

County map showing location of  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Hertfordshire County Council  
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**LOCATION**

Bounded by the Mimram valley parklands to the north and the Lea valley to the south and roughly by the A414 to the west.

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

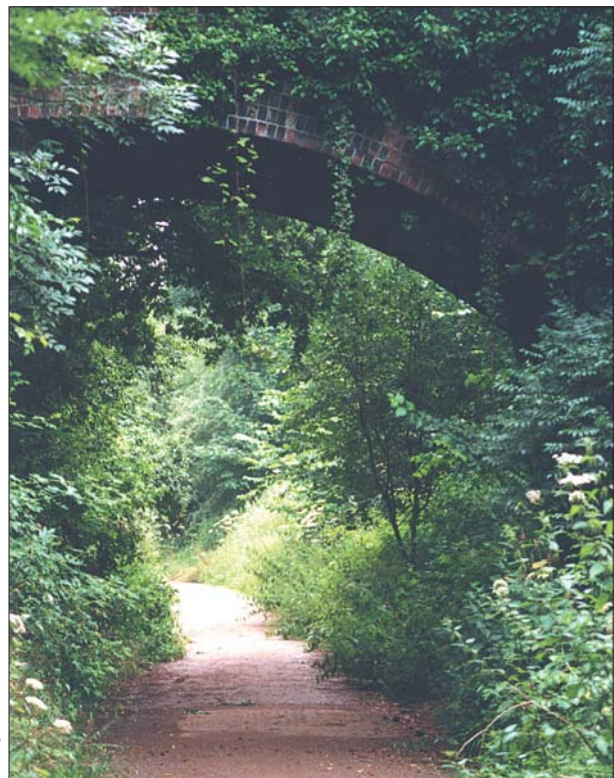
A mainly pastoral area of small hamlets, with parkland and mineral extraction along its southern edge and urban influence at its eastern extent.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- small double gravel ridge between two rivers, with a small valley between
- although focused on Hertford at its eastern end, most of this area is remote and tranquil, despite the presence of the A414 in the north west.
- small variable villages and hamlets, long established and with 20th-century additions, clustered around village greens
- influence of rivers not apparent, even at confluence

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- use of disused railway for Lea Valley Walk. Possibly the best signed and accessed footpath in the county, but dull and gloomy
- railway viaduct at eastern end
- Woolmer's Park



Cole Green Way, Hertingfordbury •  
(P. Shears)

### PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

**Geology and soils.** Clay soils over till (glacial drift); gravel locally

**Topography.** Gently undulating minor ridges with a small valley between them

**Degree of slope.** 1 in 35

**Altitude range.** 44m to 75m

**Hydrology.** The Mimram and the Lea flow eastwards to their confluence on the western edge of Hertford. Both rivers are covered in other landscape character area descriptions. There are springs within the central valley and a designed lake at Holwell Court.

**Land cover and land use.** This area consists mainly of treed arable farmland with small settlements. There are a few nurseries and some pasture around the settlements.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** There is little woodland, mainly focused in small blocks along the Lea, but the general impression of the area is of views filtered by vegetation. Woodland species are hornbeam, with ash and sycamore. Field boundaries are tall hedges of hawthorn and hazel with hedgerow oaks or ash. Elm is seen locally, as are relic orchards around East End Green and Letty Green.

### HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

To the north east of Letty Green there is a settlement site which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The earliest records of deer parks in this area are 1285 (Hertingfordbury Park) and 1749 (Cole Green Park, worked on by 'Capability' Brown), and the first major Cowper residence was at Cole Green, before Repton's advice was taken and a new mansion was constructed at Panshanger. Historically there was rich grassland through the central valley. The settlements in this area demonstrate its historic character, while Woolmer's Park adds further interest.

*'Hertingfordbury, on the spur between the Lea and the Mimram rivers, has all the appearance of an old settlement site, indeed it could be a place in which settlement has been continuous since the Iron Age - bury may mean Iron Age stronghold.'* (Munby, p.91). The A414 has caused severance of previous historic unity (Holwell Court).

