



South Gloucestershire

Landscape Character

Assessment

Supplementary Planning Document

South Gloucestershire Council

Draft report

Prepared by LUC

November 2023

Contents

| | |
|-----------------------|----|
| Enclosed Valleys LCT | 6 |
| LCA 11: Golden Valley | 9 |
| LCA 16: Avon Valley | 35 |

References 61

Table of Tables

No table of figures entries found.

Table of Figures

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 5.1: Location of Enclosed Valleys LCT | 6 |
| Figure 5.2: Location and Landscape context of LCA 11: Golden Valley | 11 |
| 11 | |
| Figure 5.3: Development and Heritage context of LCA 11: Golden Valley | 12 |
| Figure 5.4: Ecology and Biodiversity context of LCA 11: Golden Valley | 13 |
| Photo 2: View west showing the large irregular-shaped field south of Highfield Farm | 18 |
| Photo 4: View west from Wick Lane towards farmsteads at the foot of the Oldland Ridge, and the settlement edge of east Bristol beyond | 23 |
| Photo 6: Upton Cheyney set on the elevated mid-slope of Hanging Hill, overlooking the Avon Valley Floodplain | 26 |
| Figure 5.5: Location and Landscape Context of LCA 16: Avon Valley | 37 |
| Figure 5.6: Development and Heritage Context of LCA 16: Avon Valley | 38 |
| Figure 5.7: Ecology and Biodiversity Context of LCA 16: Avon Valley | 39 |
| Photo 4: Outward views looking across the wooded river valley from the Hanham Hills | 52 |

Contents

Appendix A.5: Enclosed Valleys LCT

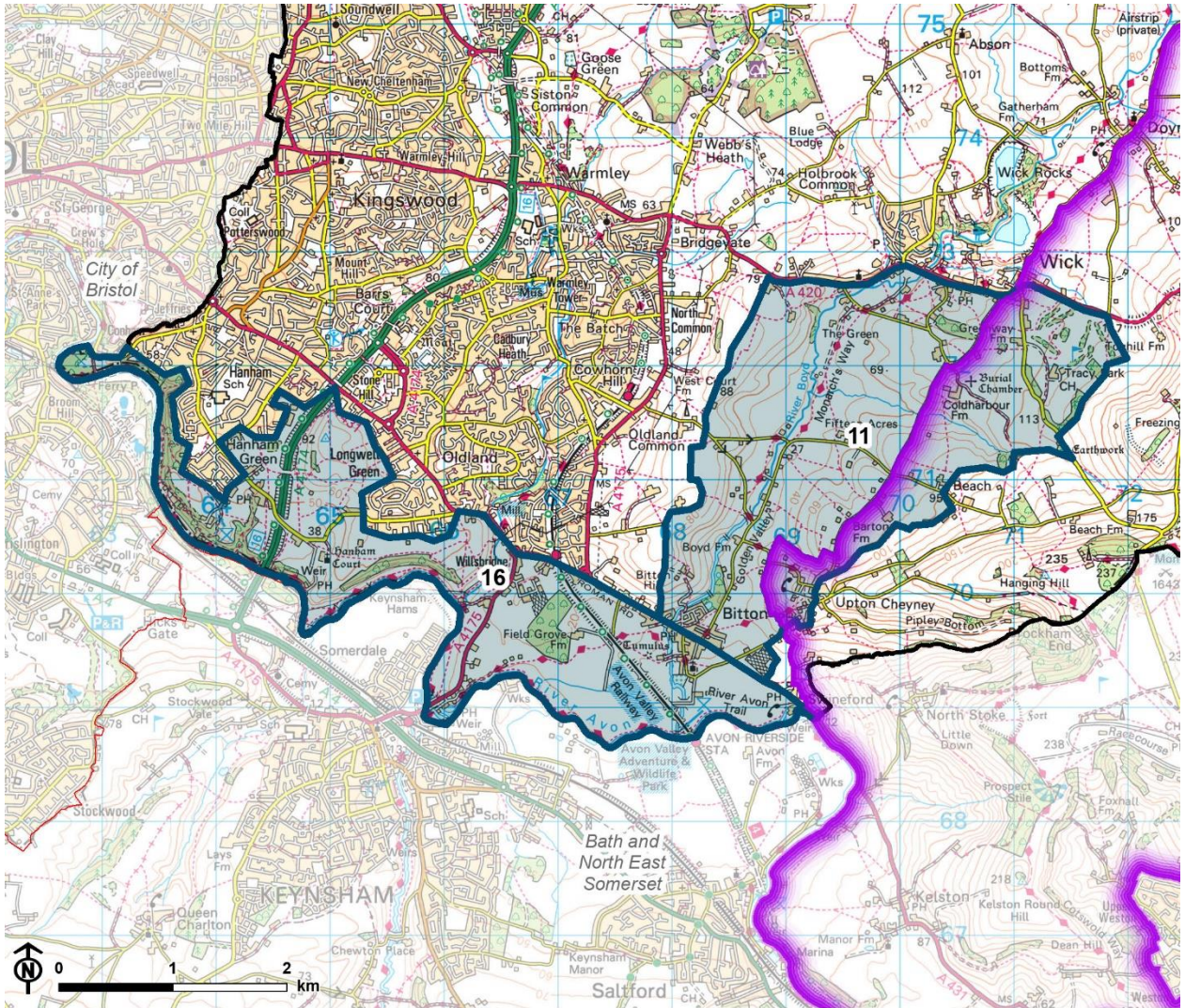
LCA 11: Golden Valley

LCA 16: Avon Valley









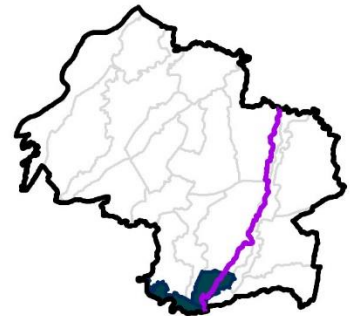
Enclosed Valleys LCT

Figure 5.1: Location of Enclosed Valleys LCT



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- | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---------------------|---|-----------------------|
|  | Enclosed Valleys LCT |  | Council boundary |  | LCA 11: Golden Valley |
|  | Neighbouring local authority |  | LCA 16: Avon Valley | | |
|  | Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary | | | | |



Description

The Enclosed Valleys landscape character type (LCT) consists of the steeply sloping landforms of the River Avon Valley and Golden Valley, located on the southern fringes of South Gloucestershire and to the east of Bristol.

Key Characteristics

- The River Avon Valley forms a wide floodplain to the east of the meandering river and a more enclosed, densely wooded steep sided valley to the west.
- The Golden Valley, which follows the smaller course of the River Boyd, contains mixed pasture and arable fields divided by both overgrown and clipped, dense hedges and linear bands of trees.
- The landscape has an enclosed character in the west, resulting from the steep landform and vegetation, with a more open character in the eastern floodplain.
- Areas of pasture are located within the floodplain and more gentle valley sides.
- The bridge carrying the A4174 is a locally prominent feature as it crosses over the valley landscape.
- Landscape character is influenced by settlement to the north and south of the River Avon floodplain, including the large red brick Cadbury's chocolate factory.
- The Golden Valley is relatively rural in character, with only a few scattered farms and dwellings. The village of Bitton, the largest settlement, and its church forms a local feature from within the River Avon Valley.

Landscape Character Areas

The Enclosed Valley LCT is subdivided into two landscape character areas (LCAs):

- LCA 11: Golden Valley
- LCA 16: Avon Valley

LCA 11: Golden Valley

The Golden Valley landscape character area (LCA) is a steeply sloping broad agricultural valley, containing the meandering River Boyd and visually enclosed by the Oldland Ridge and the higher Ashwicke Ridges.

Photo 1: View east across the Golden Valley towards Freezing Hill (marked by the distinctive line of Beech Trees), and Hanging Hill.

