

County map showing location of
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA



LOCATION

This area is located between Borehamwood, Barnet, Wrotham Park and South Mimms. The A1 / M25 interchange is located to the north of the area.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

A broadly level and gently undulating plain which rises up towards Wrotham Park and Potters Bar to the east. To the south the land comprises small to medium pasture fields enclosed by well-maintained hedges with scattered field oaks and ash, while to the north and east there are larger arable fields. In the centre of the area lies Dyrham Park, now a golf course, which is contained by perimeter tree belts. Two further golf courses to the south east disrupt the historical landscape pattern.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- gently undulating plain
- slopes rise up to the south and east at Arkley, High Barnet and Potters Bar
- small to medium fields with hedge enclosure and field trees to the south-west of Dyrham Park
- extensive areas of equestrian activity and grazing
- Dyrham parkland
- modern visually intrusive golf courses on former agricultural land
- medium arable fields to the north with hedges and field trees in a declining condition
- major motorway, trunk road and associated infrastructure

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Dyrham Park lodges
- Saffron Green radio masts
- South Mimms motorway service area

Isolated trees in arable field •
near Potters Bar •
(J. Billingsley)



PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

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

Topography. A gently undulating and wide plain with slopes rising to west, south and east. Shallow valley passes to the north by South Mimms.

Degree of slope. Plain typically less than 1 in 40. Slopes typically 1 in 20.

Altitude range. 95-100m over central plain. Side slopes rise up to 125m at Monken Hadley.

Hydrology. A number of small streams rise on the impermeable clay soils and slowly flow northward to join the Mimms Brook. There are a number of small ponds in field corners that provide water for livestock, together with a moated site at Fold Farm. At Dyrham Park the stream is artificially dammed to create a series of waterbodies within the parkland landscape.

Land cover and land use. The pattern of land cover is the prominent feature of the landscape. This is characterised by a series of small to medium grass ley and pasture fields to the south, and more extensive areas of arable cropping to the north and east.

Vegetation and wildlife. Woodland cover is sparse with only isolated and discrete woodlands and no ancient woodlands. The major woodland cover within the area is at Dyrham Park, where perimeter shelterbelts of oak, horse chestnut, ash, sycamore and yew contain a parkland landscape to give a private and separate feel. The London clay supports species-rich grassland, but much of it has now been converted to arable or improved by the use of fertilisers and herbicides. Areas of semi-natural acidic grassland survive north of Arkley and include the locally rare saw-wort. Dyrham Park has areas that are botanically rich. Hedgerows to the west are in a reasonable condition while to the east they are often declining or relic. Species comprise a mix of field maple, hawthorn, blackthorn and elm. Hedgerow trees are mainly oak, with occasional ash, but many of these are in a mature or declining condition.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Part of the listed battlefield site of the Battle of Barnet (1471) at Monken Hadley lies in the south-east corner of the area. Dyrham Park, which dates from 1776, stamps its authority on the agricultural landscape. It is currently used as a golf and country club which has led to some unsympathetic planting additions.

Field pattern. The pastoral area to the south west largely retains the pre-18th century organic enclosure pattern with its irregular field shapes. The historical pattern to the north and east has undergone considerable change from the 1880 record, with a loss of many field boundaries and a move towards increased arabilisation. Large prairie fields and golf courses have been created with only vestiges of the former field pattern, e.g. between Potters Bar and the M25.

Transport pattern. A series of green lanes (e.g. Arkley Lane) and minor roads (e.g. Galley Lane) with wide verges are retained in the landscape. The A1, M25 and South Mimms motorway service area are strong modern features in the landscape.

Settlements and built form. The settlement pattern comprises a number of widely dispersed farmsteads throughout the area. The area is sparsely settled up to the well-defined urban areas which mark the southern and eastern boundaries. Most farmsteads are modest in scale and some have been converted to riding stables.

Knightsland Farm is a good brick built farmhouse of 16th century origins.

