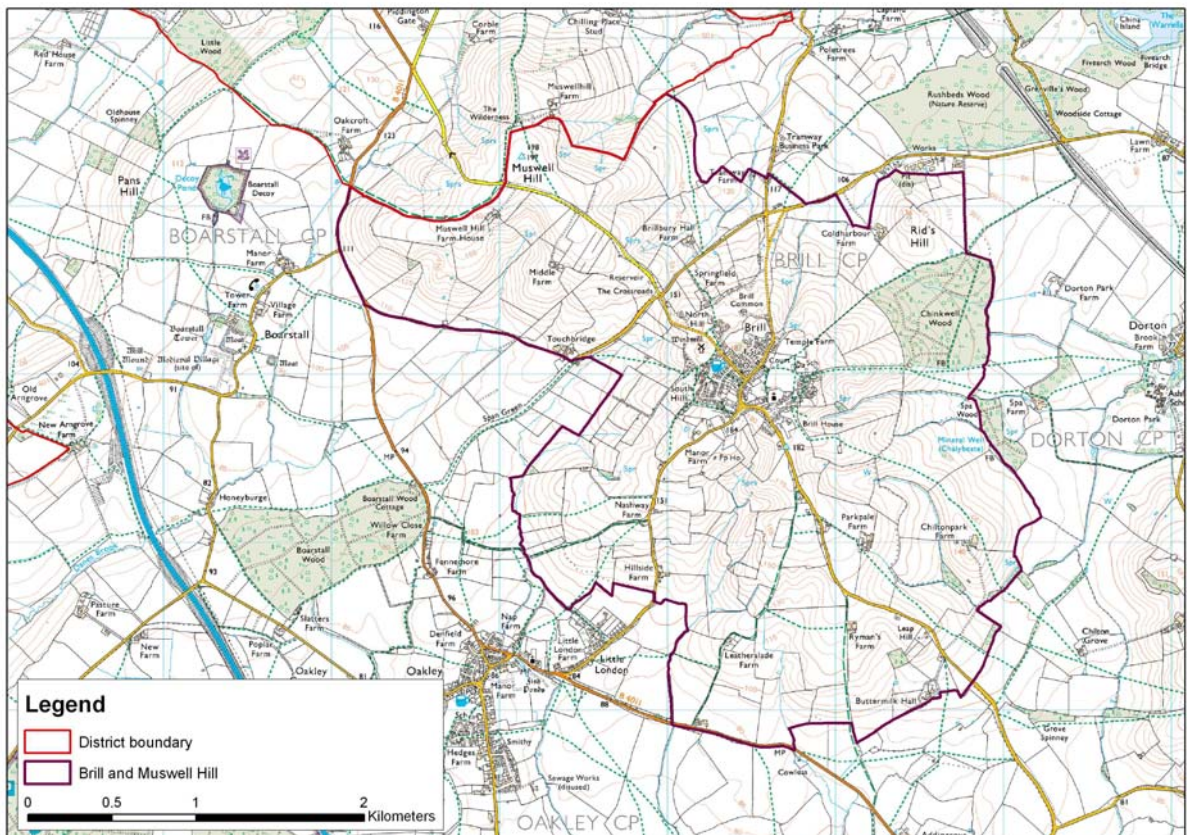
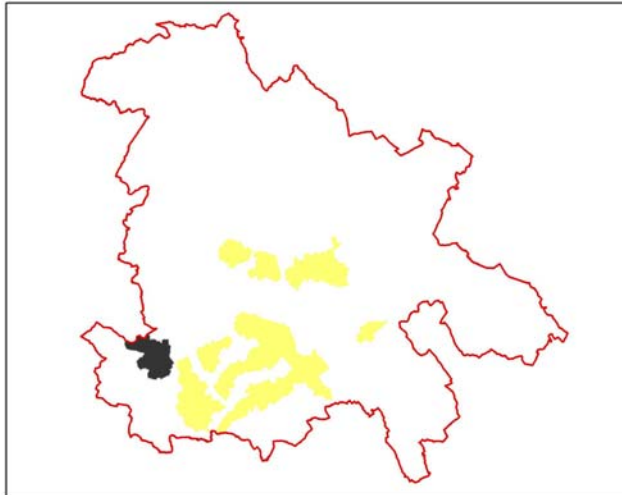