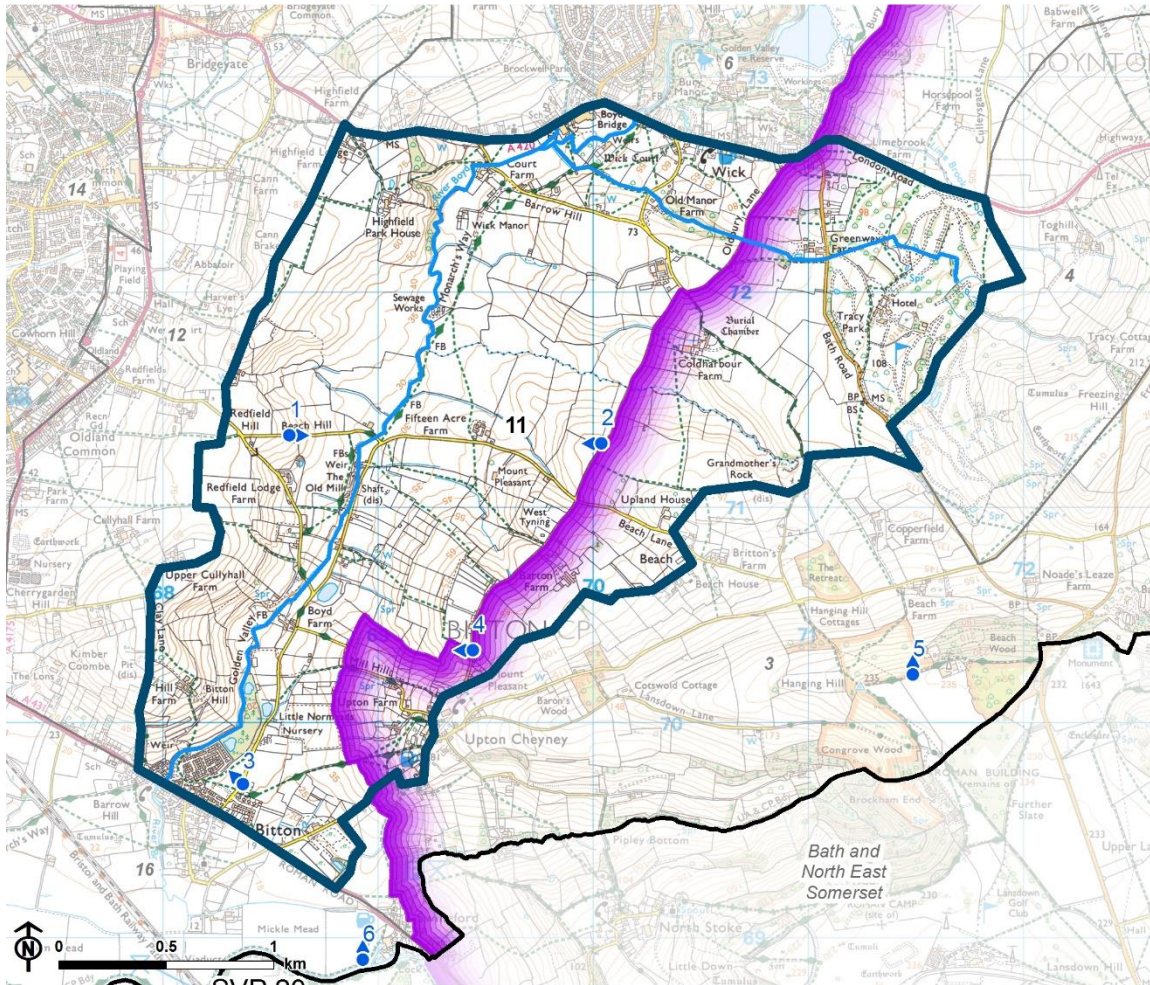


Location

The Golden Valley LCA is located in the south of South Gloucestershire to the east of Bristol, from which it is separated by the Oldland Ridge. The northern boundary of the LCA follows the A420 and marks the transition between the broader Golden Valley and the enclosed valley of the upper River Boyd (LCA 6). The southern boundary follows the A431, which generally follows the topographical change between the River Boyd valley and the open River Avon floodplain beyond (LCA 16). The eastern boundary follows a topographical transition between the lower broad slopes of the Golden Valley and the upper steeper slopes of LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges. To the south-east, the boundary follows a transitional slope between the Golden Valley and the Piple Bottom Valley of the Ashwicke Ridges. The western boundary runs along the centre of the Oldland Ridge, the skyline of which is shared with the adjacent LCA 12: Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge.


Enclosed Valleys LCT

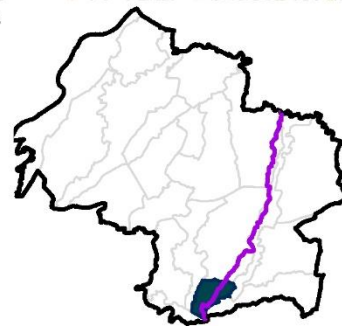
Figure 5.2: Location and Landscape context of LCA 11: Golden Valley



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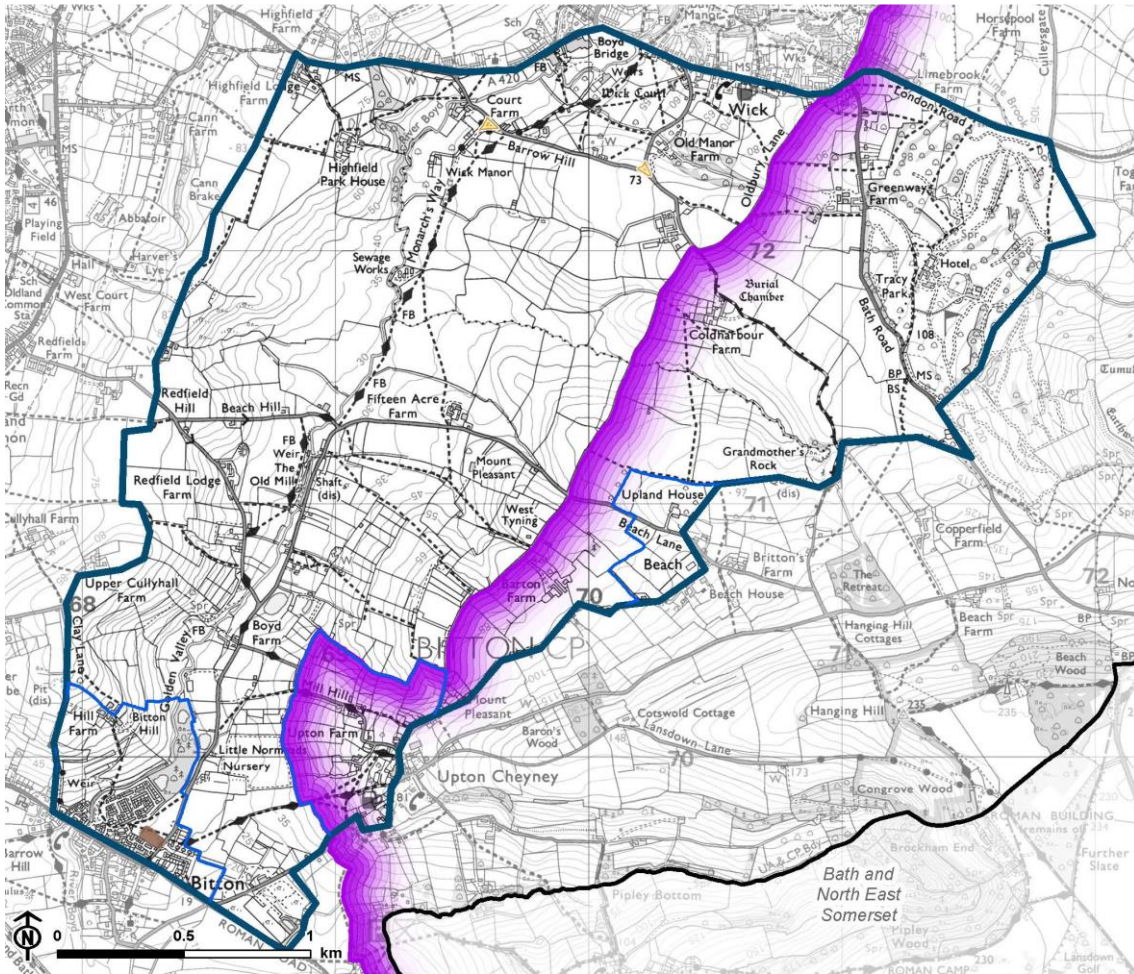
-  LCA 11: Golden Valley
-  Neighbouring LCA
-  Council boundary
-  Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
-  River

 Photograph location and direction



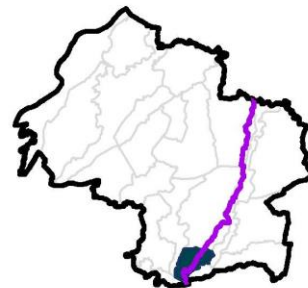
Enclosed Valleys LCT

Figure 5.3: Development and Heritage context of LCA 11: Golden Valley



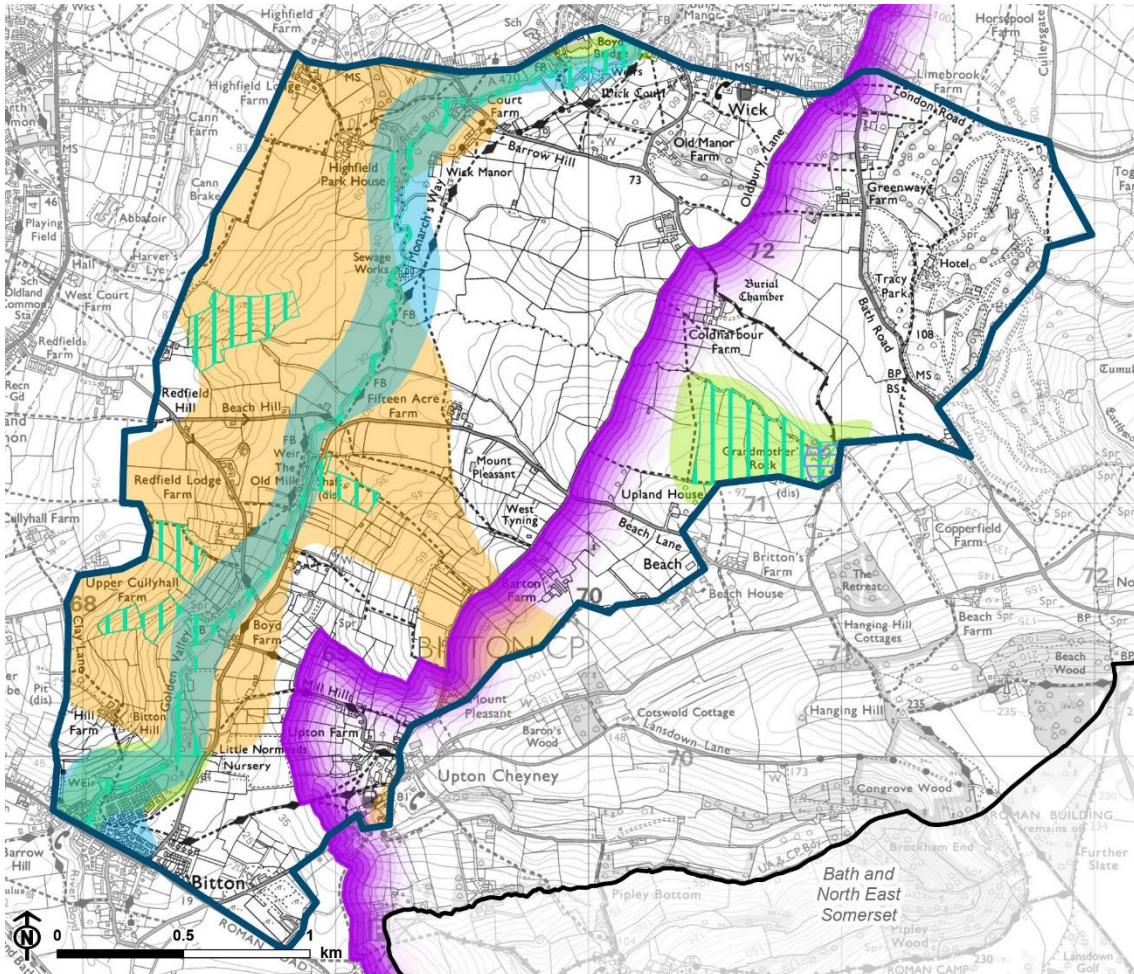
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- LCA 11: Golden Valley
- Council boundary
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- CRoW Common Land
- CRoW Open Access Land
- Scheduled Monument
- Conservation Area











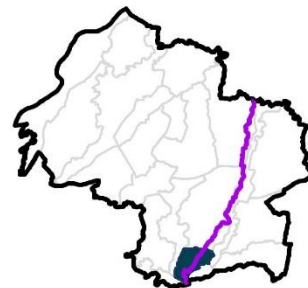
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Figure 5.4: Ecology and Biodiversity context of LCA 11: Golden Valley



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- | | | | |
|---|--|---|-----------------------------|
|  | LCA 11: Golden Valley |  | Grassland Strategic Network |
|  | Council boundary |  | Wetland Strategic Network |
|  | Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary |  | Woodland Strategic Network |
|  | Site of Nature Conservation Interest | | |
|  | Regionally Important Geological Site | | |



Landscape Description

Key Characteristics

- A valley landform, narrow and enclosed in the south, becoming broader in the north. It is contained by the Ashwicke Ridges to the east and the Oldland Ridge to the west.
- A mix of small to medium, regular, and irregular shaped pasture and arable fields rise above the tightly meandering River Boyd valley, with larger arable fields on the upper slopes.
- A dense framework of trees and riparian vegetation along the River Boyd and its tributaries provide valuable habitat and connectivity for wildlife.
- Fields are divided by a strong landscape framework of largely overgrown hedges, trees and occasional scattered woodland or copses. Boundaries also include a mix of clipped or laid hedges and some fences.
- Areas of calcareous grassland form attractive landscape and ecologically valuable features with a diverse range of flora including species rich grassland.
- A golf course at Tracy Park Golf Course has localised influence on rural landscape character and extends beyond this LCA over the lower slopes of the Cotswold Scarp.
- Settlement is limited, with isolated and scattered houses, farms, and hamlets. Villages and major roads in adjacent areas influence the northern and southern extents of this LCA.
- Remnants of the coal mining industry, small-scale stone quarrying and mill buildings lie within the valley.
- Few country lanes cross the area, some of which are sunken within steeper slopes.