- The major house in the area is Dyrham Park of which, according to Pevsner, the noteworthy section is the eastern portion with a curious heavy portico c.1800. The gatehouse just off the St Albans road is a local treasure with its Tuscan columns and twin pavilions c.1736.

OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

This landscape is widely visible from surrounding elevated areas. Within the area there is more enclosure to the south and west, where there is a strong network of hedgerows. To the north the landscape is more open to view and here the presence of the A1, M25 and South Mimms service area create major sources of visual and auditory disruption. The Regent Shooting Grounds near Saffron Green create local noise intrusion.

Rarity and distinctiveness. The area is a frequent landscape type. The most distinctive feature is Dyrham Park.

VISUAL IMPACT

- The built edges of Borehamwood and Potters Bar, which include a number of high-rise buildings, create a significant impact on the rural landscape. Other intrusive features include the Saffron Green radio masts and pylons by the M25. There is lighting impact from Dame Alice Owens School at Potters Bar and the A1 Driving Range near Rowley Green.
- A number of golf courses have been developed in the area. Planting within these golf courses has not always been complementary to the local landscape character. The new Bridgedown golf course occupies a particularly open site. Here there is minimal mature vegetation and many of the species used are not indigenous.

- The motorways present a strong built element in the landscape. The M25 interchange with the A1 and the South Mimms service area is reasonably well integrated by earthworks and planting, despite its size. However, there are other sections where the M25 is on embankment and there is relatively poor integration into the landscape.

ACCESSIBILITY

There are a limited number of rights of way. A number have been marginalised by taking routes through golf courses or across motorways and large arable fields. Arkley Lane is heavily used by horses which, coupled with the heavy soils, makes it difficult for pedestrians.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

Apart from Dyrham Park (C) the landscape in this area appears not to be highly valued by Hertfordshire residents for its distinctiveness (D).

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

Watling Chase Community Forest.

NB: English Heritage is considering the merit of listing Dyrham Park grounds.

CONDITION

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

ROBUSTNESS

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

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
- increase the extent of woodland cover in the area, concentrating on the interfaces with urban settlements, the slopes that rise up to Wrotham Park and the road corridors of the A1 and M25. Proposals should not emphasise the linear nature of the existing boundaries but make use of irregular field shapes. Consider the constraints of planting near pylons
- encourage effective management along transport corridors to ensure that thinning, selective felling and replanting is undertaken to achieve a varied age structure and locally indigenous species mix
- use ancient hedge and field boundaries to identify the most appropriate location for woodland restoration and expansion, including copses at field corners
- within Dyrham Park ensure landscape improvements respect the historic context of existing features and the form and character of parkland and gardens. Shelterbelts to be actively managed. Ornamental species should only be used to replace damaged or over-mature specimens
- promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats including watercourses
- promote hedgerow restoration and creation to the east of the area to provide visual and ecological links. Pattern to follow historic field boundaries where possible to reconnect rows of isolated field trees and link with Dyrham Park shelterbelts
- promote the management of hedgerow trees and the planting of numbers of new trees to reverse current decline
- promote crop diversification and the restoration of mixed livestock/arable farming where possible
- promote both the creation of new ponds and the retention/enhancement for wildlife of existing ponds
- promote the maintenance and retention of the traditional hedged field enclosure. Where fences have been introduced promote reversion to hedges
- conserve unimproved and semi-improved neutral to acidic grassland wherever possible, avoiding agricultural improvements and overgrazing to maintain their nature conservation value
- promote the development and implementation of a landscape management plan for all golf courses. A high proportion of the total area should be dedicated to and maintained as wildlife habitat, building upon established areas of wildlife interest already present and establishing a strong landscape framework that reflects the historic landscape pattern
- resist the targeting of redundant or derelict pasture for development or cropping
- improve the management of old meadows and pastures by ceasing fertiliser and herbicide application and introducing sensitive grassland management such as late hay cutting or low-density livestock grazing
- seek opportunities to improve the network of rights of way and provide alternatives routes for horses and pedestrians



- Pasture around Fold Farm (Environmental Land Management Service (Rural Estates) HCC)