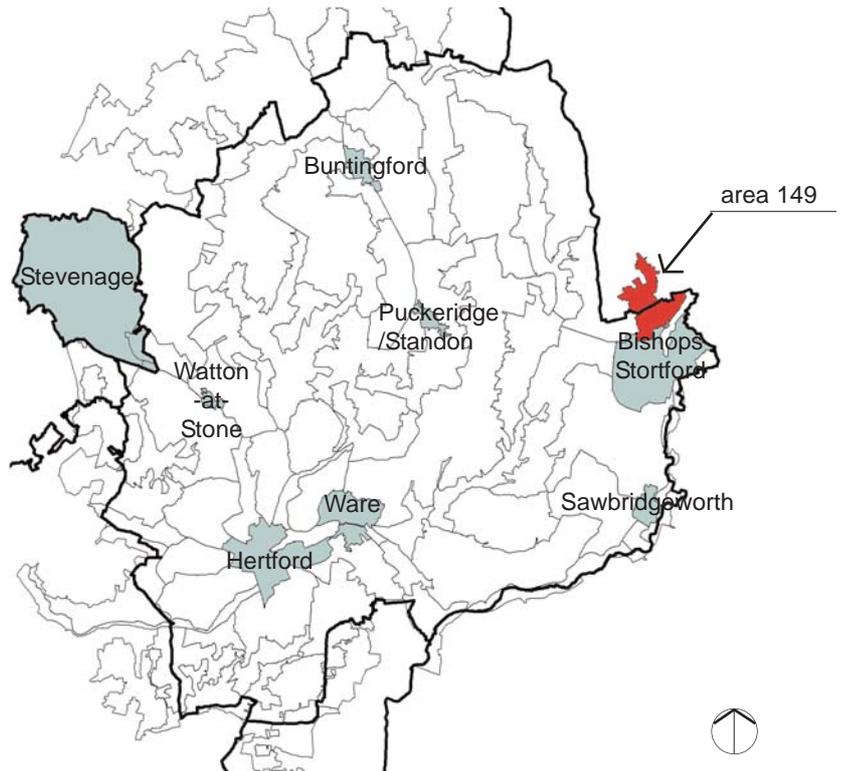


County Map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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LOCATION

Valley of Bourne Brook extending from the northern edge of Bishops Stortford to the county boundary with Essex. Area is predominantly enclosed between the A120 and the edge of Bishops Stortford.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Valley landscape formed by Bourne Brook with a strong urban fringe character. Land uses include: an animal sanctuary, higher education college, horse paddocks, set-aside, works yard and a disused quarry which has been used for fly-tipping. The A120 cuts across the valley partly in cutting and partly on an embankment close to the county boundary, forming a strong dividing feature within the area. To the north, close to the county of Essex, the area has a stronger rural and valley character with arable land use predominant.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- valley topography of Bourne Brook with series of shallow valleys and ridges on either side
- areas of poor pasture and urban fringe land uses around the edge of Bishops Stortford
- arable farming along the northern edge adjacent to the county boundary with Essex

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- A120 in cutting and on embankment
- views towards the edge of Bishops Stortford
- works yard and disused lime quarry adjacent to county boundary forming eyesores



- Bourne Brook winterbourne (J.Billingsley)

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology and soils. The upper slopes of the valleys north of Bishops Stortford are capped with calcareous Anglian boulder clay, but extensive fluvo-glacial gravels and sands etc. occur on the valley sides. Chalk outcrops on the Herts/Essex border near Foxdells Farm. There is a mix of deep well drained fine loamy over clayey, coarse loamy over clayey and fine loamy soils (Milford series). The area also includes small pocket of drift over the tertiary clays (Wickham 4 series).

Topography. Undulating area comprising a series of shallow valleys and ridges leading in to the valley formed by Bourne Brook. General slope to the south-east towards Bishops Stortford.

Degree of slope. Typically between 1 in 10 and 1 in 15 on lower valley slopes to Bourne Brook and between 1 in 20 and 1 in 30 on upper valley slopes.

Altitude range. High points of 95m and 80m on ridges either side of valley falling to approximately 60m at the confluence of Bourne Brook with the River Stort.

Hydrology. The tributary streams of the River Stort, Bourne Brook and at Foxdells Farm are seasonal bournes standing dry for much of the year. There is virtually no standing water in the area. There are several small ponds around Whitehall College (on the south side of Dane O'Coys Road).

Land cover and land use. The area contains a mix of land uses. Around the southern edge, adjacent to Bishops Stortford, the land has typical urban fringe uses including: allotments, college of education, playing fields, animal sanctuary, horse grazing, rough grassland and setaside areas. On the northern edge, adjacent to the county boundary with Essex, most land is used for arable farming. A disused lime quarry and unsightly works yard are located adjacent to the county boundary on the road to Farnham. The area also includes two substantial blocks of woodland: Hazelend Wood and Hoggate Wood.

Vegetation and wildlife. Semi-natural habitat remains in the form of some fairly extensive semi-improved neutral grasslands at Foxdells Farm on glacial gravels, and semi-natural, mainly hornbeam/ash/hazel woodland at Hazelend Wood, which is of local value. Chalk grassland remnants persist around Farnham Quarry and adjoining road verges, while secondary calcareous grassland of local value exists at the former allotments north of Bishops Stortford.

