

South Gloucestershire

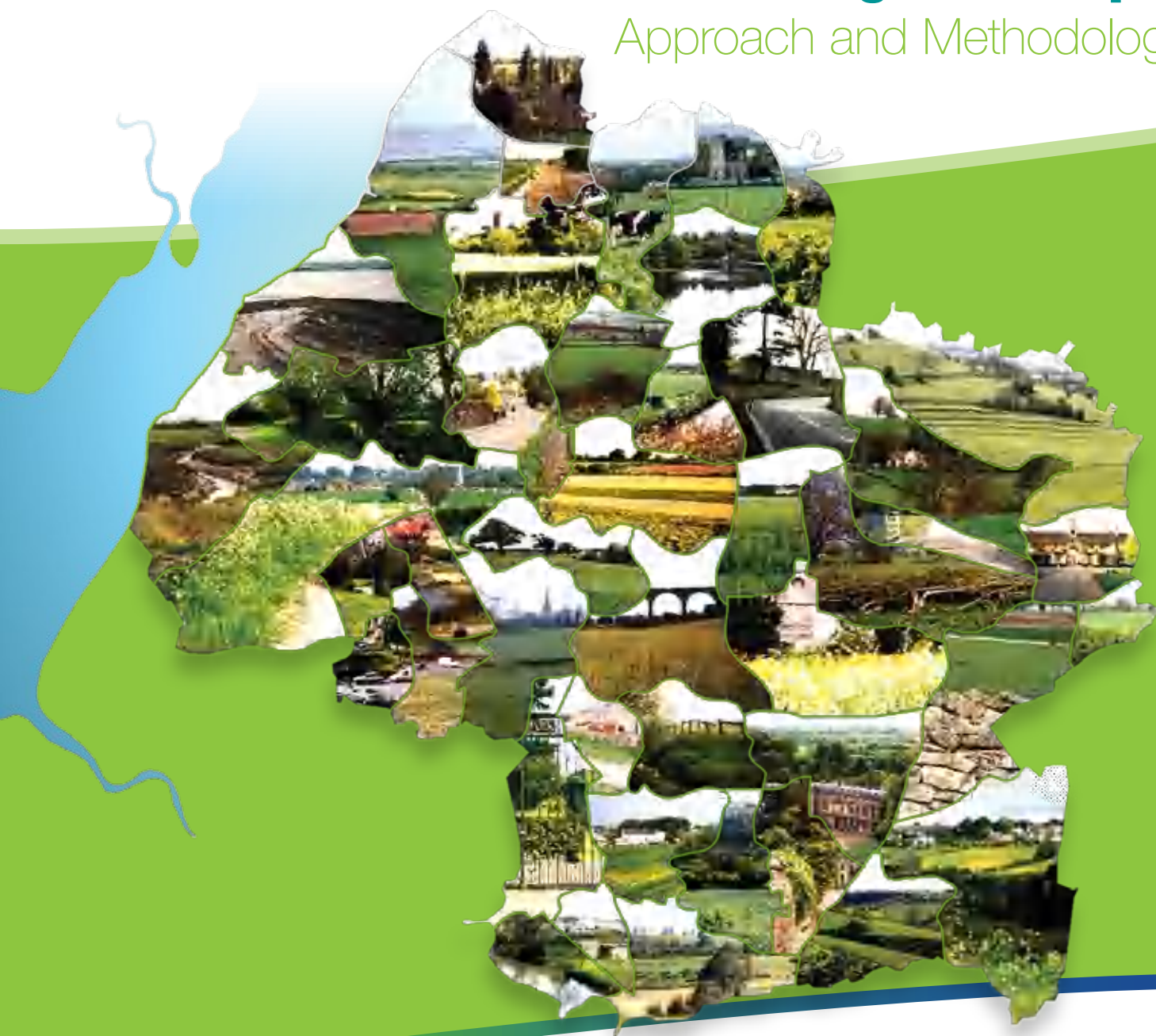
Review Proposed for Adoption November 2014

Landscape Character Assessment

Supplementary Planning Document

Technical Background Paper

Approach and Methodology



Contents

South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment Technical Background Paper	3
Approach and Methodology	3
■ Stage 1: Characterisation	3
■ Stage 2: Evaluation	4
■ 2014 Review	7
Appendix 1	8
Provides an overview of the physical and historical development of the landscape in South Gloucestershire, including more recent changes, and also considers potential future changes	
■ Landscape Context	8
■ Geology & soils	8
■ Topography & Drainage	9
■ Land use, farming patterns & Vegetation	9
■ Buildings, Settlements & Infrastructure	11
■ The Historic Landscape	12
■ Biodiversity	13
■ Recent Landscape Change	13
■ Future Trends	23
Appendix 2	29
Provides information and definitions on the hierarchy of landscape assessment classification. Describes the division of the landscape into discrete areas of similar characteristics.	
■ Landscape Character Types	29
■ Plateau & Scarp	29
■ Shallow Ridge	31
■ Parkland Vale	32
■ Shallow Vale	33
■ Broad Valleys	34
■ Enclosed Valleys	35
■ Undulating Ridge	36
■ Estuary, Shoreline & Levels	37
Appendix 3	39
■ Standard survey form.	39
Appendix 4	41
■ Consultation, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment.	41

Technical Background Paper

Approach and Methodology

The Landscape Character Assessment of South Gloucestershire has been carried out in accordance with Natural England's Landscape Character Assessment, Guidance 2002, and is consistent with the NPPF and the more recent Planning Practice Guidance..

The Landscape Character Assessment followed two main stages, Characterisation and Evaluation, which are described below.

This is followed by a summary of the 2013-4 review process, leading to the adoption of a revised Landscape Character Assessment for South Gloucestershire in 2014.

Stage 1: Characterisation

Step One: Defining the Scope

The purpose of the Landscape Character Assessment was defined (as discussed in Section 1). This influenced the scale and level of detail required. The scope of stakeholder involvement was decided.

Step Two: Desktop Study

A variety of data sources, including written and mapped data, were reviewed in Spring 2000. This included the study and analysis of relevant plans, strategies, studies and discussions with the Unitary Authority. A full list of sources reviewed is located in the Bibliography. Through a variety of methods, including map overlay and information sieving, the information was used to gain an understanding of the natural and human factors that have shaped and influenced the landscape.

Step Three: Field Survey

This involved extensive survey work in spring/summer 2000, by a team of landscape architects, to record the physical and visual components and aspects of the landscape.

This information was recorded on standard record sheets (end of Appendix 1). In addition to the physical elements and features visible within the landscape, such as land use, topography and vegetation cover, other characteristics and attributes, such as condition, key views, features and perceived sensitivity were also recorded. Photographs were taken as a working tool and where appropriate, thumbnail sketches prepared to illustrate particular features and character.

In reality, each of the stages of the desktop study, field survey and merging of stakeholder information, informed the other as the study progressed.

Step Four: Characterisation

The desktop study and field survey information were reviewed and collated, to create a hierarchy of areas of similar characteristics in consistent and recognisable groups.

The divisions within South Gloucestershire included:

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREAS - as shown on the Natural England's Character of England map, which shows broad regional character areas at a national scale. (See Fig 3).

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES - which subdivide the National Landscape Character Areas into smaller, generic areas of similar characteristics at a district or local level, largely based on geology, landform and drainage patterns, ascertained from the desktop study and field survey. (See Fig 70).

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS - which further subdivide Landscape Character Types into smaller, unique areas of similar characteristics and attributes at a local level. These were largely based on physical features, land cover, settlement and infrastructure and were ascertained from the

desktop study and field survey.

These areas were mapped and concise descriptions of their main physical and human influences noted. This included land cover, landform, drainage, settlement, infrastructure and access, field size, field pattern and boundaries. Their distinctive combination of landscape features and attributes was also recorded.

Stakeholder involvement undertaken by means of a photographic survey of each parish and unparished area of South Gloucestershire, supplemented this initial characterisation process. This helped to identify important additional features, areas of distinctive character and key characteristics.

Stage 2: Evaluation

Step Five: Evaluation and Landscape Sensitivity

Following the classification of the landscape into discrete areas of similar characteristics, the character areas were evaluated in terms of change. Landscape condition, trends and relative sensitivity to change were considered in this evaluation.

Landscape Condition refers to the existing features within the landscape which are affected by current management or maintenance practices, for example hedgerow field boundaries.

Landscape Trends refers to the potential changes which may happen within the landscape based on what is currently happening, what has occurred in the past and what may happen in the future, for example agricultural practices.

Landscape Sensitivity is the degree to which a landscape can accommodate change without unacceptable, detrimental effects on character. Sensitivity is not absolute, but is likely to vary relative to the type and scale of change being considered.

The following criteria, from the Natural England's Landscape Character Assessment Guidance, were key considerations used in evaluating conditions, trends and sensitivity:

Landscape Quality

The presence of key characteristics and absence of atypical and incongruous features. It also depends on the state of repair of elements in the landscape and the integrity or intactness of the landscape.

Scenic Quality/Beauty

Reflects the combination and pattern of elements in the landscape, its aesthetic qualities, and its more intangible qualities such as its 'sense of place', the degree to which the landscape has a distinctive and essential character.

Landscape as a Resource

A landscape may be valued because it is rare or because it is particularly representative or typical of a certain landscape type.

Associations

A landscape may be valued because it may have cultural or historical associations with particular people or events in history.

Consensus

There should be a consensus of opinion, expressed by the public, informed professionals, interest groups, artists, writers and other media, on the importance of the landscape.

Wildness Quality

A perception of remoteness and tranquillity. The landscape would appear natural, undeveloped and unspoilt.

Conservation Interests

The presence of features of notable conservation interest such as wildlife, earth science, archaeological or historical areas, in addition to the landscape scenic qualities.

However, the evaluation process for this Landscape Character Assessment specifically excluded value judgements as to the status of the landscape within each character area, or the use of the term 'quality'. Instead, the Landscape Character Assessment has identified and examined the landscape features, attributes and characteristics, how they contribute to form a 'distinctive' landscape, the condition of features and the relative sensitivity of the landscape to change.

Step Six: Stakeholder Involvement

The participation of stakeholders in the process of Landscape Character Assessment added an important dimension to understanding and evaluating the landscape through invaluable local knowledge of landscape features, industrial, cultural and historical associations and landscape evolution.

A Photographic Survey of the Landscapes of South Gloucestershire was carried out during spring/early summer 2000, at the same time as the initial characterisation study was underway. The final results of the survey were available during the Evaluation stage.

As well as providing essential information for the Landscape Character Assessment, stakeholders' participation in the process and public exhibitions which resulted, provided a means of raising public awareness of the landscapes within South Gloucestershire, as well as of the Landscape Character Assessment itself.

Step Seven: Merging Process

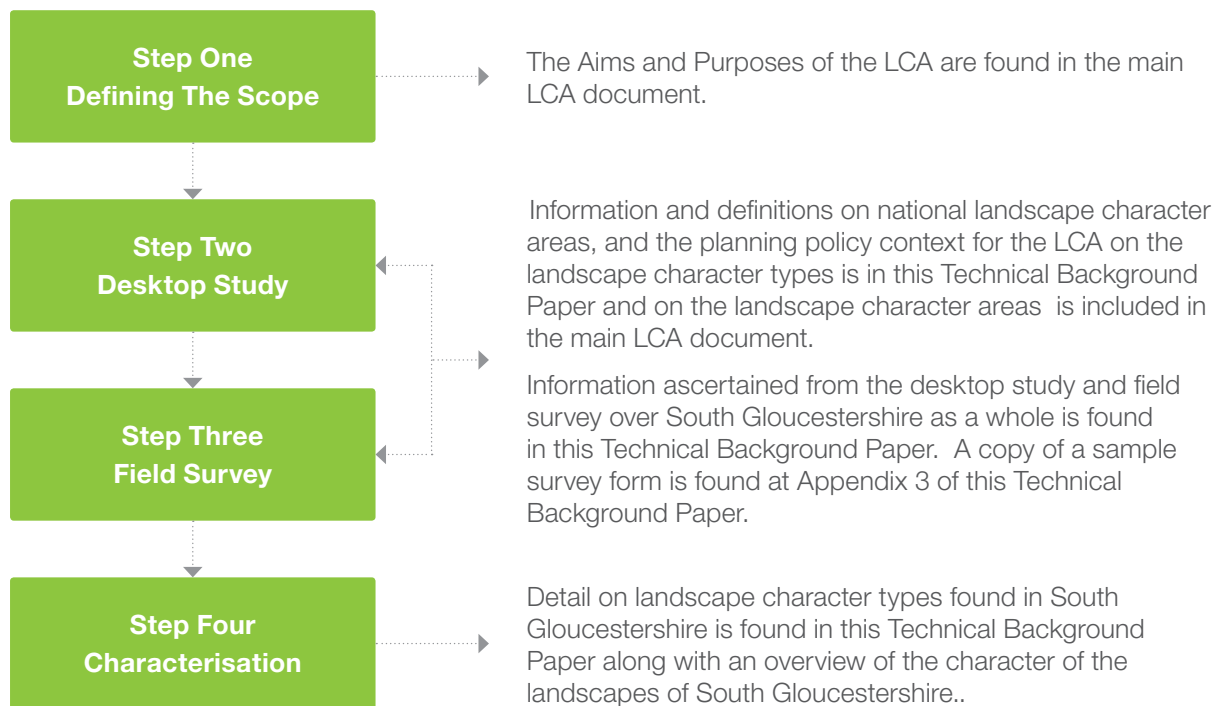
The wealth of photographic images and descriptions, obtained from stakeholder participation, were reviewed and salient information merged with the consultants' baseline Landscape Character Assessment, both with respect to the characterisation and evaluation of the landscapes. The working draft report benefited further from an internal review process by the Landscape and Built Environment teams within South Gloucestershire's Planning and Environment section, to provide further breadth to the report. All the photographs contained in the

draft Landscape Character Assessment, over 200 in number, were selected from over 2000 taken by local people as a result of the Photographic Survey. The photographs are intended to illustrate, as far as possible, typical landscape characteristics or features of each landscape character area.

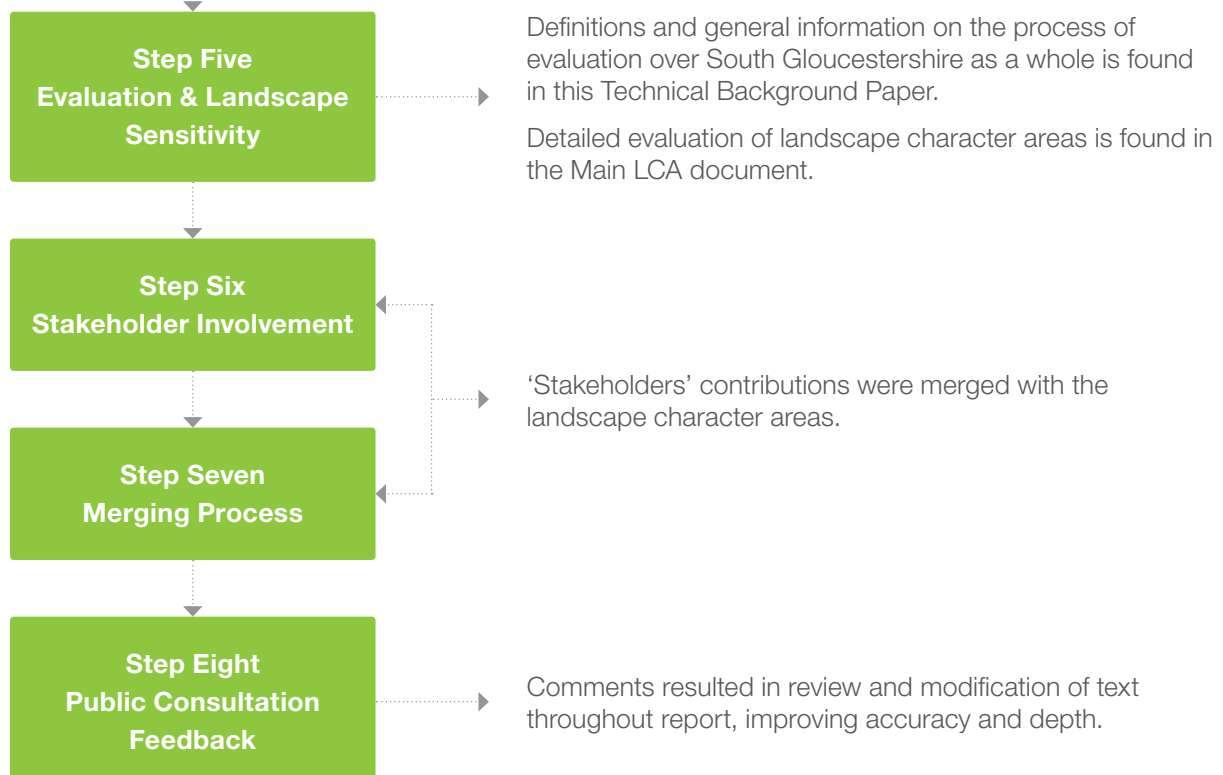
Step Eight: Public Consultation Feedback

Following the public consultation process on the draft Landscape Character Assessment, a further stage has been included in the process of the development of the Landscape Character Assessment. The many comments received on the draft report resulted in an extensive review of the document. Numerous modifications have been incorporated into the text as a result, with the objective of increasing the accuracy of information contained in the Landscape Character Assessment as a result of local knowledge, as well as where appropriate, providing additional depth to the report. As a result of this review, further photographs have been included, either from the Photographic Survey, or in a relatively small number of instances, by photographs taken by officers in the Planning & Environment team, to illustrate specific landscape characteristics or features referred to in the text, but not previously illustrated.

