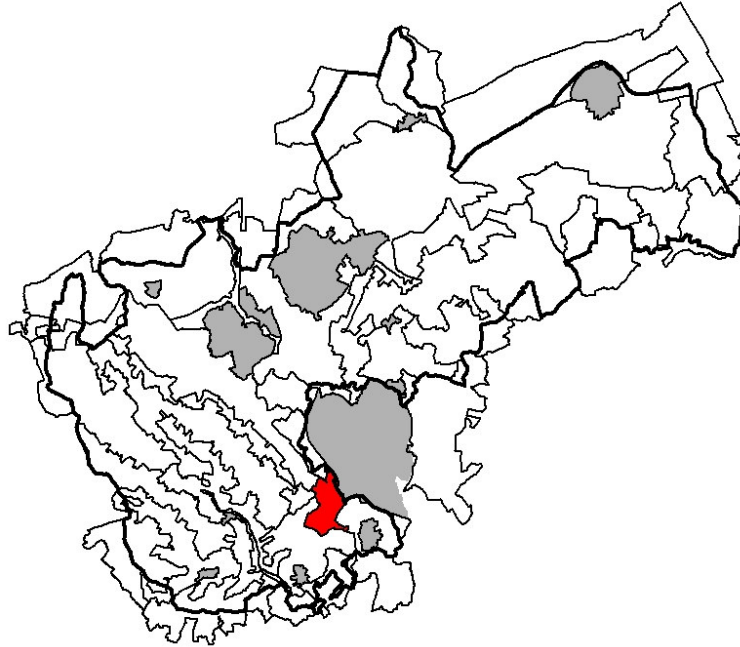


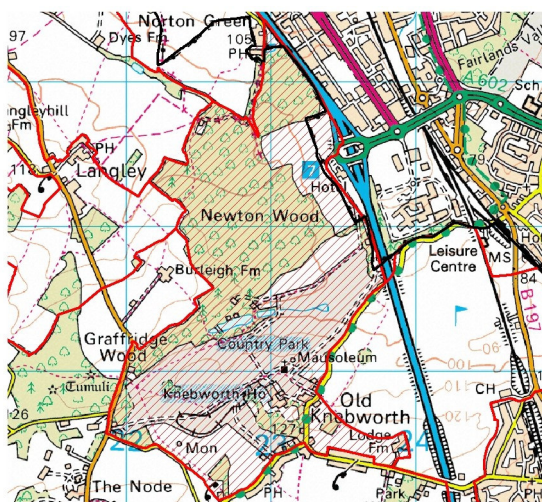
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The Character Area of Knebworth Parklands constitutes the woodlands, parkland and gardens of Knebworth House located southwest of Stevenage to the west side of the A1(M) adjacent to Junction 7.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Mature woodland in the north consisting of ancient oak and some hornbeam coppice. The Character Area has developed from acid heathlands and includes pockets of some of the best wood pasture in the county and heath grasslands. To the south lies the main area of parkland which includes numerous mature individual trees. The woods and parkland also incorporate a number of springs, streams, ponds and bogland areas.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Acid heath grasslands
- Mature oak woodland
- Parkland setting with mature trees
- Areas of wet and boggy ground

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Knebworth House
- Parkland and gardens

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

Poorly draining acidic soils over Boulder Clay.

**Topography**

Sloping valley side landform, cut by a local tributary. Transition from plateau landscape to Langley valley landscape.

**Degree of slope**

Shallow falls on plateau and valley bottom typically 1:200. Valley sides at 1:20.

**Altitude range**

90m to 130m.

**Hydrology**

Spring rises in Gaffridge Wood cutting down the valley side and crossing parkland, to disappear into Swallow Hole adjacent to Old Knebworth Lane. Springs also in Newton Wood in the north. Numerous ponds and marshy pockets of ground distributed over the Character Area.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly mixture of woodland and grazing in parkland setting. Smaller pockets of arable land.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

This Character Area supports a range of important and nationally declining habitats, notably those characteristics of acidic and heathy conditions. Watery Grove is a SSSI woodland located on just such poorly-draining acidic soils. It is predominantly composed of ancient oak and hornbeam coppice, with areas of mixed woodland and heathy rides. Knebworth Woods is another ancient woodland SSSI, which is dominated by oak and hornbeam coppice with frequent birch and aspen, along with wetter areas and wide rides supporting heathland communities. The Knebworth Woods complex is highlighted as being an area of high biodiversity within the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan. It is important for its areas of wood pasture habitat, which are associated with hornbeam pollards exceeding 250 years old.

Knebworth Park has some valuable species-rich heath grassland communities, as well as important stands of old parkland trees, boggy areas, streams and a lake. Areas of heathland are now a very scarce resource within Hertfordshire, and the small fragments that remain are considered to be of high ecological value.

Knebworth Park and lake are very important for bats (pipistrelle, serotine, noctule, Daubenton's)

The only site in Hertfordshire of the nationally scarce great broomrape is found near Knebworth Woods.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Knebworth is a medieval settlement and contains the 12th century parish church of St. Mary, earthworks and a medieval water mill.

**Field Pattern**

This Character Area is dominated by ancient woodland and informal 17th century parkland (Knebworth Country Park designated a Historic Park and Garden) with pockets of pre-18th century irregular enclosure, 19th-20th century plantation and commons with an open margin.

**Transport Pattern**

Area is not crossed by any roads, however the A1(M) forms the eastern boundary.

**Settlements and Built Form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by traditional buildings at Knebworth House, which retains one range of a two-storeyed courtyard house dating to c.1500 with later modifications and buildings dating to c.1815-20 and c.1840-45.

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

Woodland, parkland and gardens contained visually by mature tree setting. Views into the parkland where gaps in peripheral vegetation allow.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

Woodland to the north locally distinctive feature but visually not uncommon. Parkland and gardens locally important.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Area generally visually contained however some commercial development has local impact.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Road network contains the Character Area on eastern, southern and western boundaries. Parkland and grounds to the house crossed by local footpath network.

**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 1169	Knebworth
SSSI	Knebworth Woods

**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

Land cover change:	Localised
Age structure of tree cover:	Mature
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

---

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

---

**ROBUSTNESS**

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

---

**Matrix Score:** **Strong**

---

<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>		

## EVALUATION

### INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

#### Landscape Character Sensitivities

- The character area constitutes the woodlands, parkland and historic gardens of Knebworth. The character area would be vulnerable to urbanizing features or lack of management
- Mature ancient deciduous woodland blocks some of which are ancient Oak and others coppiced hornbeam. Including Watery Grove and Knebworth woods, both of which are SSSI. The woodland is vulnerable to lack of management or to removal
- The south of Knebworth is of parkland landscape character. Features include mature specimen trees, avenues of trees, deer fencing and ornamental shrub planting in the woodland. This character could be at risk from development pressure and inconsistent management
- Knebworth is also characterised by a significant number of pollarded hornbeam. The character area would be vulnerable to the loss or removal these features
- The landscape is a transition from plateau to the Langley Valley landscape, which results in the parkland having a number of springs, streams, ponds and bogland areas. The character area would be vulnerable to loss or lack of management of these natural features
- Features associated with horsiculture, e.g. post and rail fences and the removal of boundary vegetation, are detrimental to the landscape character of Knebworth. The area is vulnerable to further horsiculture activity and the associated removal of boundary vegetation
- Old Knebworth is the only settlement within the character area other than Knebworth House itself. It is a small linear settlement of generally large detached properties of rural character. Significant features of the properties include black weatherboarding, red brick and large chimneys set in large plots. The character area would be vulnerable to pressure for further development, particularly where it is out of character
- Knebworth House and a number of

associated historic Lodges and Gatehouses include elaborate architectural features. The character area would be vulnerable to loss or lack of management of these buildings or from development that would impact on their setting

- Knebworth is a tranquil area, with the only one public road cutting through the character area. Old Knebworth Lane is a rural road enclosed by a shelterbelt, which screens Knebworth Park. The area would be vulnerable to improvements/upgrading of the road
- Within the character area exists pockets of acid heath grassland habitats, which are vulnerable to loss
- Within Knebworth there are distinctive areas of wet and boggy ground, which would be vulnerable to impacts on drainage patterns
- There is public access through Knebworth Park through numerous rights of way
- The character area provides recreational facilities including a cricket ground and play opportunities. The character area would be vulnerable to inappropriate management or development of these facilities

Overall Knebworth is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. The parkland landscape, grand buildings, ancient woodlands and water features create a historic character with limited urban influence.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

- Vistas created by avenues of trees
- Open views within the private parkland, which is accessible by public rights of way or paid entrance
- Views from outside the parkland are which are generally enclosed by woodland blocks and shelter belts

In visual terms, Knebworth is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. Views within the parkland are open or designed through vistas. Whereas outside the parkland views are limited as the area is enclosed by woodland blocks. The area would be sensitive to the introduction of urbanizing features.

### **LANDSCAPE VALUE**

Overall Knebworth is considered to be of **moderate high landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Knebworth are the intactness of the parkland landscape, the general lack of incongruous elements, the presence of large areas of ancient woodland, and the historic character, all of which create a recognisable sense of place.

**EVALUATION****CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT****Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its historic and undeveloped character. The area includes a registered park and garden and SSSI woodlands. Development would be of an inappropriate scale and would introduce elements that would urbanise the landscape, altering the character and removing the existing key characteristics. Visual impacts would also be high. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing rural roads, which could erode the character of the landscape.

The landscape capacity for large urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. Visual impacts would be high.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would only be appropriate for improvements of the existing A1, which abuts the Character Area. However it would be imperative that any work respected designated features and was mitigated through earthworks and the planting of shelterbelts. Upgrading of existing rural roads could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low to moderate.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Existing minor roads would be inappropriate for any significant larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs. Any upgrading of the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There is limited capacity for individual large/bulky buildings within the character area. Such buildings could be highly visible within Knebworth and would erode the rural and historic character of the area.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low.

**Large scale open storage**

Despite the presence of the A1, the rural and historic character of Knebworth would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without significant impact. This would not be in keeping with the rural or historic character of the area and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively undisturbed. Mineral extraction would not be in keeping with the character of the area and would cause permanent loss of historic parkland and woodlands.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**EVALUATION**

**Incremental small scale development**

There may be some very limited capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were within Old Knebworth and of vernacular and rural character. However, due to the existing landscape character any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the rural and historic character of Knebworth.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low to moderate.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

Excluding the proximity of the A1, there are currently few detractors in the areas. New utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines would have a major impact on the rural and historic character of Knebworth. Large scale structures would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as potentially visible in surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low.



**GUIDELINES**

Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire

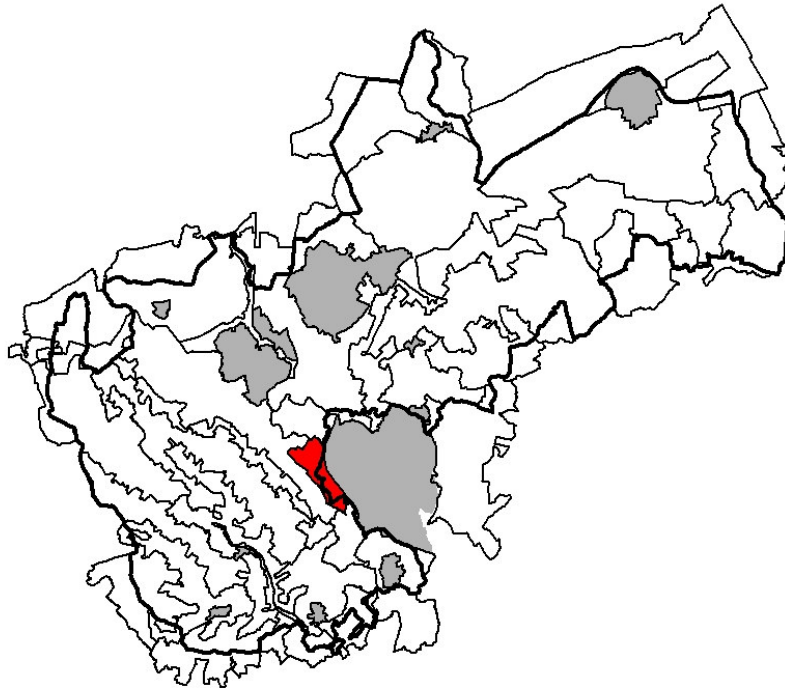
**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE****Strategy: Conserve and Restore****Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote management of ancient woodland, particularly using techniques such as coppicing to encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Conserve and enhance ancient woods as distinct historic landscape features within their original shapes and boundaries
- Promote other woodland planting and where historically appropriate, link up small remnants of ancient woodland
- Restore known lost woods or portions of woods, or create and manage new small to medium sized woods, particularly on the plateau/plateau edges
- Manage Willow plantations to enhance woodland character and encourage appropriate tree planting and wet woodland, avoiding areas of valley floor unimproved pasture
- 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 or horsiculture areas
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Encourage the management and development of acid heathland
- Encourage the management of Oak and Hornbeam coppice
- Encourage the management of traditional wood pasture
- Where appropriate promote the creation of new ponds, area of marshland and other water bodies

**Built development guidelines**

- Retain the rural and historic character of Knebworth, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area using vernacular materials
- Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations where they would be visible on the skyline
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or the loss of acid heath grassland habitats and ancient hedgerows
- Protect and preserve the pattern of the rural lanes and associated hedge banks, verges and hedges
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to mitigate new development
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area
- Ensure applications for replacement dwellings, communication infrastructure, utility infrastructure have minimal impact on the landscape character and visual quality of the area
- Ensure redundant agriculture buildings subject to applications for change of use are monitored to ensure that they reflect the local building style, resist suburbanisation and do not contribute to incremental new development in the open countryside

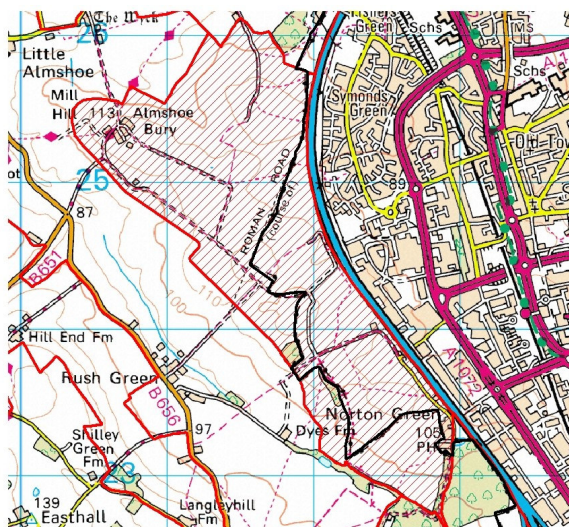
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The area lies immediately to the west of Stevenage and the A1(M). It extends from Titmore Green in the north to Knebworth woodlands in the south.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently undulating plateau. Open, exposed landscape with views out in all directions. Very large arable fields with localised remnant sections of hedgerow. Character Area includes small deciduous woodland copses. Almshoe Bury farmstead located on exposed promontory to north.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Upstanding open plateau landscape
- Large arable fields
- Small deciduous woodland copses

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Kitching Lane recreational route
- Landfill site to north of Norton Green
- Almshoe Bury Farm on local promontory

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

Free draining loamy brown soils over Chalk to north. Chalk overlain by Boulder clay to south.

**Topography**

Generally flat plateau dipping to north west and south.

**Degree of slope**

Generally 1:40.

**Altitude range**

112m to 122m.

**Hydrology**

There are no significant water courses, however, there are a number of small ponds within copses.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable land use with some land lying fallow. Small number of copses. Area to north of Norton Green is a former landfill site, which has not been restored to agricultural use.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Remnant hedges include blackthorn, hawthorn and field maple. Woodland species include oak, ash and field maple.

A few ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodlands are present within this Character Area. They are typically dominated by hornbeam, which may be coppiced. A range of ancient woodland indicators is also present.

Green lanes such as Kitching Green Lane are ecologically interesting, as they frequently have unimproved or semi-improved grassland flora, scrub, old banks and ancient hedgerow communities. Some species rich and essentially unimproved meadows are located west of Norton Green. These meadows support plant communities typical of acidic conditions.

The open fields are of local value for farmland birds including grey partridge, lapwing, skylark, linnet, yellowhammer and corn bunting.

The woods, hedges and green lanes are important for bats.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Aerial photographs of the north of the Character Area demonstrate evidence for a circular enclosure with a single entrance and a prehistoric ring ditch.

At the time of the Domesday Survey The Bishop of Bayeux held 1 hide of land in Almshoe (Almshoe 1086). It is thought that Isabella, wife of Edward II, and her daughter hunted in the vicinity.

**Field pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape pattern consists of a mixture of pre-18th century irregular enclosure and prairie fields with both post-1950s boundary loss and with relict elements within the north of the Character Area. The central part is dominated by pre-18th century unenclosed common arable while the southeastern termination contains pre-18th century enclosure and commons with an open margin. To the east only smaller fragments of the field pattern remain. The western and northern fringes are open and unenclosed.

**Transport pattern**

Area not crossed by any roads, however, the A1(M) forms the eastern boundary.

**Settlements and built form**

The historic settlement pattern is sparse with no documented traditional buildings. Small group of comparatively recent houses at Norton Green. Almshoe Bury farmstead on local promontory to the northwest is listed Grade I. There is also an early 17<sup>th</sup> century barn listed Grade II.

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

The plateau landscape lies at an elevated level in the surrounding landscape and provides long distance views across the Langley valley to the west and towards the townscape of Stevenage to the east.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

The landscape type is frequent in the county.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

There are a few low key detracting features, namely the landfill site north of Norton Green and the gypsy caravan site. Both features are close to the A1(M). Traffic on the motorway and the urban edge of Stevenage dominate the eastern edge of the Character Area.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There are a number of footpaths and bridleways that cross the Character Area, however, access from the east is limited to bridges or underpasses crossing the motorway. Kitching Lane is now a leisure route, excluding vehicular access. Part of the Hertfordshire Way long distance path crosses the north of the Character Area.

**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:	Poor
Survival of cultural pattern:	Interrupted
Impact of built development:	Low
Impact of land-use change:	High

---

**Matrix Score:** **Poor**

---

**ROBUSTNESS**

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

---

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

---

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

## EVALUATION

### INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

#### Landscape Character Sensitivities

- A gently undulating plateau, which is relatively open, exposed and of a rural character. The character area would be vulnerable to further urbanizing features
- Landuse is predominantly large arable fields, with remnant hedgerows. The hedgerows are generally grown out, fragmented and unmanaged. The area would be vulnerable to the removal of hedgerows and boundary vegetation
- Almshoe Plateau is characterised by groups of hedgerow trees and small copses. There is a significant quantity of evergreen species, including conifers and pines. Almshoe plateau would be sensitive to the removal of these features
- Paddocks are present in the character area. Such areas are characterised by post and rail fences and the removal of boundary vegetation. This practice is detrimental to the landscape character of Almshoe Plateau. The character area is vulnerable to further horsiculture activity and any associated removal of boundary vegetation
- No roads cross the character area. However the A1(M) defines the eastern boundary. A significant stretch of the A1(M) is screened, yet it is a significant detractor to Almshoe Plateau, diluting its character. The character area would be vulnerable to the loss of screen planting near the A1(M)
- There are further detractors in the area adjacent to the A1(M) including a former landfill site, a traveller site, small scale and masts and overhead electricity lines. The character area would be sensitive further detractors, which would dilute the character of Almshoe Plateau further
- The urban edge of Stevenage is a detractor, which abuts the east of Almshoe Plateau, east of the A1(M), further diluting the rural character

- There is very limited settlement in the character area. Almshoe Bury, a Grade I listed farmstead is the most significant property. There are also a few more modern properties at Norton Green. The rural character of Almshoe Plateau would be vulnerable to the pressure of development
- Good public access through numerous rights of way, including the Hertfordshire Way and Kitching Lane

Overall Almshoe Plateau is considered to be of **low sensitivity**. The gently undulating plateau and rural character have been degraded by a number of detractors to the east of the character area.

#### Visual Sensitivities

- Long distance views across the Langley Valley to the Langley Scarp are an important feature of the character area
- Views east are degraded by the A1 and the urban edge of Stevenage

In visual terms, Almshoe Plateau is considered to be of **moderate to low sensitivity**. Long distance views would be sensitive to the introduction of additional development or urbanizing features.

#### LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Almshoe Plateau is considered to be of **low landscape value**. The rural character and sense of remoteness are of particular value within Almshoe Plateau. However the landscape character has been degraded and diluted by a range of detractors, particularly in the east of the character area.

**EVALUATION**

**CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT**

**Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be entirely appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural undeveloped character and long distance views. However the landscape has been degraded to a certain extent by the A1(M) and the proximity of Stevenage.

The landscape capacity for large urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be moderate.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development could be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the degraded character of the landscape and proximity of the A1(M) and Stevenage. However long distance views should be protected and any development mitigated with suitable landscape strategies and proposals.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be moderate.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would only be appropriate for improvements of the existing A1(M), which abuts the Character Area. However it would be imperative that any work was mitigated through earthworks and the planting of shelterbelts.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be moderate.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

There may be some capacity for this type of large scale development in this character area. The land adjacent to the A1(M) would be the most suitable area as it is more affected by detracting uses. However it would be imperative that any development was mitigated including the planting of shelter belts. The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be moderate to low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings could be highly visible within the Character Area if not carefully located would erode the rural character of Almshoe Plateau.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

**Large scale open storage**

Despite the presence of the A1(M), the rural character of Almshoe Plateau would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without significant impact. They would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and likely to be open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics. However, if effective perimeter screening could be achieved it could be possible to identify areas to restrict visibility

The landscape capacity for large scale open uses is considered to be moderate.

**EVALUATION**

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

Some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction would be more prominent and not be in keeping with the rural character of the area. If proposals were consented, any restoration proposals should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be moderate. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**Incremental small scale development**

There could be capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments, due to the relatively degraded character of the landscape and the proximity of the A1 and Stevenage. However long distance views should be protected and any development mitigated with suitable landscape strategies and proposals. Any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the rural character of Almshoe Plateau.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low to moderate.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are existing small elements, such as these within this Character Area at present. New utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines would have an impact on the rural character and long distance views of Almshoe Plateau. Large scale developments, including tall elements would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as being potentially visible in surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.



**GUIDELINES**

Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire

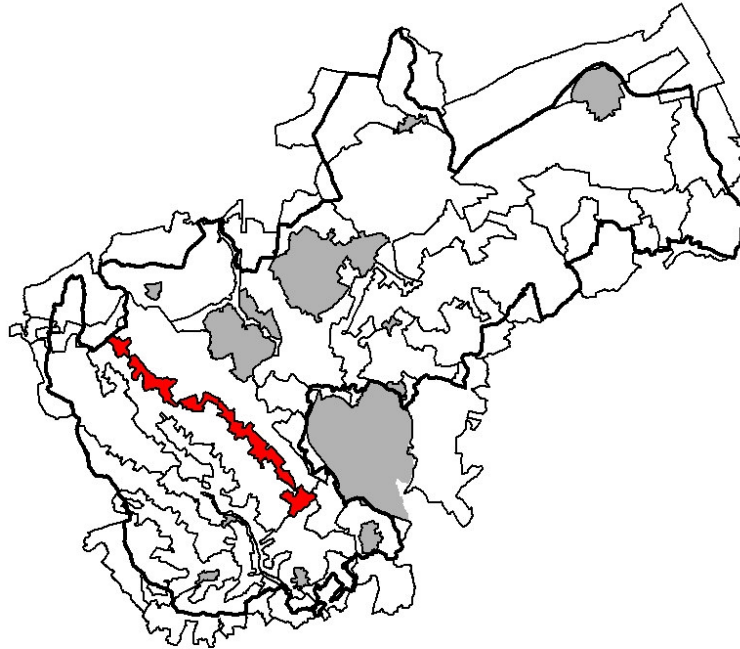
**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE**
**Strategy: Improve and Restore**
**Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote management of ancient woodland, particularly using techniques such as coppicing to encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Encourage the restoration of the landfill area (Stevenage) north of Norton Green
- Conserve and restore existing hilltop woodlands, copses, shelter belts and existing hedges by restocking to emphasise the prominent natural topography
- Enhance and extend areas of chalk grassland including roadside verges, field margins, rights of way and key access sites e.g. Therfield Heath. Promote reversion from arable to sheep pastures on steeper slopes
- Enhance features by removal of scrub vegetation to reinstate chalk grassland and rare indicator species e.g. juniper and pasque flower
- Restore known lost woods or portions of woods, or create and manage new small to medium sized woods, particularly on the plateau/plateau edges
- 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 restoration of traditional field hedges
- Protect and preserve the character and ecological diversity of Kitching Green Lane
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network

**Built development guidelines**

- Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations where they would be visible on the skyline, particularly as seen from the west
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks, copses or ancient hedgerows
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in long distance views
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area
- Ensure applications for communication infrastructure, utility infrastructure have minimal impact on the landscape character and visual quality of the area
- Use the opportunity of any developments to create new accessible green infrastructure
- Protect the setting of Almshoe Bury
- Ensure redundant agriculture buildings subject to applications for change of use are monitored to ensure that they reflect the local building style

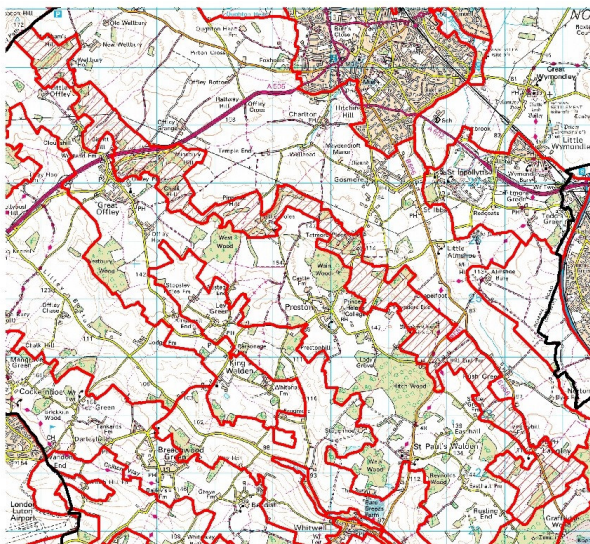
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

Extensive chalk scarp running from Deacon Hill in the north to Knebworth Park in the south



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Steeply sloping chalk landscape formed by a long narrow belt of land facing the Langley valley and in the south merging into the wooded landscape of Knebworth. Field sizes vary in size, but generally large. Field pattern varies between regular and irregular. Hawthorn hedges enclose fields. Character Area is well wooded along the top of the ridge, with mature deciduous woodland. Long distance views over the Langley valley to the east.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Steeply sloping chalk scarp
- Generally well wooded
- Irregular sized fields
- Small sunken lanes and tracks drop down the valley side

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Icknield Way long distance footpath crosses the northern end of the area

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

Shallow rendzina soils over Chalk

**Topography**

Steeply sloping chalk scarp gradually becoming shallower further south.

**Degree of slope**

Typically 1:4 but shallower to the south.

**Altitude range**

Varies between: 70m to 125m in the north  
125m to 100m in the south

**Hydrology**

Scarp cut by numerous small dry valleys. Surface water is minimal drainage consisting of occasional ditches and drains following the valley profile.

**Land cover and land use**

Mixed use including arable land on gentle slopes and grazing and woodland cover on steeper ground.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Species-rich chalk grassland and downland on steep-sided escarpments are a key ecological feature of this Character Area. Some parts have been subject to conifer planting and reversion to chalk scrub and secondary woodland occurs to varying degrees throughout. Old chalk workings, pits and quarries expose the chalky substrate and lend themselves to dry, ecologically 'stressed' habitats that result in botanically diverse communities. Some ecologically interesting chalk grassland communities also occur on road verges. The ancient route of the Icknield Way has its own association of calcareous grassland species and old hedgerow communities. Birkett Hill is the route of another green lane with a good assemblage of flora. Characteristic unimproved chalk grassland communities can be found at the chalk downland of Pinnacle Hill and at Offley Chalk Banks. Rare species include musk orchid. Evidence of buzzards around Great Offley.

Areas of ancient semi-natural woodland can be found within this Character Area, with their complement of ecologically sensitive indicator species. Examples include Wellbury Lower Wood groves at Offley Holes and near Offley Place. Ancient woodland remnants are calcareous ash/beechness, but much has been replanted, and some support fly orchid.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

To the east of Preston alongside the road from Whitwell to Hitchin is the ruined 14th century Minsden Chapel belonging to the order of St. Gilbert of Sempringham. Further to the southeast is the medieval settlement of Langley which is recorded in the Domesday Book as Langelei.

**Field Pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape in the north comprises a mixture of prairie fields with relict elements within, post-1950s enclosure, pre-18th century irregular enclosure and 19th-20th century plantation. Areas of ancient woodland and informal medieval parkland are concentrated to the north of Great Offley. In the southeast a mixture of pre-18th century, prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss, and commons with an open margin to the west of Stevenage. Fragmented – remnant hedges often supplemented with post and barbed wire especially where land used for grazing.

**Transport Pattern**

Character Area crossed by numerous local lanes, which climb up the valley side. A505 crosses at Beech Hill.

**Settlements and Built Form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by sparse settlement consisting of estates and farmsteads. The Character Area is generally too steep for settlement. There are, however, a number of minor settlements or farmsteads southwest of Hitchin.

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

The scarp affords a vantage point for panoramic views over the Langley Valley to the east.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

The chalk scarp is a relatively uncommon feature and as such has a distinctive character often also supporting a diverse chalk grassland habitat.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Generally unspoilt by development. Long distance views are affected by the relationship to urban fringe areas, especially Stevenage.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

The Character Area is crossed by numerous roads, tracks and rights of way. The Icknield Way runs along the northern boundary, also crossed by the Hertfordshire Way long distance path, west of Stevenage.

**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**

AONB	The Chilterns
LC1	Landscape Conservation Area
SAM HT14	Minsden Chapel: Langley

**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

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

---

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

---

**ROBUSTNESS**

Impact of landform:	Prominent
Impact of land cover:	Apparent
Impact of historic pattern:	Insignificant
Visibility from outside:	Widely visible
Sense of enclosure:	Open
Visual unity:	Coherent
Distinctiveness/rarity:	Unusual

---

**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>				

## EVALUATION

### INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

#### Landscape Character Sensitivities

- A large scale distinctive landscape with steeply sloping chalk scarp slope. It is rural in character, which would be vulnerable to the addition of built or urbanizing features
- Large scale irregular fields, arable on the gentle slopes and rough grazing on the steeper ground would be vulnerable to lack of management or removal
- A well wooded character area with ancient hanging woodlands along the sides of the scarp, which are vulnerable to lack of management or to removal
- The pattern of narrow, sunken lanes crossing Langley Scarp with associated hedgerows would be vulnerable to improvements to/ upgrading of the roads
- The traditional character of Langley village and the isolated farmsteads within Langley Scarp would be vulnerable to inappropriate or unsympathetic development and any form of development not in scale with the existing settlements
- Areas of surviving chalk grassland and ancient hedgerows, particularly along the rural lanes, are vulnerable to further loss
- Temple Dinsley historic parkland is a registered park and garden that falls partly within this Character Area, which could be at risk from development pressure and inconsistent management
- The A505 and electricity pylons both cross the character area and are detractors to the natural character of Langley Scarp
- Good public access through numerous rights of way, including the Icknield Way and the Hertfordshire Way
- Part of the Character Area falls within the Chilterns AONB

Overall Langley Scarp is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. The large scale steeply sloping chalk scarp and hanging woodlands create a dramatic landscape with limited urban influence.

#### Visual Sensitivities

- Open views along the scarp through gaps in vegetation are an important feature of the Character Area
- Panoramic views are common from vantage points over the Langley Valley
- Electricity pylons currently intrude on the skyline within the Character Area
- The edge of Stevenage to the east of the character area is visually intrusive in long distance views

In visual terms, Langley Scarp is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. Panoramic views from vantage points and views along the scarp are important features within the character area. These would be sensitive to the introduction of built and urbanizing features.

#### LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Langley Scarp is considered to be of **high landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Langley Scarp are the recognisable sense of place, the striking landform, the visual interest and the visible expressions of the local geology.

**EVALUATION**
**CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT**
**Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within Langley Scarp, due to its rural and undeveloped nature. It would introduce a scale of development that would be entirely out of keeping with the Character Area. Large scale development could not be accommodated within Langley Scarp without a significant visual impact on the landscape. The steeply sloping landform would also make major development very difficult to accommodate.

The landscape capacity for large urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and largely unsettled character. Visual impacts could be high, due to the panoramic views experienced.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would only be appropriate with improvements to the A505 within this Character Area. The majority of routes are rural in character. Upgrading of existing narrow, twisting lanes could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low to moderate.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area, as there are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Extensive development would also disrupt the undeveloped scarp and skyline.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, if they were of an agricultural purpose and in keeping with the rural character. Large buildings, if not carefully located, could erode the rural and undeveloped character of Langley Scarp.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low.

**Large scale open storage**

The landform within Langley Scarp would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without considerable ground modelling. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics. Extensive development would also disrupt the open views and sloping landform.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively undisturbed and rural in appearance. Mineral extraction or waste disposal would not be in keeping. The characteristic landform would also be adversely affected if mineral extraction were to occur.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**EVALUATION**

**Incremental small scale development**

There may be some very limited capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. However, due to the existing open and undeveloped character any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the rural and contained character of Langley Scarp.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are existing urbanising elements within this Character Area at present. The existing electricity pylons are currently detractors in the area. New utilities developments would have a significant impact on the rural character and panoramic views experienced in Langley Scarp. Large scale developments and tall elements would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as potentially visible from surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.



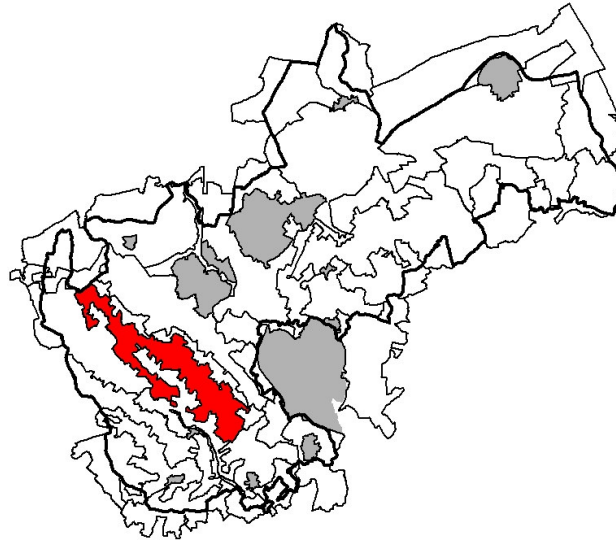
**GUIDELINES****STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE****Strategy: Conserve and Strengthen****Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote management of ancient woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Conserve and restore existing hilltop woodlands, copses, shelter belts and existing hedges by restocking to emphasise the prominent natural topography
- Conserve the visually sensitive skylines and rolling slopes from inappropriate land uses, structures and built development
- Recognise and conserve visual relationship with Lowland Village Farmlands
- 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 hedgerows 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 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
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Encourage the management and development of species rich chalk grassland habitats
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network

**Built development guidelines**

- Retain the rural character of Langley Scarp, ensuring that the need for any new development is closely scrutinised, appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to Langley Scarp
- Maintain the open character and the long distance views from the Character Area
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks, copses or ancient hedgerows
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in long distance views
- Avoid the location of new development on visually exposed areas of the scarp slopes
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area
- Ensure applications for replacement dwellings, communication infrastructure, utility infrastructure have minimal impact on the landscape character and visual quality of the area
- Ensure redundant agriculture buildings subject to applications for change of use are monitored to ensure that they reflect the local building style

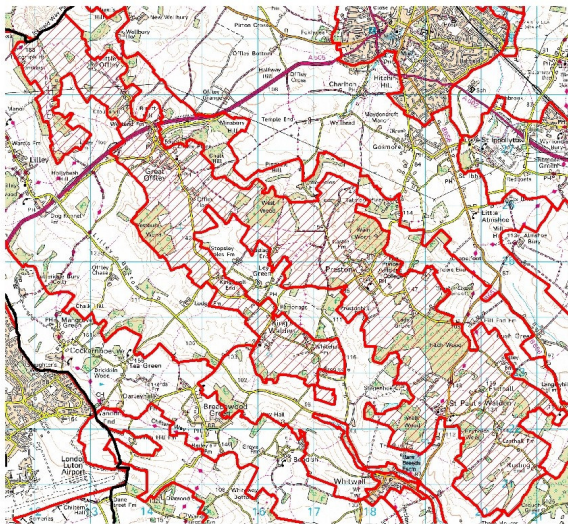
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The Character Area extends from Little Offley in the north to Crouch Green (south east of St Paul's Walden). It is long (approx 12.5 km) and comparatively narrow. Edges of the plateau are incised by various dry valleys.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently rolling upland landscape plateau dissected by incised valleys into smaller but still interlinked network of narrow arms extending from the scarp in

the north to the lower lying but more developed land to the north of Codicote. Generally more open arable land in the north and more complex patterns to the south. Grazing land adjacent to settlements, varying sizes of woodland often visually interlocking to frame views. Field pattern large in arable areas, however, landscape is often crossed by old winding and sunken lanes. Parkland is a distinctive feature. Individual remnant mature hedgerow trees are a frequent feature in the north but remain an integral part of the hedgerows further south where coppice woodland is also common. Generally scattered settlements and farmsteads with occasional larger settlements.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Gently rolling upland plateau landscape
- Large arable areas with smaller parcels of grazing land adjacent to settlements.
- Varying sized blocks of deciduous woodland
- Field pattern generally large scale

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Parkland at the Bury
- Kingswalden Deer Park
- Parkland of Little Offley and Lilley Hoo Drive

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

Acidic Clay-with-Flints and Boulder Clay overlie Chalk except in the northwest where Chalk comes to the surface. Soil are generally free-draining loamy brown soils except where the clay is deep.

**Topography**

Plateau landscape incised by dry valleys.

**Degree of slope**

Varies between 1:40 and 1:100.

**Altitude range**

125m to 180m.

**Hydrology**

Plateau area drained by local ditches and drains. Numerous small ponds to the south of Great Offley and randomly distributed throughout.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable land use with grazing around local settlements. Extensive woodland cover.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Ancient moderately acidic oak and hornbeam woodlands centred around Great Offley and Preston are the most ecologically important features of this Character Area. These woods are highlighted as being areas of high biodiversity within the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). Hertfordshire contains a high proportion of the UK's national oak/hornbeam woodlands and these woodlands are afforded further protection by their listing on Annex 1 of the EU Habitats Directive.

Ancient semi-natural woodlands occur frequently with oak and hornbeam being the dormant canopy species. Coniferous replanting has also occurred in places. Maple, birch, cherry and ash may occur as secondary tree standards. Coppicing is frequently evident as a traditional form of woodland management, with hazel and hornbeam being the principal coppice species. Groundflora frequently contains species typical of a long continuity of woodland cover, the so-called 'ancient woodland indicator species' including bluebells especially frequent around Preston.

Hitch Wood is more acidic with bracken. It is a de-scheduled SSSI containing some of the tallest trees in Hertfordshire. Icehouses are present in several of the woodlands and provide refuge for protected species such as bats. Woodland ponds also occur frequently, and add to the ecological diversity and interest.

Other important ancient woodland areas include Reynolds Wood, Westbury Wood, Wain Wood and the Warren, which comprise a SSSI recognised for ancient oak/hornbeam communities which occur on boulder clay. Walk Wood partly incorporated into gardens is less acidic and more species rich.

