

County map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA



LOCATION

The area is located south east of Potters Bar, north of Hadley Wood and east of Wrotham Park. (The majority of the area is outside Hertfordshire.)

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

A large-scale strongly undulating landscape overlaid with a very noticeable pattern of geometric fields and straight roads. Scattered trees heighten the straight and linear boundaries. There are a number of discrete woodlands and a more extensive area around Enfield Chase and Trent Country Park. The area is sparsely settled with isolated farms set back from the roads.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- geometric field pattern
- steeply sloping valley landforms
- straight roads of Roman or earlier origin, with wide verges
- sparsely settled
- discrete woodlands to north
- Enfield Chase to south
- limited rights of way
- sweeping views over landforms
- mainline railway in cutting
- Potters Bar and M25 to north west

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- obelisk at Enfield Chase
- 'Pick-Your-Own' farm at Parkside Farm

Spoilbanks Wood and railway cutting • (J. Billingsley)



PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology and soils. The underlying geology of the majority of 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. On the higher ground of the Ridgeway and Enfield Chase the geology is plateau and river-terrace drift. This is overlaid by slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged coarse loamy, fine loamy and fine silty over clayey soils (Essendon association).

Topography. There is a marked undulating landform with prominent slopes, and a narrow ridged lip that runs to the western and northern edge.

Degree of slope. Slopes between 1 in 12 and 1 in 16.

Altitude range. 28m on the western ridge to 35m in the south-east corner.

Hydrology. The clay soils support a number of streams along the bottom of the narrow valley features. These include Monken Mead Brook, Salmon's Brook, Merryhill's Brook and Leeging Beech Gutter; which all eventually flow into the River Lee. There are a number of ponds on the narrow clay ridge together with artificial lakes at Enfield Chase and a reservoir off Hadley Road.

Land cover and land use. The primary land use is arable with limited pasture including sheep on the upper slopes. There are significant areas of set-aside. Woodland cover is extensive at Trent County Park, while elsewhere it is more discrete, e.g. Little Beechill Wood. There are areas of parkland at Trent Park and West Park Lodge.

Vegetation and wildlife. Woodlands often have straight boundaries but a number are ancient semi-natural in origin, being relics of Enfield Chase. Hornbeam is the most frequent species in these areas with other species including oak and ash. Trent Park comprises a mix of both wood pasture and 19th-century plantations. Spoilbank Wood was planted on arisings from the railway cutting. Hedges are mainly low and clipped and comprise a mix of hawthorn, blackthorn and some hornbeam. Hedgerow trees include oak, ash and hornbeam. Most of the oak trees in the hedges were planted following the enclosure of the Chase. There are areas of bracken heath in the woodlands, verges and along the railway.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The listed battlefield site of the Battle of Barnet (1471) at Monken Hadley lies in the south-west corner of the area.

Field pattern. The geometric field pattern was created following the parliamentary enclosure of the former Chase in the late 18th century. This pattern is still intact, which is partly what gives the area such a distinctive character. Field sizes are medium to large in size and geometric in shape.

Transport pattern. The roads traverse the area with clean lines either along the high ground, e.g. The Ridgeway (A1005), or over the topography as on A111 at Serge Hill. Verges are generally wide. The mainline railway passes through the area in cutting near Spoilbank Wood.

Settlements and built form. The area is sparsely settled with only isolated farms built of vernacular materials. There is considerable development on the fringes of the area at Potters Bar, Hadley Wood and Oakwood. Some of this development is screened by vegetation.

The 'Bar' of Potters Bar was probably a gate into Enfield Chase. The University of Middlesex occupies the parkland site within Trent Park.

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

The area is widely visible from the perimeter fringes and within the area from the local roads. This is a large-scale coherent landscape with an open feel, except in the woodlands at Enfield Chase. The area is relatively tranquil, except by the M25 into the north-west corner and where the main East Coast line passes through the area by Spoilbank Wood.

Rarity and distinctiveness. This area is an unusual landscape type for the county. The distinctiveness is primarily a function of the unified enclosure pattern and remnant areas of ancient semi-natural woodland.

VISUAL IMPACT

The major built elements are the M25, pylon lines to the north west and the built edge of the surrounding settlements, the most noticeable being the tower blocks of Potters Bar and the northern edge of Hadley Wood. Set-aside is apparent within the prominent field pattern.

ACCESSIBILITY

There are few rights of way over the area, probably due to the late parliamentary enclosure of the Chase. The London Loop recreational footpath passes through the area from east to west and includes Trent Country Park, where there is wider public access. Other facilities include a golf course on Merry Hills Brook and a riding centre at South Lodge Farm.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

The small part of this area that is in Hertfordshire appears to be not highly valued by Hertfordshire residents for its landscape, but may be valued by people in North London (E).

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

Watling Chase Community Forest (west only).

CONDITION

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

ROBUSTNESS

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

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|------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 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 |
| STRENGTH OF CHARACTER | | | | |

STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE: IMPROVE AND CONSERVE

- support the Watling Chase Community Forest in the realisation of its objectives for the area
- promote the appropriate management of hornbeam coppice woodland in order to maintain a rich ground flora and the distinction between different management systems, such as high forest, coppice, coppice-with-standards and wood pasture
- use ancient hedge and field boundaries to locate the most appropriate location for woodland restoration and expansion. New woods to reflect the existing pattern of discrete blocks
- support the implementation of a restoration and management plan for Trent Country Park. Scheme to fully address landscape, historic and ecological issues. Ensure new planting is encouraged to maintain age diversity. Ornamental species should only be used to replace damaged or over-mature specimens, where appropriate
- promote the creation of buffer strips along watercourses to prevent pesticide, herbicide and fertilizer run-off and provide habitat for wildlife; encourage their linkage to eco-corridors within the wider landscape. Retain open watercourses as field drainage
- support the retention and management of the strong geometric field pattern
- promote hedgerow restoration through locally appropriate measures, including coppicing, laying and replanting/gapping-up
- promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats
- promote the use of reservoirs for water storage and nature conservation interest, rather than groundwater abstraction. Ensure that reservoirs are designed to reduce impact on the character of the local landscape
- promote crop diversification and the restoration of mixed livestock/arable farming where possible
- promote both the creation of new ponds and the retention/enhancement for wildlife of existing ponds
- provide new uncropped or grass field margins to link areas of wildlife importance and/or existing and proposed rights of way
- ensure all existing and proposed recreational land uses include appropriate measures to manage and enhance the existing landscape setting and historical and ecological value. Particular attention should be given to ensure earthwork proposals complement the natural landform patterns
- improve public access throughout the area including links with the London Loop recreational footpath
- ensure that design proposals for minor roads fit the grain of the local landscape both horizontally and vertically; avoid significant impact on the local field pattern and use only locally native tree and shrub species for associated planting
- maintain and develop the traditional pattern of roadside verges, including bracken heath as a local feature and a wildlife resource. Where development is likely to affect verges and damage is unavoidable, development should include details of protection of the remaining verge and replacement of its nature conservation value within the proposed scheme



• Geometric field pattern
(J. Billingsley)