



South Gloucestershire

Landscape Character

Assessment

Supplementary Planning Document

South Gloucestershire Council

Draft report

Prepared by LUC

November 2023

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Appendix A.1 Plateau and Scarp LCT

LCA 1: Badminton Plateau

LCA 2: Marshfield Plateau

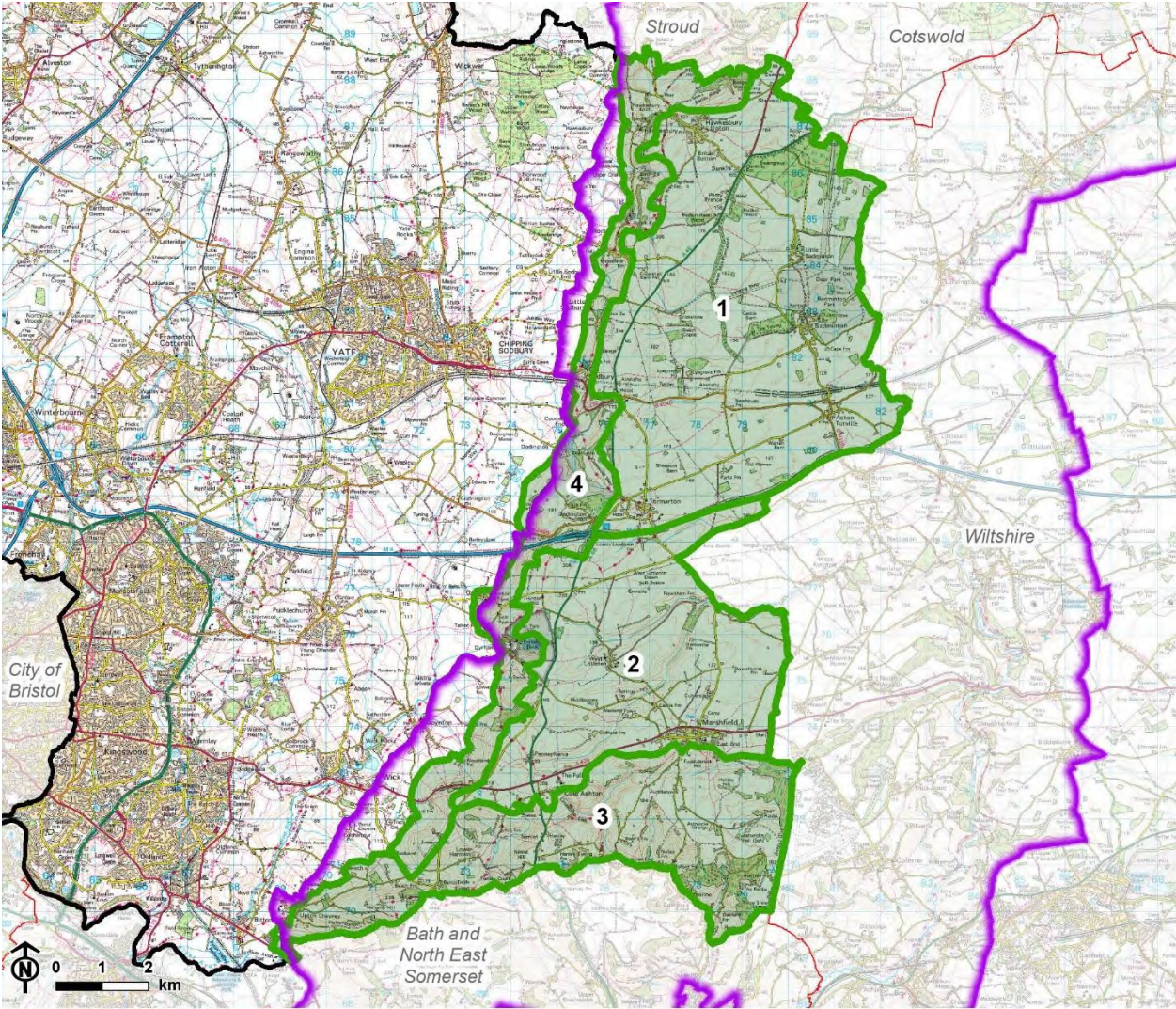
LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges

LCA 4: Cotswold Scarp










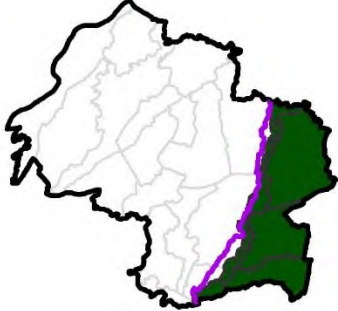
Plateau and Scarp LCT

Figure 1.1: Location of Plateau and Scarp LCT



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- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---------------------------|
|  | Plateau and Scarp LCT |  | LCA 1: Badminton Plateau |
|  | Council boundary |  | LCA 2: Marshfield Plateau |
|  | Neighbouring local authority |  | LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges |
|  | Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary |  | LCA 4: Cotswold Scarp |



Description

The Plateau and Scarp LCT is characterised by a visually dominant plateau and scarp slope extending along the eastern boundary of South Gloucestershire. Its significance is recognised through its status as a National Landscape, located within the south-western part of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL).

Key Characteristics

- A gently sloping, undulating area of large open pasture and arable fields, divided by distinctive Cotswold stone walls.
- Small areas of woodland punctuate the open landscape on the plateau and provide a focal point in long-distance views and a sense of enclosure.
- Distinctive hanging beech woodland occurs in isolated pockets on steeper slopes and the ridgeline.
- Numerous intersecting roads cross the landscape, including the A46 and small lanes, tracks, and footpaths, including the Cotswold Way (National Trail).
- Settlement on the plateau consists of small villages and isolated farms, whilst the scarp is scattered with hamlets, isolated houses and farms, united in the use of Cotswold stone as a building material.
- Landscape character is influenced by the presence of numerous historic parklands which have a rich covering of mature woodland, avenues, and ornamental trees, creating a high-level of enclosure and visual diversity.
- The west-facing scarp slope offers extensive views over South Gloucestershire, the Severn Estuary, Bristol, and north-west towards South Wales. In contrast to the plateau, the scarp has a varied, intricate, and richly textured landscape.

Landscape Character Areas

The Plateau and Scarp LCT is subdivided into four LCAs:

- LCA 1: Badminton Plateau
- LCA 2: Marshfield Plateau
- LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges
- LCA 4: Cotswold Scarp

LCA 1: Badminton Plateau

The Badminton Plateau landscape character area (LCA) is a gently sloping, open, agricultural landscape evenly scattered with Cotswold stone structures and field boundaries.

Plateau and Scarp LCT

Photo 1: Parkland with grassland and mature specimen trees within Badminton Estate.

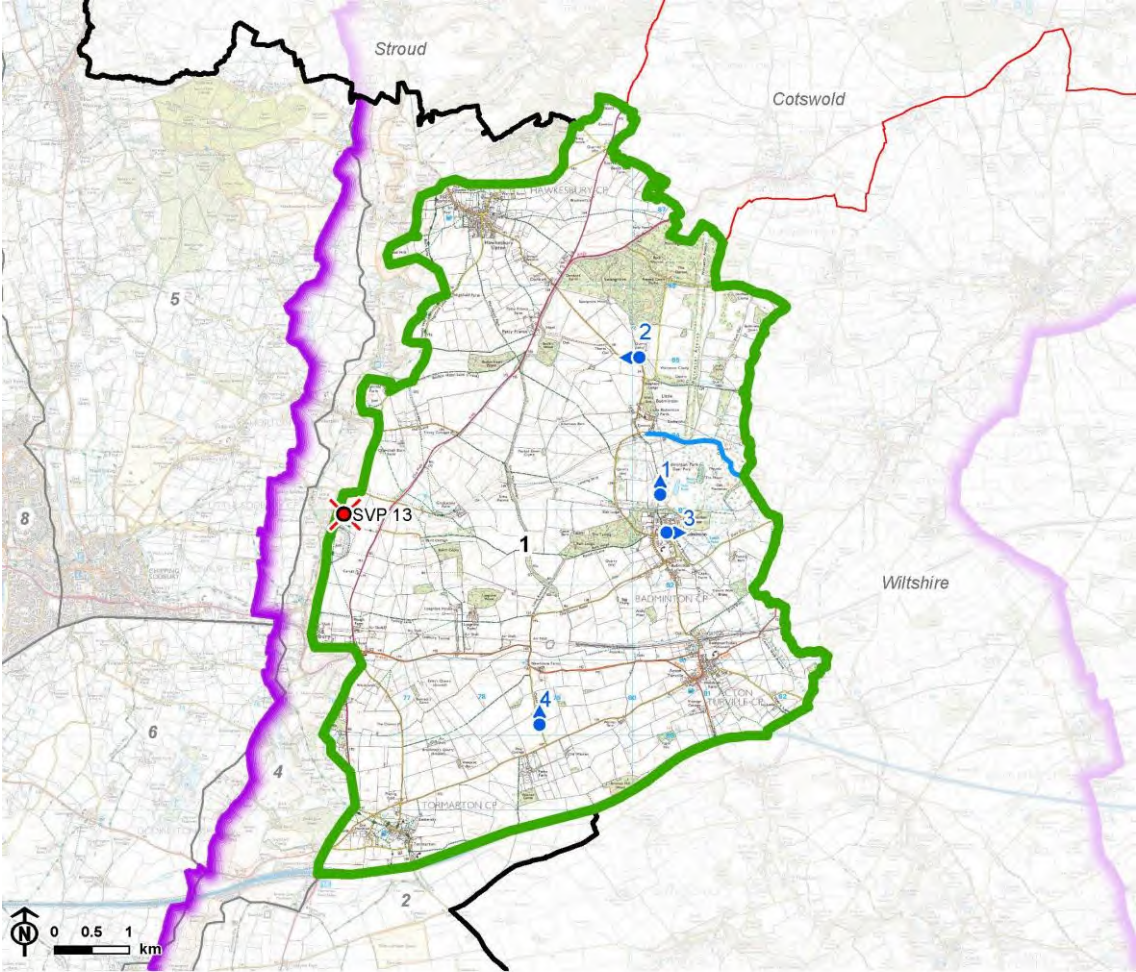


Location

The Badminton Plateau LCA is located in the north-east of South Gloucestershire within the Cotswolds National Landscape. It is defined to the north and east by the South Gloucestershire Authority boundary, although the landscape character of the plateau extends beyond. The southern boundary follows the M4, which marks a subtle transition between the Badminton Plateau and the slightly more undulating Marshfield Plateau (LCA 2) to the south. To the west, the boundary follows the often sharp change in topography, along the top of the Cotswold Scarp.

Plateau and Scarp LCT

Figure 1.2: Location and Landscape context of LCA 1: Badminton Plateau



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- LCA 1: Badminton Plateau
- Neighbouring LCA
- Council boundary
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- River
- ▶ Photograph location and direction
- ⋈ Strategic viewpoint and angle

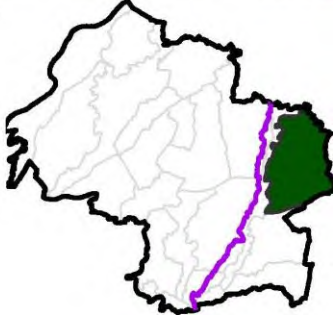
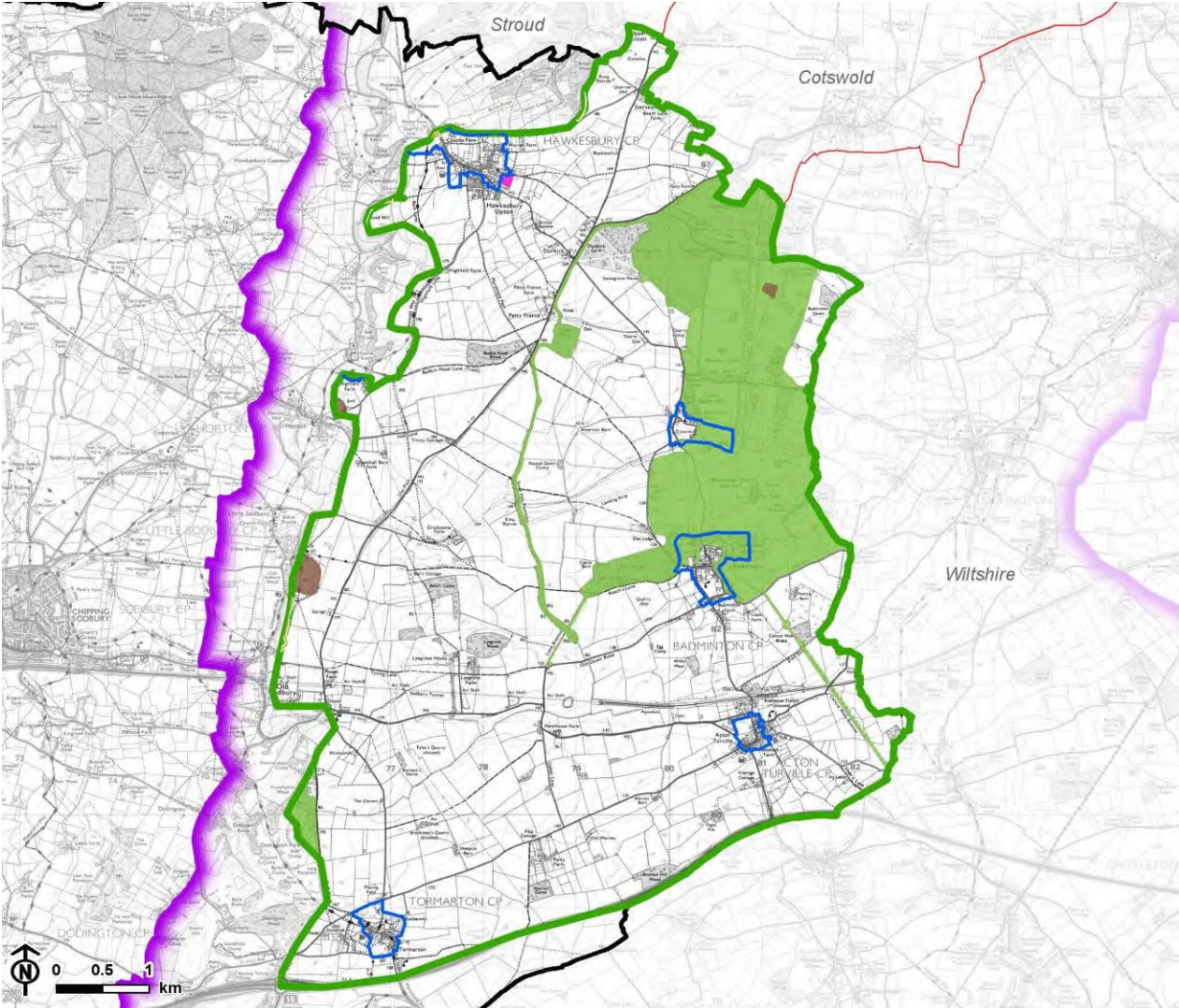


Figure 1.3: Settlement and Heritage context of LCA 1: Badminton Plateau



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- LCA 1: Badminton Plateau
- Council boundary
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- CRoW Open Access Land
- Scheduled Monument
- Conservation Area
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Recent development (since 2014)

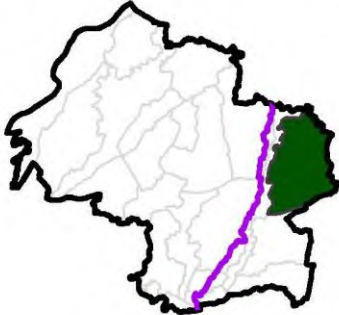
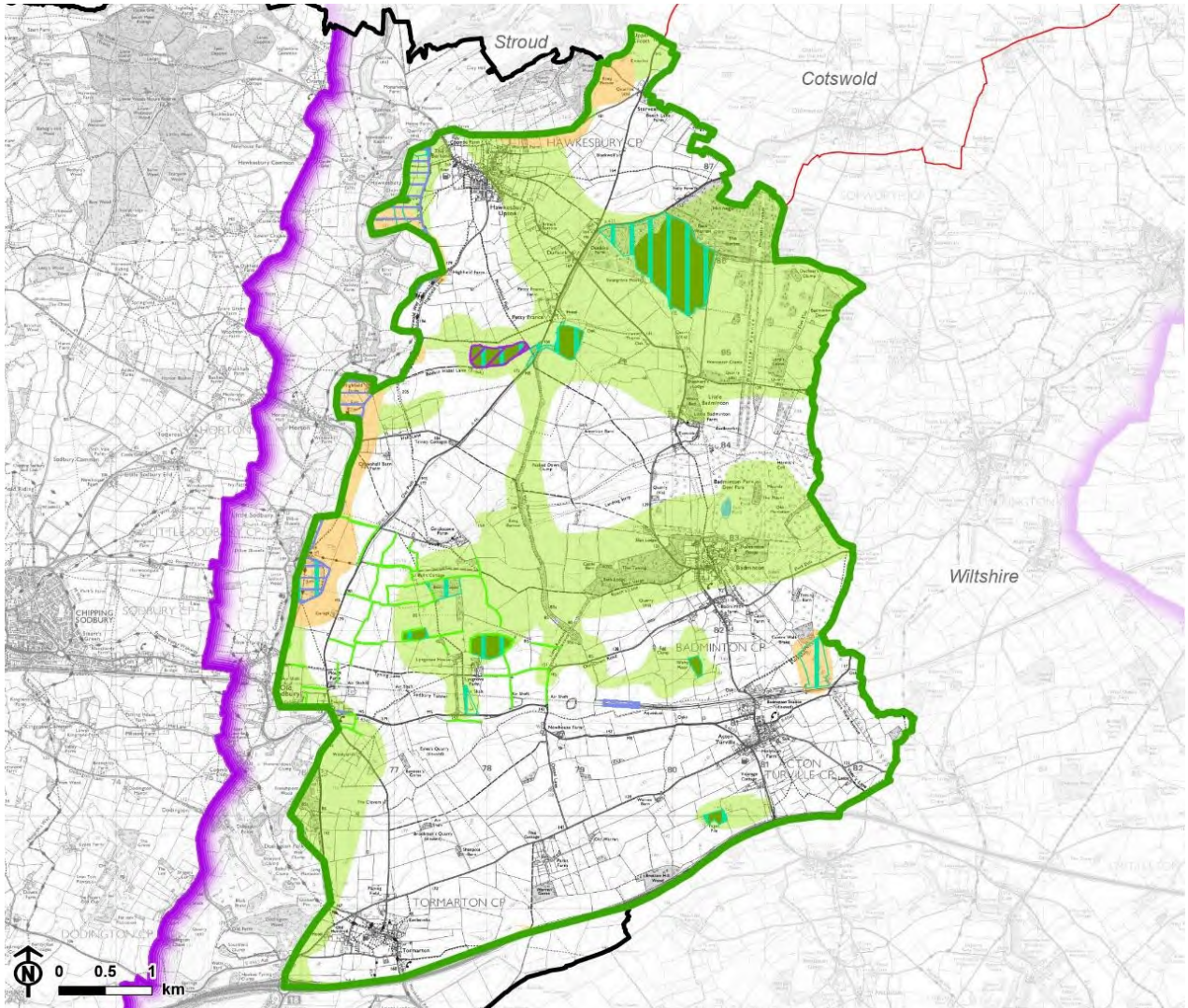


Figure 1.4: Ecology and Biodiversity context of LCA 1: Badminton Plateau



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- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--------------------------------------|
|  | LCA 1: Badminton Plateau |  | Regionally Important Geological Site |
|  | Council boundary |  | Grassland Strategic Network |
|  | Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary |  | Wetland Strategic Network |
|  | Site of Special Scientific Interest |  | Woodland Strategic Network |
|  | Site of Nature Conservation Interest |  | Important hedgerow |
|  | Ancient woodland | | |



Landscape Description

Key Characteristics

- Gently sloping and undulating, dip slope and plateau landscape with expansive views over the plateau, and panoramic views westwards from the scarp plateau edge.
- Large, regular shaped fields of mostly arable use, defined by Cotswold stone walls, clipped hedgerows or some post and wire fencing.
- Open, exposed landscape punctuated by mature trees, copses and scattered woodland of oak, ash, beech and sycamore, including ancient woodland.
- Large areas of formal parkland, woodland, and architecture associated with Badminton Park, with the Estate covering and influencing most of the LCA.
- Calcareous grassland present across the Cotswolds, including within the Badminton Plateau, supports a diverse range of flora including areas of species-rich grassland.
- A network of hedgerows and drystone walls provide a notable landscape and ecologically valuable feature which provides connectivity across the area.
- Villages, hamlets and farm buildings are scattered over the plateau and are united through their common use of Cotswold stone as a building material.
- Sense of time depth provided by the presence of prehistoric features and historic green lanes, as well as traditional buildings associated with the Badminton Estate.
- Major roads cross the open landscape, and the lack of substantial surrounding vegetation makes them a strong visible and audible element within the landscape.
- Dark skies and tranquil areas away from roads and settlements.