Enclosed Valleys LCT

- A landscape that is under pressure from increased recreational activity including horse-keeping, particularly on the edge of settlements.

Natural Influences

Geology, Landform and Hydrology

The geology of the Golden Valley LCA is diverse, with a linear strip of Coal Measures (sandstone/shales) centrally within the valley, contained largely by Keuper marls/ sandstones to the north. Lias clays and silts, occupy the southern and eastern area, with an irregular band of White and Blue Lias limestone in the area of the central and northern upper valley slopes. This geology is overlain by typical Argillic Pelosols, Brown Earth Loams over Clay to the south, with pockets of Brown Rendzinas to the north-west and north-east. There is a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS) known as Grandmother's Rock, located in a disused quarry to the south of Wick in the east of the LCA, designated for its exposures of Maes Knoll limestone conglomerate.

This geology and subsequent drainage pattern create a steeply sloping north-east to south-west orientated valley landform. This is enclosed by the ridge of Hanging Hill (part of the LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges to the east, and the Oldland Ridge to the west (LCA 12)). The topography varies from 20 metres AOD at the mouth of the valley near Bitton in the south, to approximately 88 metres AOD along the Oldland Ridge in the west, and approximately 120 metres AOD midway along Hanging Hill, on the eastern boundary of the LCA. The Oldland Ridge Visually Important Hillside (VIH) covers the majority of the LCA, incised by the Boyd Valley.

The River Boyd flows southwards through the centre of the valley along a tightly meandering course from north of Wick, through the village and then through Bitton, before joining the River Avon. The valley is narrower in the south, contained to the west by the steep slopes of the Oldland Ridge and to the east by the gentler lower slopes of Hanging Hill Ridge, which curve eastwards into

Enclosed Valleys LCT

the Piple Bottom Valley. The northern section of the valley is broader, with gentle slopes to the east, where minor tributaries flow down from Hanging Hill, joining the River Boyd to the south of Wick. This has formed an upper valley landform of broad, descending spurs with an undulating form.

To the north of Bitton, in the valley to the north of Mill Lane, the river has formed a small floodplain, with two man-made pools and large fishing lake (Boyd Valley Lake). The lower valley also includes a number of springs, one at Upton Cheyney known locally as Joseph's Well.

Land Cover

A corridor of woodland and riparian vegetation lines much of the River Boyd and its tributaries.

Irregular shaped small to medium sized pastoral fields spread along the base of the valley and rise up the lower slopes, with a mix of more regular, rectilinear fields on the eastern slopes. Further north and along the upper slopes, there is a mix of larger regular shaped arable fields, with hedgerow removal forming a particularly large irregular shaped field along the Oldland Ridge, south of Highfield Park Farm. Around Upton Cheyney and Bitton there is a noticeable pattern of long, narrow rectilinear fields. Small, isolated fields of scrub/rough grassland are associated with the steepest valley slopes along the Oldland Ridge.

Field boundaries largely follow the contours of the valley sides, except on the eastern valley slopes south of Wick, where field boundaries undulate across the broad descending spurs. South of Upton Cheyney, a rectangular hedgerow pattern extends down the slope, appearing to radiate from the village into the valley. Hedgerow field boundaries are largely tall and overgrown, with some clipped and laid hedgerows and hedge banks along lanes. Along the Oldland Ridge to the west, fields are defined by a mix of sporadic, thick, and clipped hedges and occasional fences.

Enclosed Valleys LCT

The eastern and lower north-western slopes of the valley are clothed in mature trees with occasional small copses, sometimes associated with former coal mining and quarry sites. In contrast, there is little tree cover along the upper slopes of the Oldland Ridge. In the north, adjacent to the A420, a small linear woodland plantation follows the ridgeline.

Tracy Park Golf Course occupies the north-eastern corner of the LCA and extends eastwards beyond this area onto the lower slopes of the adjoining Cotswold Scarp character area (LCA 4). Located within the grounds of a large stately home, it comprises parkland and mature tree specimens within sweeping lawns contained by Cotswold stone walls, as well as a ha-ha, and prominent gateways defined by tall stone piers.

Horse stables and paddocks, along with associated electric and wooden fencing, stables, parking, and access is prevalent across a significant area of the Golden Valley.

Photo 2: View west showing the large irregular-shaped field south of Highfield Farm



Biodiversity

This character area comprises a mosaic of grassland, woodland, and farmland, dissected by watercourses and punctuated by ponds. Hedgerows and scattered trees provide connectivity between these habitats, as well as providing important habitat for a diverse range of species.

The eastern part of the Golden Valley forms a continuation of the nationally-important calcareous grassland habitat associated with the Cotswolds National Landscape, including Grandmother’s Rock Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), designated for its grassland and woodland habitats and geological interest.

Enclosed Valleys LCT

Other SNCIs within this character area include a mosaic of habitats designated primarily for their grassland (both neutral and calcareous), including at Redfield Hill, Chimney Field south and The Ruffets. The River Boyd SNCI comprises flowing open water, broadleaved woodland and bankside vegetation. These habitats are of importance for their flora and fauna which support a diverse range of species from aquatic macro-invertebrates to fish and water voles. Ponds and pools within the area will also support amphibians such as great crested newts (a European Protected Species).

The area includes 9 hectares of woodland, comprised of medium sized scattered woodlands and copses of predominantly broadleaved woodland. Key species likely to be associated with the broadleaved woodland include bats and dormice both of which are present across South Gloucestershire and are UK priority species with associated Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP).

Agricultural land use comprises a patchwork of arable and pastoral farmland. The arable farmland in particular provides ideal habitat for many species of ground nesting farmland birds, including birds which are listed as being Globally Threatened Red listed species. The winter stubble also provides a precious foraging opportunity. Ant hills are also a regular feature. These invertebrates in turn provide a food source for mammals including bats.

South Gloucestershire Strategic Green Infrastructure (GI) Corridor E (Hawkesbury-Old Sodbury-Upton Cheyney (*Cotswold Scarp*)) covers the eastern part of this LCA, important for its mosaic of strategic woodland and grassland habitats associated with the Cotswold Scarp. A small part of Strategic GI Corridor D (Wickwar-Westerleigh-Bitton (*Westerleigh Vale/Oldland Ridge/East Fringe*)) associated with the grassland strategic network extends into the western part of the LCA from the adjacent Oldland Ridge. Green-Blue Infrastructure Corridor H (Hinton-Doynton-Bitton (*Boyd Valley*)) covers the River Boyd corridor running north-south through the LCA, incorporating its associated wetland and riparian habitats.

Cultural Influences

Land Use and Time Depth

Early settlement and land use are indicated by the remains of a prehistoric burial chamber to the north of Coldharbour Farm (south of Wick), comprising two standing stones. To the north of Bitton is a medieval enclosure (Scheduled Monument) which survives mainly as a buried feature. Conservation Areas at Bitton, Upton Cheyney and Beach, contain clusters of listed buildings.

Historic parklands and designed gardens dating from the 17th century survive at Wick Court and Tracy Park and are locally listed. These are associated with historic manor houses (both Grade II listed)

Settlement and Infrastructure

Settlement within the LCA is limited. The villages of Bitton, Upton Cheyney, and Wick, as well as the hamlet of Beach, are located on the edge of the LCA.

Scattered farms and isolated dwellings are found elsewhere, primarily constructed of local Lias limestone. Dry and mortared Lias limestone walls with occasional upright stone copings are a distinctive feature around the edges of settlement and along the lanes which pass through them. Copper slag coping stones and quoins (a by-product from the Warmley Brassworks within LCA 14: Kingswood), feature within a few walls and buildings in the area, for example at Upper Cullyhall Farm on the Oldland Ridge and in stone walling to a residential property along the A420, west of Wick, with quoins are evident at one house at Upton Cheyney.

Bitton, in the south of the area, is a large village of Saxon origin with a planned linear pattern along the A431 and intersecting lanes, extending southwards into the adjacent LCA 16: Avon Valley. It consists of a mix of buildings, mainly of limestone and render. A new housing development located on the site of the former Bitton Mill is built in red brick and render which is slightly out of keeping

Enclosed Valleys LCT

with the traditional vernacular. To the east of Bitton alongside the A431 is a large complex of disused glass houses which are locally detractive and impart a degraded character to the landscape. However, they are largely screened from view by mature vegetation.

Photo 3: New residential development on the former mill site in Bitton, with Bitton Hill Villa (Grade II listed) perched on the hillside above



The large village of Wick defines part of the northern LCA boundary, mainly falling within adjacent LCA 6: Pucklechurch Ridge and the Boyd Valley. It is situated on the slopes of the River Boyd valley and is partly strung out along the A420. It contains a number of limestone buildings, although more recent residential development comprises a mix of materials including brick, render and reconstituted stone.

The hamlet of Upton Cheyney, designated as a Conservation Area, falls partly within this area and partly within the adjacent LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges. Set on

Enclosed Valleys LCT

the elevated mid slopes between the lower Golden Valley and rising ridgeline of Hanging Hill, traditional limestone cottages and farmhouses are scattered along a number of radiating country lanes, giving a linear character.

Elsewhere, isolated farms and dwellings are typically scattered along the lower slopes of the valley, with a few along the top of the Oldland Ridge. They are generally older stone buildings, but with a mix of more recent properties. A large agricultural barn constructed in the centre of the valley in the vicinity of Beech Hill is visually detractive and is out of keeping with the traditional stone building vernacular.

