

County map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Hertfordshire County Council

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LOCATION

Curved ridge between western edge of Ware and Rib valley

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Gently undulating ridge above river valleys with narrow steep slopes to Lea and Rib rivers, with small pasture and large arable fields. On the ridge there is relic parkland and extensive mineral extraction, with a strong urban edge to the south east. Strong influence of road transport network.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- narrow undulating ridge with short steep slopes to Lea and Rib valley
- exotic and indigenous mature trees and woodland
- extensive mineral extraction sites usually screened by vegetation and topography
- geometric field pattern
- mansions and farmhouses

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- golf course
- A10 trunk road
- urban edge of Ware and Hertford

A10 bridge and Hertford •
from Ware Park (R. Hare)



PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology and soils. Deep well-drained fine loam with clay subsoil, over chalky till on the plateau (Hanslope series), with brown (free draining loamy) soils over chalk on the slopes (Melford series). Downfield Pit at Westmill is designated SSSI for its thick and complex sequence of Pleistocene gravels and tills, which is important for establishing the pre-diversion course of the Thames.

Topography. Narrow ridge sloping steeply to river valleys.

Degree of slope. Generally 1 in 25; 1 in 10 locally.

Altitude range. 45m to 74m.

Hydrology. Artificial lakes associated with parkland and mineral extraction. No watercourses flowing into the Rib or Lea.

Land cover and land use. The dominant land use here is still parkland, with wooded farmland in arable cultivation with some neglected pasture, despite the extensive areas of mineral extraction (Ware Quarry, Westhall Quarry and south of Hanbury Manor) and some landfill. Former mineral workings on the valley slopes north east of Hanbury Manor have been restored to a golf course.

Vegetation and wildlife. The parklands contain exotic tree species such as Wellingtonia and sweet chestnut close to the mansions but elsewhere the indigenous, largely deciduous, boundary belts are generally less than a century old, with holly, elm, robinia, silver birch and conifers. The hanging ash/oak/hazel/elm woodland above Kings Meads is probably the most noteworthy, visually and ecologically. Elsewhere there are significant screen plantings around mineral extraction sites, usually a standard amenity mix. The large regular fields have medium height hedges of hawthorn, and field maple, holly or elm. There is a young avenue of mixed lime, sycamore and ash within Ware Park, replacing a former lime avenue.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Despite extensive mineral extraction, the historic pattern of this area is still apparent, albeit with a different pattern of use for the mansions and parkland.

- Ware Park was informal parkland in 1766, previously a deer park (earliest record 1086), and has recent (1990) plantations screening mineral workings.
- Hanbury Manor was described in 1872 as '*one of the most beautiful examples of horticultural gardening to be found in the country*'. Some parkland and remnants of the 19th-century arboretum remain and the framework of the garden is being refurbished.

Field pattern. The large regular field pattern of the area has been significantly disrupted by mineral extraction but is still evident, despite some loss of hedgerows.

Transport pattern. There are few roads within this area.

The A602 winds across from the centre of Ware, crossed by the modern A10(T) which forms a strong boundary to urban development. There are no lanes and few footpaths. The A10(T) severs part of the parkland of both Ware Park and Hanbury Manor.

Settlements and built form. There are no settlements within this area. The mansions at either end enclose a few isolated farms and there is a business park against the A10(T)/A602 junction.

- Ware Park is a yellow brick Victorian mansion with a three-storey tower, now converted into apartments;
- Hanbury Manor is now an hotel with golf course on former mineral workings. The house, formerly called Poles, is set in a late 18th-century park and was rebuilt in 1844 and 1890/91, when terraces and terrace borders were added. It was used as convent between 1923 and 1985. There is also a monastery in the area, well screened from view.

OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

English Heritage *Register of Listed Parks and Gardens : Herts.*

HCC data on historic parks and gardens.

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

There are some views into this area from the opposing valley slopes, but views from Ware are blocked by the A10(T) embankments. Views within the area are extensive except where screened by vegetation, which blocks views of the river(s). They include the A10 bridge and the urban edge of Ware, including a golf course and a huge mineral extraction site south of Hanbury Manor. The scale of landscape elements is medium, with a sense of containment by vegetation and separation by the river valleys. It is not a coherent landscape, due to the mixed pattern of land use, and there is a constant low hum of road traffic noise.

Rarity and distinctiveness. This is no longer an unusual area, due to the impact of mineral extraction, the road transport network and urban development, which have started to obliterate and change the historic landscape pattern and landform.

VISUAL IMPACT

The impact of built development along the urban edge and from the road transport corridor is high, especially in the eastern part of this area. Land-use change from mineral extraction has also had a very significant impact on landform and land use, despite being generally screened from view. It is surprising that such extensive mineral extraction should be so unobtrusive visually.

ACCESSIBILITY

No recreational land uses were observed during survey. Footpaths are only found at the southern end, but are in fair condition.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

The parks in this area are noted as distinctive elements (D)

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

SSSI: Downfield Pit, Westmill

Landscape Conservation Area

Both Hanbury Manor and Ware Park are listed in the HCC list of historic parks and gardens, but neither are currently in the English Heritage *Register*

CONDITION

<i>Land cover change:</i>	localised
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	mixed
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	relic
<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>	high

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	apparent
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	apparent
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	interrupted/relic
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	localised
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	open
<i>Visual unity:</i>	incoherent
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	frequent

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: RESTORE CONDITION TO MAINTAIN CHARACTER**

- ensure that restoration proposals for mineral extraction sites are implemented properly and as soon after extraction ceases as is practicable. Restoration plans could be reviewed to ensure that they will enhance the distinctiveness of the local landscape character. For example, there is currently no visual or ecological link between the parkland at either end of this area. Restoration to a significant woodland component would address both these issues and help give this area some coherence.
- new woodlands should generally be of locally indigenous species and use stock of local provenance. In this area it might be appropriate to include a proportion of exotic species, to reinforce the mature ornamental planting within the parklands
- where restoration to woodland is deemed inappropriate, grassland would be preferred to arable, and should be managed to maximise its nature conservation potential
- it is possible that low-level restoration could be accommodated without permanent damage to the landscape character of this area, if it could include lakes and wetland habitats of a parkland nature and if contours could be feathered in to existing ground level around the perimeter. Golf courses should only be permitted within or adjacent to historic parklands where they can contribute to the enhancement of the landscape, such as by the replacement of historic avenues, clumps, etc. Only tree species already present or, where appropriate, native trees of nature conservation value should be planted. Nature conservation improvements along boundaries or within roughs should be emphasised.
- a strategy for improvement of the whole area should include footpath provision, access from the northern edge of Ware and suitable car-parking provision.