LCA 9.5 Brill and Muswell Hill

Landscape Character Type: LCT 9 Low Hills and Ridges



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Key Characteristics

- Core of medieval hunting forest of Bernwood
- Strong land conical landform
- Strong features of a historic landscape
- Predominantly pastoral in irregular shaped fields
- One large woodland elsewhere-scattered very small blocks.
- One large village at Brill
- Exhilarating open character

Distinctive Features

- Clinkwell Wood ancient woodland
- Brill windmill
- Historic common land
- Large farms in prominent locations
- Fine brick houses in Brill
- Landform relics of the former brickworks
- Archaeology of medieval royal estate centre and industry
- Brill Common

Location The LCA is located in the south western corner of the District just northeast of the M40 motorway. Part of Muswell Hill lies over the county and district boundary in Oxfordshire

Landscape character The landscape character of this area is strong and distinct the unifying elements are the strong landform and the strong irregular field pattern reflecting pre 18th century enclosure. The settlement of Brill was once associated with brick pits and works. This has had a lasting impact with many fine brick houses and undulating rough ground where the clay was worked. Brill windmill on the northern side is a key visual landmark. There are fine exhilarating, panoramic views out from the hills. Several large farms are situated on prominent areas of the steep hillsides one of the most notable is Chilton Park. The common land, unimproved grassland and other patches of rough ground add to the sense of a landscape with strong historic associations, which has been left relatively unchanged for centuries.

Geology An upstanding area of Kimmeridge clay capped by layers of Portland and Purbeck limestones further capped by Whitchurch sand.

Topography Two steep conical shaped hills are joined together in a small saddle. The hills rise steeply out of the surrounding low undulating clayland. The surface of the hills undulates with numerous small streamlines. There is a small flat area on the top of each hill. The elevation ranges from 100m -190m AOD.

Hydrology The hills are drained by numerous small streamlines - at the head of most of these is a spring.

Land use and settlement The hills are predominantly pastoral often in small irregular shaped fields. The arable fields are on the southern side of Brill Hill.

The area is sparsely settled apart from the large village of Brill on the top of the hill. The former brickworks are reflected in many fine brick houses. Brill windmill and the common land around it create a distinctive landscape feature of the area.

Tree cover There is a large woodland on the eastern side of Brill Hill - this is Chinkwell Wood, an area of ancient woodland. The rest of the area has a scattering of very small woodlands some of which are coniferous. The tree cover in hedgerows is variable.

Biodiversity The dominant habitat within Brill and Muswell Hill is grassland which is present throughout. Most is improved pasture, but unimproved grassland can also be found throughout. Areas of the broad habitat type neutral grassland are found at Brill Common on the northwest side of Brill Hill, and in a further area to the south of Chinkwell Wood. Brill Common is one of the most ecological interesting areas, providing a mosaic of acid and calcareous grassland, scrub, and ponds.

Other habitats present are broadleaved woodland notably at Chinkwell Wood and in the multiple small fragments scattered predominantly in the north. There is some linkage to other habitats by the hedgerow system, which is generally strong however hedgerows around Chinkwell Wood and Brill Common are defunct and gappy. Small amounts of arable land are found mainly in the southwest in large fields. Limited aquatic habitat

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interest is provided by the streams and the small number of ponds scattered throughout.

Historic environment

Brill lay at the centre of Bernwood Forest from the 10th century until its deforestation in the early 17th century. Archaeological evidence indicates a long history for this area, most of it focussed around the village which may have grown up on the site of a prehistoric hillfort. A hunting lodge was built at Brill by Edward the Confessor and occupied by successive medieval kings up until the 14th century. The parish church probably originated as the royal chapel; an earthwork bank next to it may mark the site of both the royal manor and earlier hillfort and is protected as an scheduled ancient monument. Elsewhere in the area there is evidence for a Roman settlement on Muswell Hill.

Brill was a small medieval town or borough. Since medieval times the settlement and common has been the focus of industry, the deposits of fine clay was used in the manufacture of pottery producing the renown Brill/Boarstall pottery. Brill's industrial heritage continued up until the early 20th century when the clay from the common was used in tile and brick making. The buried remains of pottery, brick and tile manufacture are widespread in and around the village whilst the old clay pits dotted across the common are clearly visible. The extensive use of brick in the village's historic buildings is its most obvious legacy. Other distinctive structures are the 17th century post-mill on Brill Common and the ruins of Dorton Spa in Chinkwell Wood.

