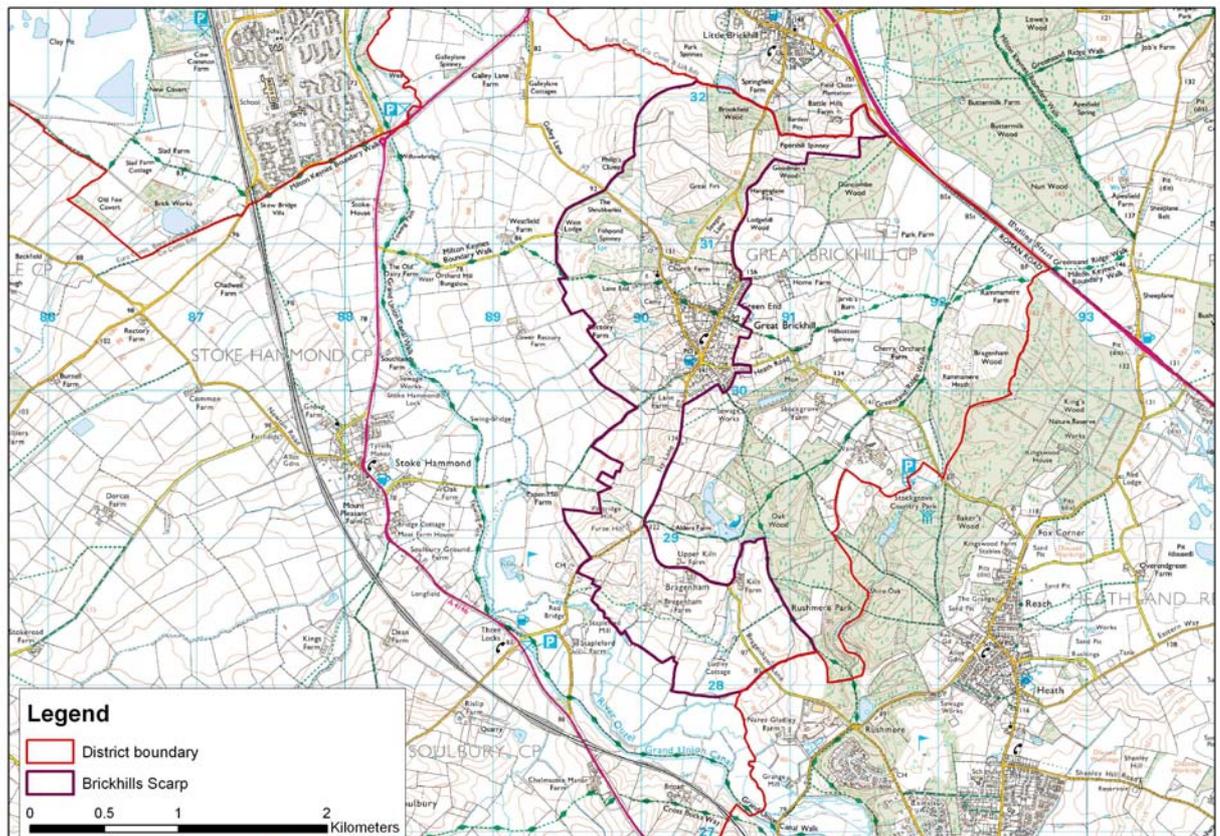
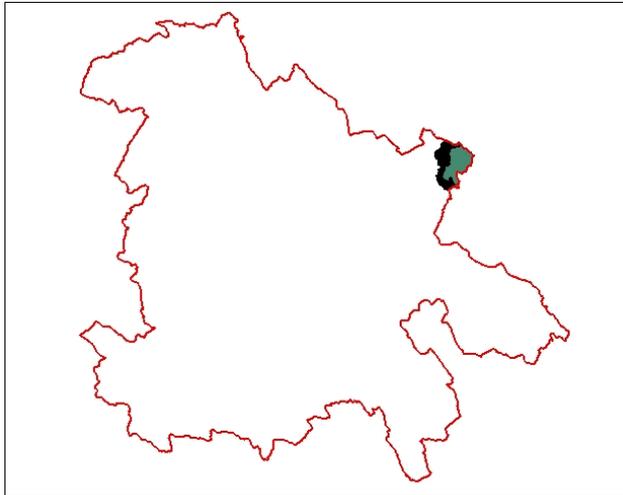


LCA 6.1 Brickhills Scarp

Landscape Character Type: LCT 6 Greensand Ridge



LCA 6.1 Brickhills Scarp (LCT 6)

Key Characteristics

- Dramatic steep scarp
- Mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland
- Predominance of pasture
- Narrow sunken lanes

Distinctive Features

- Long distance views from vantage points on the scarp
- Parkland at Great Brickhill
- Historic settlement with distinctive sandstone buildings
- Pockets of heathland vegetation
- Acid grassland and large areas of neutral grassland
- Fen

Intrusive Elements

- Long distance views to Milton Keynes
- Intermittent views of trains on west coast mainline

Location The steep face of the Brickhills Scarp is located to the east of the River Ouzel. The scarp stretches in a shallow arc north of Leighton Buzzard to the county boundary at Little Brickhill. The village of Great Brickhill occupies a central location on the scarp.

Landscape character This prominent scarp contrasts markedly with the much flatter clay landscapes at its base and forms the most dramatic landform near Milton Keynes. It runs in a northwest facing arc from the northern edge of Leighton Buzzard to Little Brickhill on the county boundary and continues into Bedfordshire as a distinctive feature.

