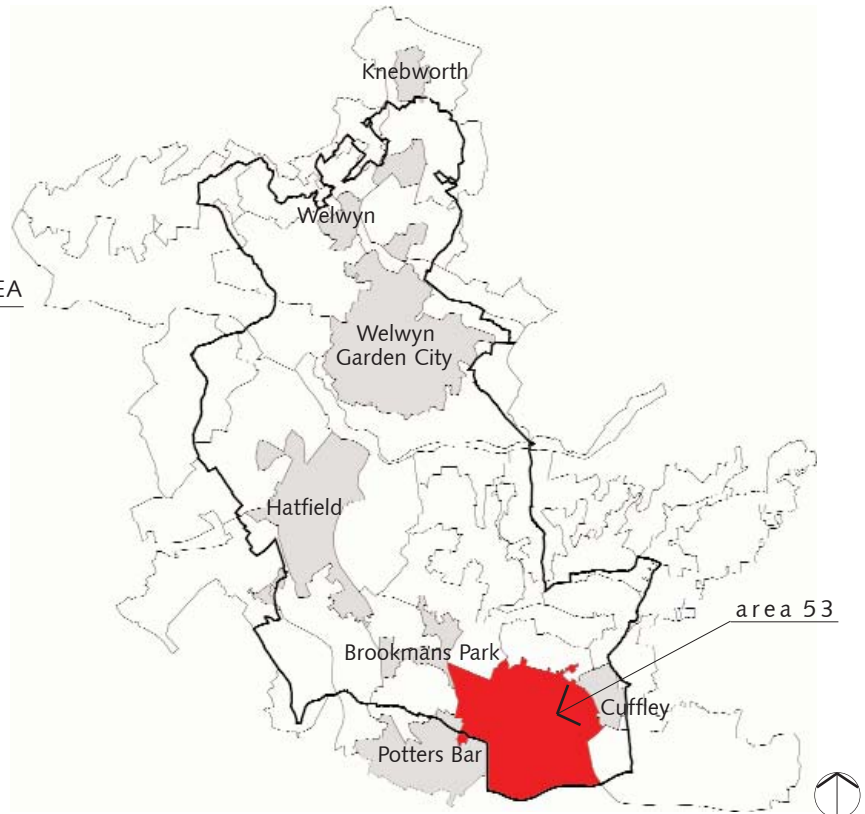


District map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

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Welwyn Hatfield Council
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LOCATION

Northaw Common Parkland lies to the east of Potters Bar. The area borders the M25 and the southern boundary of Hertfordshire, less than 13 miles (20km) from the heart of London, and includes several country houses and estates. The village of Northaw lies on a ridge in the middle of the area and The Ridgeway at Cuffley defines the northern boundary.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

A strong historical and cultural pattern is evident in the landscape and parkland features are common throughout. Fenced estate boundaries, large blocks of woodland and high hedgerows create a strong sense of enclosure. The settlement is generally confined to defensive sites on the higher ground. The parklands vary in enclosure size and shape but the landscape elements are consistent throughout. Access throughout the area is limited. Horse pasture with fenced boundaries is widespread.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- tight circles of Scots pine, limes and oaks planted in open parkland
- lodge houses and grand entrances to mansions
- restricted views and limited public access
- horse grazing in fenced pasture
- mixed architectural influences
- ridgelines and valley 'bowls'
- hornbeam pollards

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- evidence of deer park boundaries
- swallowholes
- forestry plantation
- sequoia and cedar avenue at Leggatts Park

Leggatts Park •
view west from Well Road
(E. Staveley)



PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology and soils. The area is a part of the gently undulating South Hertfordshire plateau, a sub-section of the North Thames basin. The large 'bowls' of land defined by narrow ridgelines, such as at Nyn Manor Farm north of Northaw and the ridge and dips further south at Barvin Hill, and narrow uplands of calcareous clay-with-flints are indicative of glacial drift. The soils are generally base-poor overlain with fine loamy soils and some calcareous clays (Windsor series).

Topography. Slopes are a prominent feature of this area. Ridgelines cross the area in an east-west direction, forming a series of parallel dips or valley bowls that create contained spaces.

Degree of slope. 1 in 10 to 1 in 30

Altitude range. 65m to 124m

Hydrology. Areas of wet ground are associated with the underlying geology. A number of small ponds are linked to the parklands. Springs issuing water on the higher ground at Well Wood and Northaw House flow into the field ditches and Northaw Brook in the east. The presence of a pumping station and Wells Cottages near Wells Farm is evidence of the presence of underground water supplies.

Land cover and land use. Parkland is the dominant land cover. Large areas of forestry engulf the formal landscape features of Nyn Park but the oak avenues and oak and pine circles can still be seen in the plantations. Land use is primarily horse pasture, associated with the proximity to settlement and the poor quality of the land for arable production. Fences are prominent throughout the area.

Vegetation and wildlife. Extensive woodland includes a combination of woodland types, such as hornbeam coppice, birch woodland and oak/hornbeam woodland in Well Wood and Leggatts Wood. Vast areas of hard and softwood plantations have been planted across Nyn Park. Elm is a common hedgerow species, with ash, hawthorn, bramble and dog rose locally significant. Hedgerow oaks are less significant in the area than the tree avenues and lines that mark the approaches and boundaries of the estates, such as the sequoia and cedar avenue to Leggatts Park and oak avenues at Nyn Park. Field trees are also common in the area. Well Wood (with Northaw Great Wood to the north) is designated SSSI for its oak/hornbeam community, wood pasture and heathland.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCE

The influence of London on the history and culture of the area is significant. Large country houses have been located in the area for centuries and the landscape pattern has evolved accordingly. Boundaries have been marked by estate architecture (lodges, walls and fences), distinctive vegetation types (avenues and hedge banks) and noticeable changes in landcover pattern. The strong oval shape of the boundary at Nyn Park, clearly evident on aerial photographs, demonstrates the historic use of the park for deer, for which the earliest record is 1766. Northaw Common was wood pasture and heath until the early 19th century, when it was enclosed and the land use changed to woodland and farmland.

