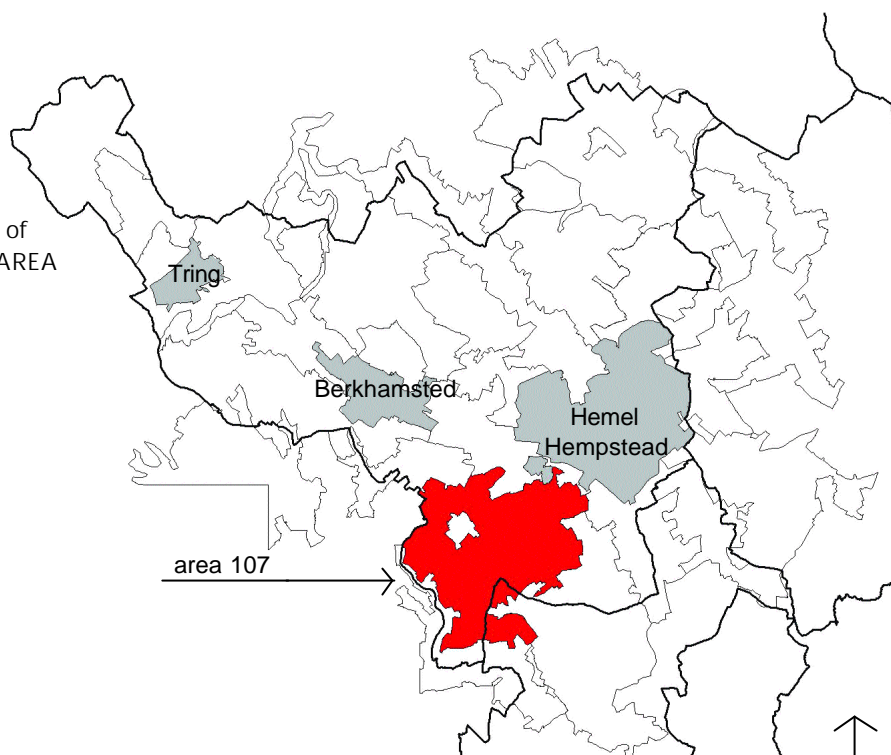


District Map showing location of
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Hertfordshire County Council
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LOCATION

To the south of Hemel Hempstead, west of Kings Langley and north of the Chess Valley. The area contains the villages of Chipperfield, Bovingdon and Flaunden.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The area comprises a large, gently undulating plateau which supports a mixed farming pattern. There are fragmented areas of semi natural woodland cover, together with variable, though generally species diverse hedgerows, which filter and frame many views within the area. Access throughout is concentrated to a series of narrow lanes, which engender a rather private and secluded feel. The plateau landscape is punctuated by scattered and sometimes extensive dispersed settlement. The ancient estate of Westbrook Hay lies on the northern periphery.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- expansive, gently undulating plateau
- mixed arable and pasture farmland
- isolated and fragmented woodland cover
- medium to large fields to east with remote feel
- settlement pattern comprising a number of villages which spread across the plateau in loose organic forms
- densely hedged narrow lanes
- semi derelict feel to large scale redundant or industrial sites
- few focal points or vistas

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Flaunden cottages and Gilbert Scott parish church
- Bovingdon Brickworks
- Bovingdon airfield-Sunday Market and Prison
- Westbrook Hay House, puddingstone summerhouse and historic parkland
- views across Sheethanger Common from Felden
- Westbrook Hay lodges/estate buildings
- Felden water tower

- Flaunden Church (A.Tempany)

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology and soils. The plateau is dominated by clay-with-flints. Locally peri-glacial brick-earth forms deep deposits over the underlying chalk geology. An exception is the tongue of land stretching along the shallow dry valley from Scatterdells Wood to Bovingdon village, and another dry valley at Hogpits Bottom, Flaunden where chalk is evident. The clay soils (Batcombe and Hornbeam 2 associations) are generally acidic or neutral and are relatively well-drained, with some local seasonal waterlogging.

Topography. A gently undulating plateau, locally interrupted by dry chalk valleys e.g. the northern extension of Whippendell Bottom.

