



South Gloucestershire

Landscape Character

Assessment

Supplementary Planning Document

South Gloucestershire Council

Draft report

Prepared by LUC

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Appendix A.4: Shallow Vale LCT

LCA 8: Yate Vale

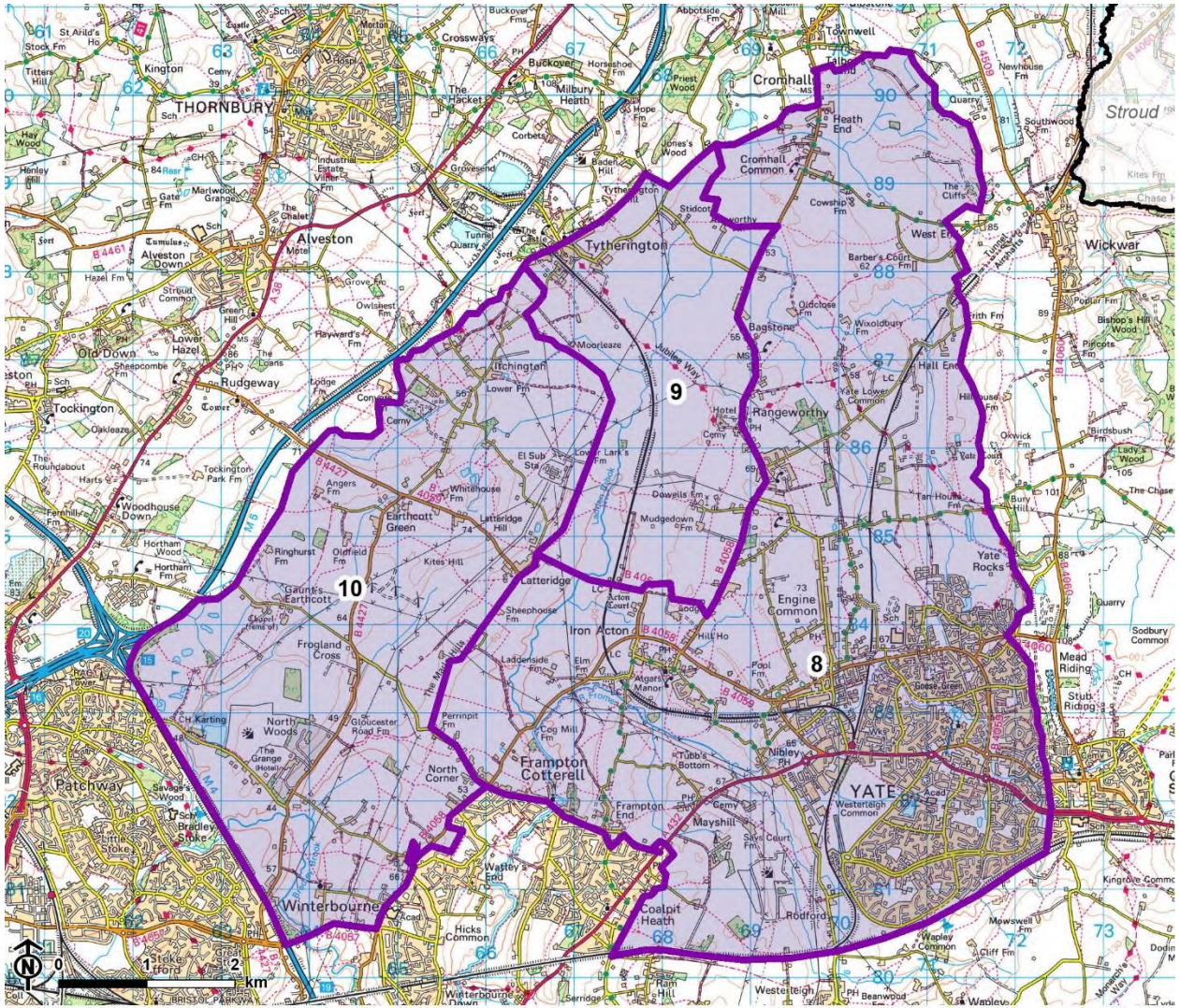
LCA 9: Tytherington Plain

LCA 10: Earthcott Vale



Shallow Vale LCT

Figure 4.1: Location of Shallow Vale LCT



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- Shallow Vale LCT
- Council boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- LCAs within Shallow Vale LCT:
- LCA 10: Earthcott Vale
- LCA 8: Yate Vale
- LCA 9: Tytherington Plain



Description

The Shallow Vale landscape character type (LCT) comprises a gently sloping basin, roughly in the centre of South Gloucestershire, north of Bristol. It is contained by ridges, formed by curving low rocky outcrops on the edge of the basin, beyond the boundary of the LCT to the east, north and west, which form the northern limit of the geological formation of the Bristol Coalfield. The landform within the Shallow Vale LCT undulates from east to west, as it passes over different bedrock formations within the basin. The southern boundary is partly defined by settlement.

Key Characteristics

- The shallow vale landscape is characterised by very gently rolling through to flat, topography.
- Pasture and large regular arable fields are contained by a strong landscape framework of clipped hedges, with occasional linear bands of trees, copses and woodlands.
- Land in the north-east is divided by drainage ditches, with a sparse vegetation framework.
- Numerous minor roads and lanes are only occasionally visible due to the surrounding clipped hedges, trees or hedgebanks within a generally flat landscape.
- The M4 and M5 form strong linear elements and define sections of the southern and western boundaries respectively.
- Settlement is concentrated within the town of Yate but has spread along many of the roads.
- The landscape is influenced by settlements located outside of the LCT, including Frampton Cotterell, Winterbourne and the urban fringes of Bristol.

Shallow Vale LCT

- Features associated with the proximity of major urban areas, such as powerlines, are also a visible and intrusive element.

Landscape Character Areas

The Shallow Vale LCT is subdivided into three landscape character areas (LCAs):

- LCA 8: Yate Vale
- LCA 9: Tytherington Plain
- LCA 10: Earthcott Vale

LCA 8: Yate Vale

The Yate Vale landscape character area (LCA) comprises a gently sloping, largely agricultural and often well-treed area of medium sized fields, with large settlements in the south.

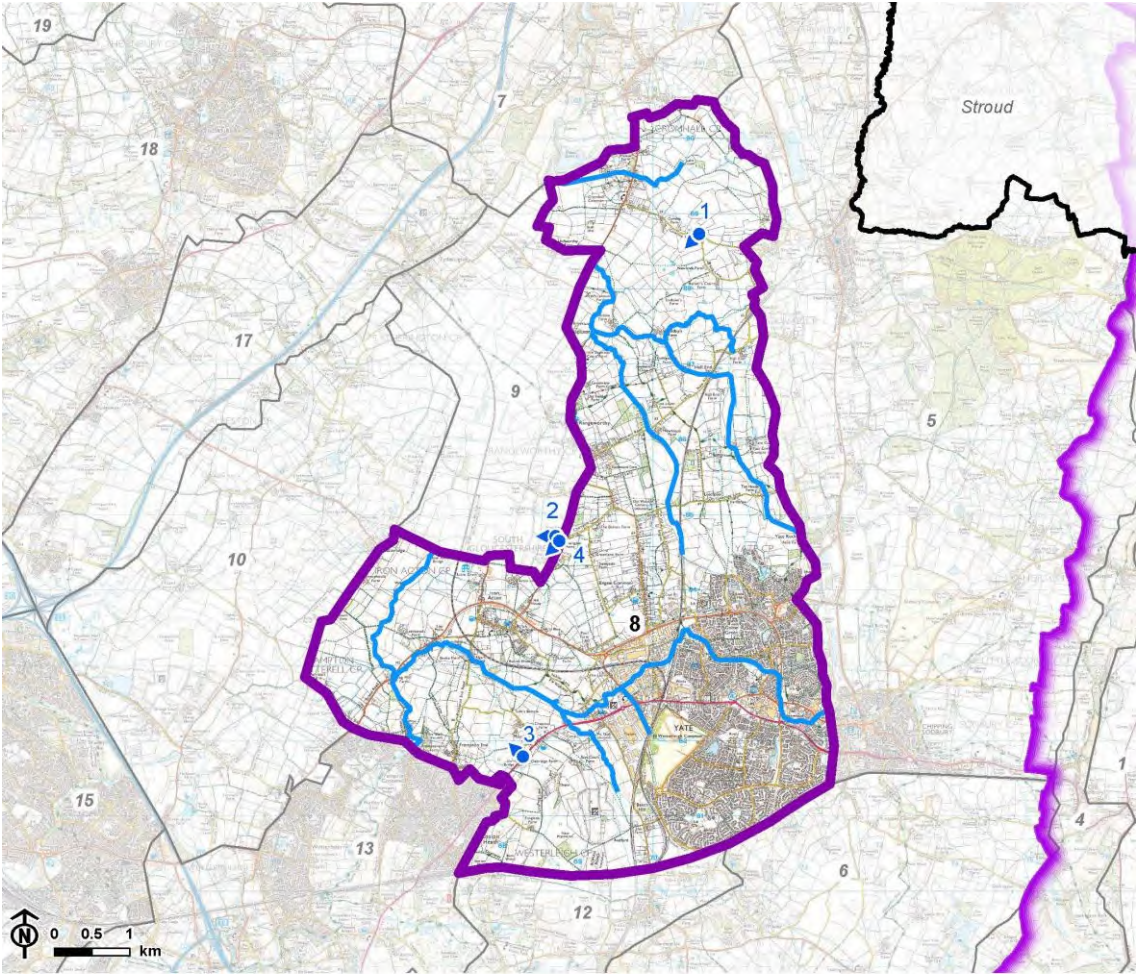
Photo 1: Gently sloping agricultural fields bounded by hedgerows and woodland



Location

The Yate Vale LCA is located in central South Gloucestershire. The northern boundary marks the transition between the vale and higher ground with a different settlement and field pattern within LCA 7: Falfield Vale. The eastern boundary is approximately defined by the toe of the Wickwar Ridge and eastern edge of Yate. The southern boundary follows the railway line and settlement edges of Yate, Coalpit Heath and Frampton Cotterell. The western boundary is defined by the rise in topography to the Marle Hills and B4058.

Figure 4.2: Location and Landscape Setting of LCA 8: Yate Vale



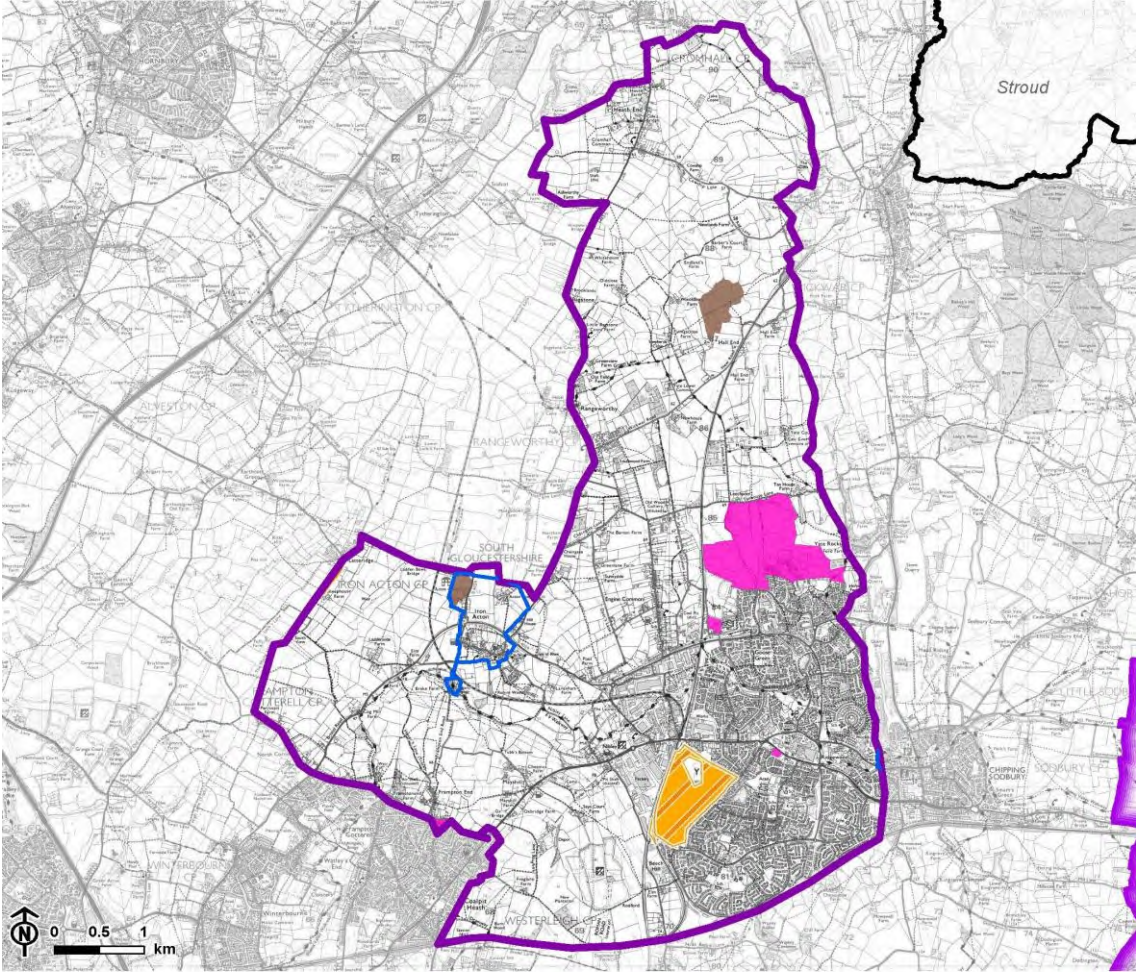
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-  LCA 8: Yate Vale
 -  Neighbouring LCA
 -  Council boundary
 -  Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
 -  River
-  Photograph location and direction