Field pattern. Fields are generally medium sized and along the southern boundary of the area the boundaries form a distinct linear pattern, associated with the arable land. The field pattern becomes more organic further north and fields are smaller, associated with the historic parkland boundaries and settlement edges. These smaller, often linear fields are used for horse grazing and their boundaries are a mixture of ancient relic hedgerows and post-and-wire fences.

Transport pattern. Winding lanes follow the ridgelines with a mixture of woodland and hedgerow margins.

Settlements and built form. Settlement is predominantly confined to the narrow ridgelines, such as the village of Northaw and 'The Ridgeway' at Cuffley, which forms a linear strip of large individual houses set well back from the road, quite typical of 20th-century development in the county. Large houses and manors are generally sited on elevated ground with a north/south aspect. Building materials vary and the use of red brick is noticeable. The manors of Northaw House and Northaw Park are of rendered Georgian style.

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

Visibility in the area is limited or framed by topography, vegetation and access restrictions. Enclosed pockets of parkland are consistent throughout the area and public long distance views are rare.

Rarity and distinctiveness. This area is quite typical of the south-western part of the county, in which the influence of settlement out of London is very evident.

VISUAL IMPACT

The site and sound of the M25 and the settlement of Potters Bar present a major impact on the south of the area. New housing developments, such as Barvin Park, have a more localised impact on its setting. The influence and taste of the local abundance of wealthy landowners continues to have a significant impact on the evolution of this landscape character.

ACCESSIBILITY

Informal recreation is limited and some of the public footpaths are impassable in places. Much of the land is used exclusively for the enjoyment of the private landowners and public use of the land is discouraged for security reasons. In an area where car use is high, parking to enable access to some of the more remote public footpaths is almost non-existent, limiting the range of path users to the immediate vicinity of their home. A number of brushwood fences can be seen in the dip to the north from Northaw Road West indicating the use of a large area of land for equestrian activities.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

The Swedish traveller Peter Kalm wrote the following in 1748: *'between Cheshunt and Bell Bar a great plain, yet not even, but having ridges and hollows...This plain extended nearly four English miles across. An abundance of common ling grew upon it, between which were found a great quantity of bracken and mosses, but only some isolated blades of grass. Sheep were pasturing there. In some places grew hornbeam enough, six feet high and totally thick. The tops were cut off for fuel...This was common land.'* Kalms' Account of his visit to England on his way to America in 1748, Macmillan (1892) in *So that was Hertfordshire* by M. Tompkins, (1998).

'The National Trust estate at Morven makes a pleasant entry into the countryside' (Potters Bar Society, September 2000)).

This area appears to be valued for some distinctive aspects (C).

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

SSSI at Well Wood.

CONDITION

<i>Land cover change:</i>	insignificant
<i>Age structure of tree cover:</i>	mixed
<i>Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:</i>	widespread
<i>Management of semi-natural habitat:</i>	good
<i>Survival of cultural pattern:</i>	intact
<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>	prominent
<i>Impact of historic pattern:</i>	continuous
<i>Visibility from outside:</i>	locally visible
<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 landowners to replace and maintain the historic hedged field boundary pattern, to restore both the landscape pattern and ecological corridors
- ensure that equestrian development reflects and enhances local landscape character. Special care should be taken over fencing, structures and buildings. Use hedges wherever possible in preference to fences
- encourage dissemination of information about the value of parkland and veteran trees for their historic and ecological significance
- encourage landowners to revert from arable to pasture within parklands, wherever possible
- encourage the appropriate management of woodland to establish a rich ground flora and a distinction between different management systems, such as high forest, coppice, coppice-with-standards and wood pasture
- survey and manage parkland and veteran trees for biodiversity value
- ensure new planting is encouraged to maintain age diversity. Landscape improvements should 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
- resist development that could lower the water table within valleys and affect wetland habitats
- resist the targeting of redundant or derelict pasture for development
- promote the creation of buffer zones around wetland habitats to prevent pesticide, herbicide and fertiliser run-off and to provide habitat for wildlife; encourage their linkage to eco-corridors within the wider landscape
- golf courses should only be permitted within historic parklands where:
 - i) important layout and features of the grounds are retained;
 - ii) existing trees are retained and adequate provision is made for their maintenance and management;
 - iii) fairways and greens are designed to complement the historic designed landscape with regard to their location and extent;
 - iv) all new tree and shrub planting uses species already present within the parkland, in similar designs, proportions and mixes, or uses locally native species where these would be more appropriate;
 - v) a proportion of the total area is dedicated and maintained as wildlife habitat;
 - vi) all new water bodies are designed to be either naturalistic or to complement existing artificial historic features;
 - vii) an appropriate buffer zone can be created around historic artefacts within the parkland;
 - viii) all and only necessary buildings and structures are designed to be in keeping with the primary age of the remaining historic character of the site;
 - ix) a long-term management plan is submitted with the planning application, adhered to and updated annually.
- support the practice of creating ornamental parkland features to reflect the 21st century
- provide car park spaces at the ends of public footpaths
- provide interpretation of the complex landscape history of this area and its evolution



- Leggatts Park with sequoia and cedar avenue on horizon (E. Staveley)