



Area 13

Frome Valley



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Key

↖14 Photograph viewpoints

▨ Core strategy proposed new neighbourhood and Local Plan allocated land

Scale: not to scale

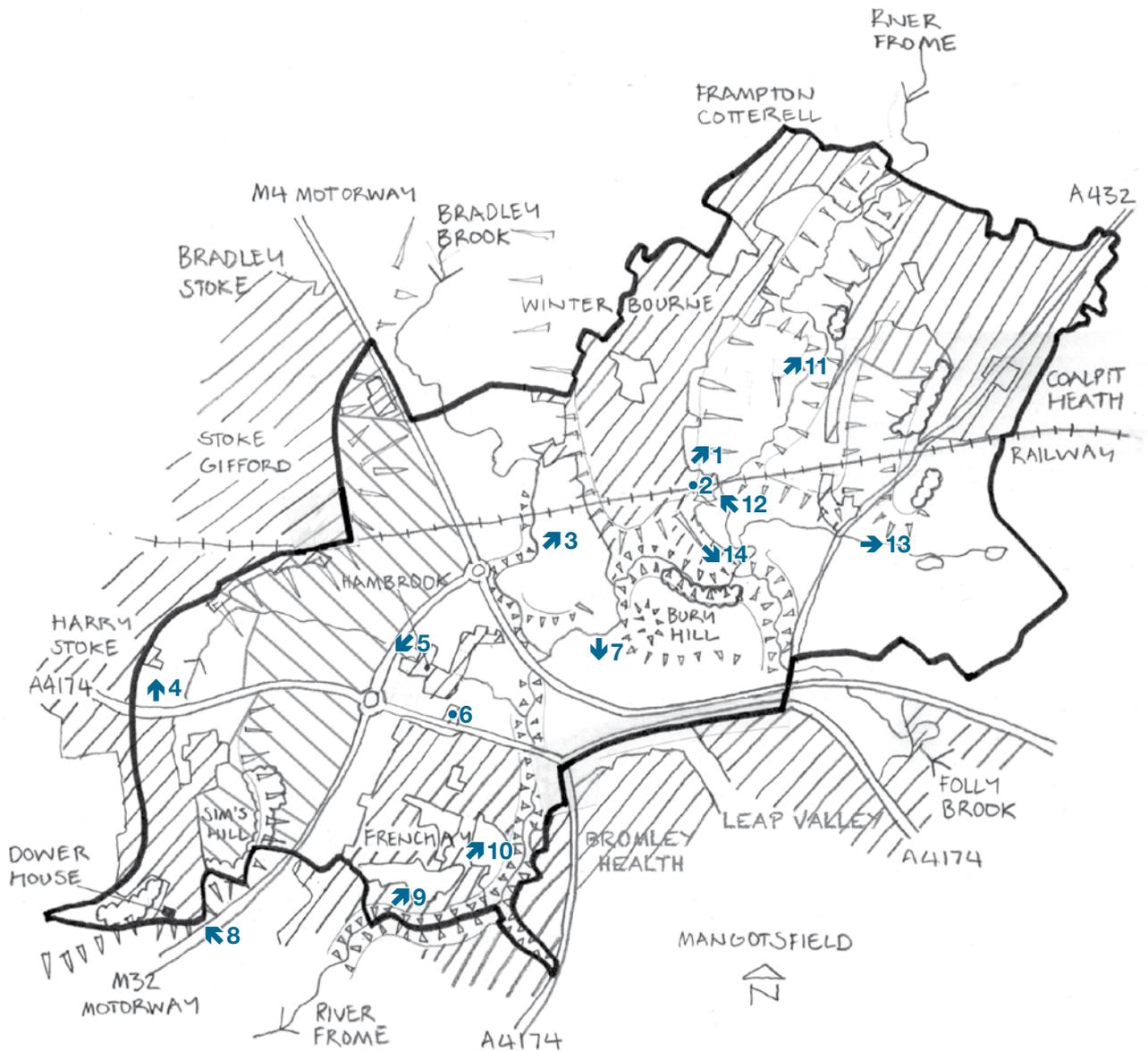
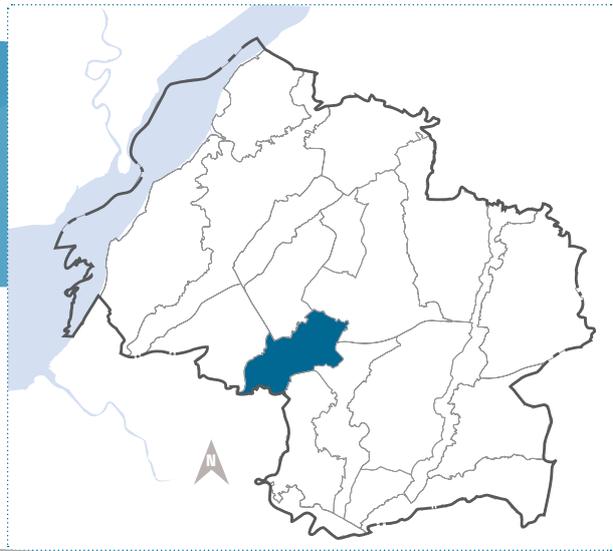


Figure 40
Frome Valley
Sketch Map

Area 13

Frome Valley

The Frome Valley character area is a diverse, enclosed, intricate combination of agriculture and settlement, divided by major roads.



Key Characteristics

- Undulating landform, with shallow valleys of the River Frome and Bradley Brook / Folly Brook tributaries. The River Frome follows a meandering incised course, through small gorges adjacent to Bury Hill and Frenchay, some of which are designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Importance due to the ecological value of their water and bankside habitat.
- Some areas have a more remote/ tranquil character, with others contained and influenced by settlement boundaries and a dense network of roads. Other areas are subject to or proposed for significant new development.
- Rural areas comprising a mix of medium sized pasture and arable fields, with some limited common land. Small fields are located nearer settlement with a more mixed land use, including some paddocks, plant nurseries, recreation grounds and storage compounds. One golf course lies in the south east.
- The Frome Valley includes a number of areas of neutral and acidic grassland which supports a diverse range of flora and include areas of attractive and ecologically valuable species rich grassland. Arable land provides ground nesting and winter stubble opportunities for farmland birds, some of which are Amber and Red listed.
- Boundaries formed by either hedges that provide important habitat value and connectivity, or post and wire fencing, with Pennant stone walls near settlement. Tree cover is generally a common feature, but is more variable along settlement boundaries.
- Woodland is associated with Stoke Park, Sims' Hill, Bury Hill, and the Frome Valley. Scattered smaller areas are associated with the Bradley Brook and former small scale quarry sites.
- Diverse settlement patterns relate to the historic layout and expansion of former village centres. The separate settlements of Winterbourne, Frampton Cotterell and Coalpit Heath form a distinct horseshoe shape surrounding a rural landscape. Hamlets, farms and residential properties are scattered across the wider rural landscape.

