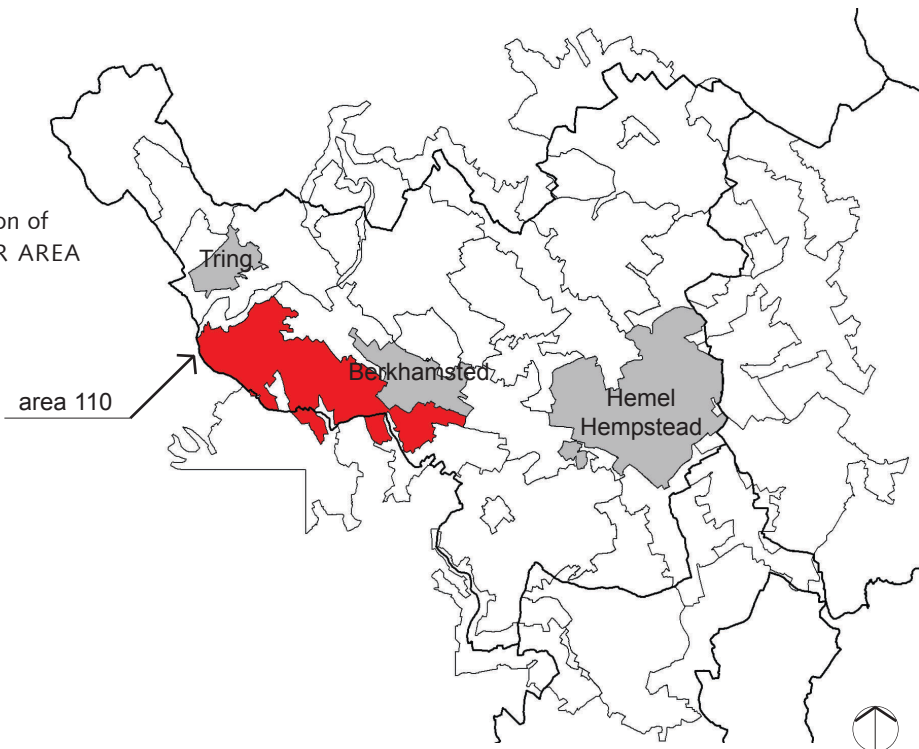


District Map showing location of
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

©Crown copyright .All rights reserved
Dacorum Borough Council
100018935 2004



LOCATION

To the south west of Berkhamsted and the Bulbourne Valley between Wigginton in the north and Ashlyns in the south.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

A gently undulating plateau, characterized by open farmland and punctuated by mixed woodland. Land use is primarily pasture and secondarily for arable. There are a number of historic parklands including; Ashlyns Hall, Haresfoot, Rossway and Champneys. A number of these parks are institutional uses. Settlement is generally dispersed, infrequent and occasionally remote and often related to the estates. The plateau incorporates part of the southern edge of Berkhamsted, including Ashlyns School and Berkhamsted Cemetery. The villages of Wigginton and Hastoe lie to the north. Overall the area is a robust landscape demonstrating fairly strong continuity and recurrent themes. It is divided and somewhat disjointed by the A41.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- gently undulating plateau forming part of the Chilterns dip slope
- numerous estates, associated parkland and estate planting
- grassland/ley crops
- suburban fringe of Berkhamsted to plateau edge including sports fields and school buildings
- extensive mixed woodlands

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Ashlyns and Haresfoot parklands with cedars, black pines and wellingtonias
- Ashlyns Hall and neo-Georgian school
- large field and hedgerow oaks at the Rossway estate
- Champneys and Rossway parklands, with associated estate architecture
- Grim's Ditch
- A41 bypass
- Gothic water tower on Shootersway
- relic heathlands

- Rossway oaks, Heath End (J.Billingsley)

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology and soils. The geology of the area consists almost entirely of well-drained clay-with-flints on the plateau. There are limited outcrops of underlying chalk in the deeper undulations around Hockeridge Wood and along the southern side of the area. Soils are fine silty over clayey and fine loamy over clayey and variably flinty, (Batcombe association).

Topography. Generally a flat to gently undulating upland plateau.

Degree of slope. There is a typical fall of 1 in 50 from the north west to the south east across the dip slope of the Chilterns plateau.

Altitude range. From 220m at Wigginton to 150m east of Ashlyns.

Hydrology. There is no running water in the Area, but the clay is impervious enough around Wigginton and Rossway etc. to allow the existence of some small ponds.

