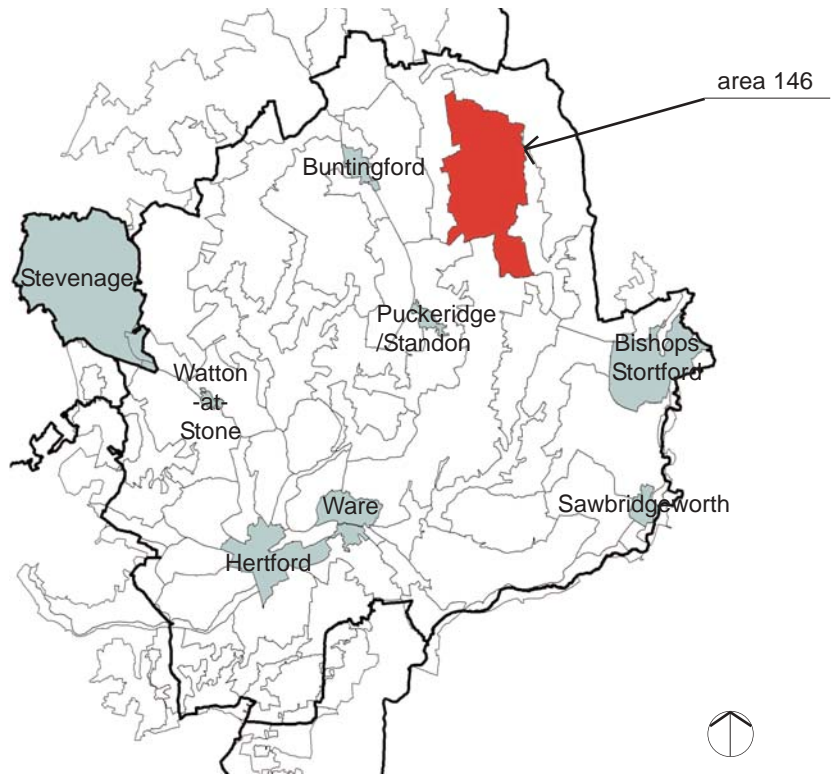


County Map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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**LOCATION**

Plateau area located between the valleys of the River Quin and the River Ash and extending to the edge of Anstey to the north.

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

Undulating plateau area with arable farmland and frequent woodland blocks especially on east side. In contrast the west side more open. Settlements of Little Hornead and Furneux Pelham are located on the edges of the plateau with no settlements other than occasional isolated farms in the centre of the plateau. Area has a quiet and empty feel with few roads or traffic. The woodland blocks create important features on the horizon especially when seen from adjacent interfluvies. Furneux Pelham Hall and the estate of the former Albury Hall include clusters of ponds and relics of parkland.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- gently undulating plateau
- frequent large woodland blocks especially on east side
- very little settlement in centre of the plateau, occasional isolated farms
- low, clipped hedges with few locally tall
- medium to large arable fields
- quiet area with few roads

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- Furneux Pelham Hall
- Hertfordshire Way long distance footpath
- relic parkland area around former Albury Hall
- mixed broadleaf and conifer woodland blocks around Furneux Pelham Hall
- high voltage electricity pylons
- distant views to electricity transformer station in the east
- Little Hornead Church



• Furneux Pelham (J.Billingsley)

**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES**

**Geology and soils.** This undulating plain is dominated largely by boulder clay, but with some of the underlying pre-glacial Tertiary deposits appearing in places, such as east of Great Hormead and around Albury Hall. These consist of localised gravels etc. Chalk also appears at the surface in a few places. Soils are slowly permeable calcareous and clayey over chalky till (Hanslope series). West of the former Albury Hall there is an area of deeper fine loamy soils with slowly permeable subsoils (Bursledon series) over Eocene and Jurassic loam.

**Topography.** A large, gently undulating plateau area bordered to the east by the valley of the River Ash and to the west by the valley of the River Quin. Around the edge of the plateau the landform is more undulating and includes several shallow valleys formed by the upper part of tributaries to the River Ash and River Quin e.g. Little Hormead Brook and the upper section of Great Hormead Brook known as Black Ditch.