Former rural industrial activity is evident within the heart of the Golden Valley, with a number of disused corn and paper mills along the River Boyd and a coal mine vent shaft near the disused Golden Valley Coal Works. A few small-scale quarrying sites (now disused) are also scattered along the valley. The road network largely consists of country lanes, some sunken (particularly on steeper ground), and others are contained by dense hedgerows. The A420 and A431 form the northern and southern boundaries of the LCA respectively, the A420 descending and rising as it crosses the Boyd Valley, and the A431 following the edge of Avon floodplain to the south.

A network of public footpaths enables recreational access to the landscape. These frequently descend into the valley to the central area of the Old Mill, also connecting Wick with the Ashwicke Ridges and plateau of Lansdown Hill. The Monarch's Way promoted route passes through the centre of the LCA following the course of the River Boyd, before turning east towards Upton Cheyney and continuing through Bitton. One of a series of Circular Rides briefly follows the western boundary at Upton Cheyney. There are two small areas of Registered Common Land at the top and bottom of Barrow Hill, to the south-west of Wick.

Photo 4: View west from Wick Lane towards farmsteads at the foot of the Oldland Ridge, and the settlement edge of east Bristol beyond



Perceptual Influences

Visual Character

The Golden Valley LCA is an enclosed, visually contained valley, narrow and secluded in its southern extent, becoming more open on the upper slopes. It is defined to the east by the ridgeline of Hanging Hill, within LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges and the Cotswold Scarp (LCA 4) and to the west by the Oldland Ridge (LCA 12).

The pattern of irregular-shaped medium and small pasture fields along the lower slopes and on the valley floor, with the smallest fields generally adjacent

Enclosed Valleys LCT

to settlement results in an enclosed and intimate character within the valley. This gradually changes to larger regular shaped arable fields along the upper slopes and fringes, imparting a more open character. The dense tree structure within the valley floor, following the River Boyd, its tributaries and, the overgrown hedgerows defining a large proportion of the field boundaries, produce a strong landscape framework. Internal views are therefore largely contained along the valley floor by the vegetation structure and upper slopes of the surrounding ridges.

Although the lanes are lined by a mix of hedges and hedge banks, descending routes have some open views across the valley. Views along the valley slopes are largely restricted by vegetation, with vantages permitted from country lanes where they follow the contours of the valley.

The cumulative impact of a significant area of equestrian developments (including parking, fencing, stables, jumps, paddocks and other features), both through the central section of the Golden Valley and to the north at Wick Court locally influences the character of these areas. Where fences have replaced hedgerows, the visual influence of these developments spreads over a wider area.

Tracy Park has a distinctive, historic parkland character, with its prominent stone pillared entrances, stone walls, lawns, and mature trees, which provide the setting to the large stately home. The golf course infrastructure with its fairways and ground reshaping, is prominent against the open sweeping slopes of Freezing Hill. This land use contrasts with the wider agricultural hedgerow field pattern, which has a more simple and bold structure, well related to the hillside setting. However, a developing framework of planting is gradually integrating it into the surrounding landscape.

Photo 5: The landscaped golf course at Tracy Park, viewed from Hanging Hill (in adjacent LCA 4)



The Oldland Ridge separates the Golden Valley from the urban area of LCA 14: Kingswood. The straight form of the ridge is overlain by a simple pattern of mixed agriculture, defined by a largely regular field pattern. Along the ridgeline the intermittent clipped hedgerows, some of which are overgrown or replaced by post and wire fences, provide limited structure over this elevated landform. From the top of the Oldland Ridge there are extensive views westwards over Bristol and eastwards into the Golden Valley and beyond to the large-scale landform of the Hanging Hill ridge.

The settlement edge of Wick is evident within middle distance views over the broader northern part of the Boyd Valley, although housing is generally well-integrated amongst a framework of copses and linear woodland along the river valley. The abrupt edge of dense modern housing on the upper valley slopes as well as Wick Quarry and its associated buildings are visually prominent in views north, set above the adjacent vegetation framework.

Enclosed Valleys LCT

Bitton is mainly visible in local views from elevated ground at Upton Cheyney and from the upper slopes of the Golden Valley. Within these views the historic settlement pattern is distinctive, nestled within the valley and extending southwards beyond the A431 into the adjacent character area (LCA 16). On slightly elevated ground above the Avon Valley floodplain and from within the Boyd valley, the settlement, including industrial buildings to the north and glass houses to the east, are well-integrated by the valley landform and strong vegetation framework. St Mary’s Church tower forms a distinctive landmark, visible on the edge of the Avon Valley.

Upton Cheyney forms a distinctive feature on the slopes of Hanging Hill, the dispersed settlement pattern well-integrated into the landscape by mature hedgerows and trees. Similarly, the A420 to the north and A431 to the south, are well screened by landform and dense vegetation, and have limited visual influence upon the character of the area.

Photo 6: Upton Cheyney set on the elevated mid-slope of Hanging Hill, overlooking the Avon Valley Floodplain



Tranquillity and Dark Skies

This is a moderately tranquil landscape, experiencing some audible and visual disruption from traffic on the A431 and A421 main roads that frame the valley, as well as from settlements to the north and south. There are some pockets of higher tranquillity on the undeveloped slopes of the Boyd Valley where there is an absence of development. The LCA experiences relatively dark skies, with some localised light pollution around Wick and Bitton.

The dispersed and relatively sparse settlement pattern and limited road network are well-integrated both by landform and vegetation structure, providing a sense of tranquillity within the valley landscape. This is reduced in the north and the south by traffic noise associated with the A420 and A431 and to some extent by the visual influence of Wick in the north.

The scenic and perceptual qualities of the east and north-eastern part of the character area are reflected in their inclusion within the Cotswolds National Landscape.

Visually Important Hillsides

The Oldland Ridge (Incl. Beach Hill, Cann Break, Bitton Hill, Barrow Hill, Mount Pleasant and Mill Hill) Visually Important Hillside falls within this LCA. This VIH comprises an area of steep ridges and a series of hills separated by the north-south Golden Valley (River Boyd). The Oldland Ridge forms a visually prominent horseshoe-shaped landform of rising ground with a distinct rural character. The eastern part of the VIH is intrinsic to the setting of the Upton Cheyney Conservation Area, which straddles the steep west-facing valley side of the VIH, and the western part forms a green backdrop to the Bitton Conservation Area.

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

Enclosed Valleys LCT

Strategic Viewpoints

There are no Strategic Viewpoints within the LCA, however SVP 12: Hanging Hill, SVP 18: Freezing Hill, and SVP 20: Bristol to Bath Railway Path offer views into this LCA. SVP 12: Hanging Hill provides a panoramic view that takes in notable landscape features and landmark features across most of South Gloucestershire and extends to the hills of South Wales; and it has historic associations with The Battle of Lansdown (1643). SVP 18: Freezing Hill provides a notable view across the CNL and a panoramic view that takes in the Ashwicke Ridges (including Hanging Hill), the Lower Hamswell valley, Dundry Hill and the Mendip Hills AONB. SVP 20: Bristol to Bath Railway Path allows an appreciation of the CNL and provides a panoramic view of the Avon Valley, Ashwicke Ridges, Oldland Ridge, Cotswold hills (including Prospect Stile and Kelston Roundhill), the Bitton and Upper Cheyney Conservation Areas, and the landmark features of St Mary's Church and the former chocolate factory at Keynsham Hams.

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

Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Valued Features

- The distinctive valley landform, narrow and enclosed in the south, becoming broader in the north, which contrasts with the adjacent ridges and provides a strong sense of place.
- A strong landscape pattern with a diverse mix of medium to small, regular and irregular shaped pasture and arable fields which provide visual diversity.
- The importance of the network of hedgerows and mature trees providing enclosure and connecting habitats.
- Trees and riparian vegetation along the River Boyd and its tributaries provide valuable landscape features, as well as habitat and connectivity for wildlife.
- The enclosed rural character of the landscape which provides a setting for scattered houses, farms and historic hamlets, often built in local materials including Lias limestone.
- Remnants of former coal extraction, small-scale stone quarrying and mill buildings in the Boyd valley, reflecting historic land uses.
- The network of winding rural lanes, including some sunken lanes.
- Recreational value provided by a network of public rights of way which allow access to the rural landscape, including the Monarch's Way promoted route.
- The rural character and perception of tranquillity resulting from an absence of major modern development.

The Changing Landscape

The following section sets out the changes and pressures to the Golden Valley LCA.

Climate Change

- Pressure for renewable energy development within the South Gloucestershire landscape to contribute towards maximising the generation of renewable energy from installations (as set out in South Gloucestershire's Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-2030). This would likely result in adverse effects on landscape character and visual impact.
- New woodland planting to the west of Wick, south of the A420 and following the Oldland Ridge skyline, is presently young and therefore subtle, but will form a significant feature within local views in the long term and will contribute to the landscape framework and biodiversity value of the character area.

Climate Emergency and Nature Recovery

- The effect of the removal of hedgerows to maximise arable practices is already highly evident along the Oldland Ridge. Further hedgerow removal has the potential to erode the strong vegetation structure found within much of this area. This will increase the sense of openness and, in places, the visually remote character, as well as reducing habitat value and connectivity.
- Within the Golden Valley, the hedgerow and tree structure is largely intact, however there are significant areas suffering from a lack of management and/ or removal of hedges.
- The prominent, overgrown hedgerows which presently provide this area's distinct character and enclosure, are the result of little active management. Changes to management may result in change to hedgerow management practices and a loss of this characteristic.

Land Use and Cover

- Recreational pressure from 'horsiculture', is significant, with stable blocks, paddocks and deterioration of hedgerow field boundaries. The cumulative effect of this and associated access tracks, exercise areas, jumps and floodlighting, has resulted in a marked change to and erosion of the landscape character of this valley and also disturbance to wildlife.
- The area experiences some recreational pressure due to its proximity to Bristol and good footpath access along the valley including the Monarch's Way locally promoted route, with links to the Ashwicke Ridges. Footpath erosion is evident along popular sections of footpaths.

Development

- A number of farmhouses have been converted to residential properties, especially in the valley bottom. This has brought about a change in the character of buildings and their boundaries by introducing modern, suburban details e.g., fences, conifer hedges and high stone walls/pillars and ornamental gates, within an otherwise distinctly rural location.
- Residential expansion of Upton Cheyney and Bitton, both of which are visible from within this LCA and from the LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges. New residential development on the edges of these settlements erodes the settlement pattern and rural characteristics of both landscape features and distinctive settlements.
- Future settlement expansion of Wick on the upper slopes of the Boyd Valley may encroach towards or onto the skyline, further increasing the visual prominence of the settlement within the locality and eroding the rural landscape character.