Natural Influences

Geology. Landform and Hydrology

The underlying geology runs in bands north to south which narrows towards the Cotswold Scarp in the west. This comprises a variety of limestone bedrocks (including Bathonian, Great Oolitic, Oolitic and Forest Marble Limestone) and Fullers Earth. The soil cover is a simple mix of Brown Rendzinas and typical Calcareous Pelosols.

This geology creates a landform of gentle dip slope and plateau, at approximately 200 metres AOD in the west, sloping to 120 metres AOD in the east.

There are very few watercourses in this area, due to the permeability of the underlying limestone. Short sections of stream rise from springs before flowing eastwards and disappearing into swallow holes.

Land Cover

The land cover of the Badminton Plateau LCA is largely influenced by the Badminton Estate. The estate covers the LCA and extends over parts of the Marshfield Plateau (LCA 2) and Cotswold Scarp (LCA 4), to the south and west respectively, and extends eastwards outside the District.

This Grade I Registered Historic Park combines a medieval park and 18th and 19th-century designed ornamental landscape, with the settlement of Great Badminton and Badminton House (a Grade I listed building) at its focus. The parkland includes stands and clumps of mature and over-mature beech and oak trees within open grassland, with lakes and ponds in the immediate area of Badminton House. Broad tree avenues project from the house northwards (Worcester Avenue) and south-eastwards (Centre Walk Avenue). Hedgerows are clipped and well managed within the estate, with evidence of woodland

Plateau and Scarp LCT

management. The mown-grass landing strip to the west of Badminton Park (1.3km in length) is a modern addition. The formal parkland character also extends out into the broader landscape of the LCA and into Wiltshire to the east.

The remaining area of the LCA is covered by extensive, mainly arable, tenant farms. This agricultural landscape contrasts significantly with the planned landscape of Badminton Park to the east (which generally has a greater and richer vegetation cover). The large regular-shaped fields are typically defined by Cotswold drystone walls (in various conditions) and hedgerows, some with lines of mature trees along their length, which are a locally distinctive feature. In places, post and wire fencing has replaced traditional field boundaries. The locations of former stone wall boundaries are often evident as grass mounds within large fields, or remaining walls are sometimes overgrown with vegetation (e.g. where there has been a significant transition from pasture/mixed agriculture to arable and where maintenance and management of field boundaries has declined).

Some local variations in field size and boundary type are found within the area. For example, large fields with stone walls to the south and east of Hawkesbury Upton; medium to large fields with stone walls and clipped hedgerows adjacent to Badminton Park; medium fields with stone walling within the area of Tormarton; and fields with clipped hedgerows in the area of Acton Turville.

To the north-east of Badminton Park lies a large and prominent area of mature mixed woodland / beech plantation, bordered by the A433 and segmented by country lanes and the northern extent of Worcester Avenue. Within the wider plateau, small copses and woodland blocks of oak, ash, beech and sycamore, punctuate the landscape, with isolated specimen trees along some of the field boundaries.

Photo 2: An arable field bounded by hedgerow with mature hedgerow trees marking its far boundary, a locally distinctive landscape feature



Biodiversity

The Badminton Plateau comprises a mosaic of important habitats for a diverse range of species, including calcareous grassland and ancient woodland.

Within the LCA, there are small areas of priority habitat deciduous woodland, of which approximately 100 hectares is ancient in origin. All of the ancient woodlands are also designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) and one, Bodkin Hazel Wood, is designated as both a SNCI and a site of special scientific interest (SSSI), recognising the importance of these habitats within the national context for flora and fauna. Key species associated with these include bats and dormice. Good connectivity exists for species such as these between the wooded areas and other habitats via hedgerows and scattered trees.

Plateau and Scarp LCT

There are five sites within the Badminton Plateau designated as SNCIs for calcareous grassland (including lowland meadow priority habitat south-east of Badminton) that support a diverse range of flora with some areas locally designated as SNCIs. This diverse habitat supports a range of invertebrates and ant hills are a regular feature. These invertebrates in turn provide a food source for mammals including bats.

As there are few watercourses within the Badminton Plateau area, species found within these habitats are likely to be sensitive to any changes impacting upon the ponds and pools within the area. These may support amphibians such as great crested newts (a European Protected Species) which are vulnerable to any loss of habitat including the terrestrial habitat around ponds as well as the ponds themselves.

The characteristic and historic drystone walls also provide valuable wildlife corridors, which can be utilised by a diverse range of species from invertebrates to reptiles and amphibians for commuting, foraging and as a refuge.

Much of the land use within this area is now arable farmland, which provides habitat for many species of ground nesting farmland birds including birds which have been listed by BirdLife International as being Globally Threatened Red listed species. The stubble left over winter across the farmland provides a precious foraging resource when food sources are scarce for many farmland birds.

The Badminton Estate was first quarried for Bath Stone in the 1800s and the quarries closed in the early 20th century. These underground quarries provide an ideal habitat for many species of bat including European Protected Species.

The western edge of the LCA falls within South Gloucestershire Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridor E: Hawkesbury-Old Sodbury-Upton Cheyney (*Cotswold Scarp*) important for its mosaic of strategic woodland and grassland habitats associated with the Cotswold Scarp.

Cultural Influences

Land Use and Time Depth

Land use across the Badminton Plateau LCA is largely associated with the Badminton Estate (comprising the Grade I Registered Historic and Grade I listed stately house), and elsewhere through agricultural practices (mainly arable).

The plateau has a scattering of archaeological sites such as long barrows and tumuli, e.g. The Starveall Long Barrow and Round Barrow, north-east of Hawkesbury Upton (both Scheduled Monuments) and the Grickstone, which lies to the west of Great Badminton. There are also two prominent Iron Age hill forts located on the crest of the Cotswold Scarp, Sodbury Camp and Horton Camp (both Scheduled Monuments), which are visible reminders of ancient land uses in this area. The site of a Roman villa and earlier settlement is situated on the gently rolling plateaux within Badminton Park; however, this Scheduled Monument is on the Heritage at Risk Register.

Settlement and Infrastructure

Settlement on the plateau is scattered and limited to a number of nucleated villages including Hawkesbury Upton with its planned medieval core, Tormarton, Great Badminton, Little Badminton and Acton Turville. The special character of these main settlements is recognised through their designation as Conservation Areas.

The settlements have all been part of the Badminton Estate at some point in their history, influencing their use, growth and style. The villages are typically a mix of former workers' cottages, farm buildings and 'grand' houses and properties. A village green and/or church is typically present at the heart of the settlements which, together with the houses, creates a rich mix of building styles and sizes.

Plateau and Scarp LCT

The character of Great and Little Badminton contrasts noticeably with other villages within the area. Both comprise estate villages (Little Badminton is built on the site of a previous medieval village, with earthwork remains) set around and enclosing a village green, with a wider parkland setting. The architectural style of the villages is varied, influenced by both estate and agricultural heritage, but unified through the use of Cotswold stone and vernacular details. Both villages have examples of stone tiled and thatched roofed cottages. Great Badminton has more prominent architectural structures associated with Badminton House. The wide roads through the village, which are lined with stone walls, are another distinctive feature.

The settlements are connected by a network of minor roads and lanes. The B4040 between Chipping Sodbury and Malmesbury runs east to west and passes through Acton Turville. The M4 defines the southern boundary of this LCA and connects to the A46, which runs north-east to south-west between Bath and Cirencester on the western fringes of this LCA.

The South Wales to London railway passes through the centre of this LCA from west to east, with the western half in tunnel. The track emerges in cutting and then continues at ground level to the east. Several brick airshafts designed to look like small castellated towers or turrets in a pastoral landscape demarcate the route of the underground section of the line. Both tunnel portals and the six airshafts are all designated as listed buildings (Grade II) by virtue of their special architectural, design and engineering interest and group value.

Two major recreational routes pass through the area, the Cotswold Way and one of a series of Circular Rides. The Cotswold Way passes north-south, west of Hawkesbury Upton along the crest of the Cotswold Scarp. The Circular Ride has several routes in the south-west, linking Old Sodbury to Tormarton and to the west of Badminton.

A number of historic green lanes which are visible as unpaved paths, tracks and bridleways, often between stone walls, lie within the western part of the area. These include Marshfield Path (running north-west to south-east), Bodkin Hazel

Plateau and Scarp LCT

Lane and the former Bristol to Oxford road north of the M4 and Tynning Lane (both running east to west).

A major powerline crosses the area in the south-west, generally in a south-easterly direction, passing east of Little Sodbury and Tormarton.

Photo 3: Buildings associated with the Badminton Estate, built in locally-distinctive honey coloured stone



Perceptual Influences

Visual Character

The northern, western and southern areas of this LCA, have an open, exposed and simple character. This results from its combination of gently sloping and undulating topography and the open views, or focal points within this expansive landscape. Views and a similar landscape character continue eastwards into

Plateau and Scarp LCT

Wiltshire. However, views are partly obscured along some roads, by the growth of self-seeded trees and shrubs. In contrast, the western boundary along the Cotswold Scarp provides extensive panoramic views over the lower vale landscapes to the west. Wetmoor Woods and the towns of Chipping Sodbury and Yate, form prominent large-scale features in the middle distance of these views.

The distinctive vegetation cover of Badminton Park gives definition and scale to the landscape from many viewpoints within the LCA. Occasional blocks of woodland and copses are scattered throughout the area, beyond Badminton Park, and help to contain views and provide the main definition of space and scale in the broader landscape.

The architectural diversity within the villages located in the LCA, is united through the common use of Cotswold stone as the principal building material. Cotswold stone also features in field and settlement boundaries and assists the gentle transition between settlement and the wider landscape, creating an integrated and harmonious appearance, particularly within the older settlements. The historic settlements are often situated within slight depressions in the topography, or include mature trees and vegetation, which assists their integration within the wider landscape. However, Acton Turville is quite prominent within local views from the south. More recent built development, such as at Hawkesbury Upton, is situated on higher ground on the edge of the older village core, where the new rooftops break the skyline and there is little tree cover, making it visually prominent within the wider landscape. Isolated properties and farms including their associated modern buildings are also prominent in the generally open landscape.

The Somerset Monument, to the north near Hawkesbury Upton, is situated on the crest of the Cotswold Scarp. Although located outside the Badminton Plateau LCA (and within LCA 4), it is a prominent feature and distinctive local landmark, visible not only from the plateau, but also from the scarp and the lower ground to the west. The earthworks at Sodbury Camp Hill Fort are a prominent local feature seen from the A46. The site forms a large, irregular landform and skyline feature on the western plateau edge.

Plateau and Scarp LCT

The settlements, set within the open rolling countryside, are connected by a network of roads. The minor roads are generally lined by mostly low Cotswold dry stone walls, often in a state of disrepair or overgrown with vegetation and some have been removed completely. There are open views from these roads across the wider landscape with occasional tree belts enclosing some views.

The overhead powerline which crosses the south-western part of the character area is also a highly visible element within the open rolling landscape. Other powerlines are visible within the Marshfield Plateau (LCT 2) to the south and beyond the South Gloucestershire boundary, in Wiltshire to the east. The railway line is not generally a visible element within the landscape, except for the prominent 'castled' air-shafts which provide distinctive features within the rural landscape.

Photo 4: View north-west across large-scale arable fields to smaller pastoral field surrounding an isolated farmstead near Acton Turville



Plateau and Scarp LCT

Tranquillity and Dark Skies

The Badminton Estate has high levels of tranquillity, whereas tranquillity and perceptual qualities are impacted in areas along the M4 and A46 .

The M4 cuts through the plateau running east to west and defines the southern boundary. Large portions are in cutting, minimising its visual and audible impact. However its high traffic volumes impact on the otherwise rural and tranquil character of most of the area (including around Acton Turville and Tomarton), and more recent gantries and signs have increased the prominence of the motorway. The A46 is largely unenclosed, with the traffic on it creating a prominent visual and audible feature through the open landscape reducing levels of tranquillity, including from around Old Sodbury. Traffic movement along minor roads is similarly evident.

The LCA has a good experience of dark skies with low levels of light pollution, although some localised light pollution occurs around Badminton and the M4/A46 corridors.

Visually Important Hillside

There are no Visually Important Hillside (VIH) located within this LCA. However, it is flanked along its western edge by the Cotswold Scarp VIH (located within LCA 2), a visually prominent escarpment on the edge of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) which defines a marked change in character from the considerably lower-lying undulating ridges and vales to the west, and the broader plateau/dip slope landscape to the east.

Further details are provided in **Annex I: Visually Important Hillside**.

Strategic Viewpoints

One Strategic Viewpoint (SVP) is located within this LCA at SVP 13: Little Sodbury Hill Fort. It provides panoramic views west taking in the notable landscape features of the Severn Ridges, the Cotswold Scarp, and the hills of

Plateau and Scarp LCT

South Wales, and the landmark features of the Tyndale Monument and Severn Bridge in long distance views.

Further details are provided in **Annex II: Strategic Viewpoints**.

Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Valued Features

- The open dip slope and plateau landform that provides topographical interest.
- The late 17th century Grade I Registered Historic Park and Grade I listed stately house within the Badminton Estate which provide time-depth to the landscape.
- Formal parkland character of Badminton Estate with its distinctive landcover pattern of open grassland with hedgerows, mature trees, woodland, avenues, lakes, and ponds.
- The deciduous woodland, some of ancient origin (including Bodkin Hazel Wood SSSI) which are locally designated as SNCIs.
- Areas of calcareous grassland (some locally designated as SNCIs) that create visual texture and biodiversity value within the arable landscape.
- Woodland, hedgerows, scattered mature trees, and drystone walls which are distinctive landscape features and important for habitat connectivity.
- The long barrows and tumuli, Iron Age hill forts and site of Roman villa and earlier settlement (Scheduled Monuments) and historic green lanes which provide time depth and local distinctiveness.
- The historic nucleated villages at Hawkesbury Upton, Tormarton, Great Badminton, Little Badminton and Acton Turville with their estate character and distinctive vernacular of Cotswold stone which are recognised through designation as Conservation Areas.
- The expansive views across the open landscape, particularly the panoramic views west from the plateau edge.
- The Somerset Monument which is a distinctive landmark feature in the local landscape, perched on a prominent landform at the northern end of the Cotswold.

- The network of public footpaths (including the Cotswold Way and a Circular Ride) that provide recreational opportunities across the landscape.
- The sense of tranquillity within the Badminton Estate and the experience of dark night skies across much of the area.

The Changing Landscape

The following section sets out the changes and pressures to the Badminton Plateau LCA.

Climate Change

- Changes in woodland and tree species composition with the increase of pests and diseases such as acute oak decline or sweet chestnut blight, as well as invasive species.
- Increases in severe storms could result in wind damage to woodland edges. Ancient woodlands, such as Bodkin Hazel Wood, may be particularly susceptible to damage from storms and drought.
- Effects of climate change resulting in wetter and warmer winters, and more frequent hot and dry periods, leading to increased risk of flooding in winter and increasing the risk of drought in summer, affecting river flow rates and impacting on riparian habitats and species.

Climate Emergency and Nature Recovery

- Wind turbines and other vertical built forms would be visible, not just from within the plateau, but potentially from the surrounding wider landscape.
- An increase in tree planting is required to contribute towards South Gloucestershire's objective of doubling tree cover by 2030, and in accordance with the proposed woodland strategic network which forms part of the West of England's Nature Recovery Network. This

Plateau and Scarp LCT

may include the establishment of new native woodlands in the 'Main Line Gap' - linking woodlands on the Badminton Estate to those at the Dodington Estate (within LCA 4) as set out in the Forest of Avon's Tree and Woodland Strategy. This may change the open character of the landscape and its expansive views.

Land use and cover

- The intensification of agricultural land use, from pasture to predominantly arable in the 20th century, and consequent loss of stone walls or hedgerows to increase field sizes, has resulted in a significant change in the character of the landscape on the plateau and loss of habitats.
- The tree structure is in a variable condition; some areas retain an ageing structure of mature and over-mature trees, with some woodlands needing to be brought back under active management. There is extensive modern tree planting throughout Badminton Park.
- A decline in the management and/or maintenance of existing hedgerow field boundaries, would further erode landscape structure, in some parts of the LCA.
- Although contributing to the landscape structure and habitat value, self-seeded trees establishing along road verges and within field boundaries, as well as other tree planting, have the potential to change the open character, vistas and views.
- The characteristic landscape framework of dry-stone walls is generally in a poor state of repair. In some locations the walls have not been maintained or rebuilt, so that only a remnant grass mound remains, and their habitat value has been lost. Their replacement with hedging or post and wire fencing, or their visual loss behind self-seeded vegetation along verges, erodes local distinctiveness and character.
- The annual Badminton Horse Trials leads to localised changes in land use and pressure on the road network from the influx of vehicles and visitors.