Shallow Vale LCT

Figure 4.3: Development and Heritage context of LCA 8: Yate Vale



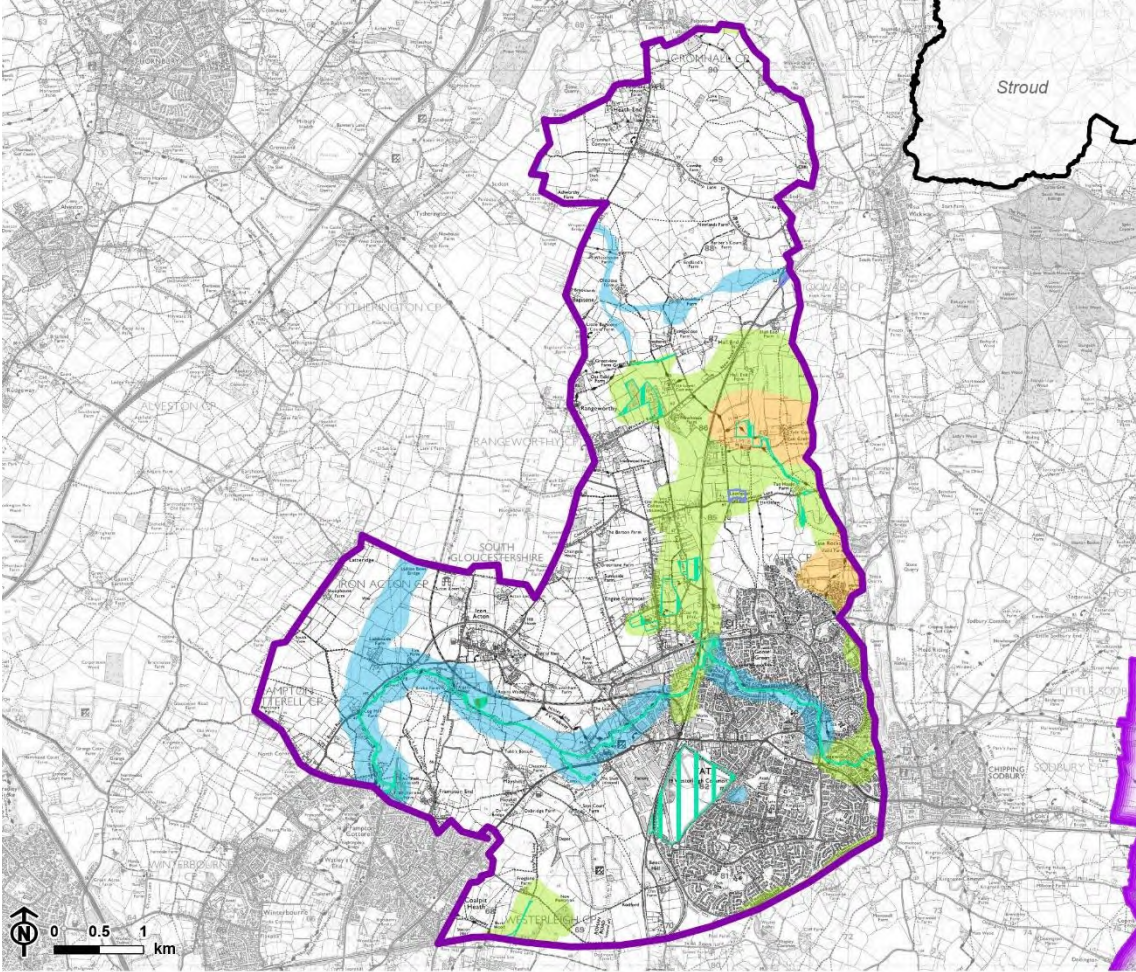
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-  LCA 8: Yate Vale
-  Council boundary
-  Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
-  CRoW Common Land
-  CRoW Open Access Land
-  Scheduled Monument
-  Conservation Area
-  Recent development (since 2014)



Shallow Vale LCT

Figure 4.4: Ecology and Biodiversity context of LCA 8: Yate Vale



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- LCA 8: Yate Vale
- Council boundary
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- Site of Nature Conservation Interest
- Ancient woodland
- Regionally Important Geological Site
- Grassland Strategic Network
- Wetland Strategic Network
- Woodland Strategic Network



Landscape Description

Key Characteristics

- Landform comprises a shallow vale with a simple, gently sloping landform.
- Medium sized pasture and arable fields are relatively irregular shaped to the north, with small to medium regular shaped fields near Engine Common and Rangeworthy.
- Fields are contained by clipped hedgerows with an even distribution of mature specimen trees.
- Areas of neutral grassland support a diverse range of flora including areas of species-rich grassland.
- North and west of Yate, tall overgrown hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees, copses and small woodlands create a more enclosed landscape. Elsewhere occasional small woodlands are scattered through parts of the area, often associated with relic coal mining, quarrying and the River Frome.
- The River Frome forms a wooded corridor with recreational routes following the river valley.
- Views are largely filtered by vegetation within this large-scale landscape, with some distant views possible. This LCA is overlooked by the adjacent Wickwar Ridge, the Marle Hills and over some distance from the Cotswold Scarp.
- Pennant stone walls feature along some minor roads to the south and B4058, elsewhere associated with older settlement and scattered farms.
- Settlement is focused within Yate in the south-east and the historic village of Iron Acton in the west. Frampton Cotterell extends into the south-west of the LCA.

Shallow Vale LCT

- Scattered linear settlements extend northwards from Yate and Iron Acton along the network of roads and lanes. This is mixed with an intricate landscape of dispersed settlement, historic courts, coal industry relics, commons, woodlands and fields.
- Numerous minor roads bisect the south of the LCA.
- The north of the LCA has relatively limited settlement, comprising scattered farmsteads and few roads, resulting in areas of tranquillity and an experience of dark skies.
- Overhead powerlines crossing the LCA form a visible horizontal and vertical element.

Natural Influences

Geology, Landform and Hydrology

The Yate Vale LCA largely consists of Carboniferous Coal Measures, with Pennant sandstones, mudstones and shales within the vale. There are some areas of Triassic Keuper marl, clays and sandstones along parts of the eastern and south-western boundary. The soils are dominated by a mix of Gleys, Stagnogleys and Brown Earth.

The LCA largely comprises part of the very shallow and broad Ladden Brook valley, which falls northwards from Yate at 85 metres AOD to 54 metres AOD. This LCA is contained to the east by the prominent Wickwar Ridge, which rises beyond the LCA boundary, on average 40 metres above the Ladden Valley floor. The southern end of the ridge forms a shallow escarpment at Yate Rocks and Bury Hill, both within the adjacent Wickwar Ridge and Vale LCA. The gradient slackens to provide the slightly elevated shallow bowl at 100 metres AOD within which Chipping Sodbury is located. Beyond the southern edge of Yate the land rises to form the Pucklechurch Ridge.

Shallow Vale LCT

West of the Ladden Valley a broad area of slightly elevated ground is followed by the B4058. To the north, land rises slightly at Heath End to 63 metres AOD. A tributary of the Little Avon River forms a small valley, flowing west and then northwards beyond this area.

The south-western extent of the LCA comprises the shallow and broad River Frome valley, which is joined by the Ladden Brook, having passed through the adjacent LCA 9: Tytherington Plain to the north. The valley floor lies at approximately 50 metres AOD, and is contained by the low ridgeline formed by the Marle Hills at approximately 65 metres AOD.

The LCA's watercourses, comprising the River Frome, Ladden Brook and Little Avon River largely form irregular brooks and stream channels. The River Frome is the most variable in channel form, flowing westwards through Yate, and then southwards through Frampton Cotterell. It variously forms a small natural river, a straightened channel and spillway (flood control measures) within Yate and south of Iron Acton. The river then follows an irregular, meandering course north of Frampton Cotterell.

The large-scale railway embankment of the South Wales to London line, on the southern boundary, is a significant man-made landform, superimposed on the gently undulating, natural ground form.

Land Cover

The Yate Vale LCA includes arable and pasture fields of varied pattern. The field pattern over much of the area is the result of parliamentary enclosure, which comprises regular shaped fields, small to medium in size, particularly near Engine Common and Rangeworthy. In the north, to the east of Bagstone, is an area of irregular shaped fields. Iron Acton also has a localised area of small to medium sized, rectangular fields. More extensively, south of Iron Acton, fields are generally medium sized and slightly more irregular in shape.

Shallow Vale LCT

Fields are largely contained by clipped hedges, with some tall overgrown hedges particularly to the north and west of Yate. Mature hedgerow trees (predominantly oak) are common in the LCA, except in north of the LCA, east of Heath End. Copses and small deciduous and mixed woodlands are common to the west and north of Yate, often marking former industrial sites, including relic coal mines and quarrying.

Horse paddocks are scattered across the LCA, largely to the west of Yate, between and adjacent to Iron Acton and Engine Common. Paddocks are bounded by overgrown hedgerows or fencing (either reinforcing gaps in hedgerows or replacing hedgerows altogether), and also use electric tape to subdivide fields.

Pennant stone boundary walls are a common feature in the south of the LCA, associated with ribbon settlements, at Acton Court, and along minor roads and the B4058. Hedge banks, including Pennant stone, are line to narrow lanes to the north of Frampton Cotterell.

There are small areas of common and heathland within the LCA, as at Mays Hill, Goose Green in Yate, Nibley and along the B4058 within Rangeworthy. Iron Acton has a village green in the centre of the settlement. Westerleigh Common is a large open space, contained on three sides by a mix of residential and industrial estate development west of Yate. It is largely grassland and used for recreation.

A history of mineral extraction has left its mark on the landscape. The extraction and burning of limestone has left small quarries and lime kilns along the toe of the Wickwar Ridge, near Yate Rocks/ Bury Hill in the east of the LCA. The remnants of a dramway, dating from the 1850's, runs west from these sites to the railway line. The extraction of celestite has left a number of small pits, now forming lakes. Small-scale remnants of stone and mineral extraction are also present north of Frampton Cotterell (Pennant sandstone) and between Engine Common and Rangeworthy (former colliery yard and coal pit). There is however, little visible evidence of the once extensive coal mining in the area, other than the woodland cover over these sites today. Former celestite

Shallow Vale LCT

extraction has also left small pools to the north of Yate, now largely colonised and enclosed by vegetation and woodland.

The urban area of Yate retains a variety of open space and parks amongst the dense settlement pattern. The extensive network of amenity space contains relic trees and hedgerows from its former agricultural use. Designed amenity space was created as part of the Radburn style housing layouts of the 1960's expansion of Yate, and largely comprises mown grass and individual trees. The River Frome corridor includes sections of a remnant rural landscape, with mature bankside trees and less distinct sections of amenity landscape, with regularly planted trees within mown grass. The rural sections of the River Frome, to the west of Yate, have occasional small woodland blocks and lengths of linear woodland.

Photo 2: Regular shaped fields near Rangeworthy with hedgerow trees



Shallow Vale LCT

Biodiversity

The rural areas of the Yate Vale LCA include a mosaic of grassland, woodland, arable and pastoral farmland with a criss-crossing of watercourses and ponds. Interconnected wildlife corridors include hedgerows, which provide an important habitat for a diverse range of species.

Woodland habitat comprises scattered woodlands and copses, with just 1 hectare of ancient woodland (representing 4% of the total woodland area in the LCA). Key species likely to be associated with the woodland include bats and dormice, both of which are present across the wider area and are UK priority species with associated Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP). Good connectivity exists for species such as these between the wooded areas and other habitats via hedgerows and scattered trees.

There are six sites within the Yate Vale designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs) for their neutral grassland habitat, including areas of species-rich grassland. 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.

This LCA is criss-crossed by a number of water courses, and many of the SNCIs within this LCA include a watercourse or tributary. The River Frome and Ladden Brook are designated as SNCIs specifically for their flowing water and bankside vegetation. These watercourses support a diverse range of species from aquatic macro-invertebrates to fish and water voles. In addition, ponds and pools within the area support amphibians such as great crested newts (a European Protected Species).

Agricultural areas comprise a patchwork of arable and pastoral farmland. The arable farmland in particular is an ideal habitat for many species of ground nesting farmland birds, including birds that are listed as being Globally Threatened Red listed species. The winter stubble also provides a valuable foraging resource for farmland birds.

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The disused quarries within the northern and western extents of the LCA may include underground quarries and mines that can provide an ideal habitat for many species of bat including European Protected Species.

Cultural Influences

Land Use and Time Depth

The Yate Vale LCA is largely an agricultural landscape with a mix of pastoral and arable land uses, except for the concentrated area of settlement in the south-east.

The village of Iron Acton, whose linear plan is typical of the planned settlements of the Middle Ages, is designated as a Conservation Area in recognition of its numerous historic buildings. The village was founded through its associations with ore extraction and iron workings. It consists largely of a mix of historic building styles, combined with a village green and other small public open spaces. The buildings are mainly constructed with Pennant sandstone and light-coloured render, with high stone walls defining property boundaries along the High Street.

Early evidence of human habitation of the landscape, include Earthworks associated with the small Roman town of Wickwar (now a Scheduled Monument) comprises an area of approximately 16 hectares and lies 2km to the south-west of Wickwar village. The site is situated on a slight crest which drops away at the northern end towards the Ladden Brook.

A cluster of grade II listed buildings at Yate Court, a medieval manor, are located north of Yate. The site is unique in being the only moated habitation within the South Gloucestershire area. It is surrounded by a former deer park, and the associated historic field boundaries are still partially evident in the current field pattern.

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Acton Court (a Scheduled Monument), located to the north of Iron Acton, is included within the wider Conservation Area. The site comprises a large Tudor house, walled grounds and decorative gateway. A former deer park lies to the north of Iron Acton, the majority of which is located within LCA 9: Tytherington Plain.

Settlement and Infrastructure

The Yate Vale LCA includes the large settlement of Yate, which has merged with Chipping Sodbury to the east to form a continuous urban area. The settlements are physically separated by the rising landform of the Wickwar Ridge, with a noticeable increase in elevation when approaching Chipping Sodbury from the west.

Although Yate has a medieval core, clustered around St Mary's Church, Goose Green and Yate Rocks, it grew rapidly in the 20th century to include extensive areas of housing. Concentrations of commercial and retail development are located along major roads with industrial estates located on the western fringe of the settlement.

Outside Yate, the settlement pattern of relatively dispersed houses is closely related to the road network. Engine Common is a distinct linear settlement, whilst Rangeworthy and Heath End are linear settlements with a clustered pattern located at road intersections. Iron Acton village, to the west of Yate, is probably the result of two settlements merging, now forming a linear settlement.

Farm building groups are numerous in the area, dispersed along minor roads or occasionally clustered together as seen at Mayshill.

The settlement edges of Frampton Cotterell and Coalpit Heath, which lie in the adjoining LCA 13: Frome Valley, form the south-western boundary of the LCA. Frampton End extends slightly northwards into this LCA and comprises scattered Pennant stone cottages, farm buildings and more recent housing infill along a winding country lane, flanked by open countryside. To the west, St

Shallow Vale LCT

Peter's Church also lies within this LCA within a tight meander of the River Frome, creating a break within the settlement pattern on the northern edge of Frampton Cotterell. The eastern edge of Coalpit Heath is defined by a linear, dense façade of 20th century brick housing, with a small clustered pattern at a minor road junction, near traditional farm buildings.

Numerous major and minor roads and lanes bisect the southern part of the area; however, in the north access is limited. The A432, with its high traffic volumes, extends from Yate to the M4 bisecting the village of Nibley. The B4059, B4060 and A432 connect Yate to Coalpit Heath, Frampton Cotterell and Bristol in the south, while the B4058 runs north–south and defines much of the western LCA boundary.

The minor roads and lanes link with the public rights of way network, which includes one of the Circular Rides in South Gloucestershire, the Jubilee Way and the Frome Valley Walkway, which are all promoted recreational routes.

A Circular Ride crosses the LCA east to west, largely along country lanes and one short section of bridleway. The route descends the Wickwar Ridge passing Engine Common, Yate and Iron Acton. The Avon Cycleway also partly follows this route, though crossing the LCA in a second location between Heath End and West End. The Jubilee Way passes through the south and centre of the LCA. The River Frome forms an important ecological and recreational corridor, and the Frome Valley Walkway largely follows the river's course from east to west.