Key Characteristics

- Distinct historic features include Bury Hill Fort (SAM), Stoke Park (listed parkland) and Whiteshill village green. The Conservation Areas of Hambrook and Frenchay form distinctive settlements with associated landscape settings.
- The landscape is influenced locally by the concentration of road infrastructure, the M32/M4 corridors and railway embankments. A number of railway viaducts form prominent landmarks. Pylon towers and powerlines influence the south west. A railway cutting at Winterbourne includes a geological Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Location

The Frome Valley landscape character area is located centrally on the south western boundary of South Gloucestershire, taking in the eastern fringes of Harry Stoke and Stoke Gifford, Frenchay and the settlements of Winterbourne, Frampton Cotterell and Coalpit Heath to the north.

The boundary of the area is defined to the north west, north and north east by the settlement edge of Winterbourne, Frampton Cotterell and Coalpit Heath. The eastern boundary encloses follows the edge of the Kendleshire Golf Course, the A4174 partly defining the northern edge of Bromley Heath, Mangotsfield, Downend and the eastern upper edge of the Frome Valley. The southern boundary follows the South Gloucestershire/Bristol City administrative boundary around Frenchay, across the M32 corridor, taking in part of Stoke Park. The western boundary follows the approximate crown of a broad ridgeline through Stoke Park, variously including development and the urban edges of Harry Stoke and Stoke Gifford. (See Figures 46).

Physical Influences

The underlying geology is diverse, varying from a mix of alluvium and sandstone to the west, leading into a mix of Coal Measures and shale to the east. Soils are generally Brown Earth Loam.

The geology, in conjunction with the drainage pattern of the River Frome, Bradley Brook and Folly Brook, has produced largely distinct, simple valley landforms of gentle vale, broad but shallow 'V'-shaped valleys, with some smaller areas of more complex and irregular, steep sided valleys and undulating landform. Topography generally varies between 30 metres in the valleys to 60 - 70 metres a.o.d. on the ridges, reaching 75 metres a.o.d. at Sims' Hill and 80 metres a.o.d. at the southern end of the ridge at Winterbourne.

The landform has been most significantly shaped by the River Frome, which flows southwards through Frampton Cotterell, Winterbourne Down and Frenchay. Its upper reaches form an asymmetric and sometimes irregular, broad but shallow 'V'-shaped valley, the river flowing within a sinuous channel and meandering around a low hill at Cloisters, creating a scarp slope to the east of the river. The valley slopes rise to a small, rounded ridgeline to the east (beyond which lies a parallel dry valley) and to a broader, flatter and higher ridge to the west, occupied by Winterbourne.

Further south, the river is contained within a small narrow gorge and the steep sided slopes of Bury Hill. The river again passes through a small incised valley and gorge through Frenchay, before flowing south west, beyond this character area, through Bristol and into the River Avon. A number of tributaries join the River Frome from different directions, the most notable being the Bradley Brook to the west and the Folly Brook to the east.

The Bradley Brook follows an irregular meandering course southwards from the adjoining character area, before forming a small, incised valley in the area of Whiteshill, before joining the River Frome.

The western area comprises part of a larger vale which runs north-south, contained by broad low lying ridges, occupied by Winterbourne and Mangotsfield to the east and Harry Stoke and Stoke Gifford to the west. The continuation of this ridge along the south western boundary forms a scarp slope within Stoke Park and Sims' Hill, continuing southwards beyond this character area.

Land Cover

The land cover of this character area is a diverse mix of rural uses, contained and variously influenced by settlement areas, urban edge, roads and railway.

To the north, the land within the River Frome valley is contained on three sides by settlement. It consists of rolling pasture of small to medium sized and regular shaped fields, enclosed common at Hicks Common and some horse paddocks near the settlement edge. A small area of woodland (Rockwell Wood) covers the steep scarp slope above the River Frome, opposite Cloisters. Fields are divided by a mix of clipped, intermittent and overgrown hedges (Photo 1).

There are frequent mature deciduous trees within hedgerows and along settlement boundaries. Post and wire and timber fencing is also present, particularly on the upper slopes close to the settlement edge. Pennant sandstone walls are common, associated with the settlement edge and roads.

Further south, tree cover and woodland generally increases, associated with the Frome Valley and dry valley to the east; a number of small disused and overgrown quarries along the Frome Valley between Winterbourne and Frenchay; along the Bradley Brook valley; the M4 and M32 verges and embankments; and the high South Wales to London railway embankments.

In this area, the River Frome is contained by a narrow corridor of dense riparian shrub vegetation and occasional trees, with linear woodland associated with the gorges near Bury Hill and Frenchay and elsewhere along steep river banks.

South of Winterbourne, the upper slopes of Bury Hill are heavily wooded, with a mix of mature deciduous trees and Scots pine. This is combined with overgrown hedges and Pennant stone walls, often in a state of disrepair (Photo 3). Bury Hill Fort (a SAM) is located on the broad hill top, above steep slopes of the River Frome and comprises earth ramparts; the western boundary has been damaged by quarrying. On the lower slopes towards the M4, the medium sized, sometimes irregular shaped, pastoral fields and areas of rough grassland include fenced field boundaries, with some stone walls, hedges and fewer trees (Photo 7). To the east lie small fields and a tree lined stream course within a small, tight valley section of the Folly Brook.

Further east again, part of a wider pattern of regular medium sized fields is evident, however much of this area has been replaced by the Kendleshire Golf Course, which retains some lengths of the former agricultural hedgerows and tree structure amongst extensive ground remodelling and earthworks to form fairways and greens (Photo 13). A more recent 9 - hole course extension to the north west comprises ground modelling and open grassland, with developing native tree and shrub planting, creating a new landscape.

The dense settlement pattern of Winterbourne, Frampton Cotterell and Coalpit Heath includes a mix of public open spaces, school grounds, playing fields and broad verges/village greens. These punctuate the settlement edge or are integrated within the settlement fabric.

A section of the Bradley Brook valley lies to the west and below Winterbourne, before continuing southwards into the adjacent character area. The surrounding fields and are predominantly in pastoral use and vary in size.

They are defined partly by overgrown, intermittent hedgerows, some containing dead elm, with some trees and scrub along the course of the brook and timber fences around some paddocks. Fields become more irregular where they abut the meandering Bradley Brook.

Sections of linear woodland line the incised valley of the Bradley Brook further southwards, in the area of Whiteshill, and also follow the railway and M4 embankments. To the west of Winterbourne Down, along the northeast side of the M4, an area land raising is gradually being absorbed within woodland cover.