This is a highly visible landform from the west. In distant views the scarp top woodlands and dark conifers appear as dominant elements but at closer range the mosaic pattern of woodland, pasture and settlement is more apparent. Within parts of the LCA the woodlands and the sunken lanes often limit views out but there can be panoramic views from the more open areas looking out over the flatter claylands. The free draining sandy acidic soils are well wooded and where not managed as grassland support a characteristic heath vegetation pattern.

Geology The scarp is predominantly the exposed edge of a large deposit of Woburn Sand. On the lower slopes are exposures of West Walton Formation calcareous mudstones and Oxford clays. Whilst the top layer is overlain by glacial till and other glacial deposits.

Topography The upper parts of the scarp lie at a level of 150m AOD whilst one foot of the scarp follows broadly the 100m contour.

Hydrology Streams which rise on the slopes above the scarp or ponds feed water courses which flow down the scarp towards the river Ouzel.

Land use and settlement To the south agricultural land use is generally pasture with fine leaved grasses characteristic of the sandy acidic soils and there is little arable cultivation. Steep narrow and sometimes sunken lanes traverse the slope connecting Great Brickhill with surrounding settlements. Distinctive historic walls and buildings of reddish brown sandstone are associated with the villages.

Tree cover Coniferous woodland predominates, mostly consisting of Scots pine but there are patches of deciduous woodland, regenerating birch, heath vegetation such as bilberry, bracken and sometimes gorse.

Biodiversity A comparatively high proportion of this LCA comprises grassland or woodland which is either a priority or broad habitat type.

Large areas of grassland are distributed throughout the Brickhills Scarp of which much is neutral pasture, acidic pasture or lowland dry acidic grassland. The latter is a priority habitat type whilst the others are broad habitat types. A very high proportion of the grassland is designated as a CWS or BNS. For example the meadows at Kiln Farm Valley CWS support a wide variety of habitats such as wet to dry grasslands, streams and flushes; Great Brickhill Field CWS contains wet flush areas and a pond that adds to the diversity of the field and adjoins woodland.

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Additional diversity is added by the coniferous woodland; some areas of broadleaved woodland; small amounts of bracken in the north; standing water in the north and south; and fen in the northern half. Arable land is restricted to a small central area and a patch to the south.

Historic environment An area of historic interest focused around the settlement of Great Brickhill, which is a conservation area. The village was involved in the manufacture of pottery and tiles in the medieval period. There is also a small deserted medieval settlement at Bragenham Farm. The historic landscape is a mixture of regular and irregular pre 18th century enclosure, fossilised strips and occasional assarts. There are also extensive areas of parliamentary and 19th century enclosure north of Great Brickhill and at Bragenham.

Designations

Conservation Area at Great Brickhill
Archaeological Notification Areas – 8 No.
CWS – 6 No.
BNS – 3 No.

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Paddocks on the lower slopes of the scarp - looking towards Bragenham Farm.



View from the scarp at Great Brickhill over the Ouzel valley to the west.

LCA 6.1 Brickhills Scarp (LCT 6)

Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis

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

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

Guidelines	Conserve
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Condition

Overall the condition of the landscape is considered to be very good. The pattern of elements is unified by the dominant features of landform and woodland cover. There are few visual detractors to dilute the visual integrity of the landscape which is considered to be strongly unified. Cultural integrity is variable, strongest where focused on the historic core of Great Brickhill and the surrounding network of winding lanes. Ecological integrity is strong due to strong connectivity, relatively large areas of broad habitats of District significance and of county wildlife sites. Functional integrity is considered to be strong.

Sensitivity

The area is identified as a distinctive landscape which dominates the surrounding areas to north and west. Historic continuity is supported by moderate sense of place. The dominant landform is supported by strong woodland cover around the settlement and forms a strong backdrop to the east of the area. Lower slopes are in agricultural land use and this gives an overall rating of intermittent tree cover. Due to the elevated nature of the scarp there are long distance views over the Ouzel Valley to the west and to the north.



Great Brickhill Parish Church.

LCA 6.1 Brickhills Scarp (LCT 6)

Landscape Guidelines Conserve

The landscape guidelines for the Brickhills Scarp are as follows:

- Encourage the retention and strengthening of heathland character of parts of the area. Encourage the restoration of the historic hedgerow pattern where it has been lost, to enhance the landscape character and strengthen the ecological diversity. Where necessary use historic maps to identify where hedgerows have been lost.
- Maintain the existing extent of acidic and neutral grassland.
- Maintain at least the current condition of lowland dry acid grassland.
- Encourage good management practice on the existing acid grassland.
- Maintain extent and condition of fen habitat.
- Maintain and improve the condition of existing hedgerows through traditional cutting regimes.
- Maintain the condition and extent of woodland using traditional techniques to create and manage a wide diversity of habitats.
- Promote information and understanding about the historic importance and appropriate management of historic woodland features such as irregular edges, assarts, banks and ditches.
- Encourage the preservation and management of the historic field pattern.
- Support and promote the recreational use of the area with access and interpretation.
- Promote the retention of the character of minor roads by the management of hedgerows and verges and limiting urbanising elements such as signage and kerbing.
- Encourage the protection and management of views to the scarp from surrounding lower and publicly accessible land.



Galley Lane north of Great Brickhill. Parkland enclosed by stone wall.