**Degree of slope.** The centre of the plateau has shallow slopes varying between 1 in 60 and 1 in 120. At the edges of the plateau, slopes are slightly steeper and range between 1 in 10 and 1 in 30.

**Altitude range.** At its highest point in the centre, the plateau reaches approximately 130m AOD. It falls away to the east and west to between 105m and 110m AOD

**Hydrology.** The plateau forms the watershed between the catchment areas for the River Quin to the west and the River Ash to the east. A series of ditches and narrow streams drain the agricultural land and flow off the plateau towards the River Quin or River Ash. There are also several ponds on the plateau particularly around Furneaux Pelham Hall and the site of the former Albury Hall.

**Land cover and land use.** Arable farmland is the primary land use in the area with a large number of woodland blocks forming a significant secondary land use in the area particularly on the eastern side. The area is very sparsely populated with few farms and very little built development other than in the small village settlements of Furneaux Pelham and Little Hormead on the edges of the plateau. The woodlands are generally substantial in size and some are deciduous while others are plantations with a mix of deciduous and coniferous species. There is a particularly dense concentration of woodland blocks in the vicinity of Furneaux Pelham Hall and around the site of the former Albury Hall. There is evidence that much of the land is used for shooting.

**Vegetation and wildlife.** The majority of the plateau is arable farmland, especially on the boulder clay in the north. However, there are some extensive tracts of semi-natural woodland, mostly ash/maple, in the north, but with increasing hornbeam on the Tertiary deposits in the south. Important woods include Great Hormead Park, (SSSI), St Patrick's Wood, and the old, mainly secondary woodlands at Rotten Row and Furneaux Pelham. The more acidic oak/hornbeam copses around Albury are relicts of a very large wood, long since destroyed (Albury Great Wood), with recent plantations. Old grasslands are almost non-existent, except for abandoned relicts at St John's, Pelham,

and pastures at Great Hormead and Mutton Hall. Traces of more acidic grassland remain around Albury Hall. Road verges and green lanes are therefore important in this area e.g. there are patches of calcareous grassland on roadside banks at Furneux Pelham. Ponds at Albury Hall are locally valuable.

The area holds one of the only native populations of the true Oxlip in Hertfordshire, at Great Hormead Park Wood. Herb Paris and Greater Butterfly Orchid also persist in some woodlands. Albury Hall has the only remaining location in the County for Small Cudweed, a species of bare heathy ground. Some of the woodland areas and old buildings are notable for the scarce Whiskered Bat.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

While the present day settlement pattern has largely medieval origins there is evidence of activity throughout the area from the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age period. This includes cropmarks of at least three ring ditches (plough-raised prehistoric burial mounds), and groups of cropmarks, throughout the area, of linear ditches, enclosures, and trackways. These are largely undated, but provide evidence of early occupation and exploitation of the landscape. Settlement activity is also indicated by finds of Bronze Age and Romano-British pottery near Brick House Farm and a Roman quernstone near Great Hormead Park Wood. However, while the probable line of the Roman road linking the settlements at Braughing and Great Chesterford cuts across the plateau it is not followed by later routes, and does not appear to have acted as a focus for later human activity.

Farmsteads and isolated houses are dispersed across the plateau, and the larger settlement foci, the villages of Furneux Pelham, Albury, and Little Hormead are located on the lower plateau slopes, on or near the boundary of the area. These villages, and settlements such as Bozen Green, Patient's End and Puttocks End, have medieval origins, as do the majority of farms within the area.

Albury Hall, Great Hormead Hall, Little Hormead Bury, and Furneux Pelham Hall are all medieval manorial sites, and the deserted moat and fishponds of St Johns Pelham also have manorial origins. Former or extant medieval moats exist near Brick House Farm in Hormead, and possibly at Little Hormead Bury, at Duck Street, Furneux Pelham, Mutton Hall, and near The Hole and Parsonage Farm, in Albury. There are small remnants of informal parkland surviving around several of these manorial sites.