A village green at Whiteshill, used as a cricket pitch, is edged by roads and mature trees and is partly contained by stone walls and some scattered buildings and cottages.

Sandwiched between the M4, M32 and A4174 a regular, medium to small sized field pattern is associated with the village of Hambrook, divided by Pennant stone walls, hedgerows, hedgebanks and mature trees, remnant orchards and small fragmented pasture and paddocks. To the east of Bromley Heath lies a narrow strip of rough grassland and paddocks. Former field boundaries have largely disappeared, with containment now provided by roadside tree planting.

Within the M32 corridor, the broad vale is defined by the urban edge of Harry Stoke and Stoke Gifford to the west, the M4 to the north and Frenchay to the east. It is characterised by a mix of medium sized, regular fields of pasture and arable land, with some horse paddocks adjacent to roads and the urban edge. Fields are divided by a mix of clipped or overgrown hedges, some containing hedgerow trees, including some dead elms and fences. Nearer to the urban edges lie Filton Cemetery, plant nurseries, a caravan storage area, recreation area and paddocks. The boundaries of these non - agricultural sites are variously formed by overgrown hedgerows, conifer hedges, or timber fences.

Pennant sandstone walls follow lanes which extend into this area from Hambrook and Frenchay.

To the south west, woodland, scrub and unimproved grassland cover Sims' Hill. Adjacent parkland within Stoke Park, a listed historic park (Photo 8), comprises large areas of woodland on the ridgeline, with open grassland covering steep rolling slopes. The park partly lies within this area, extending south westwards into the Bristol authority area. The built area of Frenchay includes a variety of open spaces, with the wooded Frome Valley connecting to parkland pasture, commons and village greens. These spaces are contained within a framework of groups of mature ornamental trees, both deciduous and coniferous specimens and numerous stone cottages and large houses. (Photo 9 and Photo 10).

Horse paddocks are scattered throughout the character area, and are often associated with the edge of settlements, or in close proximity, accessed by the many roads which cross the landscape. They are found particularly within the Frome Valley, along the edge of Winterbourne and Frampton Cotterell; in the Bradley Brook valley adjacent to Winterbourne and the M4; occasionally within the M32 corridor; between the M4, M32 and A4174; and adjacent to Hambrook.

Biodiversity

Although containing significant built up areas, the Frome Valley character area includes a valuable and diverse mosaic of grassland, woodland and farmland, with a number of watercourses and ponds connected by wildlife corridors, including hedgerows and stone walls, providing important habitat for a diverse range of species.

Approximately 9 hectares of ancient woodland is found within three small woodlands and comprises one third of the total wooded cover within this area. Several woodland sites are designated as SSSI. Key species likely to be associated with the broadleaved woodland include bats and dormice, both of which are

present across the District and are UK priority species with associated Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP).

There are 5 SNCIs designated for grassland (neutral and acidic) including areas of species-rich grassland which supports a range of invertebrates, and ant hills are a regular feature. These invertebrates provide a food source for mammals including bats.

There are a number of watercourses and their tributaries draining the Frome Valley, some of which are designated as SNCI. These watercourses will support a diverse range of species from aquatic macro-invertebrates to fish and water voles. Ponds and pools within the area will support amphibians such as great crested newts (a European Protected Species).

There appears to be good connectivity for species between the wooded areas and other habitats via hedgerows and scattered trees. However, the area is dissected by two motorways and a railway which may form a barrier to the commuting/foraging/habitat availability of these species.

Agricultural land use within this area is a patchwork of arable and pastoral farmland, the arable farmland in particular provides habitat for many species of ground nesting farmland birds including some that are listed as Globally Threatened Red species. The winter stubble in these areas also provides a foraging resource.

There is a history of quarrying in this area. Underground quarries and mines provide an ideal habitat for many species of bat including European Protected Species.

Stone walls are a feature associated with the older settlements within this character area and many of them are in disrepair. This feature may be utilised by a diverse range of species from invertebrates to reptiles and amphibians for commuting, foraging and as a refuge.

There is a golf course within the Frome Valley; such use can provide a mosaic of habitats which can be utilised by a diverse range of species.

Also residential gardens and amenity spaces within the developed areas can also provide valuable ecological habitat.

Settlement and Infrastructure

Winterbourne, Frampton Cotterell and Coalpit Heath form a distinct horseshoe shaped area of settlement, located on raised ground, partly enclosing the River Frome valley in this location.

These historic villages developed from a series of farms located along the pattern of lanes. Hamlets of Pennant stone cottages and large houses, developed in the 18th and 19th century to house workers in the local coal mines, hat making industry and associated with the agricultural economy.

Victorian and later 20th century development introduced brick buildings and infill development, resulting in the coalescence of the three villages.

The small scale, tight pattern of older Pennant stone cottages, with stone wall boundaries, edge the typically winding pattern of small lanes (Photo 14). More recent buildings have extended out from the historic core and typically form linear development along main roads, e.g. at Coalpit Heath and Park Lane. Two areas of more recent infill development have impinged on the horseshoe settlement pattern, extending into the adjoining rural landscape, and there has also been some infilling on the edge of Winterbourne Down, making the settlement more prominent in wider views.

The type of stone used throughout the character area for walls, bridges and buildings is predominantly Pennant sandstone, with some imported limestone and Old Red sandstone.

Small scale disused Pennant sandstone quarry sites are scattered extensively within and adjacent to the River Frome valley. Many have existed since Roman times and are now largely vegetated.

A few scattered farms and buildings occur within the Frome Valley, adjacent valley to the east, the Bradley Brook valley and land north of the M4. Elsewhere, farm buildings are generally associated with hamlets and villages, or have been absorbed within the edge of the urban area.

Four brick railway viaducts are highly prominent, distinctive landmarks crossing the River Frome (Photo 2) and Bradley Brook valleys and roads from east to west. The M4 is crossed by a more recent metal railway bridge.

Hambrook village comprises 18th and 19th century Pennant stone cottages, farmsteads, large houses, church and village green, clustered at a junction of lanes extending in a linear pattern outwards. Stone boundary walls extend along some lanes and there is an old packhorse bridge across the Frome to the east of Hambrook. The Conservation Area boundary includes the village and its setting, extending largely to the confines of the M32, M4 and River Frome. The motorways surround and bisect the village itself.

Frenchay village, to the south of the area, comprises a diverse pattern of settlement and open space and is also designated a Conservation Area. The phases of historic development were influenced first by the 18th century milling industry, with stone cottages and buildings adjacent to the River Frome. Large houses, stately homes, manors and churches sympathetically relate to open common land and contain smaller green spaces. The sometimes irregular pattern of winding lanes and alley ways descend into the Frome Valley. Buildings are constructed from a range of Pennant stone, limestone, brick and render, with stone boundary walls lining some lanes.