Three railway lines cross the area. The Bristol to Gloucester line passes centrally south to north, largely at grade, entering into cutting and tunnel through the Wickwar Ridge. The London to South Wales line passes east to west along the southern LCA boundary, initially in cutting in the east and then on high embankment, with two blue brick arched bridges along the section between Yate and Coalpit Heath. A mineral line runs from Yate westwards, before turning north at Iron Acton. This was formerly the main line to Thornbury.

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The LCA is also crossed by numerous powerlines in a variety of directions, but principally west to east. Some powerlines converge on a sub-station beyond this LCA to the north of Latteridge (within the LCA 10: Earthcott Vale). In addition, one line runs north-south, near the eastern LCA boundary. An existing solar farm development is located to the west of Yate. A consented solar farm site is located in the north of the LCA, along the B4058 to the west of Wickwar.

Photo 3: Clustered farmsteads located along the road network



Perceptual Influences

Visual Character

The Yate Vale LCA is gently sloping, forming the eastern segment of a wider broad, rolling and curved vale, which extends into the adjacent LCA 9: Tytherington Plain, although distinct from the plain's gentler landform, simpler pattern of land cover and sparse settlement. The low-lying landscape is contained by the gently rising landforms of the Wickwar and Pucklechurch Ridges (to the east), the Marle Hills (to the west) and Severn Ridge (to the

Shallow Vale LCT

north). These slopes contribute visually to the rural setting, sense of enclosure and scale of the LCA.

Views in the LCA are typically filtered by the layers of vegetation, with open views generally only possible from higher ground, such as from the adjacent Wickwar Ridge, the Marle Hills, or from elevated open spaces within Yate, such as at Tyler's Field. Distant views also extend over this area from the Cotswold Scarp (LCA 4), from where the low-lying vale and strong vegetation structure forms part of a much larger panorama, extending to the LCA 18: Severn Ridges.

The rural areas of the Ladden Brook valley, in the east of the LCA, and River Frome valley, in the south-west of the LCA, generally have a subtle landform, semi-enclosed by clipped hedgerows and an even distribution of mature specimen trees which creates a structured landscape pattern.

Immediately to the north and west of Yate, the landscape is more enclosed with tall overgrown hedgerows, mature hedgerow trees, copses and small woodlands. In contrast, an area to the east of Heath End is more open, with few hedgerow trees. This allows views eastwards across the LCA to Wickwar Quarry (within the adjacent LCA 5: Wickwar Ridge and Vale), where a section of quarry face and associated buildings on the skyline are visible. Similarly, the area between Yate and Coalpit Heath/Frampton End has few hedgerow trees, which, combined with a shallow open valley, allows some open distant views across to the industrial edge of Yate.

Horse paddocks, particularly to the west of Yate, have resulted in the decline or loss of hedgerows leading to a more open character. Stables, parked vehicles, open storage, jumps and other features associated with the keeping of horses are relatively visible in this open landscape.

The urban edges of Yate are not particularly visible from within the wider vale landscape in the centre and north of the LCA, due to the layered effect of vegetation and generally low-lying nature of views. Within southerly views the tower of St. Mary's Church forms a landmark.

Shallow Vale LCT

The western urban edge of Yate is however very prominent within local views, including from Nibley and Westerleigh Common, and in more distant views from Coalpit Heath and LCA 5: Wickwar Ridge to the east of this LCA. From these locations the density of residential development and large-scale industrial units form stark urban edges, though maturing landscape works provide some integration.

Dense settlement influences the south-western boundary of the LCA. The settlement edge of Frampton Cotterell and Frampton End in the west of the LCA are well-integrated by the strong hedgerow and tree structure, the riparian vegetation along the River Frome and wooded mound of the former iron workings. St. Peter's Church forms a local landmark, visible within rural views to the north and along the northern edge of Frampton Cotterell.

The eastern edge of Coalpit Heath forms a more prominent built edge against the rural landscape beyond. Gently rising ground to the east however limits views of this edge from the wider landscape.

The London to South Wales railway, on high embankment along the southern LCA boundary, physically contains views both into and out from the south-western corner of the LCA. The tall arched, brick bridges are distinctive local features, also found within the LCA 13: Frome Valley to the west. Overhead railway gantries form a significant feature. Linear woodland that formerly covered significant lengths of embankment was previously removed for maintenance works, though some lower-density maturing compensatory planting is softening this artificial skyline.

Powerlines and pylons, many converging on the substation to the north of Latteridge (within the LCA 10: Earthcott Vale, form strong vertical and horizontal elements within the landscape that are prominent within many of the distant views, particularly in the south of the LCA.

Photo 4: Partially enclosed character with influence of settlement and electricity infrastructure



Tranquillity and Dark Skies

Much of the LCA experienced reduced levels of tranquillity given the presence of settlement at Yate and busy roads in the south including the B4059, B4060 and A432. The Bristol-Gloucester and South Wales-London railway lines influence tranquillity where passing at grade or on embankment. Light pollution associated with Yate, Coalpit Heath and Frampton Cotterell influence the experience of dark skies in the south of the LCA.

The north of the LCA is relatively tranquil and has a relatively good experience of dark skies with low levels of light pollution.

Visually Important Hillside

The LCA is flanked along its eastern edge by the Wickwar Ridge Visually Important Hillside (VIH), which is mainly located within LCA 5 but passes into this LCA along the eastern settlement edge of Yate. The Wickwar Ridge VIH is a linear steep ridge that is relatively narrow in width, which extends into the town of Yate. The Wickwar Ridge forms a distinctive landscape feature in views, emphasised by the lower-lying vale landscape to the west.

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

Strategic Viewpoints

There are no Strategic Viewpoints (SVP) located within this LCA. Further details are provided in **Annex II: Strategic Viewpoints**.

Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Valued Features

- The network of hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees that create a strong landscape framework and provide habitat connectivity.
- Areas of neutral grassland (including areas of species-rich grassland) that support a diverse range of flora with some areas locally designated as SNCIs.
- The flowing water and bankside vegetation of watercourses and associated tributaries (many of which are designated as SNCI) that provides habitat for a range of notable species and contributes to biodiversity. Most notably, the River Frome and its riparian vegetation provides an important corridor for habitat connectivity and recreation.
- Views of the rural landscape of the north of the LCA from the Wickwar Ridge, Marle Hills and Cotswold Scarp, which contributes to sense of place and scenic value.
- The Iron Acton Conservation Area, with its linear planned village, historic buildings including Acton Court (Scheduled Monument), and rural setting, which adds time depth.
- The cluster of grade II listed buildings at Yate Court and the associated former deer park with historic field patterns, which add time depth.
- The network of public rights of way and cycle paths, including the Jubilee Way, Frome Valley Walkway, Avon Cycleway and Circular Ride, that provide recreational opportunities across the landscape.
- The rural character and relative tranquillity of the north of the area, which contributes to sense of place.

The Changing Landscape

The following section sets out the changes and pressures to the Yate Vale LCA.

Climate Change

- Climate change leading to increased temperatures and periods of drought resulting in a change in stream flows, altering the species composition of wetland habitats (ponds, flowing open water and bankside vegetation associated with SNCIs), particularly the River Frome.
- Climate change resulting in an increase in the frequency and severity of seasonal flooding in lower-lying valleys in the north and west of the LCA. Associated pressures to build flood management works that are unsympathetic to local landscape character and sensitive habitats.

Climate Emergency and Nature Recovery

- Pressure to expand existing and consented solar farm development in the south and north of the LCA would likely result in further adverse and cumulative effects on landscape character and visual amenity.
- 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 additional woodlands in a corridor fringing the north side of Yate, linking existing woodlands and extending to the woodland complex around and south of Lower Woods as set out in the Forest of Avon's Tree and Woodland Strategy. This may change the character of views towards Wickwar Ridge, although this may also contribute to the softening or screening of quarry operations along the ridge.

Land Use and Cover

- The existing hedgerow and tree structure is generally in a good condition. However, the mature trees have few juvenile trees to sustain the future long-term framework. A decline or loss of hedgerow trees, overgrown hedgerows or woodland would increase the visual prominence of existing settlement and infrastructure within the area and from LCA 5: Wickwar Ridge, reducing the present perception of rurality in the north of the LCA.
- The effectiveness of hedgerows for stock control will reduce in time if not managed. Bringing these features back under management, will initially result in the loss of screening and change the enclosed character of the local landscape, particularly where they predominate to the north of Yate.
- Loss or degradation of hedgerows or tree cover would also impact on the habitat value of the landscape and potentially on connectivity between habitats.
- Pools and ponds and surrounding terrestrial habitats are vulnerable to loss or degradation.
- Areas of relatively recent woodland planting, undertaken under the Forest of Avon initiative, at Tyler's Field within Yate, Rangeworthy and Westerleigh Common is softening views of built development and providing habitat connectivity throughout the wider landscape.
- Recreational pressure for 'horsiculture' is evident particularly along the edges of settlements leading to the loss or erosion of hedgerows. The cumulative effect of this and the associated infrastructure can result in a marked change in landscape character as well as impact on biodiversity.
- Pennant stone boundary walls around individual properties in the south are largely in good condition. However, in some locations (e.g. along the B4058), the condition of walling is variable, influencing the character of the locality.
- In the north of the area, to the east of Heath End, few mature trees, low tightly clipped hedges and a rising landform allow open views across the landscape. The Heath End area is highly sensitive to any visible land use change which has the potential to erode the rural landscape character.

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- Similarly, change along the toe, slopes or skyline of the Wickwar Ridge (within LCA 5), has the potential to be visually intrusive (as seen at Wickwar Quarry to the east), influencing rural views experienced both along the ridge and within the vale below.

Development

- The settlement edges of Yate are poorly integrated and have a visual influence on the adjacent rural fringe, due to limited vegetation including a lack of new planting to accompany more recent housing development. The scale of commercial and industrial estate warehouses on the western edge of Yate has a significant impact, although associated landscape works is maturing to provide some integration with the wider landscape. The visibility of Yate's extending northern fringe in views from the Wickwar Ridge make this area sensitive to change. Another feature of the area is infill and intensification of use of existing sites, such as Brimsham School and Broad Lane Depot.
- Recent expansion of settlement to the north of Yate has extended the influence of development into the countryside. As the landscaping associated with this recent development matures, the green infrastructure network should help not only to provide an appropriate buffer between the urban and rural landscape, but also break up the areas of built form in views from higher ground.
- The national trend of increasing traffic levels, with the potential for subsequent road widening, threatens some of the more populated ribbon settlements and associated routes. Currently these minor roads typically maintain a small-scale presence and follow traditional routes which have evolved over time. There are, however, examples of more recent road construction which have resulted in a significant impact in the locality, including the Iron Acton bypass (built in 1967), which cut through the village green to the north and the A432, creating severance through Nibley to the west of Yate.
- An increase in traffic volumes and/or a perceived need for highway improvement measures, has the potential to introduce standard highway design solutions including kerbs, new signage and materials, which will

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have a localised but cumulative, effect eroding the existing rural character within settlements and rural corridors.

- The solar park development at Says Court has altered the character of this locality; maturing landscaping surrounding the scheme will reinforce the existing landscape pattern and should in time help to absorb this development into the landscape. Some aspects, including ancillary equipment buildings that are located on a gentle ridge are however likely to remain relatively prominent in the landscape.
- The northern edge of Frampton Cotterell, at Frampton End, is well-integrated and largely visually contained behind an established and strong pattern of hedgerows, trees and small woodlands. This area is therefore less sensitive to change, although any loss of vegetation has the potential to erode this rural character, and increase the prominence of the existing settlement edge or any subsequent change.
- The eastern edge of Coalpit Heath is partially screened from the Yate Vale by a low gentle ridge to the east of the settlement, making it less sensitive to change along the immediate settlement edge. However, large-scale change has the potential to be prominent, due to limited tree and woodland cover which results in relatively open character of the landscape.
- The rural village character of Engine Common and Rangeworthy comprises a linear settlement pattern, often interspersed with small fields. It is sensitive to incremental infill or the cumulative effect of changes that have the potential to alter this distinctive pattern, through the coalescence of built forms, increased density of development, or loss of vegetation features and stone walls. Such change could lead to the urbanisation of road corridors and loss of rural village characteristics. Further proposed development at Engine Common, and the recent expansion of the northern edge of Yate, may influence the linear form of the settlement, lead to further encroachment into the rural landscape and contribute to the sense of coalescence between Engine Common, Rangeworthy and Yate.
- The remaining small linear settlement areas of Iron Acton and Heath End and the clustered settlements of Nibley and Mayshill, also have a distinctive character. These areas would be sensitive to change which

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could erode the existing architectural form and pattern or disturb the vegetation framework, which provides a setting for and integration of the settlements.

- Embankment stabilisation works which cleared tree cover have significantly increased the prominence of the railway within the landscape, however some maturing compensatory planting is softening the appearance of embankments. Electrification of the London to South Wales railway line has added to the visual intrusion of the line from overhead gantries.

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 Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) Landscape Strategy and Guidelines [See reference 1], as well as the overarching management strategy objectives set out in Chapter 4.

Landscape Strategy

Landscape Management

- Restore, maintain and reinforce the characteristic hedgerows, dry stone walls, historic field patterns and mosaic of habitats of the Yate Vale. Protect and extend hedgerow tree cover.
- Address potential for flooding issues with the implementation of natural flood management schemes in the south of the LCA, in line with the aims of the River Frome Reconnected project.
- Protect and enhance the special character, significance or setting of the parkland, historic field patterns and earthworks associated with Acton Court Scheduled Monument, Yate Court and their deer parks, as well as the landscape pattern of the Engine Common area. Measures should

include securing succession planting and landscape management plans.

- Protect the character of the lane network from damage by maintaining roadside stone walls, hedges and trees, and managing road verges to promote grassland interest (e.g., around Acton Court, Engine Common, and Nibley).
- Quarry restoration schemes should incorporate a robust landscape mitigation strategy and structure that ensures their re-integration into the appearance of the wider landscape, and its mosaic of habitats.
- Preserve and enhance the landscape setting of Iron Acton Conservation Area, together with key views towards it and looking out from it, and respect its characteristic mosaic of interlinked built and open spaces.
- Protect the landscape setting of the scheduled small Roman Town at Hall End.

Ecology/Biodiversity Management

- Protect and extend the strategic neutral and species-rich grassland network including Sodbury Common and Westerleigh (Yate) Common.
- Conserve and enhance the existing populations of notable habitats (including priority habitat deciduous woodland, good quality semi-improved grassland and lowland meadow), ensuring that there is no net loss of biodiversity.
- Protect and improve the riparian habitat of the River Frome and seek opportunities to naturalise sections currently impacted by engineering structures (except heritage features), together with opportunities for enhance recreational access, particularly through Yate and Chipping Sodbury.
- Encourage restoration of buffer strips along watercourses and field ponds to minimise run off to maintain the biodiversity of wetland features, in line with the aims of the River Frome Reconnected project.

