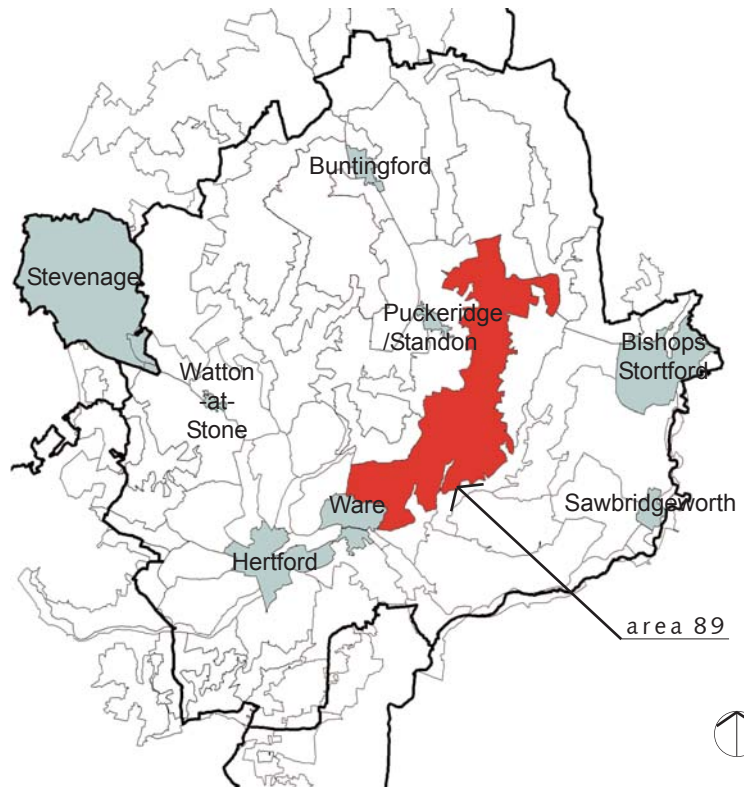


County map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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LOCATION

Uplands east of Standon and Braughing, between the Rib and Ash valleys, south to the northern edge of Ware

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Open, gently undulating arable farmland with clustered settlements and few roads, on a clay plateau of varying width between the valleys of the rivers Rib and Ash. Can be divided into four sub-areas: the Fanhams Plateau; the central plateau area; Westland/Wellpond Green and Braughing Friars. Arable cultivation has removed field boundaries and reduced woodland cover and the significant settlements lie within the river valleys, with isolated farms set above them on the edge of the plateau.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- gently undulating upland interfluve
- generally large-scale field size
- little woodland

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- horticultural nurseries
- largest uninterrupted plateau area in south Hertfordshire
- hedgerow oaks within fields rather than in hedge line



Large scale arable plateau • near Braughing (HCC Landscape Unit)

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology and soils. Slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils over chalky till (Hanslope series).

Topography. Upland clay plateau incised by river valleys; gently undulating, rising slightly to the north

Degree of slope. 1 in 30 to 1 in 225

Altitude range. 53m to 116m

Hydrology. This poorly drained plateau has streams and ditches draining east and west into the adjoining river valleys. The Nimney Bourne valley is treated as part of the Ash Valley character area.

Land cover and land use. Arable farmland with fragmented woodland cover, with minor variations within the sub-areas. The Fanhams plateau has little woodland, with no settlements but some individual houses, isolated farms and small hamlets. There are woods on the slopes of the central plateau area and a few hamlets, with some historic houses on the eastern edge above the Ash valley. The Wellpond Green area is characterised by a collection of hamlets. Both the central and northern sub-areas also contain nurseries with glasshouses. Braughing Friars is very open, large-scale arable.

Vegetation and wildlife. The Fanhams plateau has important remnant hedgerow/green lane systems, with hazel, dogwood, spindle and ash, and little woodland (except Buckney Wood). There are some pure elm hedges, often unmanaged. Around Fanhams Hall there is a little neutral to calcareous grassland which supports cowslips. The central area is very open and has few hedges but some important woods of ash/maple/hazel/oak and old grassland/park remnants on the upper valley slopes. Blakes Bushes woodland has a fairly rich ground flora, including orchids. The Wellpond Green sub-area contains a complex of small old acid grassland/neutral grass meadows and old pits, with hornbeam woods. Ash, oak, sycamore, poplar, beech, hazel and wayfaring tree can be found in woodland and plantations, with elm, field maple, hornbeam and oak, with hazel and ash, in the hedgerows. Hedgerow trees are oak and ash. Modern hedges are mixed species, with field maple dominant. The few woods north of Westland Green are oak/ash/maple or oak/hornbeam, while chalk near the surface supports locally important habitats on field edges and among arable weeds.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

- At Thundridge there are two Scheduled Ancient Monuments, a moated mound and a moated enclosure and associated remains. Near Wareside there is another SAM, the Morley Ponds moated site, with another, the motte castle of Barrow Hill, near Widford, all above but associated with the river valleys. There is no longer a distinct historic pattern to this area, except perhaps in the central plateau, towards the valley edge.
- Blakesware Manor was rebuilt in 1876-89 in red-brick neo-Tudor style and is set in extensive parkland with dense boundary tree belts, formerly a pre-1766 deer park (Blakes Ware). It extends right down to the river, with what appears to be possibly a dammed section, but is well treed.

