

Landscape Character Assessment

Supplementary Planning Document

Adopted

April 2025



South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment SPD Index

The revised Landscape Character Assessment is available in 13 parts. The first five chapters introduce the context of the study. Chapters 6-13 set out the Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and component Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). The report is supported by additional information provided in Appendices 1-4. Further information on Visually Important Hillsides and Strategic Viewpoints is provide in Annex I and Annex II, respectively.

Introductory Chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction and Context

Chapter 2: Method

Chapter 3: Formative Influences

Chapter 4: Management Guidelines

Chapter 5: Landscape Character Classification

The Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and component Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) of South Gloucestershire are described in Chapters 6-13, arranged by LCT. An overview map showing all LCAs and LCTs is provided at Chapter 5: Landscape Character Classification.

Chapter 6: Plateau and Scarp LCT

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

Chapter 7: Shallow Ridge LCT

- LCA 5 Wickwar Ridge and Vale
- LCA 6 Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley

Chapter 8: Parkland Vale LCT

- LCA 7 Falfield Vale

Chapter 9: Shallow Vale LCT

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

Chapter 10: Enclosed Valleys LCT

- LCA 11 Golden Valley
- LCA 16 Avon Valley

Chapter 11: Broad Valleys LCT

- LCA 12 Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge
- LCA 13 Frome Valley
- LCA 14 Kingswood
- LCA 15 Patchway, Filton and the Stokes

Chapter 12: Undulating Ridge LCT

- LCA 17 Rudgeway Ridge and Tytherington Ridge
- LCA 18 Severn Ridges

Chapter 13: Estuary, Shoreline and Levels LCT

- LCA 19 Oldbury Levels
- LCA 20 Pilning Levels
- LCA 21 Severn Shoreline and Estuary

Appendices

- **Appendix A:** User Guide
- **Appendix B:** Glossary of Terms
- **Appendix C:** Data sources
- **Appendix D:** Strategic and Local Green Infrastructure Projects

Annexes (issued previously)

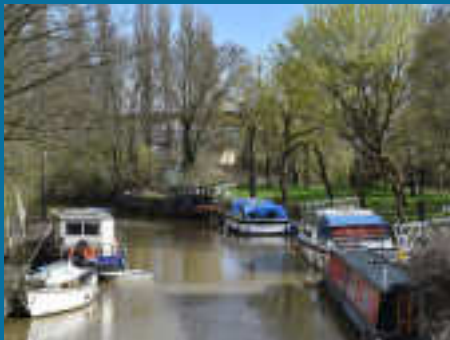
- **Annex I:** Visually Important Hillsides
- **Annex II:** Strategic Viewpoints

Landscape Character Assessment

Supplementary Planning Document

Final Report for Adoption

January 2025



South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment

Supplementary Planning Document - Chapter 1

South Gloucestershire Council

Final Draft Report proposed for adoption

Prepared by LUC

February 2025

Version	Status	Prepared	Checked	Approved	Date
1	Pilot LCT/ LCA profile	E White	K Davies	K Davies	23.01.2023
2	Draft LCT/ LCA profiles	L Jewitt A Palenske	K Davies	K Davies	15.06.2023
3	Draft Report	L Jewitt E White	K Davies	K Davies	05.07.2023
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Chapter 1

Introduction and Context

Background and purpose of the South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment

1.1 LUC was commissioned in November 2022 to prepare an update to the Landscape Character Assessment for South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) covering the unitary authority area (including part of the Cotswolds National Landscape).

1.2 The Landscape Character Assessment is primarily intended as a study of the rural landscapes of South Gloucestershire. However, the influence of urban edges on the character of the adjoining rural areas is also considered. In addition, the principal characteristics, and features of urban areas within South Gloucestershire are also included for completeness, with respect to open spaces, landscape framework and built fabric, although a detailed assessment of the urban areas is not included. It is recognised that some of the original 21 LCAs covering South Gloucestershire have a predominant townscape character and fabric, rather than rural landscape character; for example, LCA 14: Kingswood, and LCA 15: Patchway, Filton and the Stokes.

1.3 This study updates the 2014 Landscape Character Assessment, itself an update of the original 2005 assessment. The location of the study area for the 2025 South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment (i.e. the unitary authority boundary) is shown on **Figure 1.1**.

1.4 A map of the Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas within South Gloucestershire is shown on **Figure 1.2**. Further detail on the

landscape classification is provided in **Chapter 5: Landscape Character Classification**.