Traditionally managed hay meadows such as Ruisling End Meadow are a scarce commodity, both within this Character Area and within North Hertfordshire as a whole. Wellbury Pit is a disused gravel pit with associated calcareous grassland and scrub communities also containing 'The Wellbury Boulder' – a 'calcrete' boulder of hardened glacial gravel which is of geological interest. Telegraph Hill lies within a key area of chalk grassland recognised as an area of biodiversity within the Hertfordshire BAP.

Hitch Wood is noted for woodland birds. Polecats and buzzards have become re-established, evidence of buzzards in woods around Great Offley, dormice are known in several locations and fallow deer are frequent. Parkland is important for veteran trees and there are ancient oaks present within Kingswalden Deer Park.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

During the 12th century Bernard de Baliol granted 15 librates of land at Wedelee to the Master and Brothers of the Knights Templars who formed the manor of Temple Dinsley. The original manor house may lie beneath the present Queen Anne mansion. At the time of the Domesday Survey the manor of Offley was of significant size at 8 hides 8 acres. Northwest of Great Offley are two prehistoric sites consisting of a ring ditch and at Lilley Hoo a Bronze Age barrow (also the site of 18th century horse racing). Earthworks near St Paul's Walden represent the remains of medieval house platforms. Medieval settlement sites are situated to the northwest and southeast where the 12th century parish church of All Saints and St. Paul stands.

**Field pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape is composed of a mixture of 18th century and later enclosure, prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss, pre-18th century irregular enclosure, post-1950s enclosure and 19th-20th century plantation. Prairie fields with relict elements within lie to the north. Both St Pauls Waldenbury and Temple Dinsley are designated Historic Park and Gardens. St Pauls Waldenbury includes a Grade 1 listed garden (one of two in Hertfordshire) dating from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**ASSESSMENT**

There is also a high frequency of ancient woodland, particularly in the vicinity of Preston and to the southeast. The parish of Offley was enclosed by an award under an Act of 1807 and for Kings Walden the Enclosure Act is dated 1796-7 and the common was closed by an award of 1802. Today there are large scale arable fields in the north of irregular pattern and scale.

**Transport pattern**

The area is well covered by a network of old winding and often sunken lanes. These disappear to the north of Great Offley. The area is crossed by the A505 dual carriageway running in a cutting.

**Settlements and built form**

The historic settlement pattern is composed of estates and villages. An example of a village migrating away from its original centre can be found at Great Offley and Little Offley. The 13th century church of St. Magdalene and Offley Place are situated together away from the road and probably formed the focus of the original settlement.

Another example of this can be found at Kings Walden where the original settlement with church attached to the manor house was abandoned in favour of a site along the road where the market would be located. Within Kings Walden and Ley Green there are a number of medieval and 15<sup>th</sup> century farmhouses and several 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> dwellings, all of which are Listed Buildings. The traditional buildings of the area survive from the 16th century and represent a range of styles. A late Tudor H-plan manor can be found at Little Offley, and Offley Place c.1825 with 17th century brickwork. Westbury Farm is timber framed c.1600, and there are several timber framed 16th and 17th century buildings in the village of Offley including Westbury Farm and the Green Man Inn. Later buildings of interest include the early Georgian house at Temple Dinsley enlarged by Lutyens in 1908 and The Bury at St. Pauls Walden, which underwent considerable Robert Adam and Neo-Elizabethan (1887) additions. The 13th century church of St Mary Magdalene conforms to the trend in building materials for the region by employing flint and stone.

**EVALUATION**

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

Historic and mature landscape character interspersed with areas of intensive arable production. Small interlocking blocks of woodland framing views.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

The integrity and mature character have not been eroded by the intensification of arable production.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

A number of pylons, water towers and telecommunications masts (Great Offley) are distributed over the Character Area. Impact is only local.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

The Character Area is well served by the network of lanes and public rights of way.

**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**

- |           |                                  |
|-----------|----------------------------------|
| AONB      | The Chilterns                    |
| LC1       | Landscape Conservation Area      |
| GD 1047   | St Pauls Waldenbury              |
| GD 1916   | Temple Dinsley                   |
| SSSI      | Wain Wood and The Warren         |
| SAM 20623 | Barrow at Telegraph Hill: Lilley |

**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

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

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

**ROBUSTNESS**

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

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

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

**EVALUATION**

**INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**

**Landscape Character Sensitivities**

- Offley – St Paul’s Walden has an historic feel with large areas of parkland and estate landscapes, including around King’s Walden, Little Offley and Preston. These could be at risk from inconsistent management or conversion to arable farmland
- Temple Dinsley and St Paul’s Walden Bury historic parklands are registered gardens that fall partly within this Character Area, which could be at risk from development pressure and inconsistent management
- Mature field trees, avenues of trees and stands of pines associated with parkland areas would be at risk from removal or lack of a replacement strategy
- The historic settlement pattern within the Character Area is characterised by dispersed villages with historic cores and estates on the highest ground, which would be sensitive to unsympathetic development not in scale with the villages
- The A505 cuts through the Character Area but is in cutting and generally well screened by planting, which would be sensitive to removal.
- Large woodland blocks are present throughout Offley – St Paul’s Walden, several of which are ancient and would be vulnerable to lack of management, encroachment of development or to removal
- A network of winding and often sunken minor lanes would be vulnerable to improvements to/upgrading of the roads
- Hedgerows are generally well maintained and the landscape would be sensitive to removal of hedges
- Good public access through numerous rights of way radiating from the villages, including the Chiltern Way and the Hertfordshire Way
- Part of the Character Area falls within the Chilterns AONB
- Pylons north of the A505, within the AONB, are detractors to the Character Area

Overall Offley – St Paul’s Walden is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. The historic cultural pattern remains within large parts of the Character Area with very few detractors present.

**Visual Sensitivities**

- Much of Offley – St Paul’s Walden is enclosed by woodland and vegetation, creating an intimate feel that would be sensitive to vegetation removal
- The urban edge of Luton to the west is generally well contained by vegetation and landform in views from the Character Area
- Occasional wider views, particularly across Lilley Bottom and Langley Valley
- Elevated distant views over Stevenage to the east are possible from areas within the south eastern part of the Character Area
- A number of pylons, water towers and telecommunications masts have created localised visual impacts

In visual terms, Offley – St Paul’s Walden is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. Although there are localised visual detractors within the Character Area, there is a wide variety of different types of views within Offley – St Paul’s Walden.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE**

Overall Offley – St Paul’s Walden is considered to be of **moderate high landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Offley – St Paul’s Walden include the relative intactness of the landscape, the lack of visually intrusive elements, the distinctive sense of place, the sense of remoteness, the sense of openness and the striking landform.

**EVALUATION**

**CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT**

**Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its strong cultural pattern of minor lanes and historic woodlands. It would be of an inappropriate scale and would be likely to result in the coalescence of existing villages. Visual impacts could also be high, due to the elevated position of the Character Area on a ridgeline. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing narrow, twisting lanes, which could erode the character of the landscape. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and could reduce accessibility to the countryside.

The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the rural and undeveloped character and the historic intactness of Offley – St Paul’s Walden. Planting would need to be used to soften the visual impacts of any consented development. Proposed development should also be pulled back from the edges of the ridge to prevent visual intrusion into Lilley Bottom and Langley Valley, as well as the Chilterns AONB. Some small scale expansion of the villages, carefully designed and in keeping with the existing character, could possibly be accommodated.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low to moderate.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the largely rural character of most routes at present. Upgrading of existing narrow, twisting lanes could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area. Should improvements be required to the A505 these should be carefully design to avoid excessive visual intrusion into the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in the Character Area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. The existing minor roads that form part of the strong cultural pattern could be affected by any proposed improvement schemes, which would erode an important element of this landscape. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of a vernacular style and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings could be highly visible within this and adjacent Character Areas, if not carefully located, and could erode the strong cultural pattern.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low.



**EVALUATION**

**Large scale open storage**

The strong cultural pattern of winding minor roads and woodland blocks would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and likely to be very open to view, particularly from adjacent Character Areas. The existing minor roads could be affected by any proposed improvement schemes, which would erode an important element of this landscape. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively undisturbed and rural in appearance. Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated within the small scale enclosed landscape with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction or waste disposal would not be in keeping with the character of Offley – St Paul's Walden. However, the existing minor roads that form part of the strong cultural pattern could be affected by any proposed improvement schemes, which would erode an important element of this landscape. Restoration proposals for any consented schemes should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**Incremental small scale development**

There may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of a vernacular style and in keeping with the rural character. However, any coalescence of settlements or visual intrusion into adjacent Character Areas should be avoided.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are currently relatively few intrusive structures within this Character Area, other than the localised impacts of pylons, water towers and telecommunications masts. New utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines would have an impact on the rural character of Offley – St Paul's Walden. Large scale, tall structures such as these would be highly visible, particularly in surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low.

**GUIDELINES**

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE**

**Strategy: Improve and Conserve**

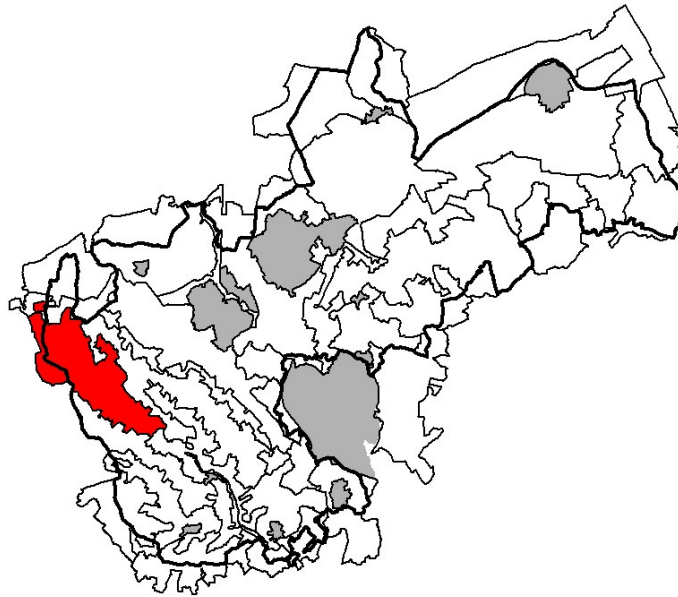
**Landscape management guidelines**

- 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
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Encourage the development and implementation of management plans for parkland at the Bury, Kings Walden Deer Park, Little Offley and Lilley Hoo
- Encourage the planting of additional or new oak/hornbeam woodland

**Built development guidelines**

- Conserve the traditional character of the villages within Offley – St Paul’s Walden, ensuring that any development located within or on the edge of the village uses appropriate vernacular materials and features to avoid inappropriate visual intrusion
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- Encourage the retention and enhancement of vegetation along the A505 to ensure that its visual impact on the landscape is minimised
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in panoramic and rural views
- Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations, such as on the edges of the ridge or where they would be visible on currently undeveloped skylines
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks
- Conserve and enhance the registered parks and garden at Temple Dinsley and St Paul’s Walden Bury
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area

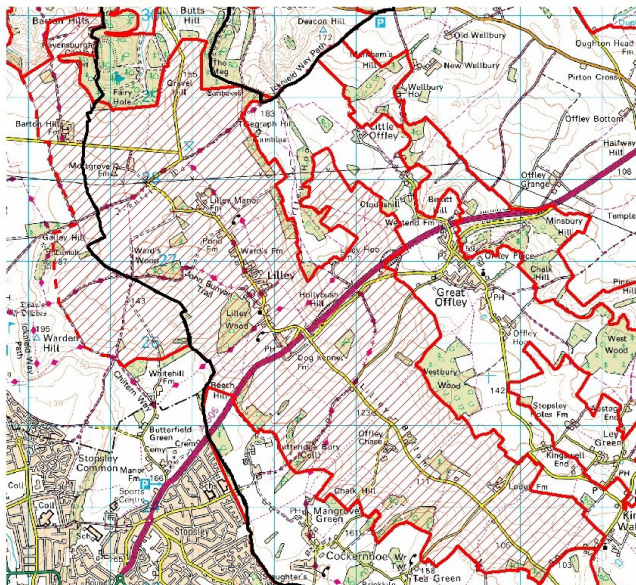
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

Character Area extends from the Chilterns scarp at Hexton to Kings Walden in the south. The valley is up to 2 km wide to the west of Great Offley, gradually narrowing down to approximately 0.5 km at Kings Walden.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently undulating arable landscape, defined by sloping valley sides. Fields enclosed by closely cropped patchy hedges. Views generally filtered by patchy vegetation although some longer panoramic views from higher ground. Woodlands/plantations particularly on higher fringes, but generally scattered across the area. Red brick village settlements follow the line of the road in the valley bottom. Localised pasture and horse-grazing paddocks on fringes of settlements.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Predominantly arable land use
- Medium to large scale fields
- Mixed woodland blocks scattered along valley sides
- Ribbon development at Lilley follows road in valley bottom
- Remnant hedges and scattered mature hedgerow trees

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Church at Lilley
- Church at Kings Walden
- A505 cutting

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

Free-draining loamy calcareous brown soils over Chalk, but more acidic where Clay-with-Flints overlies the Chalk on the upper valley sides.

**Topography**

Broad dry valley with gently undulating valley bottom.

**Degree of slope**

1:40 to valley sides.

**Altitude range**

100m to 140m over the 7.5km length of the valley.

**Hydrology**

No discernable watercourse in valley bottom. Local ponds adjacent to settlements. 'Dene holes' produced by solution effects in the chalk at Lilley.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable landscape, with small plantations typical of Chilterns dip slopes. Small paddocks for horse grazing associated with local settlements.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Mature beech are common as hedgerow or roadside trees, but with a higher proportion of oak, elm and hazel in the south. Remnant mature trees within fields where hedges have been removed. Holly and hazel are frequent components of hedges.

Some important road verge communities occur within this Character Area. The Icknield Way follows green lanes in some places. These may have interesting calcareous grassland communities, as well as ancient hedgerows. Other old trackways have similar combinations of chalk groundflora and ancient hedgerows, the latter supporting species indicative of a long continuity of woody cover. Gravel Hill at Hexton has unimproved calcareous grassland communities on road verges, others occur at Chalk Hill near Mangrove Green.

Woodlands are typically ash/beech/hazel. There are also frequent transitional stands to oak/hornbeam on more acidic soils. Nationally scarce great pignut occurs at Gravel Hill and native whitebeam is occasionally found in the hedgerows. The open farmland is frequented by brown hare and buzzards have recently become re-established

in the area. Lilley Park Wood is listed on the ancient woodland inventory and has a variety of woodland habitats present, dominated by oak and cherry, with an understorey of hazel coppice. Some coniferous replanting has also occurred. Stubbocks Wood is also an ancient woodland site. Woodland at Telegraph Hill is important for dormice.

Key area for declining farmland birds: turtle dove, linnnet, yellowhammer, corn bunting and quail.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

During the reign of Edward the Confessor the manor of Lilley was held of Earl Harold by Leuera and by 1086 was in the possession of Geoffrey de Bech. There is a medieval settlement at Lilley. Prehistoric sites include ring ditches and linear ditches to the east and west of Lilley and a possible barrow cemetery to the southeast.

**Field patterns**

The historic agricultural landscape consists of a mixture of prairie fields with relict elements within, prairie fields with post-1950 boundary loss and 18th century and later enclosure. There is pre-18th century irregular enclosure and informal medieval parkland on the margins of Lilley and small areas of ancient woodland to the southeast. The parish of Lilley was enclosed by an Act of 1768.

**Transport pattern**

The local road (Lilley Bottom) follows the valley from Kings Walden to Lilley village. A number of local lanes cut down the valley side and act as feeder or distributors linking Lilley Bottom to areas outside the valley. The area is also crossed by the A505 dual carriageway.

**Settlements and built form**

The historic landscape pattern is sparse characterised by a village and farmsteads. The village of Lilley extends in a ribbon development along the head of the valley. Additionally there are scattered farmsteads or dwellings accessed from Lilley Bottom Lane. Generally the valley lacks development. The church of St. Peter at Lilley was built by Thomas Jekyll in 1870-71. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century windmill on Breachwood Ridge is visible on the skyline from Lilley Bottom.

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

The Character Area is generally visually contained by the valley sides and has a peaceful rural character. Patchy hedgerows filter views in the valley bottom. Panoramic views are common from the higher valley slopes.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

The valley is typical of the Chiltern character albeit that its scale and comparative openness is unusual when compared to the narrower more incised valleys elsewhere in Hertfordshire.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The cutting formed by the A505 has not been integrated into the landscape.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

The valley is crossed by a number of rights of way. These include the Ickniel Way and the John Bunyan Trail in the north of the Character Area.

**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**

AONB	The Chilterns
LC1	Landscape Conservation Area
GD 1914	Putteridge Bury
SSSI	Barton Hills (Beds)

**EVALUATION**

**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/Relic
Impact of built development:	Moderate
Impact of land-use change:	Moderate

---

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

---

**ROBUSTNESS**

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

---

**Matrix Score:** **Strong**

---

<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>				

## EVALUATION

### INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

#### Landscape Character Sensitivities

- A largely rural character throughout the Character Area, with an absence of both development and other detractors, which would be vulnerable to the addition of urbanizing features
- Scattered deciduous hanging woodlands along the sides of the valley, which are vulnerable to lowering water tables, lack of management or to removal
- The pattern of narrow and twisting minor lanes crossing the valley and feeding into the local road in the valley bottom would be vulnerable to improvements to/ upgrading of the roads
- The traditional character of Lilley village would be vulnerable to inappropriate or unsympathetic development and any form of development not in scale with the village
- Areas of surviving chalk grassland and ancient hedgerows, particularly along green lanes, are vulnerable to further loss
- Putteridge Bury historic parkland is a registered garden that falls partly within this Character Area, which could be at risk from development pressure and inconsistent management
- Good public access through numerous rights of way, including the Icknield Way and the John Bunyan Trail
- Part of the Character Area falls within the Chilterns AONB

Overall Lilley Bottom is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. The gently undulating arable farmland creates an enclosed valley with limited urban influence.

#### Visual Sensitivities

- Cross valley views are an important feature of the Character Area
- Undeveloped skylines are present on both sides of the valley
- Panoramic views are common from the higher valley slopes

In visual terms, Lilley Bottom is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. Views within the valley and towards the undeveloped, wooded skylines are relatively open and would be sensitive to the introduction of urbanizing features.

#### LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Lilley Bottom is considered to be of **moderate high landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Lilley Bottom are the intactness of the valley, the lack of incongruous elements, a recognisable sense of place, the striking landform, the visual interest, memorable uninterrupted views, and the perceived distance from settlement, the sense of openness and visible expressions of the local geology.

**EVALUATION**
**CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT**
**Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. It would be of an inappropriate scale and would introduce elements that would urbanise the landscape, altering the character and removing the existing key characteristics. Visual impacts would also be high, due to the panoramic and cross valley views currently experienced. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing narrow, twisting lanes, which could erode the character of the landscape. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and could reduce accessibility to the countryside.

The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would not be entirely appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. Visual impacts could be high, due to the panoramic and cross valley views currently experienced. Some small scale expansion of Lilley, carefully designed and in keeping with the existing character of the village, could possibly be accommodated.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be moderate to low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the largely rural character of most routes at present. Upgrading of existing narrow, twisting lanes could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. There would also be restricted areas of level land for this type of development and substantial earthworks would be likely to be required. Existing minor roads would be inappropriate for any significant larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs. Any upgrading of the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings could be highly visible within the Character Area if not carefully located would erode the rural and intimate character of Lilley Bottom.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

**Large scale open uses**

The landform within Lilley Bottom would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without considerable ground modelling. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics. The minor roads are unlikely to have capacity to accommodate development or would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs, which would further dilute the landscape character. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside.



The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

### **Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively undisturbed and rural in appearance. Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction or waste disposal would not be in keeping with the character of Lilley bottom. The minor roads would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. Larger scale extraction could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside. Restoration proposals for any consented schemes should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low to moderate. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

### **Incremental small scale development**

There may be some very limited capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of a vernacular form or style and in keeping with the rural character. However, due to the existing open and undeveloped character any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the rural and contained character of Lilley Bottom.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low to moderate.

### **Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are very few urbanising elements within this Character Area at present. There are currently few detractors in the areas. New utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines would have a major impact on the rural character of Lilley Bottom. Large scale developments, tall elements such as these would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as potentially visible in surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low.

**GUIDELINES**

Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire

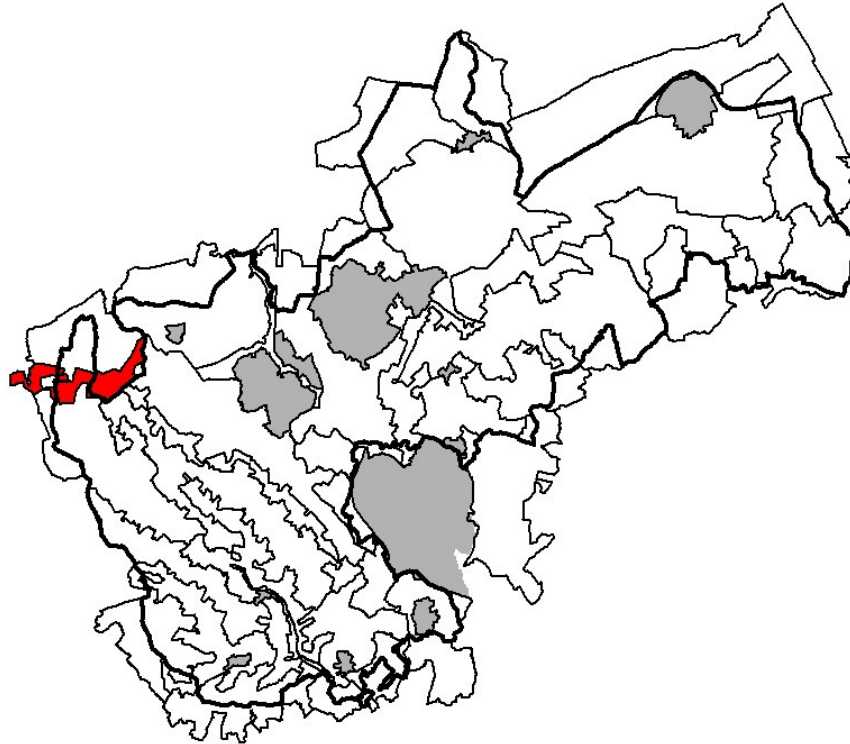
**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE**
**Strategy: Conserve and Restore**
**Landscape management guidelines**

- 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
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Encourage the planting of beech woodlands on the steeper valley sides
- Encourage the development of new calcareous grassland habitats
- Where appropriate for sites on the ancient woodland register encourage the management of hazel coppice understorey
- Encourage the replanting of existing coniferous woodland with deciduous species

**Built development guidelines**

- Conserve the traditional character of Lilley village, ensuring that any development located on the edge of the village uses appropriate vernacular materials and features to avoid inappropriate visual intrusion
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- Encourage the retention of vegetation along the A505 to ensure that it remains screened
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in panoramic rural views
- Retain the rural character of Lilley Bottom, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area
- Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations, such as on upper valley slopes or where they would be visible on the currently undeveloped skyline
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or the loss of surviving calcareous grassland habitats and ancient hedgerows
- Conserve and enhance Putteridge Bury
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area

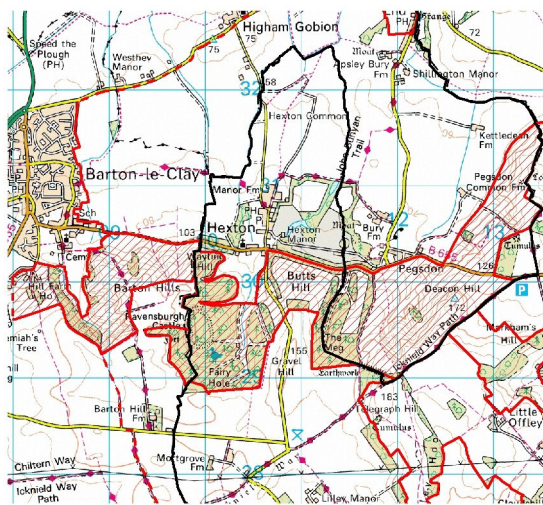
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The Character Area extends in an arc between Barton-le-Clay and Pirton lying partly within and partly outside the District boundary.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Steeply sloping chalk scarp. Arable land along the upper reaches with high proportion of sheep grazing land on the lower slopes. Field sizes vary in scale with sheep grazing areas enclosed by post and barbed wire. Character Area is generally well wooded interspersed with pockets of regenerating scrubland on the lower slopes. Part of the scarp is managed as a chalk grassland SSSI.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Steeply sloping chalk scarp
- Generally well wooded
- Mixed arable and grazing use

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Pegsdon Hill chalk grassland SSSI (Bedfordshire)
- Historic earthworks (Ravensburgh Castle)
- Icknield Way long distance footpath

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

Shallow rendzina soils over Chalk.

**Topography**

Steeply sloping chalk scarp, gradually becomes shallower further south.

**Degree of slope**

Typically 1:4.

**Altitude range**

85m to 175m.

**Hydrology**

Although the scarp face has been incised by watercourses there are none present other than from chalk springs in the valley south of Hexton.

**Land cover and land use**

Mixed use arable, grazing and woodland cover.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Species-rich chalk grassland and downland on steep-sided escarpments are a key ecological feature. The chalk grassland centred on Hexton, Pirton and Great Offley have been identified as being high biodiversity areas within the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan, and partially represented within this Character Area by the Hexton chalk grasslands. Some parts have been subject to conifer planting and reversion to chalkscrub and secondary woodland occurs to varying degrees throughout. Old chalk workings, pits and quarries expose the chalky substrate and lend themselves to dry, ecologically 'stressed' habitats that result in botanically diverse communities.

Some ecologically interesting chalk grassland communities also occur on road verges. The ancient route of the Icknield Way has its own association of calcareous grassland species and old hedgerow communities. Good examples of characteristic chalk grassland communities can be found at Devil's Ditch and Hexton Chalk Pit.

Fragments of ancient semi-natural oak/hornbeam woodland occur within this Character Area, such as Burleighcroft Wood.

Wide range of chalk grassland specialist species for example, insects like chalkhill blue and plants such as horseshoe vetch, purple milk vetch, field fleawort, pasque flower and fly orchid in some scrub areas. Area is important for farmland birds. Hexton is important for a variety of bats.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

On the western end of a ridge situated to the southeast of Barton-le-Clay lies the well preserved Iron Age hillfort of Ravensburgh Castle. To the east lies a Bowl Barrow (SAM 20419) at Knocking Knoll.

**Field pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape comprises a mixture of prairie fields with relict elements within, improved rough pasture, 19th-20th century plantation and prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss.

**Transport pattern**

The Character Area is crossed by one road to the west and the B655 forms the northern boundary.

**Settlements and built form**

The Character Area is too steep for settlement.

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

The scarp affords a vantage point, often being the highest point in the locality for panoramic views over surrounding landscape.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

Scarp face is not a common feature and as such has a distinctive character. It also supports a diverse chalk grassland, often classified as SSSI.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Generally unspoilt by development.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Numerous rights of way. The Icknield Way long distance path crosses the northern part.

**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**

AONB	The Chilterns
LC1	Landscape Conservation Area
SSSI	Barton Hills (Beds)
SSSI	Deacon Hill (Beds)
SSSI	Knocking Hoe (Beds)
SAM 8	Ravensburgh Castle: Hexton
SAM 20419	Bowl Barrow at Knocking Knoll 640m E of Pegsdon Common Farm (Beds)

**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

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

---

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

---

**ROBUSTNESS**

Impact of landform:	Prominent
Impact of land cover:	Apparent
Impact of historic pattern:	Apparent
Visibility from outside:	Widely visible
Sense of enclosure:	Open
Visual unity:	Coherent
Distinctiveness/rarity:	Unusual

---

**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>				

## EVALUATION

## INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

## Landscape Character Sensitivities

- Large woodland blocks and areas of hanging woodland are an important feature of the North Hertfordshire part of the Chilterns Scarp and would be vulnerable to lowering water tables, lack of management or removal
- Mature tree belts are present along the limited number of roads within the Character Area. These would be sensitive to removal or road widening schemes
- Arable areas are large scale with limited vegetation and hedgerows. These would be vulnerable to changes in landuse or introduction of extensive new vegetation
- The smoothly undulating and prominent landform highlights the bleached chalky soils would also be highly vulnerable to change
- The predominantly unsettled character of the area would be vulnerable to change
- Areas of surviving chalk grassland on steep side slopes and road verges are vulnerable to further loss
- Limited public access, particularly in North Hertfordshire, with the Icknield Way, the John Bunyan Trail and the Chiltern Way all located outside of North Hertfordshire
- The Iron Age hillfort of Ravensburgh Castle could be at risk from inconsistent management
- The Character Area as a whole falls within the Chilterns AONB

Overall Chilterns Scarp is considered to be of **high sensitivity**. The steeply sloping chalk scarp and hanging woodlands create a dramatic landscape with limited urban influence.

## Visual Sensitivities

- Open sweeping views and panoramic views along the scarp are an important feature in the eastern part of the Character Area
- Views within the western part of the Character Area, outside North Hertfordshire, are generally contained by vegetation and landform
- A strong visual relationship with Pirton Lowlands, which forms the visual setting to the Chilterns Scarp
- Wooded skylines are an important feature of the Chilterns Scarp and would be sensitive to vegetation removal
- Views within the Character Area are limited as a result of constrained public access

In visual terms, Chilterns Scarp is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. Views towards the rising scarp slopes from the north across the Pirton Lowlands and across the open areas of the scarp are particularly sensitive to development.

## LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Chilterns Scarp is considered to be of **high landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Chilterns Scarp are the distinctive sense of place, the striking landform, the relationship between landform and vegetation, memorable views, the visual interest and the visible expressions of the local geology.

**EVALUATION****CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT****Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within Chilterns Scarp, due to its rural and undeveloped nature. It would introduce a scale of development that would be entirely out of keeping with the Character Area. Large scale development could not be accommodated within Langley Scarp without a significant visual impact on the landscape. The steeply sloping landform would also make major development very difficult to accommodate.

The landscape capacity for large urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and largely unsettled character. Visual impacts could be high, due to the panoramic views towards the scarp slope. The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would not generally be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the largely rural character of most routes at present. Upgrading of existing narrow, twisting lanes could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area, as there are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Extensive development would also disrupt the undeveloped scarp and skyline.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There is very limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, if they were of an agricultural nature or vernacular in form and style and in keeping with the rural character. Large buildings, if not carefully located, could erode the rural and undeveloped character of the Chilterns Scarp.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low.

**Large scale open storage**

The landform within Chilterns Scarp would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without considerable ground modelling. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics. Extensive development would also disrupt the open views, woodland blocks and sloping landform.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.



**EVALUATION**

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively undisturbed and rural in appearance. Mineral extraction or waste disposal would not be in keeping. The characteristic landform, woodland and vegetation pattern would also be adversely affected if mineral extraction were to occur. There would also be major visual impacts.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**Incremental small scale development**

There may be some very limited capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of an agricultural nature or vernacular in form and style and in keeping with the rural character. However, due to the existing open and undeveloped character any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the rural and wooded character of Chilterns Scarp.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are no existing structures that act as detractors within this Character Area at present. New utilities developments would have a significant impact on the rural character and panoramic views towards the Chilterns Scarp.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low.

<b>GUIDELINES</b>	Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire
-------------------	--

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE**

**Strategy: Conserve and Strengthen**

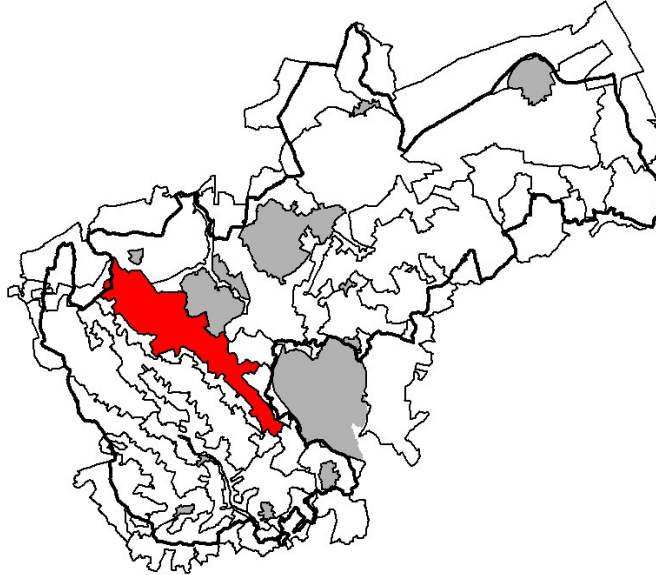
**Landscape management guidelines**

- 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 hedgerows and the creation of new boundaries at appropriate locations, consistent with agricultural management practices
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Encourage the management and restoration of species rich chalk grasslands

**Built development guidelines**

- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- Retain the rural character of the Chilterns Scarp, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to Chilterns Scarp
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or copses
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in long distance views
- Avoid the location of new development on visually exposed areas of the scarp slopes
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area
- Ensure applications for replacement dwellings, communication infrastructure, utility infrastructure have minimal impact on the landscape character and visual quality of the area
- Ensure redundant agriculture buildings subject to applications for change of use are monitored to ensure that they reflect the local building style

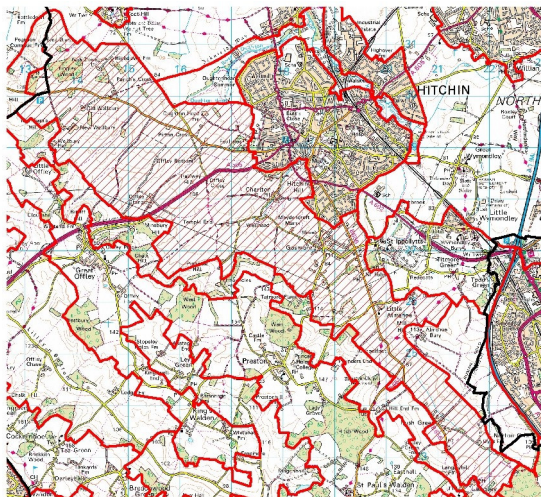
## EVALUATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The Character Area runs in a broad band from Wellbury in the north to Langley Bottom where it stops at the boundary to Knebworth woods/parkland.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Large scale rolling landform. Predominantly in arable land use but with pockets of grazing on the

steeper slopes in the north and adjacent to settlements at St Ippolyts and Langley. Field sizes vary with extensive arable land to the southwest of Hitchin and smaller fields associated with grazing land. Hedges generally well trimmed with remnant mature trees. High proportion of stag-headed trees to the north. Scattered settlements and farmsteads. Parkland as a notable feature widely spread over the Character Area. Discrete areas of commercial land-use (Isaacs Foundary, Royal Oak, Airfield, Rush Green recycling, pigeonswick sawmill)

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Rolling chalk landform
- Dominant large scale arable farming
- Smaller areas of grazing on steeper chalk slopes to the south of Hitchin
- Woodland plantations concentrated in the north on most pronounced chalk landscape. Relatively little woodland cover elsewhere.

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Small areas of parkland at Gosmore
- A505 dual carriageway cuts across the area
- Langley Valley airfield and scrapyard

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

In the north there are thin rendzina soils over Chalk which merge into brown soils over Chalk. South of Hitchin there is a transition to sandy brown soils over glacial till which continue down the Langley valley. Tingley Down is a Chalk outlier capped with gravel and Clay-with-Flints giving locally acidic soils at Tingley Wood.

**Topography**

An undulating landform in the north gradually gives way to the valley landscape at Langley.

**Degree of slope**

Varies, 1:20 in steeper areas, 1:250 in the Langley valley.

**Altitude range**

95m (Langley) to 140m (Wellbury).

**Hydrology**

The Langley valley runs north west to the Hiz and Oughton which in turn run northwards to the catchment of the river Ouse. A stream from the south disappears at Almshoe Bury swallowhole to re-appear further north on a tributary to the River Purwell. At times of high groundwater levels a lake may form at the swallowhole.

**Land cover and land use**

Dominant arable land use with grazing on steeper chalk slopes and around Gosmore. High proportion of woodland cover north of Wellbury on the steeper chalk slopes.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Mixed deciduous/conifer plantations in the north. Small pockets of woodland adjacent to Gosmore. Belts of willow following the watercourse in Langley valley. Hedge species include oak, ash, hawthorn and sycamore with beech and hornbeam in Langley valley.

Green lanes like Wood Lane with its chalk grassland and scrub habitats are ecologically valuable strips within this Character Area. Some arable field margins support rare 'arable weeds'.

Unimproved chalk grassland and traditionally managed neutral and acid grassland are present within this Character Area and are typically species-rich. Some of these unimproved grasslands have been designated as SSSIs, such as Burleigh Meadow and Langley Meadow. Tingley Down falls

within core chalk grassland described as an area of high biodiversity within the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

Tingley Wood is an ancient semi-natural woodland, partly acidic oak woodland partly calcareous ash/beechness with hybrid elm and associated maple and hazel coppicing. Ancient woodlands comprised primarily of hornbeam coppice also occur infrequently within the Character Area, and have an assortment of associated ancient woodland indicator species.

Areas of ecologically interesting marshy grassland, wet willow and alder woodland are associated with the River Hiz, for example 'The Willows'. Folly Alder Swamp is located in the area of St Ippollitts Common, and is of interest for its ancient alder woodland. The Hertfordshire BAP describes this alder/tussock sedge carr as one of the richest and most valuable examples in the county. Woodlands adjacent to the river may completely flood at certain times of year. Almshoebury Swallowhole is a unique example in north Hertfordshire of a specialised hydrological feature with associated unimproved grassland and wet woodland habitats.

Priory Park in Hitchin is important for bats and existing grazing land holds breeding barn owls.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

South of Pirton lie two areas of prehistoric ring ditches and a Scheduled bowl barrow at Knocking Knoll. On the margins of Hitchin Romano-British burials are documented to the west and a ring ditch, medieval moated site and deserted medieval village Gosmore to the southwest. Another ring ditch is located to the east of Preston.

**Field pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape generally comprises a mixture of prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss and 18th century and later enclosure to the northwest. An area of ancient woodland occupies an area southwest of Pirton. There are small areas of pre-18th century enclosure and informal medieval parkland on the southwest perimeter of Hitchin. The southeast section of the Character Area comprises of a mixture of prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss, prairie fields with relict elements within, 18th century and later enclosure, pre-18th century irregular enclosure

**ASSESSMENT**

and pre-18th century unenclosed common arable. A small area of ancient woodland remains on the northern edge of a mineral extraction pit south of Gosmore. Today there are varied irregular sizes with many removed hedges where in arable production. Smaller field parcels where land in grazing use.

**Transport pattern**

The A505 dual carriageway connecting Hitchin to Luton cuts across the Character Area. The B656 follows the Langley Valley south. Minor network of local lanes at Gosmore.

**Settlements and built form**

The historic settlement pattern is of a sparse nature characterised by farms and estates. There are mainly farmsteads in the north and south. Sub-urban fringe at Hitchin and Gosmore. Older settlement at Gosmore dating from 1283.

Dwellings in the hamlet of St Ibbs, date from 18<sup>th</sup> century St Ibbs and St Ibbs Bush and 19th century St Ibbs Lodge. Traditional buildings include The Wyck, a timber framed structure near Little Almshoe.

