soils are typical argillic brown earths which are well drained fine silty and clayey soils, locally very flinty with some shallow over flint gravel (Charity 2 association).

**Topography.** An area of high land interspersed with distinctive open dry valleys which feed into the Upper Ver Valley system along Hempstead Road, (see Upper Ver Valley area.) The area is flat to the north of Redbourn with a dry valley to the south of this, followed by another flat area where Great Revel End Farm is located along with associated farmsteads and buildings. This in turn has a dry valley to the south which forms the northern edge of Hemel Hempstead. These topographical features create a gently rolling landscape.

**Degree of slope.** The northern plateau area slopes to the east at a gradient of 1 in 57. The slopes from the southern plateau around Holtsmere End Farm average 1 in 29 and the central plateau slopes average 1 in 37.

**Altitude range.** 145m near Puddephats Farm  
100m near The Aubreys Fort

**Hydrology.** There are a number of ponds on the higher ground, generally in association with the farmsteads. e.g. Flamsteadbury Farm, which also has a well. There is no standing water on the slopes.

**Land cover and land use.** The clay plateau is predominantly intensive arable farmland, particularly in the dry valleys. Infrequent small pasture fields and some isolated woods are associated with the farms.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** There are a number of woodlands on the plateau, including New wood, Rabbitfield Spring and Nicholl's Great Wood. All are significant landscape features but are discrete and isolated on the plateau. Woodlands on the slopes typically comprise oak, ash, beech and cherry while on the plateau oak and hornbeam dominate. Hedgerows are largely hazel, hawthorn, elm and holly, and mostly ancient relict hedgerows. Limited areas of old grassland remain, dominated by Common Bent, Sweet Vernal Grass, with Pignut etc. Wild Daffodil is especially characteristic of the area.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Great Revel End Farm was originally a small hamlet that grew up on land enclosed in the 12th century. Earthworks to the north east of the existing farm apparently represent the medieval hamlet, possibly substantially reduced in the 14th century as a result of depopulation following the Black Death.

**Field pattern.** Fields are large and irregularly shaped. An isolated group of small fields surround Holtsmere End Farm and Holtsmere End are in pastoral rather than arable cultivation.

**Transport pattern.** The pattern of roads, lanes and footpaths radiate from the development of Redbourn to the west. The country lanes are sinuous and the coverage of public footpaths and bridleways over the area is relatively high. The M1 crosses the area in a north/south direction, interrupting the historic radial pattern.

**Settlements and built form.** Settlement is dispersed across the area and a number of traditional farmhouses, such as Flamsteadbury Farm and St. Agnell's Farm, are distinctive components of the landscape.

Little Revel End Farm is a cluster of traditional agricultural buildings built of buff London brick and weatherboard with patterned terracotta roof tiles.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The area is only locally visible from surrounding areas due to the level and elevated landform. It is generally a coherent landscape with some areas downgraded by the impact of the adjacent urban development or transport corridor (M1). Views within the area are filtered by vegetation, particularly hedgerow trees and high verges. It is a medium to large scale landscape with open views across the arable fields.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This open arable landscape associated with an upland plateau is common across northern Hertfordshire. The transport corridor, overhead power lines and scattered farmsteads are all distinctive features of this character type.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

There are few detracting features in this area. Despite its magnitude, the M1 has only a moderately negative visual impact, partially due to the fact the road is in cutting for much of its length through the plateau and partially due to the mature hedgerows that line the route. The influences of the settlements of Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead and their adjacent land uses are more significant on the character. Overhead power lines have a widespread visual impact.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Total length of Public Rights of Way - 22,546m  
 Total length of Other Public Access - 2,038m  
 Total length of Designated Cycle Routes - 4,263m  
 Total length of all public access - 28,847m  
 Area of LCA in square metres - 10,421,803  
 Length to area ratio - 1:361

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

There is insufficient data to establish a full picture of community views although there is evidence that there are landscape features within this area of note as well as pressures.

"I could not hear the insects, not because I have killed them all with my sprayer, but they were drowned out by the low rumble from the motorway and the roars of aeroplanes at nearby Luton." Paul Stanbridge's Pages, <http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/paulstan/>, July 2001

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

AONB: (to west)  
 Area of Archaeological Significance: East of New Wood Flamsteadbury (cropmarks)

**CONDITION**

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

**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

*Impact of landform:* **insignificant**  
*Impact of land cover:* **prominent**  
*Impact of historic pattern:* **interrupted**  
*Visibility from outside:* **locally visible**  
*Sense of enclosure:* **open**  
*Visual unity:* **coherent**  
*Distinctiveness/rarity:* **frequent**

<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>				

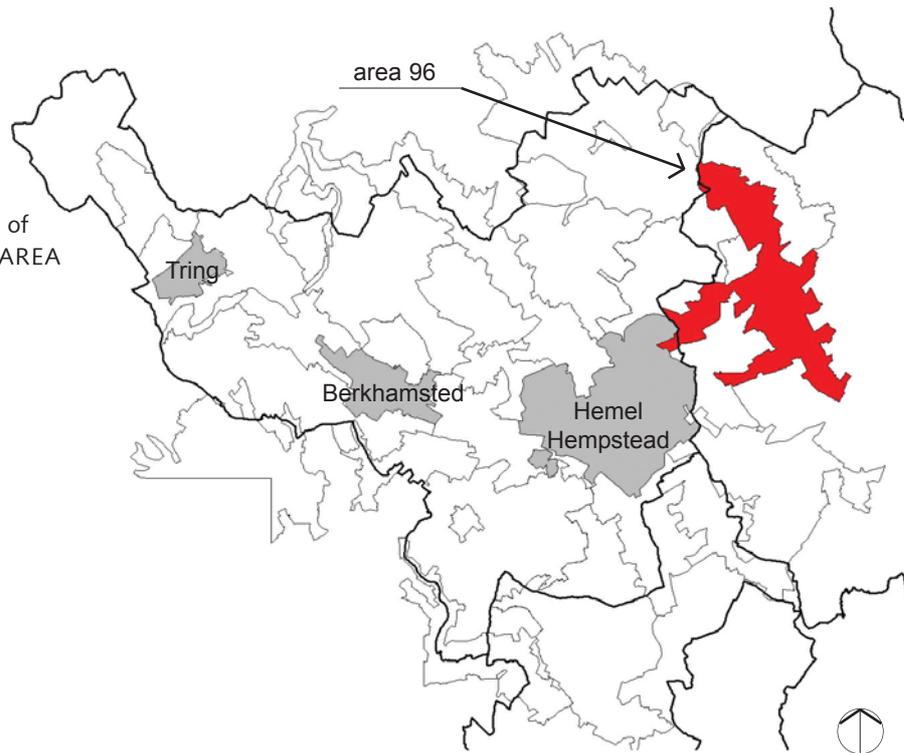
### STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE: IMPROVE AND CONSERVE

- promote the creation of a network of new medium to large woodlands in the open arable landscape, particularly with a view to visually integrating the intrusive motorways and urban fringe development
- for existing woodlands, encourage the replacement of softwoods with indigenous native deciduous communities, hedgebank management and re-establishing a rich ground flora
- improve public access arrangements to woodlands with attention to car park design and safety
- 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 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
- encourage landowners to improve ecological diversity by establishing and maintaining varied land maintenance regimes to enhance visual and wildlife functions
- 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
- 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
- restore ditches and discourage enclosing 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 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 all major roads within the area and to positively integrate these corridors into the local landscape character
- encourage effective management along transport corridors to ensure thinning, selective felling and replanting is undertaken to achieve a varied age structure and appropriate species mix
- Impact of M1 West of Redbourn (HCC Landscape Unit)



District Map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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**LOCATION**

This area follows the stretch of the Ver valley that runs from Junction 9 of the M1 (to the north of Redbourn) downstream to St. Albans. The area also includes the dry valley west of Redbourn along Hempstead Road.

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

A broad, open river valley with gentle slopes and extensive views. Riverine vegetation is confined to a narrow, linear strip along the meandering watercourse. Large arable fields on the valley's gentle slopes are characteristic and contrast with the small fields of wetland pasture along the river banks in the lower stretches between Redbourn and St. Albans. The course of the river is reinforced by the straight Roman road of Watling Street. Mature plantations of willow and poplar border the river around Pre Mill House and hotel, creating a more enclosed character. A continuous strip of pasture tracks the base of the dry valley from Redbourn along the Hempstead road. The main valley is also marked by a disused railway line now used as a way-marked footpath, the Ver Colne valley walk.



**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- narrow strip of wetland habitats along valley floor south of Redbourn
- cultural pattern and historic settlements follows the line of the river
- open, gently undulating valley slopes
- large arable fields
- discrete woodland blocks to north of the area, including conifers
- isolated settlement
- lack of field boundaries on valley slopes
- hedge banks along lanes crossing slopes
- mature willow and poplar plantations in the floodplain
- pockets of pasture along urban edges and the dry valley between Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- Watling Street Roman road
- Redbournbury Mill and ford
- Redbourn by-pass
- M1 corridor and Junction 9
- show ground
- disused railway line - now a footpath and cycle way
- meadow pasture
- Aubrey's hill fort
- horsiculture along Hempstead Road

- Water meadows at Redbournbury (HCC Landscape Unit)

## PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** The chalk bedrock is overlaid by clay-with-flints drift on the upper valley slopes, sand and gravel on the lower valley slopes and alluvium in the valley bottom. Neutral acidic loams on the upper slopes are stagnogleyic paleo-argillic brown earths, which are fine silty and loamy soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging. Some well drained clayey soils over chalk outcrops and colluvium, variably flinty (Batcombe association). On the dry tributary valley north of Gorhambury soils are typical paleo-argillic brown earths which are well drained fine silty and clayey soils, often very flinty (Carstens association). In the valley bottom soils are typical argillic brown earths which are well drained fine silty soils, locally very flinty, some shallow over flint and periglacial gravels (Charity 2 association).

There is a site of Regionally Important Geology (RIGS) at Redbournbury Chalk Pit south of Redbournbury Mill.

**Topography.** This section of river valley runs in a north west/south east direction for approximately 9 km. It is mainly dry to the north of Redbourn with the River Ver running underground in places. South of Redbourn the valley takes on a classic river valley form with a floodplain, valley slopes and dry secondary valleys feeding into the main valley. The slopes of the valley to the north east are steeper than those to the south west, however, the dry valleys to the south west are larger and extend further.

**Degree of slope.** The valley slopes typically range between 1 in 15 and 1 in 25. In the dry valley immediately north of Gorhambury Estate the slopes average 1 in 13.

**Altitude range.** The highest point is 140m near Turner's Hall Farm and the lowest point is 84 in the floodplain to the south of the area.

**Hydrology.** The river Ver is a chalk stream, partly a seasonal winterbourne to the north of Redbourn. The flow is variable depending on the level of extraction at Luton. To the north of the area a balancing pond is located at Junction 9 of the M1. Between this point and Redbourn the river runs mainly underground and is large drain when above ground. There are also two springs in this area, Northfield Spring and Scout Spring, and two fords to the east of Redbourn and two at Redbournbury Mill. On the floodplain south of Redbourn there are two areas of disused watercress beds. The river meanders within the floodplain with a number of threaded courses. There is a small dam above Corn Mill and a series of sluices above Pre Mill House. Surface water is rare on the valley slopes, but a covered reservoir lies at the head of the dry valley just east of Hemel Hempstead and small ponds are associated with farmsteads and settlements, e.g. Kettlewell's Farm.

**Land cover and land use.** The area is predominantly arable farmland with open wetland meadow along the valley floor to the south. The smaller fields along the valley floor are used for pasture and cattle graze the river banks along the river to the south of Redbourn. To the north, the valley is mainly arable, except for the golf course at Harpendenbury Farm. There are a number of plantations within the valley. A hazardous waste treatment plant (the only one in Hertfordshire) operates from the Redbournbury

Chalk Pit site. The dry valley that runs between Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead is strongly marked by the extent of horse pasture. Paddocks are defined by timber and wire fences.

### **Vegetation and wildlife.**

Remnant discrete woodlands are found on the valley slopes and are typically oak/beechn/ash/hazel/cherry with more of an oak/hornbeam mix to the south east. Poplar and willow plantations around Pre Mill and hotel are significant features adjacent to the A5183. To the north of Redbourn there are more coniferous stands and ornamental planting around the golf club at Harpendenbury Farm.

Hedgerow species comprise hawthorn, holly, blackthorn, bramble, willow, elder, elm with hedgerow oaks, willows and ash.

## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

**Field pattern.** Fields along the valley floors are notably smaller than those on the valley slopes and their linear shapes run parallel to its sinuous course. Fields on the broader valley slopes are medium to large and their boundaries perpendicular to the direction of the river. The field shapes are sub-regular or irregular. Much of the historic pattern, including most of the co-axial field systems and the associated hedgerows, have been lost to changes in agricultural practices in the later part of the 20th century.

**Transport pattern.** The main St. Albans to Redbourn road (A5183) follows the linear course of the Roman road of Watling Street along the valley between Redbourn and Bow Bridge, crossing the River Ver on several occasions. Rural lanes branch off from this road at right angles and generally follow the dry valleys up to the plateaux to the east and west. The lanes to the north of Redbourn are more sinuous. At the northern end of the area the M1 and Junction 9 form an imposing feature in the landscape. At Redbourn, the disused railway line crosses the area and is marked by parallel mature hedges. The railway line is now used as a public right of way for walkers and cyclists, known as the 'Nicky Line'.

### **Settlements and built form.**

There is evidence of development along the river valley floor dating back to the late 2nd century AD, particularly closer to the Roman town of Verulamium. Settlement outside the built up areas of Redbourn and St. Albans is dispersed, with isolated houses and farms dotted along the valley. The building style is predominantly vernacular, using mainly red brick and tile, e.g. Redbournbury Mill and Corn Mill. The hamlet of Shafford includes groups of estate cottages. Black weatherboard farm buildings are also seen in the area.

### **Other sources of area-specific information.**

Habitat Survey of Site 55/001 Redbournbury Meadows Hertfordshire Countryside Volume 6 No. 23 Winter 1951 front cover Illustration of ford at Redbournbury Hertfordshire Countryside Volume 38 No. 289 May 1983 p. 21 Illustration of Redbournbury Mill Hertfordshire Countryside Volume 24 No. 130 February 1970 p. 21 Illustration of Redbourn Landscape English Heritage: Schedule entry

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The main Upper Ver Valley is widely visible from the surrounding plateaux. The open slope character permits extensive views across the arable landscape resulting in a visual unity in the area.

Hedgerows are few and far between on the slopes but those that border the lanes are located high on steep hedgebanks, preventing views to and from the lanes. Traffic moving along the A5183 disrupts the rural character. **Rarity and distinctiveness.** Although this is one of a number of river valleys in the county, it is unusual to find a valley that is so broad and open. The water meadows south of Redbourn are the most distinctive feature.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The mills along the river are both locally important heritage sites and distinctive features along its length. The traffic moving along the Roman road detracts from the rural feel of the area. The settlements of Redbourn and St. Albans are apparent throughout the valley area. The waste treatment plant is locally visible, particularly the security fencing and works associated with it.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

- Total length of Public Rights of Way - 26,994m
- Total length of Other Public Access - 16,455m
- Total length of Designated Cycle Routes - 8,871m
- Total length of all public access - 52,320m
- Area of LCA in square metres - 16,933,032
- Length to area ratio - 1:234

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

There is insufficient data at present to establish a complete picture of community views about this area, however the environs of Redbournbury are clearly regarded as of significant value. It seems likely that following attitude survey this area as a whole would be classified as a valued landscape, as evidenced by the existence of the Ver Valley Society.

'I love this sort of place – an unassuming little corner that is so typical of the English Countryside and yet can be easily lost because it is not sufficiently important for anyone to worry about protecting it'. Gordon Beningfield on Redbournbury in 'Beningfield's English Landscape' Cameron Books 1985.

