

**LOCATION**

Valley of the River Quin located to the north of Braughing and extending northwards along the B1368 to Biggin Bridge (south of Barkway). Incorporates the settlements of Hare Street and Great Hormead.

- village of Great Hormead with many vernacular buildings in enclosed tributary valley
- B1368 passing through the centre of area

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

A shallow valley around the River Quin with open arable farmland either side. A bland landscape with few treasures. The River Quin is poorly defined in many stretches with little or no streamside vegetation. Settlements and field patterns are focused on the B1368 which passes through the centre of the area. The area contains several twentieth century features which detract from the quality of the area including: high voltage electricity pylons, chalk pit, Silkmead Farm industrial area, telecom masts, grain silos by Mutfords Farm and a sewage treatment works. The valley is sparsely vegetated but includes a substantial area of ornamental conifers north of Hare Street which form a dominant but inappropriate feature in the valley. The area includes the historic settlement of Great Hormead within a short, steep-sided tributary valley.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- shallow valley with gently sloping sides
- open, arable farmland
- small settlements and individual properties scattered along the B1368
- fragmented hedges, some low and broken, others more substantial
- frequent extensive views along and across the valley
- absence of woodland and few mature trees

**DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

- telecom masts on distant horizon

## PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

### Geology & Soils

The area is dominated by fluvo-glacial deposits from the Anglian glaciation, over much of the underlying chalk, except in some areas east of the river. Boulder Clay occupies the upper valley slopes, and the valley floor has a narrow belt of recent alluvium. Soils are generally fertile, calcareous and well-drained due to the presence of sand. To the west side of valley soils are a mix of deep, fertile, well drained fine loamy, coarse loamy and fine loamy soils, (Melford series). To the east side of valley there are areas of shallow well drained calcareous silty soils over chalk (Upton 1series).

### Topography

A shallow valley around the River Quin with gently sloping sides. At the northern end, the valley divides into three small shallow valleys, each following upper tributaries of the River Quin. At the southern end of the area (north of Braughing), the valley becomes slightly narrower with steeper sides.

### Degree of slope

At the northern end of the valley the slopes are typically 1 in 20 and at the southern end slopes vary between 1 in 7 and 1 in 15.

### Altitude Range

Levels range between 73m in the valley bottom at Quinbury Farm (at the southern end of the valley) to 120m at the top of the valley sides (at the northern end of the valley).

### Hydrology

The River Quin which rises near Barkway (north of the area) is a small and insignificant watercourse, typically a winterbourne, especially north of Great Hormead. The watercourse is fed by a number of sources including springs from Biggin Moor, Great Hormead Brook, Little Hormead Brook and various field ditches. Within the area, riverside vegetation is often absent which means the river is barely distinguishable at many points.

### Land Cover and Land Use

The valley sides are dominated by open arable farmland in small to medium fields with some occasional large fields particularly at

the northern end. Hedgerows between fields and along roads are fragmented. Some are low and broken with significant gaps and others more substantial. The area contains virtually no woodland, and map evidence, together with the cropmark evidence of early cultivation, suggests that woodland has not been a significant component in the landscape from a very early date. However, a significant block of mixed vegetation including a substantial proportion of ornamental conifers is present around a former works site to the north of Hare Street. This is visually intrusive and detracts from the character of the valley. A small area of trees and shrubs has also recently been planted close to Quinbury Farm. The valley also contains a few non-agricultural land uses including an industrial area at Silkmead Farm and a sewage works between Hay Street and Dassels.

### Vegetation and Wildlife

Owing to its fertile, well-drained soils, the area is almost devoid of semi-natural vegetation. There are some remaining neutral grasslands of local interest at Dassels, and some secondary grasslands and scrub on former allotments at Hare Street. The road verges of the B1368, and a green lane at Beauchamps are probably the most important remaining grasslands. There are no woods, and no aquatic habitats of any note. The chalk quarry west of Anstey is of local importance for a limited chalk flora on spoil banks etc.

The chalk spoil banks at Anstey Pit hold a significant colony of Kidney Vetch, as well as occasional plants of Woolly Thistle, both scarce in Hertfordshire. Tall Broomrape also occurs. The local arable weed Shepherd's Needle is known from fields at Hare Street. Pepper Saxifrage and Meadow Cranesbill survive in grasslands at Dassels.

## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The majority of its farmsteads and isolated houses are dispersed along the valley sides, with the settlements at Hare Street, Dassels and Great Hormead being sited on B1368, the road north from Braughing to Barkway, or on the B1038, the east-west road from Buntingford to Brent Pelham. These hamlets

and villages all have medieval origins, as do the majority of farms within the area. Quinbury, Mutfords and Biggin Manor Farm are all medieval sites; and Biggin Farm is also the site of a medieval hospital and chapel. While the present day settlement pattern has medieval or post-medieval origins there are indications of late Neolithic or early Bronze Age activity along the valley, including an extant barrow at Bummers Hill and cropmarks of ring ditches (plough-raised burial mounds) at Lincoln Hill, Anstey and at Mutford's. A Bronze Age axe has been found at the latter site. Cropmarks of linear ditches and enclosures also provide evidence of undated, but early occupation and exploitation of the landscape. The villages of Hare Street and Great Hormead were once prosperous settlements and contain several large properties including Hare Street House, (the country residence of Catholic Archbishops of Westminster) the Georgian-fronted Dane End Farm in Great Hormead and the Tudor Old Rectory in Great Hormead. Until recently Great Hormead was known for its two windmills but these no longer remain.