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

The valley is a combination of mature, well wooded valley sides in the upper reaches with a wider shallow sided valley washing up against a sub-urban fringe in the northeast. The valley is well defined along its boundary with the Langley scarp to the west.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

This landscape is relatively common to this locality. The rolling chalk landscape to the north is the most distinctive feature of the Character Area

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The scarp at the Langley Valley has a negative impact. The urban edge of Hitchin is a prominent feature to the west. The A505 dual carriageway cuts across the landscape and is visible from the surrounding landscape.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

The area is well covered by a network of public rights of way.

**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**

AONB	The Chilterns
LC1	Landscape Conservation Area
SSSI	Knebworth

**EVALUATION**

**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:	Declining/Relic
Impact of built development:	Low
Impact of land-use change:	High

---

**Matrix Score:** **Poor**

---

**ROBUSTNESS**

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

---

**Matrix Score:** **Weak**

---

<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>				

**EVALUATION**
**INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**
**Landscape Character Sensitivities**

- The landform plays a significant role in the character of Langley Valley, consisting of a network of ridges and wet or dry valleys
- Vegetation is present within valley bottoms and along streams where they are present. This would be vulnerable to removal
- Areas of marshy grassland, wet willow and alder woodland associated with the River Hiz, are vulnerable to further loss
- Settlement is sparse within Langley Valley, consisting of small nucleated villages with historic cores, estates and scattered farmsteads. This would be sensitive to unsympathetic development not in scale with the villages
- Areas of parkland landscape around Gosmore and west of St Ippolytts would be sensitive to inappropriate management or conversion to arable farmland
- Hedgerows throughout the Character Area are variable. Some are tall and well managed, whilst others have been removed. Hedgerows would be sensitive to further removal
- Woodland is sparse within the Character Area and small copses, particularly on higher ground within the AONB, would be vulnerable to removal
- The pattern of narrow, winding lanes around Gosmore would be vulnerable to improvements to/ upgrading of the roads
- Areas of grazing on steeper slopes and adjacent to watercourses add variety to the landscape and are of a smaller scale than larger arable fields. These would be vulnerable to inconsistent management or conversion to arable farmland
- The A505 crosses the character area and is a detractor to the natural character of Langley Valley
- Good public access through rights of way, particularly around Hitchin, including the Chiltern Way and the Hertfordshire Way
- Part of the Character Area falls within the Chilterns AONB

Overall Langley Valley is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. The gently undulating network of ridges and valleys creates an enclosed landscape but with some urban influence.

**Visual Sensitivities**

- Expansive open views are possible from the tops of the valleys, often through gaps in vegetation
- Views within the valleys are generally more contained by landform
- Electricity pylons currently intrude on views within the centre of the Character Area
- The edge of Hitchin to the north east of the character area is visually intrusive some views
- Langley Valley has a strong visual relationship with the adjacent Langley Scarp

In visual terms, Langley Valley is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. Panoramic views from vantage points and views along the valleys are important features within the character area. These would be sensitive to the introduction of built features.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE**

Overall Langley Valley is considered to be of **moderate low landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Langley Valley are the sense of openness, but there is also a less memorable landform, lack of remoteness and general human influence on the landscape that detracts from it.



**EVALUATION**

**CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT**

**Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within Langley Valley, due to its rural and undeveloped nature. It would introduce a scale of development that would be out of keeping with the Character Area. Large scale development could not be accommodated within Langley Valley without a significant visual impact on the landscape. The undulating landform would also make major development very difficult to accommodate.

The landscape capacity for large urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

It may be possible to accommodate some small scale expansion of Hitchin within this Character Area, carefully designed and in keeping with the existing character. Mitigation planting and retention of existing woodland would also need to be given careful consideration, to ensure that there is not visual intrusion into the wider Character Area.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be moderate to low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would only be appropriate with improvements to the A505 within this Character Area. The majority of routes are rural in character. Upgrading of existing narrow, twisting lanes could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not generally be appropriate in this character area, as there are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area other than in the vicinity of Hitchin. Extensive development would also disrupt expansive views.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural nature or vernacular in form and style and in keeping with the rural character. Large buildings, if not carefully located, could erode the rural and undeveloped character of Langley Valley particularly within the AONB.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

**Large scale open storage**

The undulating landform within Langley Valley would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without ground modelling. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

**EVALUATION**

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively undisturbed and rural in appearance. Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction or waste disposal would not be in keeping. Restoration proposals for any consented schemes should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns. The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**Incremental small scale development**

There may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of an agricultural nature or vernacular in form and style and in keeping with the rural character. However, due to the existing open and undeveloped character any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the rural character and avoid impacts on the AONB. The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low to moderate.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are existing detractors within this Character Area at present, including electricity pylons. New utilities developments would have a significant impact on the rural character and extensive views experienced in Langley Valley. Any proposals would need clear justification to avoid impacts on the AONB. Large scale developments and tall elements would be highly visible within the Character Area. The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.

<b>GUIDELINES</b>	Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire
-------------------	--

## STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE

### Strategy: Reconstruct

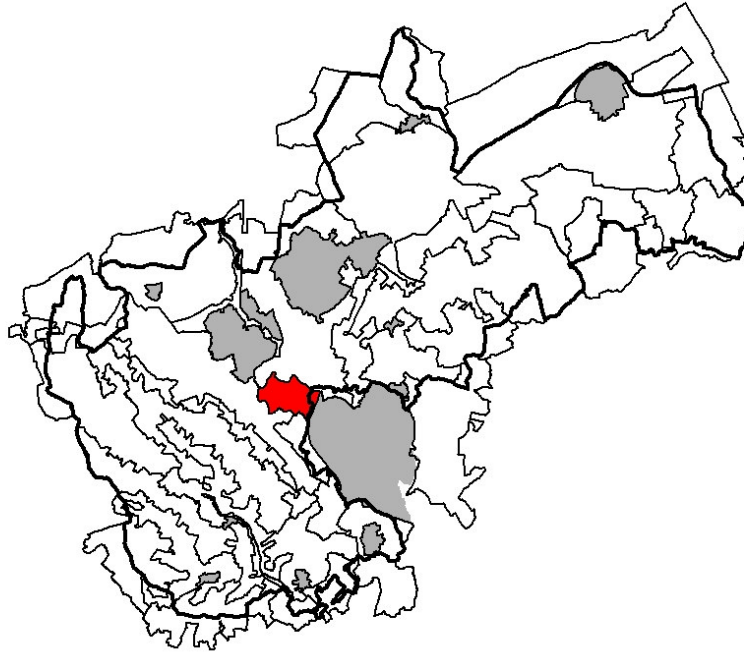
#### Landscape management guidelines

- Promote planting of new woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora especially in relation to sub-urban fringe areas
- For existing woodlands, encourage diverse woodland management practice and replanting of conifer plantations with new deciduous woodlands
- 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
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Encourage the planting of trees and appropriate species along water course
- Encourage the management of arable weed field margins
- Promote and develop the chalk grassland and scrub habitats along Wood Lane
- Encourage management of hazel and hornbeam coppice woodlands

#### Built development guidelines

- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- Retain the rural character of Langley Valley, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to Langley Valley
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing small woodland blocks
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in long distance views
- Avoid the location of new development on visually exposed ridge areas
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area
- Use the opportunity of any new developments to create new accessible green infrastructure for local communities
- Ensure redundant agriculture buildings subject to applications for change of use are monitored to ensure that they reflect the local building style

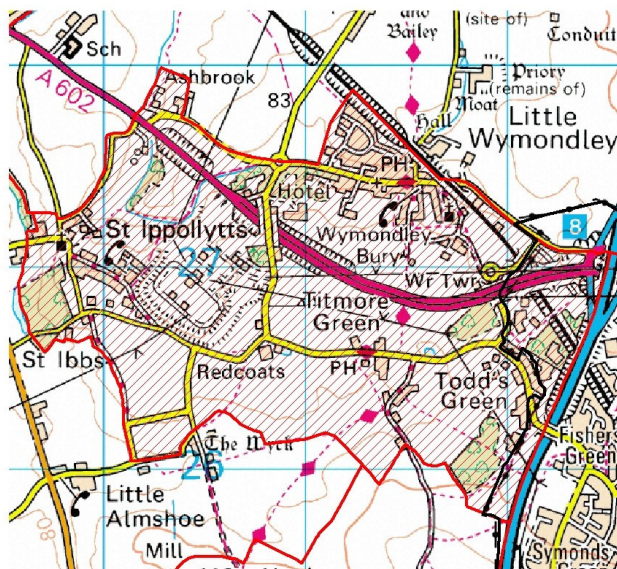
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

Located to the southeast of Hitchin and the northwest of Stevenage.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Rolling landform disguised by mature enclosed character. Smaller scale more intimate historic landscape characterised by winding lanes, smaller settlements and scattered farmsteads in the local vernacular and historic place names. Land use mixed arable and grazing. High proportion of mature tree cover.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Rolling chalk landscape
- Irregular sized fields in arable with parcels of grazing adjacent to settlements
- Historic pattern of small winding lanes and historic place names
- Mature tree cover

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Flint church at St Ippollitts
- Wymondley transformer station
- Proximity of A1(M) and Stevenage to the east
- A602 crossing partly on embankment and partly in cutting

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

Graves, tills and sands derived from a glacial outwash channel produce mixed soils from calcareous on outcrops of the underlying Chalk to neutral or mildly acid on tills.

**Topography**

Gently rolling, domed land form, falls away to north, west and south boundaries.

**Degree of slope**

Side slopes fall away at between 1:10 to 1:20.

**Altitude range**

85m to 95m.

**Hydrology**

The spring fed Ash Brook runs across the northwestern part to the Ippollitts Brook. Random distribution of small ponds throughout.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable use but with parcels of grazing land associated with settlements. Woodland cover and land used by statutory undertakers. Former mineral extraction.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Mainly oak and ash. Scattered mature hedgerow trees and relic patches of ancient woodland. Lucas Wood is listed on the ancient woodland inventory and is primarily composed of oak and hornbeam coppice, with frequent ash. Other area of similar coppice occur at Bury Wood and Margarets Wood.

Interesting grassland habitats are present in the region of Wymondley transformer station, reflecting acid, neutral and calcareous communities. The site is located within an old gravel pit. Semi-improved acid/neutral grassland occurs rarely eg at near Lucas Wood, calcareous grassland occurs at St Ippollitts.

Small-leaved sweet-briar rose, a nationally rare plant is recorded at Wymondley transformer station the only location in Hertfordshire where there are also important colonies of pyramidal and bee orchids.

Little Wymondley has important pipistrelle bat roosts.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

The 11th century church of St Ippolyts (Church of S Ypollitus 1283 dedicated to St Hippolytus) stands in St Ippollitts village. The northern part of the Character Area is dominated by the village of Little Wymondley which in 1086 was divided between William of Robert Gernon and Adam Fitz Hubert of the Bishop of Bayeux. Medieval components of the village are the 12th century church of St. Mary and evidence for a medieval village and a moated site at Wymondley Bury. A Roman cemetery is also documented in the vicinity of the village.

**Field pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape pattern is comprised of pre-18th century irregular enclosure to the south and informal medieval parkland to the west. The area immediately to the south of Little Wymondley is post 1950s enclosure. The 1816 estate map of the parish of Ippollitts and 1st edition OS 6" map demonstrates considerable developments in the landscape. Of particular interest is the disappearance of almost all the woodland and the loss of many field boundaries by 1881. Ippollitts common was enclosed under an Act of 1881.

**Transport pattern**

The pattern of winding lanes is interrupted by modern roads such as the A1(M) and the A602. The mainline railway cuts across the north east corner of the area.

**Settlements and built form**

The historic settlement pattern is one of villages and farms. Dispersed, scattered farmsteads and strings of wayside dwellings such as Todds Green and Titmore Green. Larger, more recent settlements at Little Wymondley. Ecclesiastical architecture in the area is represented by the 11th century church of St Ippolyt and the later medieval church of St Mary, both constructed using flint with stone dressings. Traditional buildings in the area date from the 15th-16th century and include the close studded and jettied Olive Branch (previously Olive Branch Inn) at Ippollitts. Later buildings are represented by the late Georgian Wymondley House.

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

The generally mature, well wooded quality of the area helps to integrate the existing settlements into the landscape, contrasting with landscape 'engineered' for highway infrastructure purposes or to support statutory undertakers plant.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

Well established, historic landscape character, comparatively unusual for its distinctive quality.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Notable detracting feature is the Wymondley transformer station and associated distributor pylons. The A602 dual carriageway linking Hitchin to Junction 8 of the A1(M), crosses the Character Area.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

The Hertfordshire Way long distance footpath crosses on a broadly north-south axis. Other footpaths cross and connect local settlements. The A602 has been designed to allow continuity of rights of way where paths have been crossed by the road.

**COMMUNITY VIEW**

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**

None

**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

Land cover change: Localised  
 Age structure of tree cover: Mature  
 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival: Scattered  
 Management of semi-natural habitat: Not obvious  
 Survival of cultural pattern: Declining/Relic  
 Impact of built development: Moderate  
 Impact of land-use change: Moderate

**Matrix Score: Moderate**

**ROBUSTNESS**

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

**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>				

**EVALUATION**

**INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**

**Landscape Character Sensitivities**

- The relatively small scale rolling landform landscape with small settlements and scattered farmsteads
- Patches and belts of mature/tall woodland of predominantly Oak and Ash including old specimen trees. The woodland is vulnerable to lack of management, incursion or removal
- Small fields and paddocks with well defined and vegetated boundaries surround the settlements. The area would be vulnerable to the removal of hedgerows and boundary vegetation
- The village of Little Wymondley, which lies to the north of the area would be vulnerable to inappropriate or unsympathetic development and any proposals, which are not in scale with the existing settlement
- The small settlements are characterised by village greens, which would be vulnerable to inappropriate development or unsympathetic management
- St Ippolytts church is located on upper ground and is a significant feature in the character area. The landmark would be vulnerable to unsympathetic development
- Enclosed farms and isolated settlements would be vulnerable to development or removal of associated boundary vegetation.
- There are limited public rights of way in the area. However the Hertfordshire Way does go through the character area and would be vulnerable to inappropriate or unsympathetic development
- The winding minor roads enclosed by hedgerows, which feed into the A602 and A1 would be vulnerable to improvements or upgrading.
- The character area consists of significant infrastructure including the A602, the

railway and it is bordered to the east by the A1. These elements are existing detractors to the character of the area.

- Wymondley transformer station and associated electricity pylons stride through the character area, creating an interrupted and fragmented character. They are an existing detractor to the landscape character.

Overall Wymondley and Titmore Green is considered to be of **low to moderate sensitivity**. The gently undulating arable farmland creates an enclosed character. However the area has been degraded by a number of factors including the infrastructure and the electricity transformer station.

**Visual Sensitivities**

- Views of St Ippolytts church on the skyline and views from the church into the valley
- Views from the character area into neighbouring parkland style character area (Langley Valley)
- Setting of the traditional villages and village greens

In visual terms, Wymondley and Titmore Green is considered to be of **low sensitivity**. Views within the character area are degraded by a number of factors including the infrastructure and the electricity transformer station.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE**

Overall Wymondley and Titmore Green is considered to be of **low landscape value**. Although there are a few isolated unusual views within the Character Area, the area has many incongruous elements including: the transport routes and high levels of human and urban influence on the landscape.



## EVALUATION

### CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT

#### Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural character. It would be of an inappropriate scale and would introduce elements that would urbanise the landscape, altering the character and removing the existing key characteristics.

The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

#### Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural character. The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low.

#### Major transport developments/improvements

This type of development would only be appropriate for improvements of the existing A1 and A602 within this Character Area. However it would be imperative that existing shelterbelts and earthwork mitigation were maintained or replaced. Upgrading of existing rural roads could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the settlements in the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be moderate.

#### Commercial/warehouse estates

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. There would also be restricted areas of level land for this type of development and substantial earthworks would be likely to be required.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

#### Individual large/bulky buildings

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings should be balanced by woodland shelterbelts and hedgerows to reflect the existing character of the area.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

#### Large scale open uses

The landform within Wymondley and Titmore Green would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without considerable ground modelling. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

#### Mineral extraction/waste disposal

Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction would not be in keeping with the character of Wymondley and Titmore Green. The minor roads would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. Restoration proposals for any consented schemes should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be moderate. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**Incremental small scale development**

There may be some very limited capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were in keeping with the rural character and incorporated into existing settlements such as Little Wymondley. However, due to the intimate scale of the landscape any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the rural character of Wymondley and Titmore Green.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low to moderate.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are existing urbanising elements within this Character Area at present. The Wymondley transformer station and associated electricity pylons are currently detractors in the area. New utilities developments would have an impact on the intimate scale and rural character of Wymondley and Titmore Green. Large scale developments and tall elements would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as potentially visible from surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.

**GUIDELINES**

Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire

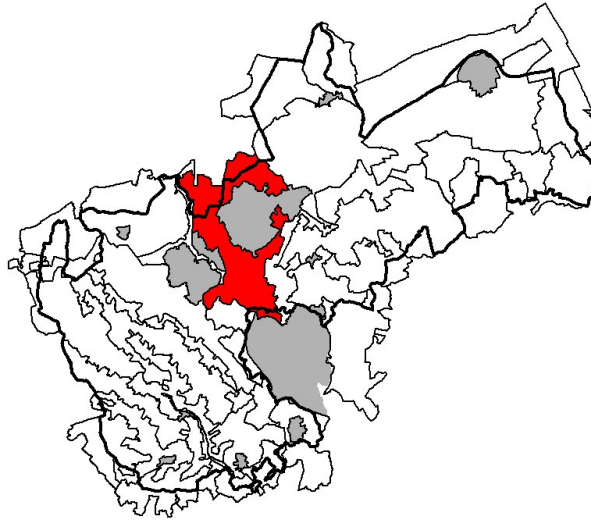
**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE**
**Strategy: Conserve and Restore**
**Landscape management guidelines**

- 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
- Encourage the managements of acidic neutral grassland areas
- Encourage the management of Oak and Hornbeam coppice
- Restore and enhance existing ponds, which provide valuable habitat for protected species e.g. Great Crested Newts
- Manage areas of paddocks and promote appropriate enclosures with hedges rather than wire fences

**Built development guidelines**

- Conserve the traditional character of the settlements, ensuring that any development located within or on the edge of the villages uses appropriate vernacular materials and features to avoid inappropriate visual impact
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- Encourage the retention and additional planting of vegetation along the A1 and A602 to enhance screening
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen any new development
- Retain the rural character and intimate scale of Wymondley and Titmore Green, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area
- Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations, such as on upper ground or where they would be visible on the skyline
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or the loss of surviving calcareous grassland habitats and ancient hedgerows
- Ensure that lighting associated with new development does not create additional urbanising influences on the Character Area
- Use the opportunity of any developments to create new accessible green infrastructure

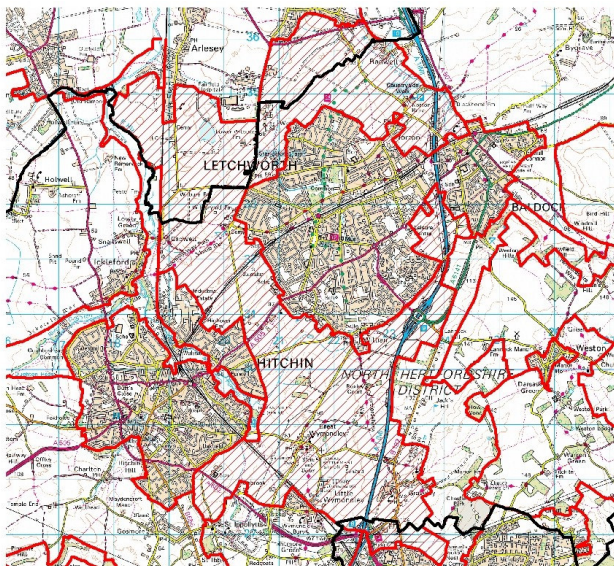
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The Character Area encloses Letchworth on its southern, western and northern sides. Part to the north is outside of the District boundary. The northeastern corner includes a short length of the River Ivel.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

To the south the rolling landform in a fold running north-south gradually merges into the gently undulating to low lying landform to the north.

There is a gradual change in character between the enclosed historic landscape in the south and the large scale open, exposed arable landscape in the north. Southern section is characterised by scattered small plantations and copses whilst to the north there are very few hedges and trees but linear shelter belts feature. The River Ivel corridor has a mature woodland setting and has been partly developed for recreational purposes.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large flat expansive arable landscape in the north
- Rolling arable landscape of large scale fields and with relatively few trees in the south
- Core defined by the urban development of Letchworth and Hitchin

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Well wooded valley landscape of the Ivel valley
- Former mineral workings at Blue Lagoon (Bedfordshire)
- Golf course landscape at Letchworth Hall Hotel
- Historic settlements at Great Wymondley
- Sewage works at Pix Brook
- A1(M) runs parallel to eastern boundary
- Mill house and lake on River Ivel at Radwell

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

Free draining loamy brown soils over Chalk but locally acidic on glacial gravels in the centre and south, and thin rendzinas where Chalk reaches the surface.

**Topography**

Relatively low lying basin - flat to gently undulating in the north merging into rolling landform further south. Spur at Wilbury Hill.

**Degree of slope**

Varies between 1:50 in the north to 1:20 in the south.

**Altitude range**

50m to 90m.

**Hydrology**

A number of minor water courses flow towards the River Purwell (Hitchin) or the River Ivel, to the north of Letchworth. The chalk springs of the Ivel rise from Melbourne Rock north of Baldock. Ponds are restricted to Norton and Wymondley on Boulder Clay.

**Land cover and land use**

The dominant land use is arable with pockets of horse grazing on urban fringes. Localised pockets of amenity use eg. golf course & caravan parks.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Woodlands are limited to a few rectangular shaped plantations. A few remaining gappy hedgerows include hornbeam, blackthorn and elm. Other roadside trees include poplar, sycamore, horse chestnut and ash. The course of the River Ivel has a greater variety of species including alder, ash, willow, sycamore, beech, dogwood, horse chestnut and extensive poplar plantations.

This Character Area has a sparse covering of recorded ecologically interesting sites.

The Wilbury Hills have a variety of soil types supporting unimproved acid, neutral and calcareous grasslands supporting the most westerly occurrence of Breckland type grasslands in Britain including the nationally scarce purple-stemmed cat's-tail grass. The underlying substrate is chalk capped with sand and glacial deposits of gravel. Some old meadows with interesting herbaceous species are present in the vicinity of Rosehill Hospital. An area of unimproved neutral grassland occurs within the grounds of Letchworth Golf Course, along with scrub, copses and a

stream.

The River Ivel has some ecologically interesting stretches of marginal and bankside vegetation in the very northeast otherwise wetland habitats are very limited but include marsh and fen along the Pix Brook, full herb fen and willow carr in the Ivel Springs area, spring-fed ponds at Wymondley Priory, reedbed north of Letchworth.

Species-rich road verges with flora typical of chalky substrates occur within the Character Area, eg at Norton Road. Ridge and furrow fields occur rarely, and are indicative of a long continuity of grassland cover. They frequently have a high diversity of plant species.

Kingfisher and wintering water rail may be seen on the Ivel along with grass snake generally rare in north Hertfordshire. Old allotments at Baldock are known for uncommon plants including the nationally scarce cornflower. Sulphur clover is recorded from the verge of Norton Road and several other localities.

Willian is important for pipistrelle, serotine and brown long-eared bats. Norton Pond is important for great crested newts. Wilbury Hills is important for common lizards. Radwell meadows are important grassland for birds, bats and water voles.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

The area to the north of Letchworth contains evidence of prehistoric, Roman and medieval activity. A prehistoric round barrow and ring ditch lie directly to the south of Radwell. There has been a manor (Radwell House) and mill at Radwell for over 1000 years. In close proximity to the northern perimeter of Letchworth are cropmarks of an enclosure and linear ditches and a medieval settlement containing earthworks and the 12th century church of St Nicholas. A settlement of unknown date lies within a complex of enclosures and linear ditches to the north of Baldock. To the northwest of Letchworth an area of earthworks describes well preserved ridge and furrow.

On the western margins of Letchworth a slight univallate hillfort is situated on Wilbury Hill. This feature is set within a complex of other prehistoric earthworks consisting of eleven ring ditches, Neolithic long barrow and large burial mound. Two bowl barrows lie to the southern end of the complex.

**ASSESSMENT**

Prehistoric sites to the south of Letchworth consist of two prehistoric ring ditches, three prehistoric ring ditches (east of Hitchin) and evidence for Iron Age occupation. A Roman villa lies on the eastern margin of Hitchin within a landscape containing two prehistoric ring ditches. Romano-British material is also documented at Great Wymondley.

There are several medieval sites in the south. During the reign of Edward the Confessor 8 hides in Great Wymondley were held by the church of St. Mary of Chatteris and by 1086 King William held 8 hides. On the southern periphery of Letchworth lies the remains of the 12th century church of All Saints belonging to the medieval settlement of Willian which is recorded in the Domesday Book as Wilie. This manor was held by Lewric, a house-carl, during the reign of Edward the Confessor and by 1086 was in the possession of Geoffrey de Bech. At the southern edge of the area lies Great Wymondley Castle which consists of motte and bailey, associated manorial enclosure and 12th century church of St. Mary. To the southwest are situated the remains of a medieval moated site, and a former hospital and Augustinian house – Wymondley Priory.

**Field pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape comprises a mixture of prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss, 18th century and later enclosure, post-1950s enclosure, prairie fields with relict elements within, and 18th century irregular enclosure. Today few hedges remain and field sizes are generally large. Field pattern is regular, geometric often laid out at broadly 90 degrees to the straight road alignments.

**Tansport pattern**

Roads in the north run in long straight sections across the landscape. In the south, adjacent to the historic settlement of Great Wymondley, the roads are winding lanes. The A1(M) cuts across the eastern part and there are a number of railway lines mainly on embankment.

**Settlements and built form**

The Character Area is confined between the urban fringes of Letchworth and Hitchin. To the south lies the historic settlement of Great Wymondley. The northern part generally sparsely settled with a number of modern farmsteads accessed off the road network. The historic settlement pattern is characterised by villages with a monastic centre to the south serving as a focus for medieval development. Traditional buildings date from the 17th century and include the early 17th century timber framed Wymondley Hall. Near the church at Willian is a small timber-framed cottage and Punchardon Hall (Guysfield Residential Home) a 17th century house of timber with an 18th century 7 bay brick façade. In the north is Radwell House dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century with 19<sup>th</sup> century alterations and Radwell Mill, 19<sup>th</sup> century with major alterations by Geoffrey Lucas in 1907.

**EVALUATION**

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

Large scale open landscape which provides views to the often poorly screened urban fringes of Letchworth, Hitchin and the A1(M).

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

This landscape type is not rare and is exhibiting typical pressures associated with urban fringe use.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Urban fringe is prominent in numerous locations as is the impact of the A1(M). Other road and rail corridors are dominant features in the landscape. Sewage works to the north of Letchworth and northeast of Hitchin (disused).

**ACCESSIBILITY**

The Character Area is crossed by a network of footpaths mainly connecting urban areas and smaller settlements. The Icknield Way and the Hertfordshire Way long distance paths cross the Character Area.

**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**

- LC2 Landscape Conservation Area
- SAM 90 Roman villa: (Site of) 300m N or Nine Springs
- SAM 104 Settlement site: S of Baldock Farm
- SAM 20615 Barrow S of Radwell
- SAM 20636 2 bowl barrows: 500m S of Fearnhill School
- SAM 20637 Great Wymondley Castle a motte and bailey castle and associated manorial enclosure 20m east of St. Mary's Church: Wymondley
- SAM 27908 Radwell Roman villa: Radwell
- SAM 29387 Slight univallate hillfort at Wilbury Hill: Letchworth
- SAM HT11518 Wymondley Priory, barn, moat, associated earthworks, enclosures, platforms, Holloway and conduit head: Wymondley

**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

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

**Matrix Score: Moderate**

**ROBUSTNESS**

Impact of landform: Apparent  
 Impact of land cover: Apparent  
 Impact of historic pattern: Prominent  
 Visibility from outside: Widely visible  
 Sense of enclosure: Open  
 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>		



## EVALUATION

## INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

## Landscape Character Sensitivities

- The character area is largely rural but is influenced by the pressures of urban areas and significant infrastructure systems. The core of the area is defined by the extents of Hitchin and Letchworth and would be vulnerable to development pressure. However the area should be retained as a green wedge between the two towns.
- There is a gradual change in landform and character from historic enclosed rolling arable landscape of the south to flat expansive arable fields in the north, creating a fragmented landscape character. The south of the character area would be vulnerable to loss of its historic character
- The character area has large arable fields with geometric regular patterns. The majority of boundary hedgerows to the north have been removed. The character area would be vulnerable to further removal of any existing field boundaries
- Smaller paddocks and horsiculture fields are found in close proximity to the settlements and would be vulnerable to development
- The southern area is characterised by the limited woodland of the character area. Generally in the form of small copses associated with isolated settlements. The woodland is vulnerable to lack of management or removal
- The southern area is also characterised by winding lanes with tall hedgerows and some hedge banks, particularly adjacent to the historic settlement of Great Wymondley. The area would be vulnerable to improvements or upgrading of the minor roads or any removal of the hedgerows
- The River Ivel crosses the north east of the character area. It is a well vegetated corridor including Alder, Ash, Willow, Sycamore and Beech. The removal or inconsistent management of these corridors would be detrimental to the character area.
- Recreation facilities in the area such as Letchworth Golf course add to the

urbanised characteristics. The character area is vulnerable to further conversion of natural elements into recreational facilities

- Electricity pylons stride through the character area in the south and Pix Brook sewage works in the north are existing detractors to the character of the area.
- The transport infrastructure is also a detractor. The A1 Borders the character area to the east and the area is crossed by a number of further busy roads. The railway also cuts through the character area. The area is vulnerable to further degradation from the removal of any existing screening
- There is generally limited public access through rights of way. However it does include sections of the Icknield Way, the Hertfordshire Way and Letchworth Garden City Greenway.

Overall Arlesey – Great Wymondley is considered to be of **low sensitivity**. There is significant urban influence and numerous landscape detractors.

## Visual Sensitivities

- Views of the countryside from the settlements are an important feature of the Character Area
- The small woodland copses and hedgerows to the south maintain the more enclosed historic character of the area
- Expansive views from higher ground create a sense of space and openness. However the views are not always high quality
- However existing urban edges are often raw, with scope for mitigation through screening with treebelts

In visual terms, Arlesey – Great Wymondley is considered to be of **low to moderate sensitivity**. Views are relatively open and would be sensitive to the introduction of further urbanizing features or elements, which detract from the character.

**EVALUATION**

**LANDSCAPE VALUE**

Overall Arlesey – Great Wymondley is considered to be of **low landscape value**. Adverse aspects within Arlesey – Great Wymondley are the large number of roads and transport routes and the presence of significant settlement to the fringes.

**EVALUATION**
**CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT**
**Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural character and the role of the land in separation Hitchin and Letchworth. It would be of an inappropriate scale and would introduce elements that would further urbanise the landscape, altering the character and removing the existing key characteristics.

The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development could be appropriate within this Character Area, adjacent to the existing settlements of Hitchin and Letchworth. Some small scale expansion should be carefully designed and in keeping with the existing character of the area while still retaining the importance of the separation between settlements.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be moderate to low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would only be appropriate for improvements of the existing infrastructure such as the A1 and railway lines. However it would be imperative that the existing shelterbelts were maintained or replaced. Upgrading of existing rural roads could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also further affect the tranquillity of the more rural sections of the Character Area. The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be moderate.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings should be balanced by shelterbelts and hedgerows.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

**Large scale open uses**

This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction would not be in keeping with the character of Arlesey – Great Wymondley. The minor roads may need upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. Restoration proposals for any consented schemes should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be moderate. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**Incremental small scale development**

There could be capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character

Area, particularly if they were in keeping with the existing character and incorporated into existing settlements. However any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the open gap between Hitchin and Letchworth and the rural character, particularly in the south of the character area. The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be moderate.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are existing urbanising elements within this Character Area at present. The existing busy infrastructure system and electricity pylons are currently detractors in the area. New utilities developments would have an impact on the more intimate scale and rural character associated with the south of the character area, particularly adjacent to Great Wymondley. Large scale developments and tall elements would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as potentially visible from surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.

**GUIDELINES**

Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire

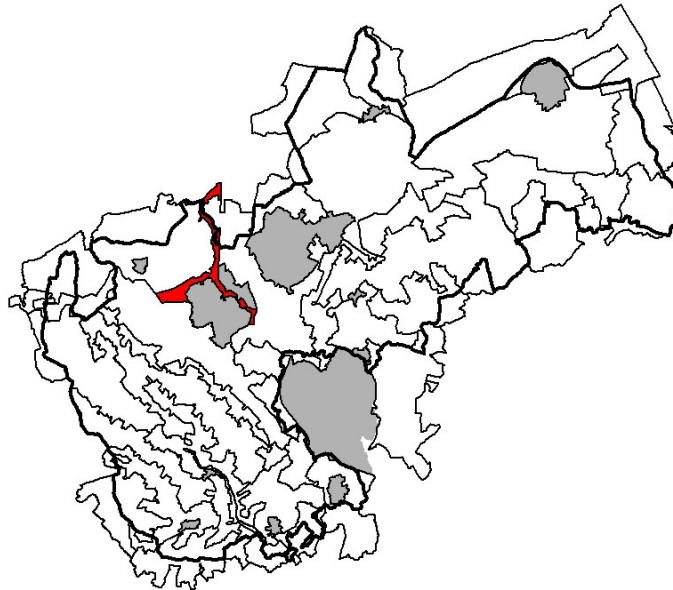
**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE**
**Strategy: Conserve and Restore**
**Landscape management guidelines**

- 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
- Encourage and develop the diversity of tree planting along the River Ivel
- In the south encourage the development of species-rich calcareous grassland habitats
- Encourage woodland planting, in small copses, around the fringes of sub-urban settlements
- Encourage small blocks of woodland planting along the A1 corridor and especially around Junction 9
- Manage areas of paddocks and promote appropriate enclosures with hedges rather than wire fences
- Encourage the management of Oak and Hornbeam coppice

**Built development guidelines**

- Conserve the traditional character of Great Wymondley and Graveley villages, ensuring that any development located on the edge of the village uses appropriate vernacular materials and features to avoid inappropriate visual intrusion
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges where present
- Encourage the retention of vegetation along infrastructure routes to ensure that it remains screened
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen any new development that could intrude in panoramic rural views
- Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations.
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or hedgerows
- Ensure that where appropriate new development provides mitigation for itself and where possible existing intrusive features in the vicinity
- Ensure that lighting associated with new development does not create additional urbanising influences on the character Area
- Use the opportunity of any developments to create new accessible green infrastructure

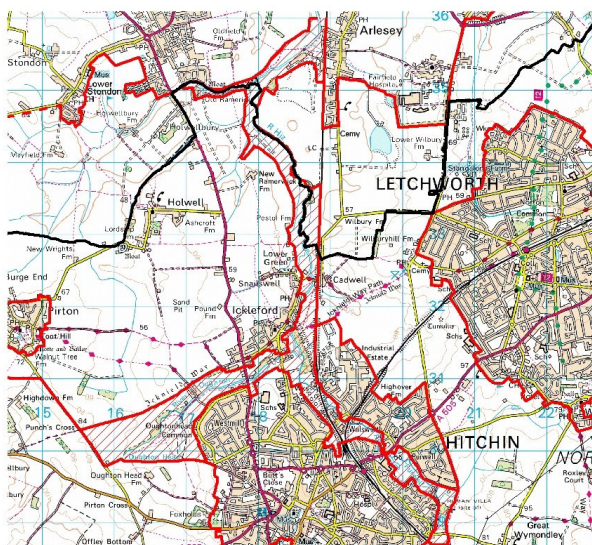
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The Purwell rises to the south east of Hitchin running broadly northward to join the River Hiz, beyond the District boundary. The River Oughton is a tributary of the Purwell running along the northern boundary to Hitchin. The District boundary follows the northern length of the water course.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Traditionally cattle grazed water meadows with poplar, willow and ash trees along the watercourses. Self seeded mature hawthorn also randomly distributed. Mature landscape character well defined by urban development (Hitchin). Trees restrict views. General change of land use adjacent to Ickleford where land is predominantly used for horse grazing and stabling. Paddocks are defined by post and barbed wire fencing. Character Area is crossed, in several locations, by the mainline railway which runs on embankment. Oughtonhead Common, to the west, managed as a local nature reserve.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Grazed water meadows
- Meandering water course with associated ponds and water bodies
- Linear woodland belts following the water course

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Mainline railway on embankment
- Public parkland at Ickleford
- Oughtonhead Common Nature Reserve
- Purwell Mill Nature Reserve

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

Poor draining gleyed soils over alluvial drift predominate.

**Topography**

Flat valley bottom.

**Degree of slope**

Negligible.

**Altitude range**

45m to 63m.

**Hydrology**

Well defined water courses of the rivers Oughton and Purwell with multiple channels and associated water bodies.

**Land cover and land use**

The dominant land use is grazing land within a patchwork of copses. Sheep grazing on dryer land, cattle on wetter areas and horse grazing adjacent to urban fringe.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Dominant trees are poplar, willow, ash and hawthorn. Scrub dog rose on dryer ground. Hawthorn often grazed to form a standard tree

This Character Area is characterised by a series of river valleys and associated wetland communities. The wetland habitats associated with the Rivers Hiz and Oughton are highlighted as being of high biodiversity status and ecological importance by the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan.

Ickleford Common is a rare example of an unimproved and traditionally managed grassland and is important for great crested newts. It is recognised as a key neutral grassland habitat by the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan.

Watercress beds and a number of rough unimproved/semi-improved wet grassland communities are located adjacent to the River Hiz. Some of these meadows are old, and have relict ditches and hedgebanks. Diverse wetland habitats including sedge-beds and reedbeds, marsh communities and spring-fed pools can be found at Cadwell Marsh and Bury Mead Springs Nature Reserve. Unimproved damp grasslands, spring-fed wetland communities and watercress beds occur around the River Purwell and its tributaries.

Oughtonhead Common and Nature Reserve contains

one of the largest fen woodlands in Hertfordshire, and is of considerable ecological interest. In particular it is important for carr woodland habitat with associated birds, bats and harvest mouse. The rivers Oughton and Hiz both have unusual habitat, and is probably the single most important feature of the site. Also present are areas of marshy grassland and fen. The rivers Purwell and Oughton are important for water voles and grass snake. Snipe roost in Purwell Meadows in winter. Purwell Ninesprings is another ecologically valuable wetland with mature alder woodland, sedge and reed beds.

Typical wetland species include southern marsh orchid, marsh valerian and tussock sedge, whilst fauna includes water rail, kingfisher, water vole and water shrew and the nationally notable musk beetle.

Railway sidings that run through this Character Area typically have scrub communities that can be of value to wildlife.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

A cropmark of a sub-rectangular enclosure is situated to the northwest of Hitchin.

**Field patterns**

The historic agricultural landscape is composed of a mixture of enclosed meadow pasture, prairie fields where abutting neighbouring Pirton Lowlands (LCA 218) with relict elements within 18th century and later enclosure, commons with an open margin to the north of Hitchin. On the periphery of Hitchin lies a mixture of 19th-20th century plantation, allotments, post-1950s enclosure, prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss and commons with an open margin. On the southern edge of Ickleford lies an area of informal medieval parkland. Today there is no apparent field pattern due to the use of this area for pasture. Where horse paddocks have been introduced post and wire fencing is dominant.