- Enhance and manage tree and hedge planting in appropriate locations along the River Frome corridor, in line with the aims of the River Frome Reconnected project and Forest of Avon Tree and Woodland Strategy.
- Support the planting of new wildflower habitats along B-lines within the west of the LCA (identified by Buglife), that will contribute to the national pollinator network.

Development Management

- Encourage and enhance small-scale woodland planting in proximity to prominent industrial and residential development, to minimise the influence of development and settlement edges on the wider rural landscape.
- The landscape strategy for new development should ensure a green character in views from adjacent high ground, including the Wickwar Ridge, Marle Hills and more distant Cotswold Scarp, and visual buffering from the surrounding rural landscape particularly in the north of the LCA.
- Protect and enhance the linear settlement pattern and associated historic field pattern of the Engine Common area.
- Encourage the use of building materials that respect and integrate with the local vernacular, in particular Pennant Sandstone with carboniferous limestone closer to the Wickwar Ridge area.
- Avoid disturbance of the remaining areas of tranquillity and dark skies in the north of the LCA. Lighting design needs careful consideration especially on the edge of settlements and in rural areas, both to minimise impact on landscape character and avoid disruption to vulnerable species.
- Cumulative impact of existing solar PV farms has significantly altered the character of the landscape, and further development of this type should be avoided.

LCA 9: Tytherington Plain

The Tytherington Plain landscape character area (LCA) is a flat open agricultural landscape, rising gently at the boundaries. It is divided by a regular framework of hedges and ditches and its rural character is influenced by a number of powerlines.

Photo 1: Flat agricultural fields crossed by powerlines



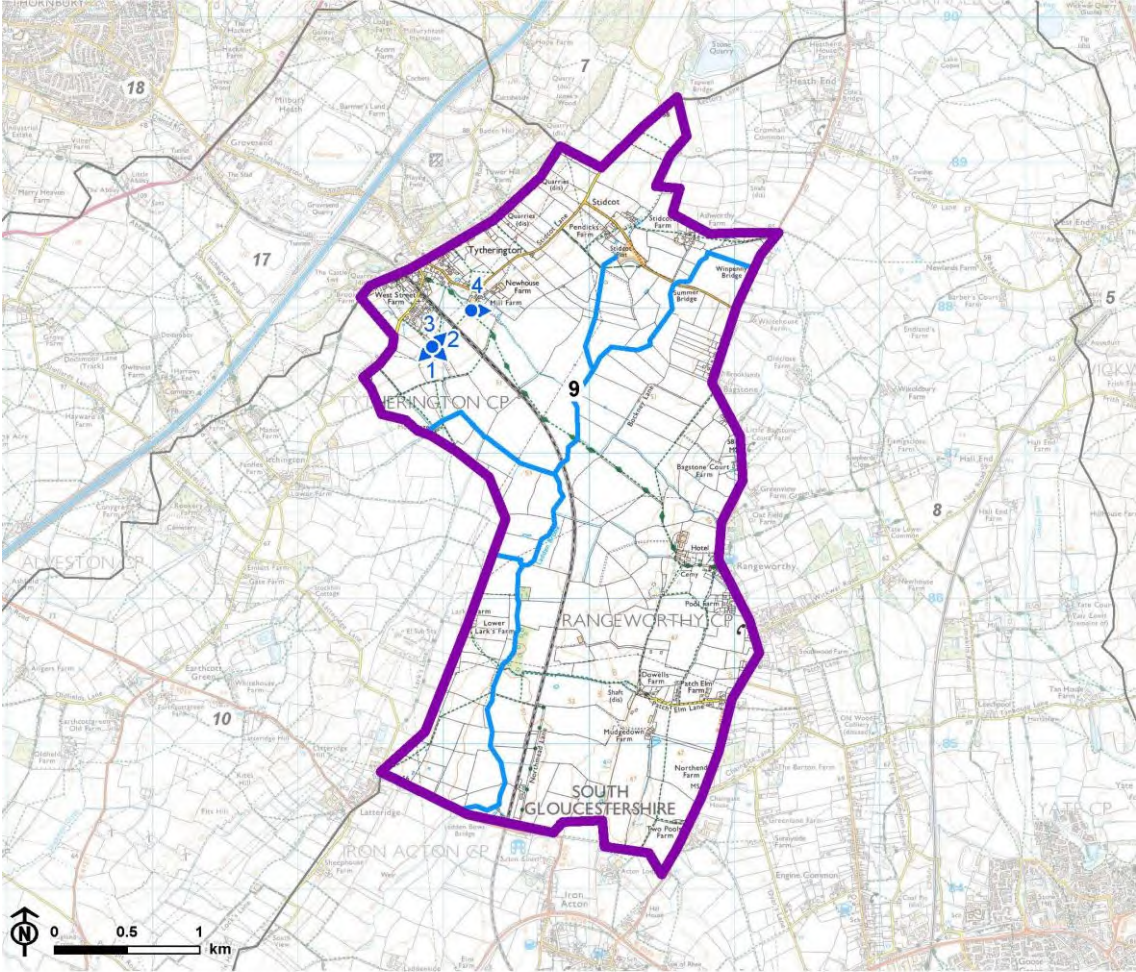
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Location






The Tytherington Plain LCA is located in central South Gloucestershire. The eastern boundary follows the B4058 as it runs along a low ridge. The central western boundary marks a transition between this LCA's limited tree cover and the denser pattern of hedgerow trees in the adjacent LCA 10: Earthcott Vale. The south-western boundary follows the slightly higher ground of The Marle Hills at Latteridge, which partly contains the southern area of the LCA. The southern boundary partly follows the B4059.


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Figure 4.5: Location and Landscape Setting of LCA 9: Tytherington Plain



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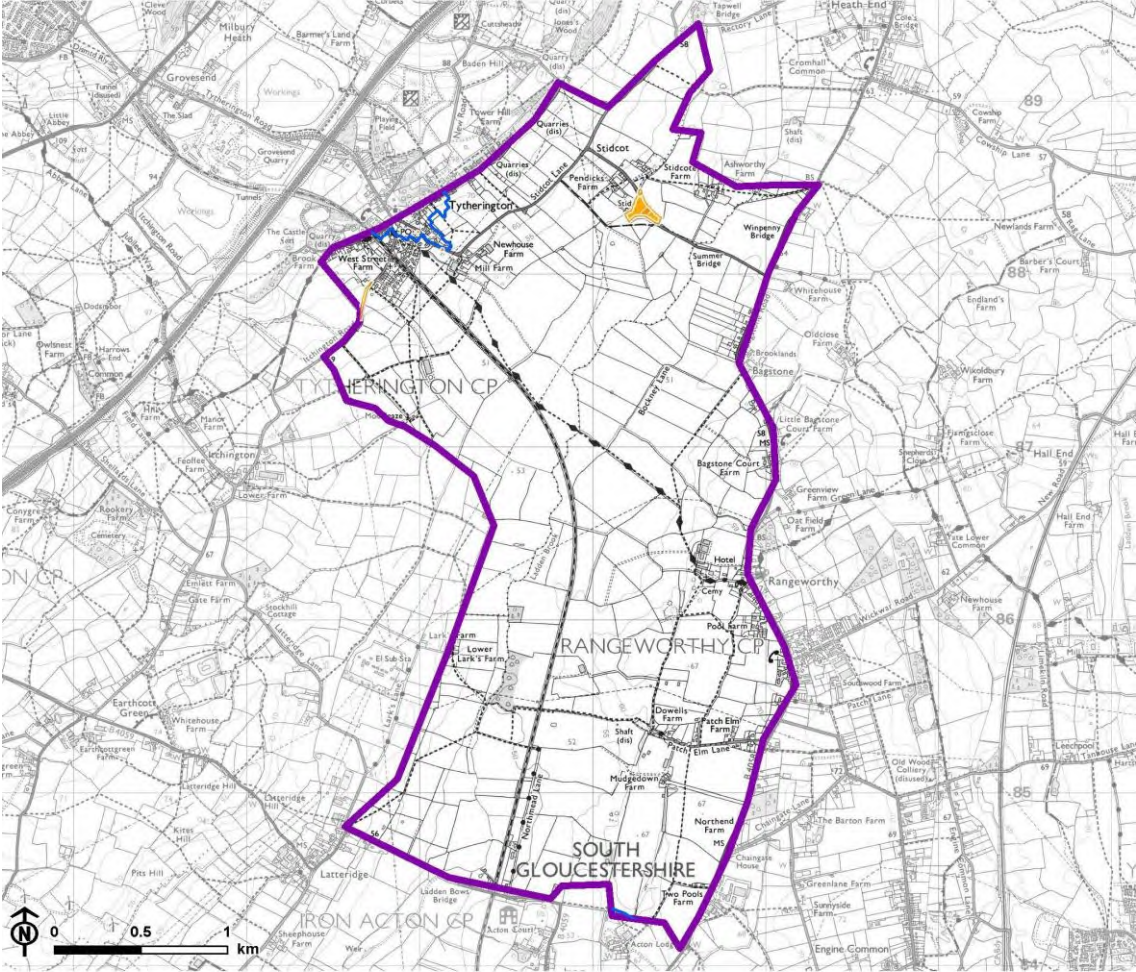
-  LCA 9: Tytherington Plain
-  Neighbouring LCA
-  Council boundary
-  River
-  Photograph location and direction

 Strategic viewpoint and angle



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Figure 4.6: Development and Heritage context of LCA 9: Tytherington Plain



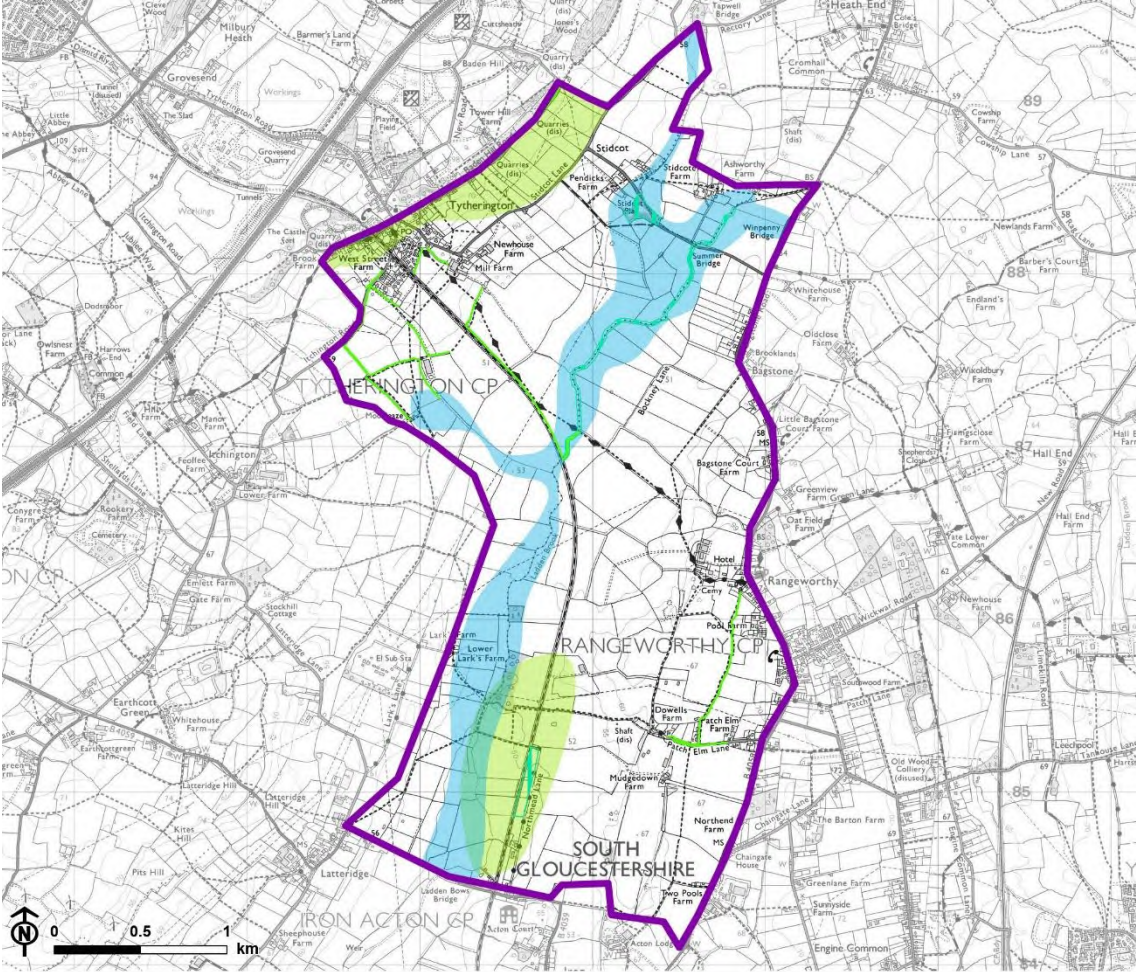
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-  LCA 9: Tytherington Plain
-  Council boundary
-  CRoW Common Land
-  CRoW Open Access Land
-  Conservation Area



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Figure 4.7: Ecology and Biodiversity context of LCA 9: Tytherington Plain



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-  LCA 9: Tytherington Plain
-  Site of Nature Conservation Interest
-  Wetland Strategic Network
-  Woodland Strategic Network
-  Important hedgerow



Landscape Description

Key Characteristics

- The simple, flat open plain in the north transitions to a very gently sloping valley to the south. The LCA is partly contained by gently rising land to the east, north-west and south-west.
- A large area of the plain is seasonally affected by flooding.
- The landscape is crossed by water courses and associated bankside vegetation of the Ladden Brook, its tributaries and a regular pattern of connecting ditches.
- Land use is mostly arable farmland with limited pasture. Fields are medium sized fields with a distinctly regular pattern.
- Within the northern plain, fields are defined by drainage ditches, while elsewhere they are contained by low clipped hedges, some overgrown, with intermittent mature trees and copses.
- Areas of neutral grassland support a diverse range of flora including areas of species-rich grassland.
- Tree cover is limited, except on higher ground along the boundaries of the LCA and in the south.
- The minerals railway line, bordered by trees and scrub, physically bisects the area north to south and forms a visual barrier within some views.
- An area with limited settlement and road infrastructure. Isolated properties, farms, some linear settlement and the small village of Tytherington line minor roads along the edges of the area.
- A number of powerlines cross and dominate the open landscape, converging on a sub-station within the adjacent LCA 10: Earthcott Vale to the south-west.
- Relatively dark skies are experienced in the centre and north of the LCA.

Natural Influences

Geology, Landform and Hydrology

The Tytherington Plain LCA largely consists of Carboniferous Westphalian rock and Coal Measures with some limestone along the northern boundary. The soils are dominated by a mix of Gleys, Stagnogleys and Brown Earth.

The topography of this area is generally flat, around 50 metres AOD rising slightly at its fringes. The LCA forms a very shallow basin within an overall broad vale landscape which includes the adjacent LCA 10: Earthcott Vale to the west and LCA 8: Yate Vale to the south and east. Within this context, the minerals railway line forms a significant landform feature, with one section on embankment south-east of Tytherington.

