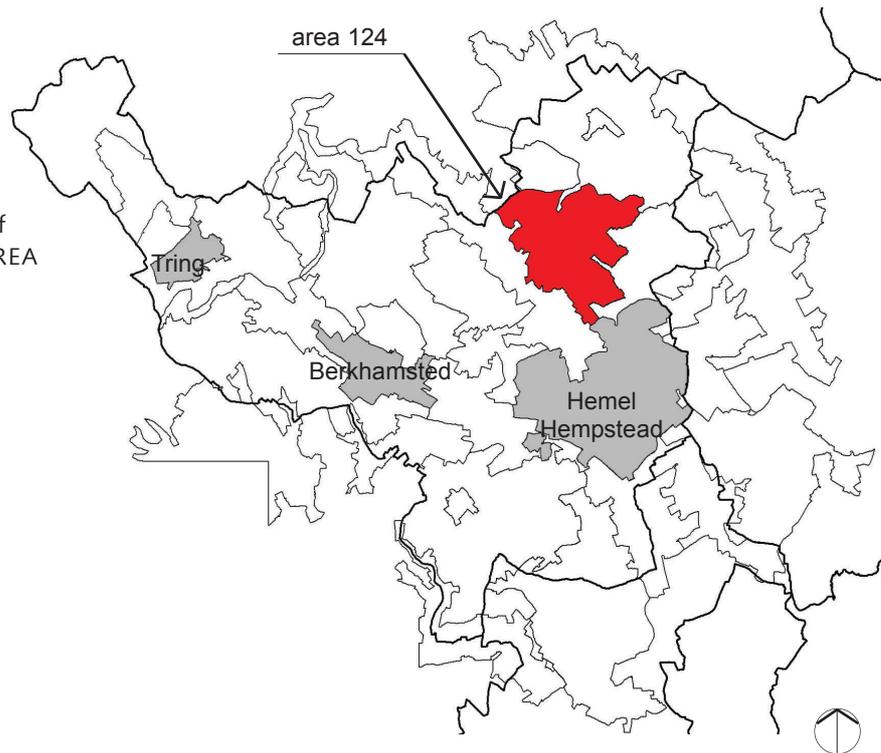


District Map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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**LOCATION**

The area is enclosed by the Markyate Ridges and Valleys to the north east and the northern slopes of the Gade valley to the south. It stretches between the settlements of Jockey End in the north west to Corner Farm that lies just within its south eastern boundary. The Roman road of Gaddesden Row lies central to the area.

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

There is a marked estate feel to this plateau landscape, with the parklands of Gaddesden Place at the southern edge, together with associated estate architecture, and relict medieval fishponds at Golden Parsonage. Historic parkland also remains at The Hoo which is also situated to the south western edge of the plateau. To the east is a more open character with some wide verges and medium to large predominantly arable fields, being contained by perimeter woodlands and plantations. The road running through the hamlet of Gaddesden Row is wide and straight, and part of

an ancient right of way. It forms a spine in the cultural pattern with boundaries and lanes joining it at right angles on both sides. Some vernacular building work is in evidence in the hamlet of Gaddesden Row, with flint faced and timber framed cottages however most buildings comprise later infill. Generally settlement is quite dispersed and / or isolated, and is well contained by vegetation. Isolated blocks of mixed semi-natural and plantation woodland cover the plateau.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- designed parklands and estate architecture overlooking the Gade Valley
- medium/large arable fields
- estate farms
- discrete mixed woodlands creating varied skylines
- gappy hedgerows with some elm and some treed hedgerows
- strong cultural pattern
- open plateau topography
- straight sunken lanes with dense holly hedges and hedge banks in places, at right angles to Gaddesden Row

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- Gaddesden Place - Palladian villa, parkland and estate
- Golden Parsonage - Georgian house
- roman road at Gaddesden Row with wide verges
- Capability Brown's parkland at The Hoo



- Arable plateau (A.Tempany)

### PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** The bedrock geology is Upper Chalk with a superficial geology of clay-with-flints drift. At Gaddesden Place there is an extensive area of superficial pebbly clay drift over clay-with-flints giving wetter surface soils.