**Transport pattern**

The Character Area is crossed a number of times by the mainline railway on embankment. The A505 crosses the Character Area in the centre of Hitchin.

**Settlements and built form**

The historic settlement pattern is sparse containing no documented traditional buildings. The urban edge of Hitchin defined the extent of the river corridor. Railway infrastructure also dominates.

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

A mature water meadow landscape enclosed over part of its length by urban development. North of Hitchin the river flows across an open large scale arable landscape. The tree cover and pastureland provide a welcome contrast with the surrounding landscape. Railway noise is an issue.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

This landscape type is not uncommon within the county.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Views are restricted along the river corridor by well established blocks of vegetation. The urban fringe dominates/intrudes where tree cover is less well established.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Only local sections are public accessible, there is no continuous public right of way following the water courses. The Icknield Way long distance path crosses the river and railway at Ickleford. North of Ickleford there is no access to the river.

**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  
LNR Purwell Meadows



**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

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

**Matrix Score: Moderate**

**ROBUSTNESS**

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

**Matrix Score: Moderate**

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

**EVALUATION**

**INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**

**Landscape Character Sensitivities**

- A valley floor character area, including the River Purwell, Hiz and Oughton, defined in part by the urban development of Hitchin. The character area would be sensitive to any development, which diluted the character of the river valley landscape
- The watercourses are meandering and associated with ponds and water bodies. The character area would be vulnerable to the loss of these features
- The valley is characterised by water meadows, which are grazed by cattle. The character area would be sensitive to any loss of or development on the water meadows
- Land use adjacent to Ickleford has changed to horsiculture, resulting in hedgerow field boundaries being replaced by post and wire fences. This practice should be discouraged as it is detrimental to the character of River Oughton and Purwell Valleys
- The river corridor is well vegetate and dominated by Willow, Poplar and Ash. The character area would be vulnerable to the removal of the vegetation
- The vegetation associated with the River Oughton is less mature than the majority of the character area. The young vegetation is vulnerable to lack of management
- River Oughton and Purwell Valleys are characterised by areas of open landscape, including Oughtonhead, Walsworth and Ickleford common and Purwell Mill Nature Reserve. The character area would be vulnerable to the loss or lack of management of these important sites
- The character area provides significant recreation facilities including, sports pitches, skate parks and play areas. The character would be vulnerable excessive facilities diluting the natural character of the area
- Watercress beds are a historic element within the character area, found adjacent to the River Hiz. The character area is vulnerable to lack of management or

- removal of such historic characteristics
- The character area is affected by the roads and railway line, which create frequent disturbance in the area. Some of the open spaces are divided by the roads and the rivers have been culverted in areas, which is detrimental to the natural character of River Oughton and Purwell Valleys
- The urban development of Hitchin defines parts of the character area but is also intrusive, where there is limited vegetation. The character area is vulnerable to inappropriate or unsympathetic development
- There is reasonable public access through River Oughton and Purwell Valleys including the Icknield Way

Overall River Oughton and Purwell Valleys is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. The character area provides an informal and naturalistic landscape with recreational facilities within and surrounding Hitchin. However there has been some degradation of character due to the road and rail connections

**Visual Sensitivities**

- There are few views of the river corridor from the urban housing areas
- Views of the river from the open landscape are frequent along the river corridor

In visual terms, River Oughton and Purwell Valleys is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. Views along the valley and of the river would be sensitive to degradation.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE**

Overall River Oughton and Purwell Valleys is considered to be of **moderate low landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within the Character Area are the variety in scale and texture, the relative sense of remoteness and extensive vegetation. However, built development in Hitchin heavily influences the area.

**EVALUATION**

**CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT**

**Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the natural character, features and presence of the rivers within River Oughton and Purwell Valleys. A proportion of the character area is within the Environment Agency’s designated floodplain, further restricting the landscape capacity for such development.

The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the presence of the rivers. A proportion of the character area is within the Environment Agency’s designated floodplain, further restricting the landscape capacity for such development.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would only be appropriate for improvements of the existing road and rail connections. However it would be imperative that any work was mitigated through the planting of appropriate shelterbelts.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be moderate.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

There is some limited capacity for this type of large scale development within the character area, adjacent to the railway line and with the existing development of this scale. However due to the existing character any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the natural character of River Oughton and Purwell Valleys. The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be moderate to low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There is some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings within the character area, adjacent to the railway line, if in keeping with existing development of this scale. However due to the existing character any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the natural character of River Oughton and Purwell Valleys. The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be moderate to low.

**Large scale open storage**

The landform and presence of the river and associated land uses in the character area would make it difficult to accommodate large scale ‘open’ uses. This would not be in keeping with the natural character of the area and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics.

The landscape capacity for large scale ‘open’ uses is considered to be low.

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

Some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures. Larger scale extraction or waste disposal would not be in keeping with the character of the area. For any consented schemes, restoration proposals could include wetland habitats and features and include for additional planting and access in keeping with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low to moderate. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

## EVALUATION

### **Incremental small scale development**

There may be some very limited capacity for carefully located and designed individual properties within the Character Area, particularly if they were in keeping with the character of Hitchin. However the presence of the floodplain restricts the landscape capacity for such development.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low.

### **Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

New utilities developments would have a major impact on the character of River Oughton and Purwell Valleys. Large scale developments, tall elements such as these would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as potentially visible in surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low.

**GUIDELINES**

Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire

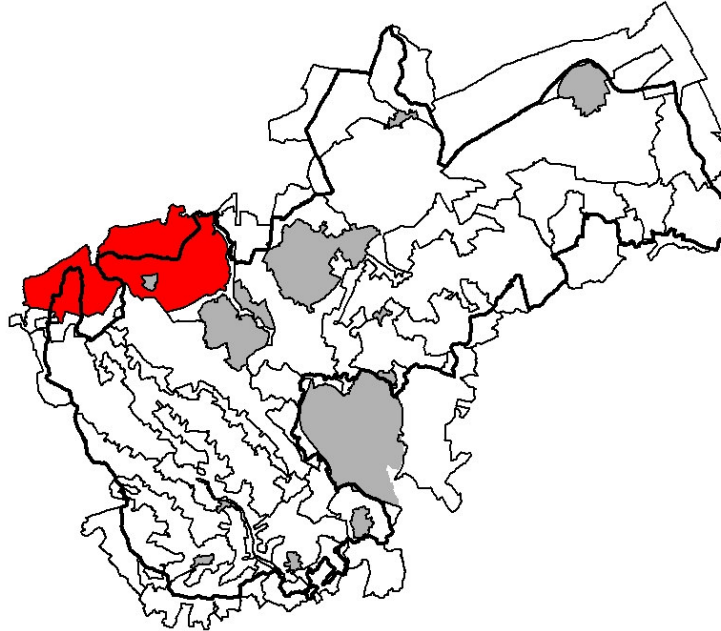
**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE**
**Strategy: Improve and Conserve**
**Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote and encourage maintenance of existing pasture land within the river valley
- Retain, manage, reinstate and extend water meadow and grazing pasture within and along the valley floor to provide connectivity and reduce nutrient leaching from arable to watercourses
- Restore and reinstate riparian features and vegetation including willow pollards, wet woodland and specimen native black poplar
- Manage and restore patterns of natural watercourses and associated habitats including secondary streams to valley sides, braided watercourses, cut offs
- Promote the creation of new and retention of existing ditches connecting to the river
- Promote and encourage the biodiversity of locally native species
- Promote and maintain semi-natural habitats along the river
- Promote the planting of trees including appropriate protection within grazing areas
- Restore and enhance ponds which provide valuable habitat for protected species
- Where appropriate promote and encourage public access to the river
- Avoid damage to the river banks as a result of agricultural or other practices
- Do not clear vegetation from river banks where evidence of use for perching and nesting
- Conserve, monitor and enhance river margin habitats for protected species
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire enclosures to new grazing areas

**Built development guidelines**

- Avoid any development in the floodplain of the Rivers
- Retain the character of River Oughton and Purwell Valleys, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area
- Planting should reflect existing patterns, to mitigate buildings
- Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations
- Ensure that lighting associated with new development does not create additional urbanising influences on the character Area
- Manage and enhance the river valley as a corridor for green infrastructure proposals and habitat creation
- Create new and enhanced landscapes in visually prominent urban fringes softening the interface between urban and rural landscapes

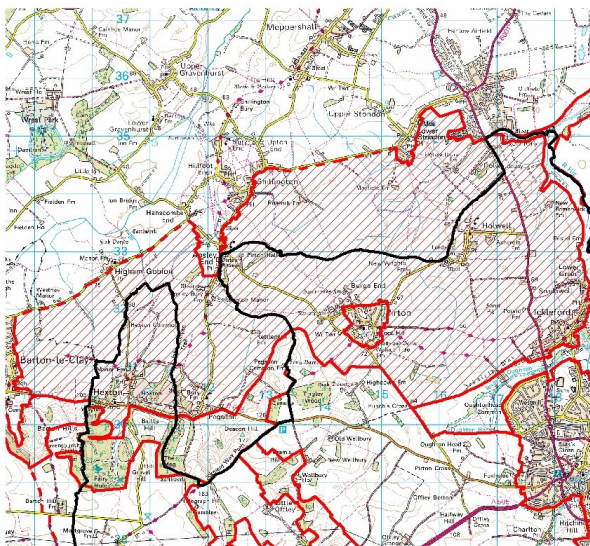
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

Lowland area to the north of the Chiltern scarp, extends from Barton le Clay in the west to the Purwell Valley in the east. Approximately half is outside the District boundary.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Large scale open, flat farming landscape given over predominantly to arable production. Long distance views of features such as water towers, churches and the chalk scarp. Remnant hedges, gappy and predominantly hawthorn but with occasional mature trees. Hedges generally well trimmed. Very little woodland cover except adjacent to settlements. Settlement pattern is nucleated with older settlements maintaining the use of local vernacular materials. Occasional farmsteads are less well integrated in terms of materials and general scale of farm buildings. Additionally the A600, Bedford Road, is quite prominent in the east.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large scale open flat farmland landscape
- Arable production
- Remnant hedgerows
- Woodland shelter around settlements

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Hexton Manor and Gardens
- A600 Bedford Road

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

Free draining, loaming brown soils over Chalk and Chalk Marl below the scarp merge into the Gault Clay plain of Bedfordshire.

**Topography**

Flat, low lying but with a gentle fall to the north.

**Degree of slope**

Imperceptible.

**Altitude range**

55m to 65m.

**Hydrology**

A number of local streams at Hexton and Pirton rising from the foot of the Chalk scarp to the south run northwards across the Character Area feeding minor tributaries of the river Ivel. Spring fed moats and ponds occurs at Pirton, Holwell and Hexton.

**Land cover and land use**

The land use is given over predominantly to arable production. Very little woodland cover except that associated with local settlements, eg plantations of beech and sycamore at Hexton and Pirton Grange. Occasional pasture on fringes of settlements.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Remnant hedgerows include ash, willow and poplar trees. Hedges mainly hawthorn. Other roadside trees include ash, sycamore and occasional oak. White willows mark watercourses.

This is a predominantly arable Character Area on flat ground. Arable plants such as pansies and cornsalads have become increasingly rare as agricultural practices have intensified, however, they can still be found at a few locations within the Character Area. Mature trees and the standing or fallen deadwood associated with them are very valuable from an ecological perspective supporting communities of saprophytic invertebrates and saproxylic animals in decline in the wider countryside. Hexton Manor Park has some of this wood pasture habitat.

White clawed cray fish have been recorded in watercourses near Hexton and otters to the north.

Hexton and Toot Hill are very important for bats (Natterers, Daubentons, pipistrelle and brown long-eared) and great crested newts.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

The Domesday Survey records that Pirton was assessed at 10 hides and of these 2 hides were in demesne. At the village of Pirton itself there is a preserved motte and bailey castle (Toot Hill) and the 12th century parish church of St. Mary. An Anglo-Saxon cemetery is documented and to the northeast at Rectory Farm is a medieval moated site, and a Scheduled Ancient Monument. In the 13th century the manor of Ickleford was held by the lords of Pirton as a quarter of the knight's fee by the family of Foliot. A medieval settlement site lies on the northwest perimeter of Ickleford and contains the 12th century church of St. Katherine. Prehistoric and Romano-British sites represented by ring ditches, occupation material and burials are located between Pirton and Ickleford. The village of Hexton is recorded in the Domesday Book as Hegestanestone and contains a 13th century church of St. Faith. Cropmarks of a rectangular enclosure are situated to the west and a medieval moated lies to the south of Shillington.

**Field patterns**

The historic agricultural landscape comprises a mixture of prairie fields with relict elements within, prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss and post-1950s enclosure. 18th century and later enclosure is concentrated to the northeast of Pirton and pre-18th century enclosure and informal medieval parkland to the south of Shillington. Today there are patchy unmanaged hedges, few hedgerow trees and large-scale remnant field pattern.

**Transport pattern**

Roads follow the older pattern of winding lanes but with more recent straight roads cutting across the area. The A600 Bedford Road is visible in the surrounding landscape.

**Settlements and built form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by villages, estates and farms. Some more recent ribbon development at Holwell and the A600 Bedford Road. There are large scale farmstead developments. Many fine traditional buildings occur particularly in and around the nucleated settlement of Pirton. Examples here date from the 16th century and include a range of types and materials. The stone built Rectory Farm was apparently once the manor house of the rectory manor and has attached barns

**ASSESSMENT**

including a tithe barn of 16th century origin. Other examples include Old Hall which is built of flint with brick quoins and stone dressings, Hammonds Farm of timber and brick, c.1600 and the moated courtyard house of Pirton Grange is also dated to c.1600. An exception in the use of building materials can be found at the moated manor house of Old Ramerick, Ickleford which has a 17th century wing built of clunch with brick quoins.



**EVALUATION**

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

Bland, featureless, vast scale landscape with remnant hedges. Farmsteads tend to be large scale and dominant features not integrated in to the landscape. Vehicles on the A600 prominent in the landscape.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

This landscape type is not common in this part of the District. It is, however a common feature of the lowlands landscape to the north.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Local farmsteads in modern materials are a prominent feature in the landscape. Vehicles on the A600.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

A number of footpaths radiate out from Pirton village across the surrounding landscape. The area is generally well served by public rights of way.

**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**

AONB	The Chilterns
LC1	Landscape Conservation Area
SAM 11568	Pirton Grange moated enclosure and associated settling pond: Pirton
SAM 13612	Toot Hill motte and bailey castle and shrunken medieval village: Pirton
SAM 20648	Moated site and associated enclosure at Rectory Farm: Pirton
GD 1907	Hexton Manor

**EVALUATION**

**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:	Declining/Relic
Impact of built development:	Moderate
Impact of land-use change:	Moderate

---

**Matrix Score:** **Poor**

---

**ROBUSTNESS**

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

---

**Matrix Score:** **Weak**

---

<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>				

## EVALUATION

## INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

## Landscape Character Sensitivities

- A low lying, flat, large scale rural character area, approximately half of which is outside the district boundary
- Settlements are generally small and nucleated in pattern, characterised by vernacular materials. The character area would be vulnerable to inappropriate or unsympathetic development and any proposals that are not in scale with the existing settlements
- There is very little woodland cover except shelterbelts adjacent to settlements, which create a balance in the landscape for the built form. The area would be vulnerable to the removal of the shelterbelts
- The character area consists mainly of large-scale arable fields with fragmented remnant hedgerows as boundary vegetation. Many hedgerows have been removed and this has degraded the landscape. The area would be vulnerable to the removal of hedgerows and boundary vegetation
- Farmsteads and isolated settlements are generally large and less well integrated into the landscape. The scale of the farm buildings should be balanced with shelterbelts. Pirton Lowlands character would be further diluted if any existing shelterbelts were removed
- The older rural roads are quiet and winding. They were traditionally enclosed by hedgerows. However some hedgerows have been removed and other include dead elm. The character area would be sensitive to improvements/upgrading of the rural roads or further removal of associated vegetation
- The larger roads such as the A600 are detractors in the area, which are associated with linear developments. These features dilute the character of the area
- Watercourses cross the character area and have associated vegetation. Removal of these would be detrimental to the character of the area.
- Shillington Manor and Hexton Manor create a parkland character in areas within Pirton Lowlands, typically with specimen trees. These areas could be at risk from development pressure and unsympathetic management
- Horsiculture paddocks are also present and associated with settlements. Hedgerows are have been replaced by post and rail fencing. The area is vulnerable to the further loss of hedgerow boundary treatment
- The character area includes some historic features such as a preserved Motte and Bailey castle at Toot Hill, a medieval moated site and scheduled ancient monuments. These features could be at risk from development pressure and inconsistent management
- Pirton Lowlands characteristics creates a strong contrasting relationship with the neighbouring scarp slope, which should be preserved
- Relatively good public access through several rights of way including the John Bunyan Trail and the Icknield Way
- A small part of the area is within the Chilterns AONB

Overall Pirton Lowlands are considered to be of **moderate to low sensitivity**. The low lying, flat large arable fields, vegetated water courses and areas of parkland character create a quiet rural character. However there has been some degradation due to loss of hedgerows and field patterns and the busy main roads.

**Suggested Draft text to add to Evaluation and Guidelines sections  
of Landscape Character Areas of North Herts LCA**

**The Landscape Partnership March 2011**

location	assessment	<b>evaluation</b>	guidelines	<b>PIRTON LOWLANDS</b>	Area <b>218</b>
----------	------------	-------------------	------------	------------------------	-----------------

**EVALUATION**

**Visual Sensitivities**

- Expansive views are possible throughout the character area
- The character area consists of significant views towards the neighbouring chalk scarp
- The small shelterbelts break up the views across the landscape and create a sense of enclosure around the settlements
- Shillington and Hexton Manor form local landmarks

In visual terms, Pirton Lowlands is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. Views within the character area and towards the neighbouring chalk scarp are relatively open and would be sensitive to the introduction of urbanizing features.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE**

Overall Pirton Lowlands is considered to be of **low landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Pirton Lowlands are the relative lack of incongruous elements and remote character with expansive views. However, the influence of human activity is very noticeable within the Character Area and there is a lack of a distinctive sense of place.

**Suggested Draft text to add to Evaluation and Guidelines sections  
of Landscape Character Areas of North Herts LCA**

**The Landscape Partnership March 2011**

location	assessment	<b>evaluation</b>	guidelines	<b>PIRTON LOWLANDS</b>	Area <b>218</b>
----------	------------	-------------------	------------	------------------------	-----------------

**EVALUATION**

**CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT**

**Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. It would be of an inappropriate scale and would introduce elements that would urbanise the landscape, altering the character and removing the existing key characteristics. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing rural roads, which could erode the character of the landscape.

The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would not be suitable for the Character Area, due to its rural character.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would only be appropriate for improvements of the existing A600 within this Character Area. However it would be imperative that associated hedgerows and shelterbelts were maintained or replaced. Upgrading of existing rural roads could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be moderate.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Existing minor roads would be inappropriate for any significant larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs. Any upgrading of the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings should be balanced by shelterbelts and hedgerows to reflect the existing character of the area.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

**Large scale open storage**

The rural character of Pirton Lowlands would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without significant impact. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics. The minor roads are unlikely to have capacity to accommodate development or would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs, which would further dilute the landscape character.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

**Suggested Draft text to add to Evaluation and Guidelines sections  
of Landscape Character Areas of North Herts LCA**

**The Landscape Partnership March 2011**

location	assessment	<b>evaluation</b>	guidelines	<b>PIRTON LOWLANDS</b>	Area <b>218</b>
----------	------------	-------------------	------------	------------------------	-----------------

**EVALUATION**

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction would not be in keeping with the open character of Pirton Lowlands. The minor roads would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. Restoration proposals for any consented schemes should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be moderate. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**Incremental small scale development**

There may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were vernacular in style and form and in keeping with the rural character. In addition, carefully planned small scale expansion or infilling of the existing settlements could be appropriate. However, due to the existing open and undeveloped character any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the potential erosion of the rural character of Pirton Lowlands.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be moderate.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are very few urbanising elements within this Character Area at present. There are currently few detractors in the areas. New utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines would have a major impact on the rural character of Pirton Lowlands. Large scale developments, tall elements such as these would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as potentially visible in surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low.

**Suggested Draft text to add to Evaluation and Guidelines sections  
of Landscape Character Areas of North Herts LCA**

**The Landscape Partnership March 2011**

location	assessment	evaluation	<b>guidelines</b>	<b>PIRTON LOWLANDS</b>	Area <b>218</b>
----------	------------	------------	-------------------	------------------------	-----------------

**GUIDELINES**

Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE**

**Strategy: Reconstruct**

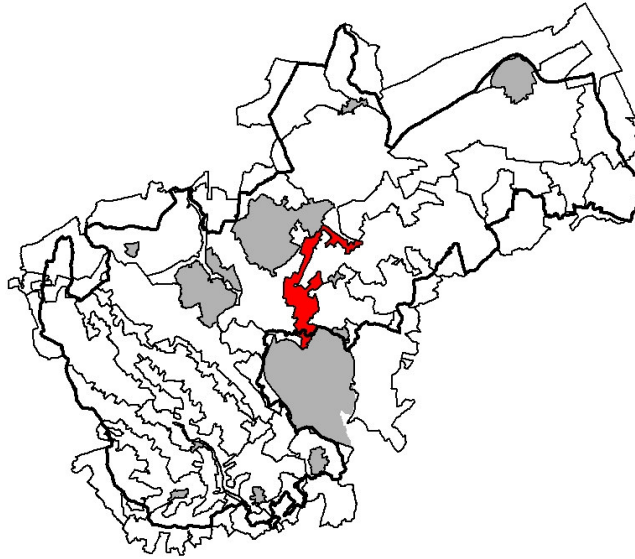
**Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote planting of new woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora especially in relation to sub-urban fringe areas
- For existing woodlands, encourage diverse woodland management practice and replanting of conifer plantations with new deciduous woodlands
- Promote the creation of buffer zones between areas of 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 fields hedges in place of post and wire fencing to new grazing areas
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedgerows and verges
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Encourage the development of unimproved species-rich grassland habitats
- Promote the creation of new ponds and the retention of existing ponds for wildlife
- Encourage the planting of shelter belts
- Encourage the planting of trees and other appropriate vegetation along watercourses
- Recognise and conserve the visual foreground relationship to the prominent chalk scarp
- Maintain the distinctiveness of river corridors from adjacent arable land
- Manage areas of new paddocks and promote appropriate enclosures with hedges rather than wire fencing

**Built development guidelines**

- Conserve the traditional character of the settlements, ensuring that any development located on the edge of or within the villages uses appropriate vernacular materials and features to avoid inappropriate visual intrusion
- Protect and preserve the pattern of rural lanes and associated hedgerows
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in panoramic rural views
- Retain the rural character of Pirton Lowlands, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area
- Avoid the location of new development in visually intrusive locations
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or the loss of surviving species-rich grassland habitats and ancient hedgerows
- Ensure that lighting associated with new development does not create additional urbanising influences on the character Area
- Conserve the open chalk landscape with its expansive views protecting the landscape from inappropriate land uses, structures and built development which would conflict with openness

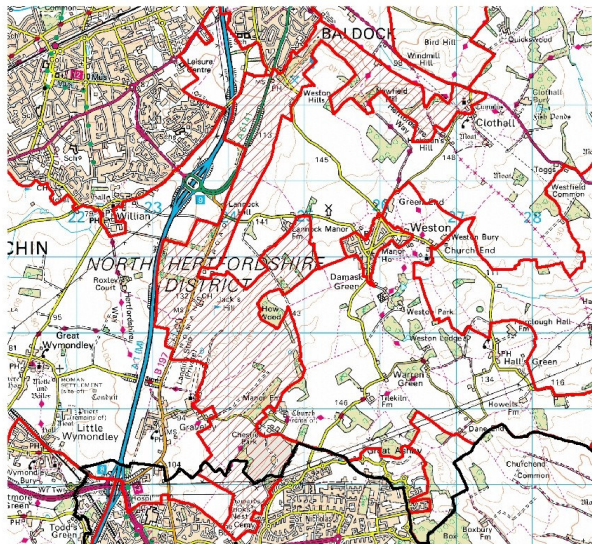
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

Located to the east of the A1(M), stretching in a narrow band from the north of Stevenage to a point southeast of Baldock, where the scarp turns through 90° and runs in a southeasterly direction.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Steeply sloping in places chalk scarp, eroded by local valleys, mostly dry, to form an undulating landform. Two deeply incised valleys southwest of Weston still carry streams, which feed a number of water features. Extensive arable fields of cereals with occasional patches of pasture land. Sparse woodland cover. General lack of development.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Undulating chalk scarp with local steep sided valleys
- Large arable fields
- Small, occasional plantations, or shelter belts
- Small sunken lanes and footpaths climbing up the slope

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- B197 Roman road cuts across the contours
- Abuts suburban edge to Baldock in the north and Stevenage in the south
- Small reservoirs and telecommunications masts
- Caravan park to north of Graveley
- Rooks Nest House (Setting for Howards End), is identified with an area known as Forster Country



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

Chalk overlain by shallow rendzina and calcareous loam soils.

**Topography**

Steeply sloping scarp face.

**Degree of slope**

Generally varies between 1:5 to 1:20.

**Altitude range**

100m to 135m.

**Hydrology**

Generally dry except for two local valleys which have been eroded in the scarp face. These rise on the western side of Weston Village, running in parallel steep sided valleys towards Graveley. The streams feed a series of water features.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable land with occasional pockets of pasture land. Small plantations. Southern part falls within Chesfield Park.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Scarp slope with associated calcareous grassland communities, which can be of significant wildlife value. Scrub and broadleaved semi-natural woodland also occur. Small woods are important for fallow deer. Old beech plantations occur at Weston Hills at Ledgerside/Chesfield Park.

Chalk grassland was historically widespread. Important remaining sites include New Field Hill Nature Reserve and Ledgeside Downs, with vestiges on road verges. Chalk grassland remnants include species such as autumn gentian, common valerian, eyebright and orchids, notably the southern marsh orchid at its only extant dry chalk site in Hertfordshire at Weston Hills. Witebeam at Ledgerside is the most easterly native site in the county. Unimproved calcareous grassland is an uncommon habitat present as only 0.25% of land cover in North Hertfordshire. It is a notably species-rich habitat which is home to an array of invertebrate and plant species, many of which are becoming increasingly uncommon in a local and national context.

The expanse of Chesfield Park is improved grassland.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Clothall was a medieval village and lies at the northeastern edge of the Character Area. The parish church of St Mary, Clothall, dates to the 12th century. To the south of the church lies Clothall House, the former rectory with a tithe barn and cottage within the grounds. Iron Age occupation straddles part of the Roman road, which runs through the western part of the area. Cropmarks of a double ditch lie towards the north of the area.

Rooks Nest House is best known as the childhood home of novelist E M Forster, author of *Howards End*, who was brought to the house by his mother in 1883.

**Field Pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape pattern consists of a mixture of post 1950s enclosure, prairie fields with 1950s boundary loss, 18th century and later enclosure, informal medieval parkland, prairie fields with relict elements within, 19th – 20th century plantation and pre-18th century irregular enclosure. Ancient woodland lies to the north and there are two water reservoirs, one to the north and one in the southwest.

**Transport Pattern**

Small sunken lanes and footpaths climbing up the slope. The Roman road cuts across the contours.

**Settlement and Built Form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by sparse settlement consisting of farmsteads and part of the historic settlement of Clothall. Traditional buildings are therefore scarce but an example can be found at Clothall House, a five bay, two storey Georgian brick house which was formerly the rectory.

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

Extensive views from the scarp over the lowland landscape to the north and south.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

Distinctive scarp edge, relatively common in North Hertfordshire.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Area comparatively undisturbed with localised infrastructure and water pumping station.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Area to north crossed by road and footpath network. Area to south more remote but crossed 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**

LC2 Landscape Conservation Area

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

**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

---

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

---

**ROBUSTNESS**

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

---

**Matrix Score:** **Weak**

---

<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>				

## EVALUATION

## INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

## Landscape Character Sensitivities

- A large scale landscape with steeply sloping and undulating chalk scarp. It is rural in character, which would be vulnerable to the addition of built or urbanizing features
- Large scale arable fields are the predominant land use, with occasional pockets of pasture and linear plantations
- The landscape is also used for a variety of recreational activities including: 'pick your own', golf courses, horseculture and an airfield. However the landscape would be vulnerable to further recreational land uses, particularly if they alter the existing character
- The area includes a number of Ash woodland belts and old Beech plantations in the southeast of the Baldock Gap associated with registered park and garden, Chesfield Park. These woodlands are vulnerable to lowering water tables, lack of management or removal
- Baldock Gap is almost unsettled, with most isolated development occurring on the edges of the Character Area and along the B197 (a Roman Road).
- Access through the Character Area is limited to two significant roads, the B197 Roman Road cuts across the contours. Associated vegetation is significant, providing good containment to the road. The area would be sensitive to vegetation loss in this situation. The more modern A505 cuts through the scarp slope more sympathetically.
- There are a limited number of rights of way in the area
- Hedgerows are not a frequent feature of Baldock Gap and are variable in height and management

- The landform is smooth with limited enclosure and despite its rural character it is not tranquil due to the significant movement generated by the busy infrastructure system in and adjacent to the area

Overall Baldock Gap is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. The large scale steeply sloping chalk scarp creates a dramatic landscape with limited urban influence.

## Visual Sensitivities

- The open undeveloped skyline is an important feature of the Character Area
- Panoramic views are common from the scarp towards the lower lying land in the west and north. Views are less pronounced to the south, which is more of a valley landform
- Small telecommunications masts currently intrude on the skyline within the Character Area
- The edge of Stevenage to the south of the character area is visually intrusive

In visual terms, Baldock Gap is considered to be of **high sensitivity**. Views to the open undeveloped skyline are an important feature both within the character area and from adjacent areas. These would be sensitive to the introduction of built and urbanizing features.

## LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Baldock Gap is considered to be of **moderate landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Baldock Gap are the intactness of the landscape, a recognisable sense of place, the striking landform, memorable views, the visual interest, the sense of openness and the visible expressions of the local geology.

**EVALUATION****CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT****Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within Baldock Gap, due to its rural and undeveloped nature. It would introduce a scale of development that would be entirely out of keeping with the Character Area. Large scale development could not be accommodated within the Baldock Gap without a significant visual impact on the open undeveloped skyline. The steeply sloping and undulating landform would also make major development very difficult to accommodate.

The landscape capacity for large urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and largely unsettled character. Visual impacts could be high, due to the panoramic views and undeveloped skylines currently experienced.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development has recently occurred in the Character Area, with the A505 Baldock Bypass, which follows a reasonably sensitive alignment and design. However upgrading of existing narrow, twisting lanes could erode the character of the landscape.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be moderate.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area, as there are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Extensive development would also disrupt the open undeveloped slopes and skyline.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of a vernacular form or style and in keeping with the rural character. Large buildings, if not carefully located, could erode the rural and undeveloped character of the Baldock Gap.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

**Large scale open storage**

The landform within Baldock Gap would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without considerable ground modelling. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics. Extensive development would also disrupt the open views and sloping landform.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively undisturbed and rural in appearance. Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction or waste disposal would not be in keeping. The characteristic landform would also be adversely affected if mineral extraction were to occur.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**EVALUATION**

**Incremental small scale development**

There is very limited capacity for small scale developments within the Character Area. Baldock Gap is almost unsettled, with the only isolated development at present occurring on the edges of the Character Area. This is already intrusive creating a less intact landscape.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are few vertical built and urbanising elements within this Character Area at present. New utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines would have a major impact on the rural character of Baldock Gap and be detrimental to the open skyline of the character area. Large scale structures such as these would be highly visible within Baldock Gap, as well as potentially visible in surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low.

**GUIDELINES**

Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire

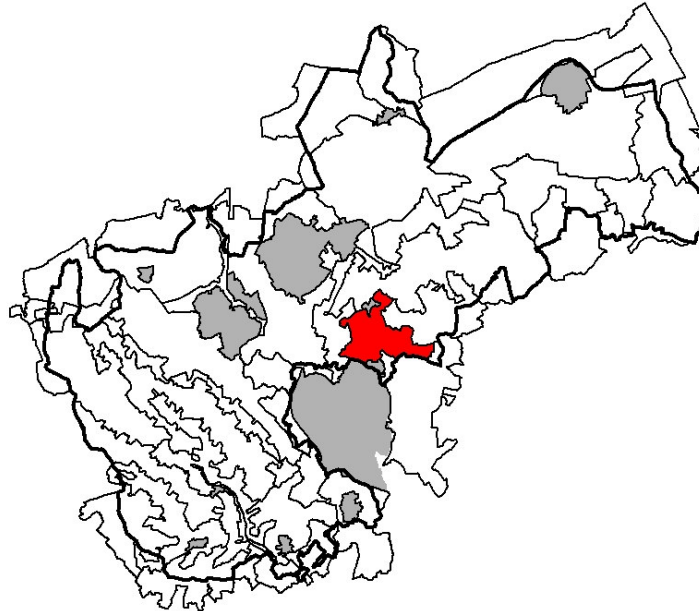
**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE****Strategy: Strengthen and Reinforce****Landscape management guidelines**

- Conserve the visually sensitive skylines and rolling slopes from inappropriate land uses, structures and built development
- Recognise and conserve visual relationship with Lowland Village Farmlands
- Promote planting of new beech woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora especially in relation to sub-urban fringe areas
- 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
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Encourage the development for species-rich calcareous grassland habitats
- Enhance features by removal of scrub vegetation to reinstate chalk grassland and rare indicator species e.g. juniper and pasque flower
- Maintain openness for rare farm birds e.g. grey partridge, lapwing, corn bunting and stone curlew and also for arable weeds and brown hares
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network

**Built development guidelines**

- Retain the rural character of Baldock Gap, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to Baldock Gap
- Maintain the open character and the long distance views from the Character Area
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing hedgerows
- Planting should reflect existing patterns, with hedges and shelterbelts following field and road boundaries and strategic isolated copses to mitigate buildings
- Avoid the location of new development on visually exposed areas of the scarp slopes
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area
- Restrict the location of masts and vertical features in the Character Area to prevent them from dominating the skyline
- Use the opportunity of any new developments to create new accessible green infrastructure

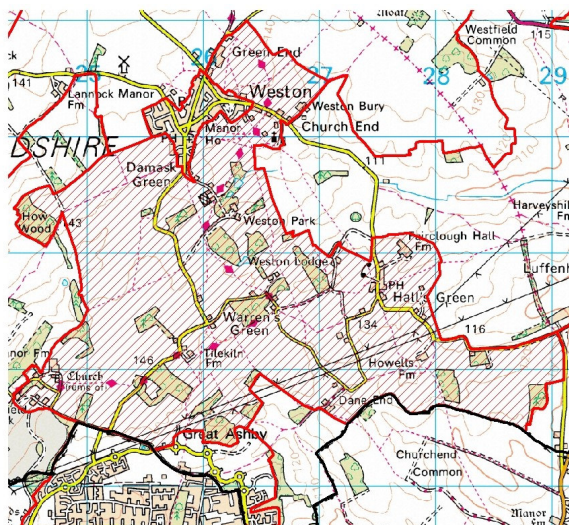
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

Weston Park lies directly to the south of Weston village. The Character Area however extends from the Baldock Gap scarp to the west, the suburban edge of Stevenage to the south and the valley of the Weston Tributary in the east (which flows into the River Beane). The Character Area also takes in a section of parkland at Chesfield Park to the southwest.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently sloping chalk plateau overlain by clay soils. Predominantly arable land use but with pockets of grazing adjacent to Weston Park to southeast of village. Character Area is well wooded – predominantly ancient deciduous woodlands. Density of woodland cover creates a sense of enclosure and is key to the character of the landscape. There is a network of winding lanes, sometimes open and affording views over the plateau.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Plateau landform
- Arable land use
- Extensive mature woodland cover
- Interlocking pattern of fields, lanes and curvilinear boundaries
- Scattered farmsteads
- Winding lanes
- Mature field and hedgerow trees

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Weston Park
- Pylon on southern boundary
- Abuts northern edge of Stevenage



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

Glacial drift (Boulder Clay and some Clay-with-Flints) overlying Chalk. Clay soils (pelosols) and locally moderately free draining brown earths.

**Topography**

Plateau landscape, gently falling in a southeasterly direction.

**Degree of slope**

Gentle cross fall of approximately 1:100.

**Altitude range**

135m to 145m.

**Hydrology**

No noted water courses. However, there is a wide distribution of lakes and ponds across the Weston parkland area, spring fed old fish ponds at Fairclough Hall and several other ponds.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable use with pockets of grazing adjacent to settlements and woodland.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

A number of important wildlife sites support neutral grassland habitats and ancient semi-natural woodlands. Weston Meadows is a potential SSSI comprising unimproved neutral grassland on boulder clay. It is described as one of the best extant examples of species-rich ancient wild flower meadows in the county, with a long continuity of grazing and over 140 recorded plant species.

How Wood and Sloggars Wood near Luffenhall are examples of numerous ancient oak/hornbeam woodlands occurring in the county. Ancient ash/maple woodlands occur less frequently, but include Harbourclose Wood. Hazel is abundant in hedgerows and oak and ash standards are common.

Old grassland at Weston includes dropwort, and ivy broomrape occurs at Weston Churchyard, one of only a few sites in the county.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Chesfield Church, a Scheduled Monument, lies in the southwest. Ruins of the 14th century church of St Ethelreda lie to the north of Chesfield Church and this is all that remains of a deserted medieval village. A medieval moated site lies at Fairclough Hall, to the east of the area. Earthworks to the south west of the Hall represent a medieval farmstead and associated ponds.

Weston to the north, is a medieval settlement recorded in Domesday book as Westone. A medieval moated site lies at Darnalls Hall. To the south of Weston there is 12th century evidence of a medieval manorial site and Romano- British burials.

**Field Pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape pattern consists of a mixture of post 1950s enclosure, prairie fields with post 1950s boundary loss, 18th century and later enclosure, informal medieval parkland, ancient woodland, 19th – 20th century plantation and pre-18th century 'irregular' enclosure. A 20th century stud farm lies to the west.

**Transport Pattern**

The Character Area is crossed by a network of winding lanes.

**Settlements and Built Form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by sparse settlement consisting of estates and scattered farmsteads. There are a number of fine traditional buildings in and around Weston. Examples here date from the 18th century and include the brick built, six bay, Town Farmhouse and a 19th century brick tower windmill. Chesfield Manor House, now a farmhouse, lies east of St Etheldreda and has a 17th century wing with steeply hipped roof.

**EVALUATION**

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

A mixture of smaller more intimate enclosures defined by woodland cover with open areas affording views over the plateau.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

This landscape type is not frequent within North Hertfordshire. Mature setting of Weston Park and Chesfield Park provides local distinctiveness.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Suburban edge of Stevenage locally prominent.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Character Area crossed by network of winding lanes and footpaths.