Frenchay Hospital site lies to the west, within the grounds of Frenchay Park. The Conservation Area extends within the park, to include playing fields and open space along the park's southern and eastern boundary, but excludes the main hospital complex, which comprises a dense pattern of buildings, with its chimneys and distinctive water tower.

North of the Conservation Area boundary and hospital, Frenchay also contains 20th century residential development of housing, flats and bungalows. This area extends both north to the A4174 and then eastwards along the A4174 to the River Frome, with Bromley Heath continuing eastwards and into the adjacent area. In combination these settlements define the urban edge to the agricultural landscape along the M4 corridor (Photo 7). The city of Bristol extends southwards beyond this area.

To the north east of Hambrook, beyond the M4, the settlements near Bury Hill such as Whiteshill, Pye Corner Moorend and Kendleshire, largely consist of older stone and render cottages and houses, clustered at road junctions or form scattered linear development, along the complex network of minor roads and lanes.

To the west, within the M32 corridor, limited settlement is scattered within the agricultural vale, which is defined by the urban edge of Stoke Gifford and Harry Stoke to the west (Photo 4) and Frenchay to the east. Rural settlement consists of scattered, isolated stone built farms/houses, a mix of more recent properties and a nursery complex with glasshouses. Stone boundary walls often surround the houses and line roads and lanes. New housing at Harry Stoke is expanding into this previously agricultural landscape from the west, with a new access road from the ring road to the south.

The adjacent urban edge to the west forms an irregular edge and in places extends over the skyline, onto the upper slopes within this area.

The variety of development along this boundary includes, from south to north, the stately Dower House in Stoke Park (Photo 8), the large institutional building complex of the University of the West of England (UWE), with adjacent commercial offices, hotel and grounds. A residential fringe currently defines a significant length of the remaining western boundary, with a small cluster of houses, stone farm buildings and stone walls along a lane at Harry Stoke and a more regular linear pattern of houses, with

rear gardens lining this edge of the character area, at Stoke Gifford. The presently open, rural and gently sloping landscape that runs down from Harry Stoke to Filton Road and the M32 is proposed for the development of a new neighbourhood and the construction of a new link road, as part of our core strategy housing allocation.

North of the railway line, on high ground, lies a recent development of town houses, a complex of large office buildings and car parks, set within a landscape framework, with the housing edge of Bradley Stoke in the north. Here new office development is prominent in the wider landscape, while below, on lower ground adjacent to the M4, a large industrial type building is partially buffered by peripheral planting.

To the east of the M32, a relatively narrow green corridor edged by Frenchay, contains nurseries and poly-tunnels making use of the high quality agricultural land together with houses, light industrial sheds, caravans and stable blocks.

Numerous roads cross the character area and variously define settlement, or divide the landscape and influence settlement pattern.

The M4 and M32 with associated junctions, slip roads and overbridges largely include road sections at grade or on embankment. Part of the M32/M4 junction and M32 approach is in cutting (Photo 5). The M4 crosses over several country lanes and the River Frome and is itself crossed by the South Wales to London railway. The railway generally crosses the area on high embankments or viaducts and is only in cutting through the ridge on which Winterbourne lies.

The A432, A4174, B4058, B4427 and numerous minor roads and lanes pass through the area largely at grade (Photo 6).

A number of public footpaths cross the area, including the Frome Valley Walkway and Community Forest Path, both major recreational routes, which connect the urban area of Bristol to the wider landscape to the north and west.

The Frome Valley Walkway closely follows the course of the River Frome through this area, from Bristol in the south to the wider landscape to the north. It mainly follows the enclosed valley/ gorge through Frenchay, beneath the A4174 and M4, within or along the edge of the narrow gorge between Bury Hill and Winterbourne Down, through the open valley to Frampton Cotterell and then beyond the area, into the wider countryside. The Hatters Trails around Frampton Cotterell and Watley's End link a range of buildings and features associated with the 300 year hatting trade that formed an important part of the local economy from the late 1500's onwards.

The Community Forest Path passes from east to west, following a tributary valley of the Frome, the River Frome crossing Bury Hill to the south of Winterbourne, through Hambrook and then rising to Stoke Gifford and out of the area.

Three overhead powerlines follow a tight corridor to the west, crossing the Bradley Brook valley, the M4, through part of the M32 corridor and then rising towards Harry Stoke and beyond.

Landscape Character

The Frome Valley landscape character area is a diverse and intricate area. The concentrations of major settlement and smaller settlement pattern are contained within a rural framework of varying scale and character. The area is defined in part to the south by the urban edge of Bristol. A dense network of road and rail infrastructure cross and segment the area.

The combination of some of the key characteristics of the area, the undulating landform, plus the varied and textured vegetation structure help to integrate some of the settlement edges, urban edge and roads within the wider landscape.

Despite the extensive areas of settlement and urban edges, there are areas of the landscape and pockets within settlements which retain, or largely retain, a distinct rural character.

To the north, both the Frome Valley and dry valley to the east, comprise an undulating rural valley landscape which is visually contained by adjacent ridgelines, the 'horseshoe' shaped pattern of Winterbourne, Frampton Cotterell and Coalpit Heath and the railway embankment to the south. The rolling pasture, intermittent thick hedgerow structure, mature trees and occasional areas of woodland provide local visual enclosure. The numerous internal views possible from more elevated locations and from the settlement edges of Winterbourne and parts of Frampton Cotterell are a particular characteristic of this locality.

The more limited presence of hedgerows (largely replaced by timber / wire fences, in some places associated with paddocks) along the upper slopes of the Frome Valley, increases the prominence of the settlement edges of Winterbourne and Frampton Cotterell locally within this valley. Similarly, the linear housing pattern along Park Lane and ridgeline to the south of Frampton Cotterell is visually evident from within the dry valley to the east. A short section of Coalpit Heath edges the eastern side of this valley, but remains well screened by Blackberry Brake woodland. Recent housing development across the northern section of this valley has encroached on this open land, and making the urban edge more prominent in local views, which in turn increases the significance of the remaining rural dry valley landscape.

Within these valleys and away from the settlement edges, the visual balance of landform and vegetation creates a strong rural character and a degree of tranquillity which contrasts strongly with the surrounding settlement.

The course of the River Frome, throughout this character area, follows a largely enclosed wooded valley with the perception of a tranquil and relatively remote character, in spite of its close proximity to settlement at Frampton Cotterell, Winterbourne and Frenchay (Photo 11). The river and Frome Valley Walkway provide a continuous corridor linking the centre of Bristol to the south, through this area, to the wider countryside north of Frampton Cotterell.