As a documented deer park, the remaining informal parkland around Albury Hall has medieval origins and was recorded in the Domesday book of 1086. Since then the estate has had at least three different houses on different sites the most recent of which was taken over by the Army and RAF during the second world war and was used for secret service work including work with the French resistance. The house was demolished soon after the second world war, however, features and remnants of the

former hall still remain including; the walled garden, parkland planting and steps, paths and terraces of the former formal gardens.

**Field Patterns.** There is a mixed pattern of field unit sizes throughout the area which locally combine with a number of small to medium sized woods and plantations. The field systems of the area were originally a combination of unenclosed common arable fields and smaller 'irregular' enclosure fields, both established before the 18th century. It also contained a sizable percentage of informal parklands including Albury Park. While much of this pattern has been superseded, by 18th century and later enclosure, there appears to be a notable difference in the survival of these earlier field systems. In the western half of the plateau there is a higher proportion of 20th century 'prairie' fields, succeeding 18th and 19th century enclosure, while the eastern half of the plateau contains a high percentage of fields of pre-18th century formation, and of pre-Parliamentary enclosure date. It is also notable that nearly all the current woodland is woodland plantation of 19-20th century date. Given the cropmark evidence for cultivation, it seems that woodland has not been a significant component in the landscape from a very early date.

**Transport pattern.** The area is large but contains only the B1038 which links Great Hormead with Brent Pelham and two other minor roads which provide east-west routes across the area. There are no north-south routes in the area. As a result there are large areas of land which are accessible only by farm tracks or public footpath/bridleway. The three roads through the area have narrow verges and are enclosed with low clipped hedges at many points. The road between Little Hormead and Furneux Pelham has a twisting organic form which follows the original field boundaries of the area. The B1038 and the road between Braughing and Patient End are straighter.

**Settlements and built form.** The area is sparsely populated other than in the small village settlements of Furneux Pelham and Little Hormead on the edges of the plateau. However the area contains an unusually large number of

historically interesting buildings. The Norman church of St Mary's in Little Hormead contains what Pevsner calls 'the most lavish display of twelfth century ironwork'. In Furneux Pelham the large thirteenth century church with Hertfordshire spike and the sixteenth century brick manor house with stepped gables are both notable. Brick House is located to the north of the area and was built circa 1579 at a time when bricks were scarce. It is an unusual building with 4 feet thick walls in places, blocked slit windows and a curious '969' on one wall.

#### OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

[www.alburyvillage.org.uk](http://www.alburyvillage.org.uk)

English Nature SSSI notification

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



- Albury Hall parkland (J.Billingsley)

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The area is visible from parts of the adjacent areas. In particular, the woodland blocks are significant features on the horizon and are important features in views from the adjacent interfluvies. Within the area, there is a mix of long distance extensive views over open arable land and others more limited by the woodland blocks. The scale of landscape elements is generally medium-large, with medium to large blocks of woodland and medium-large fields combining to give a sense of coherent visual unity. There is little intrusion from traffic, aircraft or built development which results in a tranquil area.

**Rarity and distinctiveness.** This undulating arable landscape with mature woodlands is a simple but attractive landscape that is frequently found in Hertfordshire, particularly in the east. It is similar to the landscape of Area 150 (Hadham Plateau) and the less settled parts of Area 148 (Anstey and Pelhams Plateau).