**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**

LC2	Landscape Conservation Area
SAM HT12	Chesfield Church: Graveley

**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

Land cover change:	Localised
Age structure of tree cover:	Mature
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

---

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

---

**ROBUSTNESS**

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

---

**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>				

## EVALUATION

## INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

## Landscape Character Sensitivities

- A largely rural, quiet and remote character throughout Weston Park, which would be vulnerable to the addition of further built or urbanizing features
- Weston Park is a well wooded character area, with predominantly ancient deciduous woodland. Removal or poor management of these would be detrimental to the character of the area
- Weston Park consists of organic, interlocking fields patterns. The removal of or impact on this pattern would be detrimental to the character area
- The narrow lanes crossing the plateau are generally open, however there are some existing hedge banks. The character area would be vulnerable to improvements or upgrading of the roads and the removal of any existing hedgerows
- The traditional character of Weston village would be vulnerable to inappropriate or unsympathetic development and any development not in scale with the village
- The parkland associated with Weston Park to the south of Weston Village is characterised by large parkland field oaks, metal estate hurdles and large grazing fields. However some parkland fields have been converted into arable fields. The parkland could be at risk from future loss of pasture, development pressure and inconsistent management
- Part of Chesfield Park also falls into the character area to the south west. The parkland could be at risk from development pressure and inconsistent management
- Electricity pylons stride through the south of the character area and are an existing detractor to the character of the area
- The north of Stevenage abuts the Weston Park to the south. It is an intrusive factor, which is a detractor to the character area. Weston Park would be vulnerable to the expansion of Stevenage and any development would require appropriate

mitigation methods, primarily through woodland screening

- Relatively good public access through numerous rights of way, including the Hertfordshire Way

Overall Weston Park is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. The gently sloping plateau, parkland landscape and woodland patches create an enclosed, quiet character area. However the northern edge of Stevenage and the electricity pylons are detractors to Weston Park in that part of the character area.

## Visual Sensitivities

- Relatively flat plateau creates open views punctuated or framed by woodland
- The small woodlands, shelterbelts and hedge banks break up the views across the landscape and create a sense of enclosure in and around the settlements
- The parkland characteristics are visually sensitive

In visual terms, Weston Park is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. Views within the character area across the parkland landscape would be sensitive to the introduction of built or urbanizing features.

## LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Weston Park is considered to be of **moderate landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Weston Park are the relative intactness of the parkland landscape, the condition and extent of the woodland blocks and other landscape elements that create a sense of place, the relatively few rural lanes and perceived distance from significant habitation except the northern edge of Stevenage. Part of the area forms the 'Howard's End' cultural landscape associated with the writing of E. M. Forster.

**EVALUATION****CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT****Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. It would be of an inappropriate scale and would introduce elements that would urbanise the landscape, altering the character and removing the existing key characteristics. Visual impacts would also be high where open views are currently experienced. Development would be likely to affect the existing narrow lanes, which could erode the character of the landscape.

The landscape capacity for large urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This scale of development could introduce elements that would urbanise the landscape, altering the character and removing the existing key characteristics. Visual impacts could also be high where open views are currently experienced. Some small scale development could be accommodated on the edge of Stevenage, extending recent development at Great Ashby, provided containment is provided by appropriately located woodland belts.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be moderate to low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the largely rural character the transport routes at present. Upgrading of existing narrow lanes could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Existing minor roads would be inappropriate for any significant larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs. Any 'improvements' to the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some very limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings could be highly visible within the Character Area if not carefully located and would erode the rural and intimate character of Weston Park. Any large buildings should be balanced by woodland blocks, shelterbelts and hedgerows to reflect the existing character of the area.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

**Large scale open storage**

Weston Park would not accommodate large scale 'open' uses without significant impact. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics. Upgrading local roads would further dilute the landscape character.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

**EVALUATION**

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively undisturbed and rural in appearance. Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction or waste disposal would not be in keeping with the character of Weston Park, particularly if there was an impact on the pattern of woodlands. The minor roads may need upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. Restoration proposals for any consented schemes should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low to moderate. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**Incremental small scale development**

There may be some limited capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of an agricultural or vernacular design and in keeping with the rural character. This could include carefully planned sites at Weston. However any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the potential erosion of the rural character of Weston Park.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low to moderate.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are existing urbanising elements within this Character Area at present. The electricity pylons are currently detractors in the area. New utilities developments would have an impact on the rural character of Weston Park. Large scale structures would be locally highly visible within the Character Area, as well as potentially visible from surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.

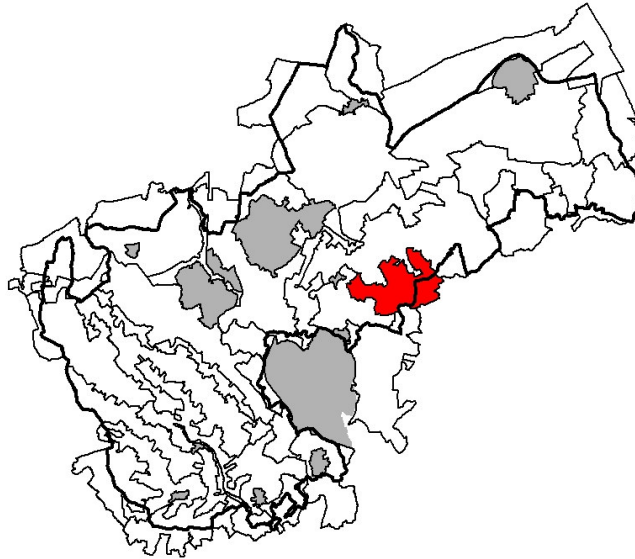
**GUIDELINES****STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE****Strategy: Improve and Conserve****Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote the restoration of ancient woodland and other woodland planting and where historically appropriate, link up small remnants of ancient woodland
- Bring areas of ancient woodland back into active management particularly using techniques such as coppicing
- Encourage appropriate tree planting using local native species to help maintain the traditional wooded appearance and character of the clay plateau
- Restore important characteristic field boundary patterns such as pre-enclosure and parish boundaries
- 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
- Restore gappy hedges, reinstate lost ones or create new features using indigenous mixes and increased number of hedgerow trees
- Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire enclosures to new grazing areas
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Manage areas of new paddocks and promote appropriate enclosures with hedges rather than wire fences
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network

**Built development guidelines**

- Conserve the traditional character of Weston, ensuring that any development located on the edge of the village uses appropriate layout, mass, vernacular materials and features to avoid inappropriate visual intrusion
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow lanes and associated hedge banks
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in panoramic and framed rural views
- Retain the rural character of Weston Park and Chesfield Park, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the parkland setting
- Planting should reflect existing patterns, with hedges following field and road boundaries and strategic copses to mitigate buildings
- Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or the loss of ancient hedgerows
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area
- Use the opportunity of any new developments to create new accessible green infrastructure

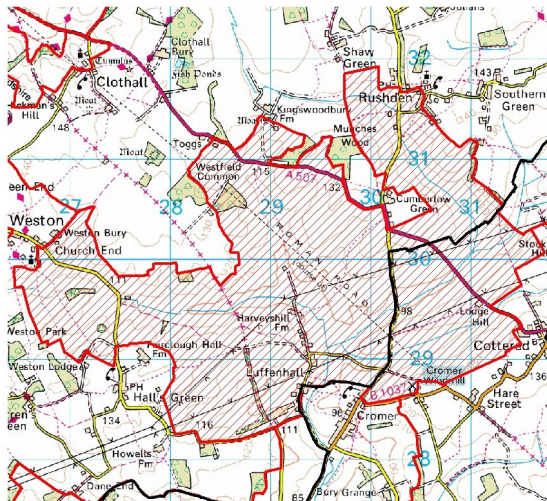
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The Character Area comprises the upper headwaters of the River Beane which continues to the south of the District within a previously identified Character Area – The Middle Beane Valley (Character Area 39). The Upper Beane Valley Tributaries are mainly the three upper arms of the valley that rise at Rushden village, Kingswoodbury and Church End to the east of Weston. All three tributaries join the main valley at Luffenhall. There is also a smaller local catchment to the west of Walkern (within Character Area 39) which extends to the east of Stevenage. Part of this Character Area lies outside the District.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Incised chalk landscape with water courses. Predominantly arable land use, organic enclosure pattern associated with an irregular network of winding lanes to the north and west of Luffenhall. The Beane valley to the north and west has regular rectilinear field boundaries often curving, set within an earlier organic pattern of boundaries.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Bowl like landform comprising steeply sloping chalk valley sides incised by a network of water courses
- Arable land use
- Irregular pattern, of medium to large sized fields
- Scattered hedgerows and waterside trees
- Small blocks of relict ancient woodland on the upper slopes
- Sparse settlement

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Extensive areas of former common land
- Pylon lines cut across the valley



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

Chalk overlain by Boulder Clay and generally free draining loamy brown soils.

**Topography**

Chalk valley incised into plateau landscape.

**Degree of slope**

Typically between 1:10 – 1:20.

**Altitude range**

125m at head of valley. Valley continues to fall well past district boundary.

**Hydrology**

Numerous incised streams and tributaries. Main catchment is the valley of the River Beane. Ponds are rare.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Moat at Cottered is important for great crested newts. Open field system is important for brown hares and woodland is important for fallow deer. Spring cereal crops and grazed grassland is important for skylarks, lapwings, quail and corn bunting.

Lolleywood Green Lane contains neutral grassland and an ancient species-rich hedgerow, part of a network of ancient hedge lined lanes.

Limited woodland includes Southern Green Copse and Chalk Pit comprising ancient semi-natural woodland coppice with a disused chalk pit.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

No recorded archaeology. Cropmarks of ditches and enclosures of unknown date and function are known from aerial photographs and lie towards the west. At Luffenhall, to the east, finds of Romano-British cremations indicate that a cemetery may be present.

While the present day settlement pattern has medieval origins there is evidence that the landscape has been exploited since the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age. This includes cropmarks, visible on aerial photographs, of field systems and enclosures of varying date and function, and of possible plough-raised burial mounds of Neolithic or Early Bronze Age date. There are also records of a Late Bronze Age hoard from Cumberlow Green (the name means 'burial mound of the Welsh'), of a Romano-British settlement and cremation cemetery south of Kingswoodbury, and Roman finds from all of these

parishes. By the late Iron Age and Roman periods the area was crossed by the Roman road that linked Baldock and Braughing.

**Field Pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape pattern consists of a mixture of pre-18th century irregular enclosure, prairie fields with 1950s boundary loss and pre 18th century unenclosed common arable. Post 1950s enclosure lies to the south and 20th century leisure to the east. There are pockets of 19th – 20th century plantation.

The field systems of the area originally mainly comprised unenclosed common arable fields, such as Luffenhall Common and Kipple Field, and smaller 'irregular' enclosure fields, both systems being established before the 18<sup>th</sup> century. An extensive block of these irregular fields has survived west of Cumberlow Green, together with an area of informal parkland once associated with Cumberlow Manor. 'Irregularly' enclosed fields also survive north of Luffenhall Common. The remainder, primarily areas north of Cromer, around Hall's Green and south of Rushden, is now 20<sup>th</sup> century 'prairie' fields. There is little pasture or woodland in the area and it is evident that woodland cover was already slight by the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, due to the long term use of the area for arable cultivation.

**Transport Pattern**

The Character Area is bounded by narrow winding lanes to the north and west but is not crossed by any roads.

**Settlements and Built Form**

There are no significant present day settlement nuclei within the area, since the larger villages, Cottered and Weston (including Church End), lie outside its boundary towards the heads of the open valleys that form the area, and the village of Rushden, partly within it, is little more than a hamlet. All of these settlements predate the Norman Conquest, and Anglo-Saxon occupation in the area is also evidenced by several distinctive place-names.

While the current network of dispersed farmsteads and houses reflects a settlement pattern established in the medieval period, there is also evidence of settlement shift and decline. Rydals Wood contains an abandoned moated site, Cumberlow Green is the site of a manorial settlement and manor house, and there is evidence of medieval occupation spanning the 12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> centuries south of Church End, Weston.

**EVALUATION**

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

Expansive open areas of arable farmland which are relatively tranquil.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

Landscape type not uncommon.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Area generally has little development. Edge of Stevenage well screened by woodland. Luffenhall on the Character Area boundary – locally prominent development.

Cromer Windmill just outside the Character Area to the southwest is a prominent landmark.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Well served by local network of winding lanes, tracks and rights of way.

**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**

LC2 Landscape Conservation Area

**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

Land cover change: Localised  
 Age structure of tree cover: Mixed  
 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival: Scattered  
 Management of semi-natural habitat: Poor  
 Survival of cultural pattern: Interrupted  
 Impact of built development: Low  
 Impact of land-use change: Low

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

**ROBUSTNESS**

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

**Matrix Score:** **Weak**

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

**EVALUATION**

**INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**

**Landscape Character Sensitivities**

- With a largely rural, quiet and remote character throughout the Upper Beane Valley Tributaries would be vulnerable to the addition of urbanizing features
- The character area is a bowl shaped, incised chalk landscape. The tributaries branch from three arms of the valley that join the main valley at Luffenhall. The tributaries are significant features of the area and the loss of character or lack of management would be detrimental to the area
- The landuse is predominantly large arable fields, in an organic field pattern. Hedgerows are the traditional boundary treatment although a number of hedges have been lost. The area is vulnerable to the loss of hedgerow boundary treatment
- The area is characterised by vegetation following the lines of the watercourses. The loss of this characteristic would be detrimental to the area
- There are conifers and belts of poplars surrounding isolated properties and farmsteads. The character area is sensitive to the loss of associated vegetation, which balances the built form
- The area is tranquil with very limited roads. The A505 passes through but its still follows a largely unimproved alignment. Other roads that are present are winding rural lanes with hedge banks and hedgerows. However some of these are gappy or have been removed. The character area is vulnerable to further loss of these features
- Upper Beane Valley Tributaries has limited woodland. However the woodland, which is present is predominantly small blocks of relict ancient deciduous woodland. Removal or poor management of these habitats would be detrimental to the character of the area
- There is little development in the area, with generally isolated properties found on the lower ground. The largest settlement in the character area is Luffenhall, which is only a hamlet of rural character, with typically

large detached dwellings with white rendered walls and steeply pitched tiled roofs or black weatherboard barn structures set in large plots. The character area is vulnerable to inappropriate or unsympathetic development and any form of development not in scale with the area

- Electricity pylons stride through the character area and are an existing detractor to Upper Beane Valley Tributaries
- Sewage works are present in the character area to the east of Weston Village and are an existing detractor
- Some boundary vegetation has been replaced by palisade fences. The character area would be vulnerable to this practice as it is detrimental to the character of Upper Beane Valley Tributaries
- The course of a Roman road cuts through the centre of the character area. Historic features such as these are vulnerable to loss
- There is relatively limited public access through Upper Beane Valley Tributaries

Overall Upper Beane Valley Tributaries is considered to be of **moderate to low sensitivity**. The largely rural character area is quiet and tranquil. However the electricity pylons are detractors to the open Upper Beane Valley Tributaries.

### Visual Sensitivities

- The bowl shaped landform and wooded horizons create an enclosed character area. However on a human scale the large arable fields and loss of boundaries create open views across Upper Beane Valley Tributaries
- The small woodland patches and shelterbelts create a wooded horizon
- The tributaries and incised landscape create an undulating characteristic. When at the bottom of the valleys, the landform presents an undeveloped horizon
- The Cromer Windmill to the south of the area is a local landmark on higher ground

In visual terms, Upper Beane Valley Tributaries is considered to be of **moderate to low sensitivity**. Views within the rural character area would be sensitive to the introduction of any urbanizing features.

### LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Upper Beane Valley Tributaries is considered to be of **moderate low landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Upper Beane Valley Tributaries are the relative sense of remoteness and the openness of the landscape. However detractors in the area include the electricity pylons and sewage works.

**EVALUATION**

**CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT**

**Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. It would be of an inappropriate scale and would introduce elements that would urbanise the landscape, altering the character and removing the existing key characteristics. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing narrow lanes, which could erode the character of the landscape.

The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the largely rural character of the transport routes at present. Upgrading of existing winding lanes could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Existing minor roads would be inappropriate for any significant larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs. Any upgrading of the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings could be highly visible within the Character Area if not carefully located and would erode the rural and intimate character. Any large buildings should be balanced by woodland blocks, shelterbelts and hedgerows to reflect the existing character of the area.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

**Large scale open uses**

Upper Beane Valley Tributaries would not accommodate large scale 'open' uses without significant impact. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and likely to be very open to views in the bowl landform and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics. The minor roads are unlikely to have capacity to accommodate development or would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs, which would further dilute the landscape character.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

## EVALUATION

### **Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively undisturbed and rural in appearance. Mineral extraction would not be in keeping with the character of Upper Beane Valley Tributaries. The minor roads would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. If schemes were consented, restoration proposals should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

### **Incremental small scale development**

There may be some very limited capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments or individual properties within the Character Area, particularly if they were in keeping with the rural character. This could include very modest and carefully planned expansion or infilling at Luffenhall. However any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the potential erosion of the rural character of Upper Beane Valley Tributaries.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low to moderate.

### **Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are existing urbanising elements within this Character Area at present. The electricity pylons are currently detractors in the area. New utilities developments would have a further impact on the rural character of Upper Beane Valley Tributaries. Large scale developments, tall elements would be highly visible within the open Character Area, as well as potentially visible from surrounding Character Areas. The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.

**GUIDELINES**

Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE**
**Strategy: Strengthen and Reinforce**
**Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote the management of ancient woodland and other woodland planting and where historically appropriate, link up small remnants of ancient woodland
- Promote the management of ancient woodlands to encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Bring areas of ancient woodland back into active management particularly using techniques such as coppicing
- Encourage the development of neutral, species rich grassland
- 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
- Enhance ditches through clearance and planting to provide opportunities for storm water retention
- Retain, manage, reinstate and extend flood meadow and grazing pasture within and along the valley floor to provide connectivity and reduce nutrient leaching from arable to watercourses
- Manage and restore patterns of natural watercourses and associated habitats including secondary streams to valley sides, braided watercourses, cut offs
- Conserve, monitor and enhance river margin habitats for protected species
- Promote arable reversion to grassland to

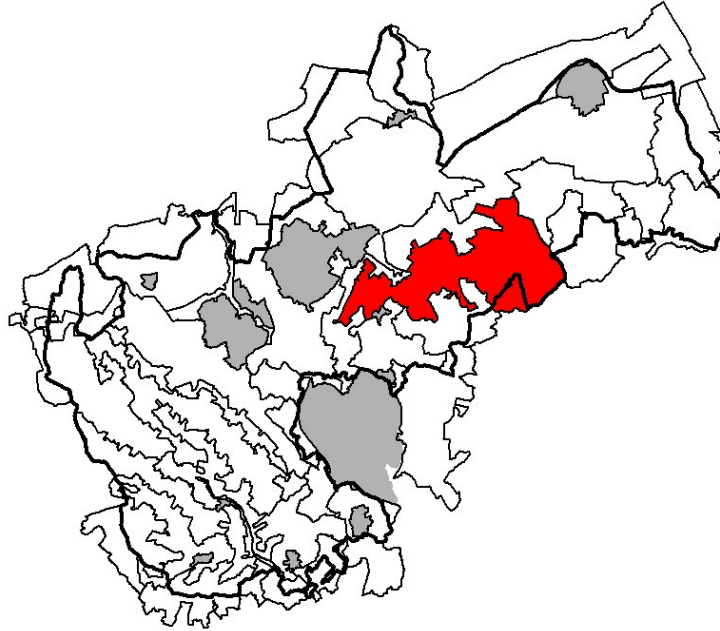
improve mosaic of habitats and to aid water quality and recharge of aquifer

- Maintain and extend the rights of way network

**Built development guidelines**

- Conserve the traditional character of Luffenhall, ensuring that any development located within or on the edge of the settlement uses appropriate vernacular materials and features
- Protect and preserve the pattern of winding lanes and associated hedgerows and hedge banks
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in rural views
- Retain the rural character of Upper Beane Valley Tributaries, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area
- Planting should reflect existing patterns, with hedges following field and road boundaries and strategic isolated copses to mitigate buildings
- Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or the loss of ancient hedgerows
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area

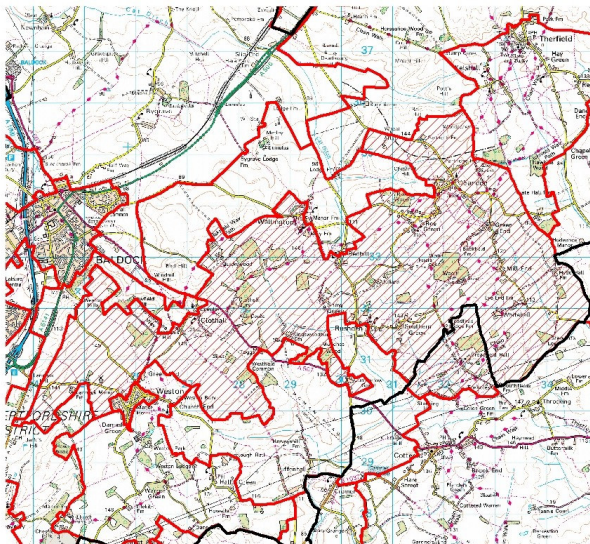


**LOCATION**

© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA**

The area extends from the Stevenage Gap scarp in the west to a line running east of the settlements of Sandon, Green End and Mill End.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

Flat, gently sloping chalk plateau with some gentle undulations overlain by clay soils. Predominantly arable land use but with extensive blocks of ancient deciduous woodland cover. Density of woodland cover creates a sense of enclosure and enhances the mature character of the landscape. Pockets of grazing land adjacent to settlements. Character Area crossed by a network of winding lanes, densely scattered hedgerows and clusters of wayside dwellings and small dispersed settlements or farmsteads.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- Plateau landform
- Predominantly arable land use
- Extensive mature woodland cover and hedgerow trees
- Organic pattern of field enclosures associated with irregular network of winding lanes

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- Icknield Way crosses at Sandon

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

Glacial drift: calcareous/neutral Boulder Clay with some Clay-with-Flints overlying Chalk. Clay soils (Pelosols).

**Topography**

Plateau landscape, gently falling in a south easterly direction.

**Degree of slope**

Gentle crossfall of approximately 1:50.

**Altitude range**

115m to 145m.

**Hydrology**

A number of tributaries of the River Beane cross the Character Area - the Kingswoodbury Tributary, the upper reaches of the River Beane north of Rushden and a local water course running south from Green End. Additionally the Weston Tributary also takes water from the land to the east of Weston village. Ponds are frequent.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable cover with pockets of grazing adjacent to settlements and ancient semi-natural woodland.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Two high biodiversity areas are included, one centred around the villages of Sandon and Green End and the other around the villages of Clothall, Wallington and Weston. These areas are typified by chalky boulder clay woodland and neutral meadows. The most abundant woodland habitats are ancient stands of ash and maple. Such woodlands have been covered with trees since at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the planting of woodland was first recorded. Examples include Coldash Wood, Bachelors Wood, Munches Wood, Great Wood and Middle Wood.

Ancient woods composed primarily of oak and hornbeam also occur, but less frequently. Green lanes with species-rich hedgerows occur at a number of locations as do areas of unimproved neutral grassland, such as Notley Green Common.

Spring systems at Green End are of county significance and supporting calcareous mire habitats such as Blagrove Common and Sandon Moor. Blagrove Common is a SSSI, an unimproved marshy grassland on Boulder Clay. It is a rare example of such a habitat in the county. Important ponds occur at Wallington Meadow, Roc Green and Southern Green

at the sources of streams feeding the river Beane.

Southern and early marsh orchids occur at some mires. Ash, maple and hazel woodlands may contain herb paris and greater butterfly orchids. Fallow deer are frequent. Sandon and Wallingford are important for pipistrelle, brown long-eared and serotine bats. Southern Green is important for great crested newts. Herts BAP is seeking to re-establish stone-curlew as a breeding species in this area.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

A moated mound, Sandon Mount, lies in the north, to the east of Sandon. It was originally constructed as a prehistoric burial mound. In the late 14th - early 15th century the site was used for a windmill, of which today no trace is remaining. To the south of Sandon Mount the ruins of medieval buildings are known to have existed. They probably formed part of a now deserted, medieval hamlet. Sandon is a medieval settlement and contains the 14th century church of All Saints. The remains of a medieval moated site lies to the south of the church at Danyells Farm. A medieval settlement at Green End lies to the south east of Sandon. A well-preserved post-medieval decoy pond lies at Hyde Hall, to the east of the area where there are also Romano-British earthworks.

Roe Green is a medieval settlement. To the South of Roe Green lie three well-preserved moated sites; Hankins, east of Friars Grange and north of Wood Farm.

Earthworks lie at Wallington in the northwest. The parish church of St Mary, Wallington, is 15th century. Bronze Age and Neolithic flint has been unearthed in the vicinity. To the west of Wallington, a Roman settlement and a Neolithic or Bronze Age settlement have been located. Cropmarks of ditches and fields belonging to the deserted medieval village of Quickswood lie to the west of the area.

Enclosure and earthworks lie southeast of Clothallbury House, probably remains of a medieval manorial site. Earthworks of a prehistoric burial mound and a well preserved medieval moated site and associated earthworks lie to the southwest of Clothallbury. Three medieval moated sites also lie to the south east of Clothallbury.

**ASSESSMENT**

The Roman Villa of Lammas Field lies to the northeast of Weston with finds of Romano British pottery and building materials spread over a wide area.

To the far west of the area lie earthworks, which possibly represent medieval house platforms. There are cropmarks of a possible Neolithic henge site 500m northwest of Bush Wood.

Rushden, to the south, is a medieval settlement recorded in the Domesday Book as Risendene. The parish church of St Mary, Rushden, dates to the 14th century. Earthworks are present within the settlement. Earthworks representing remains of Cumberlow Manor House lie to the southwest of Rushden.

**Field Pattern**

The agricultural landscape is mixed, including 18th century and later enclosure, prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss, post-1950s enclosure, prairie fields with relict elements within. Woodlands include ancient woodland, informal medieval parkland (Julians - designated Historic Park and Garden), 19th – 20th century plantation and pre 18th century 'irregular' enclosure, with small pockets of later enclosure – 18th century or later.

**Transport Pattern**

There is a network of winding lanes. The Icknield Way (prehistoric trackway) crosses at Sandon.

**Settlements and Built Form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by clusters of wayside dwellings and small dispersed settlements or farmsteads. To the north lie the historic settlements of Sandon, Green End and Roe Green. Traditional buildings date from the 17th century and include the 17th century brick house of Sandonbury.

The historic settlement of Rushden lies in the centre. Traditional buildings date from the 16th century and include a plastered timber building formerly a post office with a tiled roof and one overhanging gable. The Old Rose and Crown dates to the end of the 16th century with a tiled roof and built plastered timber, decorated with combed work. Many 17th century thatched cottages and farm buildings lie within this scattered village.

**EVALUATION**

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

Complex area of arable farmland interspersed with blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland, which frames local views. Plateau area locally exposed.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

Landscape type common in North Hertfordshire.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Limited development well integrated into the landscape.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Served by locally dense network of winding lanes, tracks and rights of way.

**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**

- LC2 Landscape Conservation Area
- GD 1911 Julians
- SAM HT18 The Mount: Sandon
- SAM HT109 Site of Cumberlow Manor House: Clothall
- SAM 111 Enclosure and earthworks southeast of Clothellbury House: Clothall
- SAM HT11512 Hankins Moated Site, Roe Green: Sandon
- SAM HT 11517 Moated site and associated remains west of Hooks Green Farm: Clothall
- SAM 20764 Henge 500m northwest of Bush Wood: Weston
- SAM 27917 Lammas Field Roman Villa 680m northeast of Weston Bury: Therfield

**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

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

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

**ROBUSTNESS**

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

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

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

**EVALUATION**

**INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**

**Landscape Character Sensitivities**

- The historic settlement pattern is characterised by dispersed clusters of roadside dwellings and small settlements. This would be sensitive to inappropriate or unsympathetic infill development and any form of development not in scale with the villages and clusters of dwellings
- Village greens and other important open spaces are found in most villages/settlement clusters and would be sensitive to development on or adjacent to them
- Traditional materials of black weatherboarding, painted render or pargeting, flint infill panels and thatch are common to buildings throughout the Character Area
- Numerous ancient ash and maple or oak and hornbeam woodlands within the Character Area, which are vulnerable to lack of management, removal or introduction of non-native species
- Julians historic parkland is a registered garden that falls within this Character Area, which could be at risk from development pressure and inconsistent management
- Numerous areas of historic interest, particularly medieval moated sites, tumuli and the Roman villa site of Lammas Field, are vulnerable to loss
- Narrow winding lanes, many of which are lined with hedge banks and some lined with trees, and would be vulnerable to 'improvement' schemes
- Hedgerows are generally tall and well maintained, with hedgerow trees present. These would be vulnerable to lack of management
- Good public access, particularly focused around Sandon, Roe Green and Wallington. This includes numerous rights of way, the Hertfordshire Way, the Icknield Way, Chain Walk, lanes and tracks
- The irregular field pattern, which is of a small to medium scale

Overall Weston-Green End Plateau is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. The dispersed settlement pattern throughout the Character Area, with large greens and open spaces, would be sensitive to the introduction of unsympathetic elements.

**Visual Sensitivities**

- Views are generally enclosed due to presence of woodland blocks and would be sensitive to woodland removal
- Woodland blocks also create localised framed views
- Areas of the plateau are locally visually exposed, particularly to the west of the Character Area
- Lannock Mill forms a localised landmark to the west of Weston

In visual terms, Weston-Green End Plateau is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. Views within the Character Area are relatively enclosed. However, the western part of the Character Area is more open and exposed.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE**

Overall Weston-Green End Plateau is considered to be of **moderate landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Weston-Green End Plateau are the intactness of the landscape, a minimal number of incongruous elements, the sense of remoteness, the uninterrupted views and relative lack of human influence.

**EVALUATION**

**CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT**

**Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and small scale nature. It would introduce elements that would alter the character and affect the existing key characteristics such as the dispersed settlement pattern and important greens and open spaces. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing minor roads, which could erode the character of the landscape. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and could reduce accessibility to the countryside.

The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would not be entirely appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural character and dispersed settlement pattern. Some small scale expansion of villages, carefully designed and in keeping with the existing character, could possibly be accommodated. However, any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of important greens and open spaces that characterise Weston-Green End Plateau.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be moderate to low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the largely rural character of most routes at present. Upgrading of existing roads and lanes could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area. However, some limited upgrading of the A507 may be possible, if accompanied by landscape enhancements.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Existing minor roads would be inappropriate for any significant larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs. Any upgrading of the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character. Extensive development could also disrupt the extensive rights of way network.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings, if not carefully located, would erode the intimate character of Weston-Green End Plateau. The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

**Large scale 'open' uses e.g. car storage**

The complex small scale of Weston-Green End Plateau would make it more difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without potential loss of hedgerows and woodland blocks. This would not be in keeping with the intimate character of the area and could lead to the erosion of important greens and open spaces that characterise Weston-Green End Plateau. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

**EVALUATION**

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively rural in appearance with small scale dispersed settlement. Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction or waste disposal would not be in keeping with the character of Weston-Green End Plateau and would be difficult to accommodate between small settlements. The minor roads would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. Larger scale extraction could also disrupt the rights of way network. If schemes were consented, restoration proposals should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low to moderate. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**Incremental small scale development**

There may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of an agricultural nature or in keeping with the rural vernacular character. However, any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of important greens and open spaces that characterise Weston-Green End Plateau.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low to moderate.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are currently a small number of detractors in the areas. These include existing telecommunications masts, which are visible locally within the Character Area. Further utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines are likely to have a significant impact on the rural character of Weston-Green End Plateau. Large scale tall elements such as these would be locally visible within the Character Area, as well as in surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.



**GUIDELINES**

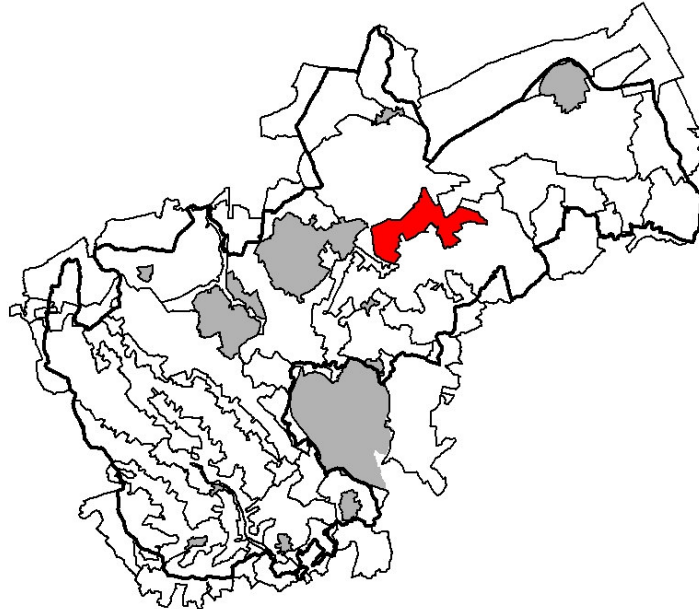
Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE**
**Strategy: Improve and Conserve**
**Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote management of ancient woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Encourage diverse woodland management practice
- 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
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Maintain the ecological diversity and use of green lanes and associated species-rich hedgerows
- Maintain and encourage the development of marshy grasslands on pockets of boulder clay

**Built development guidelines**

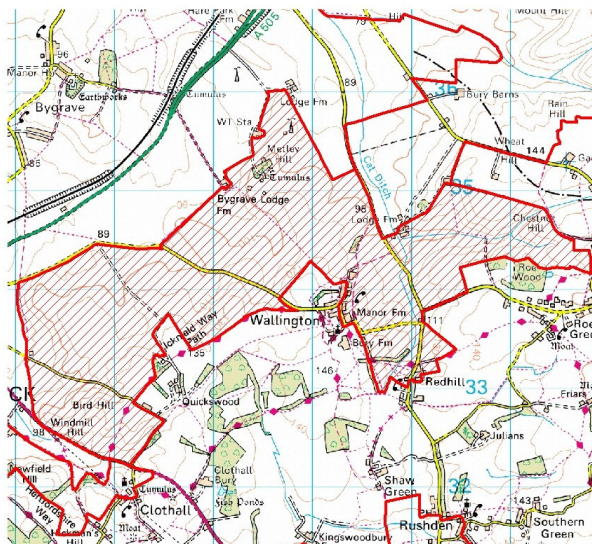
- Conserve the traditional character of villages within the Character Area, ensuring that any development within or located on the edge of the villages uses appropriate vernacular materials and features
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to mitigate new development
- Retain the rural and complex character of Weston-Green End Plateau, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area
- Avoid the location of new development sensitive greens and open spaces between settlements and groups of dwellings
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or hedgerows
- Conserve Julians registered parkland
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area

**LOCATION**

© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA**

This Character Area covers a broadly fan-shaped section of the scarp face to the north and west of Wallington is bounded by Clothall road in the west and the Redhill to Slip End road in the east.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

Sloping chalk scarp, steeper in places nearer the crest and shallower at the transition to the lowlands. The scarp face is incised locally by spring fed streams. Generally open, unenclosed landscape affording views over a rolling landform. Rectilinear fields with curving boundaries set within an earlier organic pattern of lanes and primary boundaries. Predominant arable land use.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- Sloping chalk scarp
- Long distance views over lowlands to the north
- Large but irregular field pattern

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- (Metley Hill) Radio/Telecommunications masts to east of Bygrave Lodge Farm.
- (Upper) Icknield Way passes along southern boundary
- Bird Hill

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

Chalk overlain locally by colluvium and glacial channel deposits in the hollow valley at Clothall. Shallow rendzina soils or calcareous loams.

**Topography**

Sloping ground falling from the edge of the chalk plateau to the lowlands to the north. The chalk scarp has been eroded into numerous valleys, now mainly dry, leaving a rolling landform.

**Degree of slope**

Typically 1:10 falls, becoming shallower at the transition between the scarp and the lowlands.

**Altitude range**

90m to 130m.

**Hydrology**

Local streams (Cat Ditch and tributary to the east).

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Undulating landscapes on a calcareous substrate. A large expanse of semi-improved species-rich calcareous/neutral grassland is centred around Metley Hill Wireless Station. Such habitats are scarce in the county as a whole and represent only 0.62% of total land use in North Hertfordshire. Some diverse calcareous plant communities can also be found on ancient field and road banks, for example at Wallington Road, Lodge Road at Sandon and Bird Hill, species include large thyme, squinancywort and basil thyme.

Woodland is restricted to the vestigial elm copse at Wallington and scrub at Quickswood.

Spring cereals are a feature of the farmed landscape.

The open fields are home to brown hares and occasional flocks of wintering plovers. Very important area for farmland birds such as skylark, linnet, quail and corn-bunting. Herts BAP is seeking to re-establish stone-curlew as a breeding species to this area.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

The area contains several cropmarks, enclosures, prehistoric ring ditches, linear ditches and a trackway. Roman-British burials have been unearthed north of Wallington. In the north of the area, at Metley Hill lies a tumulus of unknown date and origin.

**Field Pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape comprises predominantly post 1950s enclosure and pre – 18th century unenclosed common arable. Prairie fields with post 1950 boundary loss, 18th century and later enclosure and pre 18th century irregular enclosure lie to the eastern end of the area.

**Transport Pattern**

Bounded by Clothall road in the west and the Redhill to Slip End road in the east. The Upper Icknield Way (prehistoric trackway) passes along the southern boundary.

**Settlements and Built Form**

The historic settlement pattern is of a sparse nature characterised by farms and part of the village of Wallington.

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

Expansive open area with long distance views to the north.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

The scarp is a comparatively common feature in North Hertfordshire.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Very little development which because of the openness of the landscape can be potentially highly visible. Local telecommunications masts at Metley Hill.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

A few local roads climb up the scarp face. The Icknield Way long distance footpath runs along the southern boundary.

**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**

LC2 Landscape Conservation Area

**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

Land cover change: Insignificant  
 Age structure of tree cover: Over mature  
 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival: Relic  
 Management of semi-natural habitat: Poor  
 Survival of cultural pattern: Interrupted  
 Impact of built development: Low  
 Impact of land-use change: Low

**Matrix Score:** **Poor**

**ROBUSTNESS**

Impact of landform: Prominent  
 Impact of land cover: Prominent  
 Impact of historic pattern: Insignificant  
 Visibility from outside: Widely visible  
 Sense of enclosure: Open  
 Visual unity: Unified  
 Distinctiveness/rarity: Frequent

**Matrix Score:** **Weak**

<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>				

## EVALUATION

## INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

## Landscape Character Sensitivities

- The open and predominantly unsettled character of the area would be vulnerable to change
- The smoothly undulating and prominent landform which highlights the bleached chalky soils would also be highly vulnerable to change
- The limited access to and through the Character Area, with few minor roads and a small number of rights of way
- The Icknield Way long distance footpath runs along the southern boundary of the Wallington Scarp Slopes
- Vegetation along Cat Ditch in the east of the Character Area which creates visual interest on the sparsely vegetated slopes
- Large scale arable fields are the predominant land use
- Hedgerows are infrequent and are variable in height and management
- Hedgebanks are present along the narrow minor roads through the Wallington Scarp Slopes, although the hedgerows have been removed in some locations and would be sensitive to further losses
- The A505 is a noticeable element in views to the south of the Character Area, with little vegetation to screen it

Overall Wallington Scarp Slopes is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. The undulating landform and isolated character would be sensitive to most forms of development.

## Visual Sensitivities

- Open sweeping views and panoramic views throughout the Character Area
- A strong visual relationship with North Baldock Chalk Uplands, which is overlooked by the Wallington Scarp Slopes
- Telecommunications masts currently intrude on skylines within the Character Area, particularly at Metley Hill Radio Station
- Woodland blocks to the south in the Weston – Green End Plateau are prominent skyline features

In visual terms, Wallington Scarp Slopes is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. Views towards the rising scarp slopes and from the north across the North Baldock Chalk Uplands are particularly sensitive to development.

## LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Wallington Scarp Slopes is considered to be of **moderate high landscape value**. Aspects of particular value are the lack of incongruous elements, a recognisable sense of place, the striking landform, the visual interest, the sense of openness and relative remoteness, the relative tranquillity and visible expressions of the local geology.