Within and along the edges of the larger settlement areas of Winterbourne, Frampton Cotterell and Coalpit Heath, as well as at Whiteshill, there are smaller locally distinct landscape pockets, formed through the combination and arrangement of open space and built environment.

- On the northern edge of Frampton Cotterell, St Peter's Church forms a local landmark adjacent to the River Frome within the adjoining character area. It forms a focal point along the road corridor, which has a sequence of roadside greens and breaks within the scattered roadside development of houses and farm buildings.
- Frampton Cotterell and Coalpit Heath have a range of small scale coal mining features spanning several centuries.
- At Flaxpits, on the eastern edge of Winterbourne, the large duck pond is partially contained by prominent tall Pennant stone walls, mature roadside trees to the north and a large period house to the east. With views overlooking the Frome Valley, this area has a distinct rural character.
- To the south west of Winterbourne, the village green at Whiteshill forms a distinct and unenclosed area of grassland with mature trees and forms a focal point at the junction of several local minor roads. These roads edge the open space, with traditional stone houses, cottages and some stone walls in the immediate locality both containing and contributing to the distinctive character of the area.
- Within Coalpit Heath, the churchyard of St Saviour's Church, with mature trees, stone wall boundary and adjacent school playing fields, form a distinctive open area along the otherwise enclosed, linear built character of the A432.

The area has literary associations including with the prolific children's author Dick King-Smith (who wrote 'The Sheep Pig' later made into the film 'Babe'), managed Woodlands Farm from 1948 - 62.

The railway viaducts are distinctive, large scale local landmarks, prominent within the Frome and Bradley Brook valleys. The viaduct across the Frome Valley both emphasises and complements the valley form viewed from the north and south, whilst greatly limiting views into and beyond this area (Photo 12).

The railway embankments are also large scale features, physically cutting across the Frome and Bradley Brook valleys and blocking views along them. The removal of much of the former strong woodland cover on these slopes has substantially increased their prominence in and influence on the wider landscape.

In the south and centre of the area, the tree cover and woodland creates an enclosed and secluded landscape. Around Bury Hill Camp and to the south and westwards towards Hambrook, the combination of diverse landform, woodland and complex mix of small settlements, creates a distinctive, small scale and intimate landscape that helps to reduce the impact of the motorway infrastructure.

This area has a strong character, the historic hilltop location forming a prominent feature in the locality and offering extensive views south through mature woodland, over fields, woodland and copses towards Bristol. Stone walling and Scots pine are distinctive features over parts of the lower slopes of the hill (Photo 3), although the area also has wire fence boundaries and is generally less enclosed by trees.

The M4 which passes through this area on a low embankment, with associated high traffic levels, influences the immediate surrounding landscape visually and audibly.

The scattered settlements just north of the M4, of Whiteshill, Pye Corner, Moorend and Kendleshire, are small scale clustered or linear settlements, generally well integrated within a strong vegetation framework, maintaining the rural character of the locality. Whilst Whiteshill is distinctive, centred on the village green, to the south part of the settlement is overshadowed by the M4.

To the east of the A432, the extended Kendleshire Golf Course has introduced a different landscape structure, compared to the adjacent agricultural landscape. A more open landscape of mown fairways, low mounding, remnant hedgerows and hedgerow trees and young planting is evident within local views including from the A432 and occasionally elsewhere.

New boundary walling, as part of a recent development adjacent to the A432, contrasts with the architectural style and materials of the more traditional Pennant stone walling found elsewhere within this character area, influencing the rural character of this locality.

The historic intricate pattern and character of Hambrook village, with walled boundaries, woodland pockets and mature trees remains intact and forms a distinctive island within this area. Smaller, fragmented fields of pasture and paddocks and the encompassing road and motorway network however, have a significant but generally confined local influence within this area.

The village of Frenchay has a unique and distinctive village character, largely contained by period residential properties and a mature ornamental tree structure. The character of this area is largely intact with very limited intrusion of modern buildings, resulting in a sympathetic inter-relationship between architecture and the various open spaces, including village greens, commons and parkland, with a sweeping rural valley landform descending to the wooded gorge of the River Frome.

Views within Frenchay are largely internal, with some longer views over Bristol to the south gained from above the Frome Valley.

Within the area as a whole, the older pattern of lanes and minor roads are largely well integrated within hedgerows or Pennant stone walls (nearer older settlements) with 'cock and hen' coping, or where their alignment follows the natural landform and/or relates well to the agricultural field pattern.

This pattern has been overlain and bisected by the contrasting character of the more recent M4, M32 and railway network. Due to the frequency with which these routes cross each other and the undulating landform, this area contains a number of substantial embankments, overbridges and road junctions. Road and rail embankments are typically well vegetated, but physically divide and visually contain/ segment some areas, particularly to the west and north of Hambrook.

Road and rail overbridges have also generally increased the visibility of traffic and range of audible impact upon the landscape. These vantages can also be significant in permitting views across the landscape of this area.

The broad landscape corridors to the west of the area, through which the M4 and M32 pass, are variously influenced by the settlement edges, urban edge developments and land use change, scattered within an agricultural landscape. The asymmetric green corridor followed by the M32 in addition, forms an important gateway to Bristol (Photo 5). The road network frequently segments this part of the character area and often defines discrete areas of landscape. The area to the east and south of Stoke Gifford, south and west of the M4 and M32, and north of the Filton Road is proposed for the development of a new neighbourhood.

- Bradley Brook, adjacent to Winterbourne:

The western settlement edge of Winterbourne is visible along the Winterbourne ridge, above the Bradley Brook valley. To the south it is well integrated by the strong vegetation framework, comprising the wooded backdrop of Bury Hill and by a foreground rural framework of hedgerows, some small copses and the wooded railway embankment. Garden trees and vegetation within the settlement also soften building facades and rooflines. The linear housing pattern along the B4057 and B4058 and more recent development at the southern end of the settlement is however more prominent, visibly extending over the lower ridgeline slopes, adjacent to open fields

and horse paddocks, with little integration.

The textured vegetation structure within this part of the Bradley Brook valley, comprises dense riparian trees and scrub along the meandering stream course and some adjacent overgrown and intermittent hedgerows. Dead elms are evident in some hedgerows. Timber fences around some horse paddocks locally increase the openness of this area.

This area is physically enclosed to the south and west by the railway and M4 embankments and influenced by Stoke Gifford urban edge further to the west.

Views extend over the valley from the M4 and adjacent settlement edges. Within these views, the pylon towers are a prominent feature.

