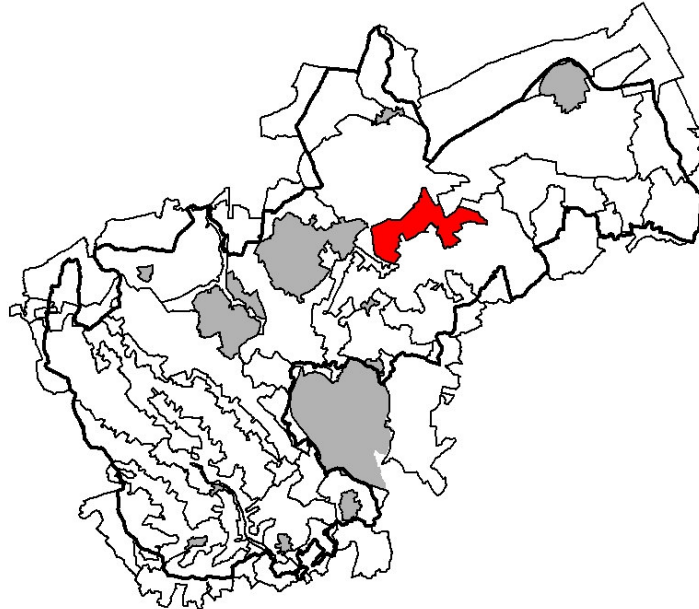
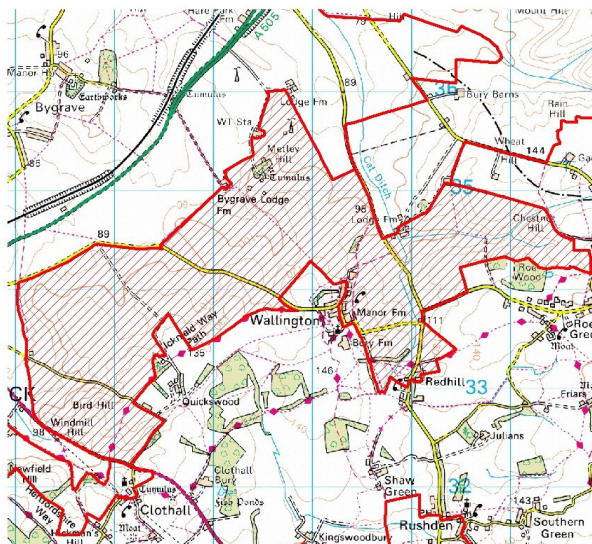


LOCATION

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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

This Character Area covers a broadly fan-shaped section of the scarp face to the north and west of Wallington is bounded by Clothall road in the west and the Redhill to Slip End road in the east.



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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Sloping chalk scarp, steeper in places nearer the crest and shallower at the transition to the lowlands. The scarp face is incised locally by spring fed streams. Generally open, unenclosed landscape affording views over a rolling landform. Rectilinear fields with curving boundaries set within an earlier organic pattern of lanes and primary boundaries. Predominant arable land use.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Sloping chalk scarp
- Long distance views over lowlands to the north
- Large but irregular field pattern

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- (Metley Hill) Radio/Telecommunications masts to east of Bygrave Lodge Farm.
- (Upper) Icknield Way passes along southern boundary
- Bird Hill

ASSESSMENT**PHYSICAL INFLUENCES****Geology & soils**

Chalk overlain locally by colluvium and glacial channel deposits in the hollow valley at Clothall. Shallow rendzina soils or calcareous loams.

Topography

Sloping ground falling from the edge of the chalk plateau to the lowlands to the north. The chalk scarp has been eroded into numerous valleys, now mainly dry, leaving a rolling landform.

Degree of slope

Typically 1:10 falls, becoming shallower at the transition between the scarp and the lowlands.

Altitude range

90m to 130m.

Hydrology

Local streams (Cat Ditch and tributary to the east).

Land cover and land use

Predominantly arable.