Land cover and land use. The area contains a relatively high woodland cover including a number of plantations. Arable and ley crops dominate to the south of the area on the Rossway estate. To the north, around Wigginton, on areas of former heath and within the parklands equestrian grazing is more evident. To the edge of Berkhamsted urban fringe uses include schools, playing fields and a cemetery.

Vegetation and wildlife. Habitats in the area include: acidic oak/beece woodland especially at High Scrubs, Roundhill Wood, Bulls and North Pesthouse Woods at Tring Park, Newsetts Wood, Cock Grove and parts of Hockeridge and Pancake Woods. At Hockeridge Wood, plantation has obscured the transition to calcareous beech woodland on the upper slopes of Hockeridge Bottom. Several of these woods are probably old secondary woodland on former wood-pasture common land, as remnants of heath persist in clearings and rides.

Rossway also has many 19th century parkland trees, predominantly oak, plus some chestnut, walnut, lime, beech. And a pinetum with over 130 types of tree (species and cultivars) and has won several awards for its forest management.

Old acidic or neutral grassland is limited in the area, but there are remnants (partly derived from Tring/Wigginton Common) at Champneys, and at other sites around Wigginton.

Uncommon woodland plants in the area include Violet Helleborine, Hard Fern and Great Wood-rush, while remnant heathland flora includes heather, Pill Sedge etc. Fauna of note in the area includes sizeable herds of fallow deer, and some uncommon bat species. The introduced Red Kites from Buckinghamshire are occasional visitors.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The substantial Iron Age boundary earthwork of Grim's Dyke runs through the area from west to east. The acidic superficial clays historically supported extensive heathland habitats on the lost Tring and Wigginton Commons, which occupied much of the western half of the area between Wigginton and Heath End until the 1870's. Remnants persist in clearings and rides in woods, and in field margins. The influence of several large estates is readily apparent throughout the area with the number originally relating to the proximity of the main coaching route of Akeman Street and laterly to the west coast main-line railway. The houses include Ashlyns Hall, Haresfoot, Rossway and Champneys. Ashlyns Hall, built c. 1800 is a compact early Regency stucco villa with a bow front and wrought iron verandah. It is set in mature, if somewhat insensitively restored, parkland, now bisected by the A41 Bypass cutting. The large cedars and wellingtonias are a visually dominant element of the skyline on this part of the plateau. Haresfoot formerly adjoined Ashlyns, but was demolished in 1962. It was a five bay Regency stucco house, by J. B Papworth (1817). The associated farm, stable range and parkland trees, however, survive. The gardens of an adjacent property, Haresfoot were worked on by Gertrude Jekyll in 1911 and plans and plant lists survive at Reef Point. The property is now a school of which the gardens are said to have a 'sleeping quality.'

Rossway (partially in the Hawridge and Bellingdon Valleys and Ridges, Area 109), to the south west, is essentially an intact Victorian estate. The mansion was built between 1864 and 1865. The grounds were landscaped at the same time including an impressive collection of rhododendrons lining the drive. There are interesting 'rusticated' lodge houses and estate architecture.

Champneys to the north west, was built in the 1860's in the French Second Empire style. It has a small formal park and is now home to the famous health farm.

Field Patterns. In the north, on areas of relict acidic heath there is a pattern of geometric fields arising from 18th century parliamentary enclosure. To the south and centre of the area there is an organic pre 18th century enclosure pattern, which is retained in part and elsewhere been subject to rationalization in the 20th century. Field sizes are medium with some larger units to the south on the Rossway estate which is notable for the widespread presence of mature hedgerow oaks throughout the estate. There are some species rich verges e.g. south of Ambers Farm.

Transport pattern. The local transport network comprises one B road and a number of minor roads. To the north on the areas of former heath and parliamentary enclosure the roads are distinctively straight with locally wide and species rich verges. To the south and east of Wigginton the lanes are more winding reflecting the contrasting organic enclosure pattern.

Settlements and built form. The settlement pattern and built form is essentially related to the estates which characterize the area. This includes country houses and associated service buildings, lodges and gate houses. The pattern of settlement is therefore generally isolated and sporadic. The exceptions are the villages of Wigginton, including the ribbon development along Chesham Road, and Hastoe to the north and to the south eastern edge of the plateau, where the former extent of Ashlyns Hall Park is now defined by the extensive grounds of the neo classical Ashlyns School (1935), and the playing fields of the Collegiate School. The outskirts of the ancient market town of Berkhamsted extend to this edge, where the settlement is essentially composed of medium to large prestigious houses and villas from the late Victorian era onwards, as well as a large town cemetery and the National Film Archive.

OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Pevsner: Hertfordshire - The Buildings of England
 Berkhamsted & District Local History Society Historic Houses & Gardens Research Group: Rossway Park - The historical development of the Estate(1999)
 English Heritage: Schedule entries



- Ashlyns Hall
(J.Billingsley)

- Haresfoot Farm and parkland specimens
(A.Tempany)



VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

Due to the plateau character the area is visually concealed from outside. Within the area there is a relatively good sense of enclosure from the woods, parklands and hedges. From the fringes of the plateau there are some good views, particularly to Aldbury and Ashridge. The area is generally tranquil except near the A41.

Rarity and distinctiveness. This is a fairly frequent landscape type within the county. The number of parklands makes the area locally unusual.

VISUAL IMPACT

The impact of built development is mainly concentrated to the fringes of Berkhamstead, however here much of the development is set within a setting of mature trees and hedges. The A41 is locally intrusive but runs in cutting for most of its length over the plateau. There are some isolated eyesores including vehicle storage, mobile home park unsightly farm buildings and telecommunication masts e.g. in Wigginton village.

ACCESSIBILITY

There is a reasonable network of footpaths and bridleways within the area. These include the Icknield Way, Ridgeway and Chiltern Way long distance footpaths which run through the north of the area at Wigginton, from where a number of other locally promoted walks start. Hockeridge Wood is another base for local walks.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

This is largely an unremarkable landscape with occasional distinctive features (D).

"[Wiggins] is not a show place, for it is a little too straggly," E A Menders from "Little-known Wigginton – the village on a hill" Hertfordshire Countryside, Vol 22 No 101 Sept 1967.

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

AONB (from Wigginton to Rossway)

Landscape Conservation Area (east of Rossway)

SM: Grim's Ditch

SM: Marlin Chapel Farm

Area of Archaeological Significance: Grim's Ditch, Oakwood, Chesham Road, Pea Lane and Wigginton

CONDITION

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

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	apparent
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	prominent
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	apparent
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	concealed
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	contained
<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
		WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
STRENGTH OF CHARACTER				

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

- promote the retention of the character of local minor roads by the management of hedgerows, pollarded hedgebanks, (e.g. Shire Lane,) and verges. Where part of a hedge has been damaged or removed it should be replanted with a mix of indigenous species
- support a strategy to limit built development within the area or the impact of development that may affect the area from outside
- encourage the retention of the existing pattern of hedges and to create new features to further enhance landscape and ecological links between woodlands, using old field boundaries where possible. To include the promotion of hedgerows to provide more permanent boundaries within equestrian pasture
- promote the survey, retention and restoration of the historic parklands, including Ashlyns, Haresfoot, Rossway and Champneys through a range of initiatives including; tree planting including parkland exotics (where over mature), encouragement to reverse arable to pasture and use of traditional metal estate fencing. Restoration of structures should be historically accurate
- promote the appropriate management of woodland in order to conserve and where absent to re-establish a rich ground flora and the distinction between different management systems, such as high forest and coppice with standards. To encourage replanting coniferous plantations with indigenous mixed broadleaves
- promote the control of pest species where they adversely affect the establishment of broadleaved woodland
- promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats
- carefully control proposals to change agricultural land to other uses such as golf courses and only permitted where they do not undermine the distinctive character of the landscape
- encourage the recreation and management of former heath areas to the north east by the use of; turf stripping, controlled burning and traditional grazing
- improve public access arrangements to woodlands with attention to car park design and safety
- conserve and enhance the distinctive character of 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 designed to reflect the traditional character of the area
- ensure that built development and storage areas both in the area or adjacent to it are integrated through the use of native tree and shrub species and the creation of hedging and/or planting to the perimeter
- encourage the creation and maintenance of ponds
- promote crop diversification and the restoration of mixed livestock/arable farming where possible
- promote as strategy for the continued mitigation of the A41 on the area
- ensure that local highway improvements are sympathetic to the scale, pattern and character of the existing road network
- provide facilities to facilitate quiet recreational activities while not adversely affecting the character and quality of the local landscape
- encourage a programme for the recording, monitoring and where desirable replanting, of roadside and field trees (including oaks) within the Rossway Estate
- 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
- Parkland pasture at Haresfoot (A.Tempany)