**VISUAL IMPACT**

The area has little built development and contains few detracting features. A small mid twentieth century residential development on the north side of Furneux Pelham detracts from local views of the village from the Ash Valley and electricity pylons in the northern part of the area are a significant feature particularly in views from the north. From some parts of the area there are also distant views of Crabb Green electricity transformer station.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Accessibility within the area is varied. Several footpaths and bridleways cross the area including the Hertfordshire Way. These include paths which pass through or adjacent to several of the large woodlands. However, there are also

some large areas of land with little or no public access.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

An area now of modest general regard but particularly valued locally, as evidenced by a community campaign to have the area included within a new AONB [D] "Here are peace, silence, stability, rest, abundant cornfields, tall and dignified copses, an overpowering scent of hawthorn in spring, birds unique in the county, one-storeyed, thatched villages in sleepy hollows, lanes that twist and turn and are deeply overgrown and liable to flood. No main road or railway penetrates the utter remoteness of this countryside on the Essex border" W Branch Johnson, 'A companion into Hertfordshire', Methuen & Co, 1952  
Great Hormead: "It is a very peaceful situation on top of the hill [by Horseshoe lane] amid the elm trees" AJ Ford, 'The County's quiet corner', Hertfordshire Countryside Winter 1958/9 p120,121  
"I value the open countryside...ideal for cycle trips for all the family" (Respondent 0552)

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

Landscape Conservation Area (part of area)  
Areas of Archaeological Significance - including around Furneux Pelham, Bozengreen Farm and to the west of Patrick's Wood  
Other Sites of Ecological, Geological and Geomorphological Importance or Interest - The Thrift, St Patrick's Wood, High Wood, Furneux Pelham Hall and Conduit Spring (near Cockhamstead)  
SSSI - Great Hormead Park  
SAM - St John's Pelham moated site and fishpond

**CONDITION**

<i>Land cover change:</i>	<b>localised</b>
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	<b>mature/young</b>
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	<b>scattered</b>
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	<b>not obvious</b>
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	<b>interrupted</b>
<i>Impact of built development:</i>	<b>low</b>
<i>Impact of land-use change:</i>	<b>low</b>

**STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**

<i>Impact of landform:</i>	<b>apparent</b>
<i>Impact of land cover:</i>	<b>prominent</b>
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	<b>apparent</b>
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	<b>locally visible</b>
<i>Sense of enclosure:</i>	<b>partial</b>
<i>Visual unity:</i>	<b>coherent</b>
<i>Distinctiveness/rarity:</i>	<b>frequent</b>

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

- for existing woodlands, encourage the replacement of softwoods with indigenous native deciduous communities, hedgebank management and re-establishing a rich ground flora
- improve public access arrangements to woodlands with attention to car park design and safety
- promote the appropriate management of coppice woodland in order to re-establish a rich ground flora and the distinction between different management systems, such as high forest, coppice, coppice with standards and woodpasture
- promote through education and access the multiple uses of ancient woodland
- encourage the dissemination of information about the historic importance and appropriate management of woodland features such as banks and ditches
- seek to resolve conflicts arising from competing uses and activities in woodland
- in areas of new woodland and hedgerow planting use native stock of local provenance wherever possible
- survey and manage parkland and veteran trees for biodiversity value in Hormead Hall, Furneux Pelham Hall and the estate of the former Albury Hall
- in parklands ensure new planting is encouraged to maintain age diversity. Ensure landscape improvements respect the historic context of existing features and the form and character of parkland and gardens. Ornamental species should only be used to replace damaged or over-mature specimens, where appropriate
- in parklands and historic gardens 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
- in areas of former parkland encourage reversion from arable uses to pasture and grassland
- restrict ploughing of grasslands within parklands
- promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats
- promote the use of reservoirs for water storage and nature conservation interest, rather than groundwater abstraction. Ensure that reservoirs are designed to reduce impact on the character of the local landscape.
- restoration of ditches and discouragement of enclosing existing open drainage systems
- promote crop diversification and the restoration of mixed livestock/ arable farming where possible.
- promote both the creation of new ponds and the retention / enhancement for wildlife of existing ponds
- promote the restoration of hedge improvement and planting adjacent to rights of way, green lanes and along parish boundaries
- maintain and develop the traditional pattern of roadside verges as a local feature and a wildlife resource. Where development is likely to affect verges and damage is unavoidable, development should include details of protection of the remaining verge and replacement of its nature conservation value within the proposed scheme. This is particularly important where verges include hedgebanks, sunken lanes, ditches and hedges



- Little Hormead (HCC Landscape Unit)