**EVALUATION**

**CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT**

**Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within Wallington Scarp Slops, due to its rural and undeveloped nature. It would introduce a scale of development that would be entirely out of keeping with the Character Area at present and its isolated location. Large scale development could not be accommodated within the Wallington Scarp Slopes without a significant visual impact and interrupting the open, long distance views. The steeply sloping and undulating landform would also make major development difficult to accommodate.

The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would also be inappropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. There are no settlements within or immediately adjacent to the Character Area that could be extended, other than the small village of Wallington. Any development would reduce the openness of the Character Area and would be difficult to accommodate on the steeply sloping and undulating landform.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would not generally be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the largely rural character of most routes at present. However, the A505 is located just outside the Wallington Scarp Slopes, along with the railway line between Baldock and Royston. These are visible elements in views from the Character Area but do not dominate the local character. Additional traffic would affect the relative tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low to moderate.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Any upgrading of the existing road network of lanes would cause damage to the landscape character. Extensive development would also disrupt the open views and sloping landform.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were in close proximity to other structures and agricultural in character. A few modern agricultural buildings have been constructed within the Wallington Scarp Slopes, although some of these are visually intrusive. Large buildings, if not carefully located and designed would erode the rural and undeveloped character of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

**Large scale open uses**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area and there are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Extensive development would also disrupt the open views and sloping landform.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

**EVALUATION**

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively undisturbed. It would be difficult for even small scale mineral extraction to be accommodated due to the openness of the Wallington Scarp Slopes. Larger scale extraction would disrupt the remoteness and tranquillity of the Character Area and likely to be highly visible. The characteristic landform would also be lost if mineral extraction were to occur.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**Incremental small scale development**

There may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of a vernacular form or style and in keeping with the rural character. Modern buildings have been constructed within the Wallington Scarp Slopes, although some of these are visually intrusive. However, large buildings, if not carefully located, could erode the rural and undeveloped character of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low to moderate.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are currently a small number of detractors in the areas. These include existing telecommunications masts at Metley Hill, which are visible on the skyline in views into the Character Area from the north. There are also a number of low voltage overhead cable routes. Further utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines are likely to have a major impact on the rural character of Wallington Scarp Slopes. Large scale tall elements such as these would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as from surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.



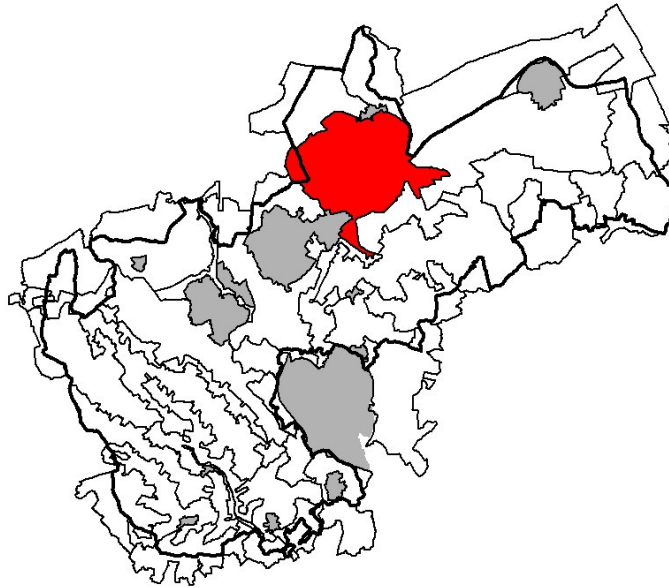
**GUIDELINES****STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE****Strategy: Reconstruct****Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote planting of new beech woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora especially in relation to sub-urban fringe areas
- Encourage the development for species-rich calcareous grassland habitats
- 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
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network

**Built development guidelines**

- Retain the rural character of Wallington Scarp Slopes, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Wallington Scarp Slopes
- Maintain the open character and the long distance views from the Character Area
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing hedgerows
- Planting should reflect existing patterns, with hedges following field and road boundaries and strategic isolated copses to mitigate buildings
- Avoid the location of new development on visually exposed areas of the scarp slopes
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area
- Restrict the location of further masts and vertical features to the eastern end of the Character Area to prevent them from dominating the skyline

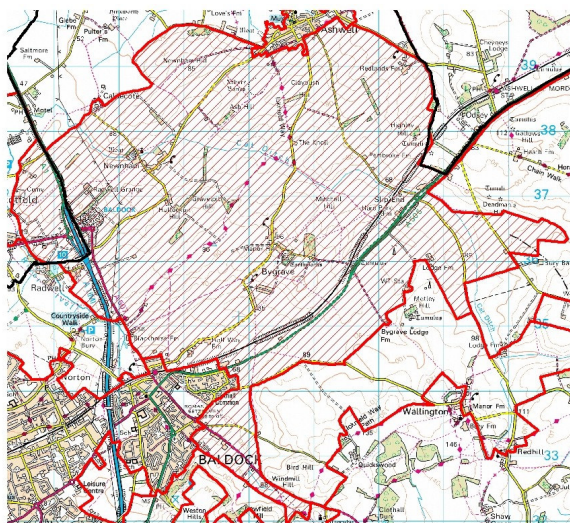
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

A large area to the northeast of Baldock, lying mainly to the east of the A1(M) but with a small parcel extending west to the River Ivel. (To the north east of Radwell village this lies outside of the District). The Character Area stretches southeast as far as the chalk scarp face and northwards to the villages of Caldecote and Ashwell.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Rolling chalk landform, eroded by a complex network of shallow dry valleys. Small rounded chalk knolls common. Large scale arable fields often with remnant field boundaries, mainly well trimmed hawthorn hedges. The core has a pattern of regular rectilinear fields often with curving boundaries. Boundaries often based on older more organic pattern of lanes and primary boundaries. To the east of the Ashwell to Slip End Road and west of Newnham field patterns become more regular with stronger patterns of more rectilinear fields.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Rolling chalk landform
- Small rounded chalk knolls
- Large rectilinear fields in arable
- Large - medium regular geometric plantations
- Nucleated settlements

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- A1(M), A505, railway
- Telecommunications masts (Lodge Farm)
- Lower Icknield Way
- Abuts suburban edge of Baldock
- Pylons crossing the western edge
- Valley and moat at Newnham
- Ivel valley

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

Chalk overlain by free draining calcareous to neutral loamy brown soils. Thin drift deposits of Boulder Clay and glacial gravel on upper slopes.

**Topography**

Undulating – rolling plateau landform with small but distinctive chalk knolls. Land generally is falling in a north westerly direction.

**Degree of slope**

Varies 1:10 to 1:30.

**Altitude range**

50m to 100m.

**Hydrology**

Area is drained by a limited network of local streams and ditches. The only watercourse is the seasonal Cat Ditch. Springs and ponds are a distinctive local feature and moats at Bygrave.

**Land cover and land use**

Arable of very long standing having formerly been corn field strips with occasional plantations and tree belts.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Character Area contains species-rich neutral grassland, such as Parkwood Meadow and ponds, which are notably uncommon in North Hertfordshire (0.29% of area). Old pastures and meadows with their diverse flora have largely disappeared since the 1940's and are now regarded as some of the most threatened habitats in the UK.

The most important semi-natural vegetation comprises vestiges of ancient grassland on road verges and some field banks, known to be of great age, such as Bygrave Road, Wallington Road and Newnham Hill. Remnants of more neutral grass pastures occur at Bygrave. Where underlying calcareous soil has been exposed, some important ecological communities have developed. Ashwell Quarry is an old chalk pit and a key calcareous grassland site within the county. Species present include horseshoe vetch, fragrant orchid and one of the county's largest colonies of pyramidal orchid.

Important area for declining farmland birds.

Open fields are important for corn bunting, brown hare and occasionally quail whilst in winter, passing golden plover and lapwings may be seen. Woodlands are secondary, eg Park Wood at Bygrave and plantations at Newnham. Spring-fed ponds at Bygrave are locally important for aquatic life.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

In the northwest lies the medieval settlement of Newnham. The church of St Vincent, Newnham, dates to the 12th century and a moated site at Newnham Manor lies to the west of the church. The Medieval village of Caldecote lies to the north of Newnham. The church of St Mary Magdalene, Caldecote, dates to the 15th century.

The Character Area seems to have been well occupied in later prehistory with numerous enclosures, prehistoric ring ditches and linear ditches. Highley Hill Bowl Barrow lies to the northeast and two bowl barrows lie at Bygrave. Prehistoric ring ditches, enclosures, trackways Romano-British cemeteries and earthworks lie to the south. Arbury Banks Iron Age Hillfort lies to the south of Ashwell. Its internal features include hut circles, visible on aerial photographs.

Bygrave is one of the few parishes in Hertfordshire which was never enclosed therefore the landscape is essentially Saxon or earlier in origin. The medieval settlement of Bygrave dates from the 10th century. The church of St Margaret's, Bygrave, dates from the 12th century. Earthworks of a moated site manorial enclosure lie to the south of the village. Radwell Roman Villa lies towards the southwest of the area. Radwell itself is a medieval settlement. The Church of All Saints, Radwell, dates from the 13th century, added to and changed through the Middle Ages.

Baldock is a major historic centre, at least of medieval date. Archaeological remains of Late Iron Age and Roman date attest to the favoured location of Baldock for settlement. The parish church of St Mary, Baldock, dates from the 13th century.

**ASSESSMENT**

The medieval settlement of Ashwell lies to the north of the area. The parish church of St Mary, Ashwell, dates to the 14th century. Finds date from the Anglo-Saxon period to the 14th century. To the south of Ashwell lie Prehistoric, Roman and Medieval earthworks.

**Field Pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape is composed of a mixture of 18th century and later enclosure, prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss, pre-18th century unenclosed common arable, post-1950s enclosure, prairie fields with relict elements, ancient woodland, orchard and 19th-20th century plantation. Today the core area has a pattern of regular rectilinear fields often with curving boundaries. To the east of Ashwell to Slip End Road and west of Newnham the field patterns become more regular with stronger patterns of more rectilinear field boundaries & lines.

**Transport Pattern**

The Character Area is crossed by major transport corridors – A1(M) to the west and the A505 from southwest to northwest, parallel to railway.

**Settlement and Built Form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by nucleated settlements with a low level of dispersal. There are many fine traditional buildings particularly in and around the nucleated settlement of Ashwell. This village has more architecturally worthwhile houses than many others in the county. Nearly all are timber framed or gabled brick type and some are of medieval origin. The Domesday Survey records fourteen burgesses within the settlement. The British Queen Inn, a timber framed house with thatched roof, dates to the 15th century and was altered in the 17th century.

Traditional buildings can also be found in the villages of Radwell, Baldock, Caldecote and Newnham for example, Radwell Grange, 16th-17th century, with some brick mullioned windows and diagonally set chimneys.

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

Large scale open landscapes with dispersed farmsteads. Long distance views from local vantage points. Overlooked from the scarp to the south.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

This landscape type is relatively unusual in the district.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Western side accommodates major road infrastructure and electricity pylons. To the south the railway runs across the open landscape. Telecommunications masts at Lodge Farm

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Crossed by two major transport corridors A1(M) to the west and the A505 Road and Rail corridor. The core area is accessed by a network of local roads radiating out from Ashwell. Extensive rights of way coverage.

**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**

LC2	Landscape Conservation Area
SAM 105	Ring ditches and enclosure at Slip End: Ashwell
SAM 106	Triple ditches at Galley Hill
SAM 108	Ring ditch and enclosure: Newham
SAM 20616	Highley Hill Bowl Barrow: Ashwell
SAM 20643	Two bowl barrows at Bygrave 65m east parkwood: Bygrave
SAM 20759	Arbury Banks Iron Age Hillfort: Ashwell
SAM 27908	Radwell Roman villa: Radwell
SAM 27913	Romano-British small town and Late Age settlement at Baldock: Baldock

**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

Land cover change: Widespread  
 Age structure of tree cover: Mixed  
 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival: Scattered  
 Management of semi-natural habitat: Poor  
 Survival of cultural pattern: Interrupted  
 Impact of built development: Low  
 Impact of land-use change: Moderate

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

**ROBUSTNESS**

Impact of landform: Prominent  
 Impact of land cover: Prominent  
 Impact of historic pattern: Prominent  
 Visibility from outside: Widely visible  
 Sense of enclosure: Partial  
 Visual unity: Coherent  
 Distinctiveness/rarity: Unusual

**Matrix Score:** **Strong**

<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>				

## EVALUATION

## INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

## Landscape Character Sensitivities

- The large scale open arable fields in combination with the rolling chalk landform are the most characteristic feature of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands and would be vulnerable to change.
- Hedgerows and woodland are limited within the North Baldock Chalk Uplands. The introduction of extensive planting or large numbers of new hedgerows would be uncharacteristic.
- Traditional materials of black weatherboarding, painted render or pargeting and thatch are distinctive features in buildings within villages within the Character Area.
- The southern edge of Ashwell is well contained and would be sensitive to further development.
- Settlement within the Character Area is generally small scale, with settlements isolated and nucleated.
- Baldock Services is one of the largest developments within the Character Area. Landform and planting have been used to integrate it into the landscape when viewed from most directions.
- Minor roads through the Character Area are generally open, with occasional rows or avenues of trees.
- Transport corridors such as the A1(M), A505 and the Baldock to Royston railway line have been imposed on the landscape, with limited vegetation screening in many locations.
- Electricity pylons stride through the western edge of the character area on a north – south axis and are an existing detractor to the character of the area.
- Telecommunications masts form prominent if incongruous elements in isolated locations within the Character Area, such as lodge Farm.

Overall North Baldock Chalk Uplands is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. The relatively intact landscape has been

influenced by built development around the edges of the Character Area but retains a largely rural character.

## Visual Sensitivities

- Extensive views across the large scale open rolling landform
- Long distance views from localised high points
- Open views from most roads and lanes throughout the North Baldock Chalk Uplands
- Overlooked by scarp slope to the south, creating a strong visual relationship with the Baldock Gap and Wallington Scarp Slope Character Areas
- Open skylines would be sensitive to the introduction of prominent structures and incongruous elements
- St Mary's church in Ashwell forms a landmark feature in many views within the Character Area
- The built eastern edge of Baldock is prominent and intrusive and would benefit from additional mitigation. Piecemeal development on the edge of Baldock has had an adverse urbanising influence on the Character Area.

In visual terms, North Baldock Chalk Uplands is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. Open views and skylines throughout the Character Area are particularly sensitive to development.

## LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall North Baldock Chalk Uplands is considered to be of **moderate landscape value**. Aspects of particular value are the intactness of the landscape, the visual interest, the aesthetic qualities of the landscape, the sense of openness, the relative tranquillity and visible expressions of the local geology.

**EVALUATION**

**CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT**

**Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within much of this Character Area, due to its rural character in all areas, except potentially to the eastern fringes of Baldock. It would introduce elements that would reduce the openness of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing minor roads, which could erode the character of the landscape. The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements overall is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within much of this Character Area, due to its rural character in all areas, except potentially to the eastern fringes of Baldock. It would introduce elements that would reduce the openness of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands in all other locations, including the fringes of Ashwell. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing minor roads, which could erode the character of the landscape. Some expansion of Baldock, could possibly be accommodated but careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edges of the development would be required in order to provide a more robust boundary than at present. The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low to moderate.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would only be appropriate for improvements of the existing A1(M), A505 and the Baldock to Royston railway line within this Character Area. Improvements to these transport links could present the opportunity to improve their fit within the landscape and soften their appearance. Upgrading of existing minor roads could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area. The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be moderate to low.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Existing minor roads would be inappropriate for any significant larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs. Any upgrading of the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character. Extensive development would also disrupt the openness of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands. The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of a vernacular form and style and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings, if not carefully located, would erode the rural character and openness of the Character Area. The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be moderate to low.

**Large scale open uses**

The openness of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands would make it more difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without significant visual impacts. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and could introduce new elements that would conflict with the current open sweeping views. The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.



**EVALUATION**

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively rural in appearance with small scale nucleated development. Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction or waste disposal would be likely to be highly visible within the North Baldock Chalk Uplands and from adjacent Character Areas. The minor roads would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. For any consented schemes, restoration proposals should be mainly at grade and include for some limited planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low to moderate. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**Incremental small scale development**

There may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of an agricultural nature and in keeping with the rural character. However, due to the existing openness any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the character of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low to moderate.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are currently a small number of detractors in the areas. These include existing telecommunications masts, which are visible in isolated locations. Further utilities developments or elements such as masts or wind turbines are likely to have a major impact on the rural character of North Baldock Chalk Uplands. Large scale tall elements such as these would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as in surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.

**GUIDELINES**

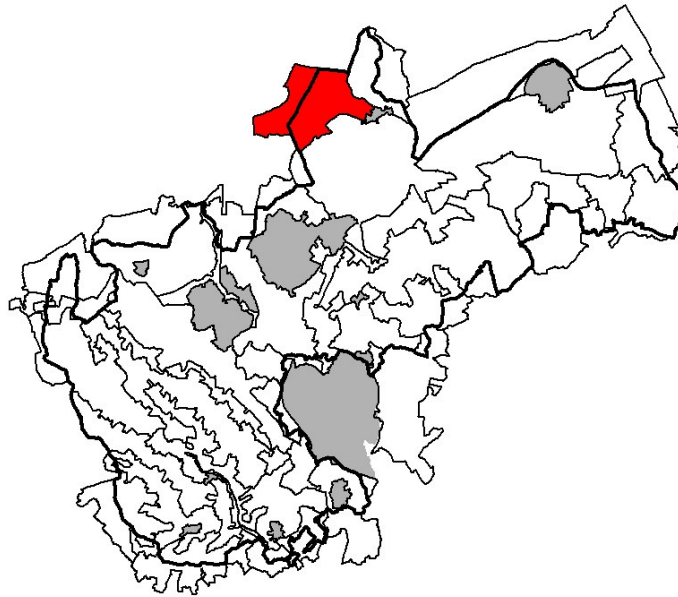
Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE**
**Strategy: Conserve and Restore**
**Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote creation of new woodland and for existing woodlands 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 to create visual links between existing woodland areas
- Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire fencing to new grazing areas
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network

**Built development guidelines**

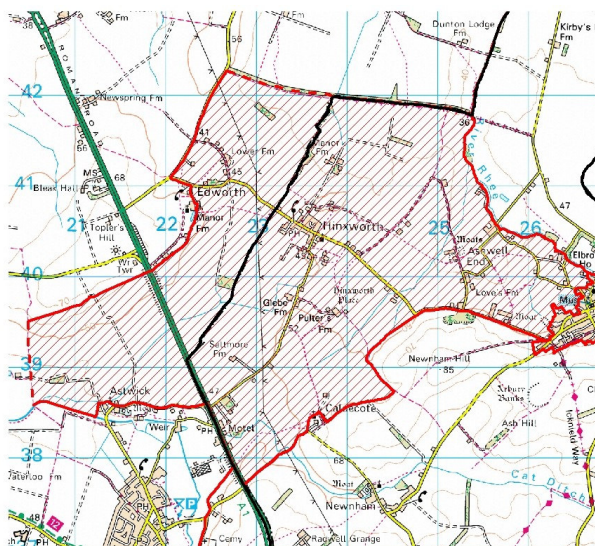
- Maintain the open character of North Baldock Chalk Uplands
- Retain the rural character of Character Area ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area
- Planting mitigation should be appropriate to local character and not necessarily fully enclose development
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or hedgerows
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow open lanes and occasional rows or avenues of trees
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area
- Conserve the traditional character of Ashwell, particularly the approaches to the village from the south and west, ensuring that any development within or located on the edge of the village uses appropriate vernacular materials and features

**LOCATION**

© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA**

A broad band extending from the River Ivel in the south to the valley of the River Cam in the north straddling the District/County boundary north of Hinxworth.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

Very gently rolling landform with predominantly large scale arable fields but with smaller paddocks and grazing land adjacent to settlements or watercourses. Small shelter belts and tree groups frequent. Settlements of Ashwell and Hinxworth on higher ground. In the south the field pattern is characteristically made up of rectilinear fields often with curving boundaries based on an earlier organic pattern of lanes and primary boundaries. To the north of the District/County boundary, the field pattern changes to an ordered layout of rectilinear fields and lanes with straight boundaries.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- Low lying, gently undulating landform
- Large arable fields with smaller parcels of grazing land adjacent to settlements
- Shelter belts
- Network of ditches and streams
- Winding lanes in the south, straight roads in the north

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- A1M runs along western boundary
- Pylons cross the area (West of Hinxworth)

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

The clays underlie the chalk and appear in the north. Soils vary between sandy brown soils in the south to poorly draining gley soils in the north.

**Topography**

Gently undulating landform but with a gradual fall from south to north.

**Degree of slope**

Shallow falls typically 1:60.

**Altitude range**

50m in the south to 35m in the north.

**Hydrology**

Drained by a network of streams and ditches rising in the south and generally flowing in a northerly direction. River Rhee skirts the eastern boundary. The River Ivel abuts the south and furthermore the Character Area extends to the catchment of River Cam in the northeast. Local ponds and moats also common.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable land use but with small pockets of grazing land. Shelter belts frequent.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Typified by large arable fields with little or no ecological interest. An old ridge-and-furrow grassland in the vicinity of Hinxworth is a rare example of species-rich unimproved neutral grassland, and is symptomatic of the scarcity of such habitats within North Hertfordshire as a whole. Loves Farm Moat is another site with unimproved neutral grassland, in association with a moat. It is believed to be one of the only unimproved grasslands occurring on a chalk marl substrate in the county. Elsewhere traces of species rich calcareous grassland may be found along field banks, eg Ridge Way track and Green Lane.

Ashwell Springs SSSI tributaries form the source of the River Rhee a major source of the River Cam. It is scheduled primarily for its cold-water community of invertebrates. The moats at Ashwell End and Hinxworth are locally valuable for aquatic wildlife. White willows are a conspicuous feature along water courses, corn buntings can be numerous. The open fields are used by wintering golden plover and lapwing, also brown hare.

Important area for declining farmland birds. Grazing associated with Bluegate Dairy is an important feature.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

The medieval settlement of Hinxworth lies in the north. The parish church of St Nicholas, Hinxworth, dates from the 14th century. Evidence of Roman occupation lies to the northwest of the village. A medieval moated site, enclosures and linear feature of unknown date and function lie to the southeast of Hinxworth. Roman tile and other occupation debris have been found in the vicinity of one of the enclosures. Hinxworth Roman Fortlet with Romano British settlement and foundations of buildings lies to the east of Hinxworth.

Three Medieval moated sites and cropmarks of three prehistoric ring ditches lie to the northwest of Ashwell. Burials dating from the Bronze Age to the Roman period have been located to the south of the area.

Ashwell Bury historic park and gardens.

**Field Pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape pattern comprises a mixture of prairie fields with relict elements within, prairie fields with post 1950s boundary loss, 18th century and later enclosure and post 1950s enclosure. Pre-18th century irregular enclosure and informal medieval parkland lie to the east, north of Ashwell.

**Transport Pattern**

The A1(M) runs along the western boundary with a pattern of winding lanes to the south and straight roads in the north.

**Settlement and Built Form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by nucleated settlement and farmsteads. There are a number of fine traditional buildings in and around Hinxworth. Examples here date from the 16th century. Hinxworth Place is one of the best-preserved 15th-16th century stone manor houses of Hertfordshire. Other examples include two 16th century farmhouses, Ashwell End and Bluegates Farm.

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

Vast scale open landscape with linear shelterbelts and dispersed farmsteads. Long distance views, long straight roads.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

This landscape type is comparatively uncommon within the District but more typical of south Bedfordshire and south Cambridgeshire.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Ashwell Church and Hinxworth Church tower are local landmarks. Water tower at Topler's Hill. A1 crosses the Character Area.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Road network better developed in the south, less so in the north. Extensive rights of way coverage but not to the north of Hinxworth.

**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**

LC2	Landscape Conservation Area
GD 1901	Ashwell Bury
SAM HT11558/1	Moated enclosures east and west of Love Lane: Ashwell
SAM HT11558/2	Moated enclosures east and west of Love Lane: Ashwell
SAM 27902	Hinxworth Roman Fortlet: Hinxworth

**EVALUATION**

**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: Interrupted  
 Impact of built development: Moderate  
 Impact of land-use change: High

**Matrix Score:** **Poor**

**ROBUSTNESS**

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

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

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

**EVALUATION****INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY****Landscape Character Sensitivities**

- A gently undulating, low lying rural character area, with the main development being the village of Hinxworth
- The village of Hinxworth, which lies on the higher ground. The village would be vulnerable to inappropriate or unsympathetic development and any proposals that are not in scale with the existing settlement
- The A1 cuts through the west of the character area but is screened relatively well by the associated shelterbelts.
- Electricity pylons stride through the centre of the character area on a north – south axis and are an existing detractor to the character of the area.
- The character area consists mainly of large-scale arable fields but with small paddocks and grazing land with fragmented vegetation adjacent to settlements and watercourses. The area would be vulnerable to the removal of hedgerows and boundary vegetation.
- Enclosed farms and isolated settlements would be vulnerable to development.
- Rural roads enclosed by hedgerows, which feed into the A1 would be vulnerable to improvements/upgrading.
- Tributaries of the River Rhee cross the character area and have associated fragmented tree groups. Removal of these would be detrimental to the character of the area.
- Small copses of woodland, provide vertical elements in the gently undulating landscape, as do rows of Poplars. Both elements are sensitive to removal
- Relatively good public access through several rights of way including links between Hinxworth and Ashwell
- Ashwell Bury historic parkland is a registered garden that falls partly within this Character Area, which could be at risk from development pressure and unsympathetic management

Overall Hinxworth Lowlands are considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. The gently undulating arable farmland, with smaller scale field patterns around settlements, is influenced by a small number of detractors.

**Visual Sensitivities**

- Long distance views are possible throughout the character area
- The small woodland copses, shelterbelts and hedgerows break up the views across the landscape and create a sense of enclosure in and around the settlements
- Ashwell Church and Hinxworth Church form local landmarks

In visual terms, Hinxworth Lowlands is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. Views within the character area and towards the undeveloped horizon are relatively open and would be sensitive to the introduction of urbanizing features.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE**

Overall Hinxworth Lowlands is considered to be of **moderate low landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Hinxworth Lowlands are the relative sense of remoteness and perceived distance from major settlement, the uninterrupted tracts of land with few built features and the relative tranquillity.

**EVALUATION****CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT****Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. It would be of an inappropriate scale and would introduce elements that would urbanise the landscape, altering the character and removing the existing key characteristics. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing rural roads, which could erode the character of the landscape.

The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would not be suitable for the Character Area, due to its rural character.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would only be appropriate for improvements of the existing A1 within this Character Area. However it would be imperative that the existing shelterbelts were maintained or replaced. Upgrading of existing rural roads could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be moderate.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Existing minor roads would be inappropriate for any significant larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs. Any upgrading of the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings should be balanced by shelterbelts and hedgerows to reflect the existing character of the area.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

**Large scale open uses**

Despite the presence of the A1, the rural character of Hinxworth Lowlands would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without significant impact. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics. The minor roads are unlikely to have capacity to accommodate development or would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs, which would further dilute the landscape character.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.



**EVALUATION****Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction would not be in keeping with the character of Hinxworth Lowlands. The minor roads would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. Restoration proposals for any consented schemes should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be moderate. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**Incremental small scale development**

There may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of a vernacular form and in keeping with the rural character. This could include carefully planned expansion and infilling of Hinxworth or the development of isolated properties strategically located. However, due to the existing open and undeveloped character any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the potential erosion of the rural character of Hinxworth Lowlands.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be moderate.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are existing urbanising elements within this Character Area at present. The electricity pylons are currently detractors in the area. New utilities developments would have an impact on the rural character of Hinxworth Lowlands. Large scale developments, tall elements would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as potentially visible from surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.

<b>GUIDELINES</b>	Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire
-------------------	--

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE**

**Strategy: Improve and Restore**

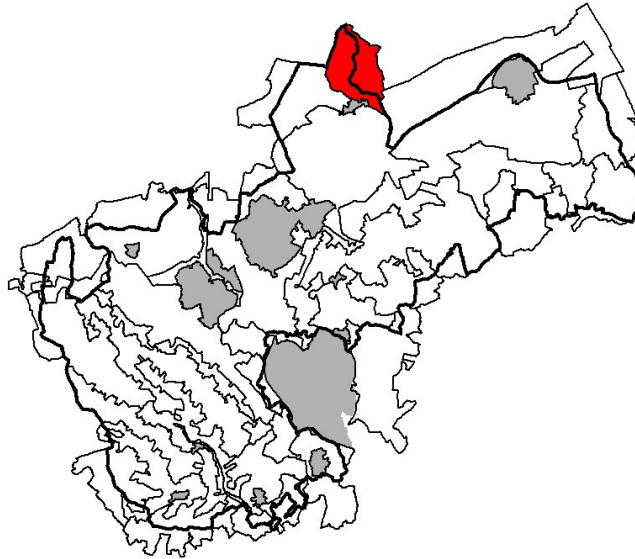
**Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote creation of new woodland and for existing woodlands encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Promote the creation of buffer zones between areas of intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas
- Promote hedgerow restoration to create visual links between existing woodland areas
- Promote the use of traditional fields hedges in place of post and wire fencing to new grazing areas
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Encourage the development of unimproved species-rich grassland habitats
- Promote the creation of new ponds and the retention of existing ponds for wildlife
- Encourage the planting of shelter belts
- Encourage the planting of trees and other appropriate vegetation along watercourses

**Built development guidelines**

- Conserve the traditional character of Hinxworth village, ensuring that any development located on the edge of the village uses appropriate vernacular materials and features to avoid inappropriate visual intrusion
- Protect and preserve the pattern of rural lanes and associated hedgerows
- Encourage the retention of vegetation along the A1 to ensure that it remains screened
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in panoramic rural views
- Retain the rural character of Hinxworth Lowlands, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area
- Avoid the location of new development in visually intrusive locations
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or the loss of surviving species-rich grassland habitats and ancient hedgerows
- Conserve and enhance Ashwell Bury
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area

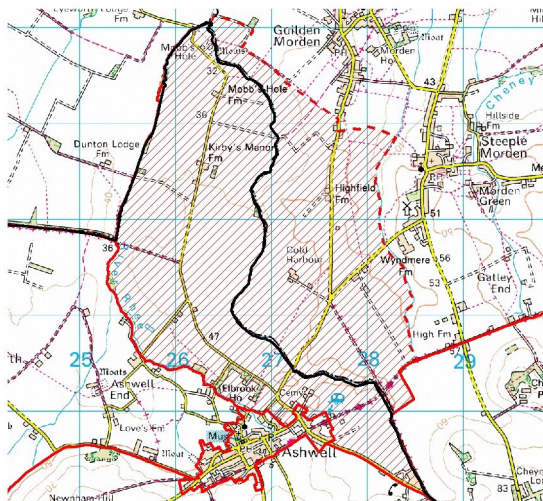
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The Character Area of Steeple Morden Plain lies to the north of Ashwell village. It is bounded by the River Rhee to the west and extends beyond the District boundary to the west of Steeple Morden village.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Steeple Morden is one of several nucleated settlements, extending eastwards, which run in a line (probably a spring line) parallel to the foot of the chalk scarp. Gently rolling chalk landform with a strong pattern of geometrically ordered fields and

lanes. Northfield Road to the north of Ashwell, runs on a slight rise across the landscape. The land falls away gently on each side of the road. Vast acreage of arable land on both sides of the road only interrupted by the recent tree planting along the road. Area is very exposed. Absence of settlements adds to the lack of variety and homogeneity of the landscape.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Medium to large arable fields
- Spring line feeds streams which flow northwards
- Flat, low lying to west
- Gently rolling landform to east
- Open, exposed character
- Geometric pattern of rectilinear fields and roads

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Bounded to north by Steeple Morden settlement
- (Lower) Icknield Way long distance footpath
- Lack of settlement in the west with pattern of nucleated settlements to the east, beyond the boundary to the Character Area

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

Soils tend to be partially waterlogged calcareous clays overlying Chalk Marl.

**Topography**

Very shallow crossfall over area to north of Ashwell rising to gently undulating further east.

**Degree of slope**

Typically 1:100 in the west rising to 1:30 in the east but with pockets of more level ground. Area falling gently from south to north.

**Altitude range**

35m to 55m.

**Hydrology**

Kirby Manor farmland drained by two broadly parallel streams running to east and west (river Rhee) of Northfield Road. The Cheney Water, which runs to the east of Steeple Morden, rises at Upper Gatley and flows through a series of weirs and ponds. Cheney Water is a characteristic chalk spring rising from the bottom of the scarp and draining northwards into the River Cam catchment.

**Land cover and land use**

Dominated by arable, large sized fields to the west, medium sized fields to the east adjacent to Steeple Morden.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

The Character Area, which falls partly outside the county boundary, contains no wildlife sites and is of notably low ecological interest. It is dominated by large arable field systems, with semi-natural vegetation restricted to watercourses, occasional shelter belts and neutral/calcareous grassland remnants on road verges and old field banks, eg Shire Baulk and Ashwell Street. Verges dominated in spring by cow parsley. Low hawthorn hedging is also common. The white willow lined eutrophic watercourses have some value for wildlife. Golden plover frequent the open fields in winter, whilst water voles inhabit some streams. Very important area for corn bunting. Dotterel occasionally occur in large arable fields on spring migration. Dung heaps (middens) from Bluegate Dairy are a very important food source (insects) for resident and migrant birds.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

In the centre of the Character Area, a cropmark of a prehistoric ring ditch is known from an aerial photograph. Earthworks of a probable medieval moated site, a Roman Villa and Romano-British occupation material lies to the south. A medieval moated site of two concentric moats lie at Mobbs Hole in the north.

Most of the open farmland has been excavated in the past for coprolites and is therefore a secondary landscape.

**Field Pattern**

The historic agricultural enclosure pattern dates from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The landscape of rectilinear fields retain some pre-enclosure features such as old moats, county boundary field baulks, etc. Informal Medieval parkland lies to the south with small pockets of 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century plantation in the centre.

**Transport Pattern**

Northfield Road runs on a slight rise along the west and Ashwell Road runs parallel to it through the east of the Character Area.

**Settlements and Built Form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by sparse settlement consisting mainly of farmsteads.

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

Vast scale open landscape in the west with dispersed farmsteads. Long distance views, long straight roads. More settlement pattern obvious to the east providing smaller scale landscape.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

This landscape type is comparatively uncommon within the District but characteristic of south Cambridgeshire.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Local pockets of linear development at Steeple Morden and Guilden Morden.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Area to the west has limited rights of way access. Steeple Morden and Guilden Morden have extensive road and rights of way coverage.

**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**

LC2 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: Poor  
 Survival of cultural pattern: Declining  
 Impact of built development: Moderate  
 Impact of land-use change: High

**Matrix Score:** **Poor**

**ROBUSTNESS**

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

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

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

## EVALUATION

## INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

## Landscape Character Sensitivities

- A largely rural character throughout the Character Area, with an absence of both development and other detractors. Steeple Morden would be vulnerable to the addition of urbanizing features
- Gently rolling chalk landform, moving into clay with large geometric open fields, create an exposed landscape with a remote character
- The few roads crossing the area are defined by clipped hedgerows, new hedgerow planting and trees, including poplars. The roads are vulnerable to improvements or upgrading.
- The majority of vegetation in the character area is associated with the River Rhee and its tributary. The removal or inconsistent management of these corridors would be detrimental to the character area.
- The character area is not particularly intact and has lost elements of its typical character due to the extensive removal of fields boundaries and hedgerows. Remaining hedgerows are vulnerable to further loss.
- The built form in the area is characterised by small groupings or individual properties set amongst tree planting and boundary vegetation. The majority of these are farmsteads and agricultural buildings. These properties would be vulnerable to development or removal of associated boundary vegetation.
- There is very limited public access to the west of the character area. There is scope for improvement. However the Icknield Way does run through the south of the area

- The area is sparse, with a simple texture and limited diversity. The limited linear vegetation associated with the river and streams, which flow northwards, breaks up its predominantly horizontal form. The area is vulnerable to removal of further vegetation

Overall Steeple Morden is considered to be of **low to moderate sensitivity**. The relatively flat arable farmland creates an open, remote character with limited urban influence.

## Visual Sensitivities

- Views towards the watercourses are an important feature of the Character Area
- Panoramic views are common from the higher ground to the east
- Long distance views along long straight roads

In visual terms, Steeple Morden is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. Views between the watercourses are relatively open and would be sensitive to the introduction of urbanizing features.

## LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Steeple Morden is considered to be of **moderate low landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Steeple Morden are the lack of incongruous elements, the remote rural character, the uninterrupted tracts of land with few built features, the sense of openness and the relative tranquillity.

**EVALUATION****CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT****Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. It would be of an inappropriate scale and would introduce elements that would urbanise the landscape, altering the character and removing the existing key characteristics. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing rural roads, which could erode the character of the landscape.

The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the largely rural character of the roads at present. Upgrading of existing rural roads could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Existing minor roads would be inappropriate for any significant larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs. Any upgrading of the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings could be highly visible within the Character Area if not carefully located. Any building or group of building should be located strategically, preferably associated with existing building groups and with boundary planting and shelterbelts where necessary.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be moderate.

**Large scale open uses**

The rural character of Steeple Morden would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without significant impact. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics. The minor roads are unlikely to have capacity to accommodate development or would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs, which would further dilute the landscape character.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.



**EVALUATION****Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction would not be in keeping with the character of Steeple Morden. The minor roads would need upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. Should any schemes be consented, restoration proposals should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be moderate. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**Incremental small scale development**

There may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. Small scale isolated properties or small groups of buildings carefully designed and in keeping with the existing character of the area, could be accommodated. However, due to the existing open and undeveloped character any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the rural character of Steeple Morden. Proposed buildings would normally be expected to relate to existing complexes

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be moderate.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are very few urbanising elements within this Character Area at present. There are currently few detractors in the areas. New utilities developments or structures would have a significant impact on the rural character of Steeple Morden. Large scale developments and tall elements would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as potentially visible in surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low.

