

County map showing location of
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

©Crown copyright .All rights reserved.

Hertfordshire County Council

100019606 2004

**LOCATION**

South of Hertford between Bayford Lane and Hertford Heath, contained to the south by sloping land and to the north by the Lea valley and the B 158.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently undulating parkland and estate farmland with large mansions now used for institutional purposes. Elsewhere this is a landscape of isolated farms and farm cottages, with some influence along the northern edge from Hertford's urban fringe. Bayfordbury occupies a sloping site and is characterised by its semi-natural oak/hornbeam woodland and many ornamental trees. Brickendonbury and Balls Park occupy a plateau divided by a brook, which is a strong landscape feature, and they are surrounded by arable farmland.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- sparse settlement pattern
- gently undulating landform
- large country mansions in extensive parkland
- strong north-south axis of transport routes
- regular field pattern with parkland accents, such as avenues

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- country mansions and parkland trees are highly visible due to their prominent position



Bayfordbury cedars •
(HCC Landscape Unit)

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

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

Topography. Gently undulating north-facing slope

Degree of slope. Generally 1 in 60; locally 1 in 30

Altitude range. 43m to 82m

Hydrology. Brickendon Brook, Bayford Brook and many moats, lakes and ponds associated with parks.

Land cover and land use. Arable estate farmland and parkland with associated indigenous and exotic woodland planting. Recreational use, particularly the sports fields associated with the educational institutions, is a notable secondary land use, with a caravan and camp site located in the southern part of Balls Park. There are a few disused mineral extraction sites adjacent to the railway line.

Vegetation and wildlife. The woodlands in this area are oak/hornbeam and oak/ash, with a relic lime avenue at Brickendonbury, now in very poor condition. Great Stocks and Little Stocks are woodlands of parkland origin, as evidenced by the pollards within them. Field boundaries are widespread and consist either of hedges with hedgerow trees or narrow woodland belts.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

There is a strong pre-20th century estate character to this area, and no settlements. The mansions within the parklands are prominent features, but the character of both the houses and their parkland has been compromised by their more recent institutional use, which has introduced new buildings, sports fields, car parks, etc.

- At Jenningsbury there is a waterfilled homestead moat of unknown date and origin.
- Bayfordbury is set within a former royal possession and a manor belonging to John of Gaunt. The earliest known date for the deer park here is 1766. Pevsner states, '*The grounds are of famous beauty.*' A new park was begun in 1763 and planting and improvements continued throughout the 19th century. In 1837 a pinetum was begun with the advice of J C Loudon and subsequently restored by the John Innes Horticultural Institution, which took over part of the estate in 1846. The house now belongs to the University of Hertfordshire. Some of the planting appears to be neglected, with a loss of hedgerows, elms and some woodland in recent years.
- Brickendonbury is on a moated site and is connected to Hertford by an 18th-century three-quarter mile long avenue, now derelict. A deer park was recorded here in 1766. The moat was enlarged in the 19th century to make a canal, which survives, and the garden continued to develop into the 20th century, with a rock garden and cascade at the end of the moat. This was the work of James Pulham, one of Hertfordshire's most illustrious and remarkable garden makers. The garden was chiefly renowned for its kitchen garden, and particularly for its large collection of fruit. During WWII the mansion was used by SOE.
- A deer park was recorded at Balls Park in 1676 and the house dates from 1640.

Field pattern. Large regular fields

Transport pattern. A few north/south sinuous lanes, usually along the parkland boundaries, with no east-west routes. There are few views out from these lanes, which are either densely hedged or sunken. The railway line also has a north-south axis.

Settlements and built form. There are no settlements in this area, in which parkland character is dominant, focused on the prominent mansions.