Stage 1: Characterisation



Stage 2: Evaluation



2014 Review of the Adopted Landscape Character Assessment

The following process was followed in the preparation of an updated Landscape Character Assessment for South Gloucestershire:

1. Review of Policy context

The review of the LCA has been informed by the policies and proposals contained in the Core Strategy, and also the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance.

2. High level review of recent development

The LCA has been informed by officer knowledge of recent developments, and input from Parishes where received.

3. Invitation to Parishes to provide updates to LCAs

Parishes were invited to provide any information to update the Landscape Character Assessment between 25 February 2014 and 08 May 2014, although responses received after this time have also been taken into account.

4. Incorporation of draft Biodiversity assessment

In line with Natural England's approach to the National Landscape Character Assessment, biodiversity information and considerations have been included in the LCA.

5. Drafting of Landscape Strategy for each Character Area

A draft Landscape Strategy was developed for each character area. This seeks to set out key guidance as to how the more general policies of the Core Strategy will be applied in each character area. It should be remembered however that this can only provide general guidance, and given the fine grain and detailed variability of South Gloucestershire's landscapes, site specific landscape and visual assessments will be required where appropriate - to inform the development of proposals for new developments.

6. Early engagement with Parishes

Some 15 Parishes responded to the initial early engagement held during the first half of 2013 contributing information to update the LCA and to raise issues of concern.

7. Public Consultation on Draft Review Document

Consultation ran from Friday 10 January to Friday 07 March 2014, drop in exhibitions were held on 07 and 10 February 2014. The documents and consultation materials were publicised by email to all Parishes and the Local Development Framework database, as well on the Council web site. Following this the consultation responses were analysed and as a result further changes made to the LCA.

8. Adoption of LCA Review

The LCA is proposed for adoption by the Planning, Transportation and Strategic Environment Committee in November 2014.

Appendix 1

Provides an overview of the physical and historical development of the landscape in South Gloucestershire, including more recent changes and considers potential future trends in landscape change.

A.1 Landscape Context

A1.1 Geology and Soils

Geologically South Gloucestershire is one of the most varied districts in Britain. From the dramatic Cotswold scarp and limestone plateau to the east, through the limestone and sandstone ridges further west containing the Coal Measure vales, to the estuarine alluvium deposits around the Severn, the diversity of geological deposits and the natural processes which have acted upon them, have a major influence on landscape appearance and character. The geology is illustrated in Figure 67.

The Cotswold scarp and plateau forms a significant upland landform in the eastern part of South Gloucestershire. Running from Chipping Campden to Bath and overlooking the lower vales and the Severn, it consists of both Inferior and Great Oolite Limestone. The Great Oolite overlies the Inferior Oolite and includes a number of formations, including Fullers Earth, Fullers Earth Rock and Forest Marble, which combine to form a wide tableland that slopes down to the east and south. The Inferior Oolite emerges to the west of the Great Oolite plateau and forms an indented scarp. The softness of the limestone creates a steep slope, often divided by deep valleys. This forms a natural boundary between the ridges and vales to the west.

On the limestone, many of the soils are derived directly from the parent rock and tend to be alkaline and of low fertility. Thin, well aerated, brashy soils are common. More fertile, deeper clayey soils of alluvial or glacial origin are present on the valley floors, along the scarp and on lower lying land to the south and east.

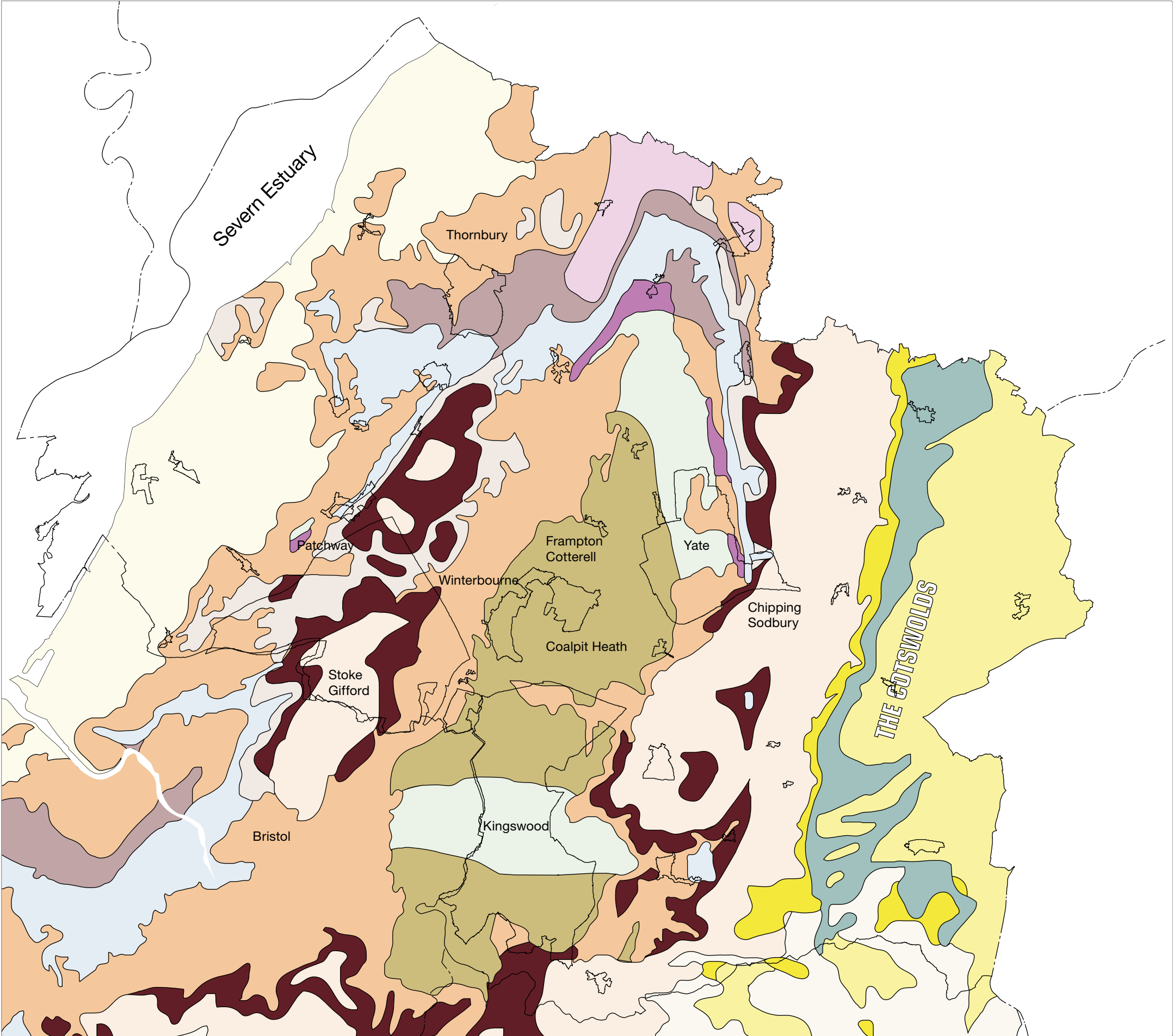
To the west of the scarp, approximately running through Pucklechurch and Wickwar, a low ridge extends irregularly through the area. This consists of Lias Limestone and Triassic Sandstone to the south, with a mixture of these and Carboniferous Limestone emerging to the north. The ridge slopes down into the shallow basins and vales of the Bristol basin to the west. The lower ground to the west of this ridge consists largely of Coal Measures, known collectively as the Bristol Coalfield.

The Coal Measures are present in a very contorted form, divided by bands of limestone and sandstone, their complex pattern strongly affecting the development of the former coal industry.

On the Coal Measures, soils are more acidic and tend towards slowly permeable, loamy soils.

The western edge of the Bristol basin is formed by another ridge extending irregularly through the area around Almondsbury, roughly parallel with the Severn, composed of a mix of Carboniferous Limestone, Devonian Sandstones, silts and conglomerates. The predominantly soft nature of these rocks gives rise to areas of low relief. The low relief is, however, broken occasionally by undulating ridges, created by outcrops of harder rocks such as Carboniferous Limestone. Carboniferous Limestone also surrounds the northern part of the Bristol Coalfield, extending from Over, north eastwards to Tortworth and then southwards to Chipping Sodbury. It is then concealed by newer rocks, except in small inliers near Codrington and Wick. West of Bristol, Carboniferous Limestone forms high ground which extends southwards towards Portishead.

Landscape evolution



- South Gloucestershire Boundary
- Major areas of settlements
- Alluvium
- Great Oolite Limestone
- Fuller's Earth
- Inferior Oolite Limestone
- Lias
- White and Blue Lias
- Rhaetic
- Keuper Marl
- Upper Coal Series and Pennant Series
- Lower Coal Series
- Upper Cromhall Sandstone
- Carboniferous Limestone
- Old Red Sandstone
- Silurian and Cambrian
- Jurassic Strata

Source Information based upon Avon County Mineral Plan

This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. South Gloucestershire Council Licence No 100023410, 2013



0 5km

Figure 67
Geology

Interbedded with the Carboniferous Limestone are areas of Devonian Old Red Sandstone and marine shale, which form a grouping of sedimentary rocks. These result in a number of small inliers north east of Thornbury that form regular hills and indicate a period of fluctuating shorelines. The limestone-derived soils are shallow and are predominantly Brown Rankers and Argillic Brown Earths. On the sandstone, soils have a tendency towards a higher clay and loam content, with associated poor drainage.

To the west, the undulating landscape falls away to the flat Levels surrounding the Severn Estuary. The Levels consist of estuarine alluvium, although there are some minor outcrops of limestone and sandstone which provide some topographical relief in the form of isolated outliers.

The soils on the Levels, over the permeable alluvium, are loamy gleys, which were formed from periodic waterlogging by a fluctuating water table.

A1.2 Topography and Drainage

The underlying geology affects the varied topography and drainage patterns of South Gloucestershire. The topography and drainage patterns are illustrated in Figure 68.

The Cotswold plateau forms the highest part of South Gloucestershire, its height approximately 180 to 240 metres above ordnance datum (a.o.d). The plateau falls gently eastwards, forming a dip slope, with occasional stream courses creating shallow valleys and a low undulating landform. West of the plateau, the landform drops suddenly and steeply at the scarp edge and forms an abrupt face of limestone and Lias Clay. These slopes have been eroded in places, along strong vertical joints, forming small valleys. Owing to the solubility of limestone, such tracts are usually waterless, or are subject to seasonal flow over parts of their course. Also, surface water, when reaching the limestone plateau, often plunges underground through “swallets” or “slockers” and runs through subterranean passages and caverns, finally emerging in springs at the foot of the scarp slope.

From the foot of the scarp, the topography changes to a more gently sloping and undulating ridge, which runs approximately north to south from Wickwar to Pucklechurch. The ridge then falls, often quite steeply, to a concave vale to the west with occasional outcrops of higher ground. Surrounded by ridges and bisected by numerous streams and tributaries, the vale is quite well contained by surrounding topography. To the south, the vale leads into a series of deep, wide valleys leading towards the River Avon. The drainage of these areas is, however, relatively simple. Practically all rivers and their tributaries flow southwards into the River Avon, before entering the Severn Estuary.

To the west, enclosing the vale and shallow valley landscapes, the topography rises again to another ridge running north to south in the vicinity of Almondsbury. This ridge, although broad and shallow, forms a backdrop to the largely flat, uniform Levels on the shores of the Severn. Minor rivers and streams flow roughly westwards from the ridge towards the Levels.

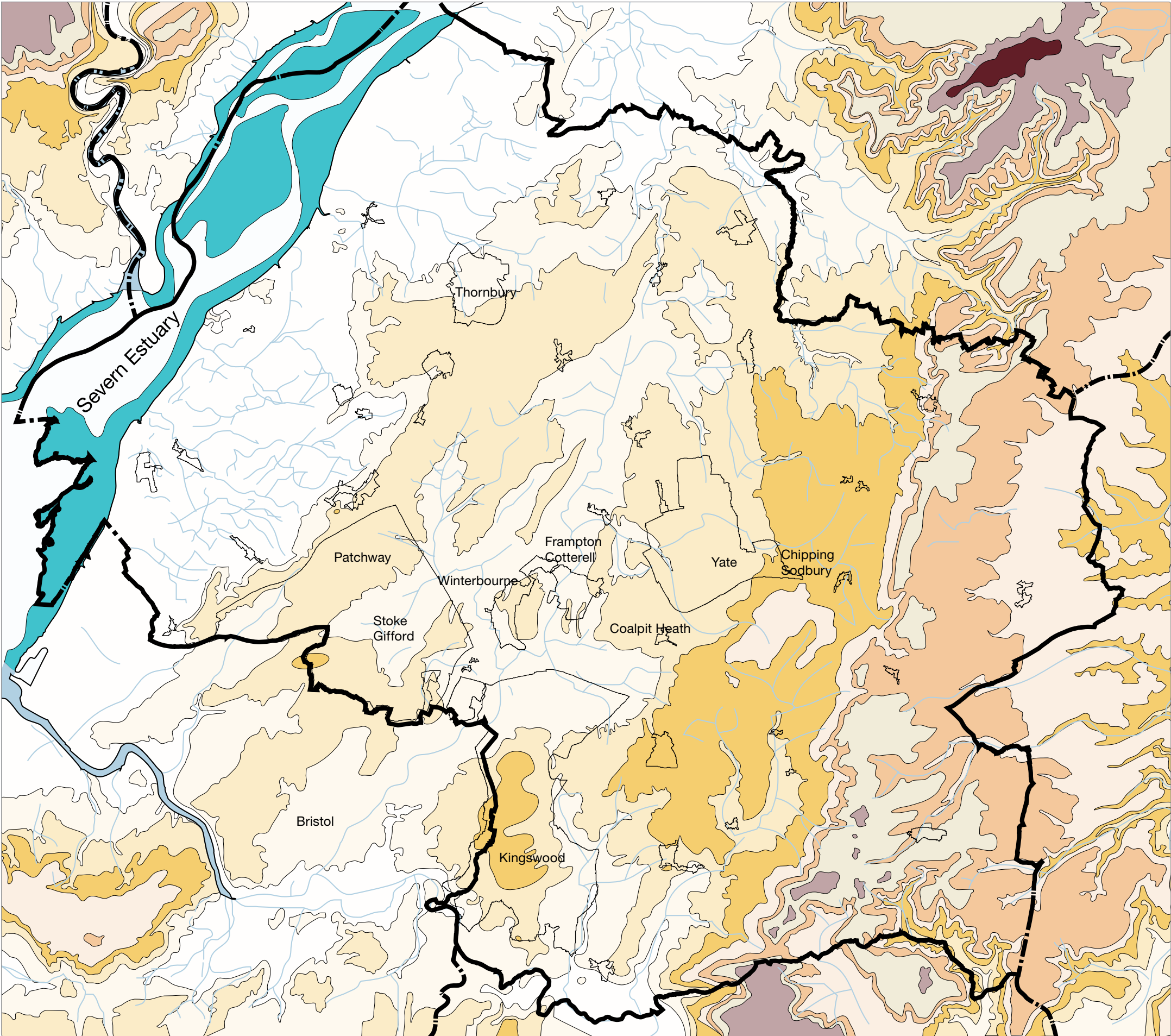
The Levels consist of a generally flat, gently sloping area, punctuated with occasional low hills. Throughout the Levels the complex network of natural and man-made drainage features, including tidal mills, rhines, streams and drainage ditches, unify the area. These generally flow westwards into the estuary. A sea wall or bund separates the agricultural levels from the fluctuating shoreline, created by the high tidal range of the estuary.

A1.3 Land Use, Farming Pattern and Vegetation

The variations in land use, farming patterns and vegetation cover, are a function of the complex interrelationship of physical factors, including geology, soils, drainage and microclimate, as well as human influences, which have affected historic land use, settlement and farming practices.

The open and exposed Cotswold plateau is dominated by large, regular fields of mainly arable use.