- Eastern setting to Stoke Gifford (west of the M4, north of the railway embankment):

The western boundary is currently formed by the built edge of Stoke Gifford. Recent development of town houses near Hillside Farm, forms a prominent hard skyline, within middle and long distance views from the west and south. The roofscape of large commercial buildings are also prominent along the skyline. Although set beyond the ridgeline, the scale of these buildings and lack of planting provides limited integration in local and middle distance views. The recreational fields, on the slopes below this edge, occupy former agricultural land, with their mown grassland contrasting visually with the adjacent pasture fields.

Further north beyond the B4057, the office development forms a prominent built edge along the skyline, while on lower ground next to the M4, a large white industrial building is locally prominent, but largely screened in views from the east by recent mound construction at Green Acres Farm, in the adjacent character area.

The remaining agricultural landscape adjacent to Stoke Gifford currently retains its rural characteristics, with pasture fields and intact hedgerows over open slopes. The largely traditional building cluster of Mulgrove Farm is prominent, but integrated within the hedgerow framework.

- Eastern setting to Harry Stoke (west of the M32, south of the railway and north of the A4174):

This area currently has a strong rural, agricultural character, given the generally intact hedgerow pattern (some overgrown and including hedgerow trees) with pasture/ arable land use. Some dead elm trees are evident within hedgerows closer to the road network.

The settlement edge on the ridgeline at Harry Stoke and Stoke Gifford is visible on the skyline in the middle distance, but is largely integrated by the intervening hedgerows, trees and garden vegetation, within views from lower slopes near the M32. This currently gives the motorway a generally rural setting to the west, contributing significantly to the strategic green corridor within which the M32 lies, that penetrates into the urban area of Greater Bristol. More recent development on the ridgeline at Harry Stoke is less well integrated as a result of its location and lack of vegetation structure and consequently has a greater influence on the rural character.

The pylons and powerlines which cross the lower slopes of this area are however prominent features in local views.

The large scale accommodation blocks at the University of the West of England (UWE) occupy the skyline and are a prominent feature in both local and long distance views to the area and dominating the roofscapes of commercial and business warehouses near by with limited vegetation structure to provide integration.

The rotunda building of AXA Sun Life, within the adjacent area to the west, is tall enough to be visible from near the character area boundary and forms a distinctive landmark.

- Eastern setting to Coldharbour Lane development (west of the M32 and south of the A4174):

The agricultural character here is less distinct, as a result of the proportionally greater range of other development and land uses, comprising some scattered houses, plant nursery, a hotel, its grounds and adjacent sports field. The agricultural field pattern of hedgerows, mature hedgerow trees and frequent tree/tall hedgerow boundaries around non-agricultural land uses however, forms a strong vegetation framework which largely integrates these elements. The group of mature Wellingtonia trees at the hotel form an important local landmark.

The rising slopes behind, include Sims' Hill woodland, a distinctive and prominent landscape feature along the ridgeline and upper slopes. The southern end of Sims Hill is part of the listed Parkland of Stoke Park. A terraced walk around the end of the hill, still marked by a line of veteran oaks, gave designed views across the park and to the Dower house. Lying just within Bristol City the setting of the terraced walk would be likely to be affected by changes to the ridgeline and the wooded slope within South Gloucestershire which is allocated for further housing. A complex of large business units further north, along the edge of the ridgeline and the UWE complex behind, is partially screened by the maturing woodland in views from the M32.

This contrasts with the landscape to the south, where the Dower House, steep parkland slopes and wooded ridges of Stoke Park, have a distinctive character and form an important landmark, visible from the M32 and extensive areas of Bristol to the south. The parkland character and ridgeline continue south westwards into the Bristol City Council area. The steep slopes and ridgeline on which the Dower House sits, also extends north westwards to the wooded slopes of Sims' Hill.

Housing development within Stoke Park, behind the Dower House, is largely contained and screened by woodland and the house itself. Housing is however evident where it has encroached upon the skyline, at Wallscourt Farm, breaching the skyline in views from the east.

The recent addition of housing within the park is also visible within local views adjacent to the Dower House and has changed the architectural balance and symmetry of the existing house. This new development however uses continuity of architectural features, such as the building plinth and recessed position of the new building, to one side and behind the main façade of the Dower House, to aid integration.

- Westerly setting to Frenchay (east of the M32, south of the A4174):

This area comprises a strip of mixed agriculture, nursery grounds, gardens, horse paddocks, and a caravan storage compound, and contains a variety of scattered buildings. These features are partly integrated by the often limited intermittent hedgerows/hedgerow trees and conifers.

This area provides a buffer to the prominent urban edge of linear housing and Frenchay Hospital (the water tower and chimneys are prominent in many local views). This edge however has very little vegetation structure to provide visual integration.

The M32 is visually and audibly prominent within its locality, particularly where it is on embankment.

Elsewhere it is partly screened by maturing roadside tree planting.

In a number of locations across the character area, the change in land use from agriculture has disrupted the vegetation framework, through changes in the management regime of hedgerows and/or the replacement of hedgerows and timber fences. This is particularly evident in relation to horse paddocks, but also occurs in relation to other non-agricultural land uses. The

consequences of this have been the creation of a more open landscape character than adjacent fields, which in relation to horse paddocks has increased the visibility of stables, parked vehicles, open storage, jumps and other associated features.

The Changing Landscape

The Frome Valley landscape character area is a diverse and intricate area, greatly influenced by the historic evolution and extensive pattern of settlement, infrastructure and the close proximity of the city of Bristol and the influences of this large population centre. The rural landscape of this area has therefore, in places, been significantly influenced visually and/or physically by settlement edges and the demands and pressures for development, including housing employment and educational facilities.

Significant further changes are proposed in the vicinity of Stoke Gifford and Harry Stoke where the existing agricultural landscape will be replaced by a new neighbourhood set within a robust green infrastructure framework. This seeks to maintain the green setting to the M32 and M4 corridors, albeit with a more enclosed and wooded landscape structure. Within the development it is proposed that the development incorporates green corridors based on existing landscape features and other areas of open space.

In addition pressures for other land use change, to non-agricultural uses, are evident within other parts of this character area, with a resultant replacement of traditional agricultural practices and evolution of the rural landscape.

Such changes, particularly at the urban edge or settlement edge, in places include the introduction of nurseries with accompanying 'poly' tunnels and buildings, the provision of sports facilities or recreation fields, horse paddocks and, storage compounds accompanied by rough ground and buildings. These pressures for change can also affect the management or integrity of key features which contribute to local distinctiveness and habitat value of an area.

Boundary hedgerows are often not actively managed as a result of these land use changes. Some hedgerows along a number of rural roads and close to the urban edge within the M32 and M4 corridors contain dead elm trees which are particularly evident in summer. The cyclical pattern of growth, decline and regeneration of elm, influences the condition, integrity, appearance and the degree of openness of the landscape framework in the locality. Their eventual decay or removal will also result in noticeable landscape change and a reduction in habitat value and connectivity.

