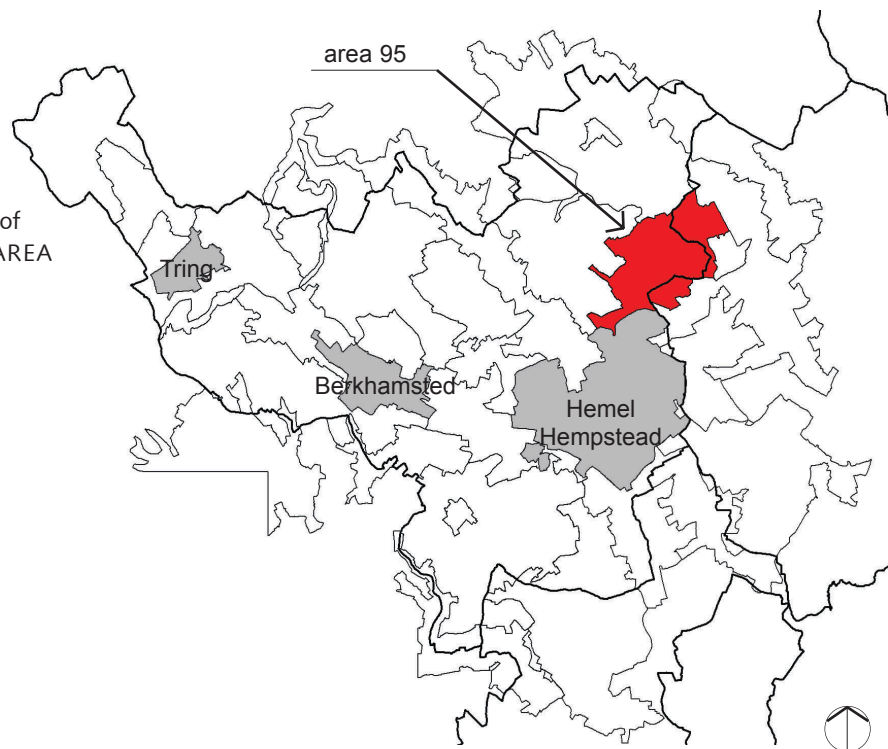


District Map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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LOCATION

This area borders the west of Redbourn, including Norringtonend, St. Agnells, Nicholl's, Hillbury and Great Revel End Farms to the east, and in the west, Holtsmore End, Little Lovett's End and Eastbrookhay Farms.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

An area of gently undulating upland with a discontinuous field pattern bordering the M1 corridor. Discrete woodland blocks help to screen the motorway. Surrounding gentle slopes define the character area boundary. The limit of the settlement of Redbourn coincides with the edge of the plateau to the east. Arable farmland and isolated patches of pasture linked to the farmsteads are the predominant land uses. A nursery, recreation ground and school playing fields influence the area's character on the northern edges of Redbourn and the M1 corridor interrupts the area's unity.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- arable farmland
- discrete woodlands and plantations
- urban fringe recreation
- M1 transport corridor
- urban fringe land uses including pasture
- isolated farmsteads
- field copses

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Flamsteadbury Farm
- overhead power lines
- Great and Little Revel End Farms



Dry valley •
Gaddesden Lane
(HCC Landscape Unit)

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology and soils. The bedrock geology is predominantly chalk. This is overlaid by clay-with-flints on the plateau areas, undifferentiated solid rock in the dry valleys and some clay with sand and gravel in the lower dry valley west of Redbourn. On the plateau the neutral loams are stagnogleyic paleo-argillic brown earths which are fine silty and loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging (Batcombe association). There are some well drained clayey soils over chalk, variably flinty. In the dry valley west of Redbourne, soils are typical argillic brown earths which are well drained fine silty and clayey soils, locally very flinty with some shallow over flint gravel (Charity 2 association).

Topography. An area of high land interspersed with distinctive open dry valleys which feed into the Upper Ver Valley system along Hempstead Road, (see Upper Ver Valley area.) The area is flat to the north of Redbourn with a dry valley to the south of this, followed by another flat area where Great Revel End Farm is located along with associated farmsteads and buildings. This in turn has a dry valley to the south which forms the northern edge of Hemel Hempstead. These topographical features create a gently rolling landscape.

Degree of slope. The northern plateau area slopes to the east at a gradient of 1 in 57. The slopes from the southern plateau around Holtsmere End Farm average 1 in 29 and the central plateau slopes average 1 in 37.

Altitude range. 145m near Puddephats Farm
100m near The Aubreys Fort

Hydrology. There are a number of ponds on the higher ground, generally in association with the farmsteads. e.g. Flamsteadbury Farm, which also has a well. There is no standing water on the slopes.

Land cover and land use. The clay plateau is predominantly intensive arable farmland, particularly in the dry valleys. Infrequent small pasture fields and some isolated woods are associated with the farms.