#### **Field Pattern**

Fields units are typically large in size, but locally there are some smaller units around settlements and properties. The field systems of the area were originally pre-18th century unenclosed common arable fields, and smaller 'irregular' enclosure fields, with the latter system predominating on the eastern side of the valley and at its southern end, close to and east of the river. Small areas of these 'irregular' enclosure field systems survive at Biggin Manor, Bandons, east of Hare Street and north east of Dassels, but nearly all the unenclosed common arable and irregularly enclosed field systems of pre-18th century date have been superseded. In the southern half of the area 20th century 'prairie' fields predominate, but substantial blocks of 18th century or later enclosure fields survive in the northern part of the area, north of the Hormead road. This contrasting survival appears to reflect the contour of the valley slope.

#### **Transport Pattern**

The B1368 runs through the area forming a locally important north-south route connecting the settlements of Barkway, Hare Street, Dassels, Braughing and Standon. At Hare Street the B1368 is crossed by the B1038

which is an east-west route providing routes to and from Buntingford. Several other minor roads connect with the B1368 and provide east-west connections across the valley. These are predominantly straight roads which join the B1368 at right angles.

#### **Settlement and the Built Form**

Settlement is concentrated along the B1368 on the west side of the River Quin in a series of small linear settlements: Hay Street, Dassels and Hare Street. These include a mixture of traditional vernacular buildings and a variety of more recent development. The area also includes the village of Great Hormead which is located in a small tributary valley on the east side of the River Quin. The village is an historic settlement focussed around a central linear road. Pevsner refers to the village street as 'uncommonly charming' and it contains a large proportion of vernacular buildings many of which are thatched properties with large overhanging roofs and exposed timbers. The Three Tuns public house is a traditional pub in the centre of the village.

#### **Other Sources of Area Specific Information**

Pevsner: Hertfordshire - The Buildings of England

**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

The area is widely visible from the edge of the adjacent plateaux and from within the arable areas. Views are generally open and extensive due to the absence of significant blocks of vegetation. However, from the B1368 views are more infrequent and are often filtered or screened as a result of roadside vegetation. The settlement of Great Hormead is also visually contained due to its location within a narrow and relatively steep-sided valley.

**Rarity and Distinctiveness**

The area is a bland landscape with few distinctive features

**VISUAL IMPACT**

There are a number of detracting features along the length of the valley which affect the visual quality of the area. Hare Street includes a mixture of twentieth century development much of which does not compliment the older vernacular buildings in the village. To the north of Hare Street, a former works site contains a large number of coniferous trees which are highly visible and detract from the character of the river valley. Other detracting features in the area include a large silo on Mutfords Farm, Anstey quarry, Silkmead Farm industrial area and two high voltage powerlines which cross the valley north of Hare Street.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Footpaths and bridlepaths cross the valley at regular intervals within the area. This includes a short section of the waymarked Hertfordshire Way which diverts across the valley from Great Hormead to Hare Street before crossing back across the valley to Little Hormead. However, there are few paths or bridleways in a north-south direction adjacent to the River Quin.

**COMMUNITY VIEWS**

An area of modest general regard but particularly valued locally, as evidenced by a community campaign to have the area included within a new AONB [D]

River Quin: "Sometimes the tiny feeders which swell the larger stream, Will travel on the highway – a thing you'd scarcely dream; And as for fords and bridges, they everywhere abound, To lure the traveller onward where some goodly scene is found."

**LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS**

SAM - Bummers Hill: a bowl barrow 135m north-west of Mutford Cottages.  
Great Hormead Conservation Area  
Areas of Archaeological Significance

<b>CONDITION</b>	
Land cover change	Widespread
Age Structure of Tree cover	Mixed
Extent of Semi-natural habitat survival	Relic
Management of Semi-natural habitat	Not obvious
Survival of Cultural pattern	Interrupted
Impact of built development	Moderate
Impact of land use charge	Moderate
<b>STRENGTH OF CHARACTER</b>	
Impact of land form	Apparent
Impact of land cover	Apparent
Impact of historic pattern	Apparent
Visibility from outside	Widely visible
Sense of enclosure	Open / exposed
Visual unity	Coherent
Distinctiveness / Rarity	Frequent

Strengthen and Reinforce	Conserve and Strengthen	Safeguard and Manage
Improve and Reinforce	Improve and Conserve	Conserve and Restore
Reconstruction	Improve and Restore	Restore Condition to Maintain Character

**IMPROVE AND CONSERVE**

- Ensure new planting is encouraged within the area. 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
- Protect the remaining river valley habitats of nature conservation interest, especially where they contribute to a suite of habitats, such as neutral grassland, running water, wet grassland, valley or floodplain woodland and grazing marsh
- Resist development that could lower the water table within river valleys and affect wetland habitats
- Promote the re-introduction of permanent pasture adjacent to the River Quin
- Promote the enhancement of the River Quin and its tributaries by the creation of wetland landscape features such as reedbeds, ponds, scrapes and pollarded willows
- Promote the management of existing riparian trees. Promote additional tree planting of native water loving species, willow, alder and poplar to emphasize the line of the watercourse
- 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 to reduce their acid or calcareous nature, in order to maintain their nature conservation value
- Traffic calming measures, where considered necessary, must be of a scale and design that relates to the local the landscape character of the settlement. The use of unsympathetic materials, such as concrete paviers, coloured concrete and brightly coloured road markings should be avoided and kerbing should be kept to a minimum
- 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, hedges and hedgerow trees
- Encourage the development of an improved network of rights of way particularly along the valley giving enhanced recreational opportunities for residents