1.5 The Landscape Character Types and their component Landscape Character Areas are detailed in **Chapters 6-13**.

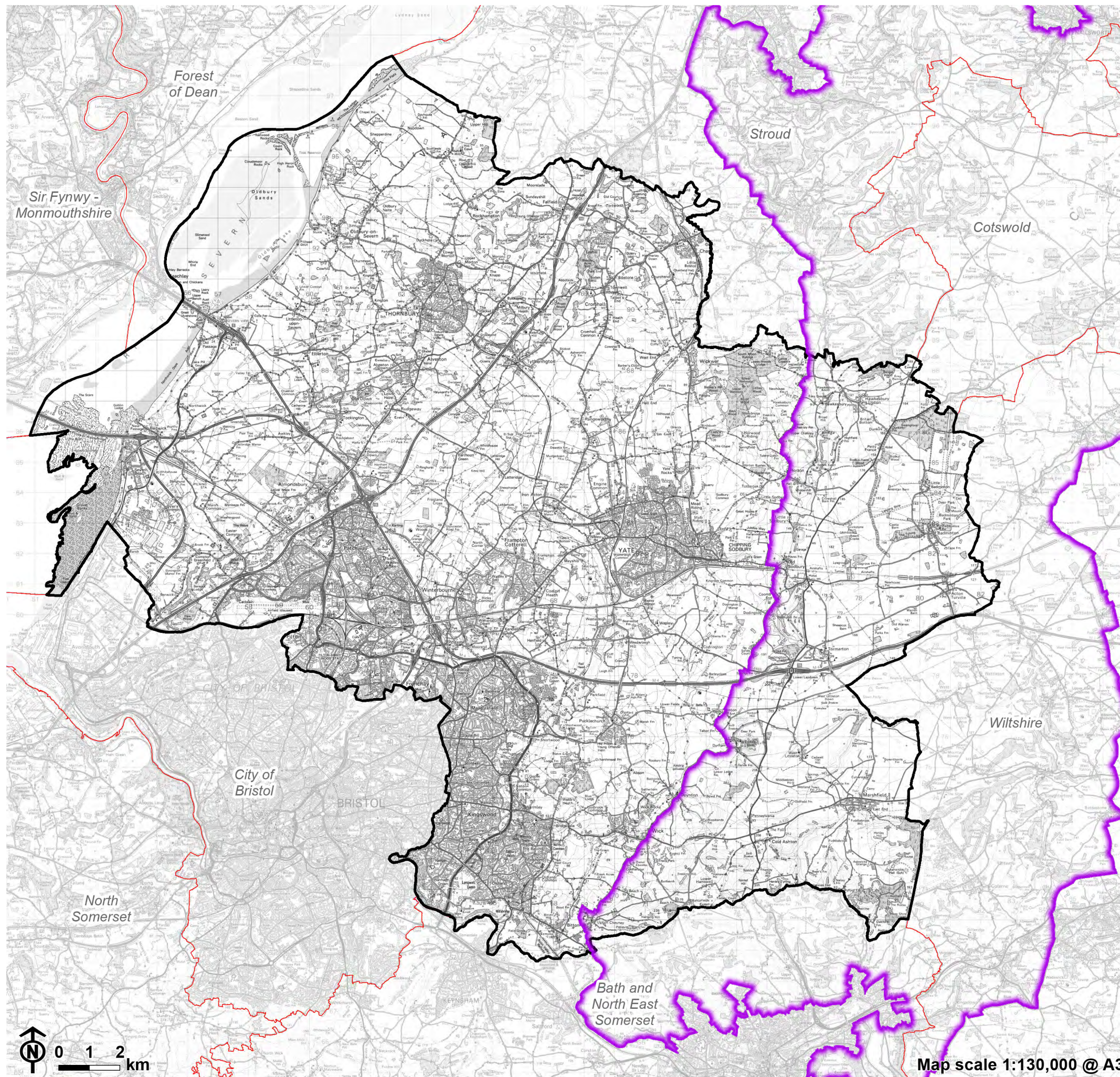


Figure 1.1: Location of the Study Area

- Council boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary



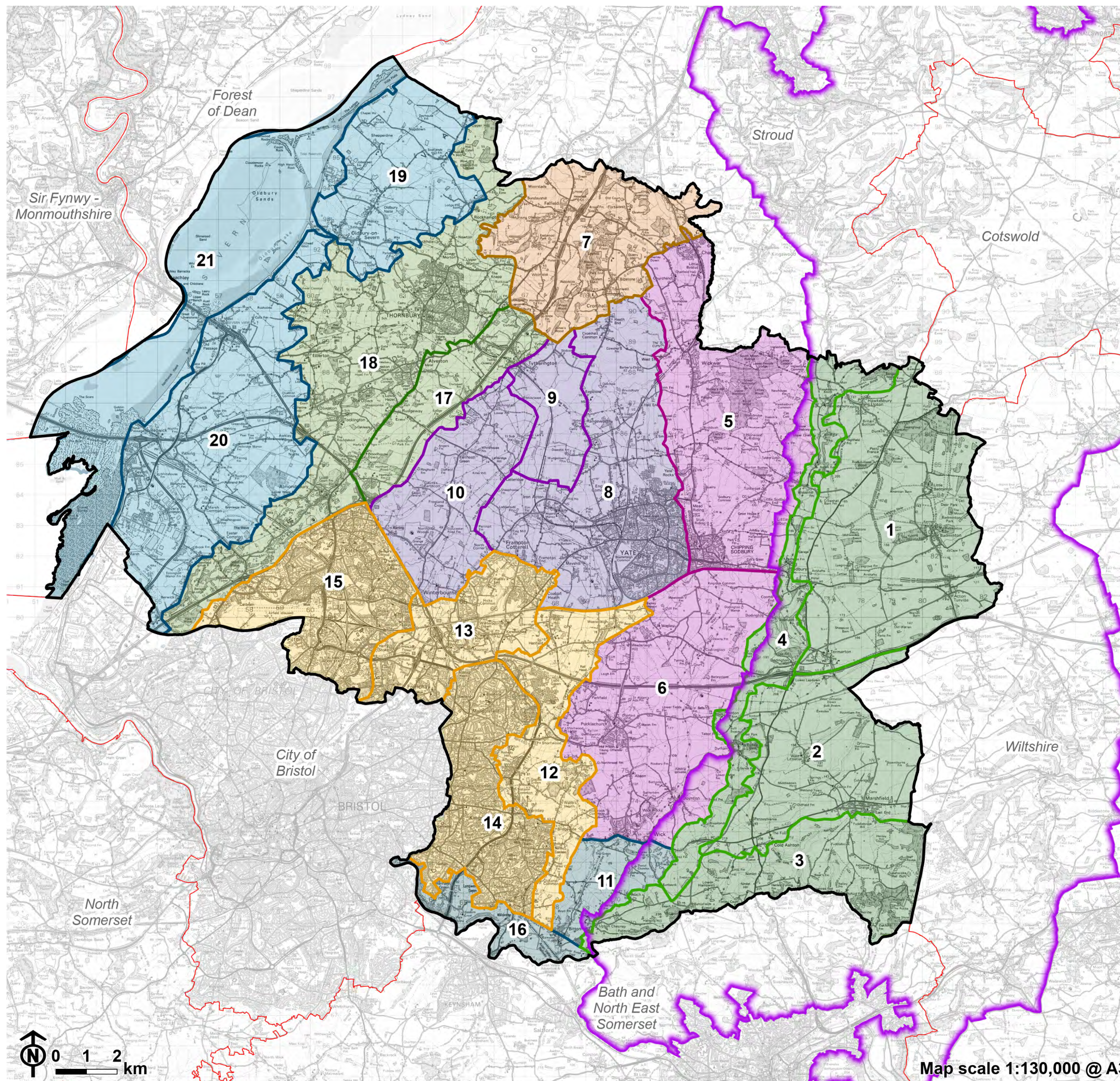


Figure 1.2: Landscape Character Types and Areas

- Council boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary

South Gloucestershire LCT/LCA

- Plateau and Scarp
 - 1. Badminton Plateau
 - 2. Marshfield Plateau
 - 3. Ashwicke Ridges
 - 4. Cotswold Scarp
- Shallow Ridge
 - 5. Wickwar Ridge and Vale
 - 6. Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley
- Parkland Vale
 - 7. Falfield Vale
- Shallow Vale
 - 8. Yate Vale
 - 9. Tytherington Plain
 - 10. Earthcott Vale
- Enclosed Valleys
 - 11. Golden Valley
 - 16. Avon Valley
- Broad Valleys
 - 12. Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge
 - 13. Frome Valley
 - 14. Kingswood
 - 15. Patchway and Filton
- Undulating Ridge
 - 17. Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge
 - 18. Severn Ridges
- Estuary, Shoreline and Levels
 - 19. Oldbury Levels
 - 20. Pilning Levels
 - 21. Severn Shoreline and Estuary