Development

- The consistent use of Cotswold stone for buildings and boundary walls is a key characteristic of the built environment. Where reconstituted stone is used, the building form, appearance and weathering qualities integrate less well, resulting in an erosion of the distinctiveness and character of the area.
- The development of horse paddocks, particularly around villages, with their associated subdivision of fields by electrified fencing, introduction of stables, exercise facilities, parking, sheds and other features, can lead to the erosion of the character and quality of the landscapes around settlements.
- The pressure for larger farm buildings (including industrial-style 'barns') and agricultural workers' dwellings can result in an adverse visual impact across a wide area of the open landscape.
- The pressure for further barn conversions, may result in the domestication of rural farm building complexes, and result in loss of habitat, particularly for birds and bats.
- Telecommunications masts have been introduced across a wide area over recent years, increasing the frequency of prominent vertical structures on skylines.
- Development which breaks the skyline, such as housing, large agricultural or other shed type buildings, wind turbines, masts, traffic on roads etc, has the potential to be visually prominent and introduce a discordant element within this open plateau.
- The cumulative effect of multiple smaller impacts, such as loss of walling, the introduction of fencing and the use of reconstituted stone, the introduction of insensitively located solar panels or alien building forms, could have a significant and erosive impact on the distinctiveness of the LCA.

Guidance

These guidelines recommend how the landscape can be managed to ensure future change respects the local character and should be read in conjunction with the objectives of the Cotswold AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines [See reference 1], as well as the overarching management strategy objectives of the South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment, as set out in Chapter 4.

Landscape Strategy

Landscape Management

- Retain the open and rural character of the undulating Cotswold Plateau with its wide panoramic views.
- Retain, manage and enhance the formal historic parkland landscape associated with the Badminton estate to the east.
- Retain, manage and enhance the areas of deciduous woodland, copses and mature trees that contribute to the character of the area.
- Enhance woodland in a controlled manner (i.e. in accordance with the Nature Recovery Network and Forest of Avon's Tree and Woodland Strategy) so that the LCA retains its open plateau character while contributing to the aims and projects/programmes of the Green Infrastructure Strategy (e.g. doubling tree canopy by 2030).
- Encourage the diversification of agricultural land use from predominantly arable to mixed farming including livestock grazing and regenerative farming methods. This will strengthen landscape character, as well as benefit biodiversity, water catchments and climate change adaptation and resilience.
- Restore, conserve and manage the characteristic and historic pattern of drystone wall and/ or hedgerow framework, as appropriate to the particular character of the local landscape, and provide habitat connectivity through these features.

- Avoid the introduction of uncharacteristic features such as field subdivision by electrified and post and rail fences which are devoid of habitat value, and the degradation of the sward by overgrazing.
- Control change of use to horse keeping where the erosion of landscape character would result.
- Protect the night-time landscape through the retention of dark skies and protect the tranquillity of undisturbed areas.

Ecology/Biodiversity Management

- Enhance biodiversity and habitat connectivity in line with the West of England's Nature Recovery Network, Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy, and Tree and Woodland Strategy (Forest of Avon Plan), as well as South Gloucestershire's Biodiversity Action Plan and Green Infrastructure Strategy (Greener Places).
- Conserve and enhance the existing populations of notable habitats (including priority habitat deciduous woodland and lowland meadow, and other areas of calcareous grassland), ensuring that there is no net loss of biodiversity.
- Support the planting of new wildflower habitats along B-lines within the north and east of the LCA (identified by Buglife), that will contribute to the national pollinator network.
- Consider changes to the management of highway verges in suitable areas, contributing to the Highway Verges for Nature programme to improve and connect habitat for nature, and climate change adaptation and resilience, whilst ensuring drystone walls do not become obscured and visually lost by vegetation.

Development Management

- Protect the open, elevated, and gently undulating plateau landscape, including its wide panoramic views (including views from the A46 and M4 motorway) and high degree of intervisibility that make it particularly sensitive to new development that may result in enclosure.

- Ensure that new development is integrated with, and where necessary screened from the wider landscape and avoids the domestication or industrialisation of the rural character of the locality.
- Any new vertical development should avoid eroding the natural beauty of, or the settings of heritage assets in the wider landscape.
- Where such development is acceptable, telecom's infrastructure, mast, pole or pylon sharing should be considered to avoid the need for addition of new towers or masts to the landscape.
- If wind turbines are to be accommodated within the LCA, these should be carefully located, in order to avoid intervisibility with the CNL and to limit the cumulative impacts of developments within this LCA and adjacent landscapes.
- Any new vertical development should avoid dominating, or visually competing with, other landmark landscape or heritage assets in the character area.
- New development should use locally appropriate materials such as locally sourced Cotswold stone of the appropriate colour and texture that respect and enhances local distinctiveness (including the settlement pattern of small, nucleated villages) and the traditional character of the area.
- Given the openness of the landscape and importance of maintaining the rural character of skylines, careful consideration should be given to the location and design of highway signage and lighting associated with the M4 and A46 roads.
- The cumulative impact with other developments will require particular consideration due to the openness of the landscape.

LCA 2: Marshfield Plateau

The Marshfield Plateau landscape character area (LCA) is an elevated, gently sloping agricultural plateau, dissected by two shallow river valleys.

Photo 1: View from Marshfield churchyard towards Henley Hill and the Doncombe Brook valley.



Plateau and Scarp LCT

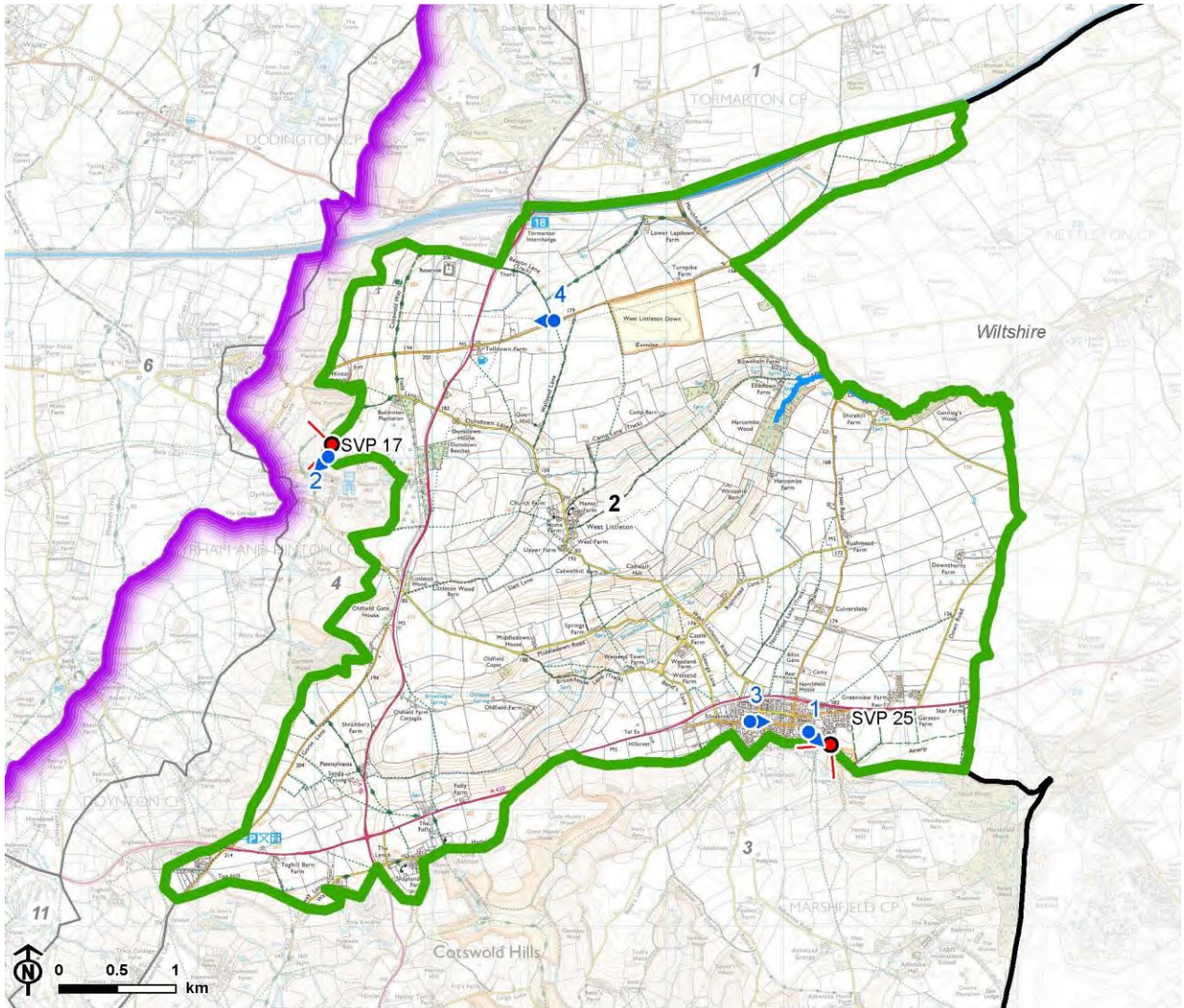
Location

The Marshfield Plateau landscape character area is located in the south-east of South Gloucestershire. The entirety of the LCA is included within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL).

This landscape character area is defined to the east by the South Gloucestershire Authority boundary, although the landscape character of the plateau extends beyond. The M4 motorway defines the northern boundary, marking a broad and subtle area of transition between the Marshfield Plateau and the slightly flatter and more vegetated Badminton Plateau to the north. To the west, the boundary is defined by the fairly abrupt change in topography formed by the Cotswold Scarp (LCA 4). The southern boundary follows an often-distinct change in topography between the plateau and upper valley edges of the Ashwicke Ridges (LCA 3).

Plateau and Scarp LCT

Figure 1.5: Location and Landscape context of LCA 2: Marshfield Plateau



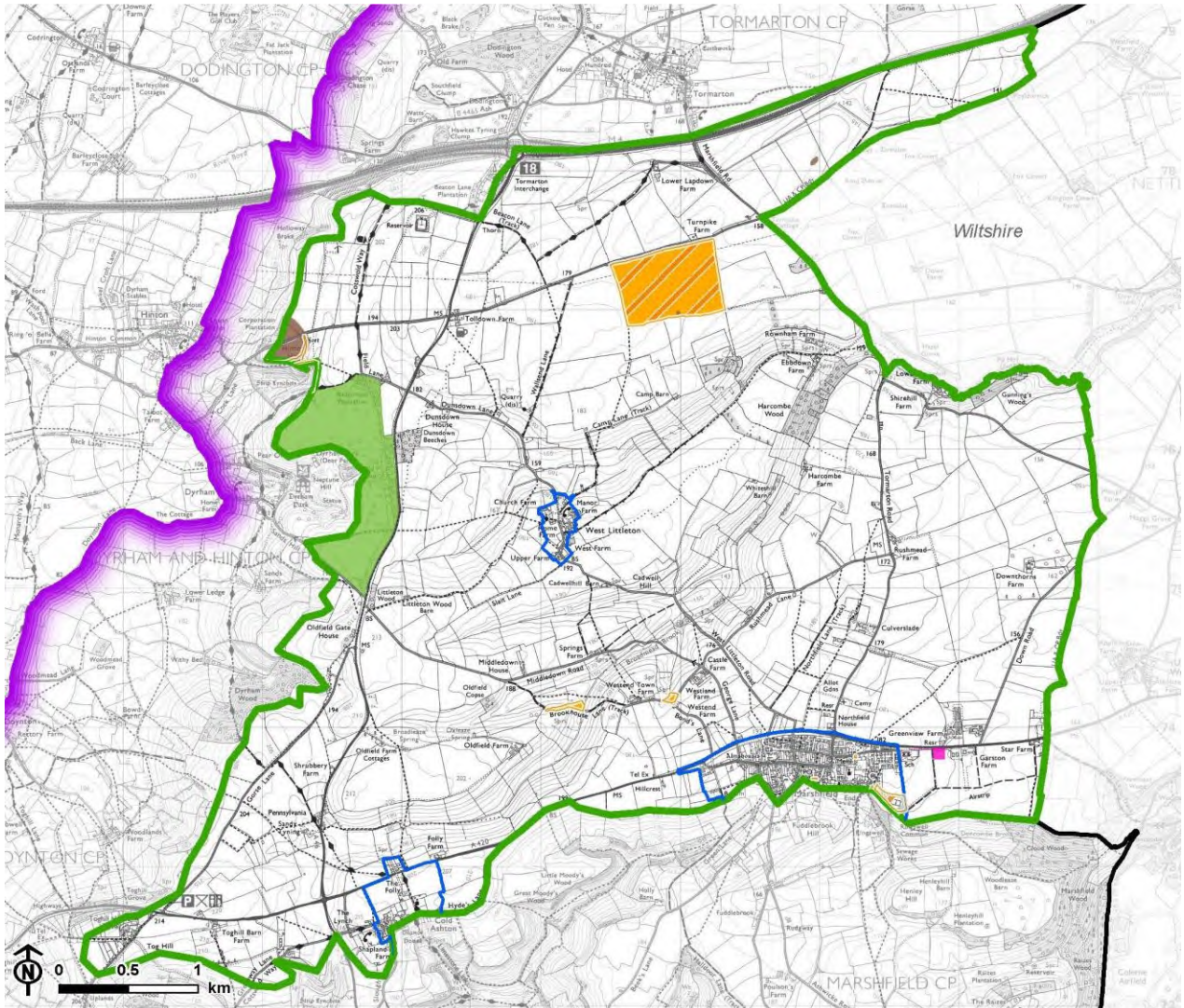
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- LCA 2: Marshfield Plateau
- Neighbouring LCA
- Council boundary
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- River
- Photograph location and direction
- Strategic viewpoint and angle



Plateau and Scarp LCT

Figure 1.6: Settlement and Heritage context of LCA 2: Marshfield Plateau



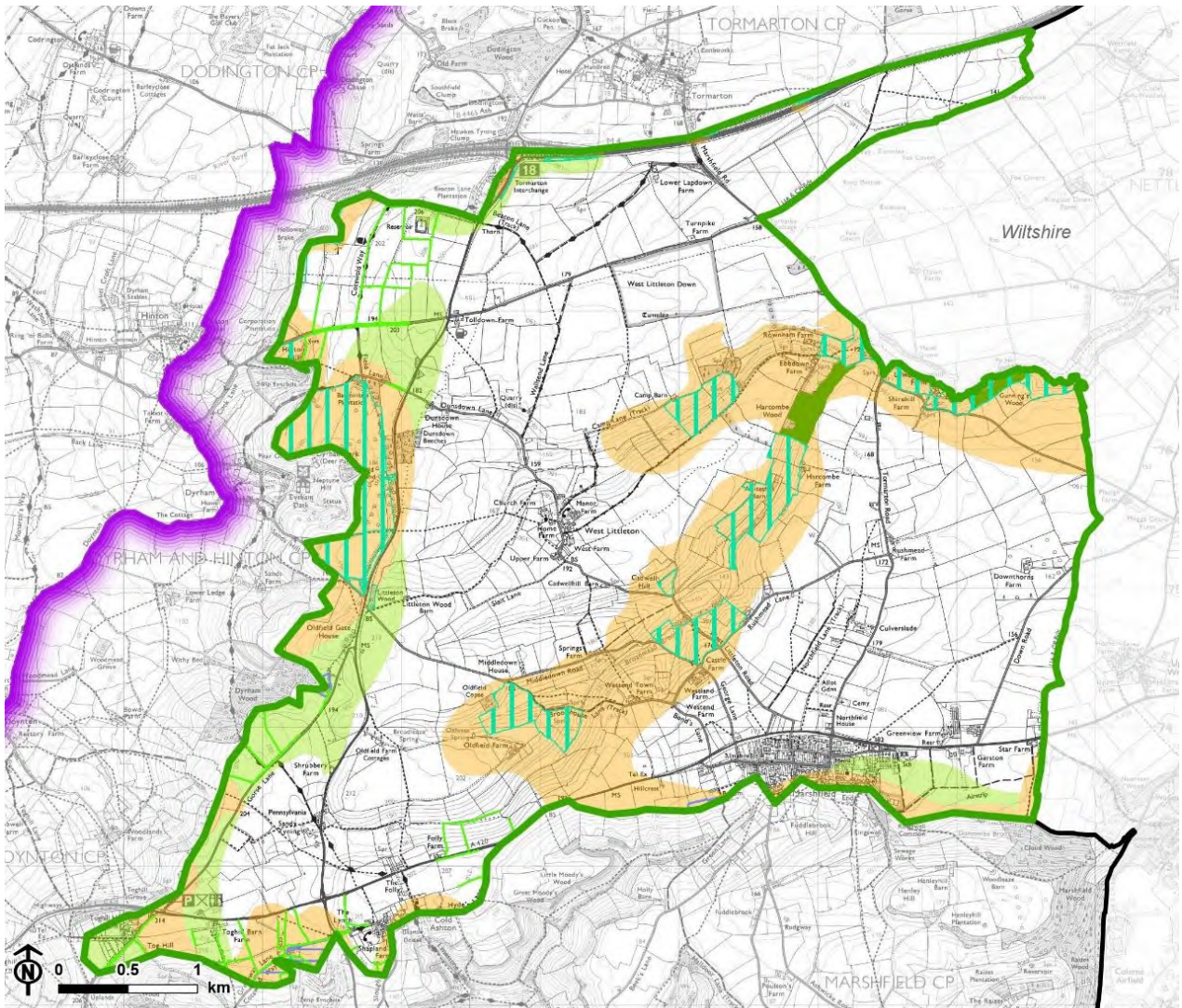
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- | | |
|--|---|
|  LCA 2: Marshfield Plateau |  Scheduled Monument |
|  Council boundary |  Conservation Area |
|  Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary |  Registered Parks and Gardens |
|  CRoW Common Land |  Recent development (since 2014) |
|  CRoW Open Access Land | |



Plateau and Scarp LCT

Figure 1.7: Ecology and Biodiversity context of LCA 2: Marshfield Plateau



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- | | |
|--|--|
|  LCA 2: Marshfield Plateau |  Regionally Important Geological Site |
|  Council boundary |  Grassland Strategic Network |
|  Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary |  Woodland Strategic Network |
|  Site of Nature Conservation Interest |  Important hedgerow |
|  Ancient woodland | |



Landscape Description

Key Characteristics

- A gently undulating upland plateau/dip slope landscape with an open expansive character.
- The boundaries of the plateau are defined by the rising topography of the Cotswold Scarp (LCA 4) to the west and Ashwicke Ridges (LCA 3) to the south, offering extensive views over the LCA.
- Land cover consists of predominantly large, regular-shaped arable fields generally defined by Cotswold stone walls which provide some habitat connectivity.
- The open plateau is dissected by two enclosed river valleys. This is a textured landscape of irregular, medium sized pasture fields and wetland meadows divided by hedges and stone walls, with scattered woodland copses.
- Areas of calcareous grassland support a diverse range of flora including areas of species rich grassland.
- Woodland cover is limited to small scattered areas of woodland, ancient woodland copses and few hedgerow trees, resulting in a generally simple, exposed landscape of open views.
- A sparse settlement pattern, comprising small villages and scattered isolated farms and buildings. The common use of Cotswold stone as a building material contributes to landscape character.
- A rural landscape with tranquil areas and dark night skies away from major roads. The perceptual and scenic qualities of the landscape are reflected in its inclusion within the Cotswold National Landscape.

Natural Influences

Geology, Landform and Hydrology

The underlying geology of the area is predominantly Great Oolitic Limestone with Fullers Earth and a small area of Athelstan Oolitic Limestone in the west. Soils are predominantly Brown Rendzinas with a small proportion of typical Calcareous Pelosols. This geology creates a landform of gently rolling upland plateau/dip slope, rising to a high point of 220m AOD at Tog Hill in the south-west corner of the LCA, forming part of the Cotswold Scarp Visually Important Hillside (VIH).

