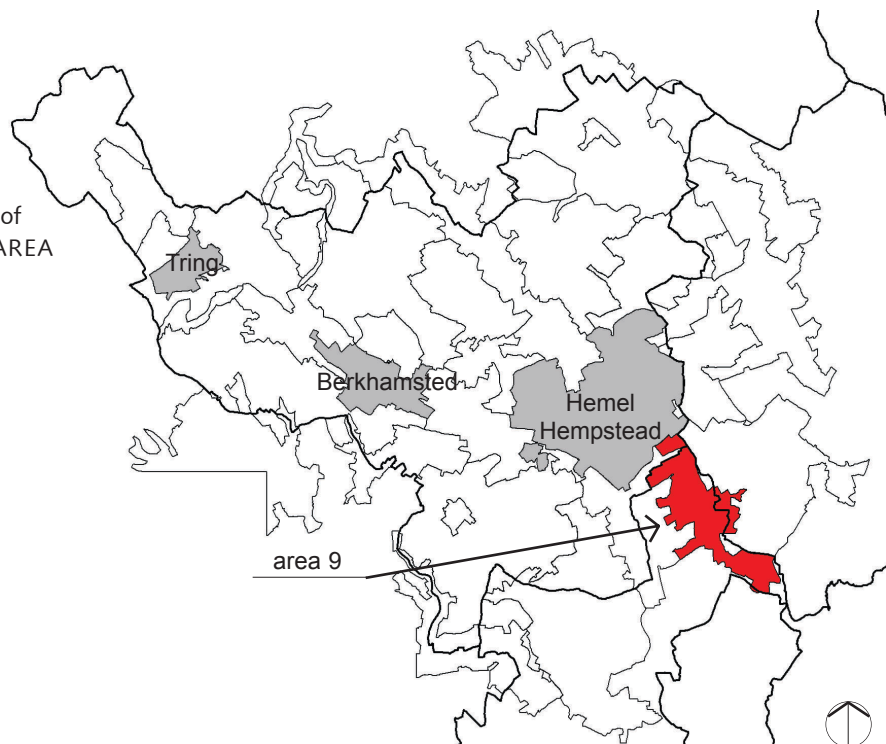


### District Map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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100018935 2004



#### LOCATION

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

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

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

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

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

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

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

East Lane hedgebank •  
(E. Staveley)



### PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

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

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

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

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

### OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

## VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

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

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

## VISUAL IMPACT

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

## ACCESSIBILITY

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

## COMMUNITY VIEWS

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

### CONDITION

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

### STRENGTH OF CHARACTER

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

CONDITION	GOOD	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	MODERATE	Improve and reinforce	<b>Improve and conserve</b>	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**

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



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