1.6 The updated Landscape Character Assessment includes the following two annexes:

- **Annex I: Visually Important Hillsides (VIH)** – A review and analysis of hillsides previously identified in Policy CS2: Green Infrastructure of the South Gloucestershire Core Strategy 2006-2027 (adopted 11th December 2013), and also described and illustrated within the previous 2014 Landscape Character Assessment. It provides the justification as to why they are categorised as being visually important and their extent has been spatially defined. The hillsides have been tested against criteria relating to the Distinctiveness and Identity; Visual Prominence; and Character and Value. Visually Important Hillsides comprise a mix of distinct hillside landforms (e.g Hanham Hills), outward facing scarps to plateau areas (e.g. the Cotswold Scarp delineating the western edge of the Cotswold National Landscape), or prominent valley sides (e.g. the northern valley side of the River Avon). In some locations, they define two sides of a broad ridgeline, for example the ridgeline lying between the western facing slope known as the Wickwar Ridge and eastward facing slope known as the Churchend Ridge.
- **Annex II: Strategic Viewpoints (SVP)** – A review and analysis of viewpoints, previously identified by SGC for the 2022 Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridor Mapping Project. It provides the justification as to why they are considered to be important and therefore categorised as being Strategic Viewpoints. The viewpoints have been tested against criteria relating to Popularity, Access, and Facilities; Relationship with the Cotswold National Landscape (CNL); and the Quality, Value and Features of the View.

1.7 The Landscape Character Assessment provides a robust evidence base to underpin the review of the Local Plan and to assist in the local planning process. It is intended to both inform work on policy development and development management, guiding development that is sympathetic to local character and the qualities of the landscape. It can help inform locational policies for strategic development as well as appropriate design and mitigation, providing baseline evidence for more detailed Landscape and Visual Impact

Assessment (LVIA). It can also provide a framework for more detailed landscape studies and sensitivity assessments. Wider applications of the Landscape Character Assessment include land management, notably implementation of agri-environment schemes (including Environmental Land Management Schemes – ELMS), and land use change to achieve net zero, including opportunities for woodland creation and renewable energy development.

1.8 In summary, the study can be used to consider landscape character when considering any type of change. This includes opportunities for conserving existing character, strengthening, and enhancing character as well as opportunities to create new character.

1.9 A user guide is provided in **Appendix A**.

The role of Landscape Character Assessment

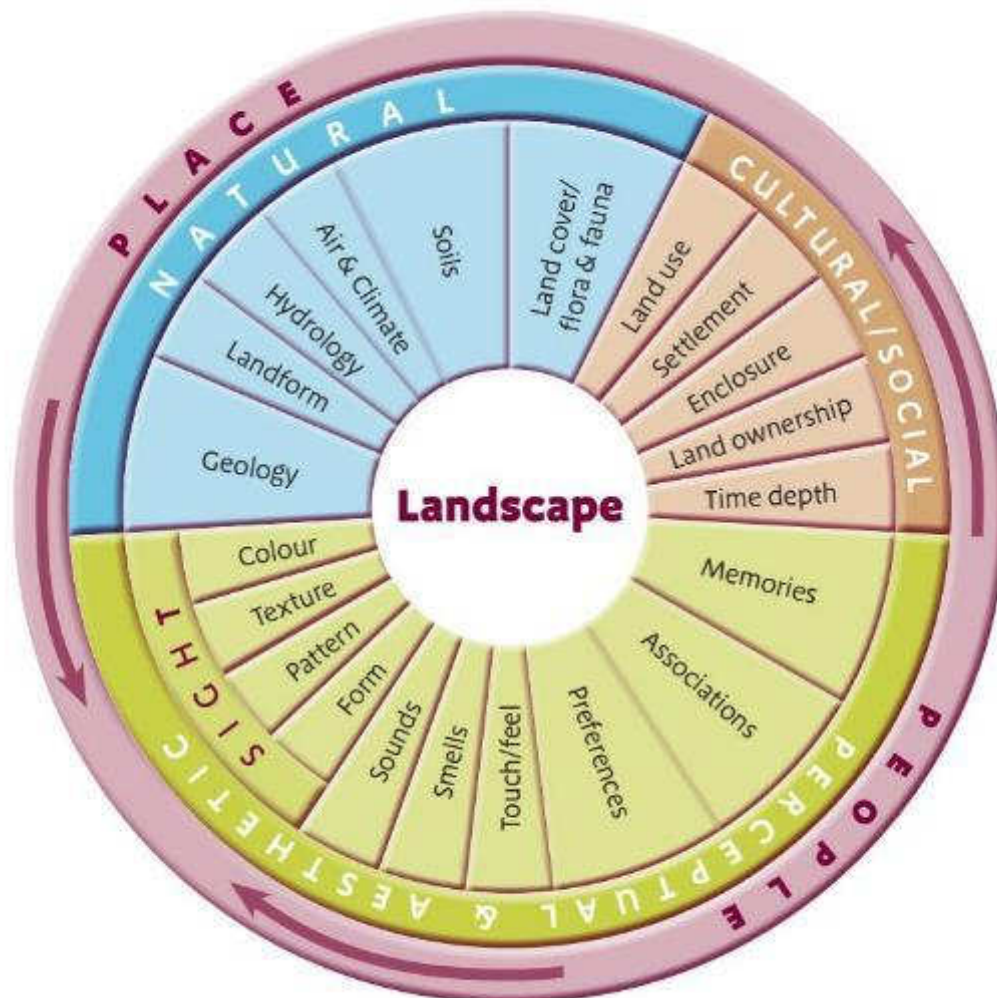
1.10 Landscape character is defined as:

“A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse” (Natural England, 2014)

1.11 Landscape Character Assessment is the process of identifying and describing such variations in character across a landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of features and attributes (characteristics) that make different landscapes distinctive. The landscape is the result of the interaction between people and place which gives an area a local identity. The ‘landscape wheel’ below (**Figure 1.3**) illustrates how the different natural, cultural, and perceptual attributes of a landscape combine to produce character. The process of Landscape Character Assessment is described in ‘An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment’ (Natural England, 2014) [[See reference 1](#)].

1.12 Understanding the character of a place and evaluating an area’s defining characteristics is a key component in managing growth sustainably and ensuring that the inherent character and qualities of South Gloucestershire's landscape can continue to be appreciated. An understanding of character can be used to ensure that any change or development does not undermine whatever is valued or characteristic in a particular landscape, and can help guide positive change that conserves, enhances, restores, or creates local character.

Figure 1.3: The 'Landscape Wheel' (Natural England 2014)



Policy Context

The European Landscape Convention

1.13 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) came into force in the UK in March 2007. It establishes the need to recognise landscape in law; to develop landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and planning of landscapes; and to establish procedures for the participation of the general public and other stakeholders in the creation and implementation of landscape policies. The ELC definition of 'landscape' recognises that all landscapes matter, be they ordinary, degraded, or outstanding:

"Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors."

1.14 The ELC puts emphasis on the whole landscape and all its values and is forward looking in its approach, recognising the dynamic and changing character of landscape. Specific measures promoted by the ELC of direct relevance to this study include:

- The identification and assessment of landscape; and
- Improved consideration of landscape in existing and future sectoral and spatial policy and regulation.

1.15 The ELC remains in place following the UK's departure from the EU in 2020.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

1.16 The revised NPPF, published in December 2024, states in paragraph 187 that:

"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland."

1.17 The NPPF is supported by Planning Practice Guidance which recognises the role that Landscape Character Assessment plays in helping to understand the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape. This assessment provides evidence to help recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and to protect the valued landscapes of South Gloucestershire.

South Gloucestershire Local Plan: Core Strategy

1.18 The current core strategy (adopted 2013) prioritises the conservation and enhancement of the landscapes of South Gloucestershire, including their heritage and biodiversity values. The following policies are of particular relevance:

- **Policy CS1: High quality design** seeks to secure the delivery of high-quality design for all new development and makes specific reference about the need of taking into account the Landscape Character Assessment, where relevant.
- **Policy CS2: Green Infrastructure, Policy CS9: Managing the Environment and Heritage, and Policy CS34: Rural Areas** make reference to the need for conserving and enhancing landscape character and associated natural, built, cultural and heritage features.
- **Policy CS3: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation** seeks to ensure that in areas covered by national designations and areas of local landscape value, such projects ‘do not individually or cumulatively compromise the objectives of the designations, especially with regard to landscape character, visual impact and residential amenity’.
- **Policy CS16: Housing Density** states that the density of new development should be informed by the character of the local area.
- **Policy CS17: Housing Diversity** states that if building on gardens is proposed, it should not adversely affect the character of an area.
- **Policy CS19: Rural Housing** states that proposals should be modest in scale and in keeping with the form and character of the settlement and local landscape setting.

1.19 The issue of landscape character is also relevant to the formulation of proposals for new development, including in relation to the location of new development (policy CS5), infrastructure and developer contributions (Policy CS6), the North and East Fringe and the growth areas, as well as Major Infrastructure Projects (Policies CS25 - CS33 inclusive, and Policies CS36 and CS37).