The plateau is incised by two gently sloping valleys, formed by two branches of the Broadmead Brook which is fed by a number of springs. The brook gently meanders north-eastwards along the valley bottom, the valley becoming steeper and narrower in the east. A number of the side valleys are dry and there is a small man-made pool to the north of West Littleton.

Land Cover

The plateau comprises a pattern of large, rectilinear fields with regular boundaries, mainly under arable cultivation. Field size is often closely related to landform; smaller fields have been formed from the enclosure of medieval open fields, generally found within the Broadmead Brook valleys. Over the plateau, much larger fields have been formed by the historic enclosure of open common and downland.

Fields on the plateau area are generally divided by Cotswold stone walls in mixed condition. In some places they have been removed, notably where former sheep pasture and mixed agriculture has been converted to arable use, with only remnant grass mounds left to define the former wall position. There is a particularly strong framework of dry stone walls along main roads and around settlements and farms, particularly evident in the north-west near Tormarton

Plateau and Scarp LCT

and to the south around Marshfield, where the pronounced change between stone and hedgerow boundaries follows the sharp junction between plateau edge and scarp beyond. Intermittent, thick and clipped hedges also form prominent field boundaries, principally to the west and adjacent to the Cotswold Scarp

Tree cover on the plateau is sparse, other than a few isolated copses and mature specimens along the field boundaries and around the edges of settlements. Exceptions are the small woodlands adjacent to the west and north-west boundary, associated with Dyrham Park.

Within the Broadmead brook valleys, land cover is mixed arable and pasture, with medium sized irregular fields on the valley sides and semi-enclosed meadows on the valley bottom. Field boundaries within the valleys consist of a mix of stone walls and intermittent, clipped and thick hedges. There is a higher proportion of tree cover than on the plateau, comprising small areas of woodland on the valley sides (Harcombe Wood being the largest area) Overgrown hedgerows and trees demarcate streams in the lower wetland areas.

Plateau and Scarp LCT

Photo 2: A typical view across large-scale arable fields on the open plateau with low drystone walls and occasional shelterbelts.



Biodiversity

The mosaic of habitat in this character area supports a diverse range of species. Nationally important habitats present include grasslands, woodland and parkland containing specimen and veteran trees and some 31 ha. of ancient woodland at Harcombe Wood and Gunnings Wood, which is also designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI). Key species associated with these habitats include bats and dormice, both of which are present across South Gloucestershire and are European protected species with associated Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP). Some habitat connectivity is provided between the wooded areas and other habitats via the stone walls, hedgerows and scattered trees.

Plateau and Scarp LCT

There are eleven sites within the Marshfield Plateau designated as SNCIs for their grassland habitats, including calcareous, neutral, and species-rich grasslands which support a range of invertebrates, and ant hills are a regular feature. These invertebrates in turn provide a food source for mammals including bats. Dyrham Park is also designated as an SNCI for the parkland present at the 100 hectare site.

The characteristic stone walls are of habitat value for a diverse range of species from invertebrates to reptiles and amphibians for commuting, foraging and as a refuge. Arable fields are important for many species of ground nesting farmland birds including birds which have been listed by BirdLife International as being on the Red List of Globally Threatened species. The stubble left over winter across the farmland provides a precious foraging resource when food sources are scarce for many farmland birds.

The few watercourses within the Marshfield Plateau area could host water voles, while ponds and pools within the area may well support amphibians such as great crested newts (a European Protected Species). Both are vulnerable to any loss of habitat including the terrestrial habitat around the water feature as well as the water bodies themselves.

A small part of South Gloucestershire Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridor E: Hawkesbury-Old Sodbury-Upton Cheyney (*Cotswold Scarp*) falls within the western part of the LCA. important for its mosaic of strategic woodland and grassland habitats associated with the adjacent Cotswold Scarp.

Cultural Influences

Land Use and Time Depth

A number of prehistoric tumuli and long barrows are scattered over the plateau landscape, indicating a long history of settlement in the area. A long barrow at Lapdown Barn and a round barrow at Littleton Down near West Littleton are

Plateau and Scarp LCT

both Scheduled Monuments, although are not visually distinctive. Many others, including a large group near Marshfield, have been removed.

Remnant ridge and furrow patterns are evident in some locations such as at West End, as are traces of Iron-Age field systems in the form of strip lynchets in the valleys surrounding Cold Ashton.

Part of Dyrham Park (Grade II* Registered Historic Park) lies within the west of the LCA. The open parkland includes planted avenues, woodland belts, scattered mature and veteran ornamental trees, native tree specimens and small copses. This has traditionally been managed as a deer park. Expansive open views are possible from within the park over the lower-lying vale landscapes to the west, including views from within the park and its stately home.

Two linear areas of woodland at Badminton Plantation and Dunsdown Beeches along the park boundary following the A46, are visually prominent in westerly views from within the character area.

Settlement and Infrastructure

The open plateau landscape is largely unpopulated in comparison with most of South Gloucestershire, with only three main settlements.

The large village of Marshfield is situated on the edge of the plateau in the south, with the A420 defining its northern edge. The historical significance of Marshfield and its status as the first major staging point on the Bristol to London route is reflected in its designation as a Conservation Area. It comprises mainly 16th-18th century Cotswold stone buildings with a church towards its eastern end. The main street is characterised by narrow frontages reflecting the medieval layout of the town. Dry stone boundary walls extend from the town into the adjacent rural landscape.

Plateau and Scarp LCT

The small linear villages of West Littleton and Cold Ashton are the other main settlements. They consist of scattered houses of a variety of styles and ages, with a church and manor house of likely Saxon origin. Both have Conservation Areas and are surrounded by fields with dry stone wall boundaries. The hamlet of Pennsylvania in the south-west includes stone buildings and traditional agricultural buildings, as well as a petrol station which exerts localised urban influence in this otherwise rural landscape. Unlike other settlements in the LCA, adjacent field boundaries are hedges.

Elsewhere, the irregular and scattered distribution of farms across the landscape is closely related to spring lines and watercourses, and the farmsteads are often surrounded by trees. Occasional industrial-scale buildings adjacent to the A46, and large-scale farm and commercial sheds alongside the A420 to the east of Marshfield have an urban influence on the surrounding rural landscape.

The settlements within this LCA all contain buildings of historic form and architectural style, with little evidence of modern additions. They are united through their use of Cotswold stone for traditional buildings and structures, as well as field boundaries. The local Marshfield stone used for many of the buildings is locally distinctive, being greyer than the honey-coloured stone found further east and north in the Cotswolds.

Settlements are connected by a number of lanes lined with stone walls, which largely radiate from Marshfield. The lanes become more winding within the valleys, often enclosed by stone walls on banks, although these are frequently masked by hedgerow vegetation. Three major trunk roads also cross the area; the M4 forms the northern boundary of the LCA, connecting to the A46 which runs north to south between Bath and Cirencester. The A420 runs east to west close to the southern boundary of the area and passes along the northern edge of Marshfield.

A network of public rights of way cross the landscape, often following field boundaries between farms and small settlements. The Cotswold Way National Trail runs north to south near the western plateau/ scarp boundary. It crosses

Plateau and Scarp LCT

the north-west of the area, passes outside the LCA along the scarp then back into this area, south-eastwards through Cold Ashton. The Limestone Link promoted route runs south-east from Cold Ashton towards Bath. One of a series of Circular Rides crosses the centre of the area via West Littleton, along the western edge of Marshfield and then south. Areas of Common and open access Land at Littleton Down, Brookhouse Common and West End Town Common provide further recreational access to the landscape.

Photo 3: The linear medieval layout of Marshfield high street, built in local Cotswold stone.



Perceptual Influences

Visual Character

The Marshfield Plateau area has three principal landform elements which influence its visual character. These comprise the open plateau/dip slope landscape, the broad shallow and largely open valleys of the upper Broadmead Brook and the smaller scale enclosed lower Broadmead Brook valley to the east of the area.

The broad plateau/dip slope has an open and simple character, created through the combination of gently rolling arable land, which generally lacks any significant vegetation to screen views across the expansive plateau landscape.

Plateau and Scarp LCT

Field boundaries of low stone walls are frequently overgrown or replaced with fencing. In some locations, walls have become overgrown with vegetation and can be easily mistaken for hedgerows. There are also occasional mature trees associated with these features.

The open character of the plateau/dip slope contrasts strongly with the smaller scale, more enclosed character of the two valleys of the Broadmead Brook and its tributary, which dissect the plateau. Irregular pastoral and arable fields, generally smaller-scale than on the plateau are divided by thick, overgrown and clipped hedges and some stone walls, interspersed with infrequent small woodland copses. In the east is a more intricate and enclosed landscape formed by woodland, copses, individual trees and wetland meadows close to the valley bottom.

The villages of Marshfield and Cold Ashton are located on high ground along the southern boundary and are visually prominent in views from across the open plateau and north from adjacent LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges, although field boundary walls and intermittent vegetation on the settlement edge integrate these elements to some extent. Views of the surrounding landscape are afforded from these settlements, including into the valleys of the Ashwicke Ridges. Marshfield church tower forms a landmark feature in many views. West Littleton nestles within the undulating wooded landscape of the valleys, with only the southern part of the settlement visible from much of the western and central parts of the character area. The hamlet of Pennsylvania is not prominent in wider views, although the petrol station introduces a detractive urban feature within the rural landscape.

The exposed plateau/dip slope allows distant views over the landscape from higher ground. Extensive views from the area's boundaries are also possible, limited in places by a woodland belt at Dyrham Park and by the skyline of the upper scarp edge. These include views westwards over the Cotswold Scarp (LCA 4) to the vale beyond, views southwards across the Ashwicke Ridges (LCA 3) and Avon Valley (LCA 16), views north across to the Badminton Plateau (LCA 1) and into Wiltshire to the east.

Plateau and Scarp LCT

The A46 and A420 run generally at grade with the surrounding landform, occasionally partially enclosed by low Cotswold stone walls, often in a state of disrepair. High traffic volumes on these ‘A’ roads have localised visible and audible influence on the rural character of the plateau. The junction at Toghill has a significant impact on the landscape, particularly at night, where lighting on the skyline is visible in long distance views from the west.

The ridgeline location of the A420 makes it a prominent route, with open views in all directions. A line of pylons running east-west to the south of the M4 and a tall telecommunications mast near the M4 and A46 junction form vertical structures that are visually prominent in the open plateau landscape.

Photo 4: View west towards the A46 and large agricultural buildings at Tolldown Farm, with pylons and Hinton Wind Turbine marking the skyline.



Tranquillity and Dark Skies

A moderately tranquil landscape, particularly in the centre of the LCA. Tranquillity is reduced around major transport corridors including the A46 in the west, A420 in the south, and M4 along the northern edge. Traffic on the A46 and A420 is visually and audibly prominent where it crosses the exposed plateau and ridge skyline to the west of Marshfield. Although mostly in cutting, high volumes of traffic on the M4 are an audible and sometimes visually prominent feature of the landscape.

The majority of the LCA experiences dark night skies, with some localised light pollution along transport corridors.

Visually Important Hillside

There are no Visually Important Hillside (VIH) located within this LCA. However, it is flanked along its western edge by the Cotswold Scarp VIH (located within LCA 2) and along its southern edge by the Ashwicke Ridges VIH. Key characteristics of each VIH include the following:

- Cotswold Scarp VIH: a visually prominent escarpment on the edge of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) which defines a marked change in character from the considerably lower-lying undulating ridges and vales to the west, and the broader plateau/dip slope landscape to the east.
- Ashwicke Ridges VIH: a distinctive and complex area of steep sided ridges and valleys, forming some of the most prominent and dramatic hillsides within South Gloucestershire, and an integral landscape feature and characteristic of the CNL.

Further details are provided in **Annex I: Visually Important Hillside**.

Strategic Viewpoints

Four Strategic Viewpoints are located within this LCA. They are:

- SVP 16: Tog Hill: provides a panoramic view west from the edge of the Cotswold scarp that takes in notable landscape features and landmark features across most of South Gloucestershire and extends to the hills of South Wales.
- SVP 17: Dyrham Park: A designed viewpoint from a Registered Park and Garden and provides a panoramic view west, taking in notable landscape and landmark features across South Gloucestershire, extending to the hills of South Wales, Dundry Hill and the Mendip Hills AONB.
- SVP 25: East End, Marshfield: Enables appreciation of the Cotswold National Landscape and provides a panoramic view that takes in notable landscape features of the Ashwicke Ridges (including the Doncombe Brook Valley and Henley Hill) as well as the landmark feature of the Church of St Mary within Marshfield Conservation Area.
- SVP 26: Cold Ashton: Provides a notable view across the Cotswold National Landscape that takes in the notable landscape features of the Ashwicke Ridges (including St Catherine's Brook Valley and Henley Hill), and the Cold Ashton Conservation Area.

Further details are provided in **Annex II: Strategic Viewpoints**.

Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Value Features

- The contrasting landform of gently rolling open arable land on the plateau and small-scale enclosed valleys that provide topographical interest.
- The drystone walls, which are distinctive landscape features and important for habitat connectivity.
- The historic villages with a distinctive form and built character, unified by their use of local stone which provide a strong sense of place.
- Small woodland copses and wetland meadows, valued for their biodiversity and provision of wildlife habitats.
- Open views experienced from the open plateau over surrounding landscapes.
- The rural character, sense of tranquillity and dark night skies experienced across much of the area.

The Changing Landscape

The following section sets out the changes and pressures to the Marshfield Plateau LCA.

Climate Change

- Ongoing demand and pressure for renewable energy developments. An area of high potential for wind energy development has been identified in the north of the area adjacent to West Littleton Down.

Plateau and Scarp LCT

- Change in tree species composition with the increase prevalence of pests and diseases including *Phytophthora* pathogens and ash die-back.
- Extended growing seasons as a result of longer warmer summers. This may alter the composition of arable land and make new crops viable, changing the appearance and structure of the farmed landscape.
- Increased frequency of extreme weather events resulting in more frequent flooding events in winter and drought events in summer, affecting water flow rates in the streams, impacting on riparian habitats and species.

Climate Emergency and Nature Recovery

- An increase in tree planting is required to contribute towards South Gloucestershire's objective of doubling tree cover by 2030, and in accordance with the proposed woodland strategic network which forms part of the West of England's Nature Recovery Network. This may include extension of woodland habitat in the Broadmead Brook valley, as set out in the Forest of Avon's Tree and Woodland Strategy [See reference 2].
- The establishment of self-seeded trees and the introduction of new planting within the plateau area, whilst contributing to the landscape structure, have the potential to affect existing vistas and key views.

Land use and cover

- The transition from pasture and mixed agriculture on the plateau to arable farmland in the 20th century introduced changes in the colour and texture of the landscape. Due to the openness of the area, any future changes will have a significant impact on the appearance of the landscape.

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- The continuing programme of landscape restoration and improvement at Dyrham Park, including woodland management and the restoration of walls and hedges will ensure the character of the historic parkland is maintained.
- Motocross scrambling tracks in the north-west and south-east corners of the area introduce localised visual and noise pollution.
- The ongoing popularity of livestock-keeping including horses and alpaca has resulted in the subdivision of fields using electric and wooden fencing. This and the associated construction of stables and shelters is eroding the character and quality of the landscape on the edge of villages, such as West Littleton.
- The deterioration and loss of stone wall field boundaries has reduced the condition and integrity of an important landscape feature within such an exposed and simple landscape. This is particularly evident along the road network and adjacent to settlement and results in changes to the visual appearance and landscape character of the locality, and also to its habitat value.
- Changing agricultural land management practices in response to climate change and forthcoming changes to agricultural subsidies. This may affect the management of landscape features and wildlife habitats including hedgerows and grassland habitats.

Development

- Ongoing residential development (18 dwellings) to the east of Marshfield on the A46 will increase the extent of the village beyond its current boundaries once complete.
- The open and exposed character of the plateau/ dip slope is highly sensitive to change. Any vertical built forms would be visible, not just from within the plateau, but from the surrounding wider landscape. Any development which 'breaks' the skyline, such as housing, large agricultural buildings, wind turbines and communication masts, would be visually prominent and introduce discordant elements within the open plateau, which would erode its distinctive character.

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- The rural character of the plateau/dip slope landscape has been eroded in places through the visual intrusion of major roads, traffic, powerlines and masts and more recently the introduction of large industrial scale barns and buildings, for example to the east of Marshfield and adjacent to the A46 north of Cold Ashton. The audible intrusion from traffic levels adds to this erosion of rural character.

Guidance

These guidelines recommend how the landscape can be managed to ensure future change respects the local character and should be read in conjunction with the objectives of the Cotswold AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines [See reference 3] as well as the overarching management strategy objectives of the South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment, as set out in Chapter 4.

Landscape Strategy

Landscape Management

- Maintain the open and rural character of the Cotswold Plateau, including its wide panoramic views (including views from the major roads) and high degree of intervisibility
- Conserve, manage and restore dry stone walls which are a key feature of this landscape, using local materials and traditional techniques as appropriate to the local landscape and to enhance habitat value, and encourage the restoration of historic features.
- Conserve and manage heritage assets, ensuring that present and future land use practices do not cause damage to or loss of remaining prehistoric features.
- Protect and enhance the setting, character and features of historic assets including Dyrham Park and Scheduled Monuments. New planting

associated with designed landscapes should use species characteristic of the historic landscape and ensure that new woodland does not compromise the structure or setting of archaeological features.

- The cumulative impacts of land use change associated with hobby farming and equestrian activity should be carefully managed, avoiding visually prominent locations such as roadsides and valley slopes.
- Preserve and enhance the landscape setting of Marshfield, West Littleton, and Cold Ashton, together with key views towards and from the Conservation Areas; including the panoramic views south from Cold Ashton and Marshfield.
- Maintain the undeveloped character of the Broadmead Brook valleys with its diverse and textured landscape of woodland and meadows which contrast with the open plateau and are unique within the area.

Ecology/Biodiversity Management

- Ensure that farming practices do not negatively impact aquatic and riparian habitats and species. Seek opportunities to enhance these habitats e.g. through South Gloucestershire's Biodiversity Action Plan and Green Infrastructure Strategy (Greener Places).
- Protect and extend the important calcareous grassland and meadow habitats, enhancing connectivity between existing areas and creating new ones where appropriate, in line with the WENP Nature Recovery Network grassland strategic network.
- Enhance the mosaic of woodland and grassland habitats and increase connectivity between different habitat types, for example link Gunnings Wood and grassland to St. Catherine's Valley SSSI through existing areas of lowland meadows, calcareous grassland and deciduous woodland.
- Retain and enhance the landscape's woodlands (including ancient woodland). Ensure new tree planting (including woodland sand shelterbelts) retains the open character and wide panoramic views experienced across the plateau and valleys, having regard to the cumulative impact of new planting.

- Support the creation of new wildflower habitats along B-lines (identified by Buglife) within the LCA to contribute to the national pollinator network.