Brill Hill is notable for a number of historic landscape features including ancient woodland of Chinkwell Wood on the eastern side, a large area of "assarts" (irregular fields created by woodland clearance) to the south, a small area of parkland to the south and common land to the north. To the northwest of the village the fields were created from a distinct area of former woodland known as "The Frith" cleared in the 17th century. These elements along with the historic settlement itself with the windmill create an area around the top of the hill of significant historic interest and diversity. Almost three quarters of the rest of the area is identified as historic landscape of primarily pre 18th century enclosure the majority of which is irregular. There are small areas of new settlement around Brill and small areas of later enclosure. This landscape reflects very strong historic associations this is visually evident in the strong field pattern and the historic settlement of Brill with its landmark post windmill.

This historic landscape has a high amenity value, in particular the historic village and its iconic windmill and common. Access to historic features is facilitated through a car park, interpretation board and the Bernwood Jubilee Way guide book.

Designations

Conservation Area at Brill

Scheduled Ancient Monuments: Brill Pottery Kilns, Earthworks

Archaeological Notification Areas – 8 No.

SSSI: Muswell Hill

CWS – 3 No.

BNS – 4 No.

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The open character and exhilarating views are key characteristics of the area.



Rough common land around Brill Windmill with views out west over Oxfordshire

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Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis

Condition	Very good
Pattern of elements:	Unified
Visual detractors:	Few
Visual unity:	Strongly unified
Cultural integrity:	Good
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Good

Sensitivity	High
Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Continuity:	Historic
Sense of place:	Moderate
Landform:	Dominant
Tree cover:	Intermittent
Visibility:	High

Guidelines	Conserve
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Condition

Generally the condition of the landscape is considered to be very good. There is a strong sense of unity across the area with a strong hedgerow pattern across the dominant landform. There are very few visual detractors. The cultural integrity is good, the landscape containing many historic features being strongest where the hedgerow pattern is strong and around the historic settlement of Brill. Ecological integrity is moderate due to reasonable connectivity and the areas of designated sites and habitats of District significance compared to the rest of the District. Overall the combination of the good cultural integrity and moderate ecological integrity combine to give the area a good functional integrity.

Sensitivity

The area has a distinctive character with a strong sense of historic continuity from the good hedgerow pattern and historic settlement of Brill, the windmill is a notable landmark with strong historic associations. Overall the sense of place is considered to be moderate. The very strong landform with steep slopes and intermittent tree cover produces an area of high visibility. The overall degree of sensitivity is high being particularly strong in Brill and around the edges of the settlement.



The village of Brill is on the very top of the hill.

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Landscape Guidelines Conserve

The landscape guidelines for Brill and Muswell Hill are as follows:

- Encourage the management of hedgerows through traditional cutting regimes and the promotion of the restoring of gaps with indigenous species and the establishment of new hedgerow trees particularly oak and ash.
- Promote good woodland management aiming to create and maintain a wide diversity of habitats.
- Encourage public access to woodland with education and new access agreements.
- Promote information and understanding about the historic importance of woodland and associated features such as banks and ditches.
- Maintain the extent and condition of unimproved and semi-improved grassland and encourage good management practices.
- Encourage the establishment of buffer strips of semi-natural vegetation along all watercourses.
- Conserve and enhance the distinctive character of the settlement of Brill.
- Encourage new housing and alterations to existing housing to be consistent with locally traditional materials and designed to reflect the traditional character of the area.
- Highway improvements should be sympathetic to the scale, pattern and character of the existing road network. Retain strong rural character of minor roads by minimising signage and kerbing.
- Identify key viewpoints from publicly accessible locations and promote the retention and enhancement of these views.
- Conserve and secure appropriate management of important archaeological remains.
- Promote understanding and enjoyment of Brill's cultural heritage.
- Maintain and improve connectivity of habitats, particularly the condition of existing hedgerows around Brill Common and Chinkwell Wood.
- Promote reinstatement of hedgerows on arable land.



Brill windmill a fine example of a postmill dating from the 1860's with fine views west out over Oxfordshire.