1.20 SGC are developing a new Local Plan [\[See reference 2\]](#) which will include a new strategy and policies to guide and manage growth and change over the next 15 years. During the Phase 2 consultation in 2022, SGC consulted on new policies covering ‘Strategic Green Infrastructure Network’ and the nine Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridors, as well on Biodiversity Net Gain (more

information is provided under the 'Related Studies, Strategies and Guidance' section of this chapter.

Relationship to published landscape and related studies

1.21 Landscape Character Assessment can be undertaken at a variety of scales and levels of detail. The South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment is part of a hierarchy of Landscape Character Assessment information cascading down from the national to the local level.

National Level

1.22 At a national level, England is divided into 159 distinct National Character Areas (NCAs). Each is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity. There are descriptive profiles available for each NCA setting out information on landscape character, changes in the landscape and an assessment of ecosystem services delivered (Natural England, 2014) [\[See reference 3\]](#).

1.23 South Gloucestershire has a varied landscape that can be broadly split into three sections: the Levels and Estuary, the central Vales and Ridges, and the nationally important Cotswold Scarp and Plateau. These divisions are reflected in the three NCAs within South Gloucestershire:

- **NCA 106: Severn and Avon Vales** - a low-lying open agricultural vale landscape dominated by the lower valleys of the Avon and Severn rivers. Occasional outlier hills punctuate the otherwise flat landscape.
- **NCA 118: Bristol Avon Valley and Ridges** - encompassing the city of Bristol and its suburbs, the area is characterised by alternating ridges and broad valleys, with some steep, wooded slopes and open rolling farmland, with the Cotswolds to the east and the Severn and Avon vales to the west.

varied settlement pattern has been influenced by the geology and geomorphology and the expansion of the City of Bristol at its centre. The proportion of urban land cover in this NCA is high, and much of the surrounding rural landscape is farmed.

- **NCA 107: Cotswolds** - a steep scarp slope backed by a high open wold and a rolling dip slope incised by wooded valleys, with small settlements concentrated along the spring line at the foot of the slope, and scattered farmsteads on higher ground. Locally quarried limestone is used in buildings and walls, bringing a distinctive unity to the area.

1.24 The NCAs within and adjacent to South Gloucestershire are illustrated on **Figure 1.4**.

Local Level

1.25 Landscape does not stop at administrative boundaries but continues seamlessly into surrounding districts. This assessment therefore sits alongside the Landscape Character Assessments of the adjacent authorities (Stroud, Cotswold, Wiltshire, and Bath and North East Somerset), which have been reviewed to inform this study. Cross-boundary relationships in terms of landscape features have been noted in the study (e.g., a ridgeline which continues into neighbouring local authorities), as well as intervisibility (e.g., views to landforms, landscape features, and notable landmarks within adjacent authorities).