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

- Landscape Conservation Area (south)
- Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Site (RIGS) at Redbournbury Chalk Pit
- SM: Aubreys Camp south-west of Redbourn
- Conservation Areas: Shafford Mill and to the southern tip of St. Albans

**CONDITION**

- Land cover change:* **localised**
- Age structure of tree cover:* **mixed**
- Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:* **fragmented**
- Management of semi-natural habitat:* **good**
- Survival of cultural pattern:* **intact**
- Impact of built development:* **low**
- Impact of land-use change:* **moderate**

**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

- Impact of landform:* **apparent**
- Impact of land cover:* **prominent**
- Impact of historic pattern:* **interrupted**
- Visibility from outside:* **widely visible**
- Sense of enclosure:* **open**
- Visual unity:* **coherent**
- Distinctiveness/rarity:* **unusual**

<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>				

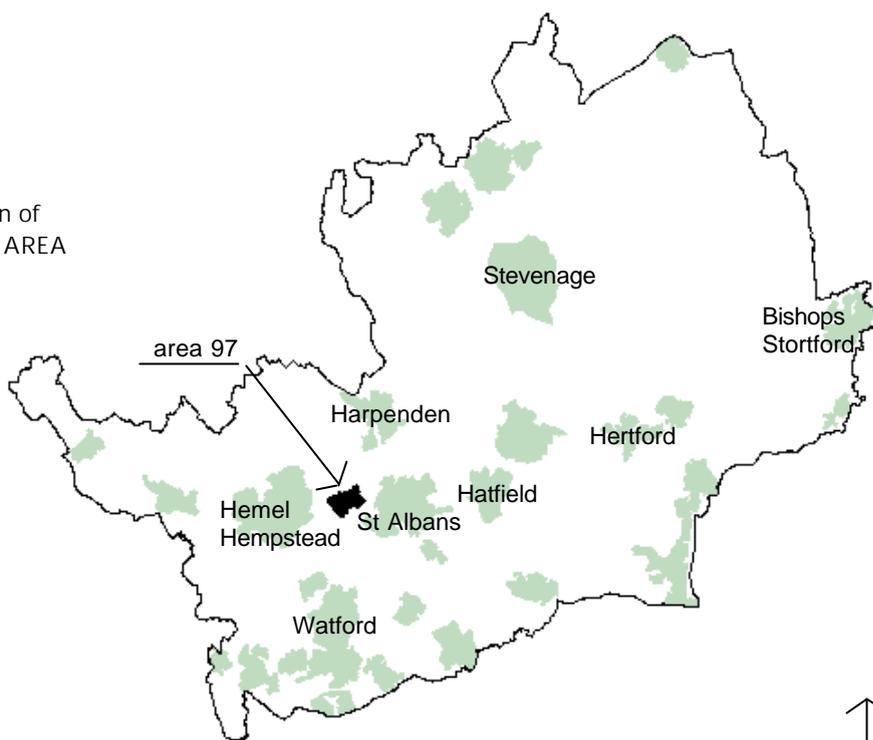
### STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE: CONSERVE AND STRENGTHEN

- within existing woodlands, encourage the replacement of softwoods with indigenous native deciduous communities, provide hedgebank management and re-establish a species-rich ground flora
- utilise ancient hedge and field boundaries to establish the most appropriate location for wood restoration and expansion
- encourage the reversal of habitat fragmentation and the creation and improvement of habitat links to create eco-corridors
- promote a clear strategy for the visual and noise mitigation of motorways and trunk roads and positively integrate these corridors into the local landscape character
- Restore and enhance wet grassland to provide a habitat for wading birds
- conserve and manage marshy grassland. Avoid over-grazing, heavy public pressure, damage from vehicles and pollution
- encourage the dissemination of information about the historic importance and appropriate management of woodland features such as banks and ditches
- encourage reversion from arable uses to pasture and grassland
- protect remaining river valley habitats of significant nature conservation interest, especially where they contribute to a suite of habitats, such as neutral grassland, running water, wet grassland, valley or floodplain woodland, grazing marsh, fens and swamp
- 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
- protect river corridors and water meadows from development that would alter its character visually or environmentally, such as culverting, impact on a floodplain, loss of water meadows or storage ponds.
- enhance and restore hedgerows and ditches 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 rights of way and recreational routes
- ensure that new and restored buildings are in keeping with the local vernacular
- promote the use of traditional field enclosure where land is converted to equestrian pasture
- within golf courses a high proportion of the total area shall be dedicated to and maintained as wildlife habitat, building upon established areas of wildlife interest already present. Landscape management plans to be an integral part of the facilities
- Poplar plantation, Pre Mill (HCC Landscape Unit)



County Map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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LA076678 2001



**LOCATION**

A rectangle of land on the western slopes of the River Ver between St. Albans and Redbourn.

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

This character area focuses on the ruins of Old Gorhambury (1563) and the later country house (1777) situated in its centre. Both are located in prominent elevated positions enjoying views across the River Ver to the east and an associated dry valley to the south. The area is strongly defined by linear woodland belts to the north and west and the topography and vegetation cover of Prae Wood to the south. The parkland planting, historic garden features and landform distinguish its character. Discrete woodland blocks frame views to and from the main house and conceal the overhead power lines that clip the north-western corner of this park. Arable and pasture fields are predominantly bounded by low hedgerows and timber fences. This allows clear views of the undulating landform, which becomes more pronounced around Stud Cottages along the dry chalk valley.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- arable fields
- strong, regular boundary planting
- parkland avenues, roundels and woodland blocks
- framed views
- estate architecture
- series of secondary ridges and valleys running perpendicular to the Ver valley
- timber fences

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- Gorhambury house
- Gorhambury ruins
- parkland planting
- stud
- landmark exotic conifers on hilltop
- fish ponds
- Bacon's Mount
- Devil's Ditch

Gorhambury arable parkland • (HCC Landscape Unit)



**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** The chalk bedrock geology is overlaid by mainly clay-with-flints on the upland areas, undifferentiated solid rock and chalky drift on the slopes, and sand and gravel on the lower Ver valley slopes to the east. On the upland area to the west acidic loams are stagnogleyic paleo-argillic brown earths which are fine silty and loamy soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging. Some well drained clayey soils over chalk are variably flinty (Batcombe association). On the central slopes the light loams are typical paleo-argillic brown earths which are well drained fine silty and clayey soils, often very flinty (Carstens association). On the lower slopes of the Ver valley light loams are typical argillic brown earths which are well drained fine silty soils, locally very flinty with some shallow over flint and peri-glacial gravels (Charity 2 association).

**Topography.** The estate covers the ridges and dry valleys associated with the western slopes of the River Ver valley. There is a mainly flat area on the western boundary of the estate which adjoins the plateau beyond. Two dry valleys join towards the east of the estate. The main house is located strategically on the spur between the two. The valley to the south is larger and has steeper slopes, the southernmost of which is heavily wooded with part of Prae Wood. Numerous quarries have been excavated over the estate, some dating back to the building of the old Gorhambury House.

**Degree of slope.** The north valley has slopes with an average gradient of 1 in 25 whereas the south valley has slopes with an average gradient of 1 in 20.

**Altitude range.** The estate ranges from 130m in the north-west to 85m in the north east.

**Hydrology.** The estate falls within the river Ver catchment boundary. There is no standing water on the estate apart from the fishponds in the north east of the area.

**Land cover and land use.** The land use is a mix of arable and pastoral farming. The arable land uses are more prominent on the lower slopes to the east with the parkland and pasture more associated with the houses on the upper slopes. There are a good number of medium to small woodlands with both deciduous and evergreen trees within the parkland and strong shelter belts on the perimeter.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The trees within this character area are mainly of plantation origin. Around the house the trees are mostly ornamental. Roundels of semi-natural acidic oak/ash/beechness woodland have been planned to frame and intercept views within the estate. There are no hedgerows within the park area, whose boundaries are marked by broad bands of mixed woodland, punctuated by ornamental trees, including some prominent Wellingtonias in the western belts, breaking the skyline in a regular pattern. Sweet chestnut, ash, lime and cherry trees of varying age line the approach to the house. Grasslands are almost entirely improved (formerly Bent/Sweet Vernal Grass). Bat species are associated with this area. The historic fishponds to the north east are of some ecological interest. Windmill Hill Wood is recorded as a habitat of note.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

The favourable location overlooking the Ver valley has long been recognised. East of the existing mansion are both Roman and medieval sites. The present Gorhambury is one of the most notable country houses and parks of Hertfordshire. The house, built between 1777 and 1784 by the third Viscount Grimston, was designed by the architect Sir Robert Taylor. To the west of the ashlar faced Palladian-style villa stands the remains of the former Tudor house (completed 1568) of the family of Sir Nicholas Bacon. It was here that his son, Sir Francis Bacon, created both a hilltop garden and elaborate water gardens. He also wrote his essays 'Of Gardens' at Gorhambury, and inspired others to develop their own gardens. He embellished and extended the existing gardens and woods and created a mound at the eastern end of Prae Wood to provide a spot for fine views of the estate. The development of the park with the building of the present Gorhambury House had an important influence on the landscape, which was redesigned by Mr Richmond. Land was taken out of cultivation and boundaries moved up to the original Belgica dyke to the north. The lanes through the estate were severed and the present entrance drive constructed. Local excavation has also revealed evidence of preceding Roman occupation on the site in 1st century AD. To the north of the ruins of old Gorhambury there is a mound surrounded by a ditch where a windmill once stood. The estate changed radically during the 20th century; most of the 19th-century park was taken back into cultivation and the grassland turned to pasture.

**Field pattern.** The field pattern is planned, with the landscape elements designed principally to frame views to and from the house and enclose the parkland. The fields are medium in size and are generally used for livestock grazing closer to the house and arable crop cultivation lower down the slopes towards the river Ver valley.

**Transport pattern.** There are straight tracks and estate roads within the area. Verges are narrow or non-existent with generally no fences or hedges. Gorhambury Lane and Hill End Lane have both been severed by the development of the estate and there are no through public roads.

**Settlements and built form.** The pattern of settlement is dominated by the Gorhambury mansions. Maynes Farm to the east is another large group of buildings. Otherwise there are only isolated estate cottages or lodges set around the perimeter of the estate. There is a small disused walled garden west of the main house.

**Other sources of area-specific information**

Hare's map 1634 Estate map 1768  
History of Gorhambury c1821 by C Grimston, *Hertfordshire Countryside* Volume 9 No 33 1954 p.97 (illustration)  
*Hertfordshire Countryside* July 27th 1940 p.82 (article about reclaiming parkland from ant plague)  
*Herts Countryside* Volume 16 No 63 Winter 1961 p 102 (illustration from engraving)  
*Hertfordshire Countryside* Volume 22 No 103 1967 p34 (reference to the ancient 'Kiss Oak')  
Jonathan Hunn's "The Landscape of Gorhambury"  
*Hertfordshire's Past* No. 10

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The distinctive woodland boundary planting and exotic conifers of the Gorhambury estate are widely visible from the surrounding areas but the house and ruins are well hidden. A lack of verges and hedges within the estate allows clear views towards the house from the approach drive. The estate is well defined and contained by planted vegetation rather than topography. The landscape is unified throughout, due to its careful design and internal openness.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This landscape type is relatively unusual. The layers of history add to the complexity of the landscape and the discovery of one of Northern Europe's most important Roman sites in the estate is a distinctive feature.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

To the west of the estate there are glimpsed views of the overhead pylons that cut across the corner of the estate but these have been well screened from the main house by the woodland plantations. As you leave the estate along the main entrance drive there are glimpsed views of the chimneys of St. Albans. A lower set of power lines supplies the main house, carving through a block of woodland but again well screened by woodlands.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Total length of Public Rights of Way - n/a  
 Total length of Other Public Access - n/a  
 Total length of Designated Cycle Routes - n/a  
 Total length of all public access - n/a  
 Area of LCA in square metres - 3,260,387  
 Length to area ratio - n/a

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This area is regarded as distinctive.  
 "From hence [Verulam] our eyes, tho' pleased, insatiate rove,  
 Till fix intent on Gorhambury's grove;  
 The seat of Wisdom, when from heav'n she came,  
 And dwelt in Britain under Bacon's name;  
 Hence like the sons of light ('tis said they're few)  
 A path, long, strait, and narrow we pursue;  
 Where tree to tree from either side inclines,  
 And o'er our heads the blended foliage twines."  
 from "A Journey to Northampton" Anon 1745.

"a most respectable and agreeable retirement, with an air of sober simplicity" Horace Walpole early 1750s

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

Greenbelt  
 Landscape Conservation Area (except for a small section in the western corner)  
 Bacon's House - Scheduled Ancient Monument  
 Devil's Ditch - Scheduled Ancient Monument

**CONDITION**

Land cover change: **widespread**  
 Age structure of tree cover: **mixed**  
 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival: **relic**  
 Management of semi-natural habitat: **poor**  
 Survival of cultural pattern: **declining**  
 Impact of built development: **moderate**  
 Impact of land-use change: **moderate**

**ROBUSTNESS**

Impact of landform: **prominent**  
 Impact of land cover: **prominent**  
 Impact of historic pattern: **interrupted**  
 Visibility from outside: **concealed**  
 Sense of enclosure: **concealed**  
 Visual unity: **unified**  
 Distinctiveness/rarity: **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>ROBUSTNESS</b>				

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING****CHANGE: RESTORE CONDITION TO MAINTAIN CHARACTER**

- encourage reversion from arable uses to pasture and grassland and restrict ploughing of grasslands within parkland. Introduce native specimen trees within new pasture
- encourage the development of an enclosure strategy using sympathetic and consistent materials for estate railings/fences, hedges, banking etc.
- within existing woodlands, encourage the replacement of softwoods with indigenous native deciduous communities, provide hedgebank management and re-establish a species-rich ground flora
- 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
- encourage the reversal of habitat fragmentation and the creation and improvement of habitat links to create eco-corridors.
- survey and manage parkland and veteran trees for biodiversity value
- encourage research into the historic legacy of the grounds and look for ways to support the appropriate restoration of lost features
- hard landscape details such as steps, balustrades, pond copings, statuary and urns should be conserved. Replacements should be in facsimile and in natural materials. Lodges, gazebos, follies, grottoes, obelisks, ice houses, terraces, ha-has, boundary walls, railings, fences 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

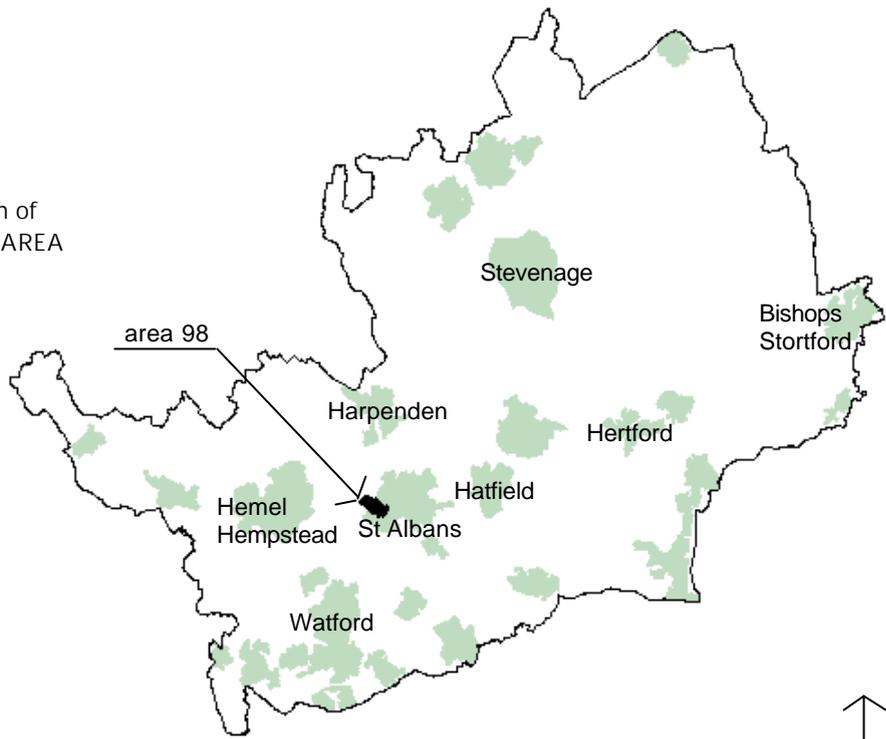
- improve the management of old meadows and pastures by ceasing fertiliser and herbicide application and introducing sensitive grassland management such as late hay cutting or low density livestock grazing
- encourage arrangements for wider public access to the estate
- encourage the dissemination of information about the historic importance of the estate landscape and appropriate management of woodland features such as banks and ditches

- Gorhambury House (HCC Landscape Unit)



County Map showing location of  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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LA076678 2001



**LOCATION**

On the western edge of St. Albans. The area is divided by the A4147 with the southern part of the area enclosed by settlement on three sides .

