

County map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA



LOCATION

This area is located south of Potters Bar and the M25 and north of Barnet.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

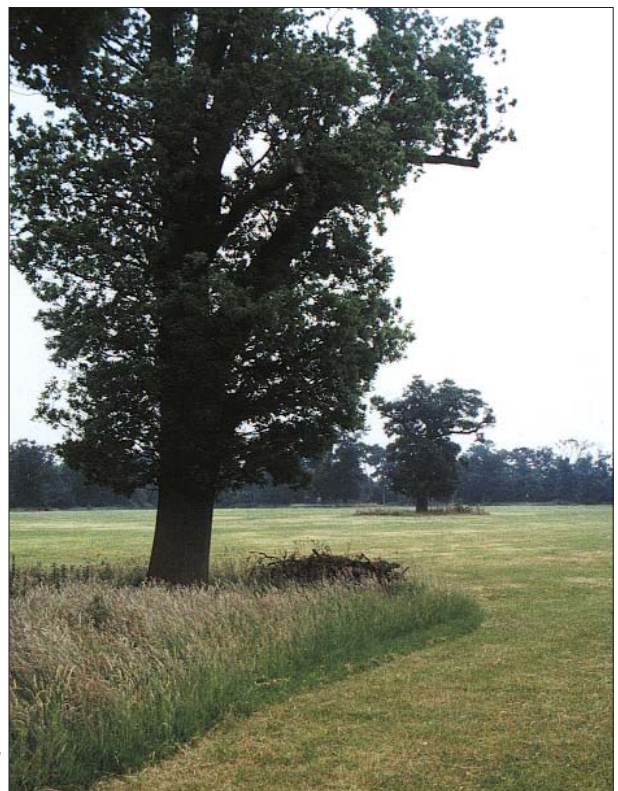
A small yet distinctive plateau area with associated slopes within Wrotham Park. The area combines historic parkland and a small settlement on wet heath.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- level plateau area
- historic parkland of Wrotham Park with perimeter tree belts
- small fields of pasture associated with Bentley Heath
- wet heath plant communities and habitats
- straight roads and wide verges on perimeter of parkland
- estate cottages and church

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Wrotham Park house
- Holy Trinity church, Bentley Heath



Wrotham parkland • (J. Billingsley)

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology and soils. On the higher level areas the geology comprises plateau and river-terrace drift. This is overlaid by slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged coarse loamy, fine loamy and fine silty over clayey soils (Essendon association). On the slopes to the south west the underlying geology comprises Tertiary clay overlaid by slowly permeable and seasonally waterlogged soils with some brown subsoils, (Windsor series.) There are locally areas of fine loamy and silty soils over these clays.

Topography. The plateau gently undulates. Slopes within the parkland fall to the east, west and also towards Dancers Hill.

Degree of slope. 1 in 70 on the plateau and c. 1 in 20 on the slopes.

Altitude range. 120 - 130m on the plateau. Down to 100m at Dancers Hill.

Hydrology. The plateau marks the watershed between the Colne catchment that falls to the north and the River Lee that falls to the east. The impermeable clay soils support a number of small ponds within the settlement of Bentley Heath. Within Wrotham Park a series of waterbodies within the parkland landscape have been created both on the plateau areas eg. Home Farm and within the parkland, at different levels. To the south west of the house a local stream has been dammed to form a feature lake within the park.

Land cover and land use. The primary land cover is the historic parkland of Wrotham. This comprises perimeter tree belts and areas of open parkland with scattered mature trees. The secondary land use is pasture, characterised by a series of small to medium grass and pastoral fields around Bentley Heath. Some horse pastures are suffering from over-grazing .

Vegetation and wildlife. Species in the parkland belts include oak, horse chestnut and pine, together with an understorey of holly and laurel. These features, although largely still intact, are in decline and there is little evidence of new planting. Specimen conifers, including Wellingtonias, punctuate the skyline when the park is viewed from a distance. Hedgerow species comprise a mix of hawthorn and elm. Hedges to Bentley Heath are generally in a good state of health where actively managed, however a significant proportion of the elm are dying where they are not regularly cut. Hedgerow trees are mainly oak with occasional ash. Areas of wet heath habitat survive on the London clay. Along Dancers Hill, heath vegetation comprising bracken and regenerating silver birch is quite distinctive. Rhododendrons are also established on the lighter soils.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Wrotham Park dates from the mid-18th century when it comprised c.60ha. In 1765, the site was visited by Capability Brown, to whom has been accredited the boundary belts and also possibly the creation of the lake to the south west of the house. There is a walled 18th-century garden. The original parkland was extended to 112ha in the mid-19th century by incorporating the land to the north east.