The Ladden Brook is the principal watercourse, which flows southwards through this relatively level landscape. The plain is extensively dissected by drainage ditches which influence the regular field pattern. This regular pattern and straightened sections of the Ladden Brook are the result of deliberate historic drainage measures to improve marsh and heathland for agricultural purposes. Seasonal flooding after continuous heavy rain can cover a significant area of the plain. The land rises in the north-west towards the Tytherington Ridge, in the south-west, at Latteridge (up to 61 metres AOD), and to the east along the B4058 (up to 67 metres AOD), defining the shallow Ladden Brook valley. This valley continues southwards and joins the River Frome in the adjacent LCA 8: Yate Vale.

Land Cover

The Tytherington Plain LCA typically consists of medium sized, regular shaped fields of predominantly arable land with limited pasture. Some smaller field patterns are clustered around scattered properties and farms. These comprise ordered, narrow, rectangular shaped fields in the north. Field boundaries principally comprise clipped hedges, often intermittent, some removed within the central area and occasionally replaced with fencing. Drainage ditches and

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streams physically contain fields, particularly in the north of the LCA. Through the centre of the area, the Ladden Brook and its tributaries are generally open, straight channels, flanked by agricultural fields and post and wire fences.

Tree cover is limited within the LCA, and is confined to scattered mature hedgerow trees, isolated trees remaining from removed hedgerows, occasional copses or clumps of trees. There are also some trees and scrub along the railway line. Tree cover is more evenly distributed on higher ground towards the LCA's boundaries and in the south. Small remnants of traditional orchards (priority habitat) are present around the edge of Tytherington.

Some local variations in land cover occur within the LCA. Rangeworthy Court, west of Rangeworthy, comprises a parkland of mature tree specimens within grassland. The adjacent remains of medieval fishponds are enclosed by trees with rough grassland. A former deer park extends into the south of the LCA, associated with Acton Lodge. Stidcot Plat Common, in the north of the LCA and north-east of Tytherington, comprises a small, isolated area of neutral unimproved pasture, fringed by trees and clipped hedgerows.

Photo 2: Medium-scale fields with hedgerow boundaries, with more distant woodland along the edges of the LCA



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Biodiversity

The general lack of woodland within this LCA means that the hedgerows and any hedgerow trees are important landscape features and provide habitats for a range of species. They are likely to form roosting features for bats and dormice both of which are present across the wider area and are UK priority species with associated Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP). The hedgerows are a major food source and provide commuting routes across the area.

The few Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs) within this character area are varied and scattered. Two areas of neutral grassland are designated as SNCIs and support a range of invertebrates which in turn provide a food source for mammals including bats.

The Ladden Brook, designated as an SNCI, is the main watercourse within this area. Its tributaries, in the form of drainage ditches, were created as irrigation for the surrounding arable farmland. These water courses support a diverse range of species from aquatic macro-invertebrates to fish and water voles. In addition, scattered ponds and pools within the area support amphibians such as great crested newts (a European Protected Species).

Agricultural land use within this area is dominated by arable cultivation with some areas of pastoral farmland. The arable farmland provides a habitat for many species of ground nesting farmland birds including birds which are listed as Globally Threatened Red listed species, while the winter stubble provides a valuable foraging resource.

There are small areas of good quality semi-improved grassland priority habitat in the south of the LCA, small areas of traditional orchard priority habitat in the north-west of the LCA, and more extensive areas of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh priority habitat in the west of the LCA.

The Strategic Blue-Green Infrastructure Corridor G: Wickwar-Iron Acton (*Ladden Valley*) follows the course of Ladden Brook across the LCA. A small area of the Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridor B: Charfield-Alveston-Hallen (*Western Scarp/Severn Ridges*) passes along the north-western boundary of the LCA.

Cultural Influences

Land Use and Time Depth

Land use across the Tytherington Plain LCA is primarily associated with agricultural practices (mainly arable).

The Tytherington Conservation Area extends into the north-west of the LCA. The Conservation Area includes key properties and a framework of tall boundary walls, all constructed of Pennant sandstone. The church and public house, located at the heart of the village (and on the boundary of the LCA), are prominent locally. The open fields of the LCA form the context of key outward views from the Conservation Area towards the Wickwar Ridge.

A parkland landscape of mature specimen trees within grassland forms the setting to a cluster of listed buildings at Rangeworthy Court, in the east of the LCA. Historic field patterns associated with the remnants of a former deer park extend from Acton Court (located in the LCA 8: Yate Vale) into the south of the LCA.

Settlement and Infrastructure

Settlement within lower-lying extents of the LCA is limited to the hamlet of Stidcot and a few isolated farms within the north and south-east of the LCA. Elsewhere, settlement is located on slightly raised ground on the periphery of the LCA, including the village of Tytherington which lies partly within this LCA. Similarly, the linear settlements of Rangeworthy and Bagstone are located on a slight ridge along the B4058, on the eastern boundary of the LCA.

Tytherington (designated as a Conservation Area) is located at a confluence of roads on the lower slopes of Tytherington Hill, partly extending into this LCA. More recent housing has developed out from the village centre beyond the Conservation Area boundary, either concentrated in a small close or a linear pattern along lanes.

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Only one minor road crosses the northern low-lying plain at Stidcot. Minor roads and lanes elsewhere are limited to the LCA's boundaries. The B4058 passes along upper slopes of the low ridge defining the Ladden Valley, from Iron Acton to Heath End. The B4059 runs to the south from Iron Acton through Latteridge, across the Ladden Brook valley. An angular pattern of lanes around Tytherington runs parallel to the rising landform with occasional acute bends.

The Jubilee Way passes south-eastwards from Tytherington to Rangeworthy, over the central plain area. A Circular Ride enters the periphery of the LCA, following lanes through Tytherington. The footpath network within the LCA is otherwise very limited.

A minerals railway line, formerly the main line from Thornbury, runs north-west to south-east through the central plain and Ladden Brook valley, linking the quarries at Tytherington to Yate, via Iron Acton.

A number of powerlines cross the plain, radiating out from the large Iron Acton electricity sub-station located to the west, within the adjacent well treed LCA 10: Earthcott Vale.

Photo 3: Views towards the settlement edge of Tytherington in the north-west of the LCA



Perceptual Influences

Visual Character

The Tytherington Plain LCA comprises a flat open plain to the north and very gently sloping valley of the Ladden Brook to the south. The area is contained by gently rising slopes to the east, south-west, west (although less evident) and the more prominent wooded Tytherington Ridge to the north-west. The pattern and location of settlement and built features (with the exception of the minerals railway) is limited to higher ground above the floodplain.

The open plain is a large-scale and simple landscape, emphasised by the flat landform, the limited framework provided by the open straight ditches, clipped sometimes intermittent hedges and scattered mature trees. The mature specimen trees provide important, though infrequent, vertical visual features. Wide open skies are a key feature.

The clipped and intermittent hedgerows provide little visual containment. However, along the limited network of lanes and roads, where the hedgerows are typically more dense and often overgrown, views are contained. Stone walls form characteristic features extending along the B4058, sometimes intermittently, between Iron Acton to the south and Bagstone. Stone walls also define the extent of Rangeworthy Court, extending into the agricultural landscape.

Further south, within the more defined Ladden Valley and on rising ground towards the boundaries of the area, the landscape is more contained and structured by an irregular pattern of copses, tree clumps, and hedgerow trees, which occasionally screen and filter outward views.

The minerals railway line, edged with trees and scrub, forms a visually significant linear feature in localised views, containing some views across the open plain to east and west. However, the occasional passage of trains is relatively evident in this open landscape.

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Tytherington and the wooded ridgeline of the LCA 17: Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge to the west, punctuated by Baden Hill to the north-west, feature in some distant views from the road network and public footpaths.

Settlement does not have a major influence on this LCA, as it contains only a scattering of isolated properties and farms. The linear settlements on the periphery of the LCA are generally well-integrated by the surrounding hedgerow and tree vegetation.

Tytherington village is generally well-integrated, set against a wooded ridgeline. The church tower forms a focal point in views from the wider landscape. The more recent village extension eastwards is locally prominent, due to the limited vegetation along this section of the settlement edge and the open landscape context. The regular layout visually extends the village towards the open plain, diluting the historic clustered settlement pattern associated with the Tytherington Ridge.

Large farm sheds within the LCA are also locally prominent, due to their scale, massing and materials, with buildings often taller than the surrounding vegetation framework, or located within an open landscape setting.

The powerlines and pylons that cross the area are prominent horizontal and vertical elements and dominate many local views, due to the openness of the landscape. The Iron Acton sub-station to the west (within the LCA 10: Earthcott Vale) is not visible, contained within a strong structure of mature trees beyond this LCA. However, the convergence of powerlines and pylons towards the sub-station is highly prominent. Operational wind turbines in the adjacent LCA 10: Earthcott Vale are also evident in views west from the LCA.

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Photo 4: Open views overlooking flat and simple landform in the north of the LCA, with an influence of electricity infrastructure



Tranquillity and Dark Skies

Settlement and busy roads on the boundaries of the LCA influence the sense of tranquillity experienced within the LCA. The occasional passage of trains on the minerals railway line also influences tranquillity.

Relatively dark skies are experienced in the centre and north of the LCA. The proximity of Tytherington, the Iron Acton substation and Iron Acton village result in some light pollution along the north-western and southern boundaries of the LCA.

Visually Important Hillside

There are no Visually Important Hillside (VIH) located within this LCA. However, it is enclosed along its north-western edge by the Wick's/Butchers Hill and Baden Hill VIH (located within LCA 7 and LCA 17) which is an elevated area punctuated by three hills, most notably Wick's Hill. The southern section of the VIH forms part of the setting of the Tytherington Conservation Area (located partially within this LCA), and its northern section is an intrinsic part of the character of the Tortworth Court RPG (Grade II*, located within LCA 7: Falfield Vale).

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

Strategic Viewpoints

There are no Strategic Viewpoints (SVP) located within this LCA. Further details are provided in **Annex II: Strategic Viewpoints**.

Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Valued Features

- Water courses (including Ladden Brook) and associated vegetation provide wildlife corridors and habitat for a diverse range of species.
- The interconnecting network of drainage ditches that influence the regular field pattern and provide habitat connectivity.
- Pockets of neutral grassland and more extensive areas of floodplain grazing marsh that contribute to the generally open character of the LCA and provide a valued habitat.
- Smaller areas of priority habitat traditional orchard contribute to the character of the Tytherington settlement edge and provide a valued habitat.
- The Tytherington Conservation Area and key outward views east across the relatively open plain of the LCA towards the Wickwar Ridge.
- The limited settlement and road infrastructure that contributes to the sense of rurality and experience of dark night skies in the centre and north of the LCA.
- The landscape pattern of flat regular-shaped medium-sized fields with relatively open character that contributes to the sense of place.

The Changing Landscape

The following section sets out the changes and pressures to the Tytherington Plain LCA.

Climate Change

- Increase in frequency and severity of seasonal flooding, which already affects a large area of the plain, as a result of climate change. Associated pressures to build flood management engineering works which are not sympathetic to local landscape character and sensitive habitats.

Climate Emergency and Nature Recovery

- The vertical and linear nature of overhead electricity lines and transmission towers is prominent within local views. Pressure for further electricity infrastructure, associated with additional deployment of renewable energy, may lead to further visual influence on the landscape and may lead to the perception of a 'wirescape' in parts of the LCA.
- 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 along the minerals railway line in the south of the LCA and along the south-eastern edge of Tytherington. This may change the open character of the landscape.

Land Use and Cover

- The removal of hedgerows, particularly within the northern plain, as a result of a change in land use to arable and associated land drainage. The resulting visual openness makes the area sensitive to change which would be evident from both within the area and higher ground to the east and

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west. The habitat value of the remaining hedgerows and ditches is increased due to their relative scarcity.

- The remaining trees and hedgerows within or towards the edge of the open plain, form a particularly important landscape and habitat feature. As remnants of a former more divided and enclosed landscape, these trees and hedgerows provide visual texture and diversity within an otherwise open and simple landscape. However, the mature tree structure contains few juvenile trees to maintain succession. Deterioration or further loss of these features would increase the extent of the open plain and visual sensitivity of the landscape and lead to further loss of habitat and connectivity.
- Any loss of or disturbance to the scattered pools and ponds, including to their surrounding terrestrial habitat would result in loss or degradation of this habitat.
- Agriculture diversification in this area includes growing biofuels, which results in a change to the texture and openness of the landscape, while an increase in horse keeping results in some erosion of the rural character

Development

- Open views are afforded across the LCA towards a number of powerlines that radiate out from the Iron Acton sub-station (within LCA 10: Earthcott Vale). In an otherwise relatively tranquil and undeveloped area with very little settlement or tree cover, powerlines and towers are prominent features in many views, eroding the rural character of the area.
- Modern agricultural buildings are also prominent structures in this open landscape in places. These contrast with earlier farm and settlement patterns, which due to their scale, stone construction and traditional form are generally well-integrated within the landscape. As a result, these modern agricultural buildings can also contribute to a loss of local character.
- The distinctive linear settlements along the LCA's boundary are likely to be particularly sensitive to pressures for change, especially from infill development. This may result in the potential loss of the characteristic

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mosaic and spatial arrangement of buildings, vegetation and open space. The loss of vegetation within and along settlement edges has the potential to reduce their integration within the adjacent, generally open landscape.

- The eastern settlement edge of Tytherington is also sensitive to change, being slightly elevated above the central plain and visible within open views from the east.
- Stone walls along the B4058 are in variable condition, with some sections in need of repair. This is detrimental to the character of this locally important route.
- The roads of this LCA are under pressure from increasing traffic that can erode verges, in addition safety improvements can result in the loss of characteristic landscape features.

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 Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) Landscape Strategy and Guidelines [\[See reference 2\]](#), as well as the overarching management strategy objectives set out in Chapter 4.

Landscape Strategy

Landscape Management

- Maintain and enhance the tree, woodland and hedgerow structure at settlement edges to help to ensure the continued integration of settlement and buildings within the wider landscape.
- Maintain and restore the remaining traditional stone walls associated with some roads and settlement to prevent further deterioration of these features.

- Address potential for flooding issues with the implementation of natural flood management schemes, including enhancement of floodplain grazing marsh priority habitats along Ladden Brook (which forms a tributary of the River Frome), in line with the aims of the River Frome Reconnected project.
- Preserve and enhance the landscape setting of Tytherington Conservation Area, together with key views towards and from it.

Ecology/Biodiversity Management

- Protect and enhance the habitat value of Ladden Brook and connecting tributaries, including appropriate buffers and land management for biodiversity enrichment. (e.g., reduce intensity of arable usage).
- Encourage restoration of buffer strips along watercourses and field ponds to minimise run off to maintain the biodiversity of wetland features along drainage ditches and Ladden Brook, in line with the aims of the River Frome Reconnected project.
- Enhance and manage tree and hedge planting in appropriate locations along the Ladden Brook corridor, in line with the aims of the River Frome Reconnected project and Forest of Avon Tree and Woodland Strategy.
- Protect and extend the strategic neutral grassland network including management of verges and changes to arable farming practice.
- Conserve and enhance the existing populations of notable habitats (including priority habitat coastal and floodplain grazing marsh and smaller areas of traditional orchard), ensuring that there is no net loss of biodiversity.