Landscape evolution



- South Gloucestershire Boundary
- Major areas of settlement
- O.S. High Water Mark
- O.S. Low Water Mark
- 0-30m
- 30-60m
- 60-90m
- 90-120m
- 120-150m
- 150-180m
- 180-210m
- 210-240m
- 240-270m
- Rivers

Source Information based on British Geological Mapping

This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. South Gloucestershire Council Licence No 100023410, 2013



0 5km

Figure 68
Topography and Drainage

The fields are divided by a mix of Cotswold stone walls, many of which are now in a state of disrepair and linear bands of trees. The plateau also contains a patchwork of woodlands, plantations and copses, often of beech. The extensive Badminton Estate has exerted a particular influence over the land use and vegetation pattern of the northern part of the plateau, with historic parkland and woodland covering large areas.

Linear woodland, often of beech, extends along the Cotswold scarp, supplemented by linear tree belts and copses. These sit amongst the largely pastoral fields on the scarp slope. Incised valleys, which cut into the scarp, often contain mixed broadleaf woodland of oak, ash and sycamore.

A number of historic parklands also occur, often associated with these valley features.

These well wooded valleys extend into the patchwork of arable and pastureland on the shallow ridge and broad valleys and vales, leading west and south from the upland plateau and scarp. Some areas of unenclosed common, used for rough grazing, are also scattered between the enclosed agricultural land and woodland.

Further west, the lower land is characterised by a mix of both arable and improved grassland, divided by trimmed hedges, linear bands of trees or fencing. Woodland is generally limited, although the numerous woodlands comprising Wetmoor Woods are extensive. To the north west of Wickwar, there are also areas of mature, ornamental and native planting with a parkland character.

These low lying areas often have a varied land use, particularly close to the urban areas, with recreational uses such as golf courses and playing fields prevalent.

The mixed farmland, interspersed with a strong recreational land use, such as playing fields, continues to and along the northern boundaries of Bristol. Bristol is intersected by a number of

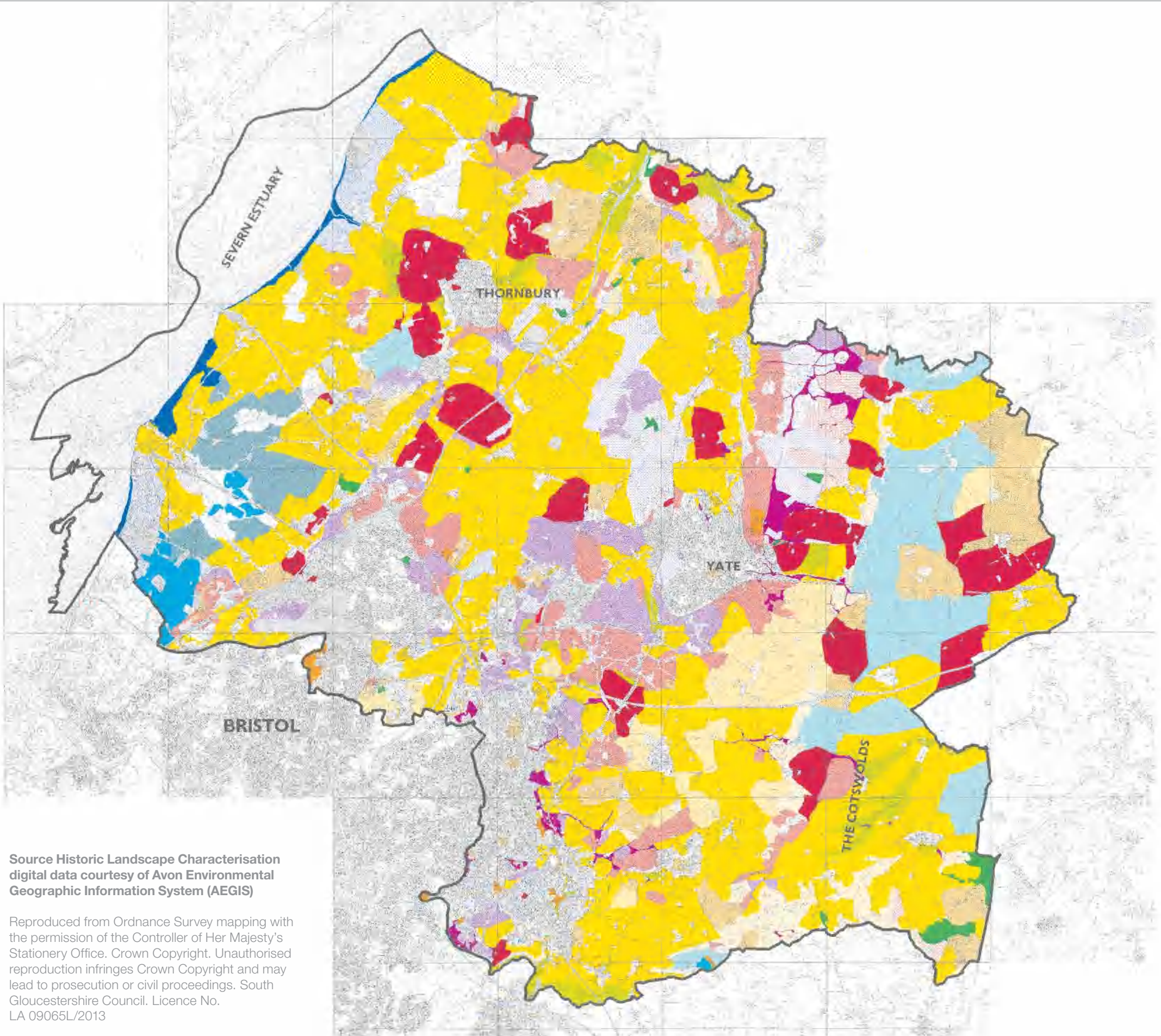
wide valleys that lead towards the River Avon, which are often characterised by linear, tree clad streams.

To the west, the heavily treed ridge, roughly between Thornbury and Almondsbury, consists of undulating mixed farmland and provides a contrast to the flat landscape of the Severn Levels. The mixed regular agricultural fields of the Levels are generally divided by a complex series of drainage ditches, rhines, streams and tidal pills which flow towards the estuary. These are often lined with low, clipped hedgerows, punctuated with individual broadleaf trees, such as willow pollards and alders.

The Levels are separated from the warth salt marshes and intertidal mudflats adjacent to the Severn Estuary, by a sea wall or bund. Their visibility is dependent on the ebb and flow of the tide.

The geological variations across South Gloucestershire have resulted in widespread exploitation of mineral resources, such as limestone, clays, celestite and coal in rural areas. There is still evidence of numerous former small sites across the area, some of which were excavated for building stone. Many of these small quarries are now covered by vegetation. However, larger quarries are still technically operational, including those at Cromhall, Tytherington and Almondsbury to the north and west and Wickwar, Chipping Sodbury, Wick to the east and south, although at the time of writing Cromhall, Wick and Tytherington are mothballed. Their visibility in the landscape is variable, dependent upon their location and the degree to which woodland cover (often planted in association with the quarrying), or bunding, help to screen the quarry itself and its associated plant.

Landscape evolution



- South Gloucestershire Boundary
- Common fields enclosed by local arrangement and exchange
- Common fields adjusted from earlier enclosures, similar pattern to Parliamentary enclosures
- Common fields on steep slopes
- Meadowlands, mostly in common
- Wetlands, / 'Levels' & Moors, common enclosure or reclamation
- Wetlands enclosed in severalty, irregular pattern
- Wetlands, common enclosure 'clay belt'
- Wetlands, Parliamentary enclosure peat moor/saltmarsh
- Wetlands, unenclosed coastal 'warth'
- Downland, or common sheep pasture, enclosed by Parliamentary Act (c18/19)
- Downland, or common sheep pasture, unenclosed
- Heathland, unenclosed
- Heathland, enclosed, organised
- Heathland, enclosed, by Parliamentary Act
- Woodland, 'natural', pre-1800
- Woodland planted or forestry
- Cleared woodland, by assart
- Cleared woodland, planned
- Medieval parkland, enclosed
- Ornamental (designed landscapes)
- Modern recreational areas
- Large scale industrial sites
- No data



0 5km

Source Historic Landscape Characterisation digital data courtesy of Avon Environmental Geographic Information System (AEGIS)

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. South Gloucestershire Council. Licence No. LA 09065L/2013

Figure 69
Historic Landscapes

A1.4 Buildings, Settlements and Infrastructure

Much of South Gloucestershire is a rural, agricultural landscape, within which are located small towns, scattered villages, hamlets and farms, connected by a complex network of lanes, roads and long distance recreational routes. With the exception of the larger towns of Thornbury, Yate and Chipping Sodbury, settlement is primarily concentrated on the northern and eastern fringes of Bristol, in the south west of South Gloucestershire.

This concentration of settlement is largely due to the expansion caused by the economic growth of Bristol. The northern and eastern fringes of the city expanded rapidly in the 20th century, with the coalescence of the largely residential settlements of Patchway, Bradley Stoke, Emerson's Green and Kingswood, which all lie within the boundaries of South Gloucestershire. The coalesced settlements of Frampton Cotterell, Winterbourne and Coalpit Heath remain separated from the urban fringe of Greater Bristol, lying just to the north east.

Expansion of the national road network has seen the development of numerous major roads and motorways, notably the M4, M5, M32, M48 and M49, as well as the A4174 Ring Road around Bristol and these have more recently increased in prominence as lanes, signage, lighting and gantries have displaced roadside landscaping.

Improved accessibility, brought about by the motorway network, has attracted significant areas of commercial and industrial development around Bristol and the motorway junctions that serve the city. This accessibility to the area has increased development pressures, not only on the urban fringe, but within South Gloucestershire as a whole. The industrial areas and distribution depots of Avonmouth and Severnside, the commercial and business park developments at Almondsbury and Aztec West, the commercial/retail development at Cribbs Causeway and the distribution depot at Emerson's Green, are all large scale, dominant, urban built forms in the landscape.

The growth and prosperity of Bristol has also affected many of the outlying settlements, such as Yate, Chipping Sodbury and Thornbury. With connections to the major road and/or rail networks, they have developed as centres in their own right and as commuter settlements for Bristol and Bath. The often rapid and significant levels of urban expansion of these towns in the last century, has increased development pressures on the adjacent smaller towns and villages within their vicinity.

As part of the Core Strategy adopted in 2013, new neighbourhoods were proposed at Cribbs Causeway, north Yate, Thornbury and east of Harry Stoke. Across South Gloucestershire telecommunications infrastructure has expanded rapidly, adding masts at frequent intervals across the area. Although consent has been given for several medium sized wind turbines in the vicinity of Latteridge, at the time of the Review none had yet been constructed. National Policy has nominated Oldbury as a potential site for a new nuclear power station.

The supply of water and level sites offered by the Severn Estuary and Levels has provided opportunity for industrial development. The industrial complex at Avonmouth and Severnside in the south is visually dominant within the open Levels landscape, as is Oldbury Power Station in the north. The M4, M49 and M48 and the two Severn road bridges are also prominent, as are the numerous powerlines that cross the flat Levels' landscape.

Away from these urban influences, however, the landscape of the Levels is one of hamlets, farms and nucleated villages in a rather dispersed pattern. Settlement is more frequent on the slightly higher ground above the Levels and consists of a mix of stone, brick and rendered buildings of a variety of ages and styles. These are linked by an intricate network of lanes, roads and paths, including a number of major recreational routes that cross the Levels, such as the Severn Way and Jubilee Way, which provide connections westwards across the Severn and eastwards inland.

Inland, amidst the undulating landscape between the Levels and the Cotswolds, the settlement pattern has been influenced by the development of agricultural and textile industries and, to a lesser extent, by coal and iron industries.

On the upland ridge areas, scattered farmsteads and hamlets are linked by a complex network of lanes and trackways. In the rural lowland vale areas, villages are more numerous and there are substantial stone farmsteads and old mills along the streams. In the former mining settlements, such as Coalpit Heath, Ram Hill, Parkfield and Shortwood, frequent groups of brick and rendered cottages and houses occur alongside the roads. These are linked by a complex network of minor roads, lanes and footpaths, some now forming recreational routes, including the Frome Valley Walkway, Jubilee Way, Dramway and the Monarch's Way.

Leading towards the Cotswold scarp and plateau, small villages lie at the scarp foot, in the valley bottoms or on the valley sides within the scarp face, on the gentlest gradients. The settlements on the limestone areas are united through their use of Cotswold stone and are generally consistent in architectural style. The use of stone in walls, cottages, houses, stately homes and churches dominates villages, which have a distinctive Cotswold style, creating a harmony within settlements and the surrounding landscape, derived from repeating simple elements.

On the lower scarp slopes there are also large manor houses, often set within parkland landscapes, such as Horton Court, Dodington Park, Dyrham Park and Tracy Park.

On the high ground of the Cotswold plateau and dip slope, the settlement pattern is one of small, nucleated villages and isolated farmsteads, usually of Cotswold Stone. The Badminton Estate, with its core of designed parkland, formal avenues, stately home and worker cottages, contrasts markedly. Roads and lanes, often lined by stone walls, connect settlements. A number of footpaths (now also recreational routes), connect the Cotswold plateau and slopes with the lower

ground to the west, such as the Frome Valley Walkway, Jubilee Way and Monarch's Way, which all connect with the Cotswold Way.

A1.5 The Historic Landscape

The landscape of South Gloucestershire visible today is the product of continuous change over many centuries, which has transformed it through both natural and human processes. Therefore, historical influences have had a major effect on the present character and development pattern of the landscape. This influence is well researched and documented across South Gloucestershire in the Avon Historic Landscape Characterisation Study, undertaken in 1995-8. The distribution of identified Historic Landscape Characterisation Groups across the area is illustrated in Figure 69.

South Gloucestershire has a long and varied history, with human activity in the area dating from prehistory. There is evidence of neolithic activity within the area, including several long barrows. Through the Iron Age there is also evidence of substantial human activity, with higher ground and ridges being of importance and the lower areas attracting settlement, based on agriculture, quarrying, coal and iron. It was probably the high degree of settlement and general importance of the land that formed the basis of the extensive Roman occupation of the area.

By the late 11th century, the area was extensively settled and there was little woodland cover remaining in many areas. A number of settlements, such as Thornbury, Pucklechurch and Bitton had been established and Bristol had developed. Soon after and possibly before the preparation of the Domesday Book, common fields were in use and in the following centuries, during the medieval period, much of the land was in large estates, both ecclesiastical and lay. There were vast open sheepwalks, which formed the basis of medieval prosperity and sheep were moved seasonally from low to high ground.

During the Middle Ages, open fields surrounded the frequent villages, interspersed with patches of common and remnant woodland. There

was, however, extensive open downland on the limestone and a royal forest lay around Kingswood, extending north as far as Thornbury.

Bristol grew rapidly, as a centre for the cloth industry and as a port and was one of the great towns of medieval England. Lesser towns, like Thornbury and Chipping Sodbury also prospered. Following the Black Death and consequent population decline in the 14th century, open fields began to be enclosed. In the late 15th century many large estates were consolidated, mainly due to culling of landowners during the War of the Roses, but also to exchange and enclosure. Much of the open downland remained unenclosed until the 19th century. An important feature of the historic landscape is the degree to which enclosure by agreement had taken place in the latter Middle Ages, well before the period of parliamentary enclosure. A noticeable example of this can be found close to Yate Court.

The dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century enabled the further consolidation of large estates, ultimately leading to fine country houses and historic parks, such as Badminton and Dyrham, being established.

Many of the villages owe their present uniform character to the strong influence of estates which, in many cases, has persisted down to the present day. Throughout the late medieval and post-medieval period, there was piecemeal enclosure of open fields, commons, waste and sheepwalks, but many of the sheepwalks remained unenclosed until the late 18th and 19th centuries and the prominent rectilinear patterns characterise much of the higher ground today.

A coal industry was present in the Middle Ages, but it did not really become significant until the 18th century. It consisted of small pits dispersed across the countryside, often an unlawful use of common land, which fuelled local industries like the brass foundry at Keynsham. The pits continued to be active throughout the 19th century.

In the post-medieval period, Bristol expanded to

become Britain's second port. In the 18th and 19th centuries the city prospered and expanded on the basis of its trade, engineering and other industries. The wealth that was generated is evident in the parks and mansions that surround the city.

Many historical landscape features which provide evidence today of the human factors influencing landscape evolution, are designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs). An indication of the distribution of these is indicated on Figure 1 of the LCA.

A1.6 The Biodiversity of South Gloucestershire

South Gloucestershire encompasses a very diverse range of habitats and species, for example from the international designations on the Severn Estuary to the Limestone grasslands of the Cotswolds, to urban areas with pockets and corridors of green space.