**Field pattern.** There has been some loss of field boundaries to arable production, and a change to medium-sized fields, but there is still a strong small-scale pattern of hedges and fences and a considerable number of mature hedgerow oaks.

**Transport pattern.** The parkland influence is apparent in the number of no through roads. Most of the villages are accessed from Birchall Lane but have no exit to the south. The lanes vary between deep and level, but all are winding and generally well vegetated. Cole Green Way/Lea Valley Walk/Chain Walk is a combined footpath, bridleway and cycle route.

**Settlements and built form.** The long-settled character of this area is very evident within the various settlements, which are quite variable in style

- Cole Green dates from 1220 and has 18th and 19th century yellow brick houses clustered around a triangular green, now planted along its edge with young oaks.
- Letty Green also has modest Victorian cottages and some white weatherboard, while Birch Green has a 20th century, sub-commuter character as well as Victorian houses in diaper-patterned red brick. It is surrounded by small pasture fields, as is Staines Green.
- Hertingfordbury is the largest settlement in this area and has many substantial red brick Georgian properties and a hotel. It has a prosperous and long-settled character.
- Woolmers, or Woolmer Park, consists of a brick house dating from 1796-1802 with a later one-storeyed colonnade between two canted bay windows. The house is set on the northern slopes of the Lea valley, looking out over the grazing meadows along the river and framed by trees

### OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Pevsner, N., rev. Cherry, B., *Hertfordshire*, Penguin (2000).  
Munby, L., *The Landscape of Hertfordshire*, Hodder and Stoughton (1977).

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

This area is generally concealed from outside views by vegetation along the rivers and by the bunds along the A414. Within the area views are limited by topography, vegetation and the embankment of the disused railway. The scale of landscape elements is small and it has a confined, unified character. It is quite tranquil in the central settled areas, but there is constant low-level noise from the road and rail transport network.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This is an unusual area in terms of the grouping of small settlements and the road network which reflects the area's former parkland character. Woolmer's Park is not listed by English Heritage or HCC, but has its own entry in Pevsner (no reference to parkland).

**VISUAL IMPACT**

Any impact from the edge of Hertford is well screened by vegetation. Although the A414 is observable only at some points on the northern edge, it has had the effect of cutting this area off from the adjoining areas to the north and west. There is a strong impact from the railway viaduct at the eastern end of this area, which is gloomy and constricted. The change from pasture to arable cultivation is localised, but it is notable that pasture is now used more for horses than for cattle or sheep.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Noted recreational land uses include walking and horiculture. There is one linear footpath, the Lea Valley Walk/ Cole Green Way, which is excellent in terms of surfacing, signage and hard detailing, but described by one user as 'a *sepulchral alleyway*'. Routine management of vegetation would soon remedy this by creating views out over the countryside.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

The northern half of this area is highly valued for a range of distinctive village and old railway landscapes including Letty Green, Cole Green, and the 'olde worlde' East End Green (B).

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

SAM north east of Letty Green (settlement site). East End Green is a Conservation Area.

**CONDITION**

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

**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	<b>insignificant</b>
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	<b>apparent</b>
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	<b>apparent/prominent</b>
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	<b>concealed</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>contained</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>unified</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>unusual</b>

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	<b>MODERATE</b>	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	<b>Conserve and restore</b>
	<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: CONSERVE AND RESTORE**

- encourage limited development within established settlements to maintain their diversity but discourage any aggregation of settlements
- ensure that restoration proposals for existing mineral workings are appropriate for the landscape character of this area, such as grassland
- encourage landowners to safeguard existing hedges, increase hedged field boundaries, create permanent grass strips around field margins and prevent spray drift, using financial incentives as available
- encourage landowners to retain hedges around pasture and resist any change to fences
- cut back vegetation along Cole Green Way to provide views out and increase biodiversity
- promote crop diversification and the restoration of mixed livestock/arable farming
- where possible and practicable, seek the restoration of relic orchards
- promote the use of reservoirs for water storage and nature conservation interest, rather than groundwater abstraction. Ensure that reservoirs are designed to contribute to local landscape character
- disseminate information about the landscape, historic and ecological value of veteran and hedgerow pollards and encourage their retention and management



• East End Green  
(HCC Landscape Unit)