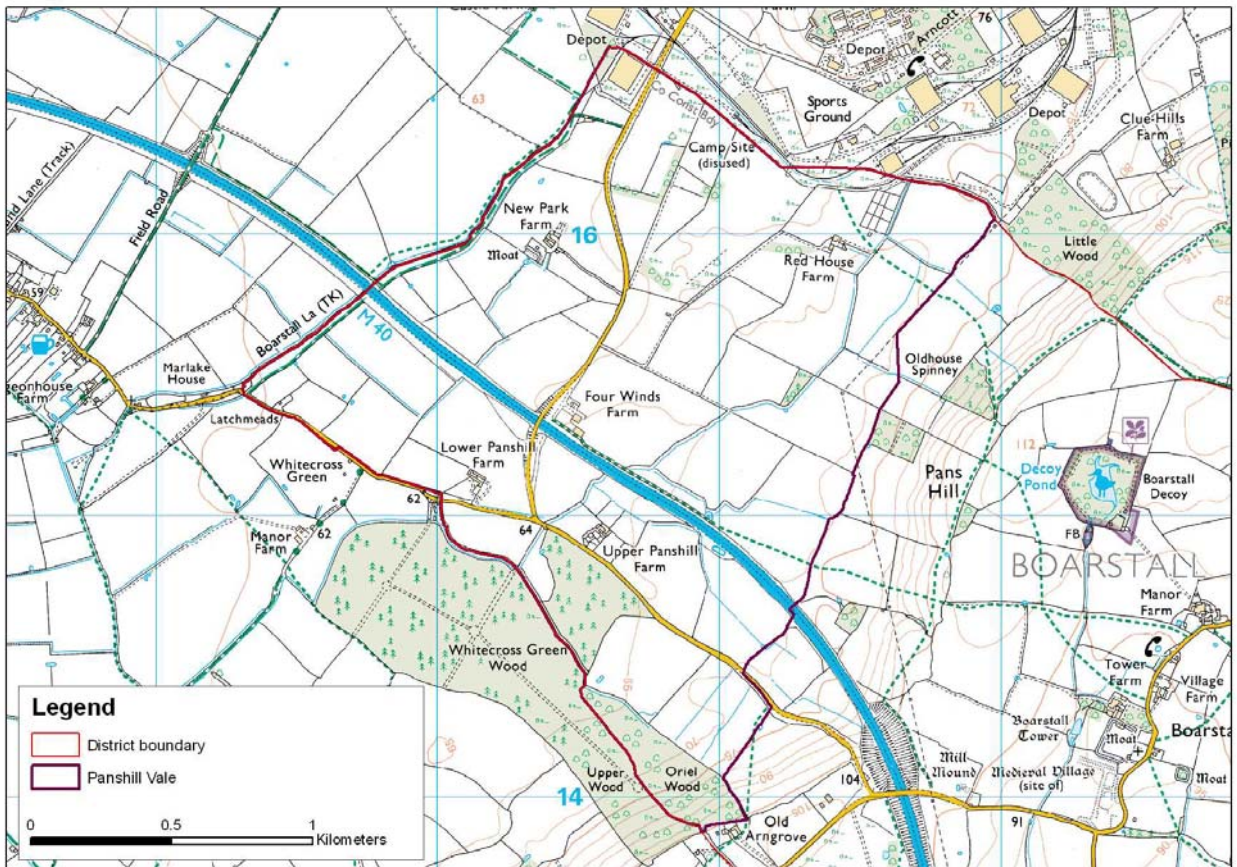
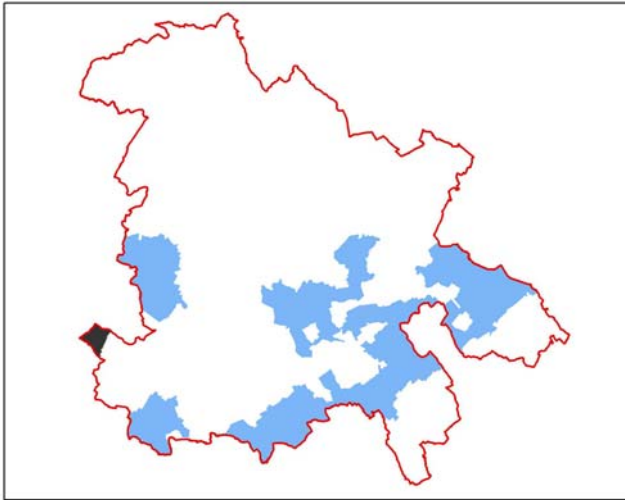