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

An ancient cultural pattern overlies the contemporary landscape of the area, dominating the valley floor and slopes of the river Ver. Signs of ancient Roman settlement prevail and a museum and visitors centre serve to interpret the local history and archaeology.

Public access is good throughout the Roman town area and is well used for informal recreation. The Ver river, associated artificial lakes and parkland contribute to the area's attractions. The land becomes more intensively managed and used for formal recreation to the south east. To the north of the A4147 access is more restricted within the arable landscape.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- ancient cultural settlement patterns
- suburban recreation
- wetland vegetation
- water features
- parkland trees
- arable land use north of A4147

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- Verulamium Roman foundation and later Roman settlements
- artificial lakes
- River Ver
- Roman theatre



Roman walls within •  
Verulamium park  
( G. Lee)

## PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** The chalk bedrock geology is overlaid by clay-with-flints plateau drift on the upper slopes and sand and gravel on the lower slopes with alluvium in the valley bottom. Areas of colluvium are also present above the valley floor. Soils are acidic loam to the north west of the A4147, a typical paleo-argillic brown earth, well drained and often very flinty (Carstens association). Soils are predominantly unsurveyed south east of the A4147 but are likely to be an extension of the Charity 2 association with alluvial gravels.

**Topography.** This rectangular area forms part of the Ver Valley. The river floodplain is situated along its north-eastern edge and expands in the south of the area to form a mainly flat expanse. The rest of the area comprises the valley's south-western gently undulating slope, which comprises parkland in the central area and arable land to the north. The perimeter of the Roman settlement is marked in a number of locations by earth banks and ditches, as at The Fosse and the Hollows.

**Degree of slope.** The central park section of Verulamium has average slopes of 1 in 25 whereas the agricultural area to the west has average slopes of 1 in 20. The east section is the flattest part, with slopes averaging 1 in 28.

**Altitude range.** 115m towards the west and the southern edge; 80m in the flood plain of the River Ver.

**Hydrology.** There is no standing water in the northern, agricultural section of the area. The River Ver flows into Verulamium Park under the A4147 Hemel Hempstead Road. Just to the south there is an old mill, now converted into a museum. In the park the Ver flows adjacent to a large ornamental lake, sited where fishpools, maintained to supply the abbey, were once located. A number of ponds within private gardens and the grounds of an hotel on Fishpool Street are connected to the Ver, which splits again at Abbey Mill House and then rejoins to flow out of the park. It is predominantly a chalk stream, but affected by eutrophication in this area. However, a concerted effort by the local wildlife and environmental groups has resulted in considerable improvement. The Environment Agency's River Quality classification for the River Ver at New Barnes Mill (Area 17 of S Herts LCA), which is 2.25 km downstream of Verulamium is "good".

**Land cover and land use.** The area to the south of the A4147 is mainly laid to grass and is now extensively used for recreation, with areas for picnics, a paddling pool by the lake and cafe/restaurant. An athletics circuit and other more formal types of recreation dominate the southern area of the park. To the north of the A4147 in the agricultural section the land use is mainly arable.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** One discrete area of woodland lies close to Pre Wood House on the slopes. The woodland is transitional with typical species being oak/beechn/ash/hazel and oak/hornbeam, heavily affected by conifer/ornamental plantation. Hedgerows are relatively sparse in the area with mostly elm/hawthorn/hazel with the occasional field maple, elder and dog rose. A distinctive single row of purple-flowered horse chestnut marks the

edge of the lane towards Gorhambury park on the west of the river. Very little natural grassland remains. There are several bat species in the area. In Verulamium Park, the lake is home to a wealth of waterfowl including great crested grebes, coot, pochard and tufted duck. The islands in the lake support one of the few heronries in Hertfordshire whilst on the River Ver occasional sightings of water vole are reported.

## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Verulamium Park and the plateau slopes were covered by the Roman town of Verulamium, traces of which are evident throughout the area. It is thought that the Romans developed the settlement in this location not because of its strategic geographic location but rather for its importance as a ritual ceremonial centre for the local Belgica tribe. Substantial lengths of the Roman town wall and defensive banks and ditches remain. The hypocaust and the site of the London Gate to the City are also evident. Remains of embankments dating back to the 2nd century AD survive in the area. The whole of the Roman town is scheduled as an ancient monument of national importance. Verulamium park was purchased from the Earl of Verulam in 1929 by the then City Corporation. Construction of the ornamental lake, a main feature of the park, started in the same year and gave much needed work to the unemployed during the economic depression of the 1930s. The grounds of the Abbey are used by people for walking, playing informal games, picnicking and relaxing and provide a main route into Verulamium Park from the town centre. They are also used to hold outdoor Christian festivals and events, with the Abbey providing a beautiful backdrop.

**Field pattern.** In the middle ages the area comprised open fields, owned by St. Albans Abbey. Remains of their associated field banks are clearly visible in the Park, along with traces of rare ridge and furrow. The south corner of the area known as Deerfold wood contains the last remnants of the deer park owned by the Abbot of St. Albans.

**Transport pattern.** The line of the historic Roman Watling Street runs through the area from north west to south east, but is not a prominent visual feature today. The area is crossed by the main Hemel Hempstead Road, (A4147). In Roman times the whole of the area was covered by a grid of roads which shared the same north-east/south-west orientation as the A4147 (see hyperlink at bottom of page). The road is straight and bordered by intermittent mature native hedgerows and wide verges. A more sinuous B road branches off along St. Michaels Street towards the north-western edge of St. Albans leading up to the Cathedral.

**Settlements and built form.** Historic buildings and interpretation centres such as the museum are located within the park. They attract and accommodate a high number of tourists and visitors to the area. The conservation area of St. Albans covers the whole area of the park and cathedral grounds.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The area is contained by topography, vegetation and settlement and is only locally visible. It is a medium scale landscape whose distinctive archaeological features throughout create a feeling of unity. Views within the area are limited and filtered by boundary vegetation and topography.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** The area is unique in Hertfordshire by virtue of the importance of the archaeological features, which are internationally rare. The Roman theatre, remains of the Roman wall, parkland trees and lake and views to the cathedral are visual treasures.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The visual influence of the archaeological features is localized and in some cases there are other subtle landscape elements. The eyesores such as the road, running track, sub-station and some of the surrounding urban settlement is locally apparent. The cathedral dominates the skyline to the south, creating an imposing focal point for the area.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Total length of Public Rights of Way - 5966  
 Total length of Other Public Access - 1866  
 Total length of Designated Cycle Routes - n/a  
 Total length of all public access - 7,832m  
 Area of LCA in square metres - 1,663,970  
 Length to area ratio - 1:212

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This area is regarded as distinctive.  
 "Three years ago a good part of the wall was standing, but ever since, out of wretched ignorance, even of their own interest, they have been pulling it up all around, to the very foundations, to mend the highway" .... "the track of the streets is visible when the corn first comes up or is nearly ripe" "Itinerarium Curiosum or an account of the Antiquities and remarkable Curiosities in Nature Observed in Travels through Great Britain" William Stukeley, 1724

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

St. Albans Conservation Area  
 Scheduled Ancient Monument -the whole of the Roman town  
 Landscape Conservation area (south west of Bluehouse Hill)

**CONDITION**

Land cover change: **widespread**  
 Age structure of tree cover: **mature**  
 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival: **fragmented**  
 Management of semi-natural habitat: **not obvious**  
 Survival of cultural pattern: **declining**  
 Impact of built development: **high**  
 Impact of land-use change: **moderate**

**ROBUSTNESS**

Impact of landform: **insignificant**  
 Impact of land cover: **prominent**  
 Impact of historic pattern: **continuous**  
 Visibility from outside: **locally visible**  
 Sense of enclosure: **contained**  
 Visual unity: **coherent**  
 Distinctiveness/rarity: **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	<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>ROBUSTNESS</b>				

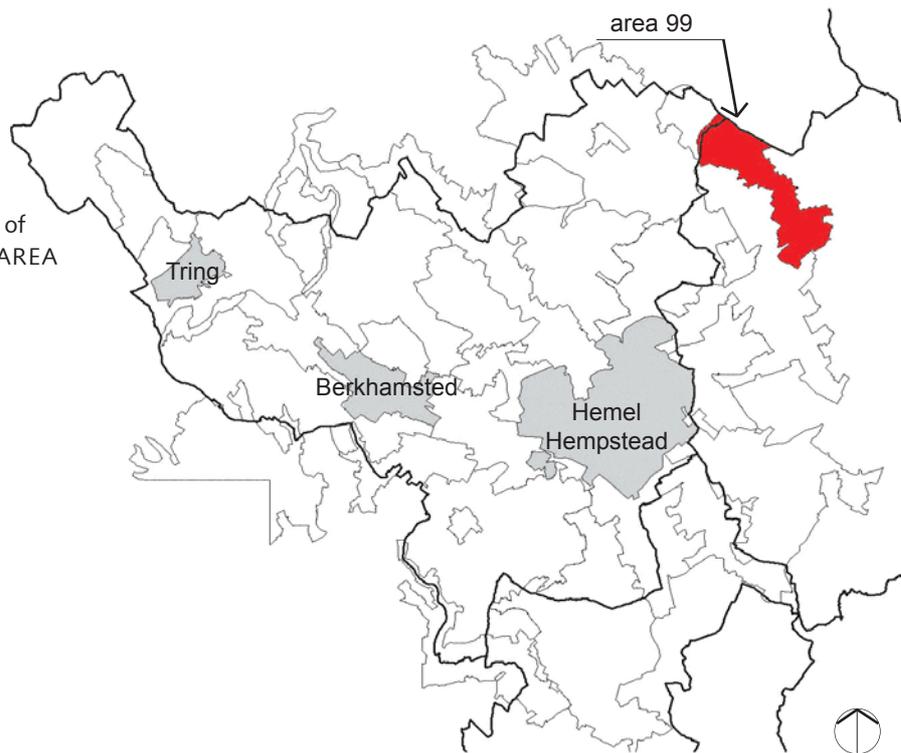
**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING****CHANGE: CONSERVE AND RESTORE**

- promote measures of agricultural and landscape management that enhance and emphasize the unity of the Roman settlement, particularly to link the areas north and south of the A4147
- restrict tree and shrub planting within areas of archaeological interest to avoid disturbance of the integrity of remaining artefacts
- survey and manage parkland and veteran trees for biodiversity value
- restrict ploughing of grasslands within the parkland
- promote strategies to visually mitigate intrusive built features and adjacent urban areas
- encourage the establishment of buffer strips of semi-natural vegetation along all watercourses, avoiding potential conflict with recreational use
- protect river corridors and water meadows from development that would alter its character visually or environmentally, such as culverting or loss of water meadows.
- encourage the enhancement and creation of wetland landscape features such as reedbeds, ponds, scrapes 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.
- ensure all existing and proposed recreational land uses include appropriate measures to manage and enhance the existing landscape setting and historical and ecological value.
- maintain and develop the traditional pattern of roadside verges as a local feature and a wildlife resource. Promote a clear strategy for the visual and noise mitigation of transport routes and integrate these corridors into the local landscape character.
- encourage the restoration and enhancement of wet grassland to provide a habitat for wading birds and wetland flora.
- promote hard detailing proposals sympathetic to the historic context of the area, with an emphasis on the use of natural and vernacular materials
- within existing woodlands, encourage the replacement of softwoods with indigenous native deciduous communities, provide hedgebank management and re-establish a species-rich ground flora
- encourage the reversion of arable areas to grassland and to make provision for enhanced public access to these areas so as to improve the awareness of the extent of the Roman settlement
- Verulamium Park and St. Albans cathedral (G.Lee)



District Map showing location of  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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**LOCATION**

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

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

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

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

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

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

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

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



White Walls •  
Kinsbourne Green  
(E.Staveley)

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Rothamsted manor house dates mainly from the 17th century. Pevsner considers that the formal gardens date from the alterations of the house in 1860 and later.

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

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

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

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

**Other sources of area-specific information.** English Heritage: Schedule entry

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

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

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

**VISUAL IMPACT**

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

**ACCESSIBILITY**

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

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

There is insufficient data to establish community views about this area at present.

In the past, Kinsbourne Green appears to have been a place of interest: "This was a real common then – in the nineteen thirties. It had bracken and hawthorn trees and even, at the lower end, a small patch of heather, and harebells grew through the soft pinkish heath grasses. It was a wonderful experience to stroll over this soft, mauve and pink counterpane on a still summer evening" Dora Barrett in Harpenden & District Local History Society Newsletter No.45, February 1988

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

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

**CONDITION**

*Land cover change:* **localised**  
*Age structure of tree cover:* **mature**  
*Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:* **fragmented**  
*Management of semi-natural habitat:* **poor**  
*Survival of cultural pattern:* **interrupted**  
*Impact of built development:* **low**  
*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:* **locally visible**  
*Sense of enclosure:* **partial**  
*Visual unity:* **coherent**  
*Distinctiveness/rarity:* **unusual**

<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>				

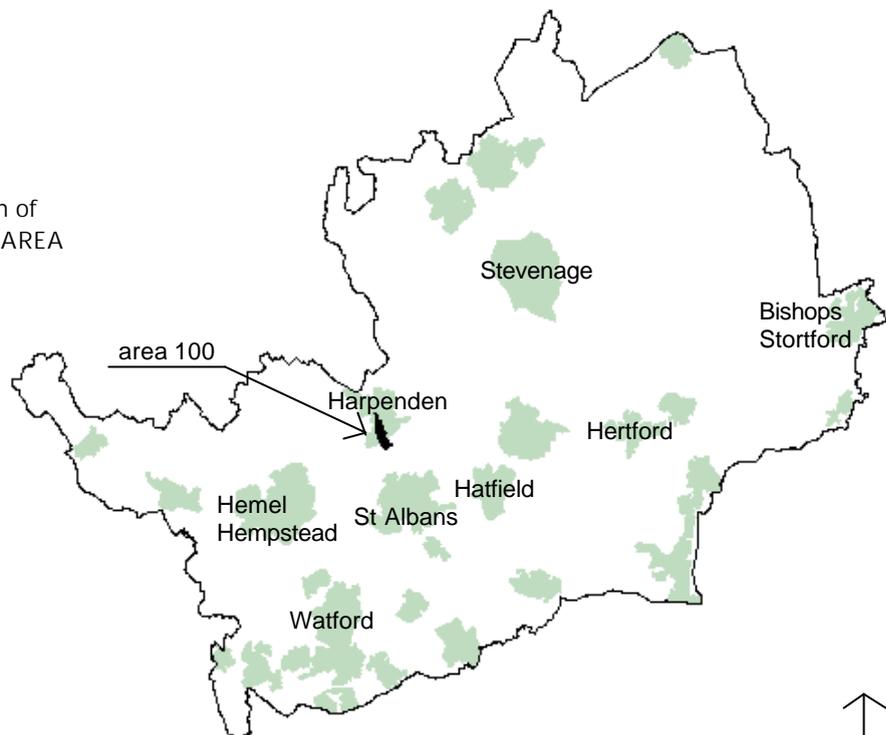
**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE: IMPROVE AND CONSERVE**

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



County Map showing location of  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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**LOCATION** A narrow wedge of land situated between Hatching Green in the south west and Harpenden to the north and east. The area extends to Ayres End Lane in the south.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The common provides a relaxed entrance to sub-urban Harpenden. The range of grassland communities help to create an informal character which supports a range of recreational activities, both active and passive. Travelling northwards into Harpenden there are fine elevated views across the common, framed by adjacent woody vegetation, leading the eye into the heart of the 'village' like town, which is set around a green and broad tree lined High Street. Secondary woodland has partially encroached on the common.