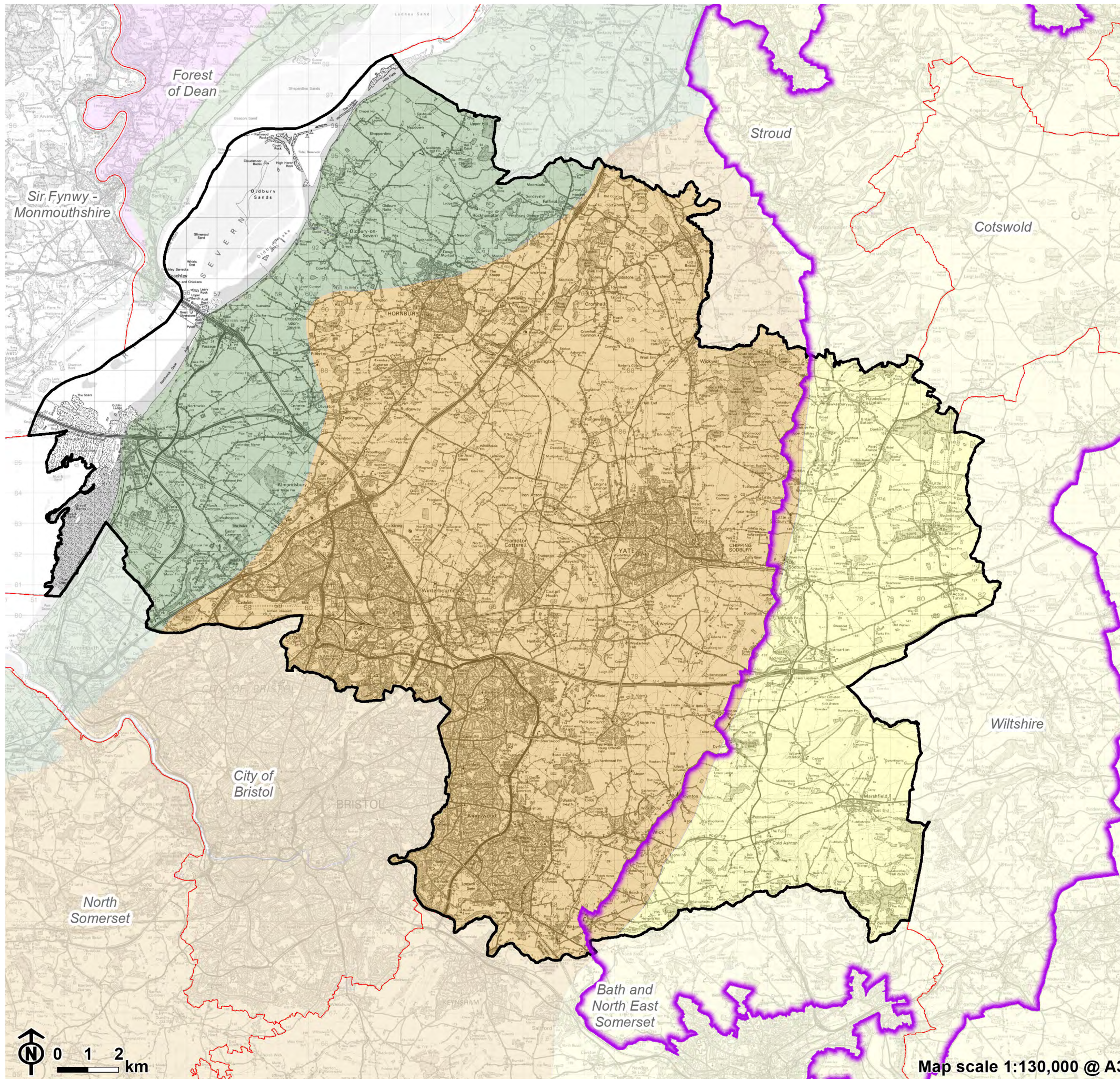


Figure 1.3: National Character Areas

- Council boundary
 - Neighbouring local authority
 - Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- National Character Area**
- 118: Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges
 - 107: Cotswolds
 - 105: Forest of Dean and Lower Wye
 - 106: Severn and Avon Vales

Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL)

1.26 The CNL is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) that extends into the east of South Gloucestershire where its boundary largely following the entire length of the Cotswold Scarp.

1.27 The CNL has published its own Landscape Character Assessment [See reference 4] which includes a landscape strategy and guidelines (published 2016). The CNL has also updated its Management Plan (Adopted February 2023) [See reference 5]. Developers should consult the South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment, in combination with the CNL's Landscape Character Assessment and Management Plan, when considering potential development sites or land use change. The CNL Management Plan contains additional landscape details, special qualities and associated guidance that should be used when assessing landscapes within South Gloucestershire that also fall within, or adjacent to, the CNL.

Related Studies, Strategies and Guidance

1.28 The South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment forms a sound evidence base to support landscape policy and other character policies in the upcoming Local Plan. A number of studies, strategies and guidance produced by SGC and other organisations are of relevance to the updated Landscape Character Assessment including:

- **The West of England Combined Authority Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy (JGIS) 2020** [See reference 6] was developed to secure investment in Green Infrastructure (GI) planning and provision. 22 GI Areas have been identified and mapped covering the whole West of England area, including South Gloucestershire.
- **The West of England Nature Partnership (WENP) Nature Recovery Network** [See reference 7] mapped the original baseline Nature

Recovery Network (NRN) and the areas of core habitat, together with the best connectivity opportunities between them and the existing gaps in ecological connectivity for woodland, grassland, and wetland. West of England Combined Authority (WECA) have further developed the original WENP ecological network mapping to create a **Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)** [See reference 8]. The LNRS forms the statutory document to guide biodiversity protection and enhancement within the whole West of England region.