Further information on priority habitats and species may be found in the South Gloucestershire Biodiversity Action Plan.¹

A1.6 Recent Landscape Change

Natural factors have continued to evolve the landscapes of South Gloucestershire in the 20th and 21st centuries; however, these are for the most part gradual processes, resulting in small changes over a hundred year period. Dutch Elm Disease is an exception and is the natural factor which has had most influence on landscape character in the last century. However, by far the most significant changes have resulted from human influences. Rapid development and changes in agricultural practices have both exerted a major influence on the character and evolution of the landscape. Although the two world wars introduced some land use changes in the first half of the century, the most significant changes affecting the area generally have occurred since World War II.

¹ <http://www.southglos.gov.uk/Pages/Article%20Pages/Planning%20Transport%20-%20Strategic%20Environment/Planning%20-%20Environment/What-is-biodiversity.aspx>

A1.6.1 Agricultural changes

The two world wars drove the initiative to improve food production, which amongst other consequences, led to the cultivation of some commons and other permanent pasture and the loss of some wildflower meadows and scrub woodlands. The interwar recession in agriculture, combined with the effects of World War I, also saw the start of the break up of large country estates and the loss of farming units. This process continued after the end of World War II. For example, Dyrham Park was bought by the nation as a war memorial and it was only this that saved its break up. It was subsequently handed to the National Trust to ensure its continuance. The wars also resulted in the felling of some woodlands, although not all of these were grubbed up and some have subsequently re-established.

The continued need to improve yields in the post war years led to the introduction of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in 1957, which resulted in major changes in agricultural practices and land use, encouraged by financial incentives for intensification and modernisation. These agricultural changes have significantly influenced the visual character of the landscape, with respect to the traditional pattern of fields, diversity, openness, texture and colour.

- **Management of field boundaries** - Although some traditional hedgelaying still takes place, the resource intensive traditional management of laying hedgerows has largely given way to mechanical hedge trimming (this method of management has been referred to as 'clipped' throughout the report). Whilst this method is quick and cost effective, it results in hedges which initially appear very ragged. Over time it also results in gappy or discontinuous hedgerows that are less diverse and no longer stockproof. Consequently, many boundaries have been supplemented by fencing of various types. In some areas, hedgerows have not been managed for a number of years, resulting in a boundary of very tall shrubby trees, which, whilst providing enclosure for a while, will also eventually become gappy.

Dry stonewall boundaries have also deteriorated through a lack of management, resulting in a loss of continuity or even removal in arable areas. On pastureland, some walls have either been replaced by, or supplemented with, fencing to maintain stockproof boundaries.

- **Enlargement of fields** - As a result of intensification, many historic field boundaries including hedgerows, ditches and walls, were lost in order to aggregate fields, to accommodate increasing arable production and larger machinery. In some areas, hedgerow trees were retained whilst the hedgerow was removed, leaving solitary trees surrounded by large arable fields. The loss of hedgerows and increase in field size is particularly evident on the Cotswold plateau, but is also seen elsewhere. Countryside management, under the Environmental Stewardship Scheme, has resulted in the retention and management of a number of hedgerows and, since the introduction of the Hedgerow Regulations in 1997, the rate of loss of hedgerows has reduced.
- **Loss of diversity** - The change to monocrop culture and the increasing uniformity of crops in order to intensify yields, which has been possible through technical developments and the increased use of machinery, herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers, has resulted in a dilution of the traditional 'patchwork' landscape.

The introduction of new crops, such as flax and, more particularly, oil seed rape, have altered the seasonal colour within the landscape over extensive areas. This is especially visible over the Cotswold plateau.

Loss of flower and species rich meadows has also resulted both from the intensive use of herbicides and, more particularly, the cultivation of previously marginal agricultural land.

During the last decade of the 20th century, 'set aside' field management under the CAP has further reduced the presence of wild flowers and resulted in a less managed appearance to the landscape.

- **Change in scale of agriculture** - The changes in economic viability of smaller farms in particular, has contributed to the decline of some farm holdings, as well as traditional management practices such as hedge laying, grazing of common land and woodland management. It has led to the merger of farms into larger units, with the development of larger farm buildings, to both house the large scale agricultural machinery and overwinter and/or house larger numbers of stock and feed.

These new buildings, which are frequently in prominent locations, are generally of an industrial appearance, both in scale and materials, often sitting less sympathetically in the landscape in comparison with traditional barns.

These farm changes have also resulted in the change of use of some farmhouses and farm buildings for residential, commercial or light industrial purposes, which can affect both their appearance and their relationship with the surrounding landscape, as a result of the associated changes to the buildings and adjacent land. Such changes can also result in pressures for new agricultural dwellings away from the original farmstead.

- **Changes in agricultural markets** - The change in economic viability of particular crops, livestock or land use, as a result of foreign competition, and the change to a free market dairy production, after the disbanding of the Milk Marketing Board, has had a significant effect on traditional agricultural land use. For example, the decline, or loss, of many of the orchards which were a characteristic feature associated with settlements or farms. The 20th century saw a number of large and small orchards

on the edge of settlements engulfed by, or incorporated into, new developments, or ploughed up. The few that remain are generally in decline, with little or no management. Their present condition contributes little to the settlement character. A large newly planted orchard at Almondsbury is an exception to the more widespread trend in the decline of orchards, although with increased awareness of their value in recent years this seems to be stabilising.

Changing markets have also resulted in a move away from hay meadows, to the practice of taking silage cuts instead. The more frequent cutting of pasture for silage has changed the colour, texture and movement, as well as species diversity, previously found in hay meadows. In addition, the presence of hay ricks or stacks has been replaced by black polythene-wrapped silage, stacked in field corners or adjacent to large livestock buildings.

As a result of these changes in agricultural markets and viability, some farmers are diversifying and using part of their land for non-agricultural purposes, for example fishing lakes, paintball games or caravan storage and converting farm buildings or adding new for other uses such as light industrial, office and retail use (farm shops/country stores). Such uses can often urbanise the surrounding landscape as they require signage, access and parking. Whilst fishing lakes are generally small in scale, there has been a slow increase in the number of these developments towards the end of the century.

- **'Horsiculture'** - The rapid increase in the keeping of horses and the change of land use for paddocks in the latter part of the century, particularly adjacent to the urban edge and other settlements, has resulted in a change in the appearance of former pasture fields. The change in use is frequently accompanied by a decline in traditional hedgerow management and their resultant effectiveness for stock control.

This has led to an adaptation of both boundaries and materials to maintain an animal-proof barrier. Often fields are subdivided into smaller units by fences and/or electric tape. In many cases, overgrazing and selective grazing results in extensive weed growth or bare ground, influencing the traditional agricultural character of the land.

Additional facilities and infrastructure which often accompanies the change in use to paddocks, including variously stabling, sheds, widening of gates onto the highway, 'pull off' areas for vehicles, multiple gates accessing different land ownerships, access tracks, muck heaps, tarpauline covers, exercise areas and rings (covered or open), horse boxes and caravans, jumps and floodlighting, further change the character of the rural landscape and can harm biodiversity.

The outbreak of BSE in 1992/93 and Foot and Mouth Disease in 2001, was expected to have both wide ranging and long term effects on agriculture. Whilst during both crises the impacts on both agriculture and the appearance of the landscape were significant, the expectations have not proved to be wholly correct and the effects were largely short term, although in some instances, there have been localised longer term impacts, with farmers ceasing to rely solely on animal husbandry and farm buildings being converted to other uses. The effects on farming practices and the agricultural landscape, as a result of market changes and agricultural subsidies, have been far more significant.

Policy changes in the UK and EU institutions, towards agricultural-environment schemes, may prove to have even more significant and long term impacts. Environmental Stewardship Schemes have, since 1992, changed the management practices on extensive area of land within South Gloucestershire. The schemes encourage actions that benefit both landscape and biodiversity, including for example hedgerow management and grass margins round

fields, as well as the restoration of old orchards, small woodland management and wildflower meadows as well as funding work on arable land in the Cotswolds to support farmland birds. Recent figures for South Gloucestershire show that the scheme has delivered beneficial management to some 39km of hedgerow, 12ha of orchards, 114ha woodland, close to 500 ha of grassland, and over 400ha arable land, making a significant contribution to the conservation and enhancement of the character and biodiversity value of South Gloucestershire's landscapes. Some funding is also available from the Forestry Commission for woodland management.

The decline in the number, extent and management of woodlands during much of the 20th century, as a result of both industrial and agricultural practices, appears to have been halted and woodland cover is again increasing. The creation of the Forest of Avon in 1991, covers some 57,300 ha. (221 sq miles) around Bristol, of which 26,840 ha. are in South Gloucestershire. The Forest of Avon objective is to increase woodland cover within the Plan area by up to 30% in the next 50 years, dependent on the existing landscape character of particular areas. Substantial areas of new planting have already been carried out in association with development, amenity areas or on agricultural land, through the Woodland Grants Scheme within the Forest area. Most notable to date are Overscourt Farm, Siston and Lower Knole Farm, Almondsbury.

The ongoing promotion of the principles of the Forest should therefore itself result in a significant change and evolution in the landscape character of widespread areas in the future.

A1.6.3 Natural factors

Many of the natural factors which shape the landscape are very gradual, perhaps imperceptible over the relatively short timescale of a century. However, some natural factors, especially disease, can have a dramatic impact on the landscape within a short period of time. There are a growing number of diseases which are threatening the health of trees.

- **Dutch Elm Disease** (DED) - Since the outbreak of the disease in the late 1960's, it has resulted in the loss of a very significant number of mature hedgerow trees across South Gloucestershire, which has had a major impact on the landscape character of the rural areas. In some areas, such as the Levels, where much of the vegetation structure was provided by hedgerow trees, the effect of the loss of enclosure provided by the elms and the opening up of views across the landscape, has been dramatic. Generally, there has been little hedgerow tree planting to compensate for the loss of elm trees.

Sucker growth from mature elm stumps which were not removed, continues to produce young elm trees within hedgerows. Where hedgerows are regularly managed, these elm suckers are continually renewed and are unaffected by the disease. However, when left to grow, at a certain age (approx. 8 years) and size, they again become susceptible to the beetle. This results in a continuous cycle of the growth of taller hedgerows, followed by the appearance of dead and dying trees, which has a further impact upon the character and enclosure within the landscape in areas where hedgerows are not managed, or are managed less frequently. Many of the suckering elms have recently reached this latter stage in their cycle.

Cameraria ohridella (Horse chestnut leaf miner) can be seen to affect many horse chestnut trees, mainly through leaf browning and loss earlier than would be expected in the summer. The disease was first found

established in the UK in the London Borough of Wimbledon in July 2002. Leaf mines with larvae were present in high densities on horse-chestnut trees (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) along the southern edge of Wimbledon Common, and in nearby streets and gardens, which suggested that the first moths had arrived in either 2000 or 2001. From this initial area of infestation, the moth has spread rapidly, and it is now present across most of south-central England, East Anglia and the Midlands. The current distribution (November 2006) extends to Wells on the north Norfolk coast, and to Derby, Shrewsbury, Cardiff and Somerset, 190-230 km from the site of the original infestation. The rate of spread in the UK (40-60 km/year) is similar to that seen on the continent. Despite the poor appearance of horse-chestnut trees infested with *C. ohridella*, there is no evidence that damage by the moth leads to a decline in tree health, the development of dieback, or tree death.

Phytophthora ramorum (*P. ramorum*) is a fungus-like pathogen of plants that is causing extensive damage and mortality to trees and other plants in parts of the United Kingdom. It has also been found in a number of European countries, but mostly on plants and shrubs, especially rhododendron, viburnum and camellia, and has caused significant damage and mortality to many trees and other plants in parts of the USA. However, few trees in the UK were affected until 2009, when *P. ramorum* was found infecting and killing large numbers of Japanese larch trees in South West England, then spreading to Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, before being found in western Scotland in 2011. It is widespread in South Gloucestershire. It also causes Sudden Oak death.

Ash die Back- is a disease of ash trees caused by a fungus called *Chalara fraxinea*. The disease causes leaf loss and crown dieback in affected trees and it may lead to tree death. Ash trees suffering from symptoms likely to be caused by *Chalara fraxinea* are increasingly being found across Europe.

These have included forest trees, trees in urban areas (such as parks and gardens) and also young trees in nurseries. The disease has recently been found in Britain on Ash trees in the natural environment in East Anglia. *Chalara fraxinea* is currently being treated as a quarantine pest under national emergency measures; it is important that suspected cases of the disease are reported. Denmark has had the disease in excess of 10 years in which time it has killed 90% of their Ash trees. Ash trees are thought to be more at risk if Honey Fungus is also present. Since Ash trees make up a third of Britain's tree this disease could have a major impact on our landscapes in the future.

- **Invasive species** - Japanese Knotweed. Japanese Knotweed is generally regarded as the most invasive plant in Britain. It was introduced into the UK in the 19th century, as an ornamental plant from the Far East. Since then it has spread rapidly, particularly along riverbanks, roadsides, on derelict land, or on unmanaged land awaiting development, displacing native flora and affecting the character of many areas, river corridors in particular, both visually and ecologically.

It spreads by vegetative means (even the smallest fragment of the rhizome, crown or stem can grow into a new plant). Its spread has been exacerbated by riverbank erosion, fly tipping and moving contaminated soil containing pieces of the plant. It is however illegal under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, to spread Japanese Knotweed.

- **Storms** - The storms of 1986 and 1990, which had varying effects across the area, highlighted the problems associated with a general lack of tree management. Although new planting can be seen in some areas, generally there has been little new tree planting to provide succession to the existing mature vegetation framework – either hedgerow trees, woodlands or copses etc. - which forms such an important feature of the landscape. Therefore, there is frequently nothing to take the place of losses resulting

from severe weather conditions, which are likely to become a more frequent occurrence.

A1.6.4 Development

In the 20th century, Bristol expanded rapidly, fuelled by economic growth and government policy. Manufacturing industries at Rolls Royce and British Aerospace, associated with Filton Airfield, influenced the development of a large area of north Bristol. More recently the airfield has closed, and subsequently this large open site has been proposed for redevelopment through the Core Strategy, leading to significant change in the landscape character of this locality.

The development of the large scale chemical works at Severnside, north of Avonmouth, increased the spread of industrial complexes along the edge of the Levels and Severn Estuary, although some have now closed and sites are being redeveloped. Large tracts of land remain the subject of an extant 1957 planning consent which enables development without the landscape requirements that would be likely to be attached to any consent today.

Major new roads developed, including the M4/M5 motorways, as well as the more recent M48 and M49 motorways through the area, the second Severn bridge, the M32 into Bristol and various stages of the Avon Ring Road around Bristol. These significantly increased accessibility of the area to and from the rest of the country. Economic development and accessibility affected the demand for housing, light industrial areas and commercial development throughout the whole area. Many outlying settlements, such as Yate and Thornbury, developed both as their own employment centres and providing housing for people working in Bristol and elsewhere.

More recent development trends have seen the growth of the service and retail industries, particularly to the north of Bristol, with large scale office complexes at the MOD Abbey Wood, Axa Sunlife, Aztec West Business Park and Cribbs Causeway retail development. The last two, located adjacent to motorway junctions.

Recent development at Emerald Park, Emerson's Green, adjacent to the Avon Ring Road, has extended the expansion of commercial development to the north east of Bristol. Further change is proposed through the allocation of growth areas in the Core Strategy, particularly on the north fringe of Bristol, north of Yate and at Thornbury, as well as at Severnside.

- **Residential development** - The extensive expansion of housing development on the edges of Bristol and Yate during the latter half of the 20th century, as well as smaller developments on the edge of other settlements across the area, more often have little relationship in terms of layout, density, materials and design, to the housing areas which they adjoin. There is therefore an erosion of the character and local distinctiveness of the more traditional settlement. The new edge of the settlement against the rural landscape, which is often a solid fence boundary, is abrupt, with no buffer to soften the effect and integrate the interface between the two landscapes, which in some instances can have a widespread impact. Further changes continue as a result of Core Strategy allocations.

Even smaller scale extensions, property or boundary changes, where these have paid little respect to existing detailing or materials, have had a localised effect on character.

Barn conversions have been a relatively recent trend, resulting in the change of use of traditional farm buildings to residential properties. The traditional materials, form and setting of these buildings often have a strong relationship with their previous agricultural function, contributing to the local rural character. The changes to the fabric of the building and addition of associated infrastructure, such as access drives, parking, gardens and new boundaries, as a result of the change of use, all have the potential to erode the local, rural landscape character.

- **Commercial development** - The scale and nature of recent commercial development, both in terms of building size, materials, colour and design, as well as the associated external infrastructure requirements, especially of roads and car parking, have increased their visual prominence, and at the same time, reduced the potential for integration of these developments within the surrounding landscape.

In the Levels, whilst the flat landscape reduced the need for physical changes to the ground, to accommodate these large-scale buildings, the existing structure of rhines and hedgerows (especially since the loss of elms to DED), was inadequate to provide an appropriate framework to help integrate such large-scale changes. A new landscape structure of appropriate scale has been implemented within the early phases of the Severnside development, however other developments such as the extensive Tesco facility have taken place under the extant 1957 planning permission and without appropriate landscape mitigation works.

