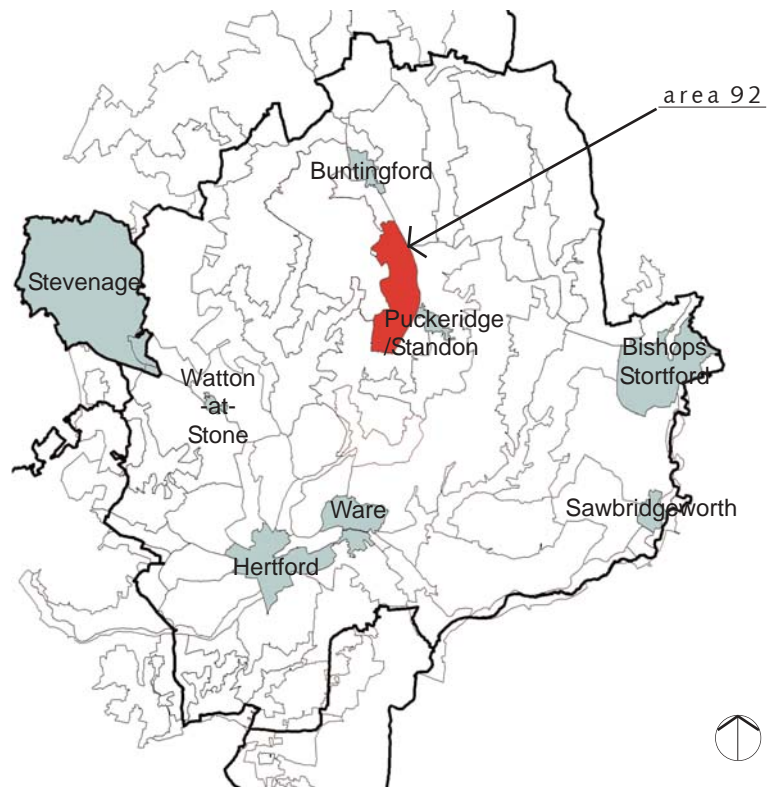


County map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Hertfordshire County Council

100019606 2004



LOCATION

Linear belt to west of A10 and river Rib, north and south of Puckeridge

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Group of disturbed parklands along the A10 Roman road, on the upper slopes of the Rib valley.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- undulating east-facing slope
- former parkland, disturbed by current land use, with no settlements
- well wooded
- estate arable farmland with isolated farms
- mature parkland trees

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- transmitting station and water tower
- St Edmunds College - buildings, parkland and playing fields
- Hamels Park - hotel, golf course and corporate entertainment
- A10 as boundary - parkland overrides valley topography

Estate farmland •
on edge of Hamels Park
(HCC Landscape Unit)



PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology and soils. Slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged fine loams and clays on drift over Tertiary clay (Wickham 4 series).

Topography. Upper valley slopes

Degree of slope. 1 in 30

Altitude range. 75m to 127m

Hydrology. Several streams and ditches flow eastwards into the Rib, including two Puckeridge Tributaries

Land cover and land use. Wooded estate farmland and parkland. Golf course within Hamels Park. Arable and pasture.

Vegetation and wildlife. Extensive woodland boundary plantings, with beech, coppiced hornbeam, ash, oak, hawthorn and some conifers. Kings Wood is the best example within the area of oak/ash/maple and hornbeam woodland on de-calcified boulder clay; the Hamels woodlands are mainly plantation. There is some old neutral grassland, mostly improved, and many hedges of varying ages, some with very large hedgerow oaks, especially around Mentley Lane. Species include willow, hawthorn, dogwood, elm and hazel and there are some modern mixed hedges. A veteran tree survey of Hamels Park has been undertaken but the findings are not currently (2000) available.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

This area is dominated by the three parklands of Coles Park, Hamels Park and St Edmunds College, all bounded by the A10 to the east.

- St Edmunds College is the successor to the famous Catholic English College at Douai, in Flanders, and moved to Old Hall Green in 1759, having been established at The Lordship ten years before. It is set within parkland which slopes westwards from the A10 and has many mature parkland trees, mainly oaks
- The original house and park at Hamels date from the end of the 16th century and appear as a significant landscape on all maps from 1695 (Oliver's county map) onwards. The earliest record of a deer park here is 1695. Elements of the earlier landscape remain within this essentially late-18th century landscape, including the remnants of a canal (1719) and an icehouse (1729). Pre-park landscape features include hollow-ways of medieval roads, ancient hedgebanks and a small area of ridge and furrow. According to Anne Rowe, a golf course created in the 1970s has done little to damage the beauty of this landscape or the historic features it contains.
- Coles Park house was built c 1790, rebuilt in 1847 and demolished in the 1950s. It was described in 1853 as standing in a park of '240 acres of fertile ground with some fine timber and flourishing plantations. The garden is laid out after the Italian fashion'. Several buildings have been converted to houses and parts of the formal gardens survive. The attractive park landscape survives more or less intact - pasture (sheep and cattle) with single mature trees, some immature replacements and surrounding woodlands. Preserved within the park are

hollow-ways marking the course of former roads (shown on Drury and Andrews map of 1766) and carriageways to the house which fell out of use at Inclosure in 1819.

Field pattern. On the arable farmland around the parklands field sizes tend to be quite small, well hedged and semi-regular in form.

Transport pattern. The dominant feature in this area is the A10, here still following the route of the Roman road. From this road narrow winding lanes run off to the west on the boundaries of the parkland estates through treed hedgerows. Verges are variable, often very wide.