Development Management

- Any new development outside the settlements should respect the landscape structure and characteristic openness of the locality, incorporate robust landscape proposals and carefully consider the

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colour and texture of finishes to maximise integration with the landscape.

- Ensure that road improvements protect and/or reinstate characteristic landscape features of the locality.
- The impact of any vertical elements in this open landscape should be mitigated through on and/or off site planting to provide a buffer, foil or screening of key views while still maintaining the open character of the landscape.
- Any new development in the vale should be designed and landscaped to ensure that it does not impact on the visual inter-relationship from higher land to the east and west.

LCA 10: Earthcott Vale

The Earthcott Vale landscape character area (LCA) is a gently undulating agricultural landscape, divided by a complex network of hedgerows, trees and lanes.

Photo 1: Gently undulating agricultural fields bounded by a mix of clipped hedgerows and woodland



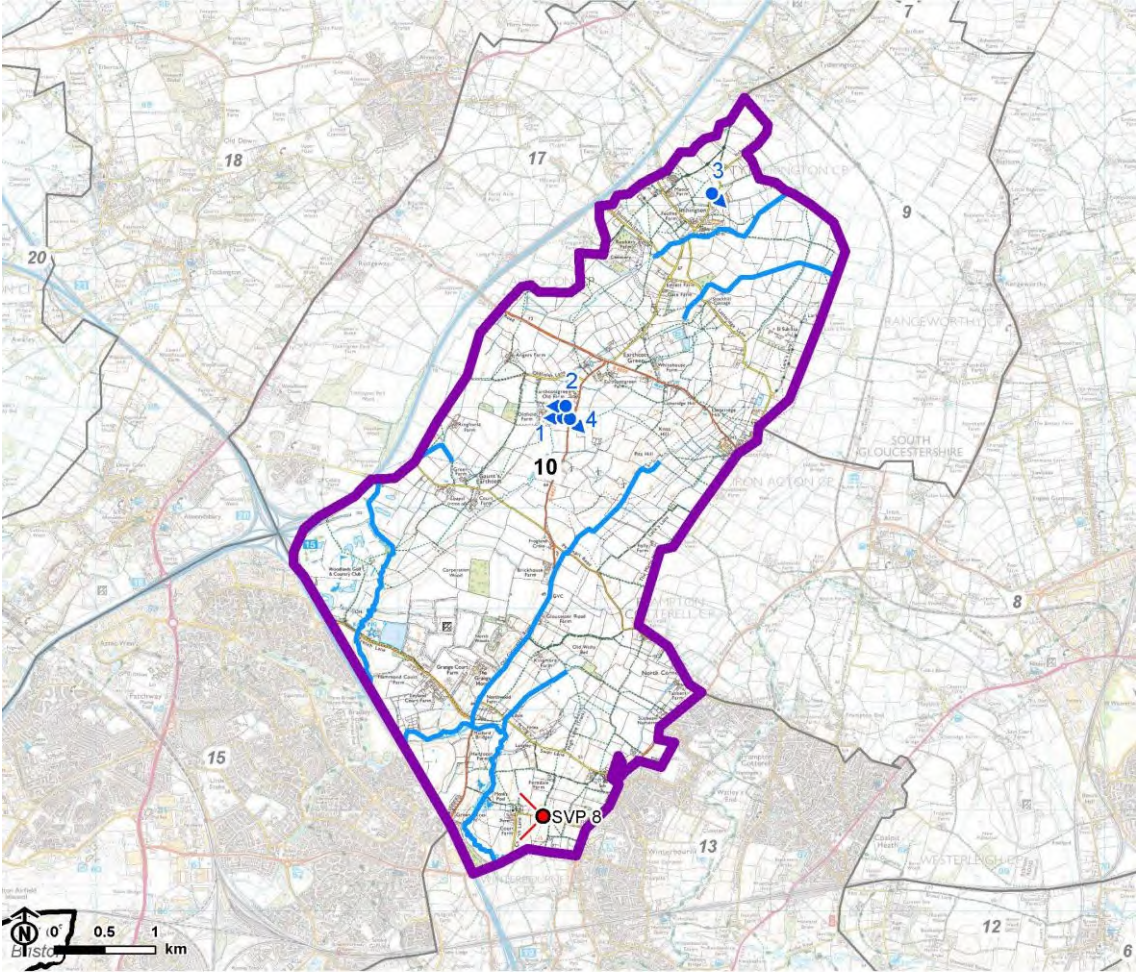
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Location

The Earthcott Vale LCA is located in central South Gloucestershire. The south-western boundary is strongly defined by the M4, with the urban edge of Bristol beyond. The north-western boundary marks a subtle change in landform between the shallow vale of this LCA and gently rising landform to the west. The north and north-east boundary also marks a transition between the gently undulating treed landform of this LCA and more open and simpler landform beyond. The eastern boundary follows the Marle Hills and the settlement edges of Frampton Cotterell and Winterbourne to the south-east.

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Figure 4.8: Location and Landscape Setting of LCA 10: Earthcott Vale



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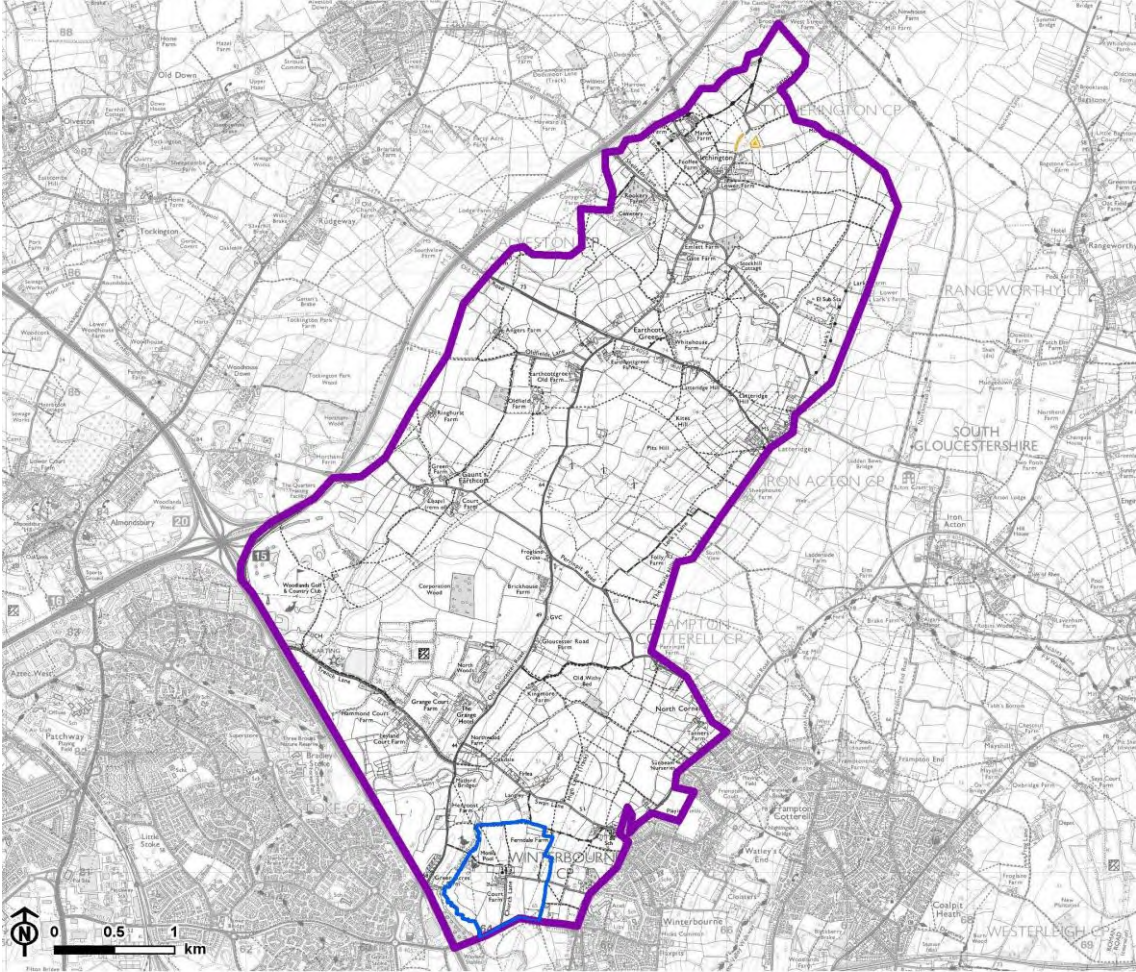
- LCA 10: Earthcott Vale
- Neighbouring LCA
- Council boundary
- River
- ➔ Photograph location and direction

⋈ Strategic viewpoint and angle



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Figure 4.9: Development and Heritage context of LCA 10: Earthcott Vale



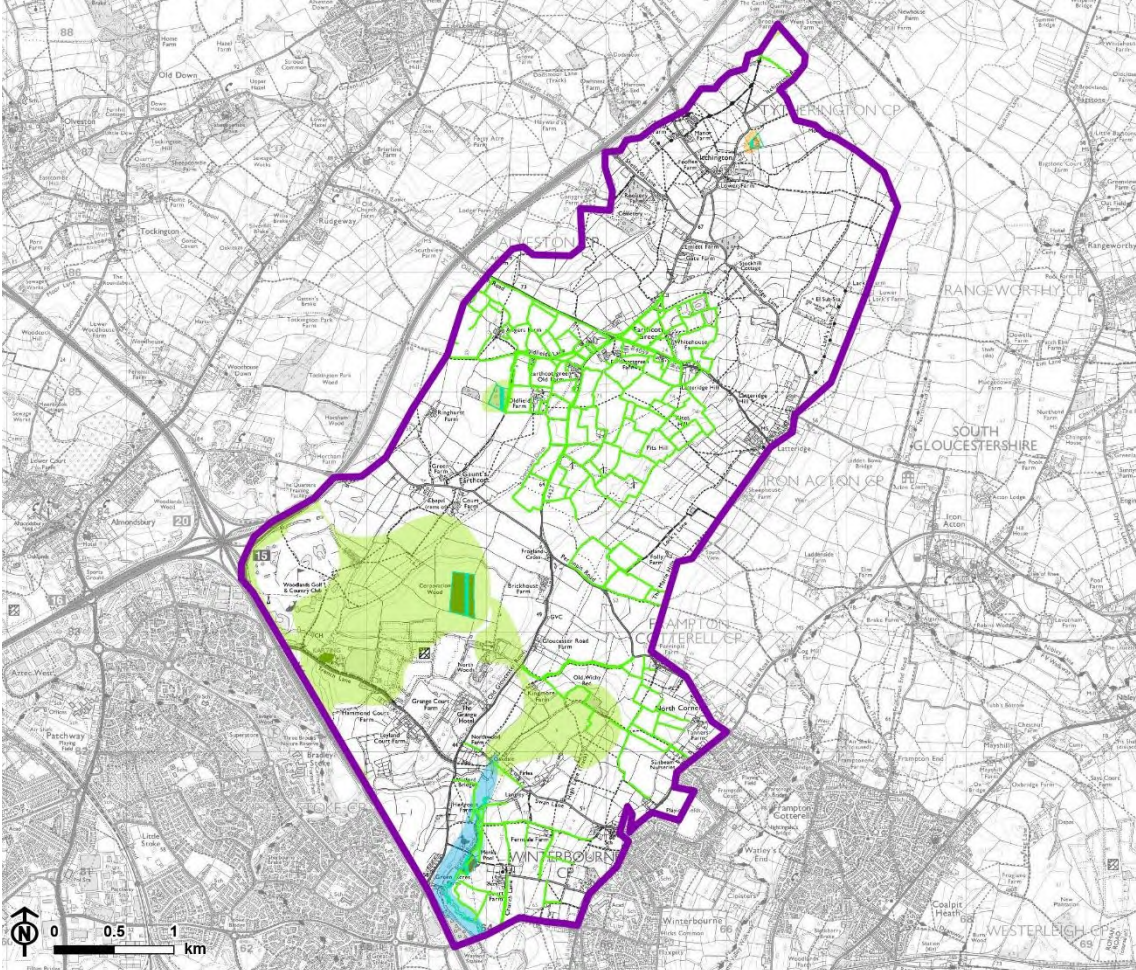
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-  LCA 10: Earthcott Vale
-  Council boundary
-  CRoW Common Land
-  CRoW Open Access Land
-  Conservation Area



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Figure 4.10: Ecology and Biodiversity context of LCA 10: Earthcott Vale



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- LCA 10: Earthcott Vale
- Woodland Strategic Network
- Site of Nature Conservation Interest
- Ancient woodland
- Local Nature Reserve
- Grassland Strategic Network
- Wetland Strategic Network
- Important hedgerow



Landscape Description

Key Characteristics

- Low ridges in the east at Latteridge Hill, The Marle Hills and Winterbourne contain the gently undulating shallow vale and provide elevated vantage points to the wider landscape.
- Small-scale valleys are located to the south and a small plateau area to the south-west.
- The mixed land cover comprises pasture and arable farmland in medium to small sized, regular or irregular shaped fields.
- Varying field boundaries comprise thick, clipped to overgrown or intermittent in places, with dense riparian vegetation in the south. Mature hedgerow and in-field trees are frequent in the north and west.
- Small scattered pockets of broadleaf woodland are located in the south and west of the LCA.
- Numerous watercourses with associated bankside vegetation and riparian trees are located throughout the LCA most notably Bradley Brook in the south.
- Some pennant sandstone walls define fields and lanes in the east of the LCA, associated with the settlement edges of Winterbourne and Frampton Cotterell.
- Traditional scattered farms, houses and hamlets are largely built of limestone in the west and Pennant sandstone in the east. Settlement is limited and is associated with the narrow minor roads/lanes which cross and intersect the area.
- The Church Lane, Winterbourne Conservation Area forms a local landmark in the south of the LCA.
- The landscape is influenced by settlement and infrastructure just beyond the LCA's boundaries, including Winterbourne, Frampton Cotterell, Bradley Stoke, the urban edge of Bristol and the M4.

- Significant man-made landforms, some with artificial profiles covered by rough grassland or scrub lie adjacent to the M4/M5 interchange and along the M4 corridor.
- A concentration of recreational land use is located in the south-west, including a golf course, water sports, rugby ground and horse paddocks.
- Electricity generation and infrastructure is visually intrusive, including numerous powerlines and associated pylons, the Iron Acton sub-station in the north-east, and solar farms in the south and north-east and a wind farm in the centre of the LCA.

Natural Influences

Geology, Landform and Hydrology

The Earthcott Vale has varied geology, divided and orientated approximately along the line of the B4427 Old Gloucester Road, comprising White and Blue Lias limestone (generally at 60 metres AOD).

Amongst this, there is a more complex pattern of clays around Earthcott Green and Latteridge Hill (at up to 75 metres AOD), which continue south-westwards in linear bands. On the south-eastern boundary at Winterbourne, Pennant sandstone partly extends into this area (at up to 65 metres AOD), whilst on the north-western boundary to the north of Itchington, Carboniferous limestone underlies rising ground (continuing beyond this area to 97 metres AOD).

