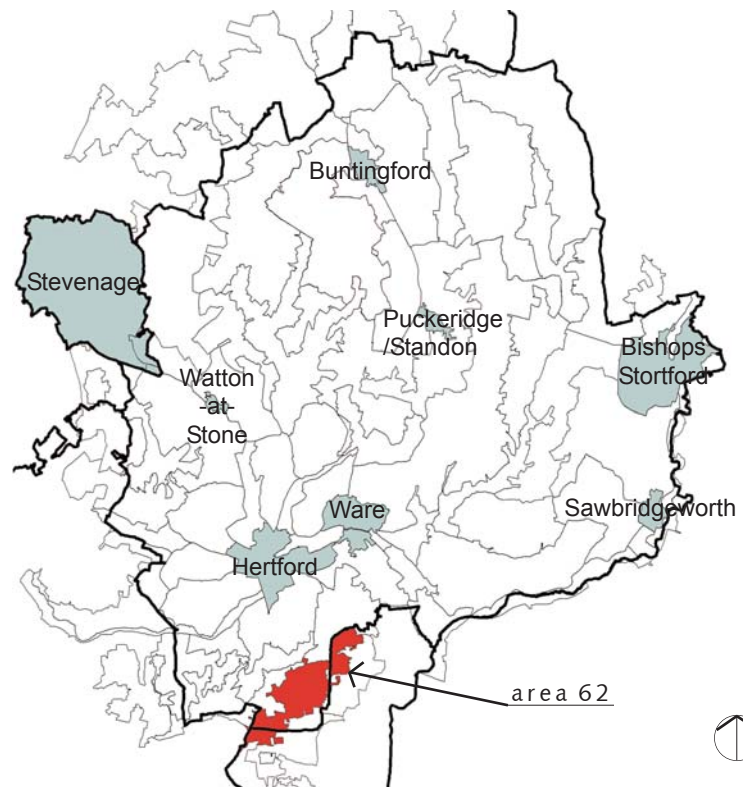


County map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Hertfordshire County Council

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LOCATION

Extensive area of woodland to the west of Hoddesdon, between Hammond Hill and Hertford Heath, divided into two sub-areas, Wormley-Hoddesdon Park Wood South and Wormley-Hoddesdonpark Woods North (sic). The northern area is further sub-divided by Ermine Street.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Dense and extensive hornbeam coppice and forestry plantations in a linked series of woodlands on strongly undulating terrain. A very unified landscape with few other features. The north-south line of the ancient Ermine Street through the woodland is a strong historic feature.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- dense hornbeam coppice ancient woodland with forestry plantations
- strongly undulating landform
- few roads within woodland; narrow lanes, typically north-south and east-west, along some perimeters
- no settlement
- small pasture fields within or on edge of woodland
- surrounded by pasture and arable land

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- relic laid hedges on woodland perimeter of some woodland blocks
- nature reserves (Hoddesdon Park Wood, Wormley Wood)
- Ermine Street
- extensive possibly Iron Age grid pattern of former field boundaries within woods



Anemones in Hoddesdonpark Wood •
(J. Crew)

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology and soils. Acid gravel deposits over London clay. Slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged fine loamy over clay soils, over chalky till (Beccles 3 series)

Topography. Strongly undulating and sloping slightly towards the east. The rather dramatically incised undulating landform, together with the hydrological influence of the streams, is masked by the vegetation.

Degree of slope. Locally 1 in 15; generally 1 in 110

Altitude range. 55m to 112m

Hydrology. Meandering high-quality streams run eastward along the shallow valleys (Wormleybury Brook and Spital Brook). There are several ponds, especially in Westfield Grove.

Land cover and land use. Broadleaf woodland is the overriding feature of this area, with a secondary land use as recreation. The woodland cover is extensive. There are several car parks and picnic areas, all in reasonable condition but rather gloomy, and very localised evidence of former mineral extraction in the woodland near Hoddesdonbury.

Vegetation and wildlife. Broxbourne Woods has been designated a proposed Special Area of Conservation under the EC Habitats Directive as one of only two areas in the whole country of extensive hornbeam/oak woodland. It is now a Management Zone of over 320 ha. The northern area consists of a series of discrete woodland blocks which have developed from ancient wood pasture and heath and retain many large oak and hornbeam pollards along the boundaries. It exhibits a varied woodland structure, wide habitat diversity and rich ground flora. Despite extensive clearance and conifer replanting, the remaining semi-natural woodland is of national importance as an example of lowland south-eastern sessile oak/hornbeam woodland. Hoddesdonpark Wood is particularly well structured, with a wide age-range of oak over a varied shrub layer including coppiced hornbeam and hazel, with widespread silver birch, downy birch and aspen.