In other areas, like Emerald Park at Emerson's Green and the developing Science Park, the introduction of large-scale industrial units into a small-scale landscape resulted in topographic changes and a significant change in the landscape character of the locality, due to the scale, materials and colour of the building, as well as the range of local and elevated views of the site from the wider landscape.

- **Infrastructure** - The major expansion of the infrastructure network across the area, resulted in the construction of two major railway lines in the early part of the century and five motorways and the Avon Ring Road during the latter part, which have all had a significant effect on the landscapes across the area. Both the railways and roads are largely unsympathetic to the grain of the landscape, cutting through or superimposed upon the topography, with elevated bridges and embankments and, in

the case of roads, intersections with adjoining roads, increasing their visual intrusion. More recently motorways and major roads have expanded within their land holding, adding further lanes, signage, gantries and lighting, often increasing the prominence of this infrastructure within the wider landscape.

The earlier development of the railways, coupled with the demise of the steam train and, the subsequent lack of management of vegetation growth along embankments and cuttings, has resulted in the establishment of mature vegetation corridors which generally screen the artificial embankments and integrate the line of the railway within the landscape framework of the rural area. The earlier, brick-built viaducts, carrying the railway across the Frome and Bradley Brook Valleys, now form local landmarks in their own right.

The increasing levels of traffic on minor roads have resulted in road widening, erosion of verges, or removal of hedgerows to increase sightlines on some roads. Even generally quiet country roads may have higher levels of traffic during rush hours and the afternoon school-run. This increase in noise from traffic levels can reduce the tranquillity of rural areas.

These changes, together with highway improvement measures, such as kerbs and lighting, introducing standardisation and urban features on some roads in rural areas, result in an erosion of local character. The accompanying increase in the plethora of road signage further affects rural character. There have been projects seeking to mitigate the impact of pressure from traffic such as the 'Quiet Lanes' initiative which sought to reinforce the rural characteristics of lanes that suffered from traffic pressures and reduce traffic speeds.

- **Telecommunications** - Since the early 1990's there has been a significant growth in the number of telecommunication facilities, for mobile phones and other uses, in the form of masts and associated ground equipment.

These facilities can have a significant visual impact, as the need to provide them has little correlation with planning designations. Consequently, besides obvious visual impact, facilities can also affect sites of nature conservation and/or archaeological interest. The customer-led demand that is inherent in the telecommunication licensing system, usually results in facilities being concentrated in urban areas and alongside motorways, major roads and railway lines, although they are also scattered across the countryside and on hilltops and ridges.

- **Light pollution** - The increased level of development has resulted in a much greater requirement for lighting of settlements, commercial sites, recreational areas and the road networks, with little consideration given to the effect these increasing light levels would have. The result has been a significant increase in light pollution of adjacent and the wider rural areas.

Even lighting of road junctions using down lighters can have a significant effect, for example on the A420/A46 junction at Cold Ashton, the A420 at Toghill and the A46/M4 junction 18 at Tormarton, which, due to their elevated locations on or near the Cotswold Scarp, have a widespread as well as local impact. Similarly, the lighting for H.M.P. Ashfield at Pucklechurch has a widespread influence, due to the nature and intensity of the lighting and its elevated position.

- **Power Generation** - The C21st has brought an increase in proposals for power generation, including the nomination of a site for a new nuclear power station at Oldbury, and various power station proposals in the Severnside area, as well as renewables proposals in the form of solar farms and proposals for wind turbines.

A1.6.5 Urban fringe

The continuing expansion of the urban areas results in increasing pressures on land and for land use change, both on the urban fringe and on the edge of other settlements.

The change of use from farmland to horse paddocks is already referred to. Small holdings, used for nursery production or market gardens have, in places, replaced pasture. Other agricultural fields, especially those earmarked for future development, are often not actively managed, resulting in vigorous weed growth taking over former pasture and overgrown and discontinuous hedgerows. All these activities have led to a decline in traditional field boundaries and, sometimes, a change in field patterns and land cover at the settlement edge, affecting landscape character.

Demands for playing fields close to settlement areas can introduce significant change in landscape character, especially where extensive remodelling of existing contours is required to create pitches, as at Emerson's Green and at Rodway Hill, and also at golf courses such as Tracey Park.

The continuing growth of the population in the urban areas and settlements, places increasing pressure on existing open spaces, within the built development and on the urban fringe and settlement edges. This can result in the erosion of paths or soil and damage to vegetation through excessive informal use (or abuse), for example at Rodway Common, or damage through the demand for organised events on open spaces, such as the fair at Yate and Westerleigh Commons. This increasing pressure at the urban fringe, also affects the condition of the adjoining rural edge and framework as both farmland and woodlands, with or without public access, are used to supplement public open spaces. The over use of both open spaces and agricultural land on the urban fringes can have a significant effect on the character of the local area.

An additional, though transient, effect of the

pressure at the urban edge are the occurrences of burnt out cars and fly-tipping on roadside verges, which are unsightly, prior to their removal. The effects may be longer term, if adjacent vegetation has been damaged by fire or tipping. Whilst this is more prevalent adjacent to the urban edge, it is occasionally apparent further into the countryside area.

A1.6.6 Sport and Recreation in the countryside

With the increase in leisure time, more people are actively using the countryside. The extensive public footpath network and particularly the designated recreational routes and availability of information on access routes, encourage both use and appreciation of the landscape. Popular areas, such as the Cotswolds, can suffer from excessive pressure, requiring a higher degree of management to conserve the landscape character.

The increase in horse riding across the area can result in conflict with walkers and erosion of path surfaces unless carefully managed. The increase in this activity is reflected in the designation of a series of Circular Rides within South Gloucestershire.

Similarly, the use of paths, tracks or green lanes by mountain bikes, trial bikes or 4-wheel drive vehicles, can result in extensive erosion of surfaces, high noise levels, and conflict with other users. Motorised vehicles especially, can disturb an otherwise quiet countryside. This situation may well change in the next few years, when new legislation comes into force to restrict the use of motorised vehicles on certain types of right of way.

The growth of golf courses in the latter part of the last century has resulted in 10 new courses and extensions in South Gloucestershire. These have generally required extensive reshaping of both contours and the landscape framework and therefore have had a significant influence on the character of rural areas.

Tracy Park Golf Course is the most prominent, located on the lower slopes of the Cotswold Scarp; the change in landscape character is visible from a wide area.

A1.6.7 Mineral extraction

The coal industry continued in South Gloucestershire into the 20th century, with some pits active into the second half of the century. There was a rapid decline following nationalisation and the last pit, at Harry Stoke, closed in 1963. Today, there is little evidence of the coal mining industry remaining. Most of the tips have either been reclaimed or are covered by vegetation, as at Shortwood and in many instances, the associated buildings and plant have largely disappeared. The industrial archaeological relics at Brandy Bottom Colliery, Shortwood are a SAM.

The production of celestite has only recently ceased. It was extracted from areas, mostly to the west and north of Yate, for over 100 years: the area was formerly the world's leading producer. The shallow strip mining process has left little evidence in the landscape today. Ground levels in some areas north of Yate can be seen to be lower than adjacent areas, where excavations extended up to hedgerows. In some areas, there is also evidence of resultant localised surface water drainage problems.

Although a few of the larger scale hard rock quarries, such as Harnhill, ceased production during the last century or are currently inactive (e.g. Cromhall Limestone Quarry and Tytherington), the economic value and demand for hard rock minerals, particularly limestone, continued to grow. As a result, a number of these quarries expanded their operational areas, e.g. Wick, Wickwar, Chipping Sodbury and Tytherington.

Relatively recent changes in government legislation and guidance have enabled greater environmental controls over mineral workings. These are seen as a key factor in securing improvements in both operations, screening and restoration, to minimise the impact of what can be a very visible and highly intensive activity in the

landscape, over long periods of time.

Similarly, the extraction of clays at Almondsbury and Shortwood continued and expanded throughout the 20th century. The brickworks associated with the quarry at Shortwood closed, the clay was stockpiled, most of the infrastructure has since disappeared and the site is being landfilled.

A1.6.8 Landfill / land raising

Whilst there is evidence of some small scale landfill occurring prior to the 20th century, the need for landfill and land raising sites, to accommodate the rapid rise in the volumes of waste produced, expanded significantly during the 20th century: this includes household waste, commercial and industrial waste and inert, construction and demolition materials. The voids of former quarries, such as at Harnhill, have been filled, producing a new landform with contours generally above those of surrounding areas, to accommodate settlement and shrinkage and to allow for drainage of the surface water, away from the filled void.

Shortwood Claypit is at the time of writing being used for landfill and progressive restoration. Rarely are landfill sites returned to their original contours, resulting in a new landform and the need to establish a new landscape framework which is in character with the surrounding landscape.

In addition to landfilling, waste materials have also been used to land raise, or to create bunds in many areas of South Gloucestershire. This has, in places, physically changed the shape of the landscape and its relationship to the surrounding areas; this is particularly evident within the Levels, e.g. at Berwick Farm, but is also visible adjacent to roads or development, where bunds form acoustic or visual screens, e.g. along the edge of Woodlands/Bristol Golf Courses, adjacent to the motorways.

Frequently these bunds have steep profiles, with little relationship to the surrounding topography, often changing the degree of openness or enclosure of the area, e.g. along both sides of

the M4 corridor and west of the M32 junction. Where the bunds/land raising have been planted, vegetation may, in the long term, help to partially integrate these new features. Where unplanted, these bunds remain an unnatural feature.

A1.7 Future Trends

The landscapes of South Gloucestershire continue to evolve, albeit relatively slowly across most of the rural areas. However there are areas of more significant change including:

A1.7.1 Development

The Core Strategy has identified areas for the development of new neighbourhoods at Cribbs/Patchway, East of Harry Stoke, north of Yate and at Thornbury. While this will result in significant change in these localities, a comprehensive approach is being taken to the planning and design of the new communities to ensure that not only do these developments provide the necessary housing, employment, community and social facilities, but Green Infrastructure is built into the planning of these areas. In order to guide the form of new development, the Core Strategy sets out 'Framework Diagrams' for each of the new neighbourhood areas, including defining indicative 'character areas' for housing, mixed use and employment. These plans also indicate the strategic distribution and extent of Green Infrastructure. Further Supplementary Planning Documents for each new neighbourhood will provide further guidance.

In addition, the development of the Science Park at Emerson's Green is resulting in the transformation of a rural landscape to a high quality employment buildings set within a robust landscape structure. At Severnside, the Core Strategy and Enterprise Area seeks to attract future development, and to promote a strategic approach to development and address flood risk, coastal protection, biodiversity, archaeology and transport issues. However the extant 1957 consent across a large area enabled the Tesco facility to be built without strategic landscape infrastructure, and there is risk of other

developers taking the same approach.

With a rapidly expanding population, pressures on the new urban fringe will increase and although proposals for green infrastructure are built into the policy proposals for the new neighbourhoods, new measures will need to be found to appropriately manage any adverse change on landscape character and on the wider rural landscape.

These developments will have a significant influence on the character of the host landscapes, however with appropriate green infrastructure they should progressively be absorbed into the surrounding landscapes.

- **Infrastructure** - There are continuing pressures to widen and add further infrastructure to the existing road network, including some motorways and major roads, to accommodate increasing traffic or to improve sustainable transport, in particular providing bus lanes. Current trends appear to be to widen within the existing highway boundary, which results in the loss of vegetation implemented as part of the initial mitigation measures of the original schemes, constructed in the latter half of the 20th century. Current land restrictions tend to result in little compensatory planting, affecting the character of the local landscape and, in some instances, of the wider landscape. On the approach to Tormarton, the adjacent landowner is implementing offsite land raising which will have the effect of reducing the impact of the widened motorway on the wider landscape.

Network Rail are implementing works to improve the safety of the system, constructed more than 100 years ago. This work, to allow regrading and drainage works to stabilise the banks, results in the loss of extensive mature/semi-mature vegetation, which has developed on the embankments, largely screening both the unnatural landform and the movement of trains across the elevated landscape. Works to date have had a major impact on the landscape, particularly between

Ram Hill and Winterbourne and at Yate, where the embankments are high relative to their surroundings. This has resulted not only in the loss of major areas of woodland which were an integral part of the landscape framework, but also in opening up views of the elevated railway and movement across the rural landscape. If the vegetation is allowed to regrow, it will take many years for any proposed replanting to be effective in screening this feature again, and it may be that future works result in similar impacts elsewhere.

Electrification of the main railway lines is also proposed, and the associated wires and gantries have the potential to increase the prominence and influence of these features within the wider landscape.

- **Energy** - South Gloucestershire is experiencing pressure to accommodate new power stations, including the National Policy Statement nomination of 150ha+ adjacent to the existing nuclear power station at Oldbury for the development of a new nuclear power station, the proposal for a new gas fired power station on the site of a former chemical works at Severnside, and on the boundary with Bristol City Council, a proposed new power station adjacent to the existing Seabank Power Station. There is also a new energy from waste plant immediately adjacent to the proposed Seabank 3 power station site, and further facilities proposed in Bristol.
- **Renewable Energy** - The UK has signed up to achieve a legally binding EU target that 15% of total energy consumed will come from renewable sources by 2020. The Government's Renewable Energy Roadmap estimates that approximately half of this target will be met from 'National' level deployment with little or no local influence and that approximately half will be met from technologies and resources over which there is local control and influence. South Gloucestershire's Climate Change Strategy has adopted delivery of 7.5% as a local target.

The National Planning Policy Framework requires local authorities to help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and to recognise the responsibility on all communities to contribute to energy generation from renewable or low carbon sources. South Gloucestershire has recognised that it has a key role in enabling the development of renewable and low carbon energy projects and contributing to the Government target, and is preparing a Climate Change Strategy that is proposed to include a local Renewables Target.

It is not possible to accurately predict the type, size and location of technologies that will be installed in South Gloucestershire as this will be reliant on the individual planning applications and projects that are brought forward by developers, individuals and communities, and these projects being granted planning consent. It will also be influenced by advances in technology. However, an assessment of available renewable energy resources in South Gloucestershire and an estimate of likely deployment potential by 2020 have been carried out to inform the setting of a local target. The assessment includes a range of renewable energy technologies as follows - onshore wind, biomass from energy crops, biomass from wood, energy from waste, anaerobic digestion, ground mounted solar PV, roof mounted solar PV, solar thermal, heat pumps, landfill gas and hydropower. A Supplementary Planning Document for Renewables is being prepared in parallel with the current review of this Landscape Character Assessment.

Although the UK's greatest wind resource is along the western coastline, more recent technological developments mean that wind power is now viable over much of the country including South Gloucestershire. As a result there have been a number of enquiries and several planning applications in recent years. However, potential locations on the edge of the Severn Estuary may conflict with the European designations in respect of migrating birds. Elsewhere in the authority area, potential sites, particularly those capable of accommodating

the larger turbines, would be constrained by proximity to residential development, in terms of the urban edge, towns and villages, as well as scattered settlement across the rural areas. Although widespread in some parts of the country, no larger turbines have yet been constructed in South Gloucestershire. Depending on the landscape context, they can result in significant change to the character of the locality. Their impact on landscape character will be influenced, in addition, by their design, height and numbers, as well as the associated infrastructure, which can include access roads, areas of hard standing adjacent to the base of each turbine to allow access for heavy plant, small transformers/ sub-stations and transmission lines, to connect the energy produced to the grid.

The development of technology in combination with the introduction of Feed-in Tariffs has resulted in the introduction of solar panels (primarily photovoltaic but also solar thermal) to many roofs across the Council area. This has particularly affected the character and appearance of some residential areas, and has the potential to impact on Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. When sited sensitively these can integrate with their surroundings, however they can also impact on the character and appearance of the host building when inappropriately sited or mounted. There may also be significant as yet unrealised potential for further solar installations on commercial and farm buildings. Several solar parks or farms have been consented including at Says Court, Yate and Grange Farm near Winterbourne,, and enquiries relating to the potential development of such facilities are increasing. These involve ranks of ground mounted panels over grazed grass (often sheep), and although they result in a significant change to local landscape character, when sensitively sited the effects on the wider landscape can be limited.

Some cultivation of biomass crops has been seen in South Gloucestershire. Such operations require large areas of land to be

converted from more traditional agricultural crops or pasture, to energy crops, to be of an appropriate economic scale that is viable to fuel the plant for production of electricity, heat, or combined heat and power (CHP). This would result in a significant change in landscape character, with crops such as short rotation coppice of willow or poplar, grown on a 2-4 year cycle, or grasses such as *Miscanthus* (Elephant Grass), (especially in southern England), harvested annually. Both types of crop will grow to a much greater height before harvesting than is typical for pasture or arable land, creating a frequently changing pattern of openness and much greater enclosure than is currently produced on agricultural land. The crops themselves, particularly the grasses, can appear as alien in form, texture and light (the last two particularly apparent as a result of wind movement through the crop). However being an agricultural operation such cultivation is outside the control of the planning system.