This underlying bedrock is overlain by shallow Argillic Brown Earth soils to the west, Keuper marl (largely at 50 metres AOD but rising to 67 metres AOD at The Marle Hills) and clay / loam soils to the east.

This geology, and resultant drainage pattern, produces a gently undulating landform. Earthcott Green and Latteridge Hill are located on relatively higher ground (approximately 75 metres AOD) in the centre of the LCA. Land falls north-eastwards towards the Tytherington Plain and south-westwards towards

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Bradley Stoke, both areas lying at about 50 metres AOD on the boundary of this LCA.

The higher ground is dissected by shallow valleys and tributaries of the Dockham Ditch, Hortham Brook and Bradley Brook, which flow south-west before joining Bradley Brook beyond the LCA boundary. In the north of the area, tributaries of the Ladden Brook flow north-eastwards. The valleys become narrower and more enclosed to the south, with tightly meandering natural channels. To the north, watercourses generally follow regular drainage ditches.

The landform, although subtle, is more elevated in the centre of the LCA and to the east, with low ridges formed at Latteridge Hill, The Marle Hills and Winterbourne, above lower-lying valleys. Towards and beyond the western boundary the landform rises gradually up to the LCA 17: Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge. An area of grade 1 and 2 (categorised as best and most versatile) agricultural land lies along the edge of Winterbourne on the higher ground.

In the south-west of the LCA a small plateau, south of Gaunt's Earthcott, lies at 60 metres AOD. Land rises to the south-east beyond Bradley Brook, towards the Winterbourne ridge.

Land Cover

A mix of pasture and arable farmland is defined within a variety of field patterns. Field boundaries are commonly dense, clipped hedges, or overgrown, thick hedges with intermittent laid hedges.

The area to the west of the B4427 and north of Gaunt's Earthcott has a pattern of medium sized regular fields, largely contained by clipped hedgerows, some with gaps. Mature hedgerow and in-field trees, predominately oak and ash, are scattered across the plateau. Occasional hedgerow removal has formed some large fields and left isolated trees, though some occasional copses and areas of deciduous woodland remain, Corporation Wood being the largest.

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The area east of the B4427, south of Earthcott Green and rising to The Marle Hills, has a pattern of medium to small-scale irregular fields, contained by clipped hedgerows with few hedgerow trees.

In the south of the LCA, adjacent to the well vegetated Bradley Brook and its tributaries, the irregular field pattern is contained by tall and overgrown hedgerows with trees adjacent to Winterbourne and Frampton Cotterell. Similarly, dense, tall vegetation of varying structure follows the course of the Hortham Brook to the south-west. A number of horse paddocks occur predominately within the south of the area, adjacent to the scattered settlements and near the edge of Frampton Cotterell and Winterbourne. Timber fences have typically replaced the hedgerow boundaries.

Small irregular fields in the north and east of the LCA are defined largely by clipped hedgerows and frequent hedgerow trees, predominately oak and ash.

Woodlands Cemetery to the north of Earthcott Green comprises extensive memorial grounds of mown lawns, with tree cover and ornamental hedgerows, surrounded by agricultural fields.

A distinct area of parkland is evident at North Woods Park, around The Grange in the south, comprising mature tree specimens in grassland.

Formal recreational facilities are concentrated in the south-west. The Woodlands Golf Course is located to the east of the M4/M5 junction and large-scale earth mounding provides screening along the site's western and southern boundaries. Some of the golf course retains sections of the former mature hedgerow pattern and tree planting surrounds the open fairways and greens. The West Country Water Park is located to the south-east of the golf course and has an ad hoc development of buildings and earthworks around a quarried lake. A rugby football club, comprising pitches, tall floodlights and buildings is also located in the south of the LCA along Trench Lane. Within the south-east of the LCA, a large playing field adjacent to the B4058 provides open space between the settlements of Frampton Cotterell and Winterbourne. A solar farm is located within close proximity of these recreational facilities.

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Along the south-western boundary of this LCA large-scale earth mounds and tree planting lie adjacent to the M4, south of Green Acres Farm with infilling of a field next to the Hortham Brook.

Photo 2: Undulating pastoral fields with mixed field boundaries



Biodiversity

The Earthcott Vale LCA comprises a mosaic of grassland, woodland and farmland with a criss-crossing of watercourses and ponds connected by wildlife corridors including hedgerows. This makes the Earthcott Vale an important habitat for a diverse range of species.

The landscape includes scattered woodland and copses, mainly in the south of the area, approximately 7ha of which is ancient woodland.

Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs) within the LCA comprise a mosaic of habitats including grassland (both neutral and calcareous), broadleaved woodland (including ancient woodland) and watercourses. Key species likely to be associated with the broadleaved woodland include bats and

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dormice both of which are present across the Wider area and are UK priority species with associated Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP).

An area of calcareous and neutral grassland to the north-east of Itchington is designated as a SNCI, providing a diverse habitat that supports a range of invertebrates and includes ant hills as a regular feature. These invertebrates in turn provide a food source for mammals including bats.

The Bradley Brook SNCI is designated for its flowing water and bankside vegetation, and along with the other watercourses, supports a diverse range of species from aquatic macro-invertebrates to fish and water voles. In addition, ponds and pools within the area will support amphibians such as great crested newts (a European Protected Species). The Monks Pool Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is located in the north of the Bradley Brook valley.

Much of the land use within this area is arable farmland, providing habitat for many species of ground nesting farmland birds including those on the Red List of Threatened Species, while the winter stubble provides a foraging resource.

There is a golf course within the Earthcott Vale, which may have the potential to provide a mosaic of habitats that can be utilised by a diverse range of species.

The Strategic Blue-Green Infrastructure Corridor C: Winterbourne-Kendleshire-Yate (*River Frome Corridor*) is located in the south-east of the LCA. Small areas of Corridor B: Charfield-Alveston-Hallen (*Western Scarp/Severn Ridges*) and Corridor G: Wickwar-Iron Acton (*Ladden Valley*) pass along the north-western and north-eastern LCA boundaries, respectively.

Cultural Influences

Land Use and Time Depth

Land use within the LCA is primarily associated with agricultural practices, with formal recreational uses in the south and electricity infrastructure located in the south and north-east of the LCA.

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Church Lane Winterbourne Conservation Area is separate from the main settlement of Winterbourne and encompasses the Winterbourne Court, Church and Tythe Barn complex in the south-east of the LCA. The buildings are built of Pennant sandstone, which locally has a red-brown colour.

The Grange and Grange Court Farm are locally listed buildings, set within North Woods Park on the upper slopes of a small tributary valley of the Bradley Brook. The estate architecture comprises the formal arrangement of large stone buildings of The Grange (a former asylum) to the north and a large house and farm complex at Grange Court Farm, to the south. Both have driveways across open lawns, with gatehouses adjacent to the Old Gloucester Road. A cluster of Grade II listed buildings are located north of the Grange within North Woods Park.

The use of stone in the construction of older properties, boundary walls and historic stiles is typical, with the type of stone reflecting local geological variation. Typically, Blue Lias limestone is used within the south-west and Pennant sandstone in the south-east and elsewhere.

Settlement and Infrastructure

Settlement largely consists of small nucleated hamlets such as Itchington, Earthcott Green, Gaunt's Earthcott and Latteridge, which are generally located at key road junctions and crossroads.

The rest of the LCA is scattered with isolated houses and farms. Stone farm buildings largely form the hamlets of Gaunt's Earthcott, Earthcott Green, and Latteridge. Farm ponds are quite common around these hamlets, with a roadside pond forming a feature in Latteridge. Adjacent to the M4 motorway, along the B4427, a small travellers' site is enclosed by tall timber fences.

A denser pattern of settlement is located beyond the south-eastern and southern LCA boundaries, with the settlement edges of Winterbourne and Frampton Cotterell forming the south-eastern boundary to the LCA. Situated on the slightly higher ground of a broad ridgeline, the settlement edge is mainly formed by traditional houses, cottages and farm buildings. Buildings are

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clustered at road junctions between the B4058 and country lanes which extend into this area of the LCA. Short sections of traditional linear development also spread along the B4058, interspersed by long lengths of stone walls and hedgerows. A more recent pattern of predominantly brick houses lines a short section of the B4058 and B4057, near their intersection, in the south.

The road network consists of a number of minor roads and lanes which criss-cross the area. The B4427 Old Gloucester Road (a former turnpike road between Bristol and Gloucester) crosses the area south to north, continuing beyond Earthcott Green as a lane. The B4059 and B4057 cross the area approximately in an east to west direction. The narrow country lanes, many with sharp bends, are often contained by hedge banks instead of hedgerows, with sections of stone walling nearer settlements.

The M4 defines the LCA's south-western boundary. It passes variously within shallow cutting, low embankment or at grade. The M4/M5 interchange, with its associated multiple flyovers and earthworks, is located to the south-west beyond large-scale earth mounds. The interchange and a short section of the M5 define this edge of the character area.

Numerous overhead powerlines and pylons cross the area in all directions, converging on the large electricity sub-station to the north-east. Mobile phone masts are also located along the south-western boundary of this area, adjacent to the M4. The Grange and Hammond Court Farm Solar Farms are located in the south of the LCA with a larger site east of Itchington and a further consent at Perrinpit Road South Gloucestershire's first operational wind farm is located in the centre of the LCA.

A recreational route within the series of Circular Rides in South Gloucestershire crosses the LCA in a small circuit, largely along lanes and ancient trackways. There are also a number of public rights of way which criss-cross the area to the west of Winterbourne and north-east of Earthcott Green. Elsewhere, the pattern is more irregular and dispersed, linking scattered farms.

Photo 3: Views towards the nucleated hamlet of Itchington



Perceptual Influences

Visual Character

The Earthcott Vale LCA largely comprises a complex, gently undulating, pastoral and arable landscape, with varying field pattern and landscape structure.

The north of the LCA is an enclosed, small-scale landscape of clipped and mature hedgerows within a gently rolling landform. Within this framework, the historic pattern of scattered farms, houses and the hamlets of Itchington, Earthcott Green and Latteridge, constructed from local Pennant sandstone, punctuate the area and are well-integrated within the landscape. Internal views are typically contained, with longer views possible along some road corridors, for example more elevated sections of the B4059 and from Latteridge Hill. The church tower at Tytherington forms a distinctive landmark in views from the north and north-west of the LCA.

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Woodlands Cemetery is located in the north of the LCA, in a remote setting near Earthcott Green. The cemetery is well screened by hedgerow boundaries and the largely retained site hedgerows. The serpentine access road, new avenue tree planting, formal yew hedging and mown lawns have introduced a more ornamental parkland structure.

The elevated ridgeline of the Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge, beyond the north-western LCA boundary, forms a backdrop within occasional views from the west of the LCA. The M5, crossing the side slopes of this landform, is evident from within occasional glimpsed views from around Itchington, with some audible influence within this area. The few scattered areas of woodland within the west and south-west are prominent features (particularly Corporation Wood) within views from the M5 and LCA 17: Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge to the north-west.

The plateau area in the west of the LCA, to the west of the B4427 Old Gloucester Road and north of Gaunt's Earthcott, has a semi-enclosed to open character. Frequent hedgerow trees over a small plateau enclose some views. However, hedgerow removal has created some large fields within this part of the LCA, which in combination with fewer hedgerow trees to the west and north and a very gentle landform, has produced a more open character. Isolated, mature former hedgerow trees over the plateau form prominent features.

The area east of the B4427, south of Earthcott Green and rising to The Marle Hills, has a slightly more open landscape of medium to small sized arable and pasture fields, contained by clipped hedgerows and few hedgerow trees. Some distant views eastwards to the Cotswold Scarp (LCA 4) and westwards to the Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge (LCA 17) are available from the Marle Hills.

Within the south of the area, the small-scale stream valleys form defined landform features compared with the broader rolling landscape elsewhere. Dense riparian vegetation and trees visually emphasise the tightly meandering watercourses and enclose views. North Woods Park, with its parkland of mature trees and estate architecture of the Grange and Grange Court Farm, is set elevated along a valley side and has a distinctive character and local visual influence along this small valley. To the east of the Bradley Brook, towards the edge of Winterbourne, rising ground is covered by open fields with a variety of field boundaries. Overgrown hedges occasionally screen and filter local views.

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Clipped hedgerows and mature trees elsewhere, within a gently rolling landscape produce a simple, more open character. The open setting and position of Winterbourne Church and Court complex, above the Bradley Brook valley, form a striking local landmark, from which relatively wide views are available looking west across Bradley Brook Valley. Pennant sandstone walls line the lanes and some fields, closer to the edge of Winterbourne (some in poor condition or overgrown) and permit some open views westwards.

The ongoing cycle of dead elm suckering is evident within a number of tall, overgrown hedgerows, generally in the south and near the edges of Frampton Cotterell and Winterbourne. These influence the condition, integrity and appearance of the landscape framework in the locality.

The formal recreation facilities in the south-west of the LCA variously influence local character. The West Country Water Park and Rugby Football Club occupy a former quarry and agricultural fields, with overgrown hedgerow boundaries largely screening these facilities and activities. Ad hoc buildings and earthworks adjacent to the regular shaped quarried lake and tall floodlight columns of the Rugby club, however, influence local views and character along Trench Lane. Woodlands Golf Course covers an extensive area and comprises an open to semi-enclosed landscape, visually contained to the south, west and north-west by large earth mounds. The golf course is partly visible from roads along its boundary and within middle distance views from higher ground beyond this area to the north-west.

Land raising, in association with the golf course and elsewhere, has had a significant impact on local landscape character. Existing earth mounds along the west and southern boundary of the golf course has produced a large-scale, steep profiled landform, forming an artificial skyline covered by rough grassland, scrub, and developing tree cover, atypical of the surrounding landscape. This feature is highly prominent along the boundaries of this LCA from the motorway interchange and its approaches. However, these slopes screen views of the M4 and its traffic from parts of the south of the LCA. Large gantries and signage, tall light columns, traffic noise and mobile phone masts along this corridor have a wider influence within the south of the LCA.

The settlement edge of Winterbourne and Frampton Cotterell is set elevated above the Bradley Brook and its shallow tributary valleys, on the south-eastern

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edge of this area. The northern settlement edge is well-integrated by the adjacent agriculture field pattern of hedgerows (many overgrown) and frequent trees. To the south, the more linear pattern of houses along the B4058 and B4057 are more evident within local views, due to the limited boundary vegetation and fewer trees.

Longer views are available from the slightly higher ground above the Bradley Brook valley, south-eastwards across the shallow vale, to Winterbourne and beyond. Frequent low undulating ridges, crowned by hedgerows and trees, the prominent middle distant ridgeline on which Winterbourne is located and the far distant Cotswold Scarp form distinct layers within the landscape.

Views into the LCA are available from the M4, glimpsed between earth mounds into the low valleys of this LCA and across the undulating landform to higher ground at Winterbourne. This typically occurs where the M4 passes on embankment above the natural landform, with limited roadside vegetation.