#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- open semi natural landscape in close proximity of Harpenden
- mosaic of grassland habitats
- remnant heathland plant communities
- secondary woodland and scrub habitats both within and to the fringes of the common
- extensive and mixed recreational uses,( including Harpenden Common Golf Course, Cricket Club, Football Club and site for local fairs nearer town centre)
- prestigious residential properties, many in mock Tudor style with large gardens and exotic trees fringing the common

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- ditches around golf course
- roads across golf course
- pub ( to S.E.) overlooking common
- ponds to east of common
- undulating topography within Prickle Dells

- Mock tudor residential to fringe of common (J.Billingsley)

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** The chalk bedrock geology is overlaid with plateau drift. The core of the area is distinguished by a band of plateau drift valley gravels overlying the chalk while to the north-east and south-west of the area the drift is more typical of the clay-with-flints that covers much of the neighbouring plateau areas. The soils are stagnogleyic paleo-agricultural brown earths which are fine silty over clayey and fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging. Some well drained clayey soils over chalk and variably flinty (Batcombe association).

**Topography.** The central area is mainly flat but slopes to both the north and south. There is a localized undulating topography in the vicinity of Prickle Dells, reflecting the site of old clay workings.

**Degree of slope.** Typically 1 in 20 to the north, 1 in 60 to the south and virtually flat to the centre.

**Altitude range.** Maximum of 130m to the centre, with the majority of the area around the 120m contour but falling away gently to 100m in the north.

**Hydrology.** There are various ponds to the north east of the common adjacent to Southdown Road. These were originally disused gravel pits. The one furthest from the town was the deepest while the two nearer the town were formed during the 1930s when work was found for the unemployed by constructing a surface water sewer from the 'Old Bells' to the pits. These pits are still affected by urban pollutants, particularly surface water run off.

**Land cover and land use.** Land cover within the area is a predominantly grassland with some secondary woodland and localised pockets of scrub. Land uses are mainly recreational. These comprise formal activities including Harpenden Common Golf Course, Harpenden Cricket Club and Harpenden Rovers Football Club, while other areas support more informal recreation including dog walking and kite flying. Closer to the town centre, travelling fairs occupy part of the common in the summer. One of the ponds to the edge of the common was historically used for ice skating while the undulating ground within Prickle Dells is currently used by young cyclists.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The primary value of the area is in terms of its mosaic of grassland and heathland communities. These include semi-improved neutral grassland, remnant acidic grassland and pockets of calcareous grassland, alongside the more intensively managed amenity areas. The acidic grassland is dominated by Common Bent and Red Fescue with areas of remnant heather and gorse, particularly to the south and including areas of rough between fairways within the golf course. Locally rare species include Fine-leaved Sandwort, Ling Heather, Crested Hair-grass and Yellow Rattle. Secondary woodland and scrub has developed to the fringes of the common e.g. West Common and within the golf course. Oak is the predominant species with ash, hawthorn, elm and sycamore also present. The

central area between Walkers Road and Cravells Road is dominated by Prickle Dells and St. Johns Wood which contains some ancient woodland indicators e.g. bluebells and ransons together with both ferns and sphagnum moss. The Small and Essex Skipper butterflies have been recorded to the fringes of these woodland habitats.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Harpenden itself originated as a hamlet of cottages grouped round the common, rather than a nucleated village. St Nicholas church originated as a chapel of rest serving the hamlet. Sheep grazing was present on the common until the 19th century. The common has been a notable centre for recreational pursuits through the centuries back as far as the archery butts. The common provided a site for the Meet of the Hertfordshire Hunt. Between 1848 and 1914 the common became the home of an annual race meeting. Horses would arrive from Newmarket by train at Batford and then be escorted by special police to the common. The location of the Paddock enclosure can still be identified on Limbrick Road by a square of trees. The Common was registered as a metropolitan common under the 1925 Law of Property Act. Today there are a number of owners, including Harpenden Town Council, three tenants and one commoner with grazing rights for 400 sheep and 20 geese.

**Field pattern.** The area is unified by its historical origin as an unenclosed open margined common. There are some 20th century leisure uses that have disrupted the pattern e.g. Harpenden Common Golf Course. A small parcel of land to the south west corner of pre 18th century irregular enclosure has recently been brought within the golf course.

**Transport pattern.** The A1081 crosses the western side of the common where it is met by the B487 from Redbourn. There are a number of minor roads crossing the common, some of which pass through the golf course. Most roads are linear in character and the boundaries are generally formed by ditches. There is a small visually prominent car park to the north of the common.

**Settlements and built form.** The long sides of the funnel shaped common are lined with properties, however, until almost at the town centre they are screened by secondary oak woodland. Mock tudor half timbered houses, largely dating from the early 20th century flank the common, having been built for the wealthy London commuter. On the common itself the buildings are limited to the pavilions and club houses of the three sports clubs.

**Other sources of area-specific information.**

Harpenden Common Management Plan - Countryside Management Service, HBRC and Harpenden Town Council - (Reviewed on a 5 year cycle, next period 2002-2007.)

Grassland Monitoring Project, Habitat Survey of 55/002 HBRC June 2001

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The common is largely concealed from surrounding areas with limited links to the surrounding countryside. Views of the common from neighbouring houses are equally limited to those directly adjacent . There is a medium to small scale in the landscape pattern . The visual unity is generally coherent, however the range of recreational activities and management measures create some incongruous elements in the landscape. There is noise intrusion from the local roads that intersect the common, however there is generally a relaxed atmosphere as open space meets town . Most of the views to the town are framed by secondary woodland and the distant horizons to the north and east are also defined by mature vegetation.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** The close proximity of a large common to a town is rare if not unique to the County.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

As development has been carefully controlled there are few intrusive built features around the fringes of the common. In fact the adjacent houses and the many mature trees in private gardens are significant components of the character of the area. Within the common there are some features that visually jar to varying degrees including: the small car park to the north, the golf club and the transient amusement fairs.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There is open access over the common with the exception of most of the golf course. Harpenden Town Council has created a permissive bridleway around the common to guide recreational users.

- Total length of Public Rights of Way - 1,360m
- Total length of Other Public Access - 5m
- Total length of Designated Cycle Routes - 1,495m
- Total length of all public access - 2,860m
- Area of LCA in square metres - 1,170,250
- Length to area ratio - 1:409

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

Research undertaken in 2002 identified Harpenden Common as a highly valued landscape, particularly as a "country" amenity for the town [A].

"We were exceedingly struck with the beauty of the village as we entered it for the first time..... After breakfast we unpacked and took a walk on the Common with Mr Phillips, there is a delightful view of the village from the hill."

Elizabeth Read's Journal, quoted in "A view of Harpenden in 1821", Harpenden and District Local History Society No.9 April 1976

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

- Greenbelt
- County Wildlife Site
- Harpenden Conservation Area ( most of the common and surrounding built up area)
- Landscape Conservation Area ( south west corner - no overlap with Conservation Area)

**CONDITION**

- Land cover change: **localised**
- Age structure of tree cover: **mixed**
- Extent of semi-natural habitat survival: **widespread**
- Management of semi-natural habitat: **good**
- Survival of cultural pattern: **interrupted**
- Impact of built development: **low**
- Impact of land-use change: **moderate**

**ROBUSTNESS**

- Impact of landform: **apparent**
- Impact of land cover: **prominent**
- Impact of historic pattern: **interrupted**
- Visibility from outside: **concealed**
- Sense of enclosure: **contained**
- Visual unity: **coherent**
- Distinctiveness/rarity: **unique**

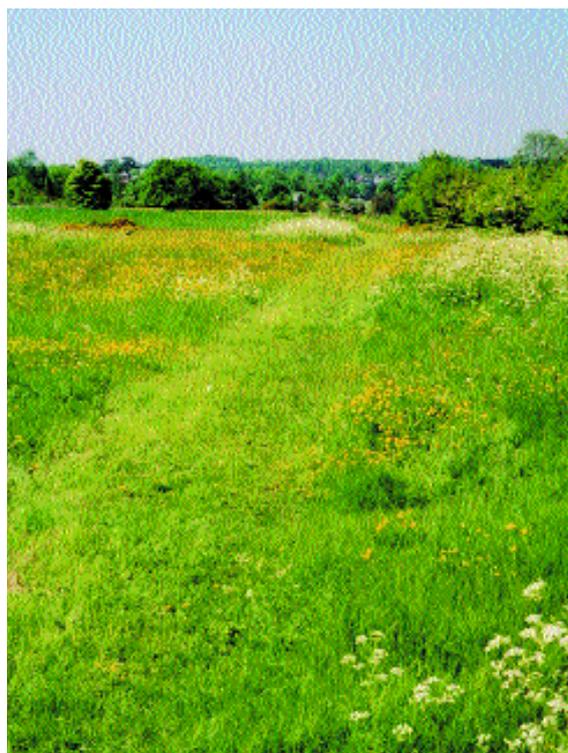
<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	<b>Conserve and strengthen</b>	Safeguard and manage
	<b>MODERATE</b>	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
	<b>POOR</b>	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		<b>WEAK</b>	<b>MODERATE</b>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

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

- support the current management plan for the common to conserve the mix of habitat types and the balance between nature conservation, recreation and public access. Promote local initiatives for further improvements and encourage traditional management measures wherever feasible
- encourage the retention of ponds to the north east and to enhance their visual and wildlife value. To monitor and promote measures to improve the water quality of ponds on the common in liaison with the Environment Agency
- conserve unimproved and semi-improved grassland wherever possible, avoiding the use of fertilizers to reduce their acid nature, in order to maintain their nature conservation value.
- for areas of semi-improved acid grassland avoid over-grazing, heavy public pressure, damage from vehicles, pollution and invasion by alien species
- promote a planting strategy to provide a framework to visually integrate both the permanent structures e.g. Club houses and the transient recreational activities on the common e.g. fairs
- support the conservation area status of the common . To restrict any new built development and control development adjacent to the common that may affect either its ecology or amenity value
- promote the development of a strategy for recreation associated parking on the common so as to minimize the visual impact of parked vehicles on the setting of the common while allowing for safety and accessibility
- improve and update the interpretive material to illustrate the nature conservation value and history of the common
- maintain ditches adjacent to roads to prevent unauthorized vehicular access
- monitor and control dog fouling
- restrict further encroachment on the common by secondary and scrub woodland
- improve public access and safety within existing woodlands
- promote the appropriate management of secondary 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
- seek to resolve conflicts arising from competing uses on the common including golf and walking
- prevent of the spread of invasive and non native species
- use locally indigenous species and native stock of local provenance wherever possible. The use of exotic species

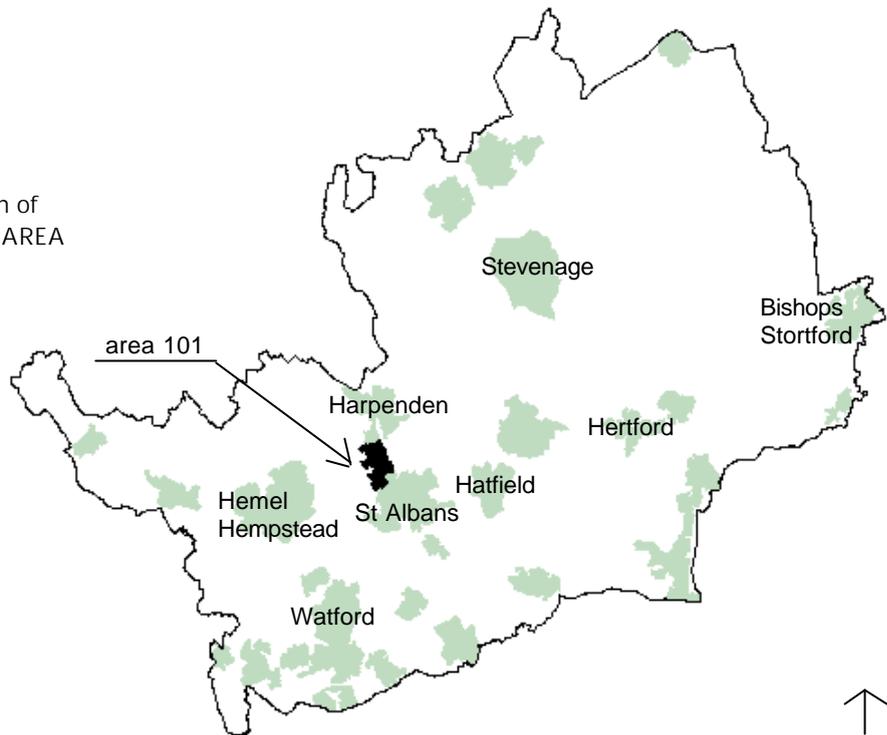
- Toward Harpenden (J.Billingsley)

- should be prevented
- promote traffic calming measures on minor roads where considered necessary. Materials and designs must be of a scale and design that relates to the local landscape character of the area.
- for all formal recreational facilities including the Harpenden Golf Course and the Cricket Club, a long-term management plan should be produced and adhered to rigorously. Liaison with local groups is to be encouraged to deal with changing circumstances, via annual meetings of interested parties. A high proportion of the total area shall be dedicated to and maintained as wildlife habitat, building upon established areas of wildlife interest already present
- ensure all existing and proposed recreational land uses include appropriate measures to manage and enhance the existing landscape setting and historical and ecological value. Particular attention should be given to ensure earth work proposals complement the natural landform patterns.
- promote initiatives to increase the extent of heathland plant communities, and thereby promote the BAP objectives for the locality
- encourage where feasible the reintroduction of traditional grazing methods on the common
- promote the educational value of the common with local schools and youth groups
- support a programme of rotational scrub management to maintain a healthy mosaic of habitats
- promote clear and safe routes for walkers, cyclists and equestrians through the common particularly through areas where there are potential conflicts with nature conservation and recreation e.g. by providing cut paths through hay meadows



County Map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Hertfordshire County Council  
LA076678 2001



**LOCATION**

This area is situated between St Albans to the south, Harpenden to the north, the A1081 to the east and the Ver valley to the west.