In addition, the plant and equipment necessary to generate heat and/or electricity, as well as on-site storage of fuel, can, depending on the scale of the installation, potentially introduce industrial structures, including chimneys, into rural areas where buildings are currently limited or absent, in order to reduce the transport distance between fuel source and plant. However, inevitably this type of fuel production and generation will increase traffic volumes on local roads and may require highway improvements, to accommodate regular use by heavy vehicles on some rural roads.

Similarly farm scale anaerobic digesters that harvest energy from food waste or agricultural slurry can result in the addition of tanks and buildings to agricultural building complexes. Depending on the siting and design of such facilities, as well as the implementation of suitable screen planting, these facilities will have varying impacts on the settings of nearby buildings and or the character of the wider landscape. In addition access by delivery

vehicles can result in pressure for highway improvements and pressure on the landscape features of country lanes.

Ground source or air source Heat Pumps are relatively modest scale installations associated with buildings, and as long as sensitively sited and designed, they have the potential to avoid significant impact on the character of the locality.

The potential for harvesting Landfill Gas is limited in South Gloucestershire as gas from the existing landfill sites diminishes.

Due to the vertical profile of the rivers of South Gloucestershire, the potential for in stream Hydro power is limited. With appropriate biodiversity impact mitigation and sensitive design such installations have the potential to avoid significant impact on the landscape character of the locality.

Although the Severn Estuary has substantial potential for the generation of renewable energy, were proposals to come forward this would not be through the Local Authority planning application process. The potential issues arising from proposals for a barrage are therefore beyond the scope of this SPD.

- Telecommunications - Technological advances in the telecommunications industry continue to grow with both increases in the number of sites and the enlargement of some existing facilities. Whilst considerable efforts are made by both the telecommunication providers and local planning authorities to minimise visual impact, it is the case that in the future some sites are impacting on sensitive locations.

A1.7.2 Agricultural changes

Government and EU policy relating to agricultural funding is the major factor affecting the rural landscape. For the present and near future, the emphasis on agri-environment schemes under the CAP, particularly when support for food production is withdrawn, commencing in 2005,

will continue to benefit landscape character and ecological diversity across South Gloucestershire. Although the new Single Farm Payment Scheme generally offers opportunities for environmental benefits, some aspects, such as changes in livestock levels, or reduction in the labour force, will affect grazing regimes and management practices, which could have a detrimental effect on landscape character. Future changes in national or European policy, could again have a widespread effect on landscape character.

The conversion of fields back into agricultural use, after set-aside, could result in the loss of the incidental habitats which have established as a result of the non-use and lack of management of these areas.

Diversification of farms will continue with the introduction of non-traditional crops and changes in animal husbandry leading to pressure for larger industrial scale barns, and the expansion of non-agricultural uses of land, unless the economics of traditional farming improves. Several alpaca farms have recently opened in South Gloucestershire. The affect of these on landscape character can be similar to that of 'horsiculture', including the introduction of additional structures for housing the animals.

To satisfy the increasing demand for horse paddocks and small holdings, pastureland is being divided and sold off, resulting in a change in field pattern which can lead to the enclosure of previously open farmland. Frequently these areas are less actively managed than the former farmland and, without hedgerow planting along new fence lines and tree planting to screen permanent stables and associated equipment and temporary shelters, these areas can affect the integrity of the rural framework and erode the existing rural character. Overgrazing can also affect the appearance of the land, resulting in the erosion of the grass sward.

Farm buildings continue to be converted, either as separate dwellings, or as holiday lets attached to farms. Although these can result in changes to the building facades and use of adjacent land,

they may also result in the removal of some large agricultural storage barns which are no longer needed for the reduced level of activity on the farm, which may have a positive impact on the character of the local or wider landscape. There is also pressure for the reuse of former agricultural buildings and the construction of new buildings to accommodate other commercial uses, such as light industrial and workshops, as well as retail farm or country stores and cafés. These bring with them pressures to improve access as well as to provide parking, signage and lighting, all of which can impact on the character of the locality and the setting of the original and sometimes listed farm buildings.

The Forest of Avon Trust, which is a charity that seeks to promote the value of trees and to increase the extent of woodland cover within South Gloucestershire. Many of the areas planted in the earlier years of the Forest are now maturing, into semi-mature woodland, influencing the openness or enclosure of parts of the landscape and significantly increasing the diversity of the land cover.

A1.7.3 Natural factors

Climate change - The potential impacts of climate change, accelerated by global warming, could have a much greater influential effect on landscape character during this century, if the current models of changes in climate pattern occur.

Landscape changes are likely to occur as direct or indirect results of higher temperatures, wetter winters, an increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events and sea level rise. Climate is a key factor, in combination with geology, soils, topography, drainage and vegetation, in shaping the physical landscape. The impacts resulting from climate change are therefore likely to be complex, often subtle, but with some more dramatic effects. Current models of the rate and extent of climate change have a high degree of uncertainty and therefore the likely impacts on landscape character are not yet clear. However, it is anticipated that there will

be changes to landscape elements such as trees, hedgerows, streams and rivers and broader changes as a result of land use change.

Some low-lying areas like the Levels, may be significantly at risk as a result of rising sea levels, as well as more frequent storm surges and tidal inundation, particularly since the Severn Estuary has the second highest tidal range in the world. These conditions would affect the warths (salt marshes) and mudflats between the Estuary and sea wall in particular, but may also affect the low-lying farmland behind the sea wall and ultimately, its viability for agricultural use. This could have a major impact on the feeding grounds for overwintering birds, for which the Estuary is designated, nationally and internationally.

Changes as a result of varying water resources may impact on the landscape relatively quickly, whilst habitats and species are likely to be affected over a longer period of time. Agriculture and forestry potentially will be most likely to be affected, both in the type of crops/species that can be grown and the viability of particular areas of land, due to changing moisture levels. In the long term, there is likely to be an altitudinal/northward migration of species, which may result in existing habitats and native tree species characteristic of our landscapes being unable to regenerate. The storms of 1986 and 1990 illustrated that woodland and hedgerow trees are also vulnerable to extreme weather events. Changes may also result in the fragmentation of habitats, or the loss of protected species and habitats both within and outside designated areas. Grassland species will be particularly vulnerable to these changes.

Cultural heritage and the historic landscape, which are an essential part of landscape character, are particularly vulnerable. Buildings or structures could be affected by weathering, flooding or subsidence. Potential changes in farming practices could subtly impact upon field patterns and ridge and furrow. More widespread impacts could result from land use change, either in response to agricultural viability, or land use planning policies, in response to climate change.

A1.7.4 Mineral extraction

South Gloucestershire is an area with significant mineral workings, including active and inactive quarries and pits as well as those in restoration. The levels of mineral extraction have varied in recent times in line with the economic context, so that at the time of writing some quarries such as Wick and Tytherington are technically still operational but active quarrying has ceased for the time being. Minerals include limestone for crushed rock, Quartzite and brick clay.

A1.7.5 Waste management

Government and EU targets over the past few years are resulting in a dramatic reduction in the volume of waste deposited in landfill sites. Churchwood Quarry, Wickwar is identified for landfill while at the time of writing Shortwood is in the landfill and progressive restoration phase. Whilst the effect of the landfill will be to ultimately fill and restore these quarries, careful planning controls will be required, both to minimise the environmental impacts during their operational life and to ensure that the final landform, land use and vegetation structure, integrates with and is appropriate to, the landscape character of the surrounding rural area.

As a result of the reduction in the level of waste going to landfill sites, further sites will be required to provide facilities for recovery of waste, which may include waste transfer sites, civic amenity sites, composting sites, energy recovery. The impact on landscape character will be dependent on siting, the nature of proposals and the sensitivity of the surrounding landscape. Again, planning controls will be a major factor in minimising adverse effects on landscape character.

Appendix 2

Character Overview

Provides information and definitions on the hierarchy of landscape assessment classification. Describes the division of the landscape into discrete areas of similar characteristics.

A2.1 Introduction

Appendix 2 illustrates the major influences on the development of the landscapes of South Gloucestershire. This helps to indicate the varied and often complex character which forms the basis of the classification of the landscape.

Partly based on the Overview information in Appendix 1 above and on previous character assessments carried out at a national and regional level, the landscape of South Gloucestershire has been divided into a number of discrete areas of similar characteristics. This is illustrated below and each level of character assessment is described in detail over the following pages.

A2.2 Landscape Character Types

From the national landscape character areas, the landscape of South Gloucestershire has been further divided into landscape character types.

Landscape character types are generic and may occur in different parts of the country, but they are united through broadly similar patterns of geology, landform and drainage patterns as well as soils, vegetation, land use, human influences, settlement and field pattern.

The landscape character types have been identified through a combination of desktop study and field survey. The desktop study included the analysis of previous landscape assessments, such as the draft Avon Landscape Assessment, which covered the whole of South

Gloucestershire and made a preliminary division of the landscape into landscape character zones and sub-zones.

This draft landscape character assessment was correlated with the historic landscape survey boundaries (see Figure 69), where the historic landscape categories and types were mapped and described.

The landscape assessment was carried out in conjunction with the Forest of Avon, within the forest plan area, to provide the basis for the development of a woodland strategy (the Forest of Avon Strategy).

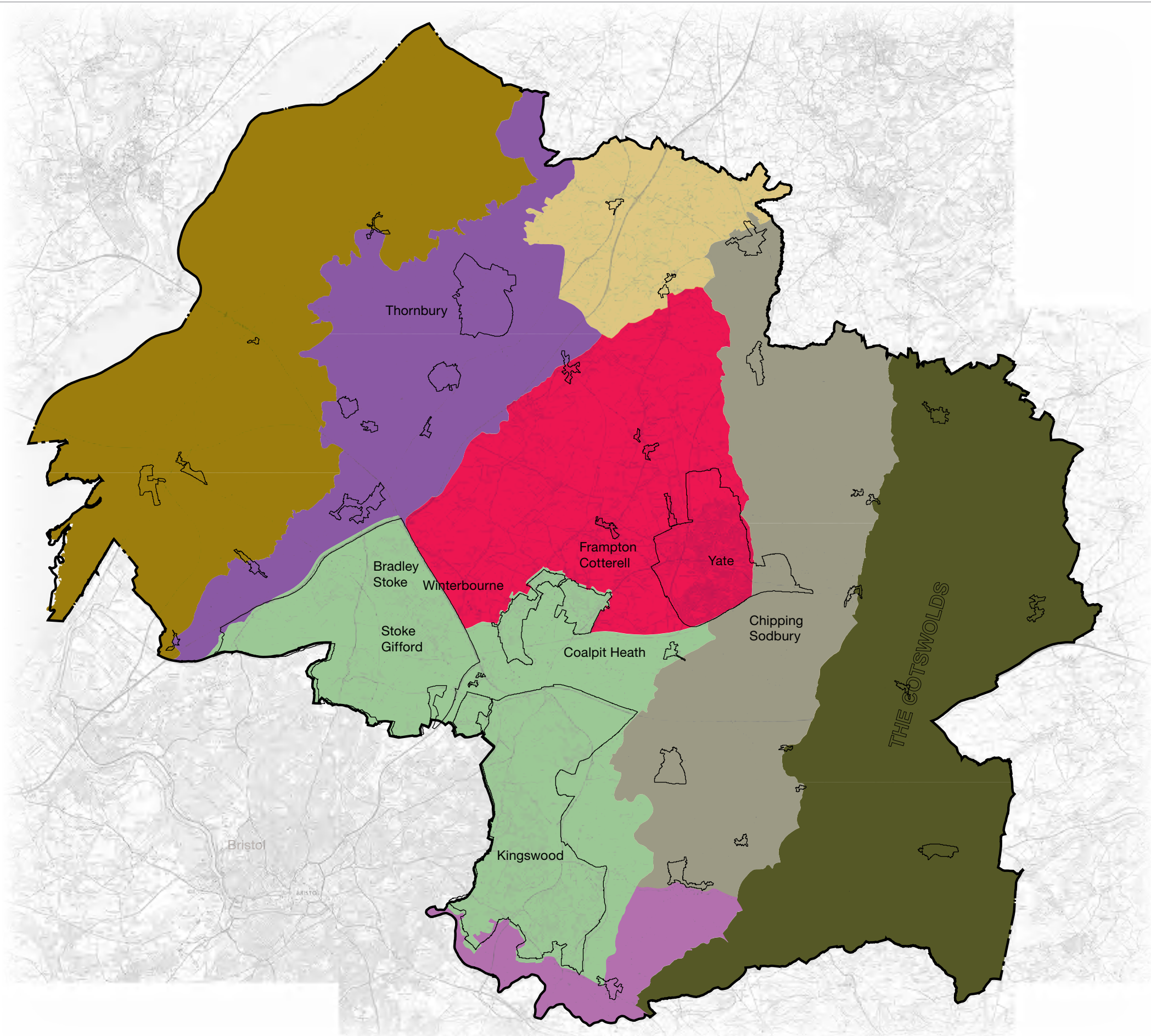
These assessments informed the current landscape character assessment and helped to define the landscape character types.

The eight landscape character types identified in South Gloucestershire include:

- Plateau and Scarp
- Shallow Ridge
- Parkland Vale
- Shallow Vale
- Broad Valleys
- Enclosed Valleys
- Undulating Ridge
- Estuary, Shoreline and Levels

Their location is mapped on Figure 70 and they are described and illustrated in the following pages.

Character overview



- South Gloucestershire Boundary
- Plateau and Scarp
- Shallow Ridge
- Parkland Vale
- Shallow Vale
- Broad Valleys
- Enclosed Valleys
- Undulating Ridge
- Estuary, Shoreline and Levels
- Major areas of settlement

Source Information based on British Geological Mapping

This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. South Gloucestershire Council Licence No 100023410, 2013



0 5km

Figure 70
Landscape Character Types

A2.2.1 Plateau and Scarp

Open, sloping landscape of the plateau



Distinctive slopes of the Scarp

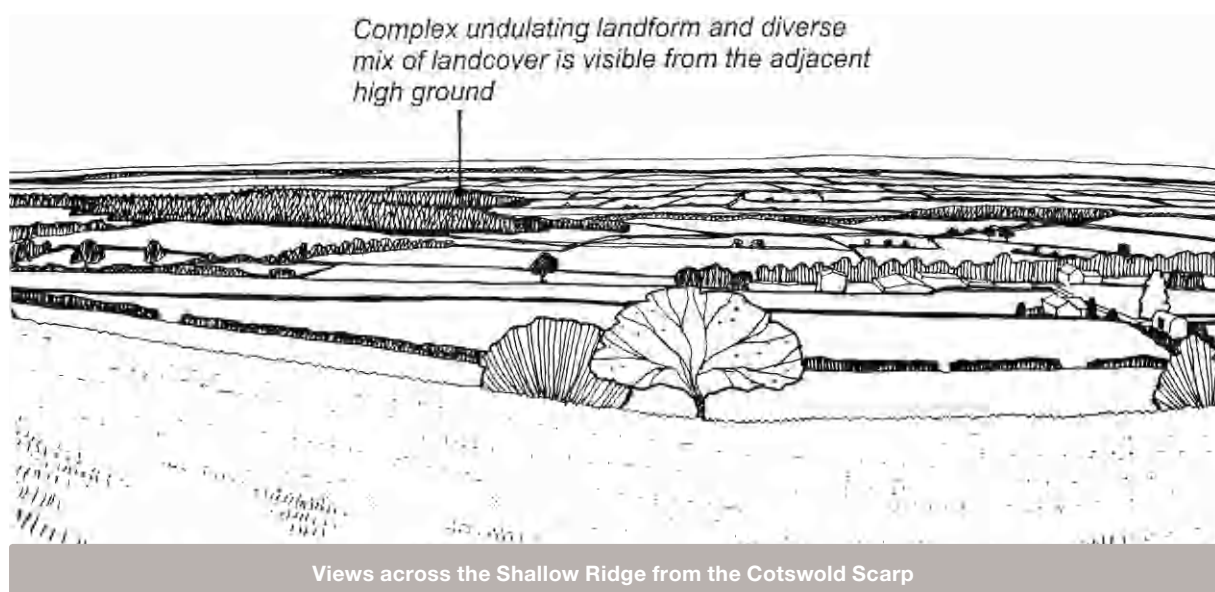
The landscape character type is characterised by a visually dominant plateau and scarp slope extending along the eastern boundary of South Gloucestershire, its significance recognised through its status as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Generally, the plateau/dip slope is a gently sloping, undulating area of large open pasture and arable fields, often divided by distinctive Cotswold stone walls, many of which are in a state of disrepair.

