

County map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA



**LOCATION**

This area lies between Borehamwood to the east, Bushey to the west and Elstree to the south. To the north is the Aldenham plateau.

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

An area of gently undulating landform and considerable pasture within an intact landscape framework .A combination of tall bushy hedgerows and field trees contain views into and across the landscape. Two reservoirs are important features but are not prominent visually, being hidden by landform vegetation. Parkland areas, mostly associated with private schools, are apparent in the landscape and add to the pastoral character. The integrity of the area is diluted on approaching the towns that enclose to the east, west and south.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- gently undulating landform
- pasture is dominant land use with arable secondary
- a number of private schools set in mature landscaped grounds
- Aldenham Park historic parkland with woodland and perimeter belts
- two large reservoirs, i.e. Aldenham and Hilfield
- Aldenham Country Park
- fragmentation and disruption by the M1/A41 corridor including pylons and associated built development

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- Elstree aerodrome
- electricity transformer station
- Hilfield Castle

Aldenham Country Park •  
(Environmental Land Management  
Service (Rural Estates) HCC)



### PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** The underlying geology to the area comprises Tertiary clay overlaid by slowly permeable and seasonally waterlogged soils with some brown subsoils, (Windsor series). Locally, there are areas of fine loamy and silty soils over the clays.

**Topography.** An undulating plateau area with the highest ground adjacent to Elstree Ridge. The central plateau area has minimal falls, while to the edges slopes are steeper where the landform becomes more strongly undulating in the minor valleys that run off the slopes. The two reservoirs are significant landforms, albeit at the hand of man.

**Degree of slope.** Typically 1 in 80 across the plateau. 1 in 20 in the minor valleys to the south-west, e.g. Hilfield Farm.

**Altitude range.** 75 - 111m.

**Hydrology.** The clay soils support small ponds and a number of visually and ecologically important streams that flow off the plateau. The streams include Tykes Water, which receives water from Aldenham Reservoir and then passes through a lake at Aldenham Park, before travelling north through Radlett. Aldenham Reservoir, 65 acres in size, was hand-dug by French prisoners of war between 1795-97. Its purpose was to control the flow of water levels in the River Colne following the construction of the Grand Union Canal. The larger Hilfield Reservoir, opened in 1957 to provide drinking water, is now an LNR.

**Land cover and land use.** The primary land use is pasture for both horses and cattle. The area contains a number of parklands which also account for the high proportion of pasture. The most notable park is Aldenham Park, now partly forming the grounds of Haberdasher's Aske's School. The grounds contain fine specimen trees, an ornamental lake, woodland and the remains of a magnificent lime avenue west of the house. Other parklands include Kendall Hall and Aldenham School, both private schools. Secondary land use is arable but not the larger open fields that characterise much of the Aldenham Plateau to the north. The reservoirs are a key land use. Besides their major functions they provide a habitat for birds and have good vegetation, including perimeter shelterbelts. The Elstree aerodrome operates from a small runway north of Hilfield Reservoir. There are other recreational land uses including the Aldenham Country Park and a golf course.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** There are few ancient or semi-natural woodlands in the area, mostly plantations associated with the parklands or reservoirs. Species include oak, sycamore, lime, pine and poplar, with native black poplars along Tykes Water. Hedges are very important in this landscape, but are in decline in places with gaps developing and infill fencing rather than replanting. They are typically tall and bushy with mature field trees. Species are mixed and include elm, field maple, hawthorn and hazel. Field trees are oak with some ash. Areas of elm by the M1 are in decline. On the London clay there are some neutral grasslands.

### HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

**Field pattern.** The historic field pattern is mainly pre-18th century organic enclosure. This pattern is largely intact with small to medium-sized irregular fields. Exceptions to this are towards Bushey, where there has been 20th-century enclosure on the urban edge and around Aldenham reservoir where there is some parliamentary enclosure.

**Transport pattern.** A number of straight arterial roads pass through the area. The Roman Watling Street A5 runs north to Radlett and verges are often wide. The A41 and the M1 run close to each other to the west of the area. Secondary roads are often straight, e.g. around Aldenham Park. The St Pancras railway runs to the east.

**Settlements and built form.** The settlement pattern is dispersed with no villages, rather a number of farmsteads and a few individual houses.