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

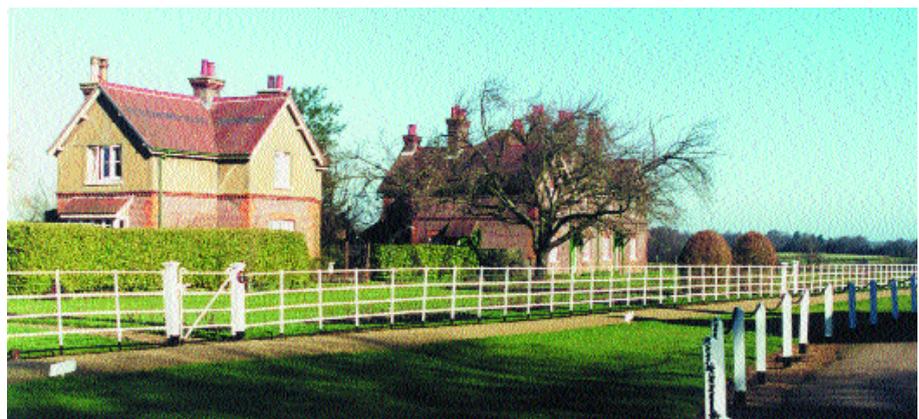
There is a marked estate feel to this plateau landscape. To the north it has a more open character with fields mainly to pasture/grassland and a stud farm at Childwick Hall, with a combination of traditional metal fences and clipped hedges with intermittent field trees. In the centre a traditional parkland landscape cocoons the secluded Childwick Bury. The busy A1081 Harpenden Road lies to the east, but otherwise there is a private estate character with limited public access. To the south there are more urban influences, including the golf club, country club and night club at Batchwood Hall. Residential areas at New Green and the associated schools and playing fields have local influence but are generally visually contained.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- strong plateau character with largely contained views
- formal estate character with common architectural detailing
- mature parkland and plantation woodlands concentrated around Childwick Bury and Batchwood Hall
- mixed species including conifers create varied skylines
- impact of adjacent urban areas generally well screened or integrated
- Childwick, particularly the stud and Childwick Bury, have strong private feel

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- Childwick Bury village green
- ornamental water tower
- ornamental lodges on Harpenden Road
- rare breed livestock at Childwick Bury
- Batchwood Hall country club and golf course



Estate cottage at Childwick Green (HCC Landscape Unit)

## PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** The chalk bedrock geology is predominantly overlaid with a clay-with-flints drift, with areas of undifferentiated solid rock at the edges of the plateau area and chalk at the surface at the south-east end. The acidic clays loams are stagnogleyic paleo-argillic brown earths, fine silty and loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging. Some well drained clayey soils over chalk, variably flinty (Batcombe association).

**Topography.** This area lies on the elevated plateau east of the Ver Valley. The area is mainly flat with some minor local variations in landform caused by the brick and chalk pits in the parkland. At Batchwood Hall, slopes form the head of a dry valley which is part of the Ver Valley system.

**Degree of slope.** The dry valley in the north east is very shallow, with average slopes of 1 in 57. The dry valley in the southern section has steeper slopes, averaging 1 in 24. The rest of the area is mainly flat.

**Altitude range.** 130m in the centre; 95m in the north east.

**Hydrology.** There is little standing water in this area of high ground - a pond east of Ladygrove Wood, a well at Childwick Green and small pond in the south of the area at Batchwood golf course. A local habitat of note is the wood of Kilmart's Spring, indicating a rising spring.

**Land cover and land use.** The primary land cover is grassland with the main land use being pasture on either parkland or within fields- there is an equestrian stud at Childwick. To the south the parkland landscape combines with woodland, ornamental grounds and recreational uses, including a golf course at Batchwood and playing fields to the north of St. Albans. There is a limited amount of arable in the extreme north.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** There are a number of small to medium sized woods in the centre and south of the area, giving an interlocking character to the Childwick Bury parkland. There are some ancient woodlands, e.g. Batch Wood and Ladies Grove. Species in the south comprise an oak/ash/beechness mix with hazel and cherry. Throughout the parklands there are more ornamental species and features, including a lime avenue and specimen sweet chestnut and cedar. Rhododendrons have been introduced to the understorey at Green Wood. In the north the mix is oak/hornbeam/elm with some modern introductions of linear belts of conifers by Childwick Stud. Hedges are typically clipped and a mix of hawthorn, blackthorn and elm, however within the estate pasture to the north many of the hedges are predominantly hawthorn with few hedgerow trees. There is virtually no semi-natural grassland except where locally present within hedgerows. Locally important rare species include the Greater Butterfly Orchid and Solomon's Seal. There are several rare fungi and bryophytes in Batch Wood.

## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

A Roman villa lies on the edge of the plateau a short distance west of Bush wood, overlooking the Ver Valley, but otherwise prehistoric and Roman settlement in the area seems to have been sparse. By the later middle ages the

pattern of dispersed farms and hamlets characteristic of much of the plateau areas in the district had emerged. Childwick appears to have been one such small hamlet. The site of the medieval moated manor of Batch Wood or Childwicksay, now a Scheduled Ancient Monument, lies to the north east of Batchwood Hall. In later centuries the estates have exerted a strong influence on the cultural pattern. Childwick Bury's manorial history dates back to Saxon times and it was the property of St. Albans Abbey until the Dissolution. Its significant gardens and parkland are shown on maps of 1766. By 1881 the manor consisted of 14,000 acres of farms, woodland and parks. The Prince of Wales entertained guests at the mansion and in the late 20th century the estate was owned by Stanley Kubrick, creator of such films as *2001 A Space Odyssey* and *Clockwork Orange*. Childwick Stud was introduced by Sir John Blundell in the late 19th century and was expanded from 1903 by the diamond millionaire Jack Joel, who bred many great horses. Lord Grimthorpe (1816-1903), responsible for the clock mechanism for Big Ben, also restored St. Albans Abbey, which he could view from his home at Batchwood Hall.

**Field pattern.** Most of the area to the south is informal fenced parkland. To the north there is a mix of regular fields around Childwick Hall and Childwick Stud with a pattern of pre 18th-century irregular enclosure and isolated prairie fields towards the upper slopes of the Ver valley. Throughout the Childwick Estate traditional metal railing fences provide enclosure.

**Transport pattern.** The area is firmly marked to the east by the A1081 Harpenden Road. Elsewhere there are only private estate tracks and narrow minor roads with minimal verges.

**Settlements and built form.** This dispersed pattern of settlement has concentrations around the Halls and estate farms. Clusters of distinctive 19th-century brick-built estate cottages add character. At Beesonend and Childwick Green. The latter, with the domestic scaled St Mary's church by Gilbert Scott and a miniature Jacobean house, forms a picturesque hamlet grouped around an enclosed village green and well. Flint is used locally in boundary walls. Childwick Bury is a large late 17th-century mansion, probably built by Joshua Lomax and altered in the 18th century, 1854 and 1900. On the Harpenden Road the ornamental iron gate of a distinctive elaborately detailed red brick and terracotta lodge (1897) matches those at the entrance to the mansion within the parkland. The stables associated with Childwick Stud make a positive contribution to the locality. Batchwood Hall was built by Lord Grimthorpe in a neo-Georgian style in the late 19th century. Remains of parts of its Victorian garden are of note.

**Other sources of area specific information.** "Childwick Bury - A dream of loveliness" Daphne Hutchins, *Herts Countryside* Vol.34 No.239 1979 March p22-3

Conservation Area Character Statement

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

To the south the interlocking character of the woodland, particularly on the fringes of the area, helps to create a strong sense of containment and privacy from the surrounding areas, including the New Greens estate at St. Albans. This is a medium scale and coherent landscape with limited intrusion from adjacent noises except for the A1081. To the north where the enclosure is limited there are open views to the Ver valley, e.g. from Beesonend Lane. **Rarity and distinctiveness.** The parklands and estate landscapes are relatively unusual in this part of the county. The retention of the livestock grazing, including some rare breeds within the parkland, is a distinctive feature.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The only significant impacts on the area are from adjacent built development. These include Hatching Green to the north, where there are some incongruous ornamental trees in rear gardens and to the south at New Greens estate with its associated secondary school. However, in the latter boundary hedges and woodland are relatively strong features of the landscape. Within the area the current uses at Batchwood Hall comprise some visually intrusive structures and poorly maintained parking areas.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Two bridleways cross the area and Beesonend Lane drops down to the ford at Redbournbury on the Ver. Otherwise there is limited access and much of the Childwickbury estate is noticeably marked as 'private'. The main hall is concealed from the adjacent bridleway by dense planting, possibly a function of the former owner's reclusive personality.  
 Total length of Public Rights of Way - 6,807m  
 Total length of Other Public Access - 1,345m  
 Total length of Designated Cycle Routes - 1,345m  
 Total length of all public access - 9,497m  
 Area of LCA in square metres - 4,751,569  
 Length to area ratio -1:500

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This area is widely recognised for its distinctiveness. "Childwick in daffodil time, with the wild cherry blossom in the woods beyond, is a dream of loveliness to which those who have once seen it make a yearly pilgrimage". Constance Toulmin in 'Happy Memories', Faith Press 1960. p.11.

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

- Greenbelt
- Landscape Conservation Area (except north of Childwick Stud and playing fields and school at New Green)
- Childwickbury Conservation Area (covers much of the estate)
- Scheduled Ancient Monument- Batch Wood moated manorial site

**CONDITION**

- Land cover change: **localised**
- Age structure of tree cover: **mixed**
- Extent of semi-natural habitat survival: **fragmented**
- Management of semi-natural habitat: **not obvious**
- Survival of cultural pattern: **interrupted**
- Impact of built development: **low**
- Impact of land-use change: **low**

**ROBUSTNESS**

- Impact of landform: **apparent**
- Impact of land cover: **prominent**
- Impact of historic pattern: **interrupted**
- 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	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>ROBUSTNESS</b>				

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

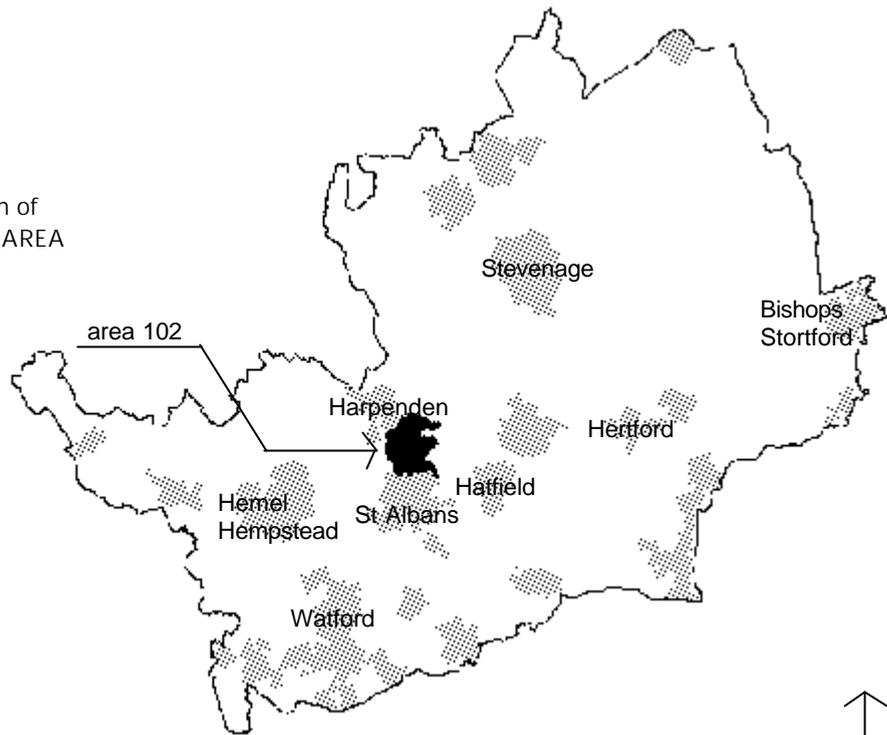
- ensure landscape improvements respect the historic context of existing features and the form and character of parkland and gardens. Ornamental species should only be used to replace damaged or over-mature specimens. New planting is encouraged to maintain age diversity and the removal of inappropriate planting should be encouraged
- survey and manage parkland and veteran trees for biodiversity value
- within the historic estates of Childwick and Batchwood hard landscaping details such as gates, metal railings, steps and balustrades, should be conserved. Lodges, follies, obelisks, terraces and boundary walls 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
- restrict ploughing of grasslands within parklands and encourage reversion from arable uses to pasture and grassland
- improve public access arrangements across whole area, providing circular walks from adjacent residential areas and access to woodlands
- 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 and coppice-with standards.
- promote the expansion of existing woodland, especially where this will help in creating habitat links and develop a sense of visual containment to the north and north west of the area
- use native indigenous species and wherever possible stock of local provenance. Prevent the spread of invasive species such as *Rhododendron ponticum*
- promote hedgerow restoration and creation to the north of the area to provide visual and ecological links. Pattern to follow historic field boundaries where possible. Hedges to the south to be maintained high and strengthened to restrict the visual impact of adjacent residential areas
- promote both the creation of new ponds and the retention/enhancement for wildlife of existing ponds
- provide new uncropped or grass field margins to link areas of wildlife importance and /or existing and proposed rights of way
- encourage the retention of existing stables for equestrian activity
- promote the use of traditional field enclosure by metal fencing or hedges where land is converted to equestrian pasture
- ensure that new development, conversions and their surroundings within estates are designed and maintained to be in keeping with their historic settings. Car parks should be sensitively sited and use appropriate materials.
- where new development is permitted native tree species only should be planted on boundaries, with exotic/ornamental species only in close proximity to the dwellings
- golf courses should only be permitted within historic parklands where the original layout and features of the grounds are retained, all existing trees are retained and adequate provision is made for their maintenance and management. Particular attention should be given to ensure earthworks proposals complement the natural landform patterns
- an appropriate buffer zone can be created around any historic artefacts, such as mansions, lodges, walls, etc., to protect their historic integrity
- ensure all existing and proposed recreational land uses include appropriate measures to manage and enhance the existing landscape setting and historical and ecological value. To include golf courses and playing fields
- maintain and manage the verges of existing roads for nature conservation interest.



• Childwick Bury parkland  
(J. Billingsley)

County Map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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LA076678 2001



**LOCATION**

This area is bounded by the A1081 to the west, Harpenden and Wheathampstead to the north and Sandridge and St. Albans to the east and south. The area is split into two unequal parts by the linear settlement of Sandridge along the B651.

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

A network of dry interconnecting valleys with a sense of rural seclusion despite the close proximity of settlements on the higher ground to the rear of the smaller plateau areas on the fringes of this area. The visual containment is aided by the prominent small and medium sized woods located on the upper reaches of the valley sides. Narrow lanes and equestrian activities create a relatively relaxed feel. The plateau areas are more open, with large arable fields and intermittent clipped hedgerows. On the fringes of the adjacent urban settlements there is a greater emphasis on recreational activities, including playing fields, equestrian activity, golf and community woodland.



**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- open dry valleys overlooked by smaller areas of plateau on the fringes
- quiet area with few visual detractors except the A1081 and mainline railway to the west
- small woods on the upper slopes emphasize the valleys
- area served by narrow, winding roads lined by dense mixed hedgerows
- mixed arable, pasture and recreational land uses
- number of equestrian establishments associated with small country houses, including The Grove and Sandridgebury
- locally prominent built edges to adjacent settlements
- isolated properties or small clusters of dwellings, generally with strong vernacular architecture

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- new playing fields for St Albans School and Old Albanians at Cheapside Farm off A1081
- Ayres End Green
- St Pancras- Sheffield mainline railway and gantries
- new golf course at Long Acre Farm
- Jersey Farm woodland park, St Albans
- St. Leonards Church, Sandridge, with flint and shingle tower
- enclosed high sided hedgerow north of Sandridge on B651

Paddocks off Pipers Lane  
( J.Billingsley)

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** The chalk bedrock geology is overlaid by clay-with-flints on the higher/plateau areas and by undifferentiated chalky drift on the slopes. The valleys contain sand and gravels while on the plateau area the acidic clay loams are stagnogleyic paleo-argillic brown earths with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging with some well drained clayey soils over chalk, variably flinty (Batcombe association). In the valley bottoms and lower slopes between Harpenden and St Albans there are typical argillic brown earths, well drained fine silty soils, locally very flinty, some shallow over flint gravel (Charity 2 association). These dry valleys also contain river terrace gravels and areas of sandy soils between St. Albans and Nomansland Common. (See also Area 103).