**GUIDELINES**

Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire

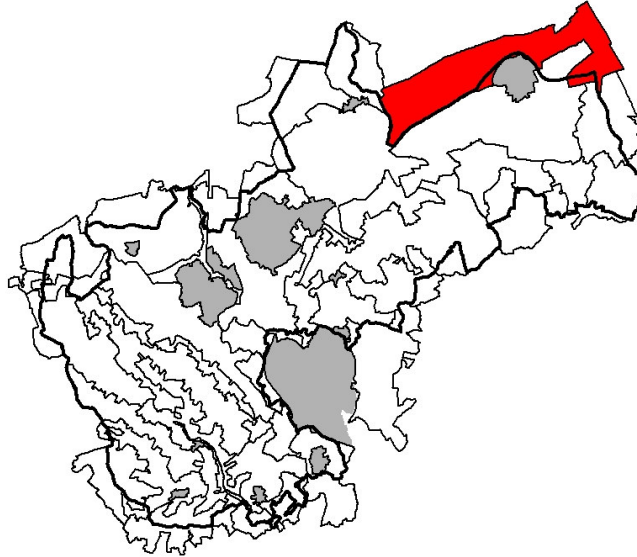
**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE****Strategy: Improve and Restore****Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote creation of new woodland and for existing woodlands encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Promote the creation of buffer zones between areas of intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas
- Promote hedgerow restoration to create visual links between existing woodland areas
- Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire fencing to new grazing areas
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Encourage the development of unimproved species-rich grassland habitats
- Promote the creation of new ponds and the retention of existing ponds for wildlife
- Encourage the planting of shelter belts and planting associated with built form
- Encourage the planting of trees and other appropriate vegetation along watercourses

**Built development guidelines**

- Protect and preserve the pattern of rural roads and associated hedgerows and trees
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in rural views
- Retain the rural character of Steeple Morden, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area
- Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations, such as on higher ground
- Place new buildings in association with existing groups
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing vegetation or the loss of surviving hedgerows
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area

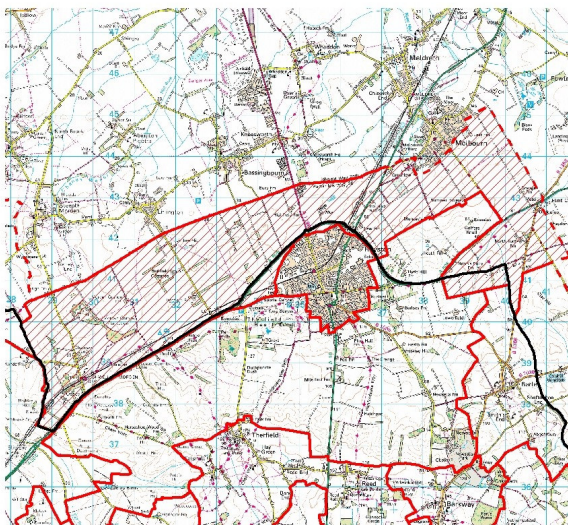
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

Odsey lies just outside the District adjacent to Ashwell and Morden Station. The area extends in a band north of and parallel to the A505 and continues eastwards past Royston. Only small parts (south of Odsey and adjacent to Royston) fall within the District. Southeast of Royston the Character Area extends into the chalk scarp landscape as a local valley feature which is occupied by the Wardington Bottom Drain. The northern boundary is to be determined by further studies undertaken by South Cambridgeshire District Council.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently rolling landform with localised chalk knolls (outliers). Large scale arable fields set out in an ordered pattern of rectilinear fields and lanes with straight boundaries. Extensive plantations around Ashwell and Morden otherwise linear tree belts along field boundaries. Remnant field boundaries.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Gently rolling chalk landform with chalk knolls
- Strong pattern of rectilinear fields
- Dominance of arable
- Linear tree belts
- Sparse settlement pattern
- Long distance views along straight roads

### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- A505 dual carriageway runs along southern boundary
- Baldock to Royston railway running parallel to A505
- Abuts suburban boundary to Royston
- (Lower) Icknield Way (Ashwell Street track) runs along northern boundary

## ASSESSMENT

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

Chalk overlain by free draining loamy brown soils.

**Topography**

Low lying, gently rolling landform.

**Degree of slope**

Typically 1:60 but with localised undulations.

**Altitude range**

50m to 80m.

**Hydrology**

Network of local ditches draining generally northwards.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Ecological data is available only for the area within North Hertfordshire.

Remnants of chalk grassland on the A505 (Icknield Way) known to support purple milk vetch a rare chalk grassland species, are being lost to scrub. Road banks of the Royston Bypass include some secondary calcareous grassland and there are remnants of rough calcareous grassland on the edge of Royston with associated common lizard.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

A number of archaeological sites have been revealed by aerial photographs to the west near Royston. A Bell Barrow lies 500m south of Morden Grange plantation in the southwest.

**Field Pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape pattern is comprised of 18th century and later enclosure and post 1950s enclosure. The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosure incorporates some prehistoric boundary features like the Icknield Way and its associated trackways. A 20th century stud farm lies to the southeast of the area.

**Transport Pattern**

The A505 dual carriageway runs along the southern boundary and the Lower Icknield Way runs along the northern boundary. The railway line bisects the area running parallel to the A505.

**Settlements and Built Form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by sparse settlement consisting mainly of farmsteads.

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

Vast scale open landscape with linear shelterbelts and dispersed farmsteads. Long distance views, long straight roads.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

This landscape type is comparatively uncommon within the District.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The A505 corridor and the parallel railway are the most notable features. Character Area abuts suburban fringe of Royston.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Well served by regular pattern of roads and tracks. Comparatively low level of footpath coverage.

**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**

LC2	Landscape Conservation Area
SAM CB99	Sites revealed by aerial photographs: Royston
SAM CB244	Mile Ditches: Royston
SAM 24419	Bell Barrow 500m South of Morden Grange Plantation (Cambs)
SAM 24420	Bowl Barrow on Goffers Knoll

**EVALUATION**

**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/Relic  
 Impact of built development: Low  
 Impact of land-use change: High

---

**Matrix Score:** **Poor**

---

**ROBUSTNESS**

Impact of landform: Apparent  
 Impact of land cover: Prominent  
 Impact of historic pattern: Apparent  
 Visibility from outside: Widely visible  
 Sense of enclosure: Open  
 Visual unity: Coherent  
 Distinctiveness/rarity: Unusual

---

**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>				

## EVALUATION

### INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

#### Landscape Character Sensitivities

- The Character Area as a whole is relatively flat to the east and more undulating to the west. However, the parcels of land within North Hertfordshire are generally relatively flat.
- Roadside shelterbelts and small blocks of woodland are characteristic of the wider Odsey - Royston Character Area and would be sensitive to removal. Some new woodland belts have been created in parts of the North Hertfordshire area.
- Hedgerows within the wider Character Area are generally intact and well managed. This is less the case within the parts of Odsey – Royston that are in North Hertfordshire, where less characteristic post and rail fences are more likely to form boundaries.
- Roads throughout the Character Area are generally open, allowing views across the Character Area. However, within North Hertfordshire this is less common, with tree belts along some roads.
- Land use within the Character Area is generally arable farmland. Smaller scale pasture and horsiculture has been introduced in some locations. Areas within North Hertfordshire have been left as rough grassland.
- Built form and business park/industrial development on the edges of Royston have a strong influence on the character of the areas within North Hertfordshire. The edges to these developments are generally intrusive and not softened by vegetation.
- The A505 and the Baldock to Royston railway line have disturbed and fragmented the parts of the Character Area within North Hertfordshire, particularly where the elevated A505 creates a physical barrier to the rest of the Character Area. These elements require more careful integration.

Overall the areas of Odsey - Royston within North Hertfordshire are considered to be of **low sensitivity**. The parcels of land that remain in North Hertfordshire are greatly influenced by the urban area of Royston and fragmented from the remainder of the Character Area.

#### Visual Sensitivities

- The Character Area as a whole provides the setting for the adjacent Therfield Heath, which is located within the Scarp Slopes South of Royston Landscape Character Area.
- Whilst there are open, long distance views within much of the Character Area, the parcels of land within North Hertfordshire are partially contained by vegetation or landform.
- The areas of land within North Hertfordshire are not visually linked to the rest of the Character Area.
- There are views into the North Hertfordshire parts of the Character Area from properties and developments on the edges of Royston.
- Elevated views from the A505 where it is on embankment.

In visual terms, the areas of Odsey - Royston within North Hertfordshire are considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. Views into these areas are more limited than into the Character Area as a whole but they still play a role in the setting of Therfield Heath.

#### LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Odsey - Royston is considered to be of **low landscape value**. Although there is a sense of openness within the Character Area, there is a lack of memorable views, the area is heavily influenced by significant habitation, there are high levels of human intervention in the landscape, a lack of distinctive landform and a lack of vernacular built form to contribute to a sense of place.

**EVALUATION****CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT****Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its urban fringe location and the fact that it is already disturbed and influenced by built form and infrastructure. Careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edges of the development would be required and the effect on the setting of Therfield Heath.

The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be moderate to high.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its urban fringe location and the fact that it is already disturbed and influenced by built form and infrastructure. Careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edges of the development would be required and the effect on the setting of Therfield Heath.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be moderate to high.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would not be relatively appropriate within this Character Area, due to the presence of both the A505 and the railway line at present. Improvements to these transport links could present the opportunity to improve their fit within the landscape and soften their appearance and the effect on the setting of Therfield Heath.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be moderate to high.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would be in keeping with existing land uses adjacent to some parts of this character area. Careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edges of the development would be required and the effect on the setting of Therfield Heath.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be moderate to high.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

This type of large scale development would be in keeping with existing land uses adjacent to some parts of this character area. However, more intensive development of the Character Area may be more appropriate when surrounding land uses are taken into account. Careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edges of the development would be required and the effect on the setting of Therfield Heath.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be moderate.

**Large scale open uses**

It would be possible to accommodate large scale 'open' uses within this Character Area. However, this would be less in keeping with other surrounding land uses.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be moderate.

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

Mineral extraction would not be appropriate in Odsey – Royston due to the close proximity to built up areas.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.



**EVALUATION****Incremental small scale development**

Incremental small scale development could be in keeping with existing land uses adjacent to some parts of this character area. However, more intensive development of the Character Area may be more appropriate when surrounding land uses are taken into account. Careful consideration of the landscape treatment to the edges of the development would be required.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be moderate.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

It may be possible to accommodate some forms of utilities developments in Odsey – Royston. However, due to the close proximity to built up areas many forms of utilities developments would not be appropriate.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.

<b>GUIDELINES</b>	Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire
-------------------	--

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE**

**Strategy: Improve and Restore**

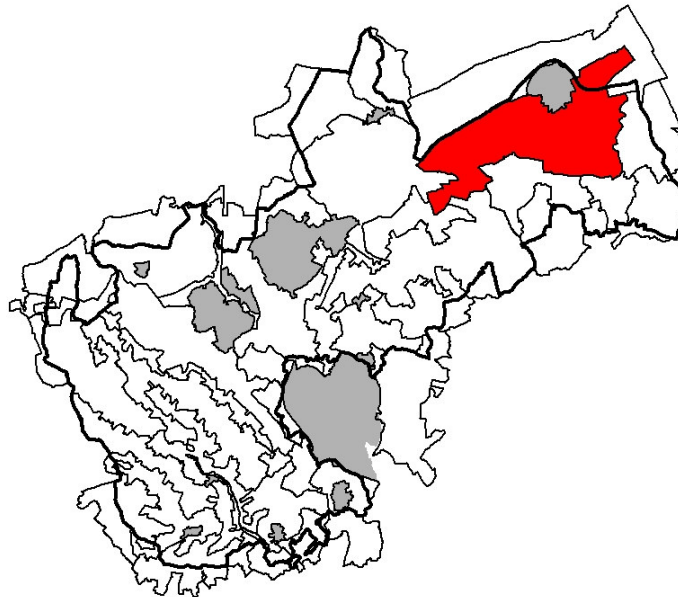
**Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote creation of new woodland and for existing woodlands encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Promote the creation of buffer zones between areas of intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas
- Promote hedgerow restoration to create visual links between existing woodland areas
- Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire fencing to new grazing areas
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network

**Built development guidelines**

- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in rural views
- Avoid the location of new development in locations where it may intrude into the setting of Therfield Heath
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing vegetation or the loss of surviving hedgerows or shelterbelts
- Ensure that lighting associated with new development does not create additional urbanising influences on the wider Character Area or Therfield Heath
- Promote the softening of the existing edge of Royston
- Encourage enhanced integration of the transport corridors in the Character Area

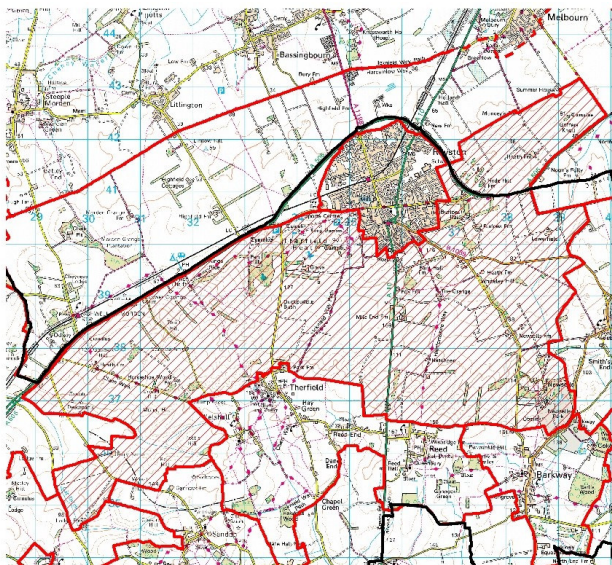
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

An extensive area running parallel and to the south of the A505. The scarp extends from the Cat Ditch Valley in the west to the Wardlington Bottom Drain in the east. The area extends southwards, rising to meet the break of slope with the plateau landscape. To the east of Royston a small chalk outlier extends northwards, ending at Goffers Knoll.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Chalk scarp slope incised by dry water cut valleys. Undulating landform with steeper slopes towards the upper plateau edge. Large scale arable fields with ordered pattern of rectilinear field boundaries and lanes with straight boundaries. Occasional farmsteads. Small tree plantations set out in discrete coverts. Individual tree belts.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Incised chalk scarp slope
- Large scale pattern of rectilinear fields
- Long straight roads, open and without hedge boundaries, climbing the face of the scarp
- Absence of larger settlements
- Long distance views

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Area abuts suburban boundary to Royston
- Therfield Heath, to the southwest of Royston - an area of uncultivated land designated as a SSSI
- Coombe Road sits within a deeply incised valley
- The A10, Roman road
- Historic earthworks
- Newsells Park and associated Stud Farm.

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

Chalk overlain by shallow rendzina soils and calcareous loams. Some areas of glacial gravels notably at Wardington Bottom. The thin chalk soils give a white appearance to the land.

**Topography**

Sloping landform falls from chalk plateau to rolling lowland landscape to the north.

**Degree of slope**

Typically 1:10 but slightly shallower in places.

**Altitude range**

70m to 160m.

**Hydrology**

No discernable water courses other than localised drainage ditches.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

The principal habitat of importance is chalk grassland. An area of high biodiversity is centred around Therfield Heath and Coombe Bottom (Coombe Road, south west of Thrift Hill). Therfield Heath, SSSI is the single largest area of unimproved chalk grassland in the county. It comprises coombes, downland and areas of mixed scrub home to an array of plants and invertebrates including pasque flower, perennial flax, bastard toadflax and burnt tip orchid and the largest colony of chalkhill blue in the county. Coombe Bottom is another key chalk grassland area occurring on steep scarp slopes. Woodland communities on these slopes are primarily broadleaved, with beech being a notably successful species. Other important sites occur at Deadman's Hill, Heath Farm, Barkway Road, Whiteley Hill and the A505 cutting at Burloes.

Unimproved calcareous grassland occupies only 0.25% of the land use of North Hertfordshire and supports a number of rare plants and invertebrates, including fragrant orchid, dropwort, great pignut, juniper as well as nationally uncommon butterfly species such as small blue, chalkhill blue and Duke of Burgandy. Semi-improved calcareous grassland occurs at Newsells Park.

The open fields of the Character Area are noted for breeding quail, stone curlews and grey partridge. Spring crops are important for declining farmland birds. Road verges are important for common lizard.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Numerous cropmarks, revealed by aerial photographs, of prehistoric ring ditches linear features and enclosures including a probably prehistoric or Romano-British field system cover a large part of the Character Area.

Ancient earthworks cut into the chalk are common, including chalk pits and lynchets.

The best surviving ancient landscape in the county lies in the northwest. Surviving elements include Neolithic long barrows, a Bronze Age barrow cemetery and an Iron Age boundary called 'The Mile Ditches'. A medieval moated site lies to the south of the Barrow Cemetery. Springfield style enclosure, three bowl barrows and two pond barrows on Whiteley Hill lie to the east of the area. A prehistoric barrow cemetery and Cross Dyke also occurs in Five Hill Field, 290m southwest of Heath Farm.

Recent landscape change occurs at Newsells Park with the creation of a Stud farm with massive tree and hedge planting resulting in a 'tidy' landscape in contrast to adjoining farmland.

**Field Pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape pattern is comprised of 18th century and later enclosure, post 1950s enclosure and prairie fields with post 1950s boundary loss. 20th century leisure use lies to the north with a 20th century stud farm and informal medieval parkland to the east. There are also pockets of 19th- 20th century plantation in the area.

**Transport Pattern**

Long straight roads open and without hedge boundaries, climbing the face of the scarp slope. The A10, Roman road cuts across the area.

**Settlements and Built Form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by occasional farmsteads. A small number of traditional buildings lie to the southeast in Newsells Park. Queen Ann House, burned in WWII, was replaced by a smaller NeoGeorgian house in 1954. 18th century outbuildings survive as part of Queen Ann House including stables, which are built of red brick with lantern and pediment archway. The timber framed and thatched Lodge was built in 1804. Newsells Bury lies to its west in the grounds, a small brick house of the late 17th century. To the north of Newsells Park lies a small hamlet of 17th century thatched estate cottages.

## EVALUATION

### VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

Expansive open area with long distance views to the north.

#### Rarity & distinctiveness

The chalk scarp is a comparatively common feature in North Hertfordshire however the openness, lack of development (particularly in the west) and the history of this character area make it almost unique in the county.

### VISUAL IMPACT

Scarp provides a vantage point for long distance views over Royston to the north.

### ACCESSIBILITY

Pattern of roads and footpaths runs up and down the scarp face. Connections radiate out from Royston. Icknield Way and Hertfordshire Way long distance paths cross the Character Area.

### 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

LC2	Landscape Conservation Area
SSSI	Therfield Heath
SAM 106	Triple ditches at Galley Hill: Sandon
SAM 20622	Gallows Hill Barrow: Kelshall
SAM 20630	Earls Hill Barrow part of the Round Barrow Cemetery on Therfield Heath: Therfield
SAM 20631	Two Bowl Barrows part of the Round Barrow Cemetery on Therfield Heath: Therfield
SAM 20632	Five Bowl Barrows part of the Round Barrow Cemetery on Therfield Heath: Therfield
SAM 20633	Bowl Barrow one or two Round Barrows on Penhills: Therfield
SAM 20634	Bowl Barrow one of two Round Barrows on Penhills: Therfield
SAM 20635	Long Barrow on Therfield Heath: Therfield
SAM 20640	Bell Barrow part of the Round Barrow Cemetery on Therfield Heath: Therfield
SAM 20641	Bowl Barrow part of the Round Barrow Cemetery on Therfield Heath: Therfield
SAM 20664	Bowl Barrow 1km south-west of Heath Farm: part of the Round Barrow Cemetery on Deadmans Hill: Sandon
SAM 29389/01 and 02	Springfield style enclosure tree bowl barrows and two pond barrows on Whiteley Hill: Barkway
SAM 33374	Prehistoric Barrow Cemetery and Cross Dyke in Five Hill Field, 290m SW of Heath Farm: Sandon
SAM HT 125	Mile Ditches: Therfield Heath

**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

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

**Matrix Score:** **Poor**

**ROBUSTNESS**

Impact of landform: Prominent  
 Impact of land cover: Prominent  
 Impact of historic pattern: Apparent  
 Visibility from outside: Widely visible  
 Sense of enclosure: Open  
 Visual unity: Unified  
 Distinctiveness/rarity: Frequent

**Matrix Score:** **Strong**

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

**EVALUATION**

**INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**

**Landscape Character Sensitivities**

- A largely rural character consisting significant variations. The area is predominantly arable but contains notable areas of grassland and woodland throughout the Character Area, with an absence of both development and other detractors
- An undulating landform with steeper slopes towards the upper plateau edge, incised by dry water cut valleys. The marked topography is emphasised by the predominantly open character of much of the area. The area would be very sensitive to change or degradation
- The area includes a large open topographic bowl feature to the north of Therfield. This landform would be vulnerable to any development
- Woodland habitat and shelterbelts are a prominent feature on the slopes, creating a sense of enclosure and on the skyline locally forming the horizon. However a number of the trees (most notably beech) are dying back particularly on the higher ground. The area would be vulnerable to further loss.
- The area consists of large scale undulating rectangular arable fields. Hedges are infrequent and where present provide clipped linear hedgerow boundaries. There is some new hedgerow planting at the boundaries. The character area would be vulnerable to the loss of the open character of the area.
- Areas of chalk grassland are of habitat importance with the highest value areas including Therfield Heath (SSSI) and Coombe Bottom. This habitat would be very sensitive to any degradation
- The character area contains Newsells Park Stud and Newsells Park between Barkway and Royston, which is associated with major shelterbelts and parkland. The area is vulnerable to the loss of shelterbelts or parkland features.
- The character area has an absence of large settlements. It is characterised by individual farmsteads and isolated

settlements, generally on south facing slopes enclosed by shelterbelts. The character area would be vulnerable to inappropriate or unsympathetic development and any form of development not in scale with the historic settlement patterns

- The character area consists of long straight roads, some of which are open. While others are bordered by clipped hedgerows. The historic roman road (A10) bisects through the area on a north-south axis. The area would be vulnerable to improvements/upgrading of the roads.
- The character area also provides recreation facilities including a golf courses and areas of common on Therfield Heath. The area would be vulnerable to removal of these facilities. However particular features of the e.g. raised green and tees on the golf course and car parks create a negative impact on the natural topography character of the area
- The character area overall is very much intact, with a good representation of typical character. The area is in a good state of repair, with varied texture, diversity with a complex pattern and form. The character area would be vulnerable to degradation of these characteristics
- Good public access through numerous rights of way, including the Ickniel Way and the Hertfordshire Way

Overall Scarp Slopes South of Royston is considered to be of **high sensitivity**. The pronounced undulating landform and mix of grassland and arable fields creates an open area with panoramic views, while the sections of wooded dip slopes create a sense of enclosure with limited urban influence.

**EVALUATION**

**Visual Sensitivities**

- Expansive open area with long distance and panoramic views particularly to the north
- Woodland and shelter belts form and break up the skyline
- Sweeping patterns of arable fields, with bleached horizons
- Clipped hedgerows create a soft line, ascending the scarp with small woodland copses at the corners of fields

In visual terms, Scarp Slopes South of Royston is considered to be of **high sensitivity**. Views to and from the scarp slopes including undeveloped and wooded skylines are relatively open and would be highly sensitive to the introduction of urbanizing features.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE**

Overall Scarp Slopes South of Royston is considered to be of **high landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Scarp Slopes South of Royston are the recognisable sense of place, the striking landform, the visual interest, memorable uninterrupted views, the sense of openness and visible expressions of the local geology.



**EVALUATION**

**CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT**

**Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. It would be of an inappropriate scale and would introduce elements that would urbanise the landscape, altering the character and removing the existing key characteristics. Visual impacts would also be high, due to the panoramic and open views currently experienced. Development could affect important habitat of chalk grassland, which would erode the character of the landscape. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and could reduce accessibility to the countryside.

The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would not be entirely appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. Visual impacts could be high, due to the panoramic and open views currently experienced.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the largely rural character of most routes at present. Upgrading of existing roads could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. There would also be restricted areas of level land for this type of development and substantial earthworks would be likely to be required. Existing minor roads would be inappropriate for any significant larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs. Any upgrading of the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings could be highly visible within the Character Area if not carefully located would erode the rural character.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

**Large scale open uses**

The landform within Scarp Slopes South of Royston would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics. Minor roads would require upgrading to be able to accept larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs, which would further dilute the landscape character. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively undisturbed and rural in appearance. Whilst some small scale

mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction or waste disposal would not be in keeping with the character of Scarp Slopes South of Royston. The minor roads would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. Larger scale extraction could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside. For any consented schemes, restoration could include sensitive reduced level proposals if following the natural landform and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction/waste disposal is considered to be low to moderate. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

#### **Incremental small scale development**

There may be some very limited capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of a vernacular style and in keeping with the rural character. Any development should incorporate mitigation with landform and shelterbelts. However, due to the existing open and undeveloped character any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the rural character of Scarp Slopes South of Royston.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low.

#### **Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are very few urbanising elements within this Character Area at present. There are currently few detractors in the areas. New utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines would have a major impact on the rural character of Scarp Slopes South of Royston. Large scale developments and tall elements would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as being visible from surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.

<b>GUIDELINES</b>	Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire
-------------------	--

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE**

**Strategy: Restore Condition to Maintain Character**

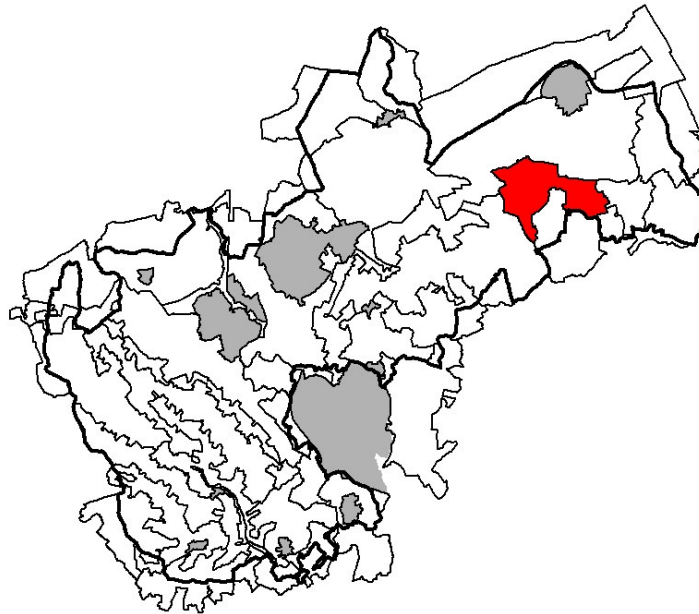
**Landscape management guidelines**

- Maintain the general open character of the area in particular the long distance views over the lowland landscape to the north
- Promote management of woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Encourage the planting of small woodlands in discrete coverts
- 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 the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire enclosures to new grazing areas
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Encourage the planting of beech woodlands on the steeper valley sides
- Encourage the development of new and improve the management of existing chalk grassland habitats

**Built development guidelines**

- Protect and preserve and enhance the pattern of straight roads and associated hedgerows
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to mitigate new development that could intrude in panoramic rural views
- Retain the open rural character of Scarp Slope South of Royston, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area
- Avoid the location of new development in isolated and visual intrusive locations, particularly where they would be visible on the skyline
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or the loss of surviving chalk grassland habitats and ancient hedgerows
- Conserve and enhance Therfield Heath and Coombe Bottom
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area

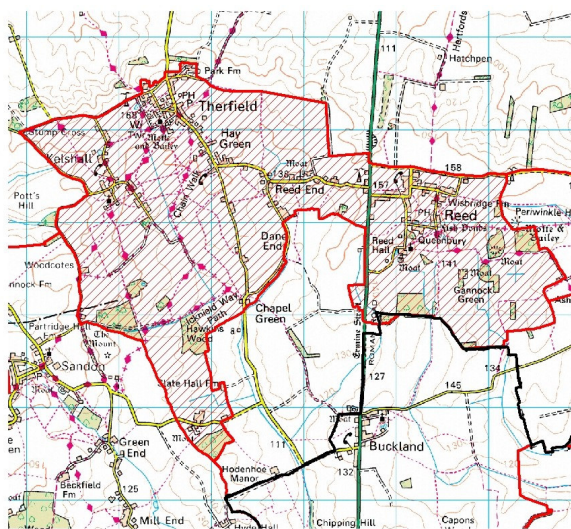
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

A broad band extending between the villages of Therfield / Kelshall in the west to the village of Reed in the east. The Character Area extends northwards to the break of slope defining the scarp edge and also extends locally to the District boundary in the south.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently rolling plateau landform. Predominantly arable but with grazing land adjacent to settlements. Generally well wooded with small pockets of ancient deciduous woodland and densely scattered hedgerow trees. Network of ancient winding lanes and an extensive footpath network especially around the settlements. Organic enclosure pattern associated with an irregular network of winding lanes. Field sizes to the south generally medium to large sized, however, between Therfield and Reed fields are small to medium sized. Scattered farmsteads and wayside dwellings.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Gently rolling landform
- Dominant arable land use
- Irregular pattern of field boundaries and ancient lanes
- Dispersed/scattered farmsteads

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Water tower at Therfield
- Telecommunications masts at Reed End
- Moated properties and fish ponds at Reed
- Upper Icknield Way

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

Glacial drift (till) overlying chalk. Calcareous loam soils, occasionally poorly drained.

**Topography**

Gently sloping plateau falling towards the south east.

**Degree of slope**

Typically 1:30.

**Altitude range**

125m to 165m.

**Hydrology**

Area drained by headwater drains of the River Rib which extends to the east of Therfield. Notable for ponds and moated properties.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

An area of high biodiversity is centred around the village of Reed typified by chalky boulder clay woodland and species-rich neutral grasslands. Unimproved neutral grasslands are a nationally scarce resource, but occur at several locations, eg Therfield Motte and Bailey and Fiddlers Green.

Ancient semi-natural woodlands of ash, maple and hazel coppice occur frequently with interlinking green lanes, the most notable being Reed, West and Philpotts Woods. Other examples include Hawkins Wood and Bush Wood.

Semi-natural grassland typical of the Character Area is a damp calcareous pasture with cowslip and pepper saxifrage but now limited to sites at Reed and Therfield. Locally important ponds occur at Reed End, Reed and Washingditch Green at Therfield. The scarce herb paris and fallow deer can be found in some woods.

Therfield and Reed End are important for great crested newts

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

To the north of the area is the medieval settlement of Therfield. Earthworks of a probable medieval Motte and Bailey Castle lie within the village. Cropmarks of enclosures, prehistoric ring ditches and linear ditches have been revealed by aerial

photographs. A medieval moated site lies to the southeast of Therfield. The Medieval settlement of Kelshall located to the southwest of Therfield was recorded in the Domesday Book as Cheleselle. The parish church of St Faith, Kelshall, dates to the 15th century. A Romano-British burial is recorded nearby.

To the east of the area lies the medieval settlement of Reed. The parish church of St Mary, Reed, dates from Saxon times. At least 10 medieval moated sites surround the settlement; two moated sites and a Holloway at Gannock Grove and Bush Wood, a double moat and fish pond at Queenbury, Moated sites at Reed Hall and Goodfellows. To the south of Reed there are cropmarks of an enclosure with associated linear ditches and a medieval moated site known as the Bull Moat.

**Field Pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape pattern consists of a mixture of 18th century and later enclosure, pre-18th century irregular enclosure, prairie fields with post 1950s boundary loss, ancient woodland, post 1950s enclosure, prairie fields with relict elements within. There are pockets of 19th-20th century plantation and small areas of enclosed meadow pasture.

**Transport Pattern**

Network of ancient winding lanes and an extensive footpath network especially around the settlements. The Character Area is crossed by the Upper Icknield Way.

**Settlements and Built Form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by villages, estates and dispersed/scattered farmsteads. There are a number of traditional buildings in the villages of Therfield, Reed and Kelshall. There are many good examples in the village of Therfield, these date from the 15th century. The Rectory, a former Manor House originally dates to the 15th century with later additions in the early 18th century. Elm House dates to the 16th century and Limes, a timber framed building with later additions dates to the 17th century. In Kelshall, a late Georgian five bay fronted Old Rectory lies close to the parish church. The village of Reed is unusual in plan with a number of buildings scattered around three greens and includes a large number of medieval moated sites. A Tudor chimney is all that remains of the original Reed Hall when it was altered in the 18th century.

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

Complex area of arable farmland mixed with grazing and woodland cover. Tapestry of varying sized fields and corridor network of winding lanes.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

Landscape type comparatively common within the District.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Local visual impact on northern edge caused by water towers and telecommunications masts.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Well covered by network of lanes, tracks and rights of way. The very straight and busy Roman Road – Ermine Street (A10) cuts across the Character Area.

**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**

LC2	Landscape Conservation Area
SAM 20603	Double Moat and fishpond Queenbury: Reed
SAM 20605	Moated Site Goodfellows: Reed
SAM 20672	Motte and Bailey Castle and associated earthworks 100m south of Tuthill Farm: Therfield
SAM HT11513/1	Gannock Grove Moated Site and Hollow way: Reed
SAM HT11514	Bush Wood Moated Site and Hollow way: Reed
SAM HT11569	Reed Hall Moated Site; Reed

**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

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

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

**ROBUSTNESS**

Impact of landform: Apparent  
 Impact of land cover: Prominent  
 Impact of historic pattern: Dominant  
 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>				

**EVALUATION**

**INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**

**Landscape Character Sensitivities**

- The historic settlement pattern within the Character Area is characterised by dispersed villages and scattered farmsteads, which would be sensitive to unsympathetic development not in scale with the villages
- Traditional materials of black weatherboarding, painted render or pargeting, flint infill panels and thatch common to buildings throughout the Character Area
- Mediaeval moated sites and other historical features are present throughout the Therfield-Reed Plateau and would be vulnerable to loss
- Village greens and other important open spaces are found in most villages and hamlets and would be sensitive to development on or adjacent to
- Ancient winding lanes, many of which are classified as green lanes and lined with hedge banks, and would be vulnerable to any 'improvement' schemes
- The linear alignment of Ermine Street Roman Road (the A10)
- Small scattered woodlands are present throughout the Character Area, several of which are ancient, and would be vulnerable to further fragmentation or impact
- Good public access through numerous rights of way, including the Icknield Way, The Hertfordshire Way, Chain Walk, lanes and tracks should be maintained
- A small number of incongruous elements have been introduced into the Character Area, including telecommunication masts and water towers along the northern boundary of the Character Area near Therfield and near Reed End, which currently act as detractors

Overall Therfield-Reed Plateau is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. The loosely settled Character Area has a number of important greens and historic features that would be sensitive to the introduction of unsympathetic elements.

**Visual Sensitivities**

- The Character Area is generally set back from the skyline of the Scarp Slopes South of Royston
- Views within the Character Area are complex due to the tapestry of land uses and field sizes
- Closer to the villages views are more enclosed as the landscape is of a smaller scale
- The skyline when looking towards the Character Area from the north has in part been degraded by telecommunications masts and water towers

In visual terms, Therfield-Reed Plateau is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. Views within the Character Area are relatively enclosed. However, some incongruous features have impinged on views into the Character Area.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE**

Overall Therfield-Reed Plateau is considered to be of **moderate landscape value**. Although there are a minimal number of incongruous elements and relatively few transport routes within Therfield-Reed Plateau, the landscape is not particularly distinctive in terms of views or landform and historical features are not prominent.



**EVALUATION**

**CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT**

**Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and tapestry of land uses and field sizes. It would introduce elements that would alter the character and affect the existing key characteristics such as the dispersed settlement pattern and important greens and open spaces. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing minor roads, which could erode the character of the landscape. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and could affect accessibility to the countryside.

The landscape capacity for large urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would not be entirely appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural character and dispersed settlement pattern. Some small scale expansion of villages, carefully designed and in keeping with the existing character, could possibly be accommodated. However, any proposals would need clear justification and avoid the erosion of important greens and open spaces that characterise Therfield-Reed Plateau.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be moderate to low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would generally not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the largely rural character of most routes at present. Upgrading of existing roads and lanes could erode the character of the landscape or affect the historic alignment of the A10. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Existing minor roads would be inappropriate for any significant larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs. Any upgrading of the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural nature or vernacular in form and style and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings, if not carefully located, would erode the intimate character of Therfield-Reed Plateau.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

**Large scale open storage**

The complex small scale of Therfield-Reed Plateau would make it more difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without potential loss of hedgerows and woodland blocks. This would not be in keeping with the intimate character of the area and could lead to the erosion of the smaller scale landscape and open spaces that characterise Therfield-Reed Plateau. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

**EVALUATION**

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively rural in appearance with small scale dispersed development. Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction or waste disposal would not be in keeping with the character of Therfield-Reed Plateau and would be difficult to accommodate between small settlements. The minor roads would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. Larger scale extraction could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside. Restoration proposals for any consented schemes should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**Incremental small scale development**

There may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of an agricultural nature or vernacular in form and style and in keeping with the rural character. However, any proposals would need clear justification and should avoid impacts on important greens, open spaces and the historic settlement pattern that characterise Therfield-Reed Plateau.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low to moderate.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are currently a small number of detractors in the areas. These include existing telecommunications masts, which are visible on the skyline in views into the Character Area from the north. Further utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines are likely to have a major impact on the rural but settled character of Therfield-Reed Plateau. Large scale tall elements such as these would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as in surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.

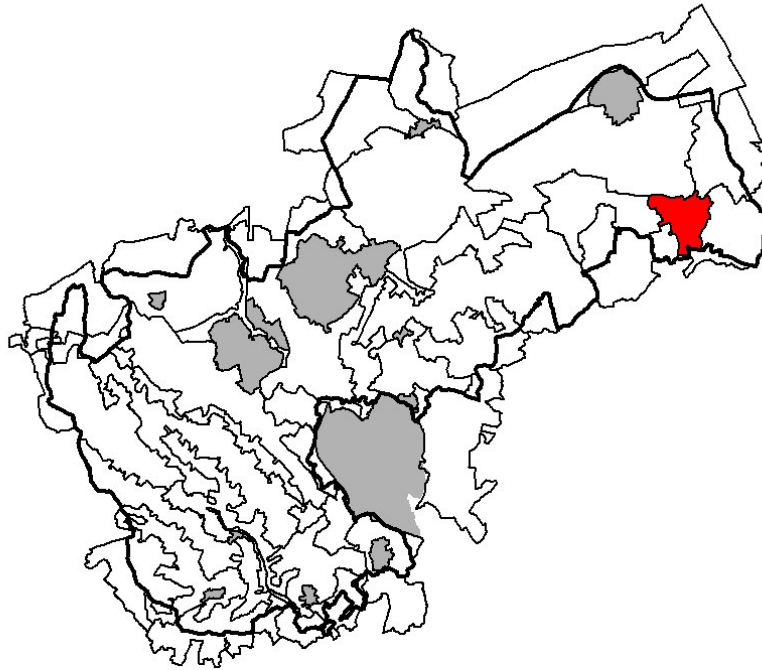
**GUIDELINES****STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE****Strategy: Improve and Conserve****Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote management of ancient woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Encourage diverse woodland management practice
- 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
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Encourage the development of species-rich neutral grasslands on chalky boulder clays
- Encourage planting of new woodland of ash and maple species
- 

**Built development guidelines**

- Conserve the traditional character of villages within the Character Area, ensuring that any development within or located on the edge of the villages uses appropriate vernacular materials and features
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to mitigate new development
- Retain the rural and complex character of Therfield-Reed Plateau, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area
- Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations, such as on the edges of the plateau where it would be visible on the currently largely undeveloped skyline
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or hedgerows
- Conserve the historic features of Therfield-Reed Plateau, such as moated sites and motte and bailey castles
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area

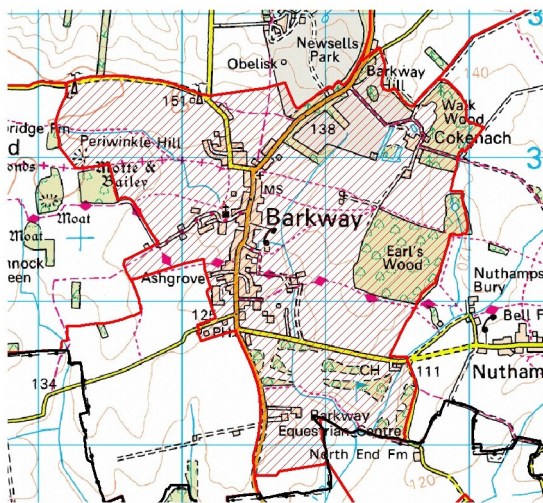
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The Character Area is focused on the settlement of Barkway which is strung out along a north-south alignment along the B1368, London Road, which runs between Barley to the northeast and Hare Street a settlement that lies within the Quin valley to the south.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently rolling landform falling gently towards the Quin valley to the south. Predominantly arable land use but with pockets of grazing land adjacent to settlements. Well wooded in the north but less so in the south. To the north regular pattern of rectilinear fields with curving boundaries set within an earlier organic pattern of lanes and primary boundaries. Field pattern breaks down to the south of the settlement with extensive open fields and remnant field boundaries.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Gently rolling landform
- Arable land use
- Regular pattern of field boundaries
- Ribbon development following B1368 London Road

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Telecommunications masts in the north
- Equestrian centre south of the settlement

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

Predominantly Boulder Clay over Chalk with limited Clay-with-Flints. Damp calcareous clay soils.