- The red brick Aldenham House was built c.1672 for H. Coghill, remodelled in 1785 and further enlarged between 1870-73. In the grounds is Home Farm, built by the Victorian architect Butterfield.
- Hilfield Castle is a Gothic construction of 1805, complete with gatehouse and portcullis. Aldenham School was rebuilt from 1825 in the Jacobean castellated style.
- The built edges of Bushey and Borehamwood form a stark line in places, contrasting with the rural landscape. There are a number of 20th-century additions to the landscape, including school buildings at Haberdasher's Aske's and Aldenham School. There is also a prominent laboratory building at Hilfield Reservoir, industrial units by Aldenham Reservoir and the aerodrome hangars.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

There are filtered and framed views into much of the area, particularly from Elstree. Views within the area are limited by the density of hedgerows and plantation woodlands. The two reservoirs are concealed from view even at close distance. The area is generally coherent apart from to the south west where there is a mix of recreational, industrial and agricultural uses and the noisy M1/A41 corridor contributes to the downgrading.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This landscape type is frequent in this part of the county. The distinctive features are the reservoirs and the private schools set in mature parklands.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

A number of structures create visual impact, including the electricity transformer station, the dam banks of Hilfield reservoir, the laboratory building at Hilfield reservoir, industrial units by Aldenham reservoir and the aerodrome hangars. Two major power lines run through the area. Built edges of the settlements are particularly raw in places, most notably on the northern edge of Borehamwood.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There are a good number of rights of way in the area, but the M1/A41 corridor and, to a lesser extent, the St Pancras railway line act as barriers from the larger settlements. Aldenham Country Park is centred on the reservoir and provides a local attraction, with sailing, fishing, walking and a rare breeds area. Other recreational facilities include Medburn Equestrian Centre, Borehamwood golf course and Elstree aerodrome.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

The lakesides at Aldenham and Hilfield are some of the county's most valued landscapes (B). Otherwise, the area is largely unremarked upon for distinctiveness (E).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

Watling Chase Community Forest.

SAM: Penne's Place moated site (grounds of Haberdasher's Aske's School).

English Heritage Grade II listing: Aldenham Park.

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>localised</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>mixed</b>
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	<b>fragmented</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>variable</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>intact</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>high</b>
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	<b>moderate</b>

**ROBUSTNESS**

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

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

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

- support Watling Chase Community Forest in the realisation of its objectives for the area
- promote the creation of new woods within the area. Planting to focus on screening harsh built edges of settlements, e.g. Borehamwood and Bushey, industrial development to the south-west and integrating M1 and A41 corridor by the use of medium to large-scale woodlands
- use ancient hedge and field boundaries to locate woodland restoration and expansion
- promote the appropriate management of existing plantation woodlands in order to create a balanced age structure and biodiverse woodland community
- woodlands should cater for public access, conservation and economic productivity
- provide enhanced habitat and visual linkage through a substantially restored network of hedges and hedgerow trees
- promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats
- promote crop diversification and the continuation of mixed livestock/arable farming
- promote both the creation of new ponds and the retention/enhancement for wildlife of existing ponds
- promote hedgerow restoration through locally appropriate measures including coppicing, laying and replanting/gapping-up
- promote the creation of new orchards, the use of traditional varieties of fruit and minimise the use of herbicides and pesticides
- retain and enhance parkland areas including Aldenham Park. Ensure new planting maintains age diversity. Landscape improvements should respect the historic context of existing features and the form and character of parkland and gardens. Ornamental species should only be used to replace damaged or over-mature specimens, where appropriate
- encourage reversion from arable uses to pasture and grassland
- restrict ploughing of grasslands within parklands
- encourage the re-use of existing agricultural buildings for equestrian activity
- promote the use of traditional field enclosure where land is converted to equestrian pasture
- discourage the use of non-native trees in shelterbelts and recreational areas
- traffic-calming measures, where considered necessary, must be of a scale and design that relates to the local landscape character of the settlement
- support the continued use of Aldenham Country Park for a range of recreational uses and explore the opportunities for increased access to Hilfield Reservoir



• Cattle at Kendal Hall Farm  
(J. Billingsley)