The scattered pools and ponds are vulnerable to any loss of habitat including the terrestrial habitat around ponds as well as the ponds themselves.

Some agricultural fields near settlement edges show signs of minimal use, with the resultant development of tall grassland cover and/or scrub, as has developed along Sims' Hill through a lack of grazing, however this area is proposed for new housing development.

Stone wall boundaries around Hambrook and south of Winterbourne are also in a variable state of repair, which will decline further without appropriate management. Buildings and structures within the non-agricultural land uses are often in a poor state of repair or unmaintained, and this area is also under pressure for recreational uses.

The increased use of small lanes by commuter traffic, in places continues to cause the erosion of verges, banks, hedges and walls. The effects are often subtle, but lead to an erosion in the condition of features which contribute to local character. An increase in traffic volumes or perceived need for highway improvement measures has the potential to introduce standard highway design solutions including kerbs, new signage and materials. These could have a localised, but cumulative effect, eroding the existing landscape character.

Recreational pressure for 'horsiculture' is evident, particularly within the Frome and Bradley Brook valleys adjacent to settlements, along the M32 corridor, between the M4, M32 and A4174 and adjacent to Hambrook. This change in land use is a recent trend, which in places has led to the loss or erosion of hedgerows or, in some instances, to the subdivision of fields. The cumulative effect of this and the associated infrastructure of stables, access tracks, exercise areas, jumps and floodlighting, can result in a marked change in landscape character and disturbance to wildlife.

At the southern end of the green corridor along the south side of the M32, a Park and Ride and new bridge over the motorway are proposed, which will fragment this landscape.

Kendleshire Golf Course, with its recent extension, has resulted in the reshaping of fields and loss of hedgerows and vegetation in the creation of fairways. Although the site is largely contained by boundary vegetation, this new landscape is partly evident from the A432. New planting measures will, in time, provide a new landscape structure and help integrate this land use change with its surroundings.

A section of new boundary wall adjacent to recent development along the A432 is a locally prominent feature and an example of how the lack of reference to the local vernacular, in materials, design, or the rural context of the site, can erode local distinctiveness.

The current pattern of and relationship between settlements or urban areas and their adjoining rural setting, which gives an area its distinctive character, is sensitive to change.

- The Frome Valley, dry valley to the east, Bradley Brook valley, river corridors and Bury Hill are sensitive to further encroachment of settlement edges or change, which might erode their distinctive pattern, rural character or their perception of relative remoteness and tranquillity.

- Scattered settlements such as Winterbourne Down, Whiteshill, Kendleshire, Moorend, Pye Corner and Hambrook are sensitive to incremental infill, or erosion of the vegetation framework and field pattern, which give them their local distinctiveness.
- This applies also to the settlement edges of Winterbourne, Frampton Cotterell and Coalpit Heath, which contain pockets of older buildings and development pattern, which have a distinctive character.
- Village greens, public open spaces, common land and school grounds punctuate these areas of settlement, providing visual and recreational amenity and a physical break within the built environment. Loss of such spaces can have a significant impact on the particular character of and possibly the range of habitats available in such localities.
- The condition of landscape features within the visual setting and open spaces of Hambrook and Frenchay contribute greatly to their character. Such features would therefore be sensitive to change, but are afforded a greater degree of protection as a result of their Conservation Area status. Change is however anticipated as Frenchay is the subject of two significant proposals for redevelopment, including both the Hospital site and the primary school.
- Green ridgelines, which remain intact at Stoke Park and Sims' Hill and which are partly intact between Harry Stoke and Bradley Stoke, are sensitive to visual encroachment of the urban edge, particularly from large built forms and infill. These areas are especially visible from road corridors and from elevated hillsides. The effect of such encroachment is already visible in some areas, where their visual prominence affects the rural character of adjacent areas.

Loss of vegetation along the ring road and main line railway to allow for infrastructure improvements has opened up views within the area and

increased the prominence of traffic movement. Whilst replacement planting has taken place next to the ring road it will be a number of years before this contributes to the wider landscape structure.

Lack of maintenance of new planting to the rail corridor means that the embankments remain largely open significantly increasing the prominence of the railway infrastructure in the locality. This will further increase with the introduction of gantries and wires as a result of the proposed electrification. Similarly the replacement or modification of structures that cross the line also has the potential to result in impact.

A key characteristic of the character area is its varied vegetation structure, which contributes to the integration of the diverse range of development and land use found within this area, as well as to the distinctive character of open spaces within settlements. As well as changes in management, a lack of replanting or replacement of hedgerows, trees and woodland, will eventually result in a decline in the landscape framework which could, as a result, increase the visibility of the urban and settlement edges and other development within a rural context or erode the distinctive features which contribute to local character.

Recent tree planting on Sims' Hill will, in the long term, extend the woodland cover on the slopes and contribute to the character, habitat value and structure of the landscape in the area as well as helping to absorb the proposed new housing.

Widening and other signage and improvement works to the motorways and the Ring Road are gradually squeezing or eliminating the planting that helps to screen these urbanising features from and integrate them into the wider landscape. This increases the visual prominence of the highways themselves, plus the traffic and associated infrastructure.

Landscape Strategy

- Active management and strengthening of the hedgerow framework, trees and woodlands, including replacement and new planting, to help to ensure the conservation of these key features for the long term as well as diversity and connectivity of habitat.
- Succession planting to ensure the future of hedgerow trees, with species selection appropriate to the particular character and typical species of the locality, including for example the locally distinctive use of Pine in the area to the south of Winterbourne.
- Secure the retention, restoration and management of traditional Pennant stone walling and hedgerows to reinforce both local character and habitat value and connectivity.
- Maintain the strength of the landscape framework associated with the motorways to ensure maximum buffering and screening to the adjacent Conservation Area at Hambrook, and in wider views across adjacent rural landscapes.
- Encourage the conservation and interpretation of the area's heritage of mining features, and the celebration of its literary associations particularly with the rural landscape.
- Ensure that where new development takes place in rural areas, that it incorporates appropriate habitat, is well related to the existing landscape infrastructure and incorporates robust and locally relevant landscape proposals that integrate the proposals with the wider landscape. Ensure that lighting proposals do not urbanise the rural areas or disturb wildlife.
- Ensure that any new infill development conserves and enhances the particular and varying townscape, settlement and landscape patterns found in the different parts of this landscape character area, including for example areas such as Hambrook, Pye Corner and Moorend that together, and along with their historic settlement patterns create a distinctive and rural character to the edge of the Bristol conurbation.
- Maintain a green setting to the motorway corridors, and seek to minimise the impact of improvement and/or new lighting and signage schemes.
- Ensure the repair, retention and protection of traditional stone walls and landscape features along rural lanes, including where highway improvements are proposed.
- Secure adequate landscape mitigation works are maintained or replaced as part of improvement schemes to major roads and motorways.
- Transport proposals including new or additional structures should be sensitively located and designed to protect the character and amenity of the host landscape
- Protect, re enforce and extend trees and woodland along Simms Hill and the east facing slopes north to the M4 to break up the impact of new development in views from the north and east.
- Ensure any infill development at Winterborne Down and Whites Hill retains a strong tree cover and is of a scale and materials to prevent a visual impact on the wider landscape.