Settlements and built form. There are no settlements in this area, only mansions and isolated farms, which are often 17th century or earlier.

- The Dower House of Coles Park is a red brick Georgian building with walled gardens, near the listed 19th-century farmhouse and associated buildings at Knights Hill Farm. The English Heritage listing states that the park contains a valuable assemblage of historic landscape, archaeological features and buildings dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, including an icehouse beneath the pasture in the park.
- The current house at Hamels is set in pleasure grounds laid out in the mid-19th century and separated from the park by a ha ha. There are mature specimens of cedar, redwood, horse chestnut and London plane and a late 18th-century walled garden, gardener's bothy and lodges, all designed by Sir John Soane.
- St Edmunds College. A brick house of 1630 is still in use but a new college of stock brick was built in 1795-99, fifteen bays wide and three storeys high, and Pugin designed a chapel for it in 1845

OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Pevsner, N., rev. Cherry, B., *Hertfordshire*, Penguin (2000). English Heritage *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens*. Master's thesis (University of Cambridge) 1997 by Anne Rowe entitled 'Hamels: The Evolution of a Hertfordshire Country House and its Landscape'. J B Burke, *Visitation of Seats* Vol. II, 1853, Local Studies Library H728.82.

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

The parkland overlay lends quite a large-scale impression to what is essentially a medium-scale arable landscape. Its potential tranquillity is damaged by constant traffic on the A10 but is widespread away from this major transport route. The area is partly visible from the A10, at points where there is little intervening vegetation, but from elsewhere, especially from the west, there are very limited views due to the extensive boundary plantations.

Rarity and distinctiveness. The pattern of this area, with the junction of the parklands with the A10, is unusual. The parklands are important in landscape history terms, and the buildings at St Edmund's College are historically important.

VISUAL IMPACT

The main visual impact in this area is the road traffic on the A10. There are no settlements or other development within the area, to which the parkland features and old farmhouses bring an air of stability and history. Between Hamels Park and Coles Park there is a transmitting station, which is visible over a wide area.

ACCESSIBILITY

Two footpaths run alongside the Puckeridge tributaries, between the parklands, but there is no other public access

COMMUNITY VIEWS

The distinctive parkland and Roman features in this area seem to be valued (D)

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

Coles Park and Hamels Park lie within a Landscape Conservation Area

Both parklands are listed in HCC data on historic parks and gardens

CONDITION

<i>Land cover change:</i>	insignificant
<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>	intact
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	low
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	high

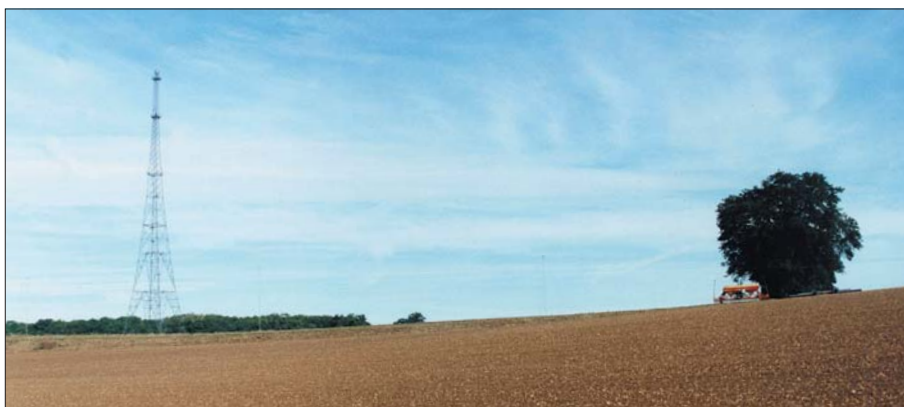
STRENGTH OF CHARACTER

<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>	contained
<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: CONSERVE AND STRENGTHEN**

- encourage the replacement of softwoods in plantations with indigenous native deciduous communities and management to re-establish a species-rich ground flora
- use ancient wood, hedge and field boundaries, including banks and ditches, to identify the most appropriate location for woodland expansion
- use only indigenous species of local provenance wherever possible
- survey and manage parkland and veteran trees for biodiversity value
- encourage new planting to maintain age diversity. Landscape improvements should respect the historic context of existing features and the form and character of parklands and gardens. Ornamental species should only be used to replace damaged or over-mature specimens, where appropriate
- hard landscaping details such as steps, balustrades, pond copings, statuary and urns should be conserved. Replacements should be in facsimile and in natural materials. Gazebos, temples, follies, grottoes, obelisks, park bridges, ice houses, terraces, ha-has, boundary walls, gates and gate piers should contribute to the planned landscape and its setting. Replacement, renovated or new features should be architect designed and in keeping with their original setting
- encourage reversion from arable use to pasture and grassland
- discourage the ploughing of grasslands within parkland
- encourage landowners and developers to retain and increase ponds and wetland areas to enhance their visual and wildlife functions
- promote the use of low-density stock grazing as a management technique
- initiate discussion on public access to woodland areas on fringes of the estate for informal recreation
- any design proposals for a bypass of the A10 should reflect the historic importance of this area, its landscape character and the traditional field pattern. Amenity planting along a new road which did not follow the 'grain' of the landscape would be unacceptable. New planting should use locally indigenous trees and shrubs and reflect planting mixes found locally.



• Transmitting station near Hamels Park (HCC Landscape Unit)