The southern boundaries of this LCA are contained by significant concentrations of settlement, with one boundary defined by the M4 corridor. In places this forms an abrupt urban edge in outward views from the south of the LCA, including near Winterbourne.

The Iron Acton electricity sub-station, located within the rural northern-eastern part of the LCA, is generally well-integrated as a result of the surrounding landscape framework, although the convergence of numerous powerlines and pylon towers are visually dominant locally. Recent development around Iron Acton substation, including solar PV and battery storage schemes are also evident locally. An operational wind farm comprising three 100m tall turbines in the centre of the LCA forms an additional vertical manmade structure in views. The powerline network is more evident within open views from higher ground in the adjacent character areas. The Grange Solar Farm in the south of the LCA influences local views, though is generally integrated into the retained field pattern with partially wooded boundaries in the south. Views to the north of the solar farm are more open. The Hammond Court Solar Farm also influences local views, though is generally integrated by retained field boundaries.

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Horse paddocks, scattered within the south of the area and near Winterbourne, have in places disrupted the vegetation framework and created a more open landscape character than adjacent fields. This more open landscape increases the visibility of white tape electric fences subdividing fields, stables, parked vehicles, open storage, jumps and other features associated with the keeping of horses.

The travellers' site adjacent to the south-western boundary is a small area off the B4427. The tall timber screen fence and dense cluster of caravans, contrasts greatly with the adjacent open rural setting. There is little vegetation either within or on the boundaries of the site to provide integration within the immediate locality and fly tipping in the vicinity leads to an erosion of landscape character.

Photo 4: Gently rolling landform with partially enclosed views, with an influence of electricity infrastructure in the centre of the LCA



Tranquillity and Dark Skies

The presence of busy minor roads and particularly the M4, M5 leads to a reduced sense of tranquillity throughout the LCA. There are localised areas of tranquillity in the north of the LCA, away from the M5, given the mature vegetation framework which helps to screen and buffer movement and noise associated with the M5.

The urban edge of the Bristol conurbation influences levels of light pollution in the south of the LCA. Areas near and to the north of Earthcott Green have relatively good experience of dark night skies. However, localised areas are influenced by security lighting associated with the substation at Iron Acton.

Visually Important Hillside

There are no Visually Important Hillside (VIH) located within this LCA. Part of the north-western boundary of the LCA is formed by Wicks/Butcher Hill and Baden Hill VIH (located within LCA 7 and LCA 17) which is an elevated area punctuated by three hills, most notably Wick's Hill. The southern section of the VIH forms part of the setting of the Tytherington Conservation Area (located within LCA 9: Tytherington Plain), and its northern section is an intrinsic part of the character of the Tortworth Court RPG (Grade II*, located within LCA 7: Falfield Vale).

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

Strategic Viewpoints

One Strategic Viewpoint (SVP) is located within this LCA at the Church Lane, Winterbourne Conservation Area (SVP 8). It provides a panoramic view that takes in the landmark feature of St Michael's Church and its setting within the

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Church Lane Winterbourne Conservation Area, as well as the RAC Tower and the Purdown BT Tower.

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

Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Valued Features

- Distant views towards the Cotswold Scarp and Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge experienced from localised elevated landform within the LCA, which contributes to visual character and sense of place.
- Water courses (including Bradley Brook) and associated dense riparian vegetation that provide wildlife corridors and habitat for a diverse range of species.
- The steep landform of small-scale stream valleys in the south of the LCA, which have an enclosed character and contribute to a sense of place.
- Small to medium-scale fields, irregular in places, particularly mature hedgerows in the north which provide habitat connectivity.
- Pennant sandstone walls near Winterbourne and Frampton Cotterell, which contribute to time depth and sense of place.
- The small-scale landscape of mature hedgerows and historic pattern of scattered farms and small hamlets in the north of the LCA, which contributes to the sense of place and rurality.
- The Church Lane, Winterbourne Conservation Area, including the distinctive features formed by the Winterbourne Church and Court listed buildings, that contributes to time depth and sense of place.
- The network of public rights of way and a Circular Ride that provide recreational opportunities across the landscape.

The Changing Landscape

The following section sets out the changes and pressures to the Earthcott Vale LCA.

Climate Change

- Increase in frequency and severity of seasonal flooding as a result of climate change, particularly associated with the Ladden Brook and Bradley Brook in the north and south of the LCA. Associated pressures to build flood management engineering works which are not sympathetic to local landscape character and sensitive habitats.
- Climate change leading to increased temperatures and periods of drought resulting in a change in stream flows, altering the species composition of wetland habitats (ponds, flowing open water and bankside vegetation associated with SNCIs), particularly Bradley Brook and its tributaries in the south of the LCA.

Climate Emergency and Nature Recovery

- The vertical and linear nature of pylon corridors is prominent within local views. Pressure for further electricity infrastructure, associated with additional deployment of renewable energy, may lead to further visual influence and may lead to the perception of a 'wirescape' in parts of the LCA.
- 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 linking existing ones east of the M5 towards ancient woodland at Corporation Wood, as set out in the Forest of Avon's Tree and Woodland Strategy which may change the character of some open views.

Land Use and Cover

- Some of the fields over the plateau to the west of the B4427 Old Gloucester Road and area north of Gaunt's Earthcott, have been enlarged through hedgerow removal with consequent erosion of landscape character and loss of habitat value and connectivity.
- Within the small stream valleys to the south and areas closer to Winterbourne, hedgerows are not actively managed, resulting in the development of tall overgrown hedgerows to fields and dense shrubs and trees along watercourses.
- The mature hedgerow tree and woodland structure throughout the area has few juvenile trees present to sustain the succession and therefore the framework in the long term. The decline of these features would significantly change the character and biodiversity value of the area.
- Further removal of hedgerows would also result in a change of landscape character, creating a more open landscape than currently exists and loss of habitat and connectivity.
- Whilst overgrown hedgerows provide structure and some degree of enclosure at present, in the longer term without management, the valley character may change as hedgerow species can eventually become over mature, allowing more open views beneath the canopies.
- Similarly the present cyclical pattern of growth, decline and regeneration of elm suckers, already influences the degree of openness/enclosure within the landscape.
- Tree planting at Woodlands Cemetery, to the north-east of Earthcott Green, is changing the character of the local area, increasing the strength of the landscape framework as the planting matures, in an area where tree cover was previously limited.
- Restoration and enhancement works in other locations including at the Monks Pool Local Nature Reserve and the restoration of Winterbourne Court Farm Barn have improved the fabric and settings of these heritage features, thereby contributing to the character, quality and distinctiveness of the surrounding landscape.

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- The agricultural pattern of hedgerows, trees and copses was subsumed and changed around the golf course in the south-west of the LCA. This has produced an ornamental character which is different to the wider rural landscape.
- In contrast, large-scale native planting was implemented as part of the golf course expansion to integrate the new landforms and land use pattern within wider views. A woodland structure will develop over time helping to provide screening and integration with the wider landscape as well as habitat value.
- The hedgerows which presently contain recreational facilities (West Country Water Park and Rugby Football Club) in the south-west of the LCA are largely overgrown, helping to screen these areas. However, without active management/ replanting, these hedgerows will decline in the long term, increasing the prominence of these recreational landscapes and their contrast with adjoining rural areas, primarily within local views.
- The solar farm in the south of the LCA has extended the influence of electricity infrastructure within the LCA. Whilst existing field boundaries have been retained, some hedgerows in the area are degraded, which results in greater visibility of the solar farm from views to the north.
- The distinctive North Woods Park relies greatly upon its mature trees for its parkland character. Without replacement planting, the character of this parkland will decline in the long term.
- Parts of the plateau area to the west of the B4427, Old Gloucester Road, north of Gaunt's Earthcott and east to The Marle Hills, are more open in character. However, this area remains slightly remote, due to the relatively limited views obtained from within or over much of this area, and the very limited pattern of settlement, in the form of traditional farms and roads. The area is sensitive to agricultural land use or management changes which might further erode the landscape framework, or to built development which might affect the pattern and integrity of the historic farm buildings.
- Land raising in the south of the LCA has introduced man made landforms and poorer quality soils which, without adequate maintenance, result in weed encroachment and visually different grassland to adjacent agricultural land. Some areas of woodland enhancement along the M4

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and maturing landscaping around the golf course have softened the impact of the landform and contribute to the vegetation structure and Forest of Avon objectives in the area.

Development

- In the south, parts of the LCA are influenced by recreational land use, the settlement edges of Winterbourne and Frampton Cotterell, the M4 corridor and proximity of Bradley Stoke beyond the LCA boundary.
- Further erosion of the landscape framework across the LCA could raise the visual prominence of a number of existing built features. This would include the Iron Acton sub-station, pylons and powerlines to the north of the area, the settlement edge of Frampton Cotterell and Winterbourne to the south-east, the limited scattered settlement pattern elsewhere and the Grange and Hammond Court Farm Solar Farms.
- The network of narrow country lanes and roads are under pressure from traffic levels, due to the close proximity of and connection between Bristol, Winterbourne and Frampton Cotterell in the south. An increase in traffic volumes and/ or a perceived need for highway improvement measures, has the potential to introduce standard highway design solutions including kerbs, new signage and materials, which could have a localised, but cumulative, effect eroding the existing rural character. Physical damage is occurring to roadside walls, hedges and verges as a result of the traffic volumes using these routes.
- Pennant sandstone wall boundaries near Winterbourne and Frampton Cotterell are in variable condition, being prone to damage from increased traffic along narrow lanes and deterioration due to limited maintenance of field boundaries elsewhere.
- The strong vegetation structure and visual enclosure in the north and west of the LCA provides some opportunities for screening of development. However, they are sensitive to the cumulative effect of change, for example built development, which has the potential to erode the vegetation framework and rural character in these parts of the LCA.

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- The western boundary of the plateau in the south-west of the LCA is visually influenced by the elevated Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge to the west and is therefore, potentially sensitive to changes along the ridge which might affect the rural character of this area.
- The rural landscape in the south forms an important buffer between Winterbourne/Frampton Cotterell and the M4 and the urban edge of Bristol beyond, due to the elevated aspect and views from settlement edges, motorway and other routes. The partially eroded vegetation framework contributes to the degree of visibility. These areas are therefore vulnerable to any change, which might affect the rural character of the locality.
- There are significant development pressures on land adjacent to settlement edges and principal roads for potential housing infill, business, industrial, amenity use or other forms of land use change, such as horse paddocks or land raising operations.
- A number of mobile phone masts along the motorway corridor have introduced new skyline features, evident from adjacent rural areas and the M4. The proliferation of these masts is a recent development trend, introducing new structures to often rural, elevated and consequently visible locations.
- The formal recreational facilities to the south are largely well-integrated, due to the existing vegetation structure, although the associated buildings, entrance/access roads and lighting infrastructure influence local landscape character, particularly along Trench Lane.
- Recreational pressure for 'horsiculture' is evident in the south of the area, particularly adjacent to Winterbourne. This change in land use is a relatively recent trend, which in places has led to the loss or erosion of hedgerows. The cumulative effect of this and the associated subdivision of fields by electric tape fencing, pressure on hedges from grazing, construction of stables, access tracks, exercise areas, jumps and floodlighting, can result in a marked change in landscape character. Lighting can also disturb wildlife.

Shallow Vale LCT

- The travellers' site on the Old Gloucester Road is an isolated site. However, the tall timber fence boundary forms a locally prominent built feature, which does not relate well to its rural setting.
- The operational solar park developments at Grange Farm and Hammond Court Farm are not highly visible within the wider landscape but is partially visible through the hedge along Trench Lane. Maturing landscaping at Grange Farm solar park is helping to absorb this development into the landscape. In time, the landscape scheme at Hammond Court Farm solar park will also help to absorb this development into the landscape. The larger solar farm at Itchington is visible in elevated views from the M5 to 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 Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) Landscape Strategy and Guidelines [See reference 3], as well as the overarching management strategy objectives set out in Chapter 4.

Landscape Strategy

Landscape Management

- Avoid the subdivision of fields or replacement of hedges by fencing or electric tape due to potential for erosion of landscape character and loss of habitat value and connectivity.
- Protect best and most versatile agricultural farmland, especially around Winterbourne Barn in the valley.
- Encourage small woodland and hedgerow tree planting through the Bradley Brook valley and the edge of Winterbourne to filter views of the M4 and urban edge.

Shallow Vale LCT

- Enhance and manage the wooded landscape framework along the small-scale stream valleys in the south of the LCA to retain the character of these valleys.
- Address potential for flooding issues with the implementation of natural flood management schemes, in line with the aims of the River Frome Reconnected project.
- Protect and enhance the setting of the Marle Hills in the east of the LCA.
- Protect the rural approaches and landscape setting to Latteridge.
- Preserve and enhance the landscape setting of Church Lane, Winterbourne Conservation Area, together with key views to and from key features including Winterbourne Church and Court listed buildings. Maintain the open nature of the fields surrounding the hamlet together with the sharp distinction between its core residential area and the rural context.
- Preserve and enhance the landscape setting of North Woods Park, its Grade II listed buildings, parkland and planting.

Ecology/Biodiversity Management

- Retain the existing habitat resource of diverse mosaic of grasslands and woodlands, with connectivity through wildlife corridors such as hedgerows and watercourses.
- Protect and enhance hedgerows, including hedgerow trees, to help to ensure the conservation of these key landscape and biodiversity features. This is particularly important in the south where the erosion of the landscape structure is extending the urbanising influence of adjacent settlement and the motorway into the vale.
- Protect and improve the riparian habitat of the River Frome, Bradley Brook and Ladden Brook. Also, seek opportunities to naturalise sections currently impacted by engineering structures (except heritage features) along the River Frome, and to enhance recreational access.

- Respect and enhance the commuting corridors of protected species particularly associated with the Bradley Brook, including retention of appropriate buffers and dark corridors.

Development Management

- Avoid unsympathetic bunding along the M5 motorway; any new earthworks will need to be fully integrated into the surrounding landform and character of the area.
- Encourage and support the repair and retention of Pennant sandstone walls and other traditional stone features such as historic stiles.
- Any development or structures (including horse keeping) in the north and west of the LCA should incorporate robust landscape proposals in views from elevated ground to the west.
- Recent development around Iron Acton substation has included solar PV and battery storage schemes. Further expansion will need careful consideration due to potential cumulative impacts on the landscape. Any new scheme will need to incorporate robust landscape proposals to screen and reintegrate it into the landscape.
- Retain the settlement pattern of small hamlets and associated rural character in the north of the LCA.
- Consideration should be given to the provision of off-site planting to mitigate the impacts of any highly visible developments in this LCA and the adjacent areas, particularly elevated areas to the north (within LCA 17: Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge) and elevated areas within the east of the LCA.
- Maintain and improve tranquillity and landscape quality by controlling light pollution, screening visually intrusive elements and repairing and maintaining the landscape structure.

References

- 1 Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (June 2016).
Available at: <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/our-landscape/landscape-strategy-guidelines>
- 2 Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (June 2016).
Available at: <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/our-landscape/landscape-strategy-guidelines/>
- 3 Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (June 2016).
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