**Topography.** This markedly undulating landscape of plateau areas and dry valleys separates St. Albans and Harpenden. A small section in the south is cut off from the rest of the area by Sandridge, which is on a subtle ridge. Slopes are slightly steeper in the northern half of the area, where the landscape is more rolling. In comparison the southern half comprises a plateau area with a south-east facing slope.

**Degree of slope.** To the north the slopes average 1 in 32 while from the central plateau to the south east they are typically 1 in 20.

**Altitude range.** 85m in the south east; 125m in the plateau areas of the north, north west and centre.

**Hydrology.** Standing water is rare in this area of high ground and dry valleys. Local wood names suggest springs, wells or wet areas, e.g. Long Spring, Pismire Spring, Pudler's Wood and Secret Spring. There is a pond at Cheapside Farm, a well at Green Cottages and a pond and wet drain near the playground at Jersey Farm. Nearby House Lane is susceptible to flooding north of the roundabout, as is the B651 north of Sandridge.

**Land cover and land use.** The primary land use is arable cropping. However there is also a good proportion of equestrian pasture, including sites at Sandridgebury and Pipers Lane. Around the perimeter of the area and adjacent to the settlements of Harpenden and St. Albans there is a range of leisure-related land uses, including extensive new playing fields for the St Albans School and Old Albanians on the A1081, the pay and play golf course at Long Acre Farm and the Jersey Farm Woodland Park north of St. Albans. There is a small orchard at Cheapside Farm

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The area contains a number of small to medium sized discrete woods, some of which are ancient, e.g. Thames Wood, Langley Wood, Pudler's Wood, Clappers Wood and Eight Acre Wood. The main species mix is oak/hornbeam with variable amounts of elm. There are also a number of later plantations, e.g. Pismire Spring, where species include cherry, ash and larch. The main hedgerow species are hawthorn/blackthorn and elm with smaller amounts of hazel, holly and field maple. Hedgerow trees are mainly oak, holly and ash. Sunken lanes and tall overgrown hedges are common on the steeper slopes, e.g. Pipers Lane. Mud Lane is a notable green lane with

interesting ground flora including bluebell. On the arable plateau areas the hedges are tightly clipped and the landscape more open, however there has been tree planting around Cheapside Farm. Remnant natural grasslands e.g. Ayres End Meadows are dominated by Creeping Soft Grass, Bents and Red Fescue. Locally important rare species include Creeping Formentii (*Potentilla angelica*) at Ayre's End and the Natterer's Bat.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

On the east of the area a finger of sandy soils from the north-eastern outskirts of St Albans, through Sandridge to Nomansland Common, led to early exploitation. Remains of burial mounds dating to the 2nd millennium BC lie west of Sandridge. On the southern edge of the area, adjacent to St. Albans, is a short length of the Beech Bottom dyke which dates from the early 1st century AD. It has been suggested that the pronounced hedgebank on the west side of the B 651 between Sandridge and Wheathampstead, which marks the line of the medieval parish boundary, also marks a prehistoric boundary between Beech Bottom Dyke and the Devils Dyke in Wheathampstead. The most notable historic feature of the landscape, first mentioned in the late Saxon period, is a long, curving boundary, marked by fields and tracks, from the western end of Nomansland Common to northwest of Cheapside farm. There is a manorial site within Thames Wood.

**Field pattern.** Field patterns derive mainly from the pre 18th-century irregular enclosure. There was some later parliamentary enclosure, but the significant impact has been the creation of large prairie fields in the later part of the 20th century, particularly to the south of the area. To the north of Nomansland are a few former unenclosed common arable fields. Field sizes are medium to the north while to the south west and south east they are larger and more regular in shape. Locally there are some reasonably intact portions of hedgerow networks, e.g. at Cross Farm immediately south of Harpenden. Smaller paddocks have been created by sub-dividing larger fields with temporary fencing to serve local equestrian activity, e.g. along Pipers Lane and Sandridgebury.

**Transport pattern.** Narrow winding lanes with narrow verges are typical and where they rise up the steeper slopes to the plateau there are some pronounced sunken lanes. The exceptions to this pattern are the busy A1081 to the west of the area and the B651 which runs between St. Albans and Wheathampstead. The London to Sheffield main line railway is mainly in cutting as it crosses from north to south.

**Settlements and built form.**

There is a dispersed settlement pattern with small hamlets e.g. Amwell and Ayres End, isolated farms and occasional white rendered cottages. Traditional building materials such as clay tile and brick are prevalent. Cross Farm, originally a Saxon hall, has a 17th-century gable brick front. An impressive range of brick, weatherboard and clay tile barns can be seen from Cross Lane. The parish church of St. Leonard is a distinctive feature in the landscape with its flint tower and chamfered shingle spire.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The area is generally both visually contained and coherent. Despite the close proximity of a number of towns the distant and enclosing views are largely formed and framed by vegetation or landform. This a peaceful area with few detractors, particularly in the central core. The harmonious blend of dwellings using traditional materials adds to the appeal of the area. The central ridge between Cheapside Farm and Hillend Farm is more exposed. The most significant noise source is from the main line railway.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** The landscape type is frequent within the county.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Locally there are some relatively raw built edges to the open countryside, e.g. along Cross Lane, Harpenden, to the southern boundary of Wheathampstead and from parts of Sandridge. However, the wider countryside is protected from the full impact of the more extensive residential areas, which are either set back from the ridgelines or screened by belts of trees, which in some cases include a relatively high proportion of conifers, e.g. north of Amwell. While the new playing fields on the A1081 represent a substantial development in the open countryside, the planting proposals include a number of copses, small woods and new hedges which respect the local pattern and native species mixes. Recreational land uses on the edge of St. Albans, e.g. Jersey Farm Woodland Park, include significant areas of new woodland. Within the equestrian areas the use of temporary fencing is discordant with the traditional pattern of hedgerows. The overhead gantries, associated earthworks and structures along the main line

railway are only locally intrusive features, as much of the route is in cutting.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

- Total length of Public Rights of Way - 16,094m
- Total length of Other Public Access - n/a
- Total length of Designated Cycle Routes - 5,184m
- Total length of all public access - 21,278
- Area of LCA in square metres - 11,125,144
- Length to area ratio - 1:523

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This area is widely regarded for its distinctive landscapes, particularly as a setting to Nomansland Common (and some would not see such a marked boundary between the two character areas), but also for locations in the north and west of the area. The impact of more recent changes in and around the area, however, has the occasional critic: "Sandridge- Subtopian clutter in a village that has ribboned out to join St. Albans....Opposite the church, Pound Farm, mellow and ivy-smothered, is guarded by four grotesquely truncated oaks" R. M. Healey in "Hertfordshire, A Shell Guide" Faber & Faber 1982.

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

- Greenbelt
- Landscape Conservation Area (north of Cheapside Farm and Hillend Farm)
- Amwell Conservation Area
- Childwickbury Conservation area (north-west corner)
- Sandridge Conservation Area

**CONDITION**

- Land cover change: **localized**
- Age structure of tree cover: **mixed**
- Extent of semi-natural habitat survival: **fragmented**
- Management of semi-natural habitat: **not obvious**
- Survival of cultural pattern: **declining**
- Impact of built development: **low**
- Impact of land-use change: **moderate**

**ROBUSTNESS**

- Impact of landform: **prominent**
- Impact of land cover: **apparent**
- Impact of historic pattern: **interrupted**
- Visibility from outside: **locally visible**
- Sense of enclosure: **contained**
- Visual unity: **coherent**
- Distinctiveness/rarity: **frequent**

<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>ROBUSTNESS</b>				

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING**

**CHANGE: IMPROVE AND CONSERVE**

- 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 and coppice-with-standards
- utilize ancient hedge, field and woodland boundaries to establish the most appropriate location for wood restoration and expansion and creating eco-corridors. Build on the pattern of woodland on the upper slopes of the valley sides
- use indigenous species and native stock of local provenance wherever possible
- promote hedgerow restoration and creation throughout the area, particularly in the south, to provide visual and ecological links between existing and proposed woodland areas. Pattern to follow historic field boundaries where possible
- promote both the creation of new ponds and the retention/enhancement for wildlife of existing ponds
- improve public access arrangements including the scope for circular walks from adjacent settlements and access to woodlands
- provide new uncropped or grass field margins to link areas of wildlife importance and/or existing and proposed rights of way
- promote the retention and restoration of existing orchards and the creation of new orchards
- encourage the reuse of existing agricultural buildings for equestrian activity and introduce native planting schemes to integrate them into the landscape
- promote the use of traditional field enclosure where land is converted to equestrian pasture. Introduce new copses within areas of pasture e.g. Sandridgebury and Pipers Lane
- conserve unimproved and semi-improved grassland, e.g. at Ayres End, wherever possible, avoiding agricultural improvements, so as to maintain their nature conservation value
- avoid over-grazing and heavy public pressure on areas of semi-improved grassland
- ensure that ancient lanes and their associated hedgerows

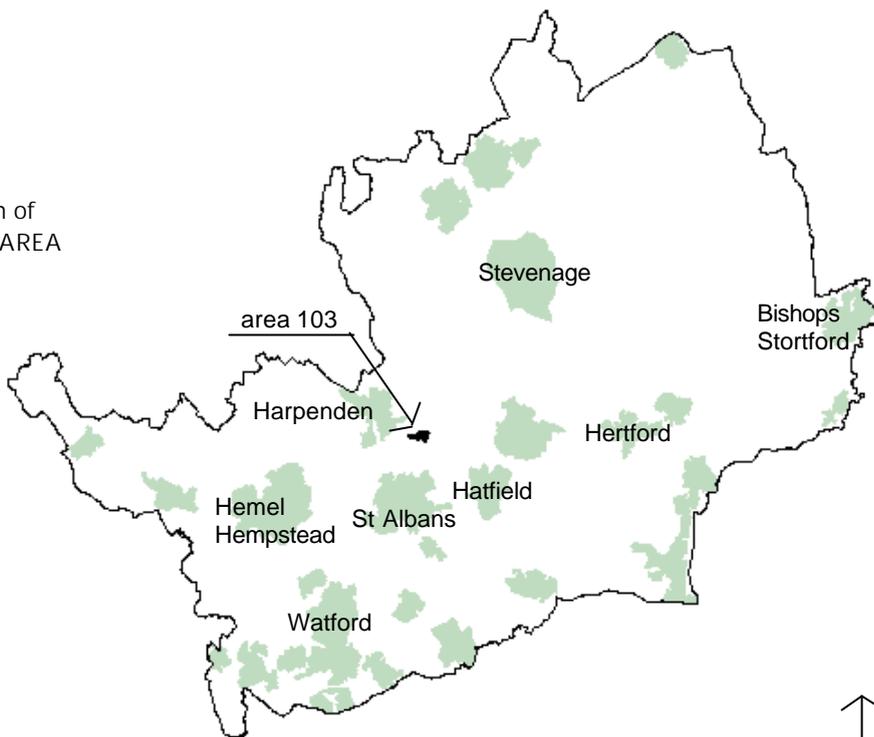
- are retained, protected, enhanced and integrated into any new development with due regard to their historic, ecological and landscape value
- ensure that the surroundings of converted and new buildings are designed and maintained to be in keeping with their agricultural surroundings. 'Garden' details are to be screened from view where possible and native species used for hedging and tree planting on the perimeter
- within golf courses a high proportion of the total area shall be dedicated to and maintained as wildlife habitat, building upon established areas of wildlife interest already present. Landscape management plans to be an integral part of the planning consent and maintenance
- new buildings and structures to be in keeping with the local vernacular and remaining historic character of the site
- ensure all existing and proposed recreational land uses include appropriate measures to manage and enhance the existing landscape setting and historical and ecological value. Developments on the urban edge to be integrated by the use of native woodland, copses and hedgerows.
- promote planting schemes that will reduce the impact of existing urban development on the landscape of adjacent areas
- promote planting to screen the impact of the mainline railway and A1081
- maintain and develop the traditional pattern of roadside verges as a local feature and a wildlife resource Where development is likely to affect verges and damage is unavoidable, development should include details of protection of the remaining verge and replacement of its nature conservation value within the proposed scheme. This is particularly important where verges include hedgebanks, sunken lanes, ditches and hedges.

- Ayres End (E. Anderson)



County Map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Hertfordshire County Council  
LA076678 2001



**LOCATION**

A small area off the B651 between Sandridge and Wheathampstead

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

A small but distinctive area located in a dry valley and surrounded by farmland. Due to locally poor soils the area has historically been cleared and used as a common. Today this is a popular location for informal recreation, notably dog walkers. There are similarities with Harpenden Common but the area exhibits a more remote feel, largely detached from urbanising influences.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- narrow low-lying valley feature with open aspects
- acid gravel soils with chalk and clay exposures
- important for historic and contemporary recreational uses
- acidic grassland and heathland communities
- regenerating scrub oak and hawthorn woodland over areas of former clay and chalk extraction
- clusters of small hamlets on fringes of the common

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- ditch and banks to common edges
- poorly visually integrated car park off Ferrers Lane
- Wheathampstead Cricket Club



Towards Symondshyde • Ridge (HCC Landscape Unit)

## PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** The underlying bedrock geology is chalk. Although locally evident at the surface, the chalk is generally overlaid by either sand and terrace gravels on the valley bottom or undifferentiated solid rock overlaid by clay-with-flints on the slopes to the north and south. The valley soils are light acidic soils, which influence the distinctive land cover, and typical argillic brown earths, which are well drained fine silts, locally very flinty, some shallow over flint gravel (Charity 2 association). On the slopes to north and south are small areas of stagnogleyic paleo-argillic brown earths, fine silty and loamy soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging. Some well drained clayey soils over chalk, variably flinty (Batcombe association).

**Topography.** A number of dry valleys all converge in this small area and continue towards the south east. As a valley bottom it is relatively flat with gentle undulations. The northern slope is wooded and settled. The overgrown pits that exist on the common today are clay pits dating from the 18th century. Brick kilns are recorded on the common in 1759 and brick making was an important local industry.

**Degree of slope.** The slopes of Nomansland common have an average gradient of 1 in 23.

**Altitude range.** 105m on the south slope of Nomansland common; 95m in the valley bottom to the south east

**Hydrology.** This confluence of dry valleys has no standing water or wells.

**Land cover and land use.** In ancient times the area would have been wooded, however at some point it was cleared for grazing, which continued until the 1930s. Due to the light quality of the acidic soils the area largely escaped cultivation, apart from during WWII when part of South Common was ploughed for crops. Today the common comprises a mix of rough grassland and scrub woodland. Although there are still grazing rights on the common the land use today is mainly for informal recreation, including dog walking and model aircraft enthusiasts. Wheathampstead Cricket Clubhouse and pitch is located to the north, adjacent to the B651.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** In the absence of grazing a considerable proportion of the acidic grassland to the north has reverted to hawthorn scrub and secondary oak/birch woodland. Hornbeam, ash, aspen, cherry and sycamore are minor species in the woodland mix. The grassland communities are a key component of the landscape and are dominated by Creeping Bent/ Red Fescue. Locally rare flora species include Petty Whin, Heather, Dwarf Gorse and Thatch Moss. On the road verges there tends to be a more rank vegetation. The northern grasslands tend to be more acidic while those to the south are neutral. There are no hedges within the core of the area, however on the perimeter there is an hawthorn/hornbeam/elm mix. The common supports a range of uncommon invertebrates, including Mottled Grasshoppers, solitary bees/ wasps, beetles and spiders. Lizards have also been recorded.

## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

In the middle ages there were frequent disputes over the common between the abbeys of St Albans and Westminster, as part of the common lay in Wheathampstead parish (owned by Westminster) and part in Sandridge parish (owned by St Albans). In 1429 the problem was resolved when it was agreed that both parishes should have grazing rights. At some time a large boulder of puddingstone was placed on the common to mark the boundaries of the parishes. It was due to these disputes over ownership that the name 'No Mans Land' was given. In 1461, during the Wars of the Roses, the Yorkist army had a camp here and it became the site of some of the fighting during the Second Battle of St. Albans, which may be the explanation for the cannon balls and 25 skeletons supposedly found on the common in the 19th century. Although the common fell into private ownership in the 17th century, the local population retained the grazing rights. The common has long been used for sports and leisure activities. In the 18th century hunting was popular while in the early 19th century cricket was introduced. The common also became a venue for brutal prize fighting, sometimes with fatal consequences, and hosted horse racing between 1829 and 1837 which was supported by nobility: in 1829 George IV won the St. Albans Cup on the course. Since the heydays of formal sports on the common the area has provided a location for more passive recreational activities. During WW II Field Marshal Montgomery reviewed his troops here prior to making an assault on the Second Front. In 1965 the common was registered under the Commons Registration Act.

**Field pattern.** The area is unified by its historical origin as an unenclosed open margined common. Some leisure uses have locally disrupted this pattern e.g. Cricket Club.

**Transport pattern.** A number of roads converge on the common. These include the B651 and a number of other minor lanes which historically would have provided access for the common grazing. Verges are typically narrow and marked by ditches to prevent unauthorized access.

**Settlements and built form.** On the northern edge of the common there are a few small hamlets or clusters of dwellings. These include the settlement of Nomansland and West End Farm. Part of the village seems to be carved out of the former common. The properties are largely hidden by the scrub woodland that dominates the northern part of the common.

### Other sources of area-specific information.

Management Plan - Countryside Management Service (Document is reviewed on a 5 year cycle, next period 2001-2006)

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

This small character area is visually unified. The scale is small to medium in the open areas of the common but much more confined within the regenerating scrub woodland. The common is generally concealed from views outside the area and therefore provides an unexpected and pleasant contrast when passing through from the adjacent landscapes. Away from the B651 this is a peaceful, low key area.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** The common is a relatively unusual landscape type within the county. The northern half of the common is one of the best remaining dry acidic heaths in Hertfordshire.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

There are few detractors within the area. Exceptions include the cricket club clubhouse, and the central car park with its unattractive height restriction barrier. The car park is occasionally adumping site for disused and stolen cars. Fly tipping can also be a problem. Adjacent properties are well integrated into the small-scale landscape.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There is an informal and permissive network of paths across the common, including rights for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians.

- Total length of Public Rights of Way - 444m
- Total length of Other Public Access - n/a
- Total length of Designated Cycle Routes - n/a
- Total length of all public access - 444m
- Area of LCA in square metres - 606,158
- Length to area ratio - 1:1365

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This site is regarded as singularly distinctive and is one of the most remarked upon locations in the county. "This disputed territory between St. Albans and Wheathamsted was...both a battlefield and a venue for bare-knuckle fighters. There is, however, little in the landscape to remind us of these violent happenings in bygone days; indeed when passing through it recently I thought how peaceful it looked." Letter from Rudolph Robert in Hertfordshire Countryside V.22 No 102, October 1967.

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

- County Wildlife Site
- Greenbelt
- Landscape Conservation Area

**CONDITION**

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

**ROBUSTNESS**

- Impact of landform: **apparent**
- Impact of land cover: **prominent**
- Impact of historic pattern: **continuous**
- Visibility from outside: **concealed**
- Sense of enclosure: **partial**
- Visual unity: **unified**
- Distinctiveness/rarity: **unusual**

<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>ROBUSTNESS</b>				

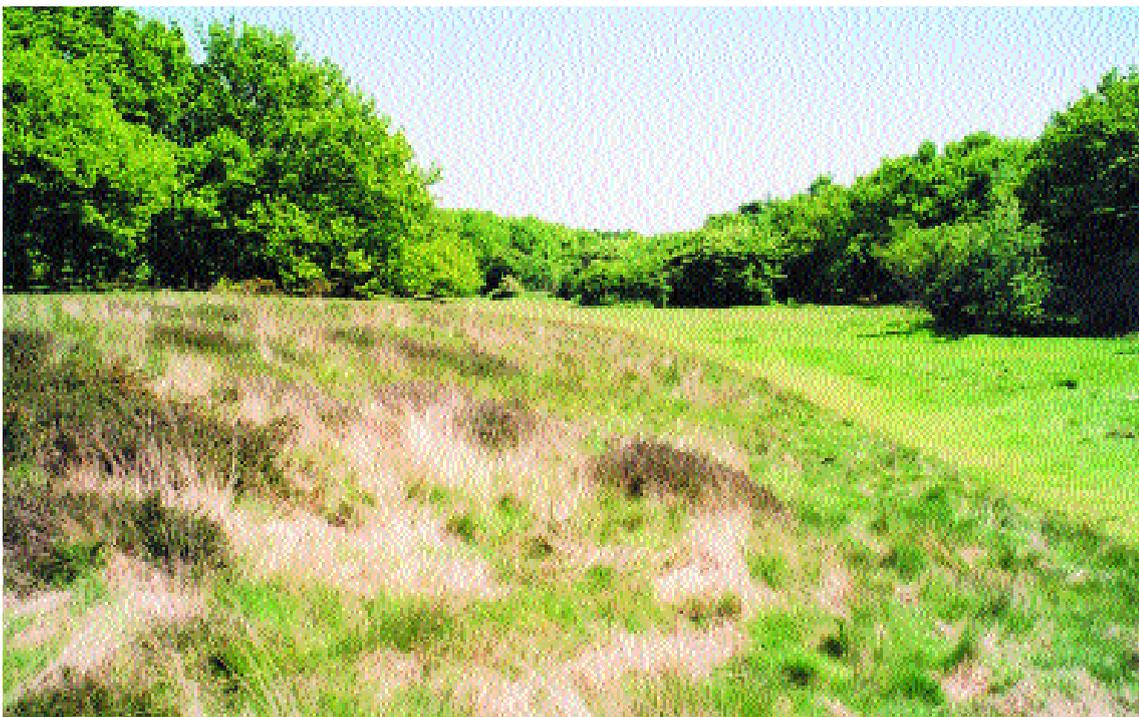
**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING****CHANGE: SAFEGUARD AND MANAGE**

- support the current management plan for the common to conserve the mix of habitat types and to achieve a balance between nature conservation, recreation and public access
- conserve, enhance and extend heathland habitats to achieve BAP targets
- control over-grazing, heavy public pressure, damage from vehicles and motorcycles in areas of semi-improved acid grassland
- promote the development of a strategy for recreation-associated parking on the common so as to restrict parking on adjacent narrow roads and minimize the visual impact of parked vehicles on the setting of the common while allowing for public safety and accessibility
- maintain ditches adjacent to roads to prevent unauthorized vehicular access and develop the ecological value of the verges
- monitor and control dog fouling and littering
- restrict further encroachment on the common by secondary and scrub woodland unless part of rotational scrub
- improve public access and safety within existing woodlands
- develop a site interpretation strategy to illustrate the nature conservation value and local history of the common
- promote the appropriate management of secondary 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
- prevent the spread of and seek to remove invasive non native species
- use locally indigenous species and native stock of local

provenance wherever possible. The use of exotic species should be prevented

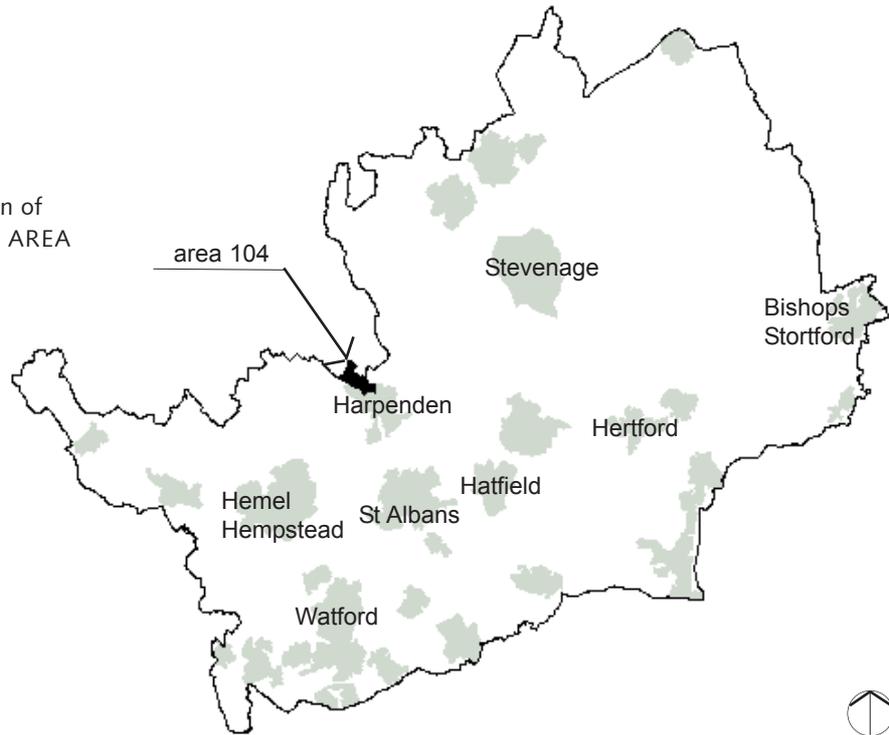
- promote traffic calming measures on minor roads where considerestyle that relate to the local the landscape character of the area.
- ensure all existing and proposed recreational land uses include appropriate measures to manage and enhance the existing landscape setting and its historical and ecological value. Discourage inappropriate recreational uses
- maintain and improve the pattern of hedgerows and banks on the perimeter of the area
- look for opportunities to extend acidic grassland and heathland communities to similar soil types in adjacent areas, e.g. to the south east, currently under arable cropping
- promote the creation of links from and to the area by additional rights of way into the adjacent areas
- restrict built development on or adjacent to the common
- encourage traditional management measures wherever feasible
- conserve and enhance and unimproved and semi-improved acidic and neutral grassland habitats

- Heath and scrub woodland (J.Billingsley)



County Map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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LA076678 2001



**LOCATION**

The area is located between Luton Hoo estate to the north west and Harpenden to the south east. The Lea valley lies to the north and the A1081 to the south. (The northern part of the area lies within Bedfordshire).

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

An area of open arable plateau and associated slopes on the northern fringes of Harpenden. Strong farmed estate feel with only a few isolated properties. Minimal tree and hedge cover except the discrete woods of Graves Wood in the north and Ambrose and Westfield Woods on the built edge of Harpenden in the south. Extensive views to the north towards Luton and towards Harpenden on rising land to the south, where the impact of the residential areas is softened by extensive tree cover within mature gardens.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- relatively narrow plateau area with views to the Lea valley to the north east and Harpenden to the south west
- large open regular arable fields with infrequent clipped hedgerows
- sparsely settled outside urban area
- woodland areas to the northern fringes of Harpenden mixed with hospital and institutional/training establishments

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- Thrales End, cluster of farm buildings set in local valley with associated copses and paddocks
- The Kings School, early 20th.c timber frame - ochre cupola and ornamental grounds
- views to Vauxhall car plant at Luton
- length of sunken lane on Cooters End Lane



Arable plateau • towards Cooters Hill Farm (J.Billingsley)

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** The chalk bedrock geology of this area is predominantly overlaid by plateau clay-with-flints drift with undifferentiated solid rock on the south-west facing slope and sand and gravel in the valley bottom. Soils are stagnogleyic paleo-argillic brown earths, which are fine silty and loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging. Some well drained clayey soils over chalk, variably flinty (Batcombe association).

**Topography.** An area of mainly flat plateau extending for 2.25 km in a north west/south east direction, with the upper slopes of the Lea Valley at the north-east edge and the slopes of a dry valley to the south west.

**Degree of slope.** The slopes off the generally level plateau average 1 in 13, being steeper to the west than to the south.

**Altitude range.** 145m in the north east; 110m in the south

**Hydrology.** This plateau area is completely dry except for a pond north of Thrales End Farm.

**Land cover and land use.** Arable farming is the dominant land use. There are some small horse paddocks in association with Thrales End. To the south 'The Kings School' is set in landscaped grounds enclosed by high hedges off Ambrose Lane. To the south east woodland softens the built edge of Harpenden.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The woodlands are discrete and few in number. Graves Wood in the north is located on the edge of Luton Hoo estate and the ancient Westfield Wood and Ambrose Wood lie on the northern boundary with Harpenden. Species comprise an oak/hornbeam mix with bluebell and bramble understorey. There are groupings of trees around farmsteads but very few hedges in the area. Where present, they consist of a hawthorn/hazel/elm mix. There are no semi-natural grasslands in the area.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

The original Thrales family are known to have lived in West Hyde as far back as 1309. Thrales End Farm was sold to the Luton Hoo Estate in 1858.

**Field pattern.** The area is notable today for its large prairie fields. The historic pattern of pre 18th-century irregular enclosure has all but disappeared. There are some localised areas of 20th-century enclosure.

**Transport pattern.** The A1081 between Luton and Harpenden follows the dry valley to the south of the area. Elsewhere the plateau is crossed by minor road, travelling north north west to the Lea Valley. The road north from Thrales End is straight while the other roads are winding in character. Verges are narrow and sunken where they rise up the outer slopes at Cooters End Farm.

**Settlements and built form.** There is a strong planned estate feel, with isolated farms across the area e.g. Cooters Hill Farm. Thrales End consists of several farms. The original timber frame and brick farmhouse is now Thrales End Cottage. The current Thrales End Farm was built in the mid 19th century on the site of Ivory's Farm.

The Kings School is set behind tall hedges in ornamental grounds to the south of the area. The building is an early 20th-century timber frame building with a distinctive ochre cupola.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The edges of the area are visible from the adjacent valleys and the built edge of Harpenden while the plateau itself is more concealed from view. On the plateau there is an open and exposed feel with few features to frame views except to the southern edge where the woods and hedgerows provide some containment. The area is fairly quiet away from the busy A1081. Despite the scale of the arable areas this is a relatively coherent area.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This is a frequent landscape within the county

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The sub urban edge of Harpenden to the south is prominent from the area and from the A1081. However the built development is significantly softened by the presence of many mature trees within gardens. To the south, Harpenden BUPA Hospital and the Highfield Oval are set between and behind mature woodland to restrict their impact on the countryside. There are views to the north towards Luton and the Vauxhall car plant.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

The area is noteworthy for the absence of any rights of way, except for the roads.