Development Management

- Maintain the open, sparsely settled character by limiting new development to existing settlements. Ensure new built development respects the local built character and does not interrupt the setting of existing villages or views. Ensure that renewable energy developments are appropriately designed and sited, avoiding visible slopes and prominent ridgelines.
- Ensure development of large-scale vertical elements do not adversely affect the skyline and views of the character area, as well as those towards and from neighbouring character areas.
- Wind turbines should be modest in scale and carefully located to limit their visual prominence, particularly in views from the CNL, and to avoid intervisibility between installations.
- Any new development should avoid dominating, or visually competing with, other landmark landscape or heritage assets in the character area including the designed landscapes of Dyrham Park, strip lynchet field systems, and the Broadmead Brook valley.
- Cumulative impacts with other developments will require particular consideration due to the openness of the landscape.
- Given the openness of the landscape and importance of maintaining the rural character of skylines, careful consideration should be given to the location and design of highway signage and lighting.
- Protect the tranquillity of undisturbed areas, including the retention of dark skies and limit new development that would introduce visual and audible disturbance.

LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges

The Ashwicke Ridges landscape character area (LCA) is a complex area of ridges and valleys covered by a diverse mix of agricultural fields and woodlands.

Photo 1: View south from Ashwicke Road along a tributary valley of St Catherine's Valley.



Location

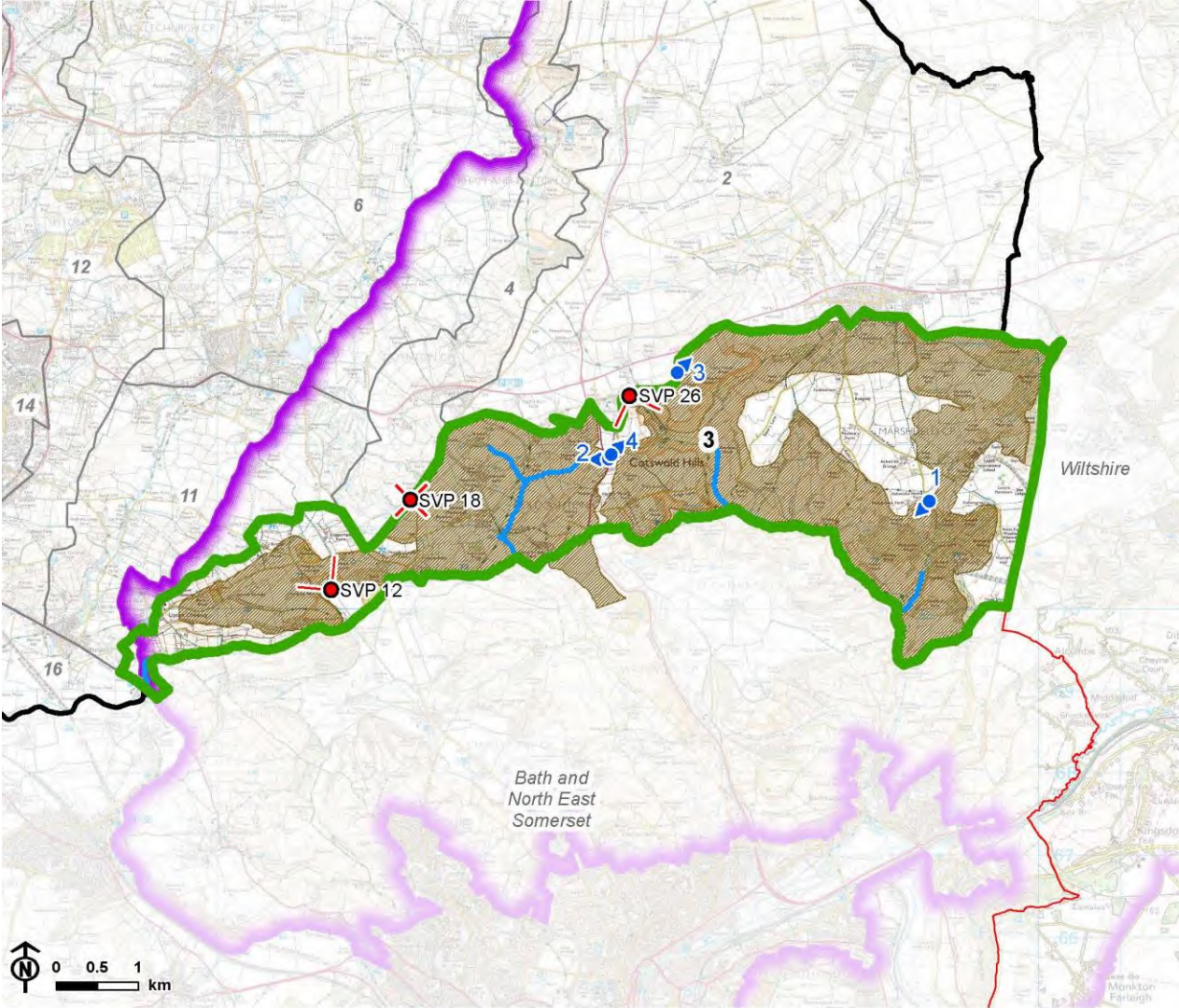
The Ashwicke Ridges LCA is located in the south-east of South Gloucestershire. It falls entirely within the Cotswolds National Landscape.

This landscape character area is defined along its northern edge northern by an often-distinct topographical change between the adjacent Marshfield Plateau (LCA 2) and the upper valley edges of this area. To the west, the boundary abuts the Cotswold Scarp (LCA 4), following the ridgeline of Freezing Hill, before descending to follow a mid-slope topographical boundary with the Golden Valley (LCA 11). The boundary then descends further to the A431, forming a boundary with the Avon Valley (LCA 16).

To the south and east, the character area is defined by the South Gloucestershire Authority boundary, although the landscape character of the ridges and valleys extends beyond this boundary into Bath and North East Somerset, and Wiltshire.

Plateau and Scarp LCT

Figure 1.8: Location and Landscape context of LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges



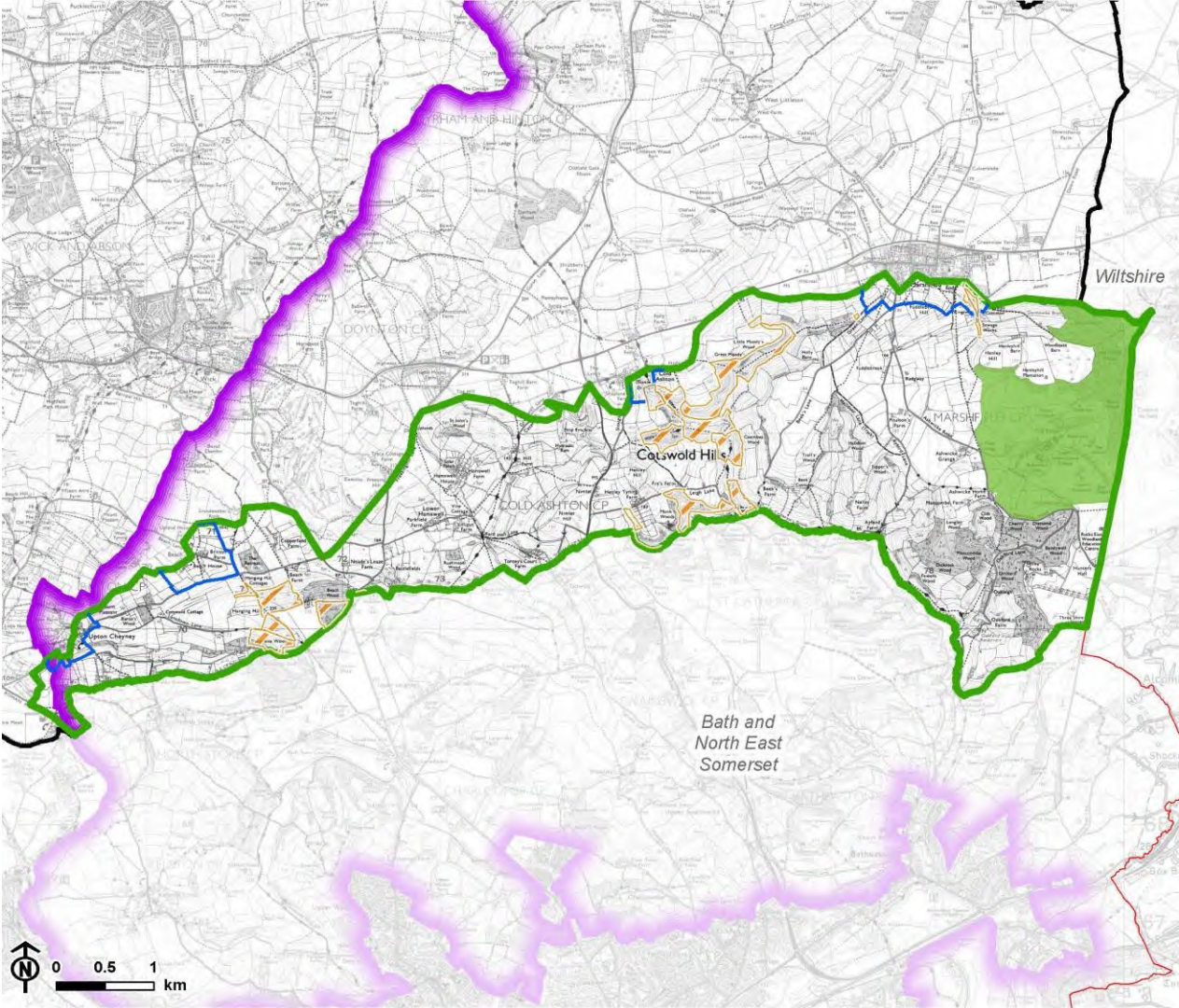
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- LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges
- Neighbouring LCA
- Council boundary
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- Visually Important Hillside
- River
- ▶ Photograph location and direction
- ◀ Strategic viewpoint and angle



Plateau and Scarp LCT

Figure 1.9: Settlement and Heritage context of LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges



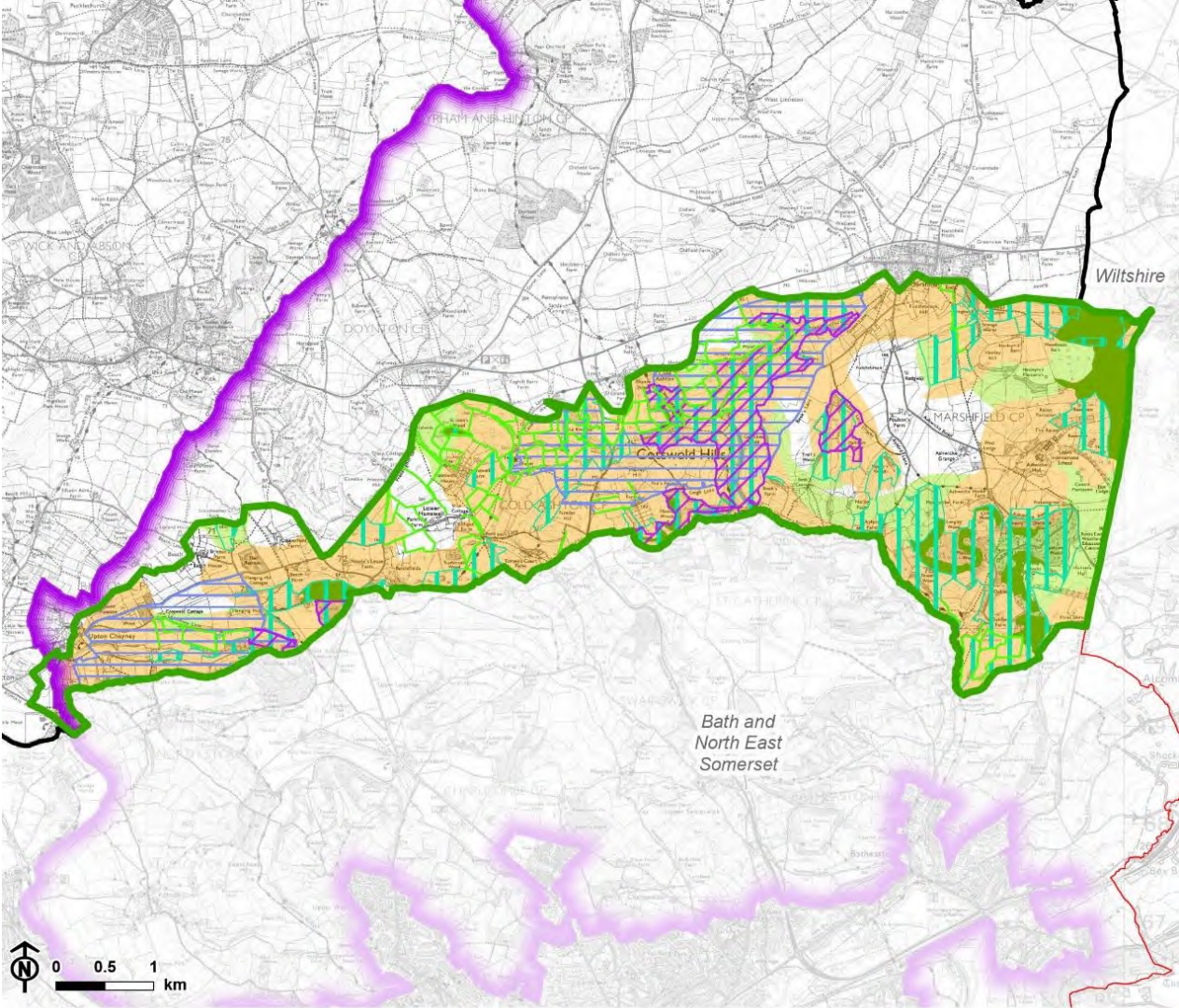
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- LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges
- Council boundary
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- CRoW Open Access Land
- Conservation Area
- Registered Parks and Gardens



Plateau and Scarp LCT

Figure 1.10: Ecology and Biodiversity context of LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges



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- | | |
|--|--|
|  LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges |  Regionally Important Geological Site |
|  Council boundary |  Grassland Strategic Network |
|  Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary |  Wetland Strategic Network |
|  Site of Special Scientific Interest |  Woodland Strategic Network |
|  Site of Nature Conservation Interest |  Important hedgerow |
|  Ancient woodland | |



Landscape Description

Key Characteristics

- A complex landform comprising a small plateau of rounded upland hills, steep sided ridges and both incised and broad valleys. The varied topography result in contrasting landscape characteristics.
- Open upland hills to the north and ridges to the west are characterised by medium, regular shaped fields of mixed pasture and arable, bound with clipped hedges and occasional Cotswold stone walls.
- Enclosed, wooded valleys of St Catherine's Brook and its tributaries are located in the east. The sinuous incised valleys are typified by irregular medium to small unimproved pastoral fields with clipped and overgrown hedges.
- The broad Hamswell Valley in the west, has irregular shaped fields bound by clipped or overgrown hedges with mature hedgerow and riparian trees.
- Significant areas of calcareous and neutral grassland support a diverse and species rich range of flora.
- Small copses, including ancient woodlands connected via hedgerows and dry stone walls, provide habitat for notable species (including European Protected Species).
- Historic assets represent a long history of settlement in the area, the most notable being the Fosse Way Roman Road.
- A scattered settlement pattern of isolated houses and farms united through the use of Cotswold stone.
- Extensive views are possible over the area from the open upper ridges.
- A prominent line of beech trees on Freezing Hill is a notable landmark in views from both within and beyond the character area.

Plateau and Scarp LCT

- An area around The Rocks forms part of the wider setting to the City of Bath World Heritage site due to its scenic qualities as part of the CNL.

Natural Influences

Geology, Landform and Hydrology

The underlying geology is principally a mix of Fuller's Earth on the valley sides, and Midford and Yeovil Sands in the valley bottom. Great Oolitic Limestone dominates the rounded exposed uplands. The diverse geology results in a variety of soil types with Calcareous Pelosols on the valley sides, Brown Earth Loam over Clay on the valley floors, and Brown Rendzinas on the exposed uplands.

The varied and tightly interwoven mix of geology has a strong influence on the topography, creating an undulating landform of small plateau areas with rounded hills, steep sided ridges, and incised and broad valleys. Elevation varies from 70m AOD within the valleys to 235m AOD at Hanging Hill in the west, which is the highest point in the area, marked by a telecommunications mast. This distinctive and complex combination of landform features form the Ashwicke Ridges Visually Important Hillside.

The eastern half of the area is occupied by the small-scale 'V'-shaped valley of St Catherine's Brook. Numerous tributaries within side valleys, often fed by springs, feed the tightly meandering St Catherine's Brook, producing a visually varied valley of descending interlocking spurs. To the north and east, a plateau area rises to Henley Hill in the east near Marshfield. It is separated from the adjacent Marshfield Plateau character area (LCA 2) by the steep sided, easterly draining Doncombe Brook valley and the upper tributary valley of St Catherine's Brook.

High ground of a second Henley Hill to the south of Cold Ashton separates St Catherine's Brook from the Hamswell Valley in the west. The upper reaches of

Plateau and Scarp LCT

the Hamswell Valley comprise a broad bowl-shaped landform contained to the west by Freezing Hill. It drains south via the small sinuous Lam Brook and its tributaries. This valley continues south-eastwards to the River Avon at Bath.

The ridgeline of Hanging Hill runs westwards, with slopes falling north-west into the Golden Valley (LCA 11), and south into the Piple Bottom Valley. It appears as a physical continuation of the Cotswold Scarp, although is separated from Freezing Hill by a 'saddle' landform which marks a prominent break in continuity of the upland landform.

There are two ponds and two reservoirs within side valleys of St Catherine's Brook valley, including Monkswood Reservoir, a man-made lake located within the western reaches of this valley system. To the east of the area is the smaller Oakford Reservoir, and two natural pools.

The steep sided 'V'-shaped Piple Bottom Valley drains westwards into the River Avon on the boundary of this area. The South Gloucestershire boundary follows the Piple stream course, the southern valley slopes lying within Bath and North East Somerset.

Land Cover

Land cover is closely related to the landform. The field pattern on the rounded hills consists of regular shaped, medium sized arable and pasture fields with varied field boundaries, including clipped hedges, post and wire fencing, and some Cotswold stone walls. Tree cover is limited on higher ground, mainly confined to the valley sides.

By contrast, the steep landform of the St Catherine's Brook valley system, results in small to medium sized fields of irregular shape with unimproved pasture, many supporting wildflower meadows. Hedgerow field boundaries vary; some are clipped, others are dense and overgrown, interspersed with occasional mature hedgerow trees. Some hedgerows are laid or supplemented with fencing. Small areas of deciduous and mixed woodland are distributed

Plateau and Scarp LCT

around historic houses, with linear deciduous woodlands along the upper valley edges, and an extensive area of mixed woodland clothing the valley sides of the Doncombe Brook valley.

To the west, the upper Hamswell Valley and sides of Freezing Hill and Hanging Hill comprise a more regular pattern of medium sized arable and pasture fields. They are defined by clipped hedges, which in places are overgrown, with an irregular pattern of mature hedgerow trees. There are occasional small areas of woodland, with one large area to the east of Hanging Hill. The highly prominent line of beech trees on Freezing Hill is a notable landmark for some great distance, both within and beyond the South Gloucestershire area to the north and west.

Photo 2: View west across the undulating ridges and valleys to the west of Cold Ashton, the distinctive line of beech trees on Freezing Hill prominent on the skyline.



