

County map showing location of LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA



LOCATION

Theobalds Estate is located in the south east of the county, parallel to and slightly overlapping the M25 and the southern boundary of Hertfordshire, less than 13 miles (20km) from the heart of London. It includes a small part of the Lea Valley flood plain.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Complex layers of history are evident in the cultural pattern of the landscape, in which mixed farmland and parkland are a dominant feature. A strong pattern of discrete woodland blocks and medium to large open arable fields create an unusual patchwork of ecologically rich and sterile patches across the undulating landform. Low, managed hedgerows allow long views across the arable slopes to the M25 in the south. Isolated settlement is generally confined to defensive sites on the higher ground. Small farms are scattered across the estate.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- discrete woodlands and estate farmland
- geometric field pattern
- undulating landform
- horse grazing
- mansions and isolated farms
- transport infrastructure
- long straight boundaries

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Temple Bar and Theobalds Palace (SAMs)
- Soper's Viaduct
- waymarked routes and linear 'rides'
- Theobalds Park College
- Gunsite Stud Farm
- Roman road / Ermine Street
- evidence of deer park boundaries
- the New River



Theobalds Estate • (E. Staveley)

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology and soils. This area is a part of the gently undulating South Hertfordshire plateau, which is a sub-section of the North Thames basin. There is a change of soils across the area from slowly permeable clay over Tertiary clay in the west (Windsor series), via loamy or clayey soils over chalky till ((Beccles 3 series) to deep stoneless well-drained silty soils over Aeolian silty drift in the east (Hamble 2 series).

Topography. This area is a south-east facing slope with a high point near Woodgreen Farm.

Degree of slope. 1 in 10 to 1 in 30

Altitude range. 27m to 95m

Hydrology. A network of springs and streams feed into the New River in the east and areas of wet ground are concurrent with the underlying geology. Northaw Brook enters this area in the west, passes under the viaduct and links in to Cuffley Brook. A number of ornamental water bodies are located around Theobalds Park College and Temple House.

Land cover and land use. Wooded arable farmland is widespread across the area, especially in the west. The influence of Theobalds Park and Temple House can be seen to the east, with more parkland and the use of land for pasture rather than arable cultivation. The farmland is compartmentalised by geometric woodland blocks, with prominent fences around pasture fields in the east.

Vegetation and wildlife. Evidence of ornamental planting and landscape features can be found within the woodlands of Theobalds Estate, e.g. lime, horse chestnut and rhododendrons. A high percentage of common elm in the hedgerows is consistent across the area. Thorns, brambles and dog roses are also significant local hedgerow species.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The influence of London on the history and culture of the area is omnipresent. Large country homes have been located in the Enfield Chase area for centuries and the landscape has been shaped substantially by wealthy landowners and visiting royalty. Land boundaries have been marked by estate architecture (lodges, walls and fences), distinctive vegetation types (avenues and hedge-banks) and noticeable changes in landcover pattern.

- Theobalds Park was created by James I as a hunting park, the largest known in England. It enclosed a large part of southern Hertfordshire within a park pale or wall, but was shortlived (see below). In 1564 Sir William Cecil, Queen Elizabeth I's leading statesman, bought the manor of Theobalds and parts of the surrounding manors. In 1608 James I persuaded Sir Robert Cecil to exchange it for Hatfield Park and the manor became a Royal Palace. A process of enlargement culminated in 1650 with a park covering 2,508 acres, enclosed by a 9-foot high wall. In that year 15,608 trees within the park were marked as being suitable for naval use, indicative of its use for timber production, as well as fishing and hawking, although its primary use was for hunting. On the execution of Charles I the estate passed into the hands of

Parliament, which demolished the palace, deforested the chase and installed several tenant farmers. A patchwork of discrete woodland blocks and relatively rectangular fields of arable land was introduced, a process that removed most traces of the former deer-park. After the Restoration, Charles II granted the estate to the Duke of Albemarle, complete with the tenancy arrangements. Thus within the span of 90 years the second largest building in England and the largest deer park were created and destroyed. Boundary banks to the former estate can be found at Hammond Street and south of the M25.

- Woodgreen hamlet, which was on the edge of the park in 1611, was moved to a new site in 1620. The site was later deserted and then emparked in 1782, a reverse of the pattern with Theobalds.

Field pattern. Since the destruction of the park, the large geometric pattern and size of fields has remained fairly constant, with the organic woodland shapes breaking up the regularity. The pattern is especially noticeable on the Theobalds Estate, around Burnt Farm, highlighted by the cruciform shape of the waymarked routes.

Transport pattern. The M25 is a major influence along the southern boundary of this area, with permanent noise, movement and light intrusion.

Settlements and built form. Settlement is dispersed across the area. The manor houses are located on the river valley slopes in the east.

- Theobalds Park, a red brick mansion dating from 1763 and much added to in the 19th and early 20th centuries, faces south east. Its Edwardian tower can be seen across the lower ground of the Lea Valley. Within its grounds stands the triumphal arch known as Temple Bar (SAM), designed by Sir Christopher Wren, erected in Fleet Street in 1672 and moved to its present site in 1888.
- Temple House is a restored 18th-century manor house.
- Gunsite Stud is a new stable building nestled into a fold of the southern slopes, finished with white rendered walls and terracotta roof tiles.
- Theobalds Manor is a red brick Queen Anne style house adjacent to the stud buildings. Of Burghley's palace only a window and a strip of brickwork remain (now a Scheduled Ancient Monument).

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

Visibility is unusually good for the south east of Hertfordshire. Views become more restricted around the country houses on the eastern slopes, limited by access restrictions and vegetation. There are long views over low hedges and more open arable land from the waymarked route across the Theobalds Estate. It is not a tranquil area.

Rarity and distinctiveness. Farmland and parkland are very typical of the stretch of landscape to either side of the M25 corridor. Although this area is rich in historic interest, much of it is not immediately obvious within the landscape

VISUAL IMPACT

The site and sound of the M25 presents a major impact on the south of the area, with the A10 bisecting the area on its eastern edge. Sopwell's Viaduct is a distinctive feature. The manor houses are well sited and only have a local impact.

ACCESSIBILITY

The waymarked routes across the area are well used and access is good for walkers. The paths are wide and well surfaced. Camping facilities are located on Ermine Street adjacent to the M25.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

While variable, overall this is a highly regarded area, particularly around Theobalds Park, and might have even higher value if the interests of people in North London were also considered (B).

CONDITION

Land cover change: **insignificant**
Age structure of tree cover: **mature**
Extent of semi-natural habitat survival: **fragmented**
Management of semi-natural habitat: **good**
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: **prominent**
Impact of historic pattern: **interrupted**
Visibility from outside: **widely visible**
Sense of enclosure: **partial**
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**

- encourage landowners to safeguard existing hedges, increase hedged field boundaries, create permanent grass strips around field margins and prevent spray drift, using financial incentives as available.
- encourage the planting of new hedges along historic field boundaries to conserve the landscape character of the area and reinforce ecological corridors
- encourage the planting of only locally indigenous trees and shrubs, of local provenance if possible
- consider the provision of interpretation and amenity space around Temple Bar