LCA 8.8 Panshill Vale

Landscape Character Type: LCT 8 Vale



LCA 8.8 Panshill Vale (LCT 8)

Key Characteristics

- Low levels landscape
- Small streams and ditches
- Predominantly flat
- Mixed agricultural landscape
- Moderate woodland cover
- Low density of settlement
- M40 disrupts landscape pattern

Distinctive Features

- Ancient woodland
- Views of wooded Panshill slopes
- Scattered farms
- Remnant of moat at New Park farm
- Lower Panshill Farm

Intrusive Elements

- Traffic on motorway
- Development on the edge of Upper Arccott
- Pylon lines

Location The M40 motorway passes through the area which is located on the District's western boundary to the west of Brill Hill.

Landscape character The area is characterised by a flat or gently sloping ground where the agricultural character is dominated by the M40, pylon lines and in places industrial sheds. The agricultural use is mixed often in medium sized fields with strong hedgerows cut low. This is a landscape in which the historic landscape pattern has been disrupted by the M40 motorway. As well as the land used by the motorway itself the land either side also has a new enclosure pattern. The motorway is visually intrusive in most of this LCA. The visual impact of M40, industry and pylon lines reduces the visual quality of the area.

Geology Predominantly calcareous mudstone with a margin of bituminous mudstone on the north western fringe.

Topography This is an area of gently sloping levels landscape, which drains towards the river Ray. The area has been extended onto more steeply sloping ground in the south to avoid Oriel Wood straddling two landscape character areas. The elevation range within the area is about 60m to 70m AOD.

Hydrology Several minor streams and ditches drain the area in a southwest direction towards the river Ray in Oxfordshire.

Land use and settlement This is a mixed agricultural landscape with a higher level of woodland covering about a tenth of the area. The arable areas tend to be adjacent to the M40 motorway. Settlement is limited to fairly closely scattered farms. The M40 is a major land use through the centre of the area. Development on the edge of Upper Arccott and adjacent to the motorway is visually intrusive.

Tree cover There are several woodlands predominantly at the junction between this landscape and the steep slope up to the Bernwood Forest LCA 7.5. They tend to extend over the natural boundary of the flat levels landscape onto steeply sloping ground.

The tree cover within hedgerows is very variable but generally strongest in the west.

Biodiversity Tributaries of the river Ray provide connectivity between habitats (including priority habitat types) both within the Panshill Vale and the neighbouring county of Oxfordshire. Hedgerows also contribute to connectivity and potentially the verges of the M40.

The bulk of the LCA is agricultural comprised mainly of arable and grassland habitats unevenly distributed throughout. The grassland consists of improved, unimproved and small amounts of neutral pasture.

Broad habitats of district significance include standing water in ponds; stands of the type broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland; and neutral grassland. The latter is the subject of a CWS covering several tussock-covered species rich fields south of Arccott which include a damp area. A wide range of fauna is supported in addition to the floristic interest which includes plants that are unusual in Buckinghamshire.

The woodland in the south at Whitecross Green and Oriel Wood is

LCA 8.8 Panshill Vale (LCT 8)

ancient and is part of a larger woodland block mainly within Oxfordshire and the subject of an SSSI. The woodland includes conifers.