Biodiversity

Semi-natural habitats within this LCA comprise a mosaic of grassland, woodland, mixed farmland, ponds and streams. Together with the hedgerow and drystone wall network, this variety of habitats supports a diverse range of species.

Deciduous woodland is distributed across the landscape mainly as small scattered woodlands and copses with two larger areas in the east, Approximately half of the total woodland is of ancient origin (116 ha) and designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI). There are three areas designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) comprising species-rich grassland and woodland. These designations recognise the importance of these habitats in a national context for the range of flora and fauna they support. Key species likely to be associated with these habitats include bats and dormice, both of which are present across South Gloucestershire and are European protected species with associated Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP). Hedgerows and scattered trees provide ecological corridors between the areas of woodland. Although less prevalent than in other Cotswold areas, dry stone walls form a valuable habitat that can be utilised by a diverse range of species from invertebrates to reptiles and amphibians for commuting, foraging and as a refuge.

There are seventeen sites designated as SNCIs for the calcareous and neutral grassland present, including species-rich grassland. Numerous watercourses and their tributaries cross the landscape and support a diverse range of species, from aquatic macro-invertebrates to fish and otters. Ponds and pools within the area support amphibians such as great crested newts (a European Protected Species) which are vulnerable to habitat loss, including terrestrial habitat around ponds as well as the ponds themselves.

The arable farmland within this LCA provides an ideal habitat and winter food source for many species of ground nesting farmland birds, including birds which have been listed by BirdLife International as being Globally Threatened Red listed species.

Plateau and Scarp LCT

South Gloucestershire Strategic Green Infrastructure (GI) Corridor E (Hawkesbury-Old Sodbury-Upton Cheyney (*Cotswold Scarp*)) covers the western half of this LCA, important for its mosaic of strategic woodland and grassland habitats associated with the adjacent Cotswold Scarp.

Cultural Influences

Land Use and Time Depth

The Ashwicke Ridges LCA has a strong sense of time depth, containing historic relics indicating a long history of settlement in the area, including prehistoric earthworks and tumuli, The Fosse Way Roman Road, medieval field systems, and historic battlefield sites.

The most visible and extensive historic feature is the Fosse Way Roman Road which forms the eastern boundary of the character area, and historically formed the boundaries of Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and in part, Somerset. The Three Shire Stones (Grade II listed) are standing stones along the Fosse Way which mark these original county boundaries. A prehistoric linear earthwork boundary on Freezing Hill (known as Freezing Hill Earthwork Lansdowne) is designated as a Scheduled Monument, whilst the site of the Battle of Lansdown (noted on OS mapping to the south of Freezing Hill, but covering a much wider area) is a registered battlefield. Relic field systems in the form of Iron Age strip lynchets remain visible in places, for example to the south of Cold Ashton.

Ashwicke Hall in the east of the character area is a Grade II Registered Park and Gardens comprising 19th Century pleasure grounds and landscaped parkland. To the south of Ashwicke Hall is The Rocks Garden, a designed historic garden that includes a distinctive avenue of mature trees.

Settlement and Infrastructure

The settlement pattern is relatively sparse, comprising nucleated hamlets located mainly around the edge of the LCA, with occasional farms scattered within the valleys.

The hamlet of Upton Cheyney falls partially within the south of this area and partly within the adjacent Golden Valley (LCA 11). Set on the elevated mid-slopes between the lower Golden Valley and rising ridgeline of Hanging Hill, the settlement is dispersed along a number of radiating country lanes, giving a linear character. Buildings consist of large cottages and farmhouses in local Cotswold stone, with a small group of red-brick houses. The nearby hamlet of Beach comprises a mix of traditional Cotswold houses, cottages and farm buildings, loosely clustered around a junction of narrow country lanes. Both villages have Conservation Areas.

The small hamlet of Lower Hamswell consists of isolated and scattered houses and farms. A number of the isolated farmsteads were originally medieval settlement centres, their building style and layout having been influenced by the formation of the Ashwicke Hall Estate. Other farms and houses nearby are of a variety of different styles, age and size, although most are constructed from Cotswold stone.

The mid-19th century Ashwicke Hall is located on a prominent ridgeline on the eastern edge of the area. Lodges define the main entrances to the estate with the estate boundaries partly defined by stone walls. The house and other buildings, used as a school until 2019, are set within Grade II listed designed parkland and garden, also dating from the 19th century.

The A46 to the west of Cold Ashton and secondary roads along the top of and to the south of Freezing Hill are the only major roads that cross the area. The A420 defines a very small section of the northern boundary to the west of Marshfield. Similarly, the A431 defines a very small length of the south-western boundary. With the exception of the A431, these routes follow upland ridges or descending spurs. Elsewhere, narrow country lanes typically radiate out from

Plateau and Scarp LCT

adjacent villages, largely following high ground or natural contours of the land. There are few east-west routes due to the limitations created by the north-south ridges and deeply incised valleys. The Fosse Way forms a distinctive linear north-south route along the eastern boundary.

A network of public rights of way allow access to the landscape, generally running approximately north to south across the LCA, including three major recreational routes. The Cotswold Way National Trail crosses the area north to south through the Hamswell valley, before continuing beyond the character area towards the Avon Valley. The Limestone Link runs south-east from Cold Ashton into the St Catherine's Brook valley, following the authority boundary eastwards also linking through to the Avon Valley beyond the character area. One of a series of Circular Rides enters this area from the adjacent Marshfield Plateau (LCA 2) and Cotswold Scarp (LCA 4) character areas.

Significant areas of Open Access land at Hanging Hill, Congrove Wood, and on the ridgelines south of Cold Ashton enable further recreational access to the landscape. There is a small area of Registered Common Land at Ringswell Common, to the south-east of Marshfield.

Photo 3: View north-east from Hydes Lane, Cold Ashton towards Marshfield located on high ground above the valley.



Perceptual Influences

Visual Character

The Ashwicke Ridges landscape character area is a varied and complex landscape of plateaux, hilltops, ridges and valleys, with a diverse land cover and few built elements. These features combine to create a dramatic, distinct and in places, remote character. There is a strong contrast between the open views obtained from the upper slopes and hilltops and the enclosure within the valleys.

The hills to the north form a simple, open landscape of arable land use over gentle slopes. Woodland cover is generally limited, so where it does feature, it

Plateau and Scarp LCT

creates texture and focus within the landscape. Further south, the landscape descends into a series of ridges and enclosed sinuous valleys of the St Catherine's Brook, with a diverse patchwork of mixed fields and woodland. This creates a quiet, enclosed and richly textured landscape. The woodland within St Catherine's and Doncombe Brook valleys combine with these valley landforms to produce an enclosed, relatively remote and intimate character.

The open ridgelines above the upper Hamswell Valley and Piple Bottom Valley to the west are large-scale landforms. Freezing Hill is particularly striking with its sweeping, primarily grassed, slopes and row of mature beech trees which form a prominent landmark in views from the east and west.

From Marshfield and Cold Ashton, as well as more open and elevated parts of sections of the A420 and A46 main roads, there are open views southwards of rolling upland agricultural hills, with ground falling steeply from pronounced edges of high ground, into adjacent textured valleys.

From the lanes south of Ashwicke Hall, views south (into Bath and North East Somerset) comprise the dramatic landform of deep valleys with richly textured, mixed woodlands covering the hillsides of St Catherine's Brook valley.

Scattered farms and buildings set within the undulating landform are united in character through the use of Cotswold stone in buildings and boundary walls. The church towers at Cold Ashton and Marshfield (located within adjacent LCA 2: Marshfield Plateau) occupy a prominent location on the upper edge of St. Catherine's Brook valley and form distinctive landmarks in views north from the open plateau and ridges to the south. Other settlement is generally well-integrated as a result of its small-scale and surrounding framework of stone walls and/or vegetation.

Designed parkland and gardens at Ashwicke Hall form a notable landscape feature and provides structure within the locality. The historic field systems and earthworks are locally prominent landform features, often on open steep hillsides, contributing an unusual form and texture to the landscape.

Plateau and Scarp LCT

Transport corridors are generally well-integrated within the landscape, due to the enclosure provided by the undulating landform and surrounding vegetation. Minor rural lanes are generally enclosed by hedgerows, which limit views into the surrounding landscape. The A420 and A46, with associated high volumes of traffic are visually prominent where they follow the crown of open ridgelines.

Photo 4: A designated ‘Quiet Lane’ near Cold Ashton, lined by clipped hedgerows.



Tranquillity and Dark Skies

The LCA experiences high level of tranquillity, particularly in the east away from larger settlements and major transport routes. There are localised areas of lower tranquillity along the A46 and A420 corridors, where high volumes of traffic impact on the otherwise strongly tranquil and rural character. Dark night skies are experienced throughout, with limited light pollution arising from the absence of major settlement.

Visually Important Hillside

The Ashwicke Ridges Visually Important Hillside (VIH) is located within this LCA. It comprises a distinctive and complex area of steep sided ridges and valleys, forming some of the most prominent and dramatic hillsides within South Gloucestershire, and an integral landscape feature and characteristic of the CNL.

Further details are provided in **Annex I: Visually Important Hillside**.

Strategic Viewpoints

One Strategic Viewpoint is located within this LCA at SVP 12: Hanging Hill. It provides a notable view from and allows appreciation of the Cotswold National Landscape and provides a panoramic view that takes in notable landscape features and landmark features across most of South Gloucestershire, extending to the hills of South Wales.

Three further Strategic Viewpoints are located along the LCA boundary and afford views into and across the landscape. They are:

- SVP 18: Freezing Hill: Allows appreciation of the Cotswold National Landscape and provides a notable view across the designated landscape; it provides a panoramic view that takes in notable

Plateau and Scarp LCT

landscape features of the Ashwicke Ridges (including Hanging Hill), the Lower Hamswell valley, Dundry Hill and the Mendip Hills AONB.

- SVP 25: East End, Marshfield: Enables appreciation of the Cotswold National Landscape and provides a panoramic view that takes in notable landscape features of the Ashwicke Ridges (including the Doncombe Brook Valley and Henley Hill) as well as the landmark feature of the Church of St Mary within Marshfield Conservation Area.
- SVP 26: Cold Ashton: Provides a notable view across the Cotswold National Landscape that takes in the notable landscape features of the Ashwicke Ridges (including St Catherine's Brook Valley and Henley Hill), and the Cold Ashton Conservation Area.

Further details are provided in **Annex II: Strategic Viewpoints**.

Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Value Features

- The complex landform of small plateau areas with rounded hills, steep sided ridges, and incised and broad valleys which provide topographical interest and contrast of openness and enclosure in the landscape.
- The strong network of hedgerows and dry stone walls bounding mixed arable and pastoral fields.
- The mosaic of woodland and grassland semi-natural habitats, including ancient woodland and designated sites which provide ecological value.
- Watercourses, spring, pools and ponds providing important habitats and contribute to the visual character of the landscape.
- Small, traditional settlements united in character by their use of Cotswold stone.
- Historic features contributing to the sense of time depth in the landscape, including prehistoric earthworks and tumuli, The Fosse Way Roman Road, medieval field systems, and historic battlefield sites.
- Recreational access to the landscape, provided by the network of footpaths, promoted routes and Open Access land.
- The harmonious relationship between landform, vegetation and settlement, with a strong sense of place which contribute to the special qualities of the CNL.
- The rural character and strong sense of tranquillity with dark night skies resulting from an absence of urban influence and modern development.

The Changing Landscape

The following section sets out the changes and pressures to the Ashwicke Ridges LCA.

Climate Change

- Changes in woodland and tree species composition, with an increase in the prevalence of pests and diseases, such as acute oak decline or sweet chestnut blight, as well as invasive species
- Increases in severe storms could result in wind damage to woodland edges. Ancient woodlands may be particularly susceptible to damage from storms and drought.
- Effects of climate change resulting in wetter and warmer winters, and more frequent hot and dry periods, leading to increased risk of flooding in winter and increasing the risk of drought in summer, affecting river flow rates and impacting on riparian habitats and species.

Climate Emergency and Nature Recovery

- Pressure for renewable energy development within the landscape (as set out in South Gloucestershire's Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-2030). This would likely result in adverse effects on landscape character and visual impact.
- Wind turbines and other vertical built forms would be visible, not just from within the plateau, but potentially from the surrounding wider landscape including from the CNL and from areas that contribute to the setting of the City of Bath World Heritage Site.
- An increase in tree planting is required to contribute towards South Gloucestershire's objective of doubling tree cover by 2030, in accordance with the Forest of Avon's Tree and Woodland Strategy

Plateau and Scarp LCT

[See reference 4] and proposed woodland strategic network, which forms part of the West of England's Nature Recovery Network. This may change the open character of the landscape and its expansive views.

- 'The Retreat' community woodland on Marshfield Lane near Beach is a positive example of woodland planting and management, leased and managed by the Forest of Avon Trust to provide outdoor learning opportunities and enable access to nature.

Land use and cover

- 'Horsiculture' and sometimes alpaca keeping are more recent trends which, in places, have led to subdivision of fields and/or the loss or erosion of hedgerows. The cumulative effect of this and the associated stables, access tracks, exercise areas, jumps and floodlighting, can result in a marked change in landscape character and disrupt habitat value.
- Many of the landscape's constituent parts are vulnerable to less active management, with evidence present of limited hedge laying, poor condition of some stone walls and ageing tree/woodland structure without measures for replacement.

Development

- Adjacent to the A420 and A46, where traffic is particularly visually and audibly intrusive, rural landscape characteristics and tranquillity of the area have been diminished and eroded.
- Recreational pressure on the landscape, particularly on promoted routes, and at scenic viewpoints and popular attractions.

Guidance

These guidelines recommend how the landscape can be managed to ensure future change respects the local character and should be read in conjunction with the objectives of the Cotswold AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines [See reference 5], as well as the overarching management strategy objectives of the South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment, as set out in Chapter 4.

Landscape Strategy

Landscape Management

- Maintain and enhance the highly distinctive, rural and tranquil characteristics of the complex valleys, hills, ridges and skylines, in particular the valleys to the south of Marshfield (e.g. valleys of Doncombe Brook, Catherine's Brook, Lam Brook and Pipeley Bottom).
- Restore, conserve and manage the dry stone wall network, hedgerow and woodland framework and pattern, particularly on the visually prominent hillsides, and encourage the restoration of other characteristic, historic and traditional landscape features.
- Limit land use change for equestrian activities where this would affect the character of the landscape, including from subdivision by electrified/post and rail fences, overgrazing, introduction of hardstanding, tracks, buildings and floodlighting.
- Conserve the historic landscape features including the strip lynchet field systems south of Cold Ashton, prehistoric earthworks, and other associated features that contribute to the character and interest of the area.
- Encourage small-scale mixed farming and promote the integration of woodlands on farms.

Plateau and Scarp LCT

- Preserve and enhance the landscape setting of Upton Cheyney, and Beach Conservation Areas, together with key views towards them and looking out from them.
- Conserve the rural character of the road network, protecting verges, hedges, and stone walls. Avoid widening or creation of new roads, particularly on the prominent mid and upper slopes.

Ecology/Biodiversity Management

- Conserve and enhance the biodiversity value of the diverse mosaic of habitats, including ancient woodland, calcareous and neutral grassland, in line with the WENP Nature Recovery Network grassland and woodland strategic networks.
- Support the creation of new wildflower habitats along B-lines (identified by Buglife) within the LCA to contribute to the national pollinator network.
- Enhance the quality of watercourses and riparian habitats, for example through riparian woodland planting using native species such as willow, creating buffer zones, and through the promotion of low intensity grazing.
- Ensure new woodland planting is appropriately sited, avoiding planting on important grassland habitats. Prioritise new planting where woodland has been lost and encourage natural regeneration, particularly in proximity to ancient woodlands. Extend and link existing woodlands rather than creating new stand-alone woods, in line with the CNL Landscape Strategy and Guidelines.
- Conserve and enhance existing populations of (calcareous and neutral) grassland habitats ensuring there is no net loss of biodiversity. Control scrub and create nesting opportunities for farmland birds and bat habitat.

Development management

Plateau and Scarp LCT

- Ensure that new development is sensitively located, and where necessary screened from the wider landscape to avoid eroding rural character of the character area, part of which contributes to the setting to the Bath World Heritage Site.
- Protect the rural character of the area including the retention of tranquillity and dark skies.
- Maintain the settlement pattern and character of isolated traditional farmsteads and oppose proposals that will be incongruous with the scale of the landscape.
- Promote the use of local building stone and building styles, such as locally sourced Cotswold stone of the appropriate colour and texture.
- Consideration should be given to the location and design of highway signage and lighting on transport corridors, particularly on high ground.
- Protect the open, undeveloped slopes of valleys, key views across and along them (including from the A46).
- Conserve the rural skylines of the Ashwicke Ridges and open upland hills, avoiding vertical elements that could impact on the particular characteristics of the wider landscape character area, including the setting of the Bath World Heritage Site.
- New development should use locally appropriate materials such as locally sourced Cotswold stone of the appropriate colour and texture that respects and enhances local distinctiveness and the traditional character of the area.

LCA 4: Cotswold Scarp

The Cotswold Scarp landscape character area (LCA) is a dramatic, steeply sloping, landform feature. It's distinct topography and land cover of farmland, woodland and parkland provide a rural backcloth to adjacent lower-lying landscapes.

Plateau and Scarp LCT

Photo 1: Dyrham Park house and parkland is situated on the Cotswold Scarp, with extensive views west across South Gloucestershire from the park.