The southern area is also sessile oak/hornbeam woodland, with pedunculate oak, birch and ash, hazel, elder, field maple, dogwood, hawthorn and blackthorn. The dominant ground flora species include bluebell, wood anemone, honeysuckle and dog's mercury. Along the deeply cut streams alder has developed with a characteristic rich flora, including some uncommon species. Other habitats include marsh and semi-improved acid grassland on relic areas of old commons/greens. Bancroft Wood has a relic laid edge on a bank. The pockets of pasture on the southern edge of the woodland are possibly relics of former mineral extraction. There are a few pollarded hornbeams on Ermine Street.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Wormley Wood has been mapped as a major woodland block for 500 years. Most of the remaining woods were wood-pasture acidic oak/hornbeam/bracken/heath communities until relatively recently. Hoddesdonpark Wood was probably converted to high forest in the 18th century from wood pasture and contains a moated site which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The whole area is predominantly ancient woodland, of high historic significance, with blocks of more modern plantations within it. Ermine Street is of national importance as a good example of a surviving Roman road.

Field pattern. There are extensive relic field boundaries within the woodland, indicative of very ancient field systems predating the woodland cover.

Transport pattern. Ermine Street is a pre-Roman road which maintains its integrity in this area. The more modern transport pattern exists mainly on an east-west axis along woodland edges, such as White Stubbs Lane, Pembridge Lane and Lord Street. These lanes are narrow and winding, with tall hornbeam hedges and no verges. There are also many tracks through the woodland.

Settlements and built form. There are no settlements or country houses, and few areas of open land.

OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

English Nature Natural Area Profile: London Basin.

English Nature SSSI notification.

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

The area is widely visible as an extensive block of woodland from high points to the south. Within the area, views are limited by the dense vegetation. The extensive nature of the woodland is very apparent, giving a large-scale aspect to the landscape. Within much of the woodland there is an apparent lack of recent management, with overgrown coppice and dying silver birch, and an air of confinement, contrasting with more open areas of recent coppice management.

Rarity and distinctiveness. The Broxbourne Woods complex includes two SSSIs, an NNR and a proposed SAC, designations that reflect its rarity and importance. Hertfordshire has a particular responsibility for oak-hornbeam woodlands, with a large proportion of the national total. The complex also contains some key wood pasture and heathland SSSI sites. It is most unusual to have a unified block of ancient woodland of this size, representing an invaluable resource (Annex 1 of the EU Habitats Directive).

VISUAL IMPACT

There is neither visual impact from built development nor land-use change and the sole distinctive feature of the entire area is its use as hornbeam coppice. At a very local level there is limited evidence of mineral extraction in the woodland near Hoddesdonbury.

ACCESSIBILITY

Noted recreational land uses: walking (nature reserve). The chainwalk runs north/south through the western edge of the woodland. Footpaths are actually fairly limited within the woodland and wet conditions can make them very heavy going. There are several car parks and picnic areas, some better managed than others.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

This is one of the most valued areas in the county for its distinctiveness (A).

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

SSSIs at Wormley-Hoddesdon Park Wood South and Wormley-Hoddesdonpark Woods North.
National Nature Reserve (NNR) in part.
Proposed Special Area of Conservation (pSAC).
Broxbourne Woods are recognised as a High Biodiversity Area (HBA) within the Biodiversity Action Plan for the county, for its woodlands.

CONDITION

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

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	prominent
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	prominent
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	continuous
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	widely visible
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	contained
<i>Visual unity:</i>	unified
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	unique

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: SAFEGUARD AND MANAGE

- promote the development of natural woodland, via natural regeneration or the use of seed/plants of local provenance, as a buffer around large blocks of ancient woodland and ensure that developers and landowners are aware of this objective
- design and manage woodland car parks to maximise public access, perceptions of personal safety and the use of woodland products.
- focus woodland management around major points of public access
- seek to improve footpath surfaces through the woods, without bringing in unsuitable hard detailing; provide segregated routes for pedestrians and equestrians, since the latter often make routes impassable for the former in wet weather
- promote initiatives to reintroduce traditional woodland management and to encourage new markets for wood products
- diversify the structure of existing woodland to increase its nature conservation and landscape value by creating a varied age structure
- enhance plantation woodland by encouraging a more semi-natural character by eg. diversifying species, retaining some standard trees, allowing some neglected coppice to develop into high forest
- promote the restoration of degraded sites associated with former mineral extraction to maximise their nature conservation potential
- ensure that any proposed woodland planting will contribute to the local landscape rather than impoverishing or destroying an existing and valued habitats or historic artefact, such as a bank or ditch or, in this area, relic field pattern within the woodland
- resist any development or mineral extraction within woodland
- ensure that adequate consideration is given to the use of Tree Preservation Orders as a protective mechanism
- address the issue of the provision of additional local footpath and recreational networks, ensuring a separation where possible between footpaths and bridleways within the woodland



• Oaks in Hoddesdonpark Wood
(J. Crew)