The soils are stagnogleyic paleo argillic brown earths which are fine silty and fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slightly seasonal waterlogging, (Batcombe association). There are some well drained clayey soils over chalk which are variably flinty and mostly acidic/neutral free draining soils, except where chalk comes to the surface along plateau margins and along three shallow dry valleys which bisect the plateau.

**Topography.** Generally the landform of the character area is that of a gently undulating upland plateau.

**Degree of slope.** The average gradient on the plateau is 1 in 88.

**Altitude range.** From 170m at Widmore Farm to 120-125m at Great Revel End Farm.

**Hydrology.** There are relict medieval fishponds at Golden Parsonage over the clay with flints giving wetter surface soils, and a network of ponds/pools at Gaddesden Place.

**Land cover and land use.** Land cover is predominantly open farmland, of mixed though primarily arable composition. Pasture does however form a secondary land use, along with the parklands of Gaddesden Place and Golden Parsonage.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The principal habitats in the area, apart from the arable farmland, are remnant acidic oak/beechness and oak/hornbeam woodlands, together with some remaining neutral grasslands. A particular feature in the area is the network of old hedges, with frequent hazel, holly and bluebells. An important species rich Chiltern beech/ash woodland modified to some extent by planting, survives at Gaddesden Hoo Wood. Remnant neutral grassland exists at The Golden Parsonage and near Gaddesden Hoo as well as along several stretches of the notable road verge of Gaddesden Row itself. Species of note include the remaining stands of wild daffodils at Golden Parsonage, after which it is believed it was named. No special fauna is recorded.

### HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The long settled estate character of the plateau is clearly visible, with the Halsey family having occupied the greater part at Golden Parsonage and later Gaddesden Place (1760) since the 16th century. Gaddesden Row is a long straight road (an ancient right of way, believed Roman) with wide (common land) verges, leading to the settlement of the same name, a small hamlet of medieval origin.

Golden Parsonage was built in the 16th century and extended in the late 17th/early 18th century. The current house comprises a five bay brick wing together with mature parkland, medieval fishponds and several associated farms, including Home Farm.

Within the estate, and occupying a more prominent, commanding position overlooking the Gade Valley at the edge of the plateau, is the other Halsey residence, Gaddesden Place, begun in 1768 and an early example of James Wyatt's work, a severe, though elegant five bay Palladian mansion with a porticoed front. The house was partially demolished in 1958. The parkland, designed by Capability Brown, is of the same period with many fine parkland trees and roundels. Historical continuity is therefore strong and cultural interventions are frequent and generally positive.

**Field Patterns.** The field pattern is essentially geometric or regular in a co-axial pattern along Gaddesden Row with areas of prairie fields where many of the boundaries have been lost. A cluster of fields at Jockey End have enclosures that are of 20th century origin. There is a small area of common land at Hedgeswood Common.

**Transport pattern.** This is comprised of lanes throughout, which are generally straight, particularly at Gaddesden Row. A number of the lanes leading to the Gade Valley are distinctly sunken, with high hedgebanks.

**Settlements and built form.** Apart from the estate and associated farms, settlements are relatively few, and include the hamlets of Briden's Camp, Gaddesden Row and Jockey End. In its built form, Briden's Camp is strongly influenced by the Halseys' estate, with brown and cream (estate colours) in evidence on the cottages, most of which appear to be late 18th/early 19th century. Gaddesden Row and Jockey End are ancient settlements, though much spoiled by inappropriate and insensitive modern infill. There are, however, a number of knapped flint faced, red brick coined cottages at Gaddesden Row. Other built form generally relates to the estates and include the mansions, old walled gardens, the farms and an interesting 19th century half timbered lodge house.

### OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Pevsner N: Buildings of England - Hertfordshire

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The area is only locally visible from outside. Views within the area are filtered by vegetation and field boundaries. Although the area has a relatively open feel (with the exception of the Halsey parklands), the scale of the landscape elements, in terms of field size is small to medium. Sound is generally distant/intermittent, coming from the Gaddesden Row road. Visual unity and integrity can be described as coherent.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** As a largely unsettled arable upland plateau with strong parkland influences, with a very strong cultural and field pattern, the character area is unusual within the district.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The impact of built development is generally localized, with the urban edge of Hemel Hempstead forming the south east of the area. Inappropriate 20th century housing at Gaddesden Row and Jockey End are locally detracting features and the line of pylons to the south east are also a negative influence.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

There is a good network of footpaths branching off and from the Gaddesden Row road with other links through the surrounding fields and parklands. Open common land is found along the wide road verges of Gaddesden Row. Disabled access is restricted.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

This area contains some distinctive features and is for some, good walking country (D); "the approach to Golden Parsonage is fine during the summer also – with its long impressive yet unkempt avenue of trees. On this path, within a few miles of Hemel Hempstead everything is rural and remote and gives an air of neglect." RJ Pigram in "Footpaths over country and stiles on the west side of Hertfordshire," Hertfordshire Countryside v.19 No.77 Apr/May 1965."lovely hill-country with mixed farming, little woods and a grid pattern of lanes." EG Meadows 1977.

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

AONB (majority except south east)  
Landscape Development Area (south east corner)  
Areas of Archaeological Significance: Jockey End and Gadesden Row

<b>CONDITION</b>	
<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>localised</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>mature</b>
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	<b>linked</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>good</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>intact</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>low</b>
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	<b>low</b>

<b>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>	
<i>Impact of landform:</i>	<b>apparent</b>
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	<b>prominent</b>
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	<b>prominent</b>
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	<b>locally visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>open</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>unified</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>unique</b>

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	<b>Safeguard and manage</b>
	<b>MODERATE</b>	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
	<b>POOR</b>	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		<b>WEAK</b>	<b>MODERATE</b>	<b>STRONG</b>
		<b>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>		

**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING****CHANGE: SAFEGUARD AND MANAGE**

- 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
- where part of a hedge has been damaged or removed it should be replanted with the same species, usually hawthorn, beech, hazel, blackthorn, hornbeam, holly and field maple. Any natural regeneration should be encouraged
- encourage the reversal of habitat fragmentation and the creation and improvement of habitat links to create eco-corridors
- survey and manage parkland and veteran trees for biodiversity value
- ensure new planting is encouraged to maintain age diversity. Ensure landscape improvements respect the historic context of existing features and the form and character of parkland and gardens. Ornamental species should only be used to replace damaged or over-mature specimens, where appropriate
- hard landscaping details such as steps, balustrades, pond copings, statuary and urns should be conserved. Replacements should be in facsimile and in natural materials. Gazebos, temples, follies, grottoes, obelisks, park bridges, ice houses, terraces, ha-has, boundary walls, gates and gate piers should contribute to the planned landscape and its setting. Replacement, renovated or new features should be architect designed and in keeping with their original setting
- restrict ploughing of grasslands within parklands and encourage restoration to pasture and planting new trees, roundels etc
- 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 crop diversification and the restoration of mixed livestock/ arable farming where possible
- conserve unimproved and semi-improved grassland wherever possible, avoiding agricultural improvements to reduce their acid or calcareous nature, in order to maintain their nature conservation value
- proposals to change agricultural land to other uses such as golf courses should be very carefully examined and should only be permitted where they do not undermine the distinctive character of the landscape
- 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 be screened from view where possible and native species are used for hedging and tree planting to the perimeter
- hard detailing should be kept to a minimum, with an emphasis on the use of natural materials such as gravel for drives etc. rather than concrete or paviers
- native tree species only should be planted on boundaries, with exotic/ornamental species only in close proximity to the dwelling
- maintain and develop the traditional pattern of roadside verges 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. This is particularly important where verges include hedgebanks, sunken lanes, ditches and hedges
- quiet enjoyment of the landscape should be encouraged but should not be allowed to undermine the character and quality of the landscape. A balance needs to be achieved between the needs of the visitors and conserving the landscape
- 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
- Ledgemoor Lane (A. Tempany)

