

County map showing location of  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA



#### LOCATION

This area is located west of Potters Bar and south of Redwell Wood on the Shenley Ridge. The M25 and the A1(M) motorway corridors divide the area and the small settlement of South Mimms lies between the two roads as they meet at junction 23 to the south.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

An area with an open valley character dominated by large-scale arable farming. The woods on the surrounding high ground to the north create a strong character boundary. The cultural pattern of the landscape has been disturbed by the development of the M25 and A1(M) transport corridors. A narrow belt of vegetation highlights the course of the Catherine Bourne stream that crosses the area from west to east.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- large-scale arable farmland with low and relic hedgerows
- long-distance views
- major transport corridors
- Catherine Bourne stream
- negligible woodland

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- South Mimms motte and bailey castle (SAM)
- Castle Lime Works Quarry (SSSI)
- South Mimms church
- Southridge Animal Centre

View South from Cecil Road •  
(E. Staveley)



**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** The area lies within the central river valleys, part of the northern Thames basin. The slowly permeable clayey soils (Windsor series) mostly have brown subsoils and lie over Tertiary clays, giving rise to seasonal waterlogging. Chalk caverns were found underground during the construction of the motorway and the presence of chalk is further confirmed by the presence of Castle Lime Works Quarry (SSSI) on the northern slopes of the character area. The disused and partly backfilled chalk quarry has an open chalk face which demonstrates the finest chalk formations of chalk karst in England.

**Topography.** The landform comprises an undulating valley feature to the south of Shenley Ridge and Redwell Wood and north east of the High Canons Ridges and Valleys. The area is in part an extension of the Arkley Plain to the south.

**Degree of slope.** The average gradient of the slopes is 1:25.

**Altitude range.** 90-83m approximately along the Catherine Bourne stream rising up to 105m in the north.

**Hydrology.** The Catherine Bourne stream flows eastwards across the area and joins the Mimmshall Brook at Windmore Hall. Scattered small ponds are associated with the farms and isolated woodland copses.

**Land cover and land use.** Arable farmland is prominent throughout the area. Smaller fields fringe the edges of the settlement including South Mimms

**Vegetation and wildlife.** There is a lack of woodland cover in the area. Occasional isolated woodlands are an oak/ash mix, with wetland species associated with the ponds. Hedges are generally poor, with mixed species including hawthorn, elm, ash, dogwood, field maple and hazel. There are occasional standard oaks in the hedgerows. Immature woodland planting mixes edge the A1(M) corridor.

**HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

A motte and bailey castle site (SAM) lies adjacent to Castle Lime Works Quarry. South Mimms lies on an historic route to St Albans.

**Field pattern.** The historic pattern of pre-18th century organic enclosure was extensively altered in the 20th century to large irregular prairie fields. There is a relatively more intact pattern adjacent to the settlements.

**Transport pattern.** The two motorways in the area are dominant features, physically dividing the landscape. The M25 is not screened by planting or earth mounding, allowing extensive views in all directions. The B556 through South Mimms once took a relatively straight alignment, but this has been affected by the M25. Elsewhere the road pattern is of sinuous minor roads with grassland verges.

**Settlements and built form.** South Mimms is a scattered and linear settlement north of the M25/A1(M) interchange. Occasional farms are located in the more open areas associated with the arable land.

**OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

English Nature SSSI notification.

English Heritage SAM notification.

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The area can be seen from outside, including views from Potters Bar to the east. The open landscape yields long views across the motorways and to the woodlands on Shenley Ridge, which contain the area to the north and contrast with the open valley around South Mimms. Noise from the motorways is a major feature of the area, detracting from the rural character. The landscape elements are large and the area feels open.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** The landscape type is frequent in the county. The geological SSSI of Castle Lime Works Quarry is the best example of chalk karst in England and is, with the motte and bailey site, a distinctive feature.

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The site of the M25 and A1(M) and the associated traffic cause a high and widespread impact on the character of the entire area. There is visual impact from the edges of South Mimms and to the east from Potters Bar.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Access via public footpaths is good and the landscape is well used by the local residents. The area does not provide a facility for informal recreation.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

There is little evidence that this area is valued for its distinctiveness (D): *'the straggling town of Mimms is quickly past,'* Kenrick Prescott (1733) when describing his journey to a friend.

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

Geological SSSI: Castle Lime Works Quarry.  
SAM: South Mimms motte and bailey castle.

**CONDITION**

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

**ROBUSTNESS**

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	<b>prominent</b>
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	<b>insignificant</b>
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	<b>relic</b>
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	<b>widely visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>open</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>incoherent</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>frequent</b>

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

- support the Watling Chase Community Forest in the realisation of its objectives for the area
- 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, settlement edges and a link to the woodlands on Shenley Ridge and the Redwell Wood complex
- promote the restoration of a renewed and robust hedgerow network based on historical field boundaries
- promote the use of low-density stock grazing as a management technique
- promote crop diversification and the restoration of mixed livestock/arable farming where possible
- promote the creation of buffer strips along watercourses to prevent pesticide, herbicide and fertilizer run-off and provide habitat for wildlife; encourage their linkage to eco-corridors within the wider landscape
- resist development that could lower the water table within river valleys and affect wetland habitats
- promote the enhancement of Catherine Bourne and the creation of associated wetland landscape features such as reedbeds, ponds, scrapes and pollarded willows
- promote both the creation of new ponds and the retention/enhancement for wildlife of existing ponds
- restore ditches and discourage the enclosure of 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
- ensure that all existing and proposed recreational land uses include appropriate measures to enhance the existing landscape setting and its historical and ecological value
- promote a clear strategy for the visual and noise mitigation of all motorways and their positive integration into the local landscape character
- encourage effective landscape management along transport corridors to ensure thinning, selective felling and replanting is undertaken to achieve a varied age structure and favour locally indigenous species
- consider improved access to and interpretation of the SSSI and SAM sites



• View north west from Cecil Road (E. Staveley)