Small areas of woodland punctuate the open landscape and provide a focal point to long distance views and a sense of enclosure.

Woodland and tree cover is a more prominent feature of the Badminton Estate, with its designed parkland. The plateau/dip slope is crossed by numerous intersecting open roads, including the A46 and small lanes and tracks, including the Cotswold Way, which provide extensive views over the surrounding landscape and to the lower ground to the west.

This network of roads and paths connect the sparse settlements on the plateau. Consisting of small villages and isolated farms, scattered over the plateau, they are united in their use of Cotswold stone as a major building material. The M4 also passes through this area, although since it is mostly in cutting, its impact is minimal on the surrounding landscape character.



Views across the Shallow Ridge from the Cotswold Scarp

The plateau drops dramatically to the west, where the west facing scarp slope offers extensive views over South Gloucestershire, the Severn Estuary, Bristol and north west towards South Wales. The scarp, in contrast to the plateau, generally has a varied, intricate and richly textured landscape. The slopes to the north are typically steep, concave, undulating pasture in irregular patterns of small fields. Deciduous woodland typically clothes the ridgeline and incised steep 'coombes', which carry streams issuing from springs or remain dry. Further south, the scarp is more open with less tree or hedgerow structure, instead typically comprising open, rolling grassland with field systems apparent on the steeper ground. Distinctive hanging beech woodland occurs in isolated pockets on steeper slopes and the ridgeline.

In the south eastern corner of South Gloucestershire, the landform typically comprises southerly facing scarp slopes, falling to deeply cut pastoral valleys, gently undulating vales, with arable open farmland on limestone ridges. Woodland encloses some of the valleys.

Amidst the intricate land cover, the scarp is scattered with hamlets typically along its toe, with isolated houses and farms. There are also a number of historic parklands such as Horton Court, Dodington Park, Dyrham Park and Tracy Park, which provide a strong managed landscape with a rich covering of mature woodland, avenues and ornamental trees, creating a high level of enclosure and visual diversity.

A2.2.2 Shallow Ridge

To the west of the plateau and scarp, a shallow and undulating ridge runs north to south across the eastern half of South Gloucestershire, from approximately Wickwar, past Pucklechurch, to Bitton.

From this lower area, the rising Cotswold scarp to the east forms a prominent and notable visual feature. To the west, the shallow ridge provides containment to the lower vale landscape and the conurbation of Bristol.



Shallow Ridge

The ridge varies from a simple, undulating landform to a more complex topography, covered with a diverse land use comprising unenclosed common, heathland, woodland (including the extensive Lower Woods SSSI), mixed pasture and arable fields. These are divided by a diverse mix of field boundaries including clipped or overgrown hedges, linear bands of trees and fencing.

A number of quarries are associated with the defined ridgeline to the west.

A network of lanes and minor roads cross the area, including a number of major recreational routes such as the Jubilee Way, Monarch's Way, Frome Valley Walkway and the Circular Rides. The M4 dissects the area, crossing from east to west, allowing open views across the landscape.

There are numerous villages and small towns present, such as Charfield, Wickwar, Pucklechurch and Wick, all with historic cores, which generally appear to blend in with the surrounding diverse landscape structure. The occasional visible church steeple on high ground, such as at Pucklechurch and Abson, forms focal points within the overall undulating landscape. Much of Chipping Sodbury in the west uses local limestone, contrasting with the more recent adjacent visible development at Yate, in the Shallow Vale.

A2.2.3 Parkland Vale

To the north of South Gloucestershire, the bowl-shaped vale is influenced by heavily wooded parkland, contained to the east and west by surrounding ridges and undulating landform.

The M5 passes north to south through the approximate centre of the vale, from which the landform gradually rises towards ridges to the east and west. The A38 also runs roughly parallel to the motorway, along which a number of linear settlements have grown.

Settlement includes Tortworth, Charfield and Falfield to the north, which are evenly spread over the landscape and are integrated with the surrounding intricate woodland, parkland and hedgerow structure. The selected views of settlement edges, or church steeples add to the visual diversity and intricacy of the landscape.

Extensive views are a feature over the vale. Settlement and roads are largely well integrated within the strong vegetation framework, with views contained by surrounding ridgelines

To the east of the M5, blocks of mixed woodland, such as Priest Wood and in the vicinity of Leyhill and Tortworth Park, enclose the landscape and combine with dense hedgerows and linear bands of trees which surround the irregular mixed

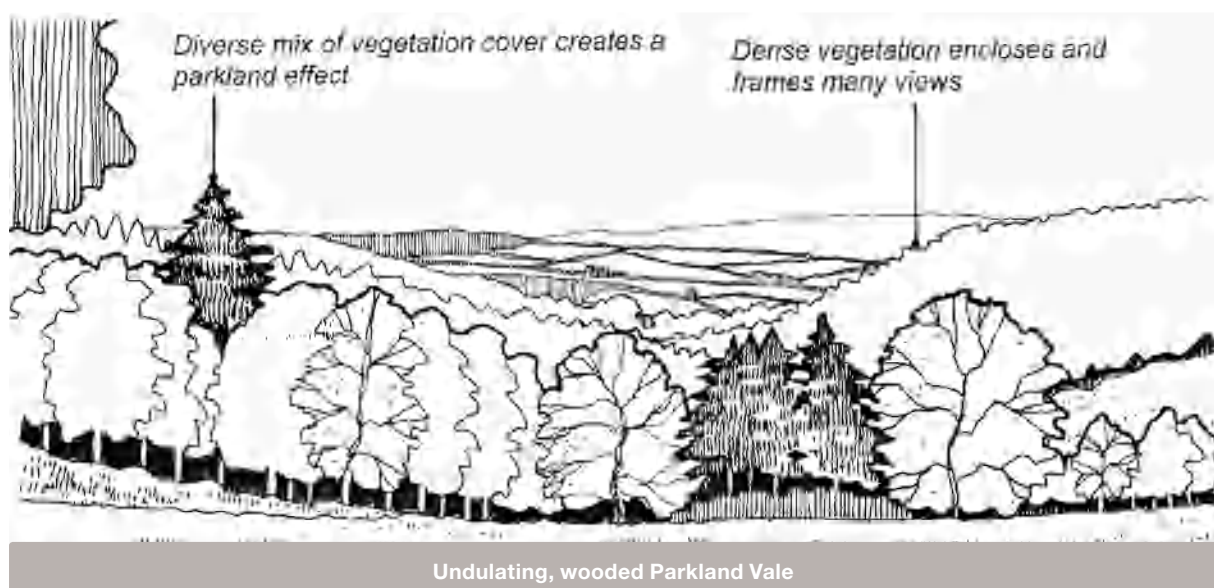


pasture and arable fields.

To the west of the M5, numerous linear woodland areas in Eastwood Park, combined with a strong hedgerow structure, enclose and screens many views.

Parkland character is enhanced by the several large houses set within parkland, with mature ornamental, specimen trees, arboretum and former deer park within the Tortworth Estate.

To the south east, above the vale, lies gently undulating ground with the small scattered settlements of Cromhall, Townwell, Bibstone as well as several small quarries. All are largely well integrated within the strong vegetation structure.



A2.2.4 Shallow Vale**Shallow Vale****Open, rolling landscape**

The shallow vale comprises a gently sloping basin, roughly in the centre of South Gloucestershire, north of Bristol.

It is contained by ridges, formed by curving low rock outcrops on the edge of the basin to the east, north and west, which form the northern limit of the geological formation of the Bristol Coalfield. The landscape within the vale undulates from east to west, as it passes over different rocks outcropping within the basin. The southern boundary is partly defined by settlement.

The shallow vale landscape is dominated by very gently rolling through to flat, topography, with pasture and large regular arable fields contained by a strong landscape framework of clipped hedges, with occasional linear bands of trees, copses and woodlands. To the north east, the vegetation framework becomes very sparse, the land divided by drainage ditches. To the north of the shallow vale lies the wooded parkland vale.

The vale is crossed by numerous minor roads and lanes. These are only occasionally visible however due to the surrounding framework of clipped hedges, trees or hedgebanks within a generally flat landscape. In contrast, the M4 and M5 form strong linear elements and define sections of the southern and western boundaries respectively.

Some mature standards create a degree of enclosure

**Sloping landscape leading to ridge**

Settlement has spread along many of the roads, concentrated particularly within the town of Yate. Yate has an historic scattered core, built of local Pennant stone, surrounded by more recent commercial, residential and industrial development on its fringes which visually encroach into the wider landscape.

Frampton Cotterell, Winterbourne and the urban fringes of Bristol to the south of the shallow vale are also visible within this undulating landscape and influence its character. Other features associated with the proximity of major urban areas, such as powerlines, are also a visible and intrusive element..



Enclosed road on the fringes of Bristol

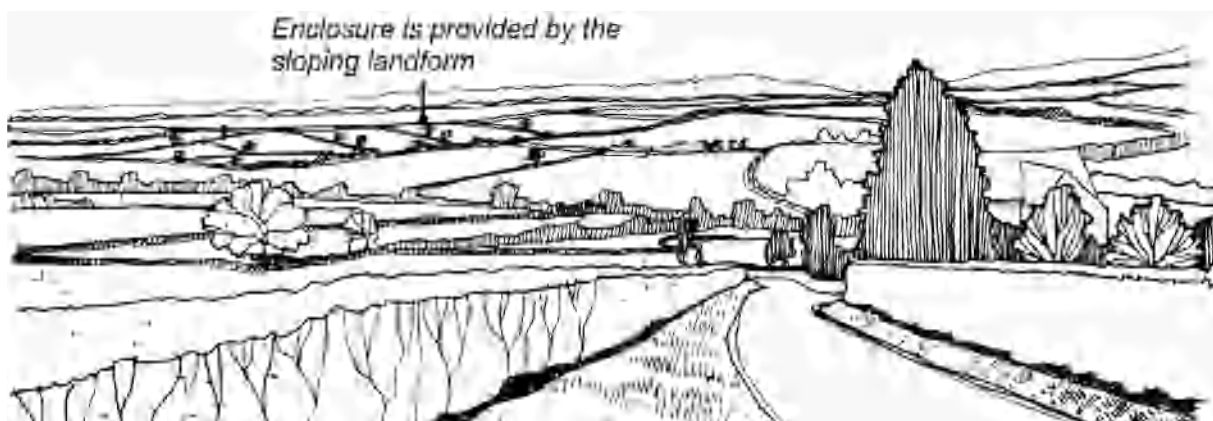
A2.2.5 Broad Valleys

To the north east and east of Bristol, a number of shallow, broad valleys occur, united through their similar topography and landform. Sloping down from the higher ground to the north and east the broad valleys lead towards the River Avon to the south.

The area is largely covered by the north and eastern urban areas of Bristol, and is contained to the north west by the M5 and to the north by the M4 motorways. Beyond the urban edges, the broad valleys comprise a rural landscape of smaller scale settlements, including villages, hamlets and scattered farms. The Bristol urban fringe comprises large areas of residential, commercial and industrial development, with retail development centred around Cribbs Causeway

and commercial/light industrial development at Aztec West and Emerald Park, as well as the developing Science Park.

Commercial and industrial developments are all located close to the major roads, motorway and their junctions. Comprising extensive areas of large buildings, warehouse-type structures and associated infrastructure these developments dominate the local landscape and views from the major road network. However, their visual influence is generally more limited in the adjoining rural landscape, largely due to the effect of earth mounding and recent planting along the motorways, as well as limited viewpoints. Emerald Park has a more extensive influence, due to the scale of development within its landscape setting and the surrounding topography, which provides more numerous viewpoints.



Broad valley landscape

There are also large areas of recent residential development at Bradley Stoke, Stoke Gifford, Patchway, Mangotsfield, Emerson's Green and Cadbury Heath. These new, often red brick estates, contrast with the older, denser mixed development around Kingswood and Filton. Scattered throughout the urban areas are diverse areas of open space and vegetation, which help to break up the density of the built form and provide local character. The urban edges of these recent residential developments exert a variable influence on the adjacent rural landscape, dependent on the surrounding landform within the shallow broad valleys, which affects visibility.

The influence of settlement continues to the north east of Bristol, where the horseshoe settlement formed by the coalescence of the villages of Frampton Cotterell, Winterbourne and Coalpit Heath, enclose the Frome Valley.

The rural landscape largely consists of a mix of regular pasture and arable fields, divided by clipped hedges, some stone walls, linear bands of trees and limited woodland. Numerous minor roads and lanes extend from the urban edge into the surrounding settlement and rural landscape.

The major routeways, including the M4, M32 and Avon Ring Road, that follow or cross these northern broad valleys, variably influence both visually and/or audibly, their localities or the wider landscape, dependent on their enclosure by topography and/or vegetation.

Settlement and its edges are also prominent. To the east of Bristol, the valley landscape is partly covered by the urban area of Kingswood, contained further east by the rising rural ridgeline of the Pucklechurch and Oldland Ridge.

Here, scattered settlement, coal industry relics and common land are distinct features. The valleys are however crossed by numerous roads and lanes, including the A420 and A431. Surrounded by hedges and dense vegetation, they are quite contained. These connect the numerous small towns, villages and hamlets that are evenly scattered throughout the valleys.

Set within the intricate field system, sloping topography and enclosed by vegetation, they appear well integrated within the surrounding landscape.

A2.2.6 Enclosed Valleys



Varied and intricate landuse and land cover

Settlement edge and urban influences visible in the enclosed valley landscape



On the southern fringes of South Gloucestershire and to the east of Bristol, there are a number of enclosed valleys.

These consist of the steeply sloping landforms of the River Avon Valley and Golden Valley. The River Avon Valley focused upon the meandering river, forms a wide floodplain to the east and a more enclosed steep sided valley to the west. Views are contained by landform and vegetation, but are generally more open within the floodplain.

The Golden Valley with the smaller course of the River Boyd, contains mixed pasture and arable fields divided by a mixture of overgrown and clipped, dense hedges and linear bands of trees.

The River Avon floodplain is edged in places by settlement to the north and beyond the South Gloucestershire boundary to the south. The steeper valley sides are covered by dense woodland vegetation with areas of pasture within the floodplain and more gentle valley sides. The bridge carrying the A4174 is a locally prominent feature as it crosses over the valley landscape.

Outside the South Gloucestershire boundary to the south, the large red brick Cadbury's chocolate factory, is also a prominent feature.

Golden Valley contains only a few scattered farms and dwellings, with the village of Bitton, the largest settlement, at its mouth. Its church forms a local feature from within the River Avon Valley.

A2.2.7 Undulating Ridge



Undulating Ridge



Church landmark

The undulating ridges forms a distinct band of high ground running north east to south west across the western part of South Gloucestershire. The area forms an extensive, prominent and distinctive landform, rising up quite quickly from the lowland levels to the west and less distinctly from the simple rolling vales to the east.

The ridge is characterised by a diverse mix of sloping pasture and some arable fields, divided by varying hedge patterns resulting from different management styles. There are also some remnants of ridge and furrow field pattern, laid hedges and old orchards, most in poor condition and in decline. The ridge is scattered with areas of prominent deciduous woodland, most typically associated with ridgelines and hill tops. This provides a strongly defined landscape framework and a sense of enclosure, particularly to the south, where the woodland structure creates an effective screen to the urban edge of Bristol.

Several towns and large villages, such as Thornbury, Alveston and Almondsbury occur on the ridgeline, as well as numerous small villages and hamlets. These are connected by an intricate pattern of roads and lanes often surrounded by hedges and woodlands, which add to the sense of enclosure. Many of the towns and villages are located on high points and offer impressive and extensive views to the west. Their churches and large buildings typically form landmarks in the surrounding landscape.



View towards the undulating wooded Ridge from the levels

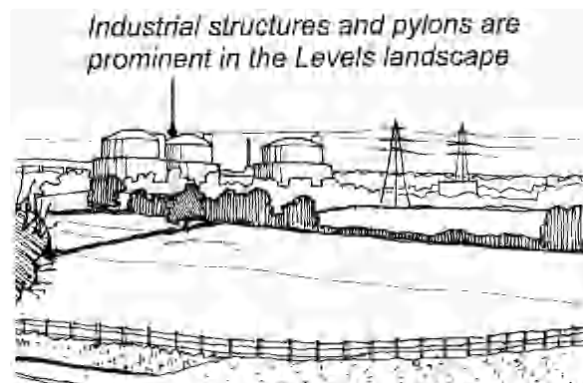
The major communication routes of the M4, M5 and A38 all cross the ridge and provide easy access to the surrounding area. Ribbon development has occurred along the A38 and adjoining roads, particularly to the south, producing a slight impression of sub-urbanisation of the rural landscape, particularly along the main transport corridors.