Guidance

These guidelines recommend how the landscape can be managed to ensure future change respects the local character and should be read in conjunction

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

Landscape Strategy

Landscape Management

- Protect and manage areas that are within the CNL in line with the CNL Management Plan [See reference 2] to conserve the highly valued visual and perceptual qualities of the landscape.
- Protect and enhance views towards and from the CNL, including views to Hanging Hill.
- Preserve and enhance the landscape setting of Bitton, Beach, and Upton Cheyney Conservation Areas, together with key views towards and from them, and the character of their rural approaches. Preserve views of St Marys Church in Bitton as a local landmark.
- Restore and enhance lengths of hedgerow where they have been lost or degraded, using native species and traditional techniques e.g., hedge laying to strengthen the landscape structure and improve biodiversity value. Protect existing mature hedgerow trees.
- Manage Tracy Park to protect and enhance the historic parkland setting, whilst enhancing biodiversity by conservation of wood pasture, mature field trees, woodlands, hedgerows, and walled boundaries, in line with the Forest of Avon Plan [See reference 3].
- Encourage the retention and restoration of natural stone walls and other traditional features such as historic stiles, copper slag coping stones, and quoins.
- Encourage the use of local building materials, such as Lias limestone, in new buildings or structures.
- Avoid the cumulative impact of multiple small-scale changes to the land use of the valley that are out of keeping with its character, particularly

equestrian developments (including fencing, stables, jumps, paddocks, and hardstanding areas).

Ecology/Biodiversity Management

- Protect and manage the riparian habitat of the River Boyd valley for biodiversity value. Seek opportunities to enhance ecological connectivity with adjacent habitats.
- Consider new tree planting along the riparian corridor to reduce agricultural runoff and reduce diffuse pollution, as well as improving flood management in the wider catchment. Use native species such as willow.
- Protect and enhance the scattered pools and ponds, creating new wetland and riparian habitat to improve habitat resilience and connectivity.
- Support the creation of new wildflower habitats along B-lines (identified by Buglife) within the LCA to contribute to the national pollinator network.
- Protect and expand the calcareous grassland network, for example along Redfield Hill.

Development Management

- Any new development in the valley or on its slopes, including on settlement edges and in the wider landscape should incorporate robust landscape proposals to ensure integration with and protection of the rural character of the Golden Valley.
- Limit further land use change for horse keeping such as fencing and floodlighting which erode landscape character and biodiversity value.
- Protect the character of the network of rural lanes from inappropriate development and highway improvement schemes. Consider opportunities for extending the network of Quiet Lanes where appropriate, to enhance recreational access to the landscape.

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- Resist development that would erode the rural character of the valley, such as intrusive lighting, hedgerow removal, road widening, new signage, and sources of noise disturbance.
- Ensure that new development or land use change (including renewable energy development) does not adversely impact on views from, or the setting to the Cotswolds National Landscape.

LCA 16: Avon Valley

The Avon Valley landscape character area (LCA) consists of open river floodplain, enclosed steep wooded lower valley slopes and gentle upper slopes defined by the urban edge.

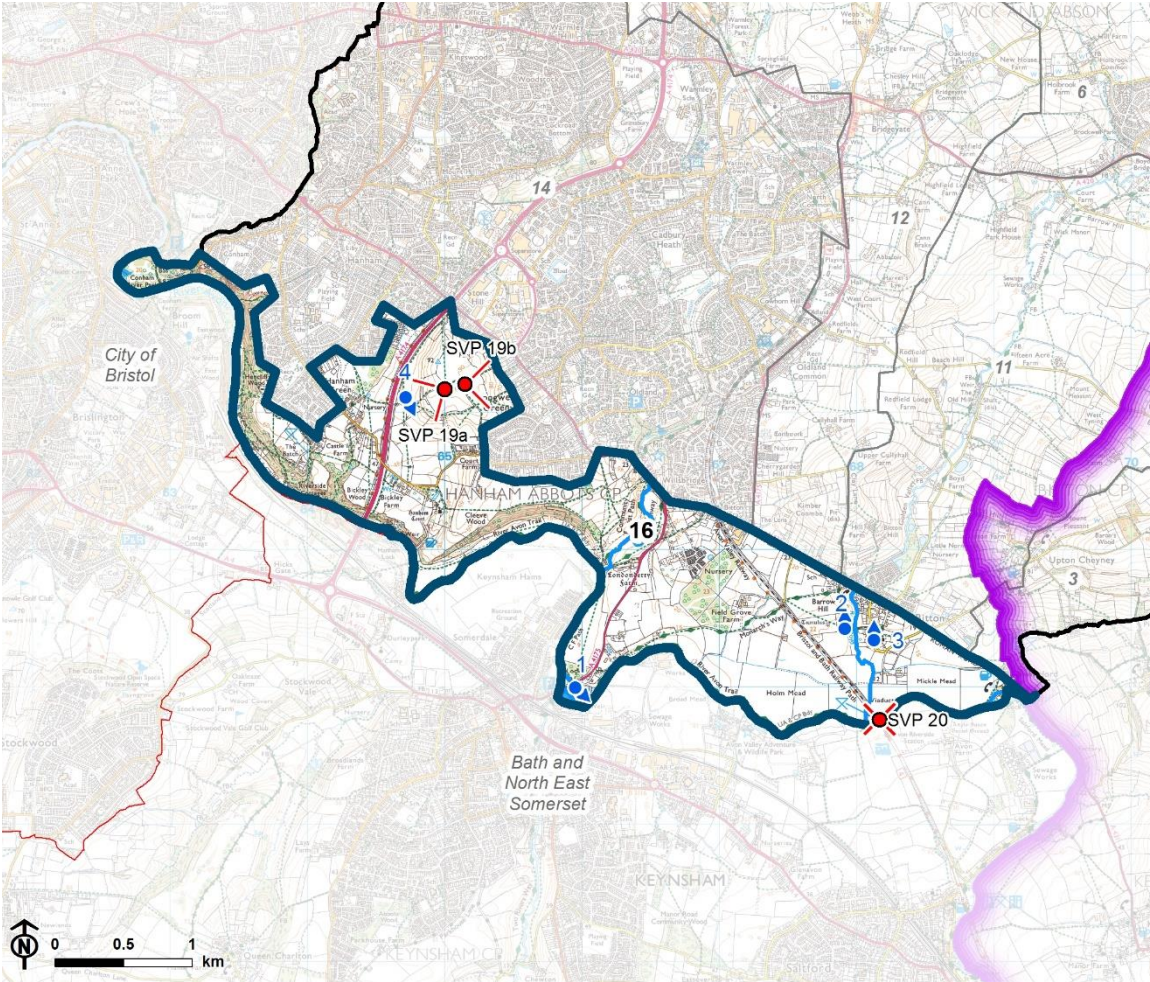
Photo 1: View south-east along the River Avon near Keynsham Marina



Location

The Avon Valley LCA is located in the south of South Gloucestershire, on the boundary with Bath and North East Somerset and to the east of Bristol. The southern boundary follows the River Avon, which also defines the Authority boundary, although the character of this area continues southwards across the valley towards Keynsham and Salford. The urban edge of Bristol defines the western boundary. The A431 marks the north-eastern boundary and edge of the floodplain, beyond which rises the Oldland Ridge north-west of Bitton and the Ashwicke Ridges at Upton Cheyney.

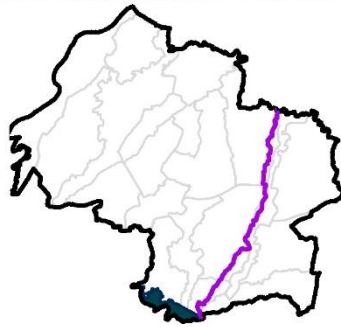
Figure 5.5: Location and Landscape Context of LCA 16: Avon Valley



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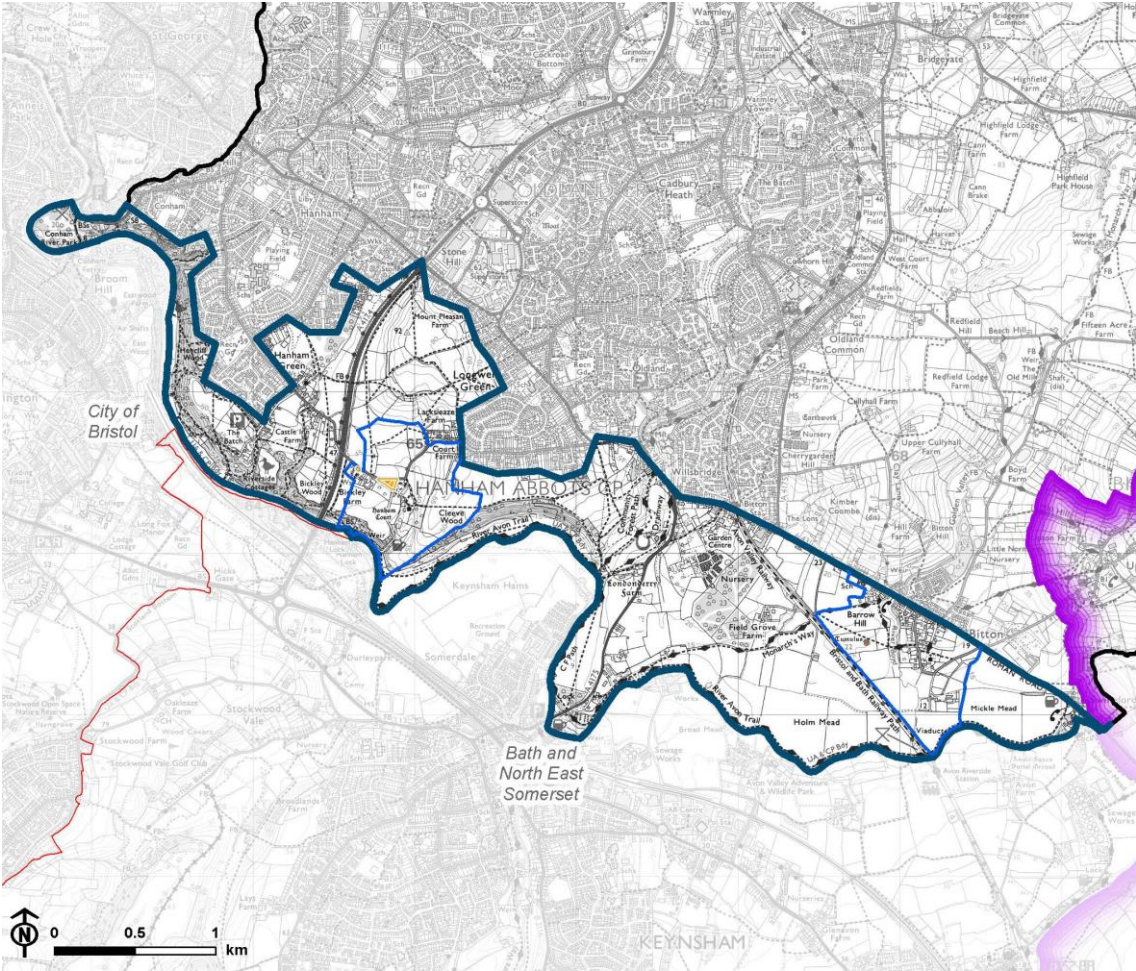
- LCA 16: Avon Valley
- Neighbouring LCA
- Council boundary
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- River