**Topography**

Gently sloping plateau falling towards the south.

**Degree of slope**

Typically 1:40.

**Altitude range**

110m to 150m.

**Hydrology**

Network of local streams which often disappear into the chalk. Numerous ponds around the settlement. Artificial lakes at Cokenach Park.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable land use plus other areas of grazing land. Golf course to southeast of Barkway.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

Rokey Wood is an ancient ash and maple woodland typical of other boulder clay woods to the west. In common with these woodlands it has a varied ground flora.

An abundance of ancient oak, ash and maple woodlands are centred around the Cokenach Estate. Examples include Wynnd's Grove and Doctors Grove and Earls Wood and Walk Wood former coppice-with-standards woodland now partly ornamental.

Herb paris and various orchids are recorded from the woodlands where fallow deer are also a feature.

Barkway Meadow is an example of damp, unimproved neutral grassland. Barkway is important for pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Earthworks, which may represent the remains of a deserted medieval village, lie at Cokenach in the northeast. A motte and bailey castle lies to the northwest at Periwinkle Hill.

The medieval settlement of Barkway lies to the southwest of Cokenach and was recorded in the Domesday Book as Berchewig. The church of St Mary Magdalene, Cokenach, dates to the 13th century. A prehistoric ring ditch lies to the northwest of Barkway.

**Field Pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape pattern consists of a mixture of, 20th century leisure use, 18th century and later enclosure, prairie fields – post 1950s boundary loss, post 1950s enclosure. Informal medieval parkland lies to the northeast, (Cokenach designated as an Historic Park and Garden). Ancient woodland and small areas of 19th – 20th century plantation to the west and unimproved rough pasture to the south.

**Transport Pattern**

The B1368 London Road runs down the centre of the Character Area.

**Settlements and Built Form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by the ribbon development of Barkway following the B1368, London Rd. Barkway High Street contains several buildings of note including a late Medieval Hall House, which has a jettied gable with entrance facing the street, The Red House a large 18th century house, now two dwellings, and a rebuilt Hall House of Wealden type.

**EVALUATION**

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

Focused on the surroundings of the settlement of Barkway. There is a transition from the large scale open landscapes in the south to the more intimate smaller scale in the north.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

Landscape type comparatively common within the District. Cokenach parkland in the north provides local distinctiveness.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Local development and agricultural buildings feature at a local scale.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Well covered by network of lanes, tracks and rights of way.

**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**

LC2	Landscape Conservation Area
GD 1906	Cokenach

**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

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

**Matrix Score: Moderate**

**ROBUSTNESS**

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

**Matrix Score: Moderate**

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

## EVALUATION

### INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

#### Landscape Character Sensitivities

- The historic settlement pattern in the main settlement of Barkway is characterised by ribbon development along the B1368 and would be sensitive to inappropriate or unsympathetic development and any form of development not in scale with the village
- Traditional materials of black weatherboarding, painted render or pargeting, flint infill panels and thatch are common to buildings throughout the Character Area
- Abundant ancient oak, ash and maple woodlands around the Cokenach, which are vulnerable to lack of management, removal or introduction of non-native species
- Cokenach historic parkland is a registered garden that falls partly within this Character Area, which could be at risk from development pressure and inconsistent management
- Several areas of historic interest, particularly Periwinkle Hill motte and bailey castle and prehistoric earthworks, are vulnerable to loss
- Good public access through numerous rights of way, the Hertfordshire Way, lanes and tracks
- A small number of incongruous elements have been introduced into the Character Area, including telecommunication masts along 'The Joint' on the northern boundary of the Character Area and palisade fencing around a sewage works, which currently act as detractors

Overall Barkway Plateau is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. The settlement focused Character Area has a traditional ribbon development and a number of historic features that would be sensitive to the introduction of unsympathetic elements.

#### Visual Sensitivities

- Views within the Character Area are generally focused towards Barkway village
- Closer to the village views are more enclosed as the landscape is of a smaller scale
- The skyline when looking towards the Character Area from the north has already been in part degraded by telecommunications masts

In visual terms, Barkway Plateau is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. Views within the Character Area are relatively enclosed. However, some incongruous features have impinged on views into the Character Area.

#### LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Barkway Plateau is considered to be of **moderate landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Barkway Plateau are the minimal number of incongruous elements, the uninterrupted views, the relative tranquillity and the presence of vernacular settlement that contributes to a distinctive sense of place.



**EVALUATION****CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT****Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and small scale nature. It would introduce elements that would alter the character and affect the existing key characteristics such as the historic ribbon development form and the small scale regular pattern of field boundaries. Increased housing development would be likely to affect the existing minor roads, which could erode the character of the landscape. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and could reduce accessibility to the countryside.

The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would not be entirely appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. Visual impacts could be moderate, due to the enclosed and focused views currently experienced. Some small scale expansion of Barkway, carefully designed and in keeping with the existing character of the village, could possibly be accommodated.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be moderate to low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the largely rural character of most routes at present. Upgrading of existing roads and lanes could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Existing minor roads would be inappropriate for any significant larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs. Any upgrading of the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. However, large buildings, if not carefully located, would erode the rural and intimate character of Barkway village.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

**Large scale open uses**

The small scale of Barkway Plateau would make it more difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without potential loss of mature vegetation in the form of hedgerows and woodland blocks. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and could introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics. The minor roads are unlikely to have capacity to accommodate development or would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs, which would further dilute the landscape character. Extensive development could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

**EVALUATION**

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively rural in appearance with small scale linear development. Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction or waste disposal would not be in keeping with the character of Barkway. The minor roads would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. Larger scale extraction could also disrupt the rights of way network and reduce accessibility to the countryside. Restoration proposals for any consented schemes should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low to moderate. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**Incremental small scale development**

There may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of an agricultural nature and in keeping with the rural character. However, due to the existing small scale character any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the contained character of Barkway Plateau.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low to moderate.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are currently a small number of detractors in the areas. These include existing telecommunications masts, which are visible on the skyline in views into the Character Area from the north. Further utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines are likely to have a major impact on the rural character of Barkway Plateau. Large scale tall elements such as these would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as in surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.

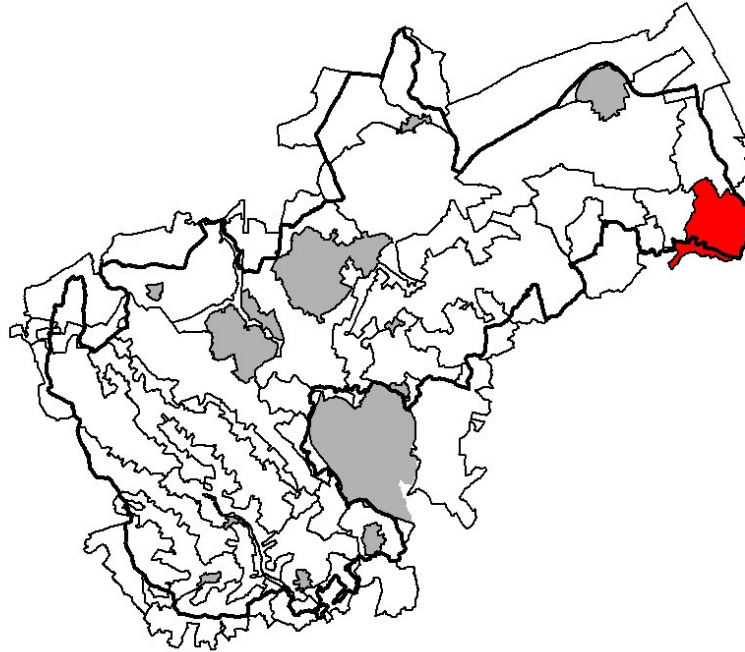
**GUIDELINES****STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE****Strategy: Improve and Conserve****Landscape management guidelines**

- 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
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Encourage the planting of new ash and maple woodlands and management of existing
- Encourage the development of new marshland/fen habitats on boulder clay
- Encourage the development and implementation of landscape management plans for historic parkland at Cokenach

**Built development guidelines**

- Conserve the traditional character of Barkway village, ensuring that any development within or located on the edge of the village uses appropriate vernacular materials and features
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to mitigate new development
- Retain the rural character of Barkway Plateau, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area
- Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations, such as on the edges of the plateau where it would be visible on the currently largely undeveloped skyline
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or hedgerows
- Conserve Cokenach
- Ensure that lighting associated with new development does not create additional urbanising influences on the character Area

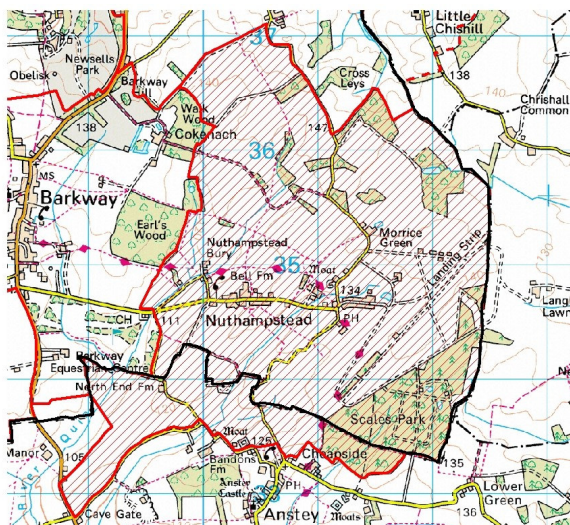
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

This Character Area lies to the south of Barley and to the east of Barkway. The area extends eastwards as far as the disused airfield and Scales Park Plantation. To the south the area extends just beyond the District boundary and the head of the River Quin catchment.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently rolling plateau landform eroded into a series of shallow local valleys. Predominantly arable use but land to the southeast given over to former MOD airfield with more recent extensive plantation at Scales Park, to the southeast. Well wooded with a mixture of ancient woodland parcels and more recent plantations. Organic enclosure pattern associated with an irregular network of winding lanes. Field sizes are generally medium to large. Nuthampstead is a network of dispersed farmsteads strung out along the local road network.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Gently rolling landform
- Arable land use with extensive woodland cover
- Irregular pattern of field boundaries
- Dispersed scattered farmsteads

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Former MOD airfield
- Hertfordshire Way long distance path

## ASSESSMENT

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

Glacial till over Chalk. Clay soils (pelosols).

**Topography**

Gently sloping land form falls to the southwest to join the River Quin catchment.

**Degree of slope**

Typically 1:40 but with plateau landscape over former airfield.

**Altitude range**

110m to 145m.

**Hydrology**

Two local streams drain the area south-westward into the River Quin catchment. The Stort rises at New England. Numerous old moats, surface ponds and lakes - some managed as commercial fishing concerns.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable but with other uses such as former military use and extensive recent plantations, mixed with ancient woodland cover.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

This Character Area encompasses an area of high biodiversity. Scales Wood lies within the south east corner of the area. It is a large (71ha) ancient woodland originally of ash, maple and hazel, formerly part of a substantial area of wood pasture (an historic woodland management regime) and has notably broad rides with species rich calcareous grassland. Wartime felling was replaced by conifer in the 1950's and 60's. All woodlands within this Character Area are typical of boulder clay habitats, and support a variety of invertebrate and mammal species, examples are Doctor's Grove/Oak Bushes, Cross Leys Wood and North Wood. Associated flora and fauna include, herb paris, early purple, great butterfly orchids, fallow deer and nightingale (Scales Park). Scales Park woodland is important for dormouse.

Areas of unimproved calcareous grassland occur occasionally within this Character Area, for example at New England Moor.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

A small well-preserved moated site lies in Sheepwash Grove in the north. It is probably a post medieval landscape feature. A moated site lies to the south at Little Cokenach. Cropmarks of enclosures lie to the south and east of Nuthampstead.

**Field Pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape pattern consists of a mixture of ancient woodland, 18th century and later enclosure, prairie fields – post 1950s boundary loss, post 1950s enclosure pre 18th century 'irregular' enclosure, later enclosure – 18th century or later. 20th century leisure use lies to the west and informal medieval parkland to the south, and small pockets of prairie fields with relict elements within.

**Transport Pattern**

Irregular network of winding lanes. The Hertfordshire Way, a long distance path, terminates at Nuthampstead.

**Settlements and Built Form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by a network of dispersed farmsteads, which are strung out along the local road network.

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

Tree lined horizon widely visible from surrounding areas. Plateau area is complex with a mixture of open and smaller more intimate spaces.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

The landscape type is comparatively frequent.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Continuity of landscape pattern interrupted by former airfield at Scales Park.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Northern and western parts are accessible by an extensive network of winding lanes and rights of way. To the south the network is sparser.

**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**

LC2	Landscape Conservation Area
SAM 20607	Pains End Moated site: Anstey
SAM HT17003	Moated site Little Cokenach: Nuthampstead

**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

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

**Matrix Score: Moderate**

**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>				

## EVALUATION

### INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

#### Landscape Character Sensitivities

- A gently rolling plateau, with localised shallow valleys formed by tributaries of the River Quin catchment area. The area is further characterised by numerous old moats, surface ponds and lakes
- A largely rural character area of arable fields and extensive woodland patches, with the exception of a former MOD airfield to the south-east. There is an absence of development and the area would be vulnerable to the addition of urbanizing features
- Scattered deciduous woodland of predominantly oak, ash, maple and hazel, some of which are ancient woodland. The woodland is vulnerable to lack of management or removal
- Scales Park to the south-east of the character area is characterised by a 71ha ancient woodland, predominantly consisting of Ash, Maple and Hazel. It is associated with species rich calcareous grassland. This area was degrading during the war and is vulnerable to further degradation or poor management
- Areas of a parkland style landscape, which are now arable fields. Specimen individual trees remain, which would be vulnerable to removal
- Medium to large arable fields with irregular hedgerow divisions would be sensitive to boundary removal
- The pattern of narrow and twisting minor lanes lined by hedgerows, some of which are raised would be vulnerable to improvements or upgrading of the roads
- The linear settlement pattern of Nuthampstead created by a network of dispersed farmsteads strung along the local road network would be vulnerable to inappropriate or unsympathetic development and any form of development not in scale with the village
- Areas of surviving ancient hedgerows, particularly along rural roads, are

vulnerable to loss

- Good public access through numerous rights of way, including the Hertfordshire Way.
- The former MOD airfield site is a detractor of the area as it has fragmented the landscape character and made the area less intact, while also reducing the representation of the areas typical historic character. The airfield has created a more extensive pattern of fields and boundaries on the plateau, resulting in a locally unbalanced character throughout the area.

Overall Nuthampstead is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. The gently rolling plateau, organic field patterns and woodland parcels create attractive characteristics, although the area has been degraded by the former MOD airfield.

#### Visual Sensitivities

- Woodland blocks interrupt views within the Character Area
- The visual continuity of the Character Area has been interrupted by the former MOD airfield
- Tree lined horizons are visible from neighbouring character areas and are a distinctive characteristic of the area

In visual terms, Nuthampstead is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. The complex patterns of open and enclosed spaces on the plateau would be sensitive to the introduction of urbanizing features.

#### LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Nuthampstead is considered to be of **moderate landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Nuthampstead are the lack of incongruous elements, the relative tranquillity and the sense of remoteness with few roads and a perceived distance from significant habitation.



**EVALUATION****CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT****Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and isolated character. Despite the existence of the former MOD airfield, it would be of an inappropriate scale and would introduce elements that would urbanise the landscape, altering the character and removing the existing key characteristics. Housing development would be likely to affect the existing narrow lanes, or add new roads out of scale with the existing landscape, which could erode the character and pattern. The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character.

The landscape capacity for small extensions is considered to be low.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the largely rural character of most routes at present. Upgrading of existing narrow, twisting lanes would erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development could be appropriate in this character area, on the site of the former MOD airfield. Shelterbelts and woodland parcel planting would have to be implemented to mitigate against the impact of such a development. Any upgrading of the existing network would cause damage to the landscape character.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be moderate.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural or vernacular style and in keeping with the rural character. However, Shelterbelts and woodland parcel planting would have to be implemented to mitigate against the impact of such a development.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be moderate.

**Large scale open uses**

The former MOD airfield could potentially accommodate large scale 'open' uses. However the minor roads are unlikely to have capacity to accommodate development or would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger volumes of traffic and/or HGVs, which would further dilute the landscape character. The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be moderate to low.

**EVALUATION****Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

The majority of the Character Area is currently relatively undisturbed and rural in appearance. Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction would not be in keeping with the character of Nuthampstead. The minor roads would need considerable upgrading to be able to accept larger HGVs, which could further dilute the landscape character. For any consented schemes, restoration proposals should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low to moderate. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**Incremental small scale development**

There is capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of a vernacular nature and in keeping with the rural character. Some small scale expansion of Nuthampstead, carefully designed, to prevent degradation to the elements of landscape value such as ancient woodlands and hedgerows could be accommodated.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be moderate.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

The former MOD airfield is currently the main detractor of the area and could provide an area in which new utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines could potentially be installed. However such developments would have a significant impact on the rural character areas of Nuthampstead. Large scale developments or tall elements such as these would also be highly visible from surrounding Character Areas and could degrade the tree lined horizon, which is visible from neighbouring character areas and is a distinctive characteristic of the area. Any such development would have to be mitigated by the plantation of shelterbelts and woodland parcels, which are in characteristic of the area. The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be moderate to low.

**GUIDELINES**

Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire

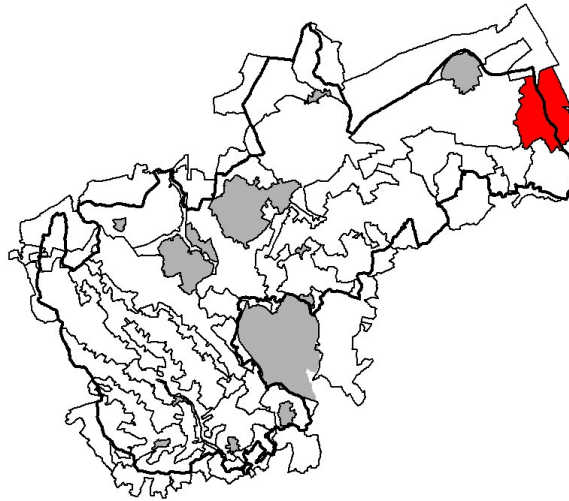
**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE****Strategy: Conserve and Restore****Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote management of ancient woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora including replacement of conifers with native broadleaves
- 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
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network particularly to the south
- Encourage the development and management of calcareous grasslands
- Encourage the management of existing and development of new wood pasture
- Encourage the planting of trees and other appropriate vegetation along watercourses

**Built development guidelines**

- Protect and preserve the pattern of rural lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedgerows
- Encourage the planting of indigenous broadleaved woodland and vegetation to mitigate by screening new development that could intrude in rural views
- Encourage the use of existing brown field sites for commercial or bulky buildings
- Retain the rural character of Nuthampstead, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area
- Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations, such as on higher ground or where they would be visible on the skyline
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing woodland blocks or the loss of surviving calcareous grassland habitats and ancient hedgerows
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area

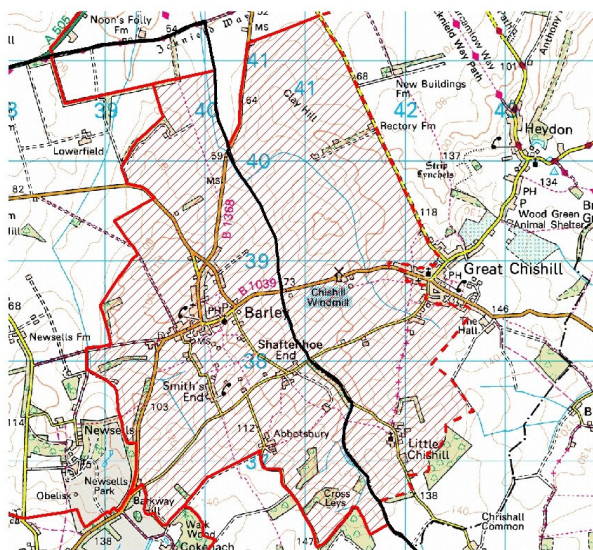
## LOCATION



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The settlement of Barley sits within the chalk scarp south east of Royston. The Character Area, which is broadly rectangular shaped comes to a point just south of the confluence of Wardington Bottom Drain and Cumberton Bottom Drain. Along the southern boundary it extends to the boundaries of Newsells Park (see LCA 228) in the southwest corner and Little Chishill Road in the southeast. The character area extends northeastwards beyond the District boundary.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved North Hertfordshire District Council LA078794, 2004

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Chalk scarp slope incised by water erosion. Barley stands on sloping ground squeezed between Wardington Bottom to the west and Cumberton Bottom to the east forming a broad promontory of chalk which falls away on three sides. Land use is predominantly arable. This is an area of transition with a complex pattern of field sizes and boundaries. To the north and west, the field pattern is typical of the adjacent areas of large geometric rectilinear fields. Around the settlement and in particular to the south of the village centre the pattern changes to one of small to medium sized rectilinear fields often with curving boundaries, set within an earlier organic pattern of lanes and primary boundaries. To the southeast of Shaftenhoe End the pattern becomes more irregular, one of a more organic framework associated with the irregular network of winding lanes. There are pockets of woodland in the south. There are long distance views to the north from vantage points on the scarp.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Incised chalk scarp slope
- Complex pattern of field sizes and fields
- Open arable areas to the north
- Extensive woodland cover to the south. Linear shelter belts to the north

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Historically important architectural features
- Chishill Windmill

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

Chalk with patchy overlay of Boulder Clay. Shallow rendzina or calcareous loam soils.

**Topography**

Sloping landform falls from chalk plateau.

**Degree of slope**

Typically 1:10 on the upper slopes but falls slacken off at the point of transition where the scarp meets the lowlands to the north.

**Altitude range**

65m to 145m.

**Hydrology**

Local network of drainage ditches draining north feed into peripheral water courses. Network of ponds and drains at Newsells Park.

**Land cover and land use**

Predominantly arable.

**Vegetation and wildlife**

This Character Area contains limited ecologically valuable ancient woodland. Pondbottom Wood is an ancient woodland site dominated by oak, ash and maple. Wigney Wood has a similar character, but also contains elements of pedunculate oak and hornbeam woodland.

Exposed calcareous areas can produce diverse flora, such as that along Bogmoor Road verge, to the south of Barley.

Spring fed ponds at Smith's End, Broadmoor Pond and Newhill Pond are locally important.

Old barns support colonies of Natterer's bat and the open fields are historically important for stone curlew and in winter for golden plover flocks, grey partridge and birds of prey.

Barley village is important for brown long-eared, pipistrelle and Natterer's bats.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

Barley a medieval settlement contains the 12<sup>th</sup> century parish church of St Margaret, where there is also an Iron Age farmstead and two Romano-British cemeteries. Earthworks, which may have formed part of a medieval manorial site lies at Abbotsbury to the south.

**Field Pattern**

The historic agricultural landscape pattern consists largely of 18th century and later enclosure to the north with a mixture of prairie fields – post 1950s boundary loss, pre 18th century 'irregular' enclosure, post 1950s enclosure and ancient woodland to the south. There are pockets of 19th-20th century plantation and a 20th century stud farm lies to the east.

**Transport Pattern**

Barley is on a formerly important coaching road from Ware to Cambridge. Irregular network of lanes.

**Settlements and Built Form**

The historic settlement pattern is characterised by farms and villages. Traditional buildings date from the 17th century and are represented by examples from Barley. Barley Lock Up is timber framed and dates to the 17th century. Early Tudor Town House with original timber roof is now a village hall and was restored in 1969-72. Margaret House incorporates later additions by Salvin (1831-3) to an earlier building in a gaunt Jacobean style.

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

Barley stands on a local chalk promontory facilitating long distance views over the scarp to the north. To the south smaller more intimate field patterns and greater sense of enclosure.

**Rarity & distinctiveness**

The chalk scarp landscape is comparatively common within the District.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The scale of visual impact is related to local development and infrastructure.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Area to the north is less well served by rights of way compared to the complex network of winding lanes to the south of Barley.

**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**

LC2	Landscape Conservation Area
SAM HT 80	Barley Lock Up: Barley

**EVALUATION**

**CONDITION**

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

---

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

---

**ROBUSTNESS**

Impact of landform:	Prominent
Impact of land cover:	Prominent
Impact of historic pattern:	Apparent
Visibility from outside:	Widely visible
Sense of enclosure:	Open
Visual unity:	Unified
Distinctiveness/rarity:	Frequent

---

**Matrix Score:** **Strong**

---

<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>				

**EVALUATION**
**INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**
**Landscape Character Sensitivities**

- Chalk scarp slope incised by dry valleys. The landform is one of the strongest characteristics of the Barley Scarp Slopes
- The core of the Character Area, around Shaftenhoe End in the valley of Cumberton Bottom, has a sense of intactness that would be sensitive to intrusive development and significant changes
- Traditional materials of black weatherboarding, gault brickwork, painted render or pargeting, flint infill panels and thatch are common to buildings throughout the Character Area. These form part of the historically important architectural features of the Barley Scarp Slopes
- Limited woodland in belts and small blocks creates a largely open landscape, particularly in the north of the Character Area
- Some hedgerows have become relic and poorly managed, with others removed altogether, making them sensitive to further lack of management or removal
- The small scale and nucleated settlement predominantly located on the higher undulating ground.
- The interplay of the settlement within the Barley Scarp Slopes and the mixed pattern and scale of fields around them are a key feature
- Sunken lanes are located throughout the Character Area and would be vulnerable to upgrades or modifications
- Traditional built elements, such as windmills and individual properties, create focal points throughout Barley Scarp Slopes
- Groupings of non-native conifers around isolated buildings create visually intrusive elements in the landscape
- There are currently relatively few detractors within the Character Area

Overall Barley Scarp Slopes is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. The relatively intact valley core of the Character Area would be particularly sensitive to change.

**Visual Sensitivities**

- Long distance views over and towards the scarp in the northern part of the Character Area
- Greater sense of enclosure in the southern part of the Character Area, from woodland and landform
- Open views from roads and lanes throughout the Barley Scarp Slopes
- The Character Area is to a certain extent contained by a bowl landform with inward facing slopes, particularly in the valley core

In visual terms, Barley Scarp Slopes is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. Views across and towards the scarp slope are particularly sensitive to development.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE**

Overall Barley Scarp Slopes is considered to be of **moderate high landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Barley Scarp Slopes are the intactness of the valley, the good condition of many elements within the landscape, the lack of incongruous elements, a recognisable sense of place, the striking landform, the visual interest, memorable uninterrupted views, the sense of openness, the relative tranquillity and visible expressions of the local geology.



**EVALUATION**

**CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT**

**Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural nature. It would introduce elements that would alter the character and affect the existing key characteristics such as the historic nucleated development form and the intact valley of Cumberton Bottom. Increased housing development could affect the sunken lanes, which could erode the character of the landscape. Extensive development could also disrupt the complex pattern of field sizes and boundaries. The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

**Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)**

This type of development would not be entirely appropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. However, the undulating landform within the Character Area would allow some development to be accommodated without widespread visual intrusion in the wider landscape. Some small scale expansion of Barley, carefully designed and in keeping with the existing character of the village, could possibly be accommodated. The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low to moderate.

**Major transport developments/improvements**

This type of development would not be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the largely rural character of most routes at present. Upgrading of existing roads and lanes could erode the character of the landscape, particularly if sunken lanes were to be upgraded. Additional traffic could also affect the relative tranquillity of the Character Area. The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low.

**Commercial/warehouse estates**

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. Whilst isolated developments are located within the Barley Scarp Slopes, and built development creates focal points, there are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Any upgrading of the existing road network would cause damage to the landscape character. Extensive development could also disrupt the complex pattern of field sizes and boundaries. The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

**Individual large/bulky buildings**

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural character and in keeping with the rural character. Black painted buildings with black painted weatherboarding could be an appropriate material. However, large buildings, if not carefully located, would erode the rural character of Barley and Sheltenhoe End villages. The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be moderate.

**Large scale open uses**

The varied scale of Barley Scarp Slopes would make it more difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses. The high visibility of the Scarp Slopes and the steep landform would make these 'open' uses visually intrusive. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and could introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics. Extensive development could also disrupt the complex pattern of field sizes and boundaries. The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

**EVALUATION**

**Mineral extraction/waste disposal**

This Character Area is currently relatively rural in appearance with small scale nucleated development. Whilst it may be possible for some small scale mineral extraction to be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction or waste disposal would not be in keeping with the complex pattern of field sizes and boundaries in Barley Scarp Slopes. Larger scale extraction could also disrupt the intact nature of the Cumberton Bottom valley. Restoration proposals for any consented schemes should be mainly at grade and include for some additional planting in character with existing patterns of small belts and copses.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

**Incremental small scale development**

There may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of an agricultural nature and in keeping with the rural character. New developments would need to utilise traditional vernacular materials and styles, such as black weatherboarding, gault brickwork, painted render or pargeting, and flint infill panels, in order to respect the historically important architectural features of the built form within the Barley Scarp Slopes.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be moderate.

**Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines**

There are currently a limited number of detractors in the area. Further utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines are likely to have a major impact on the rural character of the Barley Scarp Slopes. Large scale tall elements such as these would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as in surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.

**GUIDELINES**

Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE**
**Strategy: Conserve and Restore**
**Landscape management guidelines**

- 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
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Encourage the diversity of oak, ash and maple ancient woodland
- Encourage development of chalk grassland habitats on exposed calcareous areas

**Built development guidelines**

- Conserve the traditional character of Barley village, ensuring that any development within or located on the edge of the village uses appropriate vernacular materials and features
- Preserve and enhance the historically important architectural features of the Character Area
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- Maintain the open character and the long distance views from the northern fringe
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland, copses and native hedges to mitigate new development
- Retain the rural character of Barley Scarp Slopes, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area
- Avoid the location of new development in visual intrusive locations, such as on visually exposed areas of scarp slope
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing hedgerows
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area
- Avoid the intrusion of built development into the largely intact Cumberton Bottom valley

# APPENDIX A

## FIELD SURVEY DOCUMENT RECORD SHEET

# FIELD SURVEY RECORD SHEET

**1**

Date :	Surveyor Ref :	LDU:
Location :		OS Grid ref:
Geological Unit :	Soils	Photo Nos :
<b>LANDFORM</b> prominent; apparent; insignificant		
		Degree of slope: Altitude range:
<b>Natural features</b>		Prominent Widespread Localised Insignificant
<b>LANDCOVER</b> prominent; apparent; insignificant		
<b>Landuse</b> Arable Mixed Pastoral Other		Prominent Consistent Variable Insignificant
<b>Woodland</b> Interlocking Large woods Small woods Linear woods		Prominent Consistent Variable Insignificant
<b>Other trees</b> Densely Scattered Thinly scattered Linear Tree groups		Prominent Consistent Variable Insignificant
<b>CULTURAL PATTERN</b> prominent; apparent; insignificant		
<b>Field Boundaries</b> Hedge Banks Mixed hedges Primary mixed Thorn hedges Other		Prominent Consistent Variable Insignificant
<b>Built Features</b> Villages  Wayside dwellings Scattered farms	Building Materials Stone Flint Brick/tile Other	Prominent Consistent Variable Insignificant
<b>Other Features</b>		Prominent Consistent Variable Insignificant
<b>VISUAL CHARACTER</b>		
<b>Views</b> <i>filtered/framed/open/exposed</i>	<b>Treasures/eyesores</b>	<b>Scale:</b> intimate small medium large
<b>Unity:</b> <i>harmonious varied discordant</i>	<b>Diversity:</b> complex varied simple	<b>Colour:</b> Varied uniform intense
<b>Overall Description</b>		

# FIELD SURVEY EVALUATION

2

<b>CONDITION</b> ( <i>extent to which the landscape functions as a self-sustaining resource</i> )			
<b>VISUAL IMPACT</b>			<b>low/moderate/high</b>
Type and scale of impact of detracting features: built development/mineral extraction/tree planting/other		Extent of landcover change: widespread/localised/insignificant	
Impact of built development: <b>Urban development:</b>			
Magnitude of impact high/moderate/low		Extent of impact: widespread/localised	
Impact of built development: <b>Road/rail corridors:</b>			
Magnitude of impact high/moderate/low		Extent of impact: widespread/localised	
Impact of built development: <b>Rural dwellings:</b>			
Magnitude of impact high/moderate/low		Extent of impact: widespread/localised	
Impact of built development: <b>Other impacts/change:</b>			
Magnitude of impact high/moderate/low		Extent of impact: widespread/localised	
Respect for vernacular character: Yes/No		Respect for sense of place: Yes/No	
Notes:			
<b>Cultural integrity</b> ( <i>survival of cultural pattern</i> )			<b>strong/moderate/weak</b>
Landuse change (non-agricultural)	Field pattern extent/survival: intact and well managed/intact but poorly managed interrupted: gen. intact but locally interrupted declining: boundaries poorly managed/relic:		Hedgerow tree age structure: over mature /mature/young mature/young/N.A.
<b>Ecological integrity</b> ( <i>survival of ecological areas/corridors</i> )			<b>strong/moderate/weak</b>
Extent of habitat patch survival: whole parcel/widespread/scattered/linked/insignificant/relic	Management: good/poor/relic	Survival of ecological corridors: intact/declining/fragmented	Intensity of other land use: high/moderate/low

<b>SENSITIVITY TO AND CAPACITY FOR CHANGE (strength of character)</b>		
Natural dimension	<b>Habitat survival:</b> <i>continuous/patchy/relic</i>	Effect of landform: dominant/apparent/insignificant Effect of tree cover: dominant/apparent/insignificant
Cultural dimension	<b>Consistency:</b> <i>unified/coherent/incoherent</i>	<b>Continuity:</b> <i>ancient/historic/modern</i>
Boundary revision notes:		

# **APPENDIX B**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## **Appendix B: Bibliography**

- Ashwell Education Services, *Snippets of Ashwells History Vol 1* (1997)
- Ashwell Village Design Group, *Ashwell Village Design Statement*
- Bedfordshire County Council, *A Rural Strategy for Bedfordshire* (1996)
- Chilterns Conference, *Management Plan for the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty The Framework for Action* (1994)
- Chilterns Conference, *Environmental Guidelines for the Management of Roads in the Chilterns* (1997)
- Chilterns Conference, *Chilterns Buildings Design Guide* (1999)
- Countryside Agency, *Countryside Character Volume 6 East of England CA12* (1999)
- Countryside Agency, *Countryside Character Volume 7 The South East and London CA13* (1999)
- Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage, *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland* (2002)
- Countryside Commission, *The Chilterns Landscape CCP392* (1992)
- Dony, J. G., *Flora of Hertfordshire*, Hitchin Urban District Council (1967)
- Dyson-Bruce L., *Historic Landuse Assessment Area West of AI(M) Hertfordshire*
- English Heritage *List of Scheduled Monuments for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Luton and Peterborough* (1996)
- English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens: Hertfordshire* (1987)
- English Nature *Natural Area Profile: Chilterns*, (1997)
- English Nature *Natural Area Profile: East Anglian Chalk*, (1997)
- English Nature *Natural Area Profile: East Anglian Plain*, (1997)
- English Nature *Natural Area Profile: West Anglian Plain*, (1997)
- English Nature *Natural Area Profile: London Basin*, (1997)
- Environment Agency, Local Environment Agency Plan (LEAP), *Colne Action Plan* (May 1999)
- Environment Agency, Local Environment Agency Plan (LEAP), *North London - Environmental Overview*, (Dec. 1999)
- Environment Agency, Local Environment Agency Plan (LEAP), *Upper Lee - Environmental Overview*, (May 1999)
- Harting, J. E., 'Hertfordshire Deer Parks', Herts Nat. Hist. Soc. - *Transactions* Vol.2, Oct. 1881-Oct. 1887
- Healey R. M., *Hertfordshire: A Small Circle*, Faber & Faber
- Healey R. M., *Shell Guide to Hertfordshire*
- Hertfordshire County Council documents:
- An Archaeology Strategy for Hertfordshire* (1997)
- A Landscape Strategy for Hertfordshire Volume 1: Background Information* (1997, amended 2001)



- A Landscape Strategy for Hertfordshire Volume 2: Southern Hertfordshire (Areas 1 – 93)* (2001)
- A Landscape Strategy for Hertfordshire Volume 3A: North of St Albans Southern Hertfordshire (Areas 94 – 105)*
- Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991-2011* (1998)
- Hertfordshire's Woodland Strategy*
- Hertfordshire's Past, *Braughing: a Possible Saxon Estate?*, (Autumn 1987)
- Hertfordshire's Past, *The Offley By-pass* (Spring 1997)
- Herts. Federation of Women's Institutes *The Hertfordshire Village Book*, Countryside Books, Newbury and HWFI,
- Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, *A 50 Year Vision for the Wildlife and Natural Habitats of Hertfordshire - A Local Biodiversity Action Plan - Consultation Document* (1997)
- Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, *Habitat Survey for North Herts District* (1997)
- Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, *Biodiversity Action Plan for Hertfordshire* (draft, no date)
- Hoskins, W. G., *The Making of the English Landscape*, Hodder and Stoughton (1955)
- Jones-Baker, D., *Tales of Old Hertfordshire*, Countryside Books, Newbury (1987, reprinted 1999)
- Morley, F., *The Great North Road*, Hutchinson, London (1961)
- Munby, L., *The Hertfordshire Landscape*, Hodder and Stoughton (1977)
- North Hertfordshire District Council, *North Hertfordshire District Local Plan no2 with Alterations* (1996)
- Oliver, J. *The Actual Survey of the County of Hertford* (1695), Herts Record Office
- Pevsner, N and Cherry, B., *Hertfordshire*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth (1953, rev. 1977, reprinted 2000)
- Rackham, O., *The History of the Countryside*, Dent, London (1986)
- Rackham, O., *Ancient Woodland*, Edward Arnold, London (1980)
- Richardson, B. (ed.), *The Hertfordshire Way: A Walker's Guide*, Castlemead Publications (1998)
- Rook, T., *A History of Hertfordshire*, Phillimore, Chichester (1997)
- Saint Paul's Walden Parish Council, *Whitwell Village Design Statement* (Unpublished draft)
- Saxton, *Hartfordiae Comitatus* (1577), Herts Record Office
- Scott, V. G., and Rook, T., *County Maps and Histories: Herts*, Quiller Press, London (1989)
- Shirly, E. P., *Some Account of English Deer Parks*, J. Murray, London (1867)
- Soil Survey of England and Wales, *Sheet 4 Soils of Eastern England*, Ordnance Survey for the Soil Survey of England and Wales (1983)
- Speed, J., *Hertfordshire Described* (1676), Herts Record Office
- Stevenage District Plan, *Second Review 1991-2011*, Deposit Draft (Nov. 1999)
- Tompkins, M., *So That Was Hertfordshire* (1998)
- Waters, B., *Thirteen Rivers to the Thames*, Dent, London (1964)
- Whitelaw, J. W., *Hidden Hertfordshire*, Countryside Books (1998, 1999)