Degree of slope. The plateau typically slopes at less than 1 in 100. Locally slopes may be steeper e.g. at Hogpits Bottom, where they are 1 in 20 and in the dry valley to the north where they reach 1 in 8.

Altitude range. The plateau ranges from 135m up to 160m at Bovingdon and Pudds Cross. Dry valleys locally drop to 100m.

Hydrology. Deep deposits of clay can support local perched water tables, allowing development of ponds, such as at Bovingdon Grange, Pudds Cross and Shantock Lane and the old Bovingdon brick pits. Surface streams are rare.

Land cover and land use. Much of the landscape, particularly to the east is dominated by arable agriculture. Around the more settled areas there is a greater concentration of grassland providing pasture and paddocks particularly between Bovingdon and Flaunden. Woodland cover is sparse and limited to the edges of the plateau. Bovingdon airfield has a number of uses including a prison, stock car and go-cart racing and a Sunday Market.

Vegetation and wildlife. A significant feature is the network of old hedgerows, especially south and east of Bovingdon. These are typically mixed and include; hazel, blackthorn, holly, hawthorn, honeysuckle and hornbeam. Semi-natural woodlands are very limited except for Great/Phasels Woods, and Scatterdells Wood in the east. These are in part acidic oak/hornbeam in part beech, where calcareous soils are at the surface as they overhang the Gade Valley. A line of small, isolated copses also exists along the sides of the dry valley towards Bovingdon, dominated by ash and hazel with occasional hornbeam.

Unimproved grasslands are rare, with a few remaining meadows at Bulstrode and south east of Bovingdon. All are dry neutral grasslands of moderate diversity, characterized by Sweet Vernal grass and Common Bent.

The heavily-disturbed site of Bovingdon brickworks is of some note ecologically, with its temporary ponds which support some locally uncommon invertebrates and areas of regenerating rough grassland and scrub.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Westbrook Hay, formerly the seat of the Ryder family until 1933 and now a preparatory school, is the only really significant house and estate in the area. It is a large, late 18th century stucco Georgian country house, with formal gardens, grazed parkland, estate lodges and farms. The parish church of Bovingdon, St Lawrence dates from

1845. The church is set in the second largest churchyard in the county, crossed by a soldierly avenue of clipped Irish yews. The Bovingdon brickfields have created a localized industrial landscape through a combination of clay extraction and the associated brickworks. Bovingdon Airfield, with its three runways was built in 1941 to serve the US Air Force during WW II. Film stars including Clark Gable and James Stewart spent time as serving airmen while Bob Hope and Glen Miller entertained the troops there. In 1946 the Ministry of Civil Aviation took over the base. More recently the site was used as a set for films such as '633 Squadron' and episodes of the TV series 'Z Cars'.

Field Patterns. The historic landscape contained a mix of organic, irregular and co-axial pre 18th century enclosure. However much of this pattern has been eroded by 20th century enclosure and more extensively by field amalgamations in the latter half of the 20th century forming prairie fields. These large scale arable units are most noticeable to the east while to the west there are more smaller to medium fields associated with the dispersed and settled landscape. In the west the hedged enclosure is also stronger, however there are some areas of post and wire and timber fencing.

Transport pattern. Access throughout the area is concentrated to the network of relatively straight narrow lanes with limited verges. There are no main roads or railways.

Settlements and built form. Bovingdon, Chipperfield and Flaunden have conservation areas. These include some good half timbered houses on the approach to Bovingdon and some large early Georgian villas such as Braziers on the approach to Chipperfield. Flaunden, has a traditional settlement pattern, displaying a range of vernacular cottages from the 16th Century onwards neatly arranged around the central cross roads. Built form includes half timbering, with brick infill, locally manufactured red brick and clay tile.

There are few prominent buildings in the landscape. Flaunden Church (St Mary Magdalene 1838), the first church by Gilbert Scott, built in a simple Early English style, is an innocuous single storey composition with no tower. Felden water Tower, to the north, with its octagonal spire is a locally distinctive feature but largely concealed among trees. At Westbrook Hay there is a folly house built from one of the world's rarest rocks - puddingstone, a conglomerate of small pebbles bonded by mica to create a very hard wearing material.

