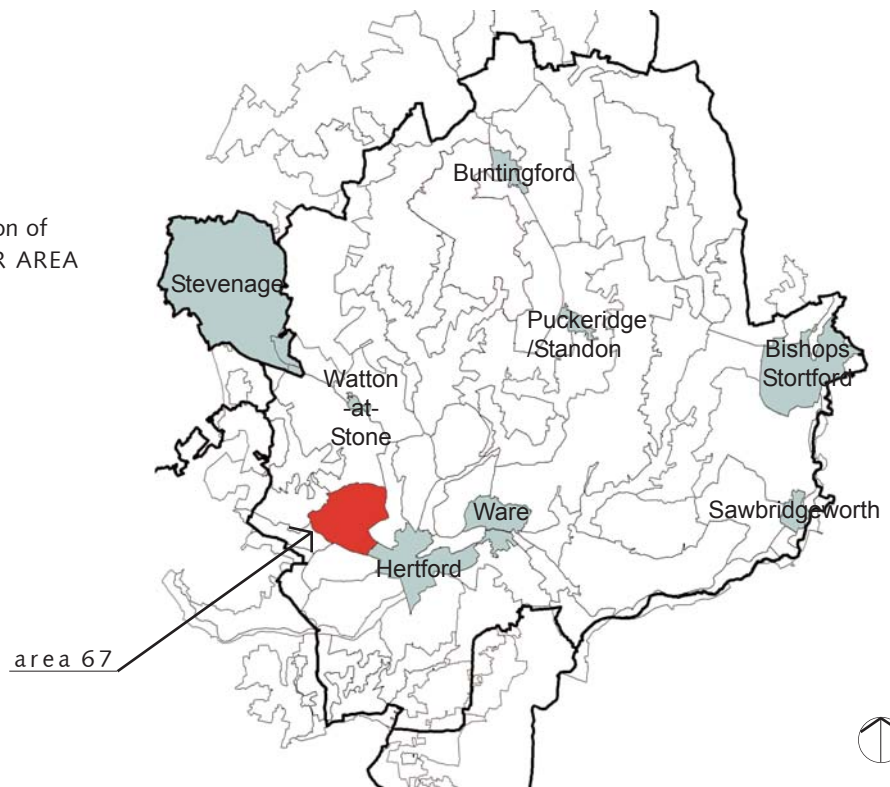


County map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Hertfordshire County Council

100019606 2004



LOCATION

Shallow bowl bounded by the western Beane valley slopes to the east, the Panshanger estate to the south and the higher ground beyond Bramfield to the north and west.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

A very gently undulating to flat area of open arable land, unsettled and with little woodland. It is enclosed to the north west by the wooded ridge of the Tewin-Datchworth plateau and by river valleys to south (Mimram) and east (Rib).

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- flat open arable farmland
- long views over area and river valleys
- narrow winding lanes with bare or over-managed hedgebanks, with passing places and 'oxbow' verges
- few hedges or hedgerow trees
- estate character of Bramfield village and outlying buildings

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- very large red and yellow brick barns

Bramfield post office •
(P. Shears)



PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology and soils. Deep, well-drained fine loamy and sandy soils, locally flinty, over glaciofluvial drift. (Ludford series)

Topography. Flat to very gently undulating

Degree of slope. 1 in 120

Altitude range. 70m to 80m

Hydrology. This area is bounded to the east by the valley of the river Beane and there is one eastward-flowing ditch or stream within it. The Bramfield swallowhole is unique. A spring at one end of a wet grassland field rises to form a stream which then disappears down a hole at the opposite end of the field. This is the source for Goldings canal (see Beane valley character area description).

Land cover and land use. This area consists mainly of open arable farmland, with a few large blocks of woodland (Priests Wood) and small areas of pasture. On its eastern edge there is a large mineral extraction site, which is being restored as a nature reserve. Elsewhere a small extraction site has been backfilled and restored to arable cultivation.

Vegetation and wildlife. The few woodland blocks in this area tend to be large and prominent, the more so for the surrounding lack of hedges, with some blocks of ancient woodland. Species are sweet chestnut, beech coppice and hornbeam, with standard oaks, also field maple, hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn and elder. Within the woodland the almost calcareous conditions give rise to a bluebell and orchid ground flora, despite the clay. Field boundaries are marked by hedgebanks.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The pre-20th century pattern of this area is apparent, despite the loss of hedges. Within Priest Wood, west of Stapleford, lie well preserved earthworks of banks and ditches, which almost certainly represent the remains of an Iron Age or Roman field system.

Field pattern. The field pattern is generally irregular and the field size consistently large. This is an area in which 19th-century enclosure overlies a pattern of pre-18th century 'organic' enclosure.

Transport pattern. The transport pattern is very simple, with one lane (Tattle Hill) linking Bramfield to Hertford and another linking to the Beane valley, winding their way between the hedgebanks which are a consistent feature. The area is bounded by larger roads, with the B1000 along the southern boundary and the A119 within the Beane valley to the east.

Settlements and built form. Bramfield village is an ancient settlement and has some of the character of an estate village, with groups of cottages in a consistent style, in red or yellow brick, usually with dark blue paintwork detail. Bramfield House occupies a prominent position within the village. A house with ornamental grounds is shown on a map of 1766 and it appears currently to have extensive ornamental grounds with a lake.

OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

Hertfordshire Sites and Monuments Record.

HCC data on historic parks and gardens.

See also Area 68: Lower Beane Valley

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

This area is generally visible from the high ground to the north west and the slopes below, and it commands extensive views to the edge of Hertford. This is a coherent, long-settled, tranquil, medium-scale landscape.

Rarity and distinctiveness. Unusual by virtue of its flatness in this generally undulating county, but otherwise an unremarkable arable landscape.

VISUAL IMPACT

There has been little visual impact on this area from built development, other than extensive mineral extraction on its eastern edge. This has markedly changed the local landform but will extend the range of local biodiversity and will help link it to the Beane river valley. The northwestern edge of Hertford is well screened from view and there has been little obtrusive development within Bramfield. Loss of field boundaries is likely to have been a result of arable intensification and visually this area resembles a prairie, more typical of areas to the north east.

ACCESSIBILITY

Noted recreational land uses are walking and family play. There is an extensive footpath network, in good condition with a wide hoggin surface in some parts.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

This area includes various distinctive elements in the landscape, including Bramfield (C).

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

Landscape Conservation Area.

CONDITION

<i>Land cover change:</i>	localised
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	mature
<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>	low
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	moderate

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	prominent
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	apparent
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	continuous
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	widely visible
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	open
<i>Visual unity:</i>	coherent
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	unusual

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 CONSERVE**

- where possible and appropriate, replace former hedges along historic field boundaries, but not necessarily along road boundaries, where they could obscure views over this open landscape. Use only local species, preferably of local provenance, to reinforce distinctiveness
- do not plant hedgerow trees, as these are not found in this area
- tree planting should be confined to the creation of buffer zones round existing woods, preferably following historic field or woodland boundaries. Where possible, use this type of planting to link discrete woodlands. Use only locally native species of local provenance. Do not plant trees in areas that have not previously been woodland, as this could alter the balance of landscape features in this area. Ensure that new woodland planting is of a scale to match existing woodland in the area
- encourage the appropriate management of the new nature reserve to maximise biodiversity, since it is not a feature that contributes to the historic local landscape character
- encourage the management of road verges and banks to increase biodiversity
- within arable farmland encourage the establishment of wide field margins, beetle banks, etc. to increase biodiversity without altering the landscape character of the area
- look at creating green corridors between ridges and river valleys

Waterford Heath nature reserve •
(R. Hare)