A2.2.8 Estuary, Shoreline & Levels



Shoreline and levels

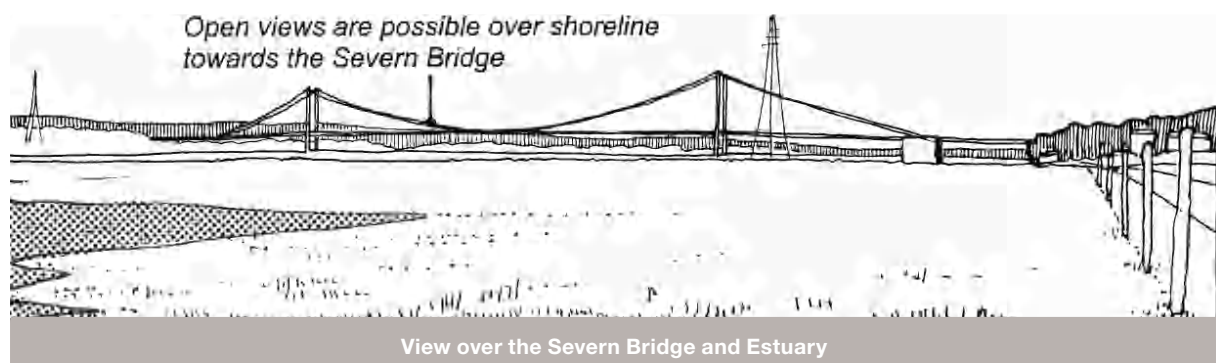
The estuary, shoreline and Levels extend along the western edge of South Gloucestershire and beyond. The most dominant feature is the estuary with its expansive and panoramic views. Combined with the constantly changing shoreline, the open and exposed character of this area is prominent.



Industry dominates parts of the levels

Away from the changing edge of the Severn Estuary of mudflats, exposed rock and salt marsh warth, the Levels generally consist of a mix of arable and pasture farmland protected by a sea wall. These fields are divided by a regular framework of streams and man-made rhines. Hedges and pollarded trees typically follow the pattern of rhines. The few small woodlands within the area, set within the rectangular field and drainage patterns, are significant despite their size, due to the largely flat and open landscape.

A complex network of minor roads and lanes connect the farms and hamlets scattered over the area with the Severn Way recreational route, following the sea wall along the edge of the estuary. Settlements such as Severn Beach, Redwick and Aust, occur on the edge of the Levels, protected by the sea wall or situated on slightly higher ground. They are a mix of old stone and brick cottages, pre-war brick housing as well as new red brick housing.



View over the Severn Bridge and Estuary

Other settlements such as Oldbury-on-Severn, Olveston and Almondsbury are also on slightly higher ground or outliers. These settlements are visible when viewed from the Levels' landscape, with churches and larger buildings forming local landmarks. The higher ground of the ridges to the east and in South Wales, in the Forest of Dean to the west form some distant enclosure and a backdrop to many views.

Parts of the Levels are dominated by large scale industrial and warehouse buildings, structures and infrastructure, due to the open character of the landscape. The Severnside warehouses to the south and Seabank Power Station and industry at Avonmouth, beyond the boundary of South Gloucestershire, are visually prominent.

Similarly, Oldbury Power Station to the north is prominent. The M4, M48, M49 and the main London to South Wales railway line pass through the Levels' landscape, as do numerous powerlines. The two Severn Bridges are prominent from within the Levels' landscape and have become nationally distinct landmarks.

Landscape Character Types Landscape Character Areas

Plateau and Scarp

Badminton Plateau
Marshfield Plateau
Ashwicke Ridges
Cotswold Scarp

Shallow Ridge and Vale

Wickwar Ridge and Vale
Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley

Parkland Vale

Falfield Vale

Shallow Vale

Yate Vale
Tytherington Plain
Earthcott Vale

Broad Valleys

Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge
Frome Valley
Kingswood
Patchway, Filton and the Stokes

Enclosed Valleys

Avon Valley
Golden Valley

Undulating Ridge

Rudgeway Ridge and Tytherington Ridge
Severn Ridges

Estuary, Shoreline and Levels

Oldbury Levels
Pilning Levels
Severn Shoreline and Estuary

Appendix 3

Example of standard survey form used to record site survey information as part of the landscape characterisation and assessment process.

SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT			
January/February 1999			
Landscape Character Area:		Viewpoint No: 69	
Location: scarp,			
Date: 17.02.95		Direction of View: North East Weather: overcast	
LANDSCAPE TYPES/ELEMENTS (topography)		Dominant Elements	Additional Elements
Landcover	Landform	Settlement	Boundaries
Arable	Flat	Isolated Farms/Resid.	Thick Hedges
Pasture	Gently Sloping	Agri. buildings/Barns	Clipped Hedges
Heath	Steeply Sloping	Hamlet	Laid Hedges
Common	Undulating	Village	Intermittent Hedge
Rough Grassland	Rolling	Town	Hedge Banks
Scrub	Hilly	Industry	Little Trees Cover
Woodland	Mountain	Urban Fringe	Some Trees Cover
Forest Plantation	Broad Valley	Field Size	Strong Tree Cover
Copse	Narrow Valley	Small	Copse
Water meadow		Medium	Woodland in hollows
Park	Plateau	Large	Post & Wire fence
Amenity Landscape	Floodplain		Fencing
Other	Other		Stone wall
Water Features	Routes/ Transport	Field Pattern	Other Features
Drainage Ditches	Footpath	Regular	Power Lines
Stream	Lane	Irregular	Mineral Workings
River	Minor Road	Rectangular	Roads
Pond/Lake	B Road	Linear	Railways
Severn Estuary	A Road / Trunk Road		telecom tower.
	Motorway		
VISUAL CONTAINMENT. main space definers - woodland blocks, walls, hedge etc.			
BOUNDARY TYPES - clear / distinct / indistinct / transitional			
VERNACULAR DETAILING OF NOTE. in addition to above			
CONDITION OF THE LANDSCAPE			
Good	Run-down	Significantly Destroyed	Requires Restoration
Attractors: tops with field pattern			
Detractors: telecom.			
Likely seasonal variation: small medium large			
MANLY ACCESSIBILITY BY:			
Footpaths	Motorway	Bridleway	Tracks
Railway	Road	Cycle tracks	
DEGREE OF DEVELOPMENT			
1. very high degree of development		4. some degree of development	
2. high degree of development		5. no development	
3. medium degree of development			
TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT			
Sympathetic		Unsympathetic	

OPEN VIEWS OF SETTLEMENTS

YES noted on plan

NO

NOTE visual envelope of settlement on plan where relevant

AESTHETIC FEATURES)

Dominant Elements

Additional Elements

Scale	Intimate	Small	Medium	Large
Enclosure	Confined	Enclosed	Open	Exposed
Form	Straight	Angular	Curved	Sinuous
Diversity	Uniform	Simple	Diverse	Complex
Harmony	Harmonious	Balanced	Discordant	Chaotic
Movement	Deserted	Tranquil	Well used	Heavily Used
Rarity	Ordinary	Unusual	Rare	Unique
Colour	Monochrome	Muted	Colourful	Diverse
Texture	Smooth	Textured	Rough	Very Rough
Stimulus	Boring	Bland	Interesting	Invigorating
Pleasure	Unpleasant	Pleasant	Enjoyable	Beautiful

Key Views:

N/E east

Photo number:

x 1

VALUE/ QUALITY OF LANDSCAPE

Quality	High	Good	Moderate	Low	Very Low
Scenic Value	High	Good	Moderate	Low	Very Low
Vulnerability of the Landscape (initial judgement)	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT/STRATEGY GUIDANCE NEEDS

Conserve or Strengthen

Enhance

Restore

Reconstruct

Create New Landscape

Landscape Needs

- More Trees & Hedges?
- Grassland Needs?
- Other Notes

replace some trees, maintain open views.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION/ SKETCHES/ NOTES ETC.:

(Describe the main elements and features of the landscape and the way in which they are organised)

gently undulating arable land well
balanced and harmonious view in
contrast with the steep. attract landscape
requiring some work. highly visible properties
should be ad monuments could be restored.
avoiding obtrusive elements (UPVC etc)

Appendix 4

Consultation, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment.

Work for the Landscape Character Assessment commenced in 1999, prior to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The new Act and Regulations require consultation on Supplementary Planning Documents to be undertaken in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This has not been prepared to date.

The Council still needs to demonstrate that in preparing the SPD, community involvement has been:

- Appropriate - for the level of the document and the needs of the community;
- Front loaded - allowing opportunities for early community input and ownership of the document;
- Continuing - and using appropriate methods; and also that it:
- Allows for revision on the basis of community input;
- Incorporates feedback from early informal consultation.

The process adopted for the Landscape Character Assessment and described below, meets the minimum requirements of Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations, 2004. It is also within the spirit of Planning Policy Statement 12 Local Development Frameworks 2004 (PPS 12), that are likely to form part of the SCI in due course.

Initial Consultation

Stakeholder involvement initially took place at an early stage in the process, at the same time as the baseline studies for the landscape character assessment were being carried out. The community members of the 44 parishes and 1 non-parished area of South Gloucestershire were invited, via the Environmental Link Groups and agreed, to participate in a Photographic Survey of the Landscapes of South Gloucestershire in 2000. The network of 8 Environmental Link Groups had previously been established to discuss environmental issues within local communities.

Each parish / non-parished area, involving a wide range of the community, took panoramic and detailed photographs to capture distinctive characteristics and particular features of their local landscape during spring / early summer 2000, using cameras and film provided by the Authority. Following the field work stage, parishes, individuals who had carried out the photographic survey and Members, were invited to attend one of four workshops held in June and July 2000: 68 members of the various parishes attended these. Each parish selected a range of photographs from the total of 50 no. taken across their particular area (over 2000 photographs in all), to produce an A1 sized board which best represented the landscape of their area, supported by descriptive captions for each photograph, which provided another layer of information and additional depth.

The compiled photographic boards were used in an extensive exhibition of all the parishes of South Gloucestershire, which was held at a number of locations, during November 2000 to March

2001. The exhibitions explained the purpose of the Photographic Survey and its relationship to the development of the Landscape Character Assessment and the Landscape Strategy which is to follow and provided a means for feedback for any comments from both participants in the photographic survey and the wider public. Feedback was also received through further meetings with the Environmental Link Groups.

Following this stage, the wealth of information from the photographic material and descriptions, together with feedback from the exhibitions and Link Groups, was merged with the baseline landscape character assessment to produce the draft Landscape Character Assessment report. In addition, all the photographs used in this document to illustrate typical landscape characteristics or features, over 200 in number, were derived from the Photographic Survey.

Public Consultation Process

On 23 August 2002, the draft Landscape Character Assessment report was issued for a 9_ week Consultation Period as part of the regulatory requirement for adoption of the document, at that time as SPG.

Due to the wide range of interest for the document and the topic, generated in part as a result of the Photographic Survey and exhibitions, notice of the public consultation was sent to nearly 600 no. stakeholders, including Parish Councils, statutory bodies, all Members, interested parties and individuals, environmental and amenity groups, landscape architects, architects, planning consultants, developers, land agents and adjacent Local Authorities. The letters explained the consultation process and how to comment, including a proforma for commenting. The recipients were provided with either a hard copy or CD copy of the document.

Draft documents were also circulated internally to principal service users of the Landscape Character Assessment, including to each of the 5 Area Forums, for their comment during the formal consultation period.

The Public Consultation process was advertised in the local press: the Gazette on 16 August and Bristol Evening Post on 23 August 2002. Hard copies of the document and CD access were made available for inspection at all 12 no. local libraries and the mobile library and at the Council's One Stop Shops at Kingswood, Thornbury & Yate.

Due to the size and complexity of the document, it was not possible to make the report accessible on the Council's website at the time, which is why CD versions were made widely available. However, the proforma for comments was available on the web.

In addition, 5 no. workshop sessions were held in July 2002, immediately prior to the statutory consultation process, to commence the development of the next stage Landscape Strategy, based on the draft Landscape Character Assessment findings. 43 no. community members from parishes, representatives from the photographic survey, Members, as well as individuals who had expressed an interest in the process during the exhibitions, attended the workshops. Many comments were received at those workshops on the draft Landscape Character Assessment itself.

Representations and Responses

- | | |
|--------|---|
| 55 no. | consultation responses were received as a result of the public consultation process. The breakdown of these was as follows: |
| 22 no. | Members, Parish Councils or photo representatives |
| 9 no. | Members of the Public |
| 2 no. | Statutory Consultees |
| 9 no. | Environmental, Interest or Other Groups |
| 2 no. | Planners |
| 3 no. | Developers |

1 no. Architect

6 no. Landscape Architects

1 no. Other Local Authority

In addition, 7 no. written responses were received from parishes and landowners following the workshop sessions, prior to the formal consultation process.

In total nearly 700 no. comments were received from the public consultation process and the workshops. All of these have been reviewed and, where appropriate, changes have been recommended for inclusion in the final document. The Schedule of Representations and Responses to Public Consultation are separately available. This sets out the details of the representations received during the consultation period and as a result of the workshops, together with the officer response and recommendations for modifications. Further comments were received from internal users of the document and these too have been reviewed and changes incorporated in the revised document where appropriate.

The comments have resulted in many changes to the draft Landscape Character Assessment and in some instances, text has been substantially rewritten. In addition, a further 35 no. photographs have been recommended for inclusion in the revised draft report – 6 no. further photographs from the earlier photographic boards and 29 no. new photographs, taken by officers, to show landscape characteristics or features, not previously illustrated.

The purpose of the changes is, primarily, to ensure that the final document adopted as SPD is as accurate as possible, bearing in mind the nature of the report and, that the level of detail it contains supports the implementation of relevant Local Plan policies, especially policy L1, as well as enabling an appropriate Landscape Strategy to be developed for each of the 21 Landscape Character Areas.

Sustainability Appraisal

Central government guidance in “Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks (consultation draft)” has been followed in deciding how to carry out the sustainability appraisal of the Landscape Character Assessment SPD.

This SPD was produced to support policies in the South Gloucestershire Local Plan. The South Gloucestershire Local Plan was prepared prior to the current draft guidance on sustainability appraisal. However, a sustainability appraisal of the plan was prepared in accordance with best practice at the time (South Gloucestershire Local Plan Consultation Draft Sustainability Appraisal, Sept 2000 and Sustainability Appraisal of the Revised Deposit Draft Plan, June 2002).

Draft government guidance indicates that there may be opportunities for avoiding duplication in sustainability appraisal within the plan-making hierarchy. Specifically, in this situation it is considered that the content of the Landscape Character Assessment is descriptive and does not add new policy over and above that in Policy L1 of the Local Plan, which has already been subject to detailed sustainability appraisal. It is considered that there is, therefore, no need for further appraisal at this stage.

2014 Review

Public Consultation

Landscape Character Assessment SPD

Statutory consultation: Summary of representations and council's responses

In line with Regulation 12 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 Local Planning Authorities are required to prepare a consultation statement setting out how consultation was undertaken and how it helped to inform the final SPD.

The Landscape Character Assessment Review and the Draft Renewables Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) were the subject of joint formal public consultation between Friday 10 January and Friday 7 March 2014.

Consultation comprised a number of focused stakeholders on the Council's LDF database from private and public organisations, developers/consultants to all Local Members and Town and Parish Councils, including adjoining authorities of the West of England.

36 formal representations were made to the council, which are listed and summarised, with the council's responses, in the attached document.

Issues raised included the following:

- Support for the document and the inclusion of strategy guidance
- Reference to NPPF policy on the AoNB
- Concerns about potential impact from recent proposed developments such as horse keep, Network Rail electrification, lighting and the need to protect dark skies
- Queries about the meanings of terms such as 'vertical development' and 'iconic approach to building design', the consistency of some statements, and concerns that strategy in respect of wind turbines might be too restrictive in the AoNB.

- Factual corrections and suggestions for aspects and features of the landscape that should be included in the LCA
- Suggestions to improve consistency of approach in respect of the landscape strategy for each character area, and to increase the robustness of some aspects of the LCA strategies.

All of the above issues have been considered and progressed in drafting the final SPD. Where appropriate, repetition has been removed and wording has been made more concise. Consideration has also been given to the wording of the document to ensure a balanced commentary on all technologies.

Where it has or has not been possible to address the concerns raised above, this is fully explained in the council's response to the consultation representations.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

A screening process was undertaken² to determine whether or not the refresh of the Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

On the basis of this, it was concluded that a SEA was not required to be conducted on the review of the Landscape Character Assessment SPD. This is because there will be no significant environmental effects arising from the update to the SPD. As such it is considered that the SPD does not require a SEA to be undertaken. Natural England have also provided written agreement that this conclusion reasonable.

² South Gloucestershire Council Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document: Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report July 2014.

A full copy of the SEA Screening Report

[https://consultations.southglos.gov.uk/
consult.ti/Landscape_Character_SPD/
consultationHome](https://consultations.southglos.gov.uk/consult.ti/Landscape_Character_SPD/consultationHome)

for the 2014 Review of the LCA may be found on
the Council's web site.