

LCA 9.2 Quainton Hill (LCT 9)

Key Characteristics

- Prominent network of hills
- Pastoral land use
- Long distance views over surrounding countryside
- Area is exposed in winter
- Incised steep sided valleys
- Narrow ridges and promontories
- Lack of woodland cover
- Ridge and furrow

Distinctive Features

- Streams draining off the hill
- Historic earthworks and former moated settlements
- Mature hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Irregular shaped field pattern
- Dominance of grassland

Intrusive Elements

- Telecommunication masts
- Underground water storage infrastructure

Location The LCA comprises a distinctive and prominent group of smaller hills clustered around Quainton Hill.

Landscape character Directly north of the village of Quainton, slopes are steep and the predominant land use is grazing. The hill tops are exposed and are used for water storage (reservoir). The area is unsettled except for some local farmsteads however, Quainton village (not within the LCA) sits on lowest slopes of southern edge. There are long distance views over surrounding open countryside including to Waddesdon. Quainton Windmill, located within Quainton is a local landmark and in the foreground of views to the south. The area is popular with recreational walkers being on the route of the North Buck Way long distance footpath.

Geology Quainton Hill is made up of Kimmeridge clay capped by a layer of Portland stone and Whitchurch sand. The surrounding lower slopes are part of the wider calcareous mudstone formations.

Topography The highest point on Quainton Hill is noted at 187m AOD (Triangulation point). Grange Hill, Simber Hill, Woad Hill and Denham Hill are slightly lower. The land drops away on all sides to an average level of approximately 100m AOD along the southern edge and an average level of 110m AOD along the northern edge.

Hydrology The slopes of Quainton Hill have been eroded by small streams which drain in a variety of directions. There are also a number of small ponds dispersed over the sides of the hill. To the north at Fulbrook Farm and to the south at Denham Lodge are old moats. Both sites were spring fed by water from the hill. The top of Quainton Hill is occupied by an underground water storage reservoir.

Land use and settlement Predominantly pastoral land use. Dispersed farmsteads.

Tree cover No woodlands but oak and ash hedgerow trees.

Biodiversity The range of habitat at Quainton Hill is limited as it is almost exclusively grassland, about two thirds of which is improved but one third is unimproved. Aquatic habitats are limited to very small occurrences of standing water relating to the moated sites and a small number of minor streams. Hedgerows often tall and with trees, subdivide the landscape and provide additional habitat and biodiversity potential especially where linked to the streams.

There are no biodiversity designations and no priority habitat types are recorded.

Historic environment This landscape was part of Bernwood Forest in the early 13th century. Bernwood had been a hunting ground from the time of Edward the Confessor. Although today forests are synonymous with woodland, this part of Bernwood has historically been an open landscape of arable or pasture. The landscape contains a mixture of pre 18th century enclosure, parliamentary enclosure and 19th century enclosures. There are some prairie fields to the north east of the area as result of boundary loss. The landscape contains no substantial settlements; there are isolated farmsteads with listed buildings at Fulbrook Farm and Denham Lodge.

By contrast the area contains a wealth of archaeology. The most prominent

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are the earthworks of ridge and furrow that are found throughout the landscape; these are amongst the finest surviving examples to be found in England. Associated with these former open field earthworks are two deserted settlements, the first is located at Denham Lodge, although the present house dates to the 17th century, it was built on the site of the medieval manor house. There is a complex of features around it, including fishponds and house platforms to the north, a 16th century gatehouse on the south arm of the moat, and the brick walls of a deer park enclosure. The second site is to the north of the area at Fulbrook Farm where the earthworks of a former moated site can be seen. Another notable site in the area is the discovery of a cemetery at Woad Hill, the date of which is unknown. The landscape has a good amenity value with a number of publicised Rights of Way running through it including the Bernwood Jubilee Way.

Designations

Scheduled Ancient Monuments: Deserted Village, Deserted Village Denman Lodge

Archaeological Notification Areas – 8 No.

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Quainton Hill seen from the north.



Quainton Hill seen from the south.

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Summary of Condition/Sensitivity Analysis		Condition
Condition	Good	<p>The condition of the landscape is considered to be good. The irregular pattern of pastoral fields is supported by mature hedgerows over a distinctive steeply sloping landform. These factors support the assessment of a unified pattern of elements and contribute to a strong sense of visual unity. There are few visual detractors other than the telecommunications mast on top of the hill and the underground reservoir. Cultural integrity is good and there are a number of moated sites and earthworks and extensively well preserved ridge and furrow found throughout the area. Ecological integrity is considered to be weak due to sub-optimal connectivity and low areas of designated sites and habitats of District significance. Functional integrity is coherent.</p>
Pattern of elements:	Unified	
Visual detractors:	Few	
Visual unity:	Strongly unified	
Cultural integrity:	Good/Weak	
Ecological integrity:	Coherent	
Functional integrity:		
Sensitivity	High	
Distinctiveness:	Distinct	
Continuity:	Historic	
Sense of place:	Moderate	
Landform:	Dominant	
Tree cover:	Intermittent	
Visibility:	High	
Guidelines	Conserve	

Sensitivity

The dominance of the landform combined with the strong field pattern contributed to the area's distinctiveness. There is good historic continuity supported by the intrinsic rural character and lack of development pressure. Sense of place is considered to be moderate. Tree cover is a feature of the hedgerow network however it is not consistent and is considered to be intermittent. The elevation of the hill over the surrounding areas allows for high visibility and long distance views. Overall the sensitivity of the area is considered to be high.

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Landscape Guidelines Conserve

The landscape guidelines for Quainton Hill are as follows:

- Conserve the extensive network of hedgerows and tree cover.
- Strengthen the field pattern especially around the northern slopes of the hill by planting up gaps and encouraging development of hedgerow trees.
- Conserve existing pattern or irregular shaped fields.
- Improve the management of historic meadows and pastures where they have been 'poached' due to intensive stock pressure.
- Preserve the open character of the hill where it facilitates long distance views over the surrounding countryside.
- Preserve and manage the rights of way to facilitate pedestrian access to the hill and its importance as a link to the Midshires Way long distance path.
- Encourage the preservation of historic earthworks and ridge and furrow by maintaining a continuous grass sward.
- Maintain and improve connectivity.



The open grassland landscape of Grange Hill.