Bovingdon village, is a sprawling and undistinguished settlement that has been the subject of considerable untidy 20th century modern housing development. A number of prestigious late 20th century pastiche houses characterize the fringes of the village. After 14 years of planning 'The Mount' HMP opened as a Youth Custody Centre in 1988. It comprises a number of cell blocks, workshops and a sports hall and is now a Category 'C' prison housing adult offenders.

Other sources of area-specific information

Chipperfield Village Design Statement

Williamson: The Parks and Gardens of West Hertfordshire

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

The elevated plateau landform means that the area is largely concealed from outside. This is a coherent but unremarkable landscape. The local pattern of hedges creates a compartmentalized and private feel to the west however pockets of temporary equestrian enclosure is unsympathetic to the traditional hedged landscape. The area is relatively quiet with visual and audible disturbance from the A41 limited to the northern edge. Local distractions include the airfield, brickfields and The Mount which exerts a strong visual and perceptual influence on Bovingdon village.

Rarity and distinctiveness. This is an unremarkable landscape within the county.

VISUAL IMPACT

Bovingdon airfield and The Mount HMP are locally intrusive features. The perimeter of the airfield is in a neglected condition and a local eyesore. There are two groups of radio masts to the south of the area which are locally intrusive. The brick works are apparent but not too intrusive.

ACCESSIBILITY

There are a number of rights of way in the area which link with the relatively dense network of minor roads e.g. between Bovingdon and Felden. Horse riding and cycling are popular recreational activities.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

This area, which many see as linked to Area 7, includes some distinctive elements, including the woodland (D). "[Bovingdon] is situated upon a hill, from whence it might derive its name, whereof the top is a level piece of ground containing three miles over every way, famous for broad greens and pleasant highways, apples and black cherries which grow in every hedge, and proves a very wholesome air" Sir Henry Chauncy, 1700 (Bovingdon: History of a Hertfordshire Village - Sarah CM Brown, Bovingdon Parish Council 2002).

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

Flaunden, Bovingdon and Chipperfield Conservation Areas
Landscape Conservation Area (to south west)
Landscape Conservation Area (along the south west)
Area of Archaeological Significance: Apsley Manor, Bovingdon Green and Bury Farms- Bovingdon

CONDITION

<i>Land cover change:</i>	localised
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	mature
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	relic
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	poor
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	interrupted
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	moderate
<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>	apparent
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	concealed
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	contained
<i>Visual unity:</i>	coherent
<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: IMPROVE AND CONSERVE**

- encourage the retention of the existing pattern of hedges and to create new features to further enhance landscape and ecological links between woodlands. To include the promotion of hedgerows to provide more permanent boundaries within equestrian pasture
- promote the retention and restoration of the historic parkland at Westbrook Hay through a range of initiatives including; tree planting supporting pasture in preference to arable and replacing metal estate fencing
- promote the appropriate management of existing woodland in order to conserve and where absent to re-establish a rich ground flora and the distinction between different management systems, such as high forest and coppice with standards
- promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats
- conserve unimproved and semi-improved grassland wherever possible avoiding agricultural improvements in order to maintain their nature conservation value. Encourage traditional management by grazing
- encourage the creation and maintenance of ponds
- promote a landscape strategy for the assimilation of Bovingdon Airfield and the Mount HMP into the village and wider setting
- conserve and enhance the distinctive character of traditional settlements and individual buildings by promoting the conservation of important buildings and high standards of new building or alterations to existing properties, all with the consistent use of locally traditional materials and designed to reflect the traditional character of the area
- resist proposals to extend sub-urban influences from the existing villages or through infill of more dispersed areas
- promote the expansion of new woodland particularly beyond ancient woodland boundaries, especially where this will help in creating habitat links. Species to reflect local variations in soil type
- promote the retention of the character of local minor roads the by management of hedgerows, hedgebanks and verges. Where part of a hedge has been damaged or removed it should be replanted with a mix of indigenous species
- ensure that local highway improvements are sympathetic to the scale, pattern and character of the existing road network
- ensure that built development both in the area or adjacent is integrated through the use of native tree and shrub species and the creation of hedging and/or planting to the perimeter
- Poor condition equestrian enclosure (HCC Landscape Unit)