Farnham Quarry has some local chalk plants, such as Tall Broomrape, while the former allotments have one of the largest known colonies of Bee Orchid in the County, and scarce species, such as the County's only extant site for Pale Flax.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

There is little historic environment data available, but flint axes of Palaeolithic date are known from the area. Foxdells Farm is a post-medieval site, on the slopes but it may have medieval origins, given the former existence of small and medium sized pre-18th century 'irregular' enclosure fields around the farm. There is also evidence for gravel extraction brick making near nearby. The historic pattern of

this area is masked by current urban fringe land uses. Whitehall College, a large Edwardian property with 21 acres of parkland is now a residential education centre. The grounds contain the remains of a World War II air raid shelter which was built for the Gilbey's who were living there at that time. The grounds also contain a Rhododendron Walk which was planted as an ornamental carriage drive. Hoggates Wood is probably named after a local family with this surname, as a Richard Hogate appears in parish records in the late 16th century.

Field Patterns. Within the Hertfordshire boundary the historic field pattern is predominantly pre 18th century irregular enclosure, however the area has been subject to successive enclosure and the affects of urban development. Small areas of 'irregular' enclosure fields, enclosed meadow pasture, and woodland, survive at its eastern end, where the land use was, and still is, more mixed.

Transport pattern. The A120 passes through the area partly in cutting and partly on embankment. This is a large and busy road constructed in the 1970s that cuts across the topography and landscape patterns of the area. Two local roads also pass through the area providing routes to Hazel End and Farnham. These are narrow, minor roads which are old routes in to Bishops Stortford. They were both altered in the 1970s to accommodate the construction of the A120.

Settlements and built form. The area is sparsely populated with several isolated properties mainly located in the southern part of the area adjacent to the edge of Bishops Stortford. These include Dane O'Coys Farm, Whitehall College and Foxdells Farm.

OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

There are limited filtered and framed views into the area from the A120 when it is on embankment. From elsewhere in the surrounding areas there are few views. Views within the area are generally short or medium distance and are limited by the undulating topography. The area is generally incoherent due to the range of land uses and the presence of the A120 which divides the area into two. Much of the area feels neglected and poorly maintained.

Rarity and distinctiveness. The area is generally unremarkable with the exception of Hoggates Wood Ancient Woodland. It is fairly typical of urban fringe areas in Hertfordshire.

VISUAL IMPACT

The area contains a considerable number of detracting features. The urban edge of Bishops Stortford is prominent to the south and the A120 is prominent as it passes around the northern side of the area. Urban fringe land uses such as the works area, fly tipping and lime quarry on the Farnham road and the rough grassland and set aside areas around Foxdells Farm also detract from the general quality of the area.

ACCESSIBILITY

There are several well-used footpaths in the area providing easy access from the urban area of Bishops Stortford to the rural areas beyond. However, the area contains no bridleways.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

The area as a whole, but particularly that part lying

between the A120 and the town is very highly regarded [A] "A beautiful peaceful area much needed for recreation." D Watts, <http://freespace.virgin.net/gary.aldam/chantry/CAUSE/1999> "used for walks regularly" (Respondent 0840) "From the edge of town you can see right across the hills - an uninterrupted view which is rare so near to town...I love the view across to Hassobury house" (Respondent 0900) Of Foxdells Farm in particular: "...open green pasture and valued as a welcome break from the urban area of Bishop's Stortford." (Respondent 3017)

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

Other Sites of Ecological, Geological and Geomorphological Importance or Interest - Hazelend Wood, Hoggates Wood and part of Dane O'Coys Farm
Ancient Woodland – Hoggates Wood

CONDITION	
Land cover change:	widespread
Age structure of tree cover:	mature/young
Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:	scattered
Management of semi-natural habitat:	poor
Survival of cultural pattern:	declining
Impact of built development:	moderate
Impact of land-use change:	high

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER	
Impact of landform:	apparent
Impact of land cover:	apparent
Impact of historic pattern:	apparent
Visibility from outside:	locally visible
Sense of enclosure:	partial
Visual unity:	incoherent
Distinctiveness/rarity:	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

- improve public access to and multiple uses of woodlands
- 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
- encourage the reversal of habitat fragmentation and the creation and improvement of habitat links to create eco-corridors
- promote the expansion of woodland beyond ancient woodland boundaries, especially where this will help in creating habitat links
- encourage the dissemination of information about the historic importance and appropriate management of woodland features such as banks and ditches
- in areas of new planting use native stock of local provenance wherever possible
- protect remaining river valley habitats along the River Bourne of significant nature conservation interest
- resist development that could lower the water table within river valleys and affect wetland habitats
- promote the use of low-density stock grazing as a management technique
- 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 hedgerow restoration and creation throughout the area to provide visual and ecological links between existing and proposed woodland areas. Pattern to follow historic field boundaries where possible
- promote the management and restoration of ditches and discouragement of enclosing existing open drainage systems
- promote the restoration of hedge improvement and planting adjacent to rights of way, green lanes and along parish boundaries
- ensure that the surroundings of converted and new buildings are designed and maintained to be in keeping with their agricultural surroundings by ensuring that 'Garden' details are be screened from view where

possible and native species are used for hedging and tree planting to the perimeter

- 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.
- native tree species only should be planted on boundaries, with exotic/ornamental species only in close proximity to the dwelling
- promote the creation of buffer strips along watercourses to prevent pesticide, herbicide and fertilizer run-off and provide habitat for wildlife; encourage their linkage to eco-corridors within the wider landscape
- promote a planting strategy for screening the features creating visual impact including the A120, built forms to the edge of Bishops Stortford and the lime quarry and storage areas

- From Dane O'Coys to Bishops Stortford (J.Billingsley)