- The current mansion at Bayfordbury has a Regency facade of twenty-five bays, set behind an ornamental lake, but is an addition to an earlier red brick house of 1759-62.
- Records for Brickendonbury suggest a late 17th century house, built for the Lord Mayor of London, to the north of the L-shaped moat, but according to Pevsner the house '*seems to be Georgian*' and is credited elsewhere as being '*early Georgian*'. It was re-done in 1885-86 and again in 1898 (and 1902), when half-timbering and ornamental plasterwork were added.
- Balls Park is described by Pevsner as '*one of the most puzzling houses of Hertfordshire*'. Although the house appears to be early Georgian, it in fact dates from around 1640 (with improvements in 1705 to 1725) and is remarkably plain for that date. Since 1924 a number of new buildings have been added, reflecting the mansion's new use as a collage of further education (now part of the University of Hertfordshire).

OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens*.

Pevsner, N., rev. Cherry, B., *Hertfordshire*, Penguin (2000).

HCC data on historic parks and gardens.

Hertfordshire Gardens Trust and Bisgrove, R., *Hertfordshire Gardens on Ermine Street* (1996).

Hertfordshire Sites and Monuments Record.

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

The parkland is well contained and the wooded boundaries are dominant in the landscape. This is therefore an internally open but contained landscape, with few views in from the outside. From within views are often screened by vegetation, but there are some longer distance views across the large fields to the east of Swallow Grove Farm, blocked by the relic avenue in Brickendonbury Park.

Rarity and distinctiveness. Although Hertfordshire is rich in parklands, this area is unusual in being dominated by a series of parklands, most of which have undergone a wholesale change to institutional use, influenced by their location close to an urban centre.

VISUAL IMPACT

In general terms the parklands are in reasonable order, although the relic avenue at Brickendonbury is visible over a wide area. They have, however, changed their terms of reference and the impact of institutional use is widespread and evident. The signage and entrance treatments of the institutions detract from their parkland character, as does the massing of the modern buildings and extensive car parks within. Some of the parkland has also undergone conversion to arable production, and throughout the area there has been an impact from the loss of hedges as field boundaries. There is limited impact from the southern edge of Hertford, which is generally well screened by vegetation.

ACCESSIBILITY

Institutional use means that the parklands are accessible to a large number of people, if not to the public at large. There are a few public footpaths around Brickendonbury, one within Bayfordbury's parkland and none within Balls Park.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

There is little evidence that this area is valued for its distinctiveness, but the parklands are highlighted (D).

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

Landscape Conservation Area.

Bayfordbury is listed Grade II* in the English Heritage *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens*, while Balls Park is listed Grade II. Brickendonbury is referred to in the HCC list of historic parks and gardens.

CONDITION

<i>Land cover change:</i>	localised
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	mature/overmature
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	fragmented
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	not obvious
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	declining
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	high
<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>	interrupted
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	concealed
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	open
<i>Visual unity:</i>	incoherent
<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: IMPROVE AND REINFORCE

- ensure that landowners are made aware of grant aid possibilities for woodland and parkland management, including the Veteran Trees initiative
- ensure that landowners and managers are aware of the importance of veteran trees and parkland habitats for biodiversity
- encourage landowners to establish and maintain ecological links between woodland blocks, especially in the open arable landscape
- promote the reinstatement of hedgerows along historic boundaries and the replacement of relic avenues with appropriate species
- encourage farming techniques which contribute to biodiversity, such as wide field margins, beetle banks, etc.
- promote the expansion of woodland beyond ancient woodland boundaries, especially where this will help in creating habitat links
- encourage the reintroduction of wood pasture on appropriate sites
- encourage woodland planting of locally native species on poor quality agricultural land, where this is in keeping with local landscape character, is on the site of former woodland or can provide an ecological link to other woodlands or habitat.
- encourage the appropriate restoration of parkland features that have been destroyed, with due regard to both historic context and the possibility of improving biodiversity
- resist any development within parkland areas to ensure that historically valuable parkland features are not lost and that the context of parkland and mansion is safeguarded. This concept extends to the setting of listed parks and gardens and may therefore extend beyond their present boundaries.



• Bayfordbury
(HCC Landscape Unit)