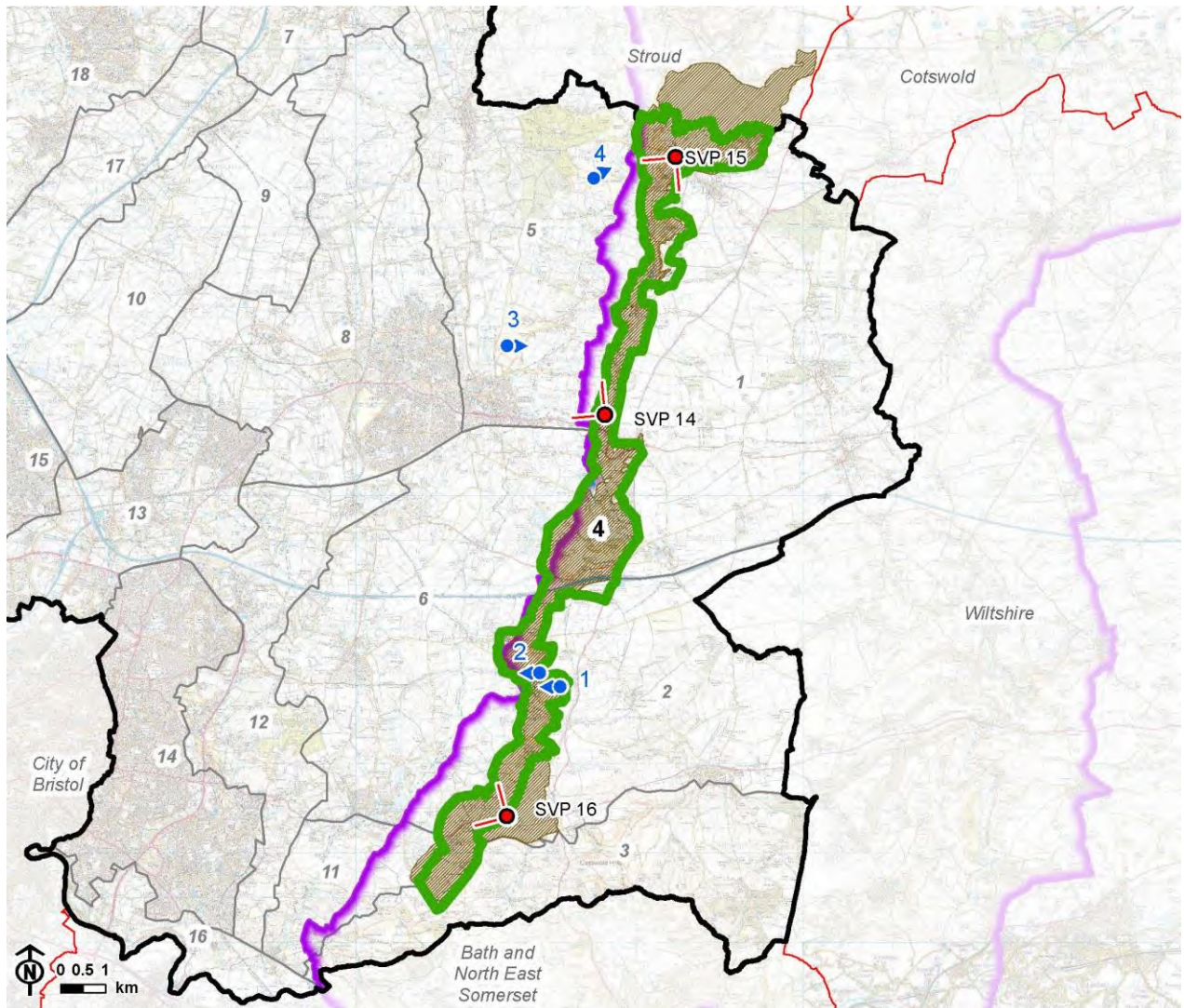


Location









The Cotswold Scarp LCA is located in the east of South Gloucestershire and forms a distinct and prominent landform running approximately north to south . It defines the western edge of the Cotswolds National Landscape , within which the entire LCA is included. The eastern boundary of the character area is marked by the sudden change in slope between the steeply rising scarp face and the open upland and flatter plateau/dip slope landscape to the east. The western boundary marks the transition between the scarp slope and the lower-lying, gently undulating broad ridge and valleys to the west. The South Gloucestershire Authority boundary forms the northern edge of the character area, although the landform continues beyond this boundary. The southern boundary of the LCA follows the base of Freezing Hill, within a saddle landform dividing the valley to the east, marking the change to the more undulating form of the Ashwicke Ridges (LCA 3) and the more gently sloping land to the west, towards the Golden Valley (LCA 11).

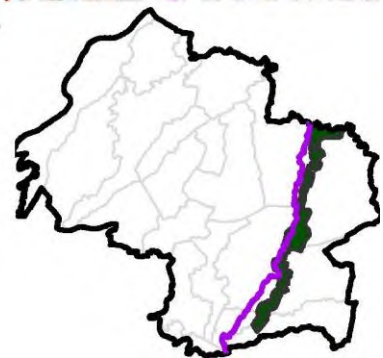
Plateau and Scarp LCT

Figure 1.11: Location and Landscape context of LCA 4: Cotswold Scarp



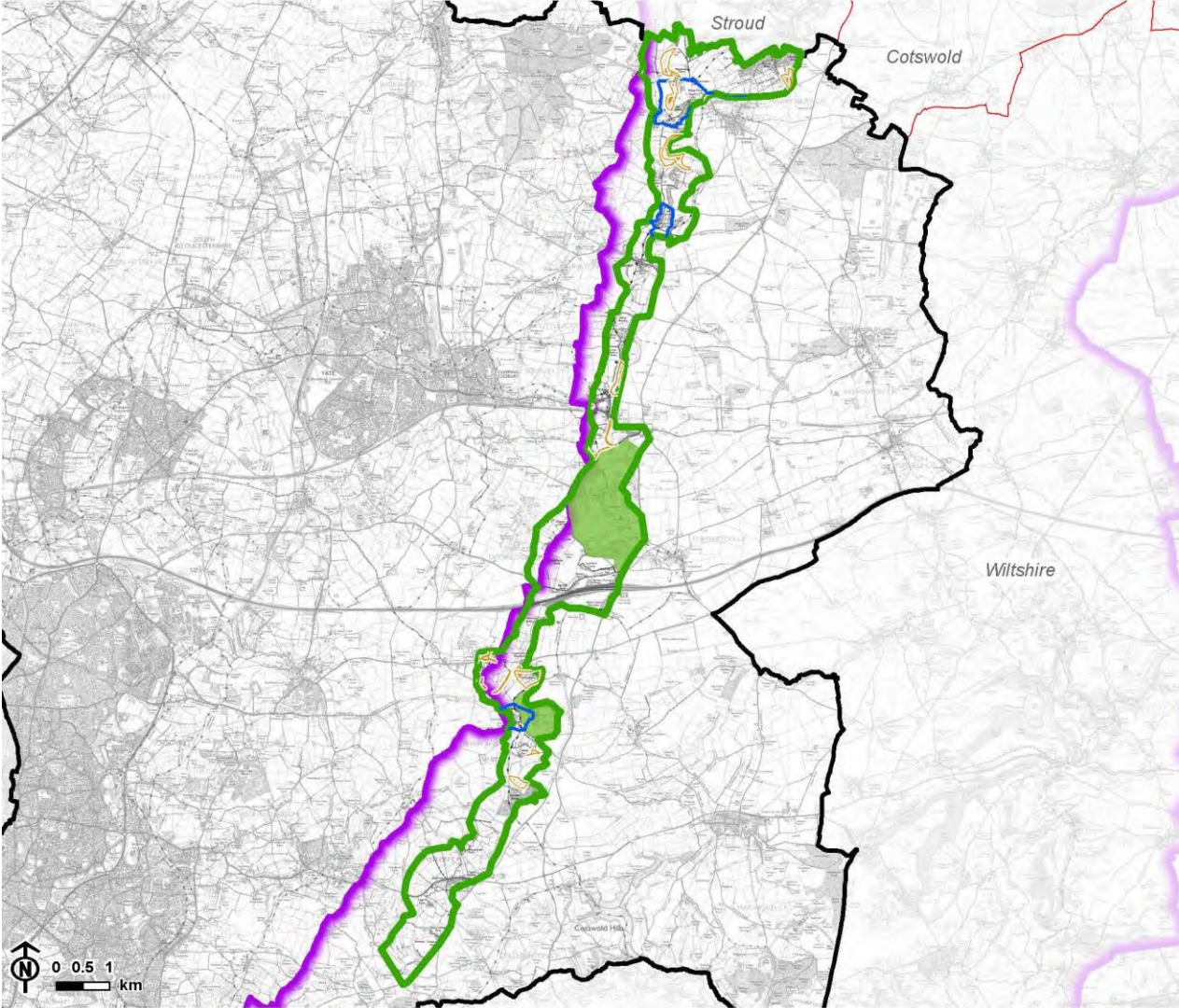
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-  River
-  Photograph location and direction
-  Strategic viewpoint and angle



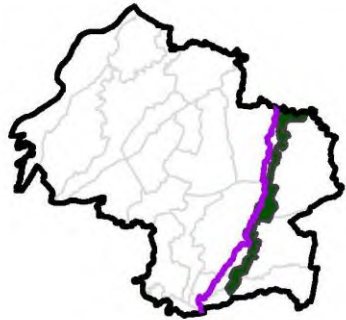
Plateau and Scarp LCT

Figure 1.12: Development and Heritage context of LCA 4: Cotswold Scarp



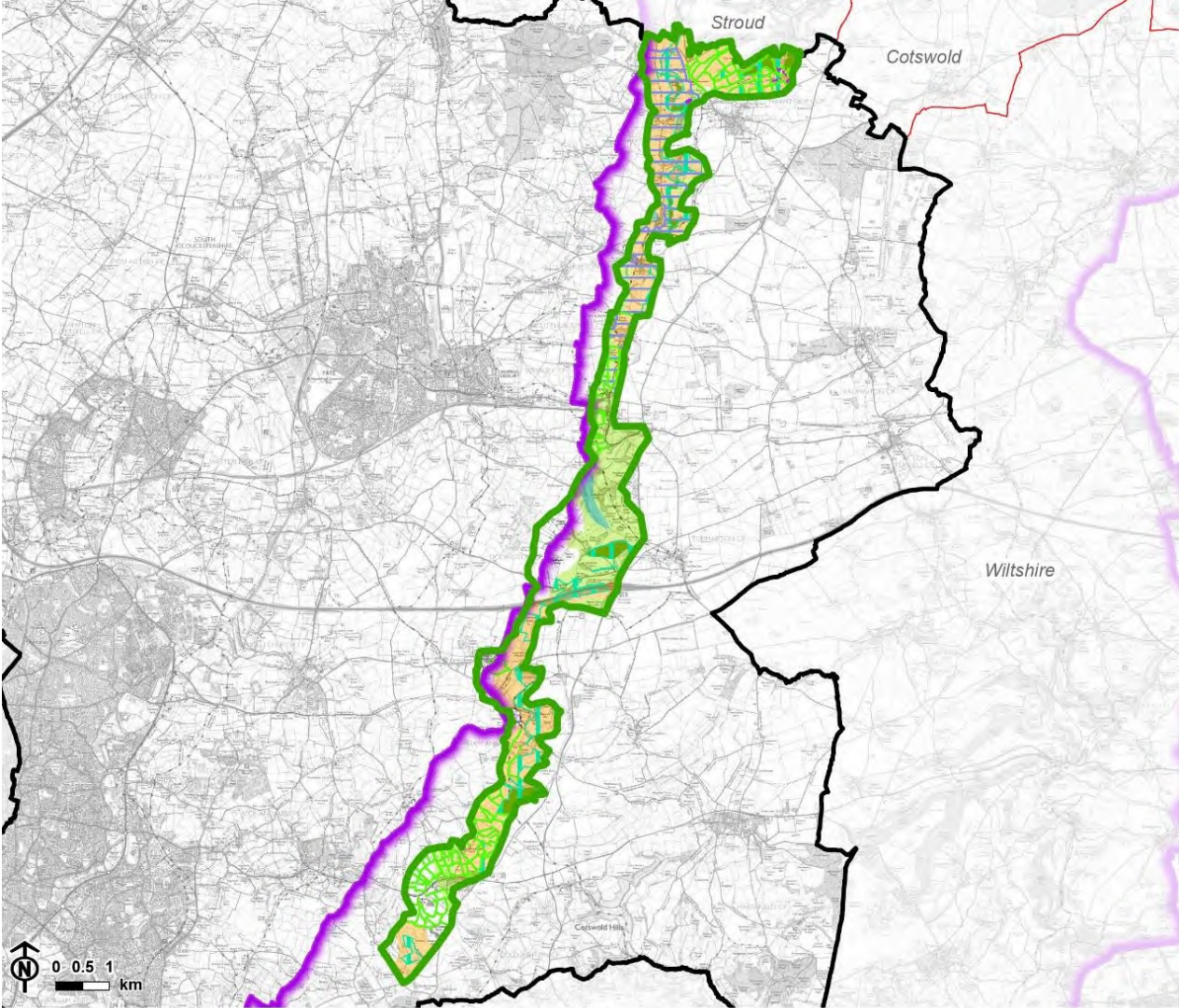
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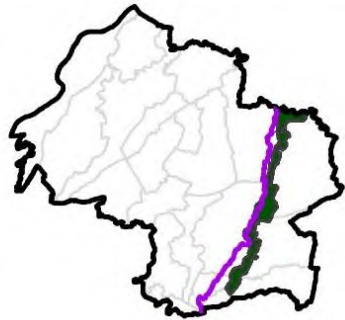
Plateau and Scarp LCT

Figure 1.13: Ecology and Biodiversity context of LCA 4: Cotswold Scarp



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|  LCA 4: Cotswold Scarp |  Regionally Important Geological Site |
|  Council boundary |  Grassland Strategic Network |
|  Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary |  Wetland Strategic Network |
|  Site of Special Scientific Interest |  Woodland Strategic Network |
|  Site of Nature Conservation Interest |  Important hedgerow |
|  Ancient woodland | |



Landscape Description

Key Characteristics

- Large-scale, steeply sloping and folded scarp landform, falling from the Cotswold Plateau westwards to lower vales.
- A largely undisturbed landscape with dramatic and panoramic views to the west, forming a highly prominent rural backcloth to adjacent lower-lying landscapes.
- A diverse land cover of small, irregular pasture fields and some regular arable fields, rough grassland, and a golf course.
- Fields are defined by thick clipped hedges, some laid, often intermittent and supplemented with fences, with limited Cotswold stone wall field boundaries. These provide some connectivity between habitats. Calcareous grassland provides an important habitat, supporting a diverse and species-rich flora.
- Undisturbed grassland provides nesting opportunities in the spring and foraging potential in the winter for farmland birds including Amber and Red listed species such as Skylark.
- Trees and hedgerows are important landscape features. Deciduous woodland (including ancient woodland) and small areas of scrub are generally associated either with valley landforms, or follow the contours along the upper scarp slopes.
- Historic manor houses in open parkland settings are prominently situated on the scarp to take advantage of the views.
- Numerous nucleated spring-line villages nestle within the landform along the toe of the scarp and often include churches and large houses.
- Sunken lanes climb the scarp, enclosed by high banks, hedgerows or trees.

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- Enclosed valleys contrast with expansive views from high points on the scarp, including from key viewpoints at Tog Hill, Dyrham Park, Hanging Hill and Freezing Hill. Views from and to the Cotswold escarpment are identified as a special quality of the CNL.

Natural Influences

Geology, Landform and Hydrology

The Cotswold Scarp is formed of mixed underlying geology, including Middle Jurassic Limestone overlying Lower Jurassic Sandstone and Lias Clays which slope down from the plateau to the east. The soils are typically Brown Earths and Loam over Clay, forming a distinctive and fertile strip of land. The large-scale, generally steeply sloping landform varies from approximately 200m AOD at its highest point in the east, falling westwards to a height of approximately 100m AOD. Generally, the scarp gradient and aspect varies only slightly along its length. Sections of consistently uniform concave scarp are interspersed with small-scale valleys, several of which are dry. These have created both simple valley forms and a more complex deeply folded scarp, with convex upper slopes, knolls, rounded hills, promontories and descending broad spurs. The Cotswold scarp forms Visually Important Hillside 8 (see Annex I: Visually Important Hillside).

The scarp crest defines a watershed within South Gloucestershire with many springs rising along the scarp edge, which flow westwards into the Little Avon River, River Frome and River Boyd, and eventually to the Severn Estuary.

The hydrological and geological characteristics of the scarp can be split into three sections: to the north between Hawkesbury and Horton, the scarp is typically concave with deeply incised valleys. Springs and streams flow generally westwards from these valleys, feeding the Little River Avon. Further south (within Dodington Park), the River Frome has formed a prominent valley feature which erodes some way into the scarp. The north-west facing valley

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becomes a shallow 'U'- shaped valley with convex upper slopes creating an undulating profile, characteristically different from the main slope. To the south of this area, west-facing folds have been formed by tributaries of the River Boyd, which flow south-westwards through the adjacent Pucklechurch Ridge character area (LCA 6). This has formed a convex scarp with broad rounded spurs extending into the landscape below. At the southern boundary of the LCA, a saddle between Freezing Hill and Hanging Hill forms a prominent break in the Cotswold Scarp. Here, Freezing Hill descends steeply in a concave slope.

Land Cover

The steeply sloping landform is typically covered with small, irregular shaped pastoral fields, with rough grassland along the steepest sections. Some large, regular shaped arable fields extend beyond the base and crest of the slope.

The strong hedgerow framework is an important feature along the scarp. Hedgerows generally follow the contours of the landform and flow down the scarp (perpendicular to the contours). Fields are divided by a mix of thick clipped or laid hedges, some overgrown, sometimes supplemented with post and rail fencing. Field boundaries along the crest of the scarp are generally laid or clipped hedgerows. Some Cotswold stone walls are present, particularly to the south where they extend eastwards from the scarp and onto the plateau/dip slope of the adjacent character area.

In the north, woodland cover is typically a mix of large, irregular shaped belts of deciduous woodland which generally follow the upper contours of the slope. Small areas of woodland and scrub are found on the lower slopes.

Towards the centre and the south of the LCA, woodland cover is typically more sparse, with the exception of large areas within Dodington Park and at Dyrham Wood. Smaller woodlands and copses are scattered amongst the mix of open rolling grassland and pasture fields... In a few locations, such as immediately north of the M4, open rough grassland with limited hedgerow or tree cover extends westwards into the lower vale.

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A stand of mature beech trees along the scarp edge at Freezing Hill in the south (located along the boundary with adjacent character area (LCA 3) forms a highly distinctive landmark which is visible from a wide area within South Gloucestershire and beyond.

On the lower slopes of the scarp part of the grounds of Tracy Park golf course extend from the west (LCA 11), comprising landscaped fairways, putting greens and formal tree planting.

Along the scarp there are a number of estates with historic houses and associated parkland which impart a distinctive character along the scarp and contrast with the agricultural and wooded landscape pattern.

Photo 2: View south-west from Dyrham Park along the scarp slope towards Hanging Hill



Biodiversity

The mosaic of grassland, woodland, arable and pastoral farmland, water courses and framework of hedges and dry stone walls makes the Cotswold Scarp an important habitat for a diverse range of species.

Ancient woodland represents approximately half of the total woodland within this character area (approximately 80 hectares). Deciduous woodland exists across the landscape mainly as small scattered woodlands and copses. Approximately half of these ancient woodlands are designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) in recognition of their importance for flora and fauna. Key species likely to be associated with the ancient woodland include bats and dormice both of which are present across the district and are European protected species with associated Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP). Other protected species, such as badgers and ground-nesting birds are also likely to be present. Hedgerows and scattered trees provide ecological corridors between the areas of farmed land, woodland and grassland. Veteran trees are an important landscape feature within parkland and an important habitat for lichens and invertebrates.

Fifteen sites within the LCA are designated as SNCIs for their calcareous and neutral grassland habitats, including species-rich grassland. Upton Coombe is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designated for its species-rich calcareous grassland. This diverse habitat supports a range of invertebrates and ant hills are a regular feature. Dyrham Park is also designated as an SNCI for the parkland habitat present at the 100 hectare site.

Hawkesbury Quarry SSSI is designated for its geological significance as one of the few Inferior Oolite sections in the South Cotswolds, forming a vital link between the northern Cotswolds and the fossil-bearing limestone found further south.

The numerous springs and their resultant watercourses support a diverse range of species, from aquatic macro- invertebrates to fish and otters. Ponds and

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pools within the area support amphibians such as great crested newts (a European Protected Species).

Although dry stone walls are less prevalent in this area compared with the adjacent Badminton and Marshfield Plateaus (LCAs 1 and 2 respectively), these features are utilised by a diverse range of species from invertebrates to reptiles and amphibians for commuting, foraging and as a refuge.