Field pattern. The pastoral area to the north has largely retained the pre-18th century organic enclosure pattern with its irregular small field shapes.

Transport pattern. The road pattern involves a triangle of straight roads that contain the parkland, with secondary lanes within Bentley Heath.

Settlements and built form. The settlement pattern comprises a cluster of estate cottages at Bentley Heath. Together with the estate chapel, by Teulon, these mid- to late-Victorian buildings are of red brick with contrasting ornamentation using blue and gault bricks. Individual farms are also grouped on the higher ground. Wrotham Park, a Palladian mansion built by Isaac Ware in 1754 for Admiral Byng, was enlarged in 1810-16 and again in 1854. It was rebuilt in 1883 after a fire.

OTHER SOURCES OF AREA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens*.

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

The vegetated skyline of the parkland with its distinctive conifers is widely visible from surrounding areas. However, within the area there is a strong sense of containment both on the plateau and within the parkland. This is a small scale, coherent landscape. The M25 is not widely visually intrusive, as it is in deep cutting; however it is very noisy on the edge of Bentley Heath.

Rarity and distinctiveness. This area is relatively unusual in the county. The modest plateau has a distinctive combination of parkland and small heathy village.

VISUAL IMPACT

There is peripheral visual impact from the tower blocks at Potters Bar and the pylons that follow the M25. The M25 is locally intrusive at Dancers Hill and in deep cutting forms a strong boundary to the north of the village. The floodlights at Owens School, to the south of Potters Bar, are intrusive after dark.

ACCESSIBILITY

There is a single footpath across the northern corner of the parkland, with views of the eastern elevation of the house. The main part of the parkland is inaccessible to the public. There is some pedestrian access over the pasture fields at Bentley Heath with connection to Potters Bar over the M25. There is a cricket ground to the north east of the parkland.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

This area is regarded by a significant proportion of the Hertfordshire community as being of value for its fields, hedgerows and parkland features, and is likely to be additionally valued by Londoners (C).

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens*: Wrotham Park (Grade II).

Watling Chase Community Forest.

CONDITION

- Land cover change:* **insignificant**
- Age structure of tree cover:* **over-mature**
- Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:* **widespread**
- Management of semi-natural habitat:* **variable**
- Survival of cultural pattern:* **intact**
- Impact of built development:* **low**
- Impact of land-use change:* **low**

ROBUSTNESS

- Impact of landform:* **apparent**
- Impact of land cover:* **apparent**
- Impact of historic pattern:* **continuous**
- Visibility from outside:* **widely visible**
- Sense of enclosure:* **contained**
- Visual unity:* **coherent**
- Distinctiveness/rarity:* **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**

- additional planting on motorway embankments
- support the Watling Chase Community Forest in the realisation of its objectives for the area
- prepare and implement a restoration and management plan for the historic parkland and gardens at Wrotham Park in conjunction with the landowner and English Heritage. Scheme to fully address landscape, historic and ecological issues
- encourage woodland management of perimeter shelterbelts and new planting within Wrotham Park to maintain age and species diversity. Ornamental species should only be used to replace damaged or over-mature specimens
- encourage reversion from arable uses to pasture and grassland and restrict ploughing of grasslands within parklands
- establish realistic and attractive countryside management schemes for all sites with heath and acid grassland/scrub communities
- encourage the retention and active management of ponds and artificial water features for visual amenity and wildlife value
- 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 crop diversification and the restoration of mixed livestock/arable farming where possible
- promote hedgerow restoration through locally appropriate measures including coppicing, laying and replanting/gapping-up. Concentrated efforts to regain healthy elm hedgerows
- encourage the retention of the traditional pattern of fields at Bentley Heath
- in areas of semi-improved acid grassland avoid over-grazing and visitor pressure
- traffic-calming measures, where considered necessary, must be of a scale and design that relates to the local landscape character of the settlement
- maintain and develop the traditional pattern of heathy 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
- promote a clear strategy for the visual and noise mitigation of the M25. Allow for the constraints of pylons
- develop a strategy for improving public access within the grounds of Wrotham Park

- Parkland trees on skyline above Lower Kitt's End Farm (HCC Landscape Unit)