Vegetation and wildlife. There are a number of woodlands on the plateau, including New wood, Rabbitfield Spring and Nicholl's Great Wood. All are significant landscape features but are discrete and isolated on the plateau. Woodlands on the slopes typically comprise oak, ash, beech and cherry while on the plateau oak and hornbeam dominate. Hedgerows are largely hazel, hawthorn, elm and holly, and mostly ancient relict hedgerows. Limited areas of old grassland remain, dominated by Common Bent, Sweet Vernal Grass, with Pignut etc. Wild Daffodil is especially characteristic of the area.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Great Revel End Farm was originally a small hamlet that grew up on land enclosed in the 12th century. Earthworks to the north east of the existing farm apparently represent the medieval hamlet, possibly substantially reduced in the 14th century as a result of depopulation following the Black Death.

Field pattern. Fields are large and irregularly shaped. An isolated group of small fields surround Holtsmere End Farm and Holtsmere End are in pastoral rather than arable cultivation.

Transport pattern. The pattern of roads, lanes and footpaths radiate from the development of Redbourn to the west. The country lanes are sinuous and the coverage of public footpaths and bridleways over the area is relatively high. The M1 crosses the area in a north/south direction, interrupting the historic radial pattern.

Settlements and built form. Settlement is dispersed across the area and a number of traditional farmhouses, such as Flamsteadbury Farm and St. Agnell's Farm, are distinctive components of the landscape.

Little Revel End Farm is a cluster of traditional agricultural buildings built of buff London brick and weatherboard with patterned terracotta roof tiles.

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

The area is only locally visible from surrounding areas due to the level and elevated landform. It is generally a coherent landscape with some areas downgraded by the impact of the adjacent urban development or transport corridor (M1). Views within the area are filtered by vegetation, particularly hedgerow trees and high verges. It is a medium to large scale landscape with open views across the arable fields.

Rarity and distinctiveness. This open arable landscape associated with an upland plateau is common across northern Hertfordshire. The transport corridor, overhead power lines and scattered farmsteads are all distinctive features of this character type.

VISUAL IMPACT

There are few detracting features in this area. Despite its magnitude, the M1 has only a moderately negative visual impact, partially due to the fact the road is in cutting for much of its length through the plateau and partially due to the mature hedgerows that line the route. The influences of the settlements of Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead and their adjacent land uses are more significant on the character. Overhead power lines have a widespread visual impact.

ACCESSIBILITY

Total length of Public Rights of Way - 22,546m
Total length of Other Public Access - 2,038m
Total length of Designated Cycle Routes - 4,263m
Total length of all public access - 28,847m
Area of LCA in square metres - 10,421,803
Length to area ratio - 1:361

COMMUNITY VIEWS

There is evidence that there are landscape features of note within this area as well as pressures, but generally this is rarely remarked upon (D).

"I could not hear the insects, not because I have killed them all with my sprayer, but they were drowned out by the low rumble from the motorway and the roars of aeroplanes at nearby Luton." Paul Stanbridge's Pages, <http://dspace.dial.pipex.com/paulstan/>, July 2001

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

AONB: (to west)

Area of Archaeological Significance: East of New Wood Flamsteadbury (cropmarks)

CONDITION

<i>Land cover change:</i>	localised
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	mixed
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	fragmented
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	not obvious
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	interrupted
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	moderate
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	low

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	insignificant
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	prominent
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	interrupted
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	locally visible
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	open
<i>Visual unity:</i>	coherent
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	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
	STRENGTH OF CHARACTER			
		WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG

STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE: IMPROVE AND CONSERVE

- promote the creation of a network of new medium to large woodlands in the open arable landscape, particularly with a view to visually integrating the intrusive motorways and urban fringe development
- for existing woodlands, encourage the replacement of softwoods with indigenous native deciduous communities, hedgebank management and re-establishing a rich ground flora
- improve public access arrangements to woodlands with attention to car park design and safety
- utilise ancient hedge and field boundaries to locate the most appropriate location for wood restoration and expansion
- encourage the reversal of habitat fragmentation and the creation and improvement of habitat links to create eco-corridors
- encourage the dissemination of information about the historic importance and appropriate management of woodland features such as banks and ditches
- encourage the use of native stock of local provenance wherever possible and encourage the eradication of non-native species
- encourage landowners to improve ecological diversity by establishing and maintaining varied land maintenance regimes to enhance visual and wildlife functions
- 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 hedgerow restoration and creation throughout the area to provide visual and ecological links between existing and proposed woodland areas
- 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
- restore ditches and discourage enclosing existing open drainage systems
- provide new uncropped or grass field margins to link areas of wildlife importance and /or existing and proposed rights of way
- promote the use of traditional field enclosure where land is converted to equestrian pasture
- encourage the re-use of existing agricultural buildings for uses such as equestrian activity and tourism
- ensure that the surroundings of converted and new 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 for hedging and tree planting to the perimeter
- encourage planting native species on settlement boundaries, with exotic/ornamental species only to internal faces
- promote a clear strategy for the visual and noise mitigation of all major roads within the area and to positively integrate these corridors into the local landscape character
- encourage effective management along transport corridors to ensure thinning, selective felling and replanting is undertaken to achieve a varied age structure and appropriate species mix
- conserve and enhance the distinctive character of traditional settlements and individual buildings by promoting the conservation of important buildings and high standards of new building or alterations to existing properties, all with the consistent use of locally traditional materials and design to reflect the traditional character of the area
- promote awareness and consideration of the setting of the AONB, and views to and from it, when considering development and land use change proposals on sites adjacent to the AONB



- Impact of M1 West of Redbourn (HCC Landscape Unit)