Much of the land use within the area is arable farmland which provides habitat and a food source for many species of ground nesting farmland birds including birds which have been listed by BirdLife International as being on the red list of globally threatened species.

South Gloucestershire Strategic Green Infrastructure (GI) Corridor E (Hawkesbury-Old Sodbury-Upton Cheyney (*Cotswold Scarp*) extends along the length of this LCA, important for the mosaic of strategic woodland and grassland habitats on the scarp slope.

Cultural Influences

Land Use and Time Depth

Prehistoric settlement and land use on the Cotswold Scarp is indicated by the presence of numerous Neolithic and Bronze Age barrows scattered along the scarp. Other notable features include visually prominent strip lynchet field patterns at Hawkesbury Knoll and Hinton Hill Fort (also a Scheduled Monument). Other Scheduled Monuments include Horton Camp and Sodbury Hillfort.

Historic estates with parklands are a notable characteristic of this LCA, exerting localised influence on the character of the scarp. From north to south these include:

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- Horton Court (locally listed) is nestled within a prominent fold within the scarp, comprising stone estate walls, fishponds and woodland. It extends into the lower vale to the west, in the adjoining character area.
- Little Sodbury Manor includes fishponds and a large area of earthworks, evident as pillow mounds.
- Dodington House and parkland (a Grade II* Registered Historic Park) includes open undulating grassland and arable fields, with large woodland plantations, mature specimen trees, and lakes.
- Dyrham Park (a Grade II* Registered Historic Park) incorporates a medieval deer park and 18th century house set within mature woodland, with grounds designed by Humphrey Repton and Charles Harcourt Masters amongst others including planted avenues, woodland belts and clumps and scattered mature ornamental trees and native tree specimens. A formal garden lies to the west of the house. The parkland extends eastwards beyond the scarp into adjacent LCA 2: Marshfield Plateau.

Settlement and Infrastructure

The settlement pattern of the Cotswold Scarp comprises scattered, nucleated villages, hamlets and farms, united through their use of Cotswold stone as a building material. Many of the villages are spring-line settlements, located along the lower slopes of the scarp, with church towers commonly forming local landmarks. The villages comprise, from north to south, Hawkesbury, Horton, Little Sodbury, Old Sodbury, Dodington, Hinton and Dyrham, all of which include churches, except Hinton and Horton, where the church is located at Horton Court. Hawkesbury, Horton and Dyrham are defined and united by their Cotswold Scarp setting, historic layout, and use of Cotswold stone, qualities recognised through their designation as Conservation Areas.

The pattern and form of the historic settlements and country lanes has been influenced by landform and was closely related to surrounding rural agricultural practices. Settlements, typically set near the toe or nestled within folds of the

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scarp, are nucleated, small-scale and well-integrated, given the surrounding mature framework setting of hedgerows, trees and woodland and common use of Cotswold stone in building construction.

A number of major roads ascend the scarp, including the M4, A420, A432 and B4465. Several small sunken lanes enclosed by high banks, hedgerows or mature trees, generally follow folds and valley formations within the landform, with the largest concentration of lanes in the north of the LCA.

The A46 and A420 are ridgeway roads, historically taking the dry and relatively safer high ground. The M4 is mainly in cutting, incorporating large-scale re-profiling within an existing valley.

A network of public rights of way traverse the scarp slope, linking adjacent low-lying vale landscapes to the elevated plateau. The Cotswold Way national trail follows a significant length of the LCA along the toe, flank and crest of the scarp, as well as within the plateau, ascending the scarp in several locations. The path passes along the crest of the scarp between Hawkesbury to Horton and between Dodington Park and Dyrham Park to the south. The Circular Ride network crosses and passes along the scarp at several locations, linking with the larger network of public rights of way.

There are several small areas of open access land across the scarp slope including a larger area at Dyrham. Small linear areas of Registered Common Land are associated with historic settlements as at Hinton Common and Sodbury Commons.

Photo 3: The village of Old Sodbury located along the mid-slope of the scarp. The tower of St Johns Church is a locally-prominent landmark.



Perceptual Influences

Visual Character

The Cotswold Scarp landscape character area is a prominent landform feature forming a highly visible and distinctive backcloth in views from the lowland vales and ridges to the west. It is regionally prominent, being visible from as far away as South Wales. The top of the scarp provides the highest vantage point from within South Gloucestershire and thus allows extensive panoramic views westwards. Its distinct form defines a marked change in character from the plateau/dip slope landscape to the east and the lower undulating ridges and vales to the west.

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The scarp comprises a diverse cover of pasture, rough grassland, hedges and woodland, combined with historic parklands and small nucleated settlements. These elements create a mixture of both bold, simple landscape forms and a more intricate textured landscape.

In places the extensive and prominent tree cover and hedgerow pattern visually link the various land uses. The largely linear form of woodland and hedgerow pattern complements the scarp by following the slope contours. Hedgerows often follow the slope gradient visually emphasising the intricacies and folds in the scarp, contributing to a strong and harmonious landscape framework. Elsewhere, open grass hillsides, with small, isolated tree clumps or scrub reveal the scarp's slope profile and exposed ridgeline.

The single line of mature beech trees along the ridgeline of Freezing Hill on the boundary to the south forms a distinctive landmark on the skyline visible both locally and in long-distance views from the west and east.

The historic designed parklands of Dodington House and Dyrham Park strongly influence the character of parts of the scarp. Both have a mature framework of woodland, copses, linear tree belts, scattered specimen trees and avenues (the latter at Dyrham Park) within open grassland. This planting provides structure and enclosure within pronounced natural landforms, which comprise a shallow valley, stream and lake (forming the headwaters of the River Frome) at Dodington House, and a curving 'bowl' landform at Dyrham Park. The large stately houses of both estates are visually prominent within their open parkland setting. However, these areas of parkland, their houses and associated buildings, generally have little wider influence beyond their boundaries, due to the surrounding large-scale landform and strong tree and woodland framework.

The golf course at Tracy Park (largely in adjacent LCA 11) introduces a highly managed pattern and texture within an existing agricultural landscape of open fields and hedgerows. Tree planting around the golf course helps to reduce its visual prominence in views from the scarp and lower ground to the west.

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The degree of enclosure varies considerably along the scarp. Landform, elevation, aspect, woodland and trees define the extent and focus of views both within and beyond the area. View characteristics vary between the heavily enclosed woodland in deeply incised valleys, more open historic parks, to the exposed rough grassland bluffs protruding beyond the scarp, which allow wide panoramic views over considerable distances. In particular important view points from the scarp include Dyrham Deer Park, Old Sodbury Church, the Somerset Monument and, Toghill picnic site together with sections of the Cotswold Way permit expansive views of the vale landscape below and as far as Wales in the distance.

Church towers form distinctive local landmarks, and The Somerset Monument (tower), to the north of Hawkesbury, is a visually prominent and distinctive landmark featuring in many views, not only from the scarp and plateau, but from the lower vales and valleys to the west. Horton Court to the north is a large house, prominent on the scarp, framed by woodland and visible from the vale to the west. Similarly, the pillow mound earthworks north of Horton Camp are also clearly visible from within local views below the scarp and along the top of the scarp from the A46, where the road passes close by.

The M4 cutting, through an existing valley in the scarp is a large, more uniform slope than the natural slope profile. The motorway rises up the scarp with the high traffic volumes a visible feature within distant western views and an audible feature locally. The motorway, on approaching the foot of the scarp, is elevated on a substantial embankment and is visually prominent in local views from the scarp and the adjacent character area to the west. The surrounding dense vegetation and undulating landscape along the scarp however limits this impact on more distant views along the scarp itself.

Overhead powerlines set on pylons cross the scarp at two locations, north of Little Sodbury and south of the M4, the latter being more noticeable due to the more open surrounding landscape which accentuates the prominence of the pylons on the scarp slope. A single 66-metre wind turbine at Hinton is located in a prominent location at the edge of the scarp and forms a distinctive skyline feature in views from surrounding lower-lying landscapes to the south

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Photo 4: The Cotswold Scarp seen from Hawkesbury Common, with the Somerset Monument forming a prominent vertical feature on the skyline



Tranquillity and Dark Skies

A rural landscape with some tranquil areas. The distant sound of traffic can be heard across much of the LCA, although there are some areas of relatively higher tranquillity, particularly within the small valleys and within areas of enclosure within the wooded parklands.

The LCA generally experiences dark night skies, with some localised brighter areas around the Tormarton interchange and M4 motorway.

Visually Important Hillsides

The Cotswold Scarp itself is a Visually Important Hillside located within this LCA. It is a visually prominent escarpment on the edge of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) which defines a marked change in character from the considerably lower-lying undulating ridges and vales to the west, and the broader plateau/dip slope landscape to the east.

Further details are provided in **Annex I: Visually Important Hillsides**.

Strategic Viewpoints

Two Strategic Viewpoints are located within this LCA, they are:

- SVP 14: Old Sodbury Churchyard: Provides a panoramic view that takes in the notable landscape features of the Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley, the Cotswold Scarp, the historic parkland associated with Dodington House and the hills of South Wales, and the landmark features of St John the Baptist Church, the Tyndale Monument and the Severn Bridge.

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- SVP 15: Hawkesbury Monument: Provides a panoramic view that takes in the notable landscape features of the levels, Severn Estuary and hills of the Wye Valley and South Wales, and the landmark features of the Severn Bridge, the Prince of Wales Bridge, Oldbury Power Station and Berkley Power Station.

A further three Strategic Viewpoints are located along the eastern boundary and represent views experienced from the scarp. They are:

- SVP 16: Tog Hill: provides a panoramic view west from the edge of the Cotswold scarp that takes in notable landscape features and landmark features across most of South Gloucestershire, extending to the hills of South Wales.
- SVP 17: Dyrham Park: A designed viewpoint from a Registered Park and Garden and provides a panoramic view west, taking in notable landscape and landmark features across South Gloucestershire, extending to the hills of South Wales, Dundry Hill and the Mendip Hills AONB.
- SVP 18 Freezing Hill provides a panoramic view that takes in notable landscape features of the Ashwicke Ridges (including Hanging Hill), the Lower Hamswell valley, Dundry Hill and the Mendip Hills AONB.

Further details are provided in **Annex II: Strategic Viewpoints**.

Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Valued Features

- Visually distinctive scarp landform marking the edge of the Cotswold plateau.
- Small-scale irregular pasture fields enclosed by hedgerows and dry stone walls which provide a strong landscape pattern.
- Important calcareous grassland habitats which support a diverse and species-rich flora.
- Areas of deciduous woodland, including ancient woodland, some of which are also SNCIs are valued landscape feature and ecologically important.
- Estate parklands including at Dodington Hall, Horton Court, and Dyrham Park create locally distinctive historic landscape.
- Extensive panoramic views within and from the landscape character area, including to landmark features at Hawkesbury and Tyndale Monuments as well as the Severn Bridges in longer views.
- Nucleated spring-line villages nestled along the toe of the scarp, with stone square church towers forming distinctive local landmarks in views towards and along the scarp.
- Recreational value provided by the Cotswold Way National Trail which traverses much of length of the scarp, as well as areas of open access land which enable further recreational access to the landscape.
- The rural character and sense of tranquillity, with dark night skies across much of the area.

The Changing Landscape

The following section sets out the changes and pressures to the Cotswold Scarp LCA.

Climate Change

- Potential changes in woodland and tree species composition, with an increase in pests and diseases, such as acute oak decline or sweet chestnut blight.
- Increases in severe storms could result in wind damage to woodland edges. Ancient woodlands may be particularly susceptible to damage from storms and drought.

Climate Emergency and Nature Recovery

- Pressure to locate renewable energy developments within the South Gloucestershire landscape to contribute towards maximising the generation of renewable energy (as set out in South Gloucestershire's Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-2030). This would likely result in adverse effects on landscape character and visual impact.
- An increase in tree planting is required to contribute towards South Gloucestershire's objective of doubling tree cover by 2030, and in accordance with the proposed woodland strategic network which forms part of the West of England's Nature Recovery Network. This may include the establishment of new native woodlands in the 'Main Line Gap' - linking woodlands on the Badminton Estate to those at the Dodington Estate (within LCA 4), in the 'Lower Woods Gap' linking the Lower Woods complex with woodland on the escarpment and valleys beyond, and in the 'Tormarton Gap' consolidating a woodland corridor between Dyrham Park to Dodington, as set out in the Forest of Avon's Tree and Woodland Strategy. This may change the open character of the landscape and its expansive views.

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- Landscape restoration and management continues to make a positive contribution at Dyrham Park, including avenue planting and woodland areas alongside the A46, on the park's eastern boundary and restoration of boundary walls. New tree planting and restoration of walls is also evident at Dodington Park. Such restoration work will contribute to strengthening the landscape framework, biodiversity value, and contribution to climate change.

Land Use and Cover

- The parkland estates at Dodington House and Dyrham Park influence land use and management and therefore character, along sections of the scarp. Dodington Park includes some arable land use, enclosed by fences following the removal of hedgerows. Whilst this open landscape (with mature trees and woodland framework) is a typical characteristic of parkland, the colour and texture of this land use is subtly different to traditional pasture. Further, or wider land use changes could therefore potentially erode the typical parkland character.
- The intactness of the key components of the landscape is typically better in the north, although outside Dodington and Dyrham. However, much of the existing framework of hedgerows and woodland lacks consistent management. Sporadic hedges, some becoming overgrown, or replaced with timber fencing, are evident. The decline of traditional management practices, such as laying hedges, is also a widespread trend. These features are particularly important to the distinctiveness of the area, due to the elevated aspect of the scarp, which is highly visible from the adjacent character areas to the west. Their loss or decline would therefore result in the erosion of the character of the area. This would also impact on biodiversity value, including loss of connectivity between habitats.
- The mature tree structure has a general lack of juvenile trees to sustain succession and hence the woodland framework in the longer term. The landmark trees at Freezing Hill similarly, presently have no juvenile succession planting.

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- Any changes in land use, particularly grazing and arable practices, are likely to change the visual texture of fields and existing scrub pattern with related impacts on habitat value and species. Pressure for horse keeping is also affecting the character of some areas.
- There are few Cotswold stone wall field boundaries within the area, but where these are present they typically occupy an area of landscape transition between the scarp and adjacent plateau/dip slope to the east. Here, they form a strong framework feature, although condition is variable. While some of these features are in decline with a resultant impact on the character of the landscape including its biodiversity value, others have been restored.
- The extent of views are often influenced by mature vegetation and its degree of management. For example, the panoramic view once obtained from Tog Hill picnic site is becoming curtailed by the growth of self-seeded trees. Without management, more of this view, and others within the character area, will be obscured in time.

Development

- The consistent use of Cotswold stone for buildings and other structures, including boundary walls is a key characteristic of the built environment. Where reconstituted stone has been used, the building form, appearance and weathering qualities integrate less well, resulting in an erosion of the distinctiveness and character of the area.
- The elevated ground of the scarp makes this character area and its features particularly visible within local and distant views, particularly from the lower-lying vale landscapes to the west. The variety in landscape framework produces both enclosed and open character, offering numerous vantage points across the area and adjacent landscapes. These characteristics make this character area particularly visually sensitive to change, both viewed from within this and across the adjacent character area to the west. Similarly, certain types of change within this character area could have a wide visual impact.

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- Features which visually disturb the skyline or cause noticeable change to the physical landform or landscape framework (including wind turbines and solar arrays), have the potential to erode the intrinsic characteristics and distinctiveness of the area and its role as a backcloth to many views from the west.

Guidance

These guidelines recommend how the landscape can be managed to ensure future change respects the local character and should be read in conjunction with the objectives of the Cotswold AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines [See reference 6] as well as the overarching management strategy objectives of the South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment, as set out in Chapter 4.

Landscape Strategy

Landscape Management

- Protect key views to and from the escarpment and maintain its rural character both in local views and as a backcloth to views across adjacent character areas to the west, including views from the A46.
- Avoid development, or new woodland planting, that may restrict or obscure views to the upper scarp slopes and distinctive features such as folly towers and hill forts.
- Ensure new woodlands respond to the scale and form of the existing escarpment woodlands; retain the irregular form of woodland and its relationship to landform and interlocking patterns with hedgerows. Extend and link existing woodlands in preference of creating new stand-alone woodland, where possible.
- Securing succession planting for veteran trees, such as the distinctive line of Beech trees at Freezing Hill.
- Restore, conserve and manage the dry stone wall and/or hedgerow and woodland framework and pattern in a manner that reinforces their landscape pattern and biodiversity value and as appropriate to the local landscape.

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- Retain and repair Cotswold stone walls, which are an intrinsic feature of this LCA. For example, the stone walls around Dodington have been repaired recently and make a valuable contribution to local character.
- Avoid the introduction of features and land uses that can harm landscape character and biodiversity, including uncharacteristic planting and field boundaries, the subdivision of fields by electrified and post and rail fences, as well as the degradation of the sward by overgrazing.
- Respect and conserve the historic landscapes, field systems around Dyrham and Hinton, earthworks and other associated features that contribute to the character and interest of the area.
- Support the ongoing active management of parkland at Horton Court, Dyrham Park and Dodington House, including preservation of its historic character, fabric and features. Planting associated with designed landscapes should use species characteristic of the historic landscape. Ensure new planting does not damage archaeological features or their setting.
- Preserve and enhance the landscape setting of Hawkesbury, Horton, and Dyrham Conservation Areas, together with key views towards and from them. Also, protect the remaining rural, open approaches into Hawkesbury Upton village.
- Protect and enhance the notable views towards and from the Somerset Monument at Hawkesbury, and Grade II* registered parks and gardens of Dyrham park and Dodington Park.

Ecology/Biodiversity Management

- Ensure the grassland corridor along the scarp remains intact and that woodland creation does not result in the loss of permanent pasture or unimproved grassland, but instead is designed to extend the mosaic of grassland and woodland.
- Ensure new woodland planting uses native species and is appropriately located, in line with The Forest of Avon Plan Tree and Woodland Strategy and Forestry England's 'right tree, right place' guidance.

Development Management

- Conserve the rural Cotswold skyline, avoiding vertical elements and lighting that could impact on the particular characteristics and natural beauty of the wider landscape character area and also on views across the character areas to the west.
- Ensure that any new development and structures are sensitively located avoid the need for earthworks that disrupt the landform, and where necessary screened from the wider landscape to avoid eroding the rural character of the locality.
- Any new vertical development should avoid dominating, or visually competing with, other landmark landscape features or heritage assets in the character area.
- Protect the rural and tranquil character of the landscape by avoiding intrusive lighting and structures, and by controlling the introduction of new sources of noise. Dark skies should be preserved.
- Protect the nucleated settlement pattern, including the network of sunken lanes that follow the folds and valleys, particularly in the north of the LCA.
- New development including buildings and other structures should use locally appropriate materials such as locally sourced Cotswold stone of the appropriate colour and texture that respect and enhances local distinctiveness and the traditional character of the area.
- Ensure that new development does not harm the character, significance or setting of the historic designed parklands and gardens associated with Horton Court, Dyrham Park and Dodington House.
- Ensure that any new renewable energy developments including wind turbines and solar arrays are sensitively designed and sited, avoiding prominent slopes and ridgelines. Utilise natural undulations and new or existing vegetation to provide visual screening.

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