Historic environment The landscape of Panshill was once a part of the hunting forest of Bernwood, which had been a hunting ground from the time of Edward the Confessor. Bernwood was finally disafforested in the reign of James I in 1635. The area was known as Pauncell Walk and was covered by woodland until disafforestation. Within Pauncell Walk there was a keeper's lodge and an area called Pauncell Rails from which the commoner's cattle was excluded. Today, the landscape is made up of a mixture of pre 18th century fields in the southwest and the remodelled and realigned 20th century fields, found in the north east. There is a small amount of woodland within the area, although this is coniferous planted in the 20th century. The other major component of landscape is the presence of the M40 motorway which carves through the centre of the landscape.

There are no large settlements in this area, isolated farmsteads being the sole settlement type however, the most significant being the listed 17th century house of Upper Panshill Farm. The landscape contains a few archaeological sites including a moat at New Park Farm which may lie on the site of the forest keeper's lodge, a possible medieval kiln site and evidence of a potential Roman occupation.

Despite being within the historic landscape of Bernwood Forest, this area is not well promoted in local guides and Rights of Way, although Boarstall Lane is an historic routeway recorded on a 16th century map. The area could be enhanced by the restoration of former woodland.

Designations

Archaeological Notification Areas – 4 No.

SSSI: Whitecross Green & Oriel Woods

CWS – 1 No.

BNS – 1 No.

LCA 8.8 Panshill Vale (LCT 8)



Flat or gently sloping ground with strong often recent hedgerows cut low.



Settlement is limited to fairly closely scattered farms

LCA 8.8 Panshill Vale (LCT 8)

Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis

Condition	Poor
Pattern of elements:	Coherent
Visual detractors:	Some
Visual unity:	Coherent
Cultural integrity:	Poor
Ecological integrity:	Moderate
Functional integrity:	Weak

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

Guidelines	Restore and Enhance
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Condition

The landscape within this area is considered to be in a poor condition. The pattern of elements is considered to be coherent because although the landscape has been dissected by the M40 it has largely retained its historic landscape pattern. The level of visual detractors is considered to be moderate these include the motorway, pylon line and industrial development in and around the area. The combination of a coherent pattern of elements and some visual detractors gives a landscape, which has a coherent level of visual unity. The cultural integrity of the landscape is quite weak, although stronger around the ancient woodland on the southern boundary of the area and weakest where most historic associations have been lost close to the motorway. Ecological integrity is moderate because although connectivity is good, areas of designated sites and habitats of District significance are average

compared to the rest of the district. The functional integrity is weak.

Sensitivity

The landscape in this area is considered to be of moderate sensitivity as a whole. It has a distinct landscape character based on the historic field pattern which remains locally intact and the historic farmsteads and woodlands, which have also helped to retain some sense of historic continuity. The distinct character and the sense of historic continuity combine to give the area a moderate sense of place. The landform is considered to be apparent because although gently sloping this is an intrinsic part of the character of the area. The tree cover is considered to be intermittent reflecting the variation between the southern tip of the area where woodland creates quite an enclosed landscape and the majority of the rest of the landscape which relies on fairly widely spaced hedgerow trees. The combination of the apparent landform and intermittent tree cover combine to give an area of moderate visibility.



The M40, pylon lines and new industrial development have a visual impact on much of the area.

LCA 8.8 Panshill Vale (LCT 8)

Landscape Guidelines Restore and Enhance

The landscape guidelines for Panshill Vale are as follows:

- Encourage the restoration and management of hedgerows through traditional cutting regimes.
- Encourage the establishment of new woodland to restore former woodlands of Bernwood Forest and reduce the visual impact of intrusive elements including the M40, new development and pylon lines.
- Promote woodland management and conservation of historic woodland features.
- Encourage the management and retention of the open ditches as a landscape feature and wildlife resource.
- Close to watercourses promote the use of permanent pasture, with low stocking density and flooding regimes to encourage biodiversity and landscape enhancement.
- Maintain the condition and extent of unimproved and semi-improved grassland. Encourage good management practices.
- Maintain connectivity of features of interest.
- Identify key views from publicly accessible locations and promote their conservation and enhancement.