- **The South Gloucestershire Climate Change Strategy (2020-2030):** SGC declared a climate emergency in July 2019 which includes a target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. Climate change mitigation and adaption measures to achieve net zero, as set out in the climate emergency strategy document [See reference 9] will result in changes to the landscape. Changes will likely include an increase in number and extent of renewable energy installations located within South Gloucestershire (including new solar installations, wind farms and associated grid connections) in response to the target of maximising energy generation from renewable sources, as well as increased tree cover to meet the target of doubling tree canopy cover in South Gloucestershire by 2030.
- **The Forest of Avon Plan: A Tree and Woodland Strategy for the West of England (2021)** [See reference 10] provides specific tree and woodland restoration and creation aims by character area covering the West of England Combined Authority area, including South Gloucestershire.
- **South Gloucestershire Green Infrastructure Strategy: Greener Places (2021)** [See reference 11] brings together the Council and partners' ambitions, obligations, priorities, and commitments for new and existing green infrastructure in South Gloucestershire, to deliver a vision for 'greener places where people and nature thrive'.
- **South Gloucestershire Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridor Mapping Project (2024)** identifies nine green infrastructure (GI) and blue-green infrastructure (BGI) corridors across South Gloucestershire, with the intention that they will be defined in the new local plan policies map, linked to new planning policies and strategies. A map showing the relationship of

the strategic GI and BGI Corridors and the Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) that they fall within is shown in **Figure 5.2 (see Chapter 5)**. Further information on the relationship between LCAs and GI/ BGI Corridors, as well as local-scale GI/ BGI projects, can be found in **Appendix D**.

1.29 SGC have also produced three Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) that are also of relevance to landscape character as follows:

- **Green Infrastructure: Guidance for New Development (2021)** [See reference 12] provides information to support existing Local Plan policies which seek to ensure that green and blue infrastructure is adequately conserved and enhanced in new developments and outlines the information required for planning applications regarding GI .
- **Trees and Development Sites (2021)** [See reference 13] provides practical guidance on how trees can be incorporated into new development, conserving and enhancing existing trees, hedgerows, and woodlands. The document also includes a Tree Replacement Table, outlining the number of trees required to compensate for any trees lost to development.
- **Biodiversity and Planning (2023)** [See reference 14] provides information to support existing Local Plan policies to ensure that biodiversity is adequately conserved, enhanced and achieves a measurable Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) throughout the development process, taking account of the emerging legislative framework set by the Environment Act (2021).

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South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment

Supplementary Planning Document - Chapter 2

South Gloucestershire Council

Final Draft Report proposed for adoption

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Chapter 2

Method

2.1 This Landscape Character Assessment follows the method promoted by Natural England through 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (2014) [See reference 1] which embeds the principles of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) within it.

Process of Assessment

2.2 The process for undertaking the study has involved the following key stages:

- Baseline data collection/ collation of mapped data in GIS;
- Review of boundary classification (see **Chapter 5** for more information);
- Field survey to check/ identify key characteristics, collecting aesthetic/ perceptual information, take photographs and observe forces for change within the landscape; and
- Draft and final reporting.

Data collection/ collation

2.3 The initial desk-based stage involved the collation of a wide range of up-to-date mapped information to 'sense-check' the existing landscape classifications and to update the baseline. Designations relating to nature conservation and cultural heritage were checked for any changes since the previous 2014 Landscape Character Assessment. Data used within the study, including data collated in the GIS database is shown in **Appendix C**.

Outputs

2.4 The Landscape Character Assessment is presented by Landscape Character Area (LCA), arranged by their respective Landscape Character Type (LCT) in **Chapters 6-13**.

2.5 Each LCT profile begins with a location map which illustrates the extent of the LCT and component LCAs, followed by a description of its location and defining landscape character (including key characteristics).

2.6 The 21 individual LCA profiles are structured as follows:

- Location map and description illustrating the extent of the LCA and its relationship with other LCAs within the district, and with the CNL where relevant.
- 'Settlement and Heritage' map illustrating the relevant cultural heritage designations within the LCA, and also indicates where development has taken place since the previous 2014 Landscape Character Assessment;
- 'Ecology and Biodiversity' map illustrating the relevant ecological designations within the LCA, and also shows the strategic networks for woodland, grassland and wetland identified in the West of England's Nature Recovery Network;
- Representative photographs of the LCA distributed throughout the profile;
- A landscape description, comprising:
 - Key characteristics in bullet point format, providing a summary description of the character of the LCA;
 - A description of the natural influences on the landscape (including geology, landform, and hydrology; land cover; and biodiversity);
 - A description of the cultural influences on the landscape (including land use and time depth; and settlement and infrastructure); and

- A description of the perceptual influences in the landscape (including visual character; tranquillity and dark skies; visually important hillsides; and strategic viewpoints).
- An evaluation providing