- Total length of Public Rights of Way - n/a
- Total length of Other Public Access - 349m
- Total length of Designated Cycle Routes - 1,677m
- Total length of all public access - 2,026m
- Area of LCA in square metres - 2,572,545
- Length to area ratio - 1:1270

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This area is of some regard [D]

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

- Greenbelt
- Landscape Conservation Area (eastern end)
- (Highfield Oval -outside the area is part of Harpenden Conservation Area)

**CONDITION**

- Land cover change:* **widespread**
- Age structure of tree cover:* **over mature**
- Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:* **relic**
- Management of semi-natural habitat:* **not obvious**
- Survival of cultural pattern:* **declining**
- Impact of built development:* **moderate**
- Impact of land-use change:* **moderate**

**ROBUSTNESS**

- Impact of landform:* **prominent**
- Impact of land cover:* **prominent**
- Impact of historic pattern:* **relic**
- Visibility from outside:* **locally visible**
- Sense of enclosure:* **open**
- Visual unity:* **coherent**
- Distinctiveness/rarity:* **frequent**

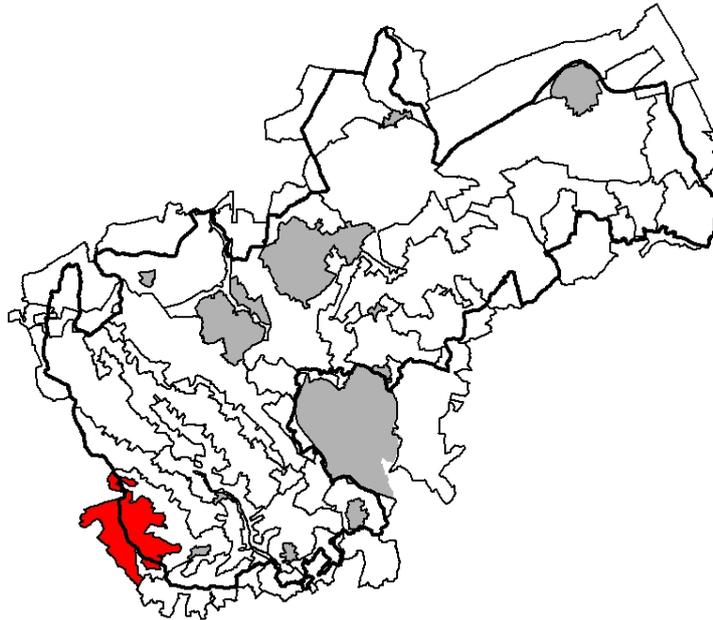
<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	<b>MODERATE</b>	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
	<b>POOR</b>	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	<b>Restore condition to maintain character</b>
		<b>WEAK</b>	<b>MODERATE</b>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

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE: RESTORE CONDITION TO MAINTAIN CHARACTER**

- promote the creation new woodlands to the south west of the area to soften the impact of Harpenden, utilizing ancient hedge and field boundaries to determine the most appropriate location for woodland restoration and expansion
  - 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. Woodland management should also ensure that adjacent urban development is screened from the countryside
  - encourage the reversal of habitat fragmentation and the creation and improvement of habitat links to create eco-corridors
  - 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 the use of reservoirs for water storage and nature conservation interest, rather than groundwater abstraction. Ensure that reservoirs are designed to maintain the distinctiveness of local landscape character.
  - promote hedgerow restoration and creation throughout the area to provide visual and ecological links between existing and proposed woodland areas. Pattern to follow historic field boundaries where possible
  - promote both the creation of new ponds and the retention/enhancement for wildlife of existing ponds
  - create a network of rights of way with links from Harpenden and the Lea Valley Walk
  - promote the use of traditional field enclosure where land is converted to equestrian pasture e.g. Thrales End Farm
- ensure that ancient lanes and their associated hedgerows are retained, protected, enhanced and integrated into any new development with due regard to their historic, ecological and landscape value
  - ensure that the surroundings of converted and new buildings are designed and maintained to be in keeping with their agricultural surroundings. Ensure that 'garden' details are screened from view where possible and native species are used for hedging and tree planting on the perimeter
  - native tree species only should be planted on boundaries, with exotic/ornamental species only in close proximity to the dwelling
  - traffic calming measures, where considered necessary, must be of a scale and design that relates to the local landscape character of the settlement
  - maintain and enhance the traditional pattern of roadside verges as a local feature and a wildlife resource Where development is likely to affect verges and damage is unavoidable, development should include details of protection of the remaining verge and replacement of its nature conservation value within the proposed scheme. This is particularly important where verges include hedgebanks, sunken lanes, ditches and hedges.
- Thrales End Farm (J.Billingsley)



## LOCATION



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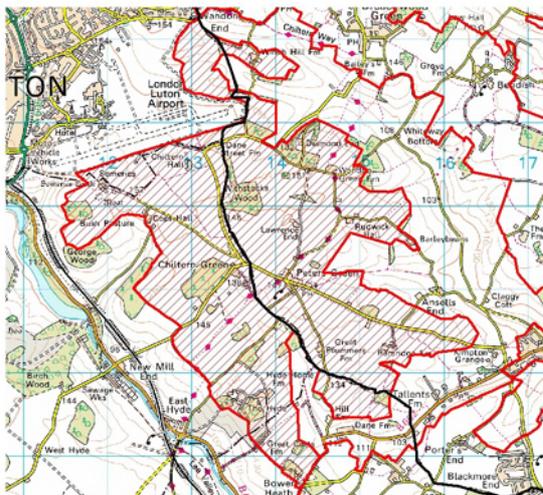
### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

Character Area extends from boundary of Luton Airport in the north to Kimpton valley in the south.

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently rolling elevated landscape plateau defined by steep sided incised valleys to east, west and south.

Many large exposed arable fields with smaller pockets of grazing around settlements. Occasional scattered dwellings. Field pattern degraded with relatively few remaining hedgerows. Remnant mature hedgerow trees. Mixture of woodland types, some mature, well-established, deciduous woodland interspersed with more recent mixed woodland plantations. Character Area truncated by the man-made landscape features associated with Luton Airport.



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### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Elevated plateau
- Predominantly large scale arable use
- Smaller pastoral fields closer to settlements
- Large to medium sized mixed woodland plantations
- Historic houses and associated parkland

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Lawrence End parkland
- Man-made landscape at Luton Airport boundary
- Water-tower at Peters Green

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

Soils are free-draining loamy acidic brown soils over glacial drift till.

**Topography**

The plateau covers a broadly rectangular area extending some 4km from north to south and 3km from east to west. The plateau appears flat to gently sloping to the southeast.

**Degree of slope**

Minimal, typically 1:200 across the plateau.

**Altitude range**

125m to 160m.

**Hydrology**

There are no significant water courses. There are, however, a number of small ponds associated with farms in the north.

**Land cover and land use**

The predominant land use is arable farming.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Scattered woodland in discrete parcels including both ancient deciduous woodlands and more recent mixed plantations. Species include hornbeam coppice, oak and ash. Regenerating elm in hedgerows also some holly is common. Lime is the dominant parkland tree at Lawrence End Park which is largely improved grassland.

This Character Area contains a few ancient semi-natural woodlands, which are typically dominated by oak and coppiced hornbeam. Bluebells are frequently a feature of the groundflora, but other ancient woodland indicators are also present. Withstocks Wood, Bishey Wood and Burnt Wood are examples of ancient semi-natural oak and hornbeam woodland. These woods have been replanted with conifers to varying extents, but their seedbanks of ancient flora are retained, as denoted by the presence of ancient woodland indicator species. Occasional ancient, species-rich hedgerows are another feature of this Character Area.

The Character Area has generally a sparsity of ecologically interesting sites.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

In the west are the remains of a chapel and Someries Castle.

**Field pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape pattern consists of a mixture of prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss, pre-18th century irregular enclosure, 18th century and later enclosure and ancient woodland. Today there are predominantly large irregular fields with smaller parcels of grazing land around settlements.

**Transport pattern**

Winding sunken lanes complement the more direct connecting roads. To the north the pattern of roads and lanes are truncated by the development at Luton Airport.

**Settlements and built form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by farms and villages.

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

The Character Area is only locally visible from the surrounding areas due to its elevated land form. The Character Area is generally peaceful, however, in the north aircraft noise is a particularly notable element. The landscape has been de-valued by extensive arable production and has open and exposed aspects. The parkland to the north is a more discrete landscape with unified features and contained views.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

This landscape type is frequent in the county.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

There are few built detractors.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

The local network of roads and public rights of way radiates out from the hub, which covers the Character Area between Peters Green to Chiltern Green. The Character Area is well served by footpaths and bridleways.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) have undertaken Tier B (Community of Place) consultations. Views of the local community have been sought and contributor's responses to each of the Character Areas will be analysed and a summary of the responses provided by HCC.

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

LC1 Landscape Conservation Area

**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

Land cover change: Widespread  
 Age structure of tree cover: Mixed  
 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival: Relic  
 Management of semi-natural habitat: Good  
 Survival of cultural pattern: Declining/Relic  
 Impact of built development: Low  
 Impact of land-use change: Moderate

**Matrix Score:** **Good**

**ROBUSTNESS**

Impact of landform: Apparent  
 Impact of land cover: Prominent  
 Impact of historic pattern: Insignificant  
 Visibility from outside: Locally visible  
 Sense of enclosure: Partial  
 Visual unity: Coherent  
 Distinctiveness/rarity: Frequent

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

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

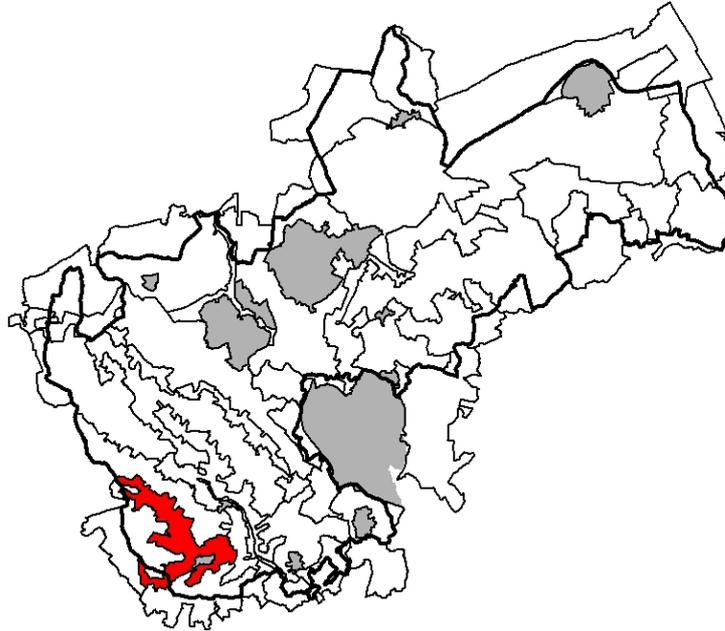
**GUIDELINES**

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE:**

**Conserve and Strengthen**

- Promote management of ancient woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas
- Encourage policies for the safeguarding of existing hedges and the creation of new boundaries at appropriate locations, consistent with agricultural management practices
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Encourage the management of hornbeam, oak and ash coppice
- Encourage the preparation and implementation of restoration and management plans for parkland landscapes including Lawrence End

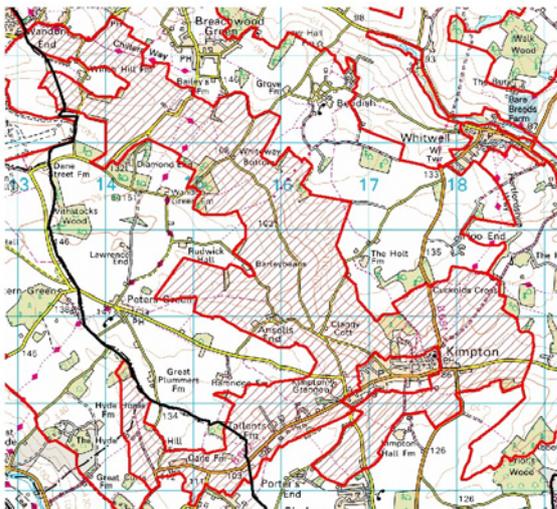
## LOCATION



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## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The Whiteway valley extends from the eastern edge of Luton to a point west of Kimpton where the valley joins the Whitwell valley. Kimpton village lies at the confluence of the two valleys. The head of the Kimpton valley is located west of Plummers Lane, joining Kimpton Bottom Lane at Dane Farm.



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## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Steeply sided dry valleys with Whiteway Bottom Lane following the bottom of the valley and the B652 Kimpton Bottom Road to the south. To the north of Whiteways small winding lanes cross perpendicular to the line of the valley. Predominantly arable use. Whiteways Bottom is largely devoid of settlement whilst Kimpton Bottom has a linear settlement. Locally smaller field parcels on the more steeply sloping land. Scattered woodland parcels along the top edge of valley sides.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Steep sided valley slope
- Dominant arable use
- Scattered woodland parcels

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Abuts Luton Airport runway

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

Free draining loamy brown soils over Upper and Middle Chalk. Chalk is masked by overlying Clay-with-Flints and peri and post glacial coombe deposits.

**Topography**

Narrow valley in upper reaches gradually widening at confluence with other tributaries. The valley is approximately 1km wide east of Kimpton.

**Degree of slope**

Typically 1:10 slopes to valley sides.

**Altitude range**

Valley falls from 135m at suburban edge of Luton to 80m at Kimpton Mill. 125m at the head of the Kimpton valley.

**Hydrology**

Whiteway valley is a dry valley, but in time of high water table the historic river Kym can reappear at Kimpton Bottom.

**Land cover and land use**

The predominant land use is arable farming.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Limited woodland cover in the upper reaches of the valleys. Large woodland block to the north of Kimpton (Park Wood). Ancient semi-natural woodland is present on valley sides such as Hurst/Sewetts Wood, groves near Rowdalls Plantation and Hoo Park. Most of this woodland tends to be transitional between oak/hornbeam and ash/beechn, depending on the presence or absence of chalk near the surface. Cherry is also common.

Fragments of calcareous grasslands remain along Kimpton Bottom and on road verges at Whiteway Bottom and north of Kimpton.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

In 1086 Kimpton was assessed for 4 hides and formed part of the possessions of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux. The village of Kimpton still retains its 12th century church of St Peter and St Paul. To the west of Kimpton lie ring ditches, linear ditches and enclosures of unknown origin

**Field pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape comprises a mixture of prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss, pre-18th century irregular enclosure, pre-18th century irregular sinuous enclosure, 18th century and later enclosure and ancient woodland. Today a high proportion of hedges have been removed, there is predominantly large-scale field pattern but with smaller fields on some steeply sloping ground. Smaller field parcels associated with fringes of settlements and along Kimpton Bottom, west of Kimpton.

**Transport pattern**

A combination of primary routes following valley bottoms interconnected by small winding lanes often sunken and rising up the valley side.

**Settlements and built form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by outlying cottages, villages and farmsteads. The Character Area includes the larger settlement of Kimpton and incorporates some associated ribbon development. The scattered farmsteads are further up the valleys. Kimpton contains several 17th century houses and cottages.

<b>EVALUATION</b>
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**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The Character Area is a combination of undeveloped open landscapes, mainly in the upper valley reaches, with a sense of remoteness, contrasting with the well settled, sub-urban character in the lower part of the valley.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

Landscape type frequent in the west of the District.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

More recent ribbon development associated with Kimpton and Whitwell intrudes into the valley setting especially associated pony paddocks and stabling. Some narrower steeper sided valleys provide sense of visual containment. From certain vantage points, especially where there is little woodland cover, there are long distance views down the valley.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Whereas the road network follows the valley bottoms, with feeder roads connecting to adjacent areas, the network of rights of way often cuts across the valleys.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) have undertaken Tier B (Community of Place) consultations. Views of the local community have been sought and contributor's responses to each of the Character Areas will be analysed and a summary of the responses provided by HCC.

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

LC1 Landscape Conservation Area  
GD 1909 Hoo

<b>EVALUATION</b>
-------------------

**CONDITION**

Land cover change: Widespread  
 Age structure of tree cover: Mixed  
 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival: Relic  
 Management of semi-natural habitat: Not obvious  
 Survival of cultural pattern: Relic  
 Impact of built development: Low  
 Impact of land-use change: Moderate

<b>Matrix Score:</b>	<b>Poor</b>
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**ROBUSTNESS**

Impact of landform: Prominent  
 Impact of land cover: Apparent  
 Impact of historic pattern: Insignificant  
 Visibility from outside: Locally visible  
 Sense of enclosure: Contained  
 Visual unity: Coherent  
 Distinctiveness/rarity: Frequent

<b>Matrix Score:</b>	<b>Moderate</b>
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<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	<b>MODERATE</b>	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
	<b>POOR</b>	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		<b>WEAK</b>	<b>MODERATE</b>	<b>STRONG</b>
<b>ROBUSTNESS</b>				

## GUIDELINES

### STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE:

#### Improve and Restore

- Promote management of ancient woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas
- Promote hedgerow restoration along the lines of historic field boundaries and for the creation of visual links between existing woodland areas
- Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire enclosures to new grazing areas
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Protect the tranquil nature of Whiteways Bottom by ensuring that no adverse development is permitted