- Photograph location and direction
- Strategic viewpoint and angle



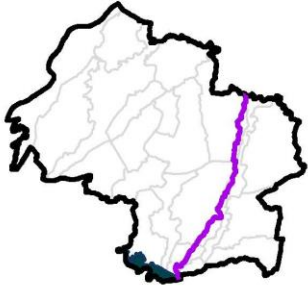
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Figure 5.6: Development and Heritage Context of LCA 16: Avon Valley



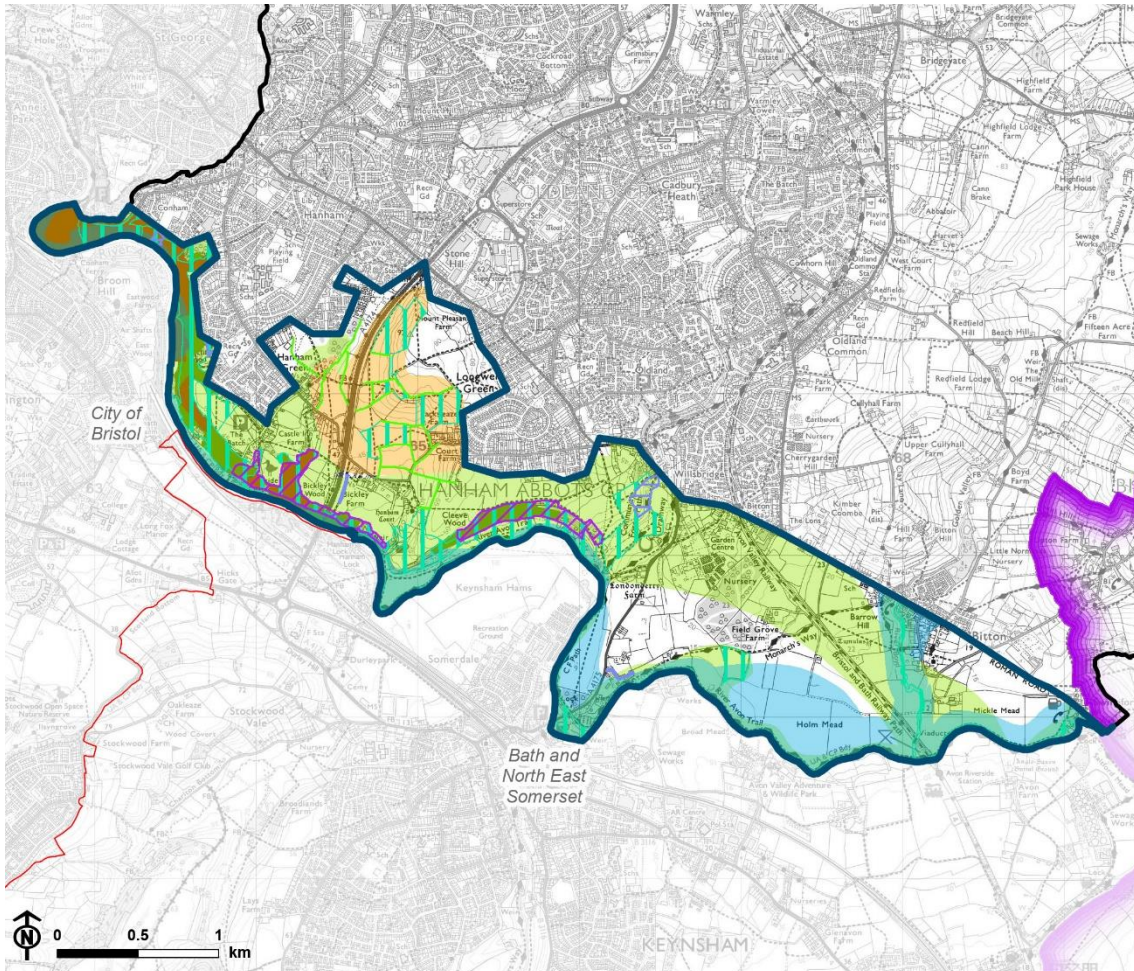
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- LCA 16: Avon Valley
- Council boundary
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- CRoW Common Land
- CRoW Open Access Land
- Scheduled Monument
- Conservation Area















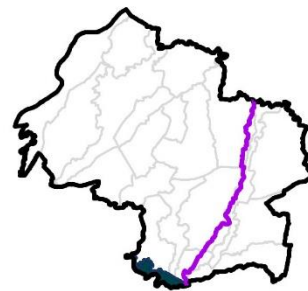
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Figure 5.7: Ecology and Biodiversity Context of LCA 16: Avon Valley



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- | | |
|--|--|
|  LCA 16: Avon Valley |  Regionally Important Geological Site |
|  Council boundary |  Local Nature Reserve |
|  Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary |  Grassland Strategic Network |
|  Site of Special Scientific Interest |  Wetland Strategic Network |
|  Site of Nature Conservation Interest |  Woodland Strategic Network |
|  Ancient woodland |  Important hedgerow |



Landscape Description

Key Characteristics

- The sinuous and meandering form of the River Avon with its associated bankside vegetation runs along the southern boundary of the LCA.
- The broad, open Avon floodplain is located to the east, with medium to large regular shaped fields of pasture and meadows with some arable.
- Fields in the east are bound by clipped and overgrown hedges with occasional lines of trees and intermittent specimen trees, some pollarded.
- Steep-sided, densely wooded slopes enclose the River Avon to the west. The linear broadleaved woodland includes large areas of ancient woodland.
- Gentle upper slopes in the west include medium sized pasture and arable fields, defined by the urban edge to the north.
- The distinct landform of the Hanham Hills rises above the urban edge, enabling panoramic views over Bristol and to the Cotswold Scarp.
- A general lack of development contrasts with notable areas of built development outside the LCA, which bound the open slopes to the north-west.
- The small-scale historic settlement at the Hanham Abbots Conservation Area and Bitton Conservation Area also contrasts with areas of built development outside the LCA.
- Historic industrial relics scattered along the Avon Valley are remnants of past mining, smelting and small-scale quarrying.
- The network of rural lanes and minor roads is only crossed by main roads in two places.
- A navigable river, the Avon is now used mainly for recreation, with promoted recreational routes following the riverbank.

Natural Influences

Geology, Landform and Hydrology

The Avon Valley LCA largely consists of Westphalian sandstone to the west, gradually changing to a mix of alluvium and Lower Jurassic limestone to the east. The soils are principally Brown Earth to the west, with a mix of Pello-alluvium Gley, typical Argillic Pelosols, Brown Rendzinas, Calcareous Pelosols and Brown Calcareous Earths over the rest of the area.

The topography varies from 10 metres AOD along the River Avon, rising generally to 50-55 metres AOD towards the urban edge of Bristol to the north. The highest point within the LCA rises to approximately 92 metres AOD on the Hanham Hills above Longwell Green.

In the east of the LCA the landform is dominated by the broad river valley floodplain. The River Avon occupies a relatively broad channel, which meanders considerably as it flows north-westwards towards Bristol. Within the context of this broad floodplain, the former London to Midland railway (now a footpath and cycleway), is located on a high earth embankment, which physically bisects the flat valley floor. Lock gates at several points allow navigable access, with weirs controlling river flow. The regular winter flooding of the valley floor is a feature of this area.

Further west, the valley profile becomes enclosed. Steep-sided bluffs rise from the valley floor, with more gentle slopes above. North of the river these slopes continue to rise gently to the rounded and prominent convex landform of the Hanham Hills (Visually Important Hillside (VIH)). This topography extends above the River Avon valley and into the surrounding urban edge to the north. The River Avon Valley VIH also falls within this LCA, the steep valley side sloping southwards to meet the River Avon at the South Gloucestershire authority boundary.

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A number of tributaries flow southwards to the River Avon. These include the River Boyd (south of Bitton village) and Siston Brook (south of Willsbridge). The River Boyd flows along a small slightly irregular shaped channel, fed by regular drainage ditches, across the floodplain. The Siston Brook follows a meandering channel within a narrow steep sided valley.

Land Cover

The Avon Valley LCA is largely rural and has a variety of land cover closely related to the river valley form. The floodplain to the east comprises medium to large, generally regular shaped, pastoral fields with some arable land. Fields are contained by clipped and overgrown hedgerows, with some fencing. Tree belts line the riverbank and disused railway line. Scattered specimen trees (some pollarded) are located within fields and hedgerows and wet meadows alongside the river.

Further west, where steep slopes contain the river valley, linear ancient and semi-natural woodland (largely of oak) is dominant, intermixed with areas of rough pasture. Conham River Park lies within a small meander loop of the River Avon, on the north-western boundary of the LCA. The site comprises woodland cover, with open glades of rough grassland and informal footpaths.

The upper slopes to the north are covered by a mix of medium, generally regular shaped, pastoral, and arable fields. Pastoral farmland is generally located on the higher ground near the Hanham Hills. The fields are contained variously by either woodland, clipped hedges, or bands of mature deciduous trees. Thick and overgrown hedges are typical along the urban edge, although some boundaries are fencing.

Elements of a more ornamental landscape are evident in the area of Hanham Court, to the south of the Hanham Hills and include a formal avenue of mature trees.

Photo 2: Gently undulating pastoral fields in the east of the LCA, enclosed by the rising landform of the river valley sides



Biodiversity

A mosaic of woodland, grassland and farmland connected by the wildlife corridors formed by the meandering River Avon (and its confluence with the River Boyd), plus a network of hedgerows which combine to make the Avon Valley an important habitat for a diverse range of species.

The area includes approximately 33 hectares of ancient woodland, including some relatively large areas, representing approximately 60 percent of the total broadleaf wooded cover within this area. Key species likely to be associated with the broadleaved 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). Cleeve Wood within the Avon Valley woodlands is designated as a Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) for the floral species present, with a mosaic of grassland and woodland habitats extending

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between the SSSI and Willsbridge Valley to the north-east. Bickley Wood is designated as a SSSI for the geological features present. The Avon Valley Woodland is designated as a Local Nature Reserve. There are also extensive areas of priority habitat deciduous woodland along the River Avon in the west of the LCA.