- Wynches, south-west of Hadham Cross, is a Regency re-modelling of a 17th-century timber-framed house, set in extensive grounds, while Hadham Mill is also 17th century.
- Although originally a ford settlement, Thundridge is set on the slopes above the Rib and is the only settlement in the southern part of this area.
- The collection of hamlets around Westland Green is the only settlement of more than minimal size further north, and even this is clustered around the head of a stream feeding the Ash.
- Fanhams Hall has a listed early 19th-century authentic Japanese garden and formal English gardens, including a lake, within 11ha. of parkland

Field pattern. The huge size of most fields means that the variation in this area between regular and irregular is impossible to discern. The field pattern is much smaller locally around the isolated hamlets. Historically this is an area of common arable and pre-18th century 'organic' enclosure, with some 19th-century parliamentary enclosure.

Transport pattern. This large area contains very few roads. The A120, partly aligned along the Roman Stane Street, has been modernized and has wide verges and dense hedge planting along much of its length. It crosses this area towards its northern boundary in an east-west direction but there are no major north-south routes and much of the plateau is without roads, indicating extensive and long-held land ownerships. The minor roads are winding and slightly sunken, with variable verges - usually they are absent, occasionally very wide.

Settlements and built form. Bakers End, Newhall Green, Kettle Green, Wellpond Green, Broken Green and Westland Green: all indicate small sub-settlements or outposts of larger settlements, which in this part of the county lie on the edge of the river valleys, reflecting their ancient need for water. There are few substantial country houses or large farmhouses.

- Upp Hall, south east of Braughing, is a fine early 17th-century brick manor house with a spectacular 140 foot long brick barn with blue diaperwork.
- Fanhams Hall, a mile north of Ware, is a converted Queen Anne house, now a vast neo-Tudor building. It was remodelled at the turn of the 20th century, when a lodge was added at the end of the approach drive

OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Pevsner, N., rev. Cherry, B., *Hertfordshire*, Penguin (2000).
English Heritage *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens*.

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

There are few views into this area, due to its elevation, but from within there are extensive views over the neighbouring valleys to areas beyond. The scale of landscape elements is large, possibly the largest within south Hertfordshire and it is a very open landscape. It is also a simple, coherent, and productive landscape, ancient and tranquil, largely untouched by the 21st century, apart from the loss of field boundaries. Minor local variations in the balance of arable to woodland, or comparative hedgerow cover, serve to distinguish sub-areas.

Rarity and distinctiveness. This is possibly the single largest landscape character unit in south Hertfordshire, and extends north over the boundary with the A120. It is rare by virtue of its simplicity and large scale. Despite the impact of late 20th century arable intensification, the hamlets retain their character and provide a historic focus.

VISUAL IMPACT

There are high local impacts from features outside the area, such as phone masts, transmitting stations and the water tower on the M11. The chief impact throughout the area (least on the Fanhams plateau) is the loss of hedges and the impact this has on scale.

ACCESSIBILITY

Noted recreational land uses: none
 Frequency/density of: footpaths, bridleways, waymarked routes (in north) - widespread in northern part, absent south of Wellpond Green

COMMUNITY VIEWS

This area is not generally regarded as distinctive (E) but includes particular elements that are valued, such as the park at Fanhams and some of the woods (D)
'The many scattered hamlets and farms in Braughing and Standon parishes are the result of localised assarting undertaken from two large nucleated villages, which were the original centres of settlement. What is fascinating is that so many of these later settlement sites are today so inaccessible...Braughing and Standen are full of roads to nowhere' (Munby, L., *The Landscape of Hertfordshire*, Hodder and Stoughton, (1977)).

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

North of Bromley this area is designated a Landscape Conservation Area.
 Fanhams Hall is Grade II listed in the English Heritage *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens*.

CONDITION	
Land cover change:	insignificant
Age structure of tree cover:	mature
Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:	fragmented
Management of semi-natural habitat:	not obvious
Survival of cultural pattern:	intact/interrupted
Impact of built development:	low
Impact of land-use change:	low

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER	
Impact of landform:	apparent
Impact of land cover:	apparent
Impact of historic pattern:	continuous
Visibility from outside:	concealed
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: CONSERVE AND STRENGTHEN**

- this is one of the few areas in which moderation of the distinctiveness of sub-areas could be regarded as positive enhancement. In the northern part of this area in particular, arable intensification has degraded the local landscape by removing all vertical features and the landform is insufficiently varied to mitigate these losses. An emphasis on hedgerow replacement, with hedgerow trees, and the planting of small woodlands in appropriate historic locations, would do much to make this area less bleak.
- replant/restore historic hedgerows, using species appropriate to the sub-area, to retain some local distinctiveness.
- plant woodlands on the central plateau, of a species mix and scale that echoes Blakes Bushes, etc.
- protect and enhance the important road verges of Stane Street and around Albury End
- encourage the planting of new woodland around existing woodland, to protect it and increase biodiversity. Use only locally indigenous species, of local provenance if possible
- ensure that new woodland planting reflects historic land use patterns, following historic woodland or field boundary patterns where possible and ensuring that historic artefacts, such as ditches and banks, are not destroyed
- encourage the planting of hedgerow oaks wherever woodland planting would be inappropriate
- wherever the loss of ponds is unavoidable, ensure that replacement ponds of at least equivalent nature conservation potential are created
- encourage a reversion of arable to grassland and management of grassland sites to maximise their biodiversity potential
- encourage the management of woodland to promote age diversity and a species-rich ground flora. Management strategies may be the maintenance of high forest, coppice, coppice-with-standards or wood pasture.
- encourage the dissemination of information about the historic and ecological value of veteran and parkland trees



• North of Wareside
fragmented field boundary
(P. Shears)