Vegetation and wildlife

Undulating landscapes on a calcareous substrate. A large expanse of semi-improved species-rich calcareous/neutral grassland is centred around Metley Hill Wireless Station. Such habitats are scarce in the county as a whole and represent only 0.62% of total land use in North Hertfordshire. Some diverse calcareous plant communities can also be found on ancient field and road banks, for example at Wallington Road, Lodge Road at Sandon and Bird Hill, species include large thyme, squinancywort and basil thyme.

Woodland is restricted to the vestigial elm copse at Wallington and scrub at Quickswood.

Spring cereals are a feature of the farmed landscape.

The open fields are home to brown hares and occasional flocks of wintering plovers. Very important area for farmland birds such as skylark, linnet, quail and corn-bunting. Herts BAP is seeking to re-establish stone-curlew as a breeding species to this area.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The area contains several cropmarks, enclosures, prehistoric ring ditches, linear ditches and a trackway. Roman-British burials have been unearthed north of Wallington. In the north of the area, at Metley Hill lies a tumulus of unknown date and origin.

Field Pattern

The historic agricultural landscape comprises predominantly post 1950s enclosure and pre – 18th century unenclosed common arable. Prairie fields with post 1950 boundary loss, 18th century and later enclosure and pre 18th century irregular enclosure lie to the eastern end of the area.

Transport Pattern

Bounded by Clothall road in the west and the Redhill to Slip End road in the east. The Upper Icknield Way (prehistoric trackway) passes along the southern boundary.

Settlements and Built Form

The historic settlement pattern is of a sparse nature characterised by farms and part of the village of Wallington.

EVALUATION**VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION**

Expansive open area with long distance views to the north.

Rarity & distinctiveness

The scarp is a comparatively common feature in North Hertfordshire.

VISUAL IMPACT

Very little development which because of the openness of the landscape can be potentially highly visible. Local telecommunications masts at Metley Hill.

ACCESSIBILITY

A few local roads climb up the scarp face. The Icknield Way long distance footpath runs along the southern boundary.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) have undertaken Tier B (Community of Place) consultations. Views of the local community have been sought and contributor's responses to each of the Character Areas will be analysed and a summary of the responses provided by HCC.

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

LC2 Landscape Conservation Area

EVALUATION

CONDITION

Land cover change: Insignificant
 Age structure of tree cover: Over mature
 Extent of semi-natural habitat survival: Relic
 Management of semi-natural habitat: Poor
 Survival of cultural pattern: Interrupted
 Impact of built development: Low
 Impact of land-use change: Low

Matrix Score: **Poor**

ROBUSTNESS

Impact of landform: Prominent
 Impact of land cover: Prominent
 Impact of historic pattern: Insignificant
 Visibility from outside: Widely visible
 Sense of enclosure: Open
 Visual unity: Unified
 Distinctiveness/rarity: Frequent

Matrix Score: **Weak**

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
ROBUSTNESS				

EVALUATION**INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY****Landscape Character Sensitivities**

- The open and predominantly unsettled character of the area would be vulnerable to change
- The smoothly undulating and prominent landform which highlights the bleached chalky soils would also be highly vulnerable to change
- The limited access to and through the Character Area, with few minor roads and a small number of rights of way
- The Icknield Way long distance footpath runs along the southern boundary of the Wallington Scarp Slopes
- Vegetation along Cat Ditch in the east of the Character Area which creates visual interest on the sparsely vegetated slopes
- Large scale arable fields are the predominant land use
- Hedgerows are infrequent and are variable in height and management
- Hedgebanks are present along the narrow minor roads through the Wallington Scarp Slopes, although the hedgerows have been removed in some locations and would be sensitive to further losses
- The A505 is a noticeable element in views to the south of the Character Area, with little vegetation to screen it

Overall Wallington Scarp Slopes is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. The undulating landform and isolated character would be sensitive to most forms of development.

Visual Sensitivities

- Open sweeping views and panoramic views throughout the Character Area
- A strong visual relationship with North Baldock Chalk Uplands, which is overlooked by the Wallington Scarp Slopes
- Telecommunications masts currently intrude on skylines within the Character Area, particularly at Metley Hill Radio Station
- Woodland blocks to the south in the Weston – Green End Plateau are prominent skyline features

In visual terms, Wallington Scarp Slopes is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. Views towards the rising scarp slopes and from the north across the North Baldock Chalk Uplands are particularly sensitive to development.

LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Wallington Scarp Slopes is considered to be of **moderate high landscape value**. Aspects of particular value are the lack of incongruous elements, a recognisable sense of place, the striking landform, the visual interest, the sense of openness and relative remoteness, the relative tranquillity and visible expressions of the local geology.

EVALUATION

CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT

Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)

This type of development would not be appropriate within Wallington Scarp Slops, due to its rural and undeveloped nature. It would introduce a scale of development that would be entirely out of keeping with the Character Area at present and its isolated location. Large scale development could not be accommodated within the Wallington Scarp Slopes without a significant visual impact and interrupting the open, long distance views. The steeply sloping and undulating landform would also make major development difficult to accommodate.

The landscape capacity for major urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)

This type of development would also be inappropriate within this Character Area, due to its rural and undeveloped character. There are no settlements within or immediately adjacent to the Character Area that could be extended, other than the small village of Wallington. Any development would reduce the openness of the Character Area and would be difficult to accommodate on the steeply sloping and undulating landform.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be low.

Major transport developments/improvements

This type of development would not generally be appropriate within this Character Area, due to the largely rural character of most routes at present. However, the A505 is located just outside the Wallington Scarp Slopes, along with the railway line between Baldock and Royston. These are visible elements in views from the Character Area but do not dominate the local character. Additional traffic would affect the relative tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low to moderate.

Commercial/warehouse estates

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area. There are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Any upgrading of the existing road network of lanes would cause damage to the landscape character. Extensive development would also disrupt the open views and sloping landform.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

Individual large/bulky buildings

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were in close proximity to other structures and agricultural in character. A few modern agricultural buildings have been constructed within the Wallington Scarp Slopes, although some of these are visually intrusive. Large buildings, if not carefully located and designed would erode the rural and undeveloped character of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

Large scale open uses

This type of large scale development would not be appropriate in this character area and there are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area. Extensive development would also disrupt the open views and sloping landform.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

EVALUATION

Mineral extraction/waste disposal

This Character Area is currently relatively undisturbed. It would be difficult for even small scale mineral extraction to be accommodated due to the openness of the Wallington Scarp Slopes. Larger scale extraction would disrupt the remoteness and tranquillity of the Character Area and likely to be highly visible. The characteristic landform would also be lost if mineral extraction were to occur.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

Incremental small scale development

There may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of a vernacular form or style and in keeping with the rural character. Modern buildings have been constructed within the Wallington Scarp Slopes, although some of these are visually intrusive. However, large buildings, if not carefully located, could erode the rural and undeveloped character of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low to moderate.

Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines

There are currently a small number of detractors in the areas. These include existing telecommunications masts at Metley Hill, which are visible on the skyline in views into the Character Area from the north. There are also a number of low voltage overhead cable routes. Further utilities developments or structures such as masts or wind turbines are likely to have a major impact on the rural character of Wallington Scarp Slopes. Large scale tall elements such as these would be highly visible within the Character Area, as well as from surrounding Character Areas.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.

GUIDELINES**STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE****Strategy: Reconstruct****Landscape management guidelines**

- Promote planting of new beech woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora especially in relation to sub-urban fringe areas
- Encourage the development for species-rich calcareous grassland habitats
- Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas
- Promote hedgerow restoration along the lines of historic field boundaries and for the creation of visual links between existing woodland areas
- Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire enclosures to new grazing areas
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network

Built development guidelines

- Retain the rural character of Wallington Scarp Slopes, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Wallington Scarp Slopes
- Maintain the open character and the long distance views from the Character Area
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing hedgerows
- Planting should reflect existing patterns, with hedges following field and road boundaries and strategic isolated copses to mitigate buildings
- Avoid the location of new development on visually exposed areas of the scarp slopes
- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area
- Restrict the location of further masts and vertical features to the eastern end of the Character Area to prevent them from dominating the skyline