There are five sites designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs) for their neutral and calcareous grassland as well as marshy grassland at the River Boyd and wetland at the Hanham Hills fields. These include areas of species-rich grassland, which support a range of invertebrates and ant hills are a regular feature. These invertebrates in turn provide a food source for mammals including bats.

The watercourses and their tributaries which criss-cross the LCA act as wildlife corridors. The adjacent woodlands provide a wider habitat resource. The entirety of the River Avon within this LCA is situated within an SNCI. The section of the River Boyd which joins the River Frome within the eastern extent of the LCA is also designated as an SNCI. These watercourses will support a diverse range of species from aquatic macro-invertebrates to fish and water voles. Ponds and pools within the LCA support amphibians such as great crested newts (a European Protected Species). There is good connectivity between habitats for species such as these throughout the Avon Valley. Relatively large areas of priority habitat floodplain grazing marsh are located in the east of the LCA.

The relatively small area of arable farmland provides some habitat for many species of ground nesting farmland birds including some listed as being Globally Threatened Red listed species, while the winter stubble provides a foraging resource.

There is a history of small-scale stone quarrying within the Avon Valley. Underground quarries, mines, and features such as lime kilns provide an ideal habitat for many species of bat including European Protected Species.

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Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridor F (Hanham Green-Hanham Abbots-Bitton (*Avon Valley*)) covers the majority of the LCA. A small area of Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridor D (*Wickwar-Westerleigh-Bitton (Westerleigh Vale/Oldland Ridge/East Fringe)*) passes along the northern boundary of the LCA.

Cultural Influences

Land Use and Time Depth

Land use across the LCA is associated with agricultural practices (a mix of pastoral and arable).

Hanham Abbots Conservation Area is perched on the open slopes above the steep sided River Avon valley, to the south of the Hanham Hills. It extends to the River Avon and includes an important historical building group at Hanham Court and Court Farm, with historical associations with the Ancient Kingswood Forest. Dating back to the 14th and 15th centuries, important features include St George's Church and Tithe Barn at Hanham Court and the 18th century 'Sally on the Barn' at Court Farm, which is a prominent local landmark in views from the approach along Court Farm Road. Materials include limestone and Pennant sandstone within buildings and walls.

The Bitton Conservation Area is partially located in the east of the LCA. The village is designated for its historic linear form, the setting formed by the surrounding rural countryside and central landmark formed by St Mary's Church.

Between the railway and the village of Bitton lies a round barrow (designated as a Scheduled Monument). However, this feature is on the Heritage at Risk register due to adverse effects caused by animal burrowing.

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Areas of ancient woodland add time depth in the west of the LCA. Historic industrial relics of mining and small-scale quarrying within the Avon Valley include a disused railway, the Dramway, wharfs and lock gates along the river. The remnants of coal mining and small-scale stone quarrying have left traces along the valley sides to the west. The small quarry sites form frequent features, creating a number of stone outcrops, now enclosed by woodland. The natural stone boundary walls to Conham Hall (demolished 1971) and the ruins of a copper smelting works can be found nestling within the woodland cover.

The red brick building of the former Cadbury's factory (located to the south of the LCA) is an evident feature in views south from the LCA, though now partially absorbed by recent redevelopment.

The former importance of the River Avon as a communication route is evident at frequent intervals along its course. Londonderry Wharf is located on a meander in the river, opposite and to the north-east of the now disused Cadbury factory. The wharf was the terminus for coal barges, which collected coal transported along the Dramway from Mangotsfield and Ram Hill and even from as far as Coalpit Heath to the north.

Settlement and Infrastructure

There are no major settlements within the area. Part of the nucleated Bitton village lies within the east of the LCA, the rest of the village lying within LCA 11: Golden Valley. The village, which is designated as a Conservation Area, is positioned on slightly higher ground on the edge of this area and overlooks the floodplain of the Avon Valley.

Otherwise, settlement is limited to the hamlet of Swineford in the east, a number of scattered, isolated farms and buildings along the A4175 and A431, and dispersed farms and houses along a minor road east of Hanham. The LCA is however, bordered by dense settlement. To the north, the urban areas of Willsbridge, Longwell Green and Hanham include both dispersed and clustered groups of cottages, houses, farms, and outbuildings. These are distinct and

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variously distributed along major roads, extending into the landscape, or absorbed within more recent areas of brick housing or industry.

Other small settlements include Riverside Cottages, a scattering of cottages along the river to the west and farmhouses, including cottages at Castle Inn Farm and Bickley Farm.

The former London to Midland railway line (now the Bristol and Bath Railway Path) crosses the floodplain diagonally on embankment, heading towards Bath to the south-east. Part of this route is shared with a steam railway, at Willsbridge to the west of Bitton village.

Numerous lock gates along the Avon and the Port Avon Marina at Keynsham provide recreational facilities and access to the wider river and canal systems of Bristol and Bath. Conham River Park and car park on the north-western edge of the LCA enables easy recreational access to the Avon Valley from the surrounding urban area. Conham Ferry operates seasonally, allowing links across the river.

A number of promoted recreational routes cross the LCA. This includes the Bristol and Bath Railway Path, Avon Cycleway (following part of NCN Route 4), Monarch's Way, Dramway, Community Forest Path in the centre and east of the LCA. The River Avon Trail follows the northern riverbank from Bristol. A number of footpaths intersect and cross the hillsides above the Avon Valley and floodplain.

The A4174 crosses the LCA on an elevated bridge, spanning the narrow steep sided river valley to the west. The A4175 follows naturally higher ground within a meander loop, before crossing the river. The A431 follows slightly higher ground along the northern edge of the floodplain and LCA boundary.

One powerline passes through the Siston Brook valley and then westwards along the River Avon valley.

Photo 3: Traditional stone buildings within Bitton Conservation Area



Perceptual Influences

Visual Character

The Avon Valley LCA has a relatively simple rural character comprising floodplain, enclosed wooded valley to the west and open hillsides to the north-west, contained by dense settlement.

The Avon floodplain in the east of the LCA is a flat, large-scale area with regular shaped pastoral fields, fringed by some arable fields. Occasional overgrown hedges, hedgerow trees and linear woodland occasionally confine views, although overall the landscape is open.

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The tree-lined railway embankment forms a significant physical landform and visual screen within the valley floor, containing east to west views and providing a more enclosed setting to the edge of Bitton. The elevated footpath/cycleway also allows occasional local and distant views over the adjacent floodplain and river, including views towards distinctive landform features within the CNL, Ashwicke Ridges and Oldland Ridge, and historic features including the Bitton and Upper Cheyney Conservation Areas.

The winter flooding of the river meadows in the east of the LCA contributes to seasonal visual changes and connection with natural processes and cycles. The presence of over mature wetland trees, such as willow and poplar, provide both structure and a sense of age and place in the landscape.

Conham River Park contains a similar tree structure near the riverbank, with lime trees enclosing the park's central area. Glimpsed views southwards include rock outcrops, which define the river valley's southern edge at this point, with housing partially visible along the skyline.

Villages such as Bitton on the LCA's boundary also contribute to the distinctive character of the locality, with its rich mix of stone buildings and boundary walls on its fringes. The village's church tower is a prominent feature, visible from many parts of the valley.

The red brick building of the now disused Cadbury's chocolate factory is located on the river at Somerdale, just outside this LCA. However, the open character of the floodplain ensures this building is visually prominent in the locality and forms a key landmark in many local and wider views from within this area such as the Cotswold Scarp (LCA 4). The large regular shaped fields beside the factory have intermittent hedges and fenced boundaries, creating a very open appearance, the flat landscape contrasting with the more undulating landform to the north of the river.

The narrow, enclosed river valley to the west includes a combination of linear ancient and semi-natural woodland, clipped hedges, and bands of mature deciduous trees. This creates a textured but simple enclosed landscape, which

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emphasises the sinuous form of the River Avon. Long views along the valley are possible from the elevated A4174, less so from the A4175 road bridges. Views are typically more contained from eye level along the valley floor and from slopes, due to the dense woodland cover. One powerline passes through the enclosed valley area and is prominent locally within the valley confines.

The landscape to the north-west, above the steep sided wooded valley, is visually separate from the River Avon. Roughly south of the Abbots Road and Court Farm Road, pasture fields are contained by the irregular woodland edge of the River Avon valley. The small-scale scattered traditional stone properties and farms at The Batch, Castle Inn Farm and Bickley Farm are well-integrated. This is due to containment by south-westwards sloping landform, local woodland and the variety of boundary and garden vegetation and strong structure of stone wall boundaries.

Hanham, south of Abbots Road has a dense urban edge, which is well-integrated to the south by boundary trees and hedgerows. The eastern settlement edge is more exposed. To the east of Hanham, the A4174 is in cutting and remains visually unobtrusive, except within immediate views.

In the area of Hanham Court, a small hollow in the landform and diverse structure of adjacent hedgerows forms a textured, more enclosed landscape. The court and church form distinctive historic built landmarks. To the north, the linear housing edge of Longwell Green is relatively well-integrated by an adjacent framework of dense overgrown hedgerows, woodland, and small-scale vegetated back gardens. This integration provides some transition between the urban edge and rural fringe beyond.

To the north, the Hanham Hills form a prominent rounded landform extending into the urban edge and rising some 30 metres above the adjacent area. This rising ground visually separates the urban edges of Hanham and Longwell Green. The medium sized irregular shaped pasture fields on the hills, bounded by clipped hedges with little tree cover, allow panoramic views. Extensive views are available towards the Oldland Ridge, Pucklechurch Ridge, the Avon Valley towards the Ashwicke Ridges and the Cotswold Scarp to the east. Views west

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look towards the Severn Ridge and Welsh Hills beyond Bristol. Dundry Hill is seen in views south-west.

The Hanham Hills are a local landmark and important open space, prominent from the defined urban edge of Hanham and Longwell Green and within southerly views from Kingswood. In conjunction with open fields and public open space to the west, this area forms an important rural buffer to and the skyline from the urban edge. Although the hills are physically severed from the urban area by the A4174, since this lies in cutting, the open space adjacent to the urban edge and the hills are visually continuous.

The retail centre at Longwell Green (located in LCA 14: Kingswood) forms a prominent urban edge to the north of the LCA. Large-scale light-coloured commercial units and adjacent dense residential framework are evident in outward views from the Hanham Hills. To the west, the recent housing development adjacent to Hanham Hall is also prominent, extending into the adjacent open landscape with no planting structure along its fringe to provide visual integration. To the south-east, a section of Longwell Green forms a harsh and prominent urban edge, rising over the lower slopes of the hills.