Note: The Frampton Cotterell and Coalpit Heath Village Design Statement provides more detailed adopted non- statutory planning guidance for this locality.

Landscape Character Areas



1 The open Frome Valley, contained with linear settlement along the hill tops on either side and by the viaduct and tall railway embankment to the south.



2 One of four impressive viaducts within this character area built in 1902, carrying the South Wales to London railway over the River Frome valley. Taken from the Frome Valley Walkway.



3 The south side of Winterbourne is characterised by its raised ground and stone walls in place of hedges. Native, Scots Pine and exotic trees crown the rise on Mill Road.



4 The existing settlement edge of Harry Stoke encloses pasture land and forms a visible built skyline.



5 The M32 and broad largely green corridor, continues southwards to Bristol.



6 The intersection of the Ring Road with the Winterbourne to Bristol Road. The volume of traffic is frequently high. Several footpaths used to cross near here.



7 View from Moorend towards the urban edge of Downend. M4 on embankment is concealed by dense vegetation.



8 The Dower House, within Stoke Park, set in a prominent position along a scarp edge, overlooking the M32 Motorway.



9 View across the 'Cricket Common' to Frenchay Church. The tree to the right is one of several tulip trees found locally. The churchyard is surrounded by a ha ha.



10 Frenchay - The cows grazing the annual profusion of buttercups in the Hilly Field, given to the village by Francis F. Tuckett. The land beyond the hedge down to the River Frome is owned by the National Trust.



11 Enclosed valley character along the River Frome, with Rockwell Wood to the right.



12 The River Frome valley and railway viaduct, looking northwards.



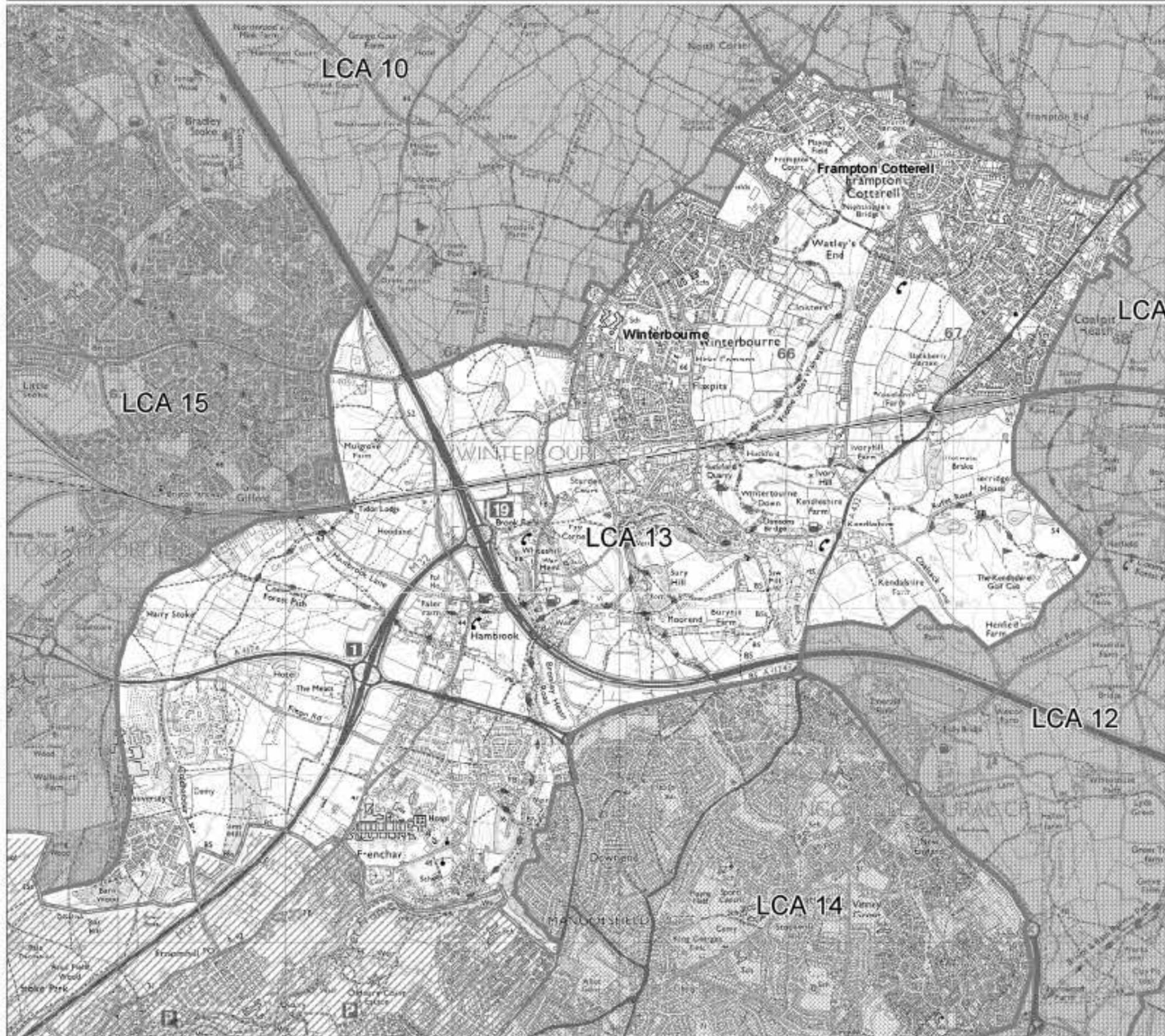
13 Kendleshire Golf Course, with new lake and planting within existing mature vegetation framework.



14 Winterbourne Down, looking over a dry stone wall with its cock and hen coping stones. Cottages and modern infill housing tumble down the wooded hill to the River Frome and are well integrated by the tree cover.

Figure 41 – Area 13
Frome Valley

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS



Legend

-  South Gloucestershire Boundary
-  Landscape Character Area

The Landscape Character Area boundary shown on this map is indicative, sometimes marking a distinct change, but more often representing a transition in character with adjacent areas.

Similar attributes may therefore be evident within adjacent areas. (For further information refer to Report Section 4.1)

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Figure 42
Area 13
Frome Valley