Individual properties punctuate the line of the A4175, across slightly raised ground within the Avon Valley floodplain and are generally well-integrated by surrounding vegetation.

The A431 defines the north-eastern boundary of the LCA. Views from the route are varied in character, influenced by the extent to which settlement or open landscape fringe this corridor. Rural characteristics are, however, strong for much of its length, with scattered Pennant stone houses and cottages (with limestone more common to the east) forming a linear corridor pattern. The vegetation structure is strong and comprises hedgerows, trees, and garden vegetation.

Photo 4: Outward views looking across the wooded river valley from the Hanham Hills



Tranquillity and Dark Skies

Adjacent settlement, noise, and movement of traffic on the A4174, A431 and A4 (to the south of the LCA) influence the sense of tranquillity within the LCA.

Localised wooded areas in the west of the LCA are relatively tranquil, given containment by landform and woodland, however background road noise from the prominent elevated A4174 overbridge interrupts the secluded character.

Within the wooded valley in the west of the LCA, glimpsed views of the urban edge along adjacent higher ground and trains passing along the valley sides to the south erodes the otherwise secluded and rural character.

The proximity of the dense urban edge of the Bristol conurbation influences the experienced of dark night skies throughout the area. Areas of woodland in the west filter some of the light pollution from the adjacent settlement edge.

Visually Important Hillside

The River Avon Valley Visually Important Hillside (VIH) and Hanham Hills VIH are located within this LCA. Key characteristics of each VIH include the following:

- River Avon Valley VIH: a steep wooded northern valley side which contributes to the setting of the River Avon and forms a southerly extension of the Hanham Hills VIH. The VIH contributes to the setting of Hanham Court Conservation Area.
- Hanham Hills VIH: a steep sided singular hill of convex landform that forms a northerly extension to the River Avon Valley VIH. The VIH forms a distinctive landform feature in both views towards the urban edge of Hanham and from within the settlement area itself, as well as providing a green backdrop to Hanham Court Conservation Area.

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

Strategic Viewpoints

Two Strategic Viewpoints (SVP) are located within this LCA at SVP 19: Hanham Hills and SVP 20: Bristol to Bath Railway Path. SVP 19: Hanham Hills allows an appreciation of the CNL and provides a panoramic view of Avon Valley, Oldland Ridge, Pucklechurch Ridge, Severn Ridges, Dundry Hill, Kelston Hill, the Ashwicke Ridges and the Cotswold Scarp, and the landmark feature of the distinctive line of beech trees on Freezing Hill. SVP 20: Bristol to Bath Railway Path allows an appreciation of the CNL and provides a panoramic view of the Avon Valley, Ashwicke Ridges, Oldland Ridge, Cotswold hills (including Prospect Stile and Kelston Roundhill), the Bitton and Upper Cheyney Conservation Areas, and the landmark features of St Mary's Church and the former chocolate factory at Keynsham Hams.

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

Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Value Features

- Varied landform that provides visual interest and a sense of place both within the LCA and from surrounding areas, including the steep-sided river valley landform and Hanham Hills in the west.
- Areas of deciduous woodland, some of which is ancient, that contribute to habitat connectivity, biodiversity, and landscape pattern.
- The flowing water and bankside vegetation of watercourses and associated tributaries that provides habitat for a range of notable species and contributes to biodiversity, notably the course of the River Avon which is designated as an SNCI.
- The distinctive sinuous form of the River Avon, which contributes to the sense of place and landscape pattern.
- The Hanham Abbots Conservation Area and Bitton Conservation Area which add time depth.
- Industrial relics that provide a historic link to former mining and small-scale quarrying in the area.
- The network of public rights of way and cycle paths, including the Bristol and Bath Railway Path and Avon Cycleway, River Avon Path, Dramway, Community Forest Path, and the River Avon, that provide recreational opportunities across the landscape from the urban edge.

The Changing Landscape

The following section sets out the changes and pressures to the Avon Valley LCA.

Climate Change

- Climate change and changing land management practices may lead to potential changes in woodland and tree species composition. Increases in severe gales could result in wind damage to woodland edges. Ancient woodlands in the west of the LCA may be particularly susceptible to damage from storms and drought.
- Climate change leading to increased temperatures and periods of drought resulting in a change in stream and river flows, altering the species composition of wetland habitats (particularly those associated with the River Avon and River Boyd SNCIs).
- Increase in frequency and severity of seasonal flooding in lower-lying valleys, particularly in the east of the LCA, 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

- 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 small new woodlands to buffer ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW)/SSSIs and extend the woodland corridor into urban areas north and south of the River Avon, as set out in the Forest of Avon's Tree and Woodland Strategy. This may soften and further integrate the settlement edge.

Land Use and Cover

- Much of the existing strong landscape framework of woodland, trees and hedgerows is in a reasonable to good condition. There is a mix, however, of sporadic and intermittent hedges, often replaced or supplemented with fencing in the eastern areas and near the urban edge.

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- The area has over recent years seen an increase in woodland management and more recent woodland planting that is now maturing, thereby strengthening the landscape structure, and enhancing the habitat value of the area. A number of these initiatives include local community involvement and 'Friends' groups, such as at Conham River Park and the Avon Valley woodlands.
- The River Avon towpath has been restored, improving recreational access.
- Pennant stone boundary walls have in places fallen into disrepair and, in some instances, the stone has been removed.
- The more wooded areas to the west and north create a strong, intact landscape structure and important wildlife habitat, however given the proximity of urban populations and access, recreational use such as mountain biking has the potential to erode or disturb wildlife habitat including ground flora.

Development

- The proximity of the urban edge creates pressures for housing, business, transport, amenity, and recreational development and use within the area. Any further significant physical or visual encroachment of the urban edge has the potential to erode the character of the rural landscape.
- Recent years have seen a significant increase in the number of houseboats/barges on the river and the duration of stays. Some associated domestic related activity has spread onto the banks with garden and storage areas being created. This has the potential to erode rural character and displace habitats of ecological value.
- There has been intensification of recreational activities such as at Bitton football club. Such pressures and additional recreational facilities have the potential to erode the distinctive rural character, perception of remoteness and increase disturbance of wildlife.
- The effects of urbanisation, including telecoms masts and fly tipping within localised areas, have had some influence across the rural valley landscape.

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- The older pattern of settlement along the northern boundary of the LCA (Hanham, Longwell Green, Willsbridge and Bitton), and use of local stone and traditional architectural style relate well to their rural setting. These areas are sensitive to change from infill or coalescence, which might change their distinctive character.
- Recent development at Hanham Hall has seen the restoration of this landmark building (within LCA 14: Kingswood) and also incorporated a robust landscape scheme that respects its setting, which extends into this LCA.
- The landscape character of this area is dependent on adjacent areas, both within and beyond the South Gloucestershire boundary. Any significant change in adjacent areas potentially could influence the character of the Avon Valley LCA. For example, redevelopment of the former Cadbury factory has influenced the character of views south from the LCA.

Guidance

These guidelines recommend how the landscape can be managed to ensure future change respects the local character and should be read in conjunction with the objectives of the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) Strategy and Guidelines [See reference 4] as well as the overarching management strategy objectives set out in Chapter 4.

Landscape Strategy

Landscape Management

- Enhance and manage existing deciduous and ancient woodlands through appropriate woodland management.
- Establish trees and small woodlands using native species to buffer ancient woodlands and SSSIs, to secure the landscape structure and

Enclosed Valleys LCT

habitat value of the valley (i.e., Hencliffe Wood, Conham River Park), in line with the aims of the Forest of Avon Tree and Woodland Strategy.

- Strengthen woodland buffers around more recent urban areas and other new developments to aid their integration into the landscape.
- Restore, manage, and strengthen the hedgerow network, planting hedgerow trees at irregular spacing where appropriate, on balance with maintaining key views afforded from the open floodplain in the west of the LCA, in line with the aims of the Forest of Avon's Tree and Woodland Strategy **[See reference 5]**.
- Address potential flooding issues with the implementation of natural flood management schemes and enhancement of priority habitat floodplain grazing marsh.
- Encourage and support the management, restoration and enhancement of the relic industrial landscapes and structures associated with the coal mining and copper smelting industries along the Avon Valley.
- Encourage the restoration and management of stone boundary walls and reinforce local distinctiveness through the use of materials such as local Pennant sandstone and limestone that complement the local vernacular.

Ecology/Biodiversity Management

- Protect and extend the mosaic of grassland and woodland habitats, for example between Cleeve Wood SSSI and Willsbridge valley and between Hanham Hills Fields and the Avon Valley as part of the wider strategic grassland network.
- Restore and maintain riparian habitats, taking opportunities to restore the river and enhance biodiversity, in line with the aims of the Bath and North East Somerset WaterSpace project where relevant **[See reference 6]**.
- Conserve and enhance the priority habitat Floodplain Grazing Marsh, as part of the wider wetland strategic network.

Development Management

- Protect the open characteristics and undeveloped nature of the remaining rural skylines, including the Hanham Hills, and views towards and from the Cotswold Scarp.
- Restore and maintain the rural character of the riverbanks and wooded slopes, including managing recreational pressures and access routes in a manner that respects their integrity and character, in line with the aims of the Bath and North East Somerset WaterSpace project.
- Limit sprawl and encroachment into the rural landscape from the dense urban edge to the north of the LCA.
- Reinforce local distinctiveness through the use of materials such as local Pennant sandstone and limestone that are in keeping with the local vernacular.
- Ensure that new development does not harm the character, significance or setting of Hanham Court and the Hanham Abbots Conservation Area, its gardens and rural landscape setting. Retain key views towards and from the Conservation Area.
- Ensure that new development does not harm the character, significance or setting of the Bitton Conservation Area. Retain views towards the church, which forms a key landmark feature in views in the east of the LCA.

References

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- 3 Forest of Avon Trust and West of England Nature Partnership, The Forest of Avon Plan: A Tree and Woodland Strategy for the West of England. Available at: <https://forestofavontrust.org/forest-of-avon-plan/>
- 4 Cotswolds National Landscape, Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (June 2016). Available at: <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/our-landscape/landscape-strategy-guidelines/>
- 5 Forest of Avon Trust and West of England Nature Partnership, The Forest of Avon Plan: A Tree and Woodland Strategy for the West of England. Available at: <https://forestofavontrust.org/forest-of-avon-plan/>
- 6 Bath & North East Somerset Council, Water Space Project. Available at: <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/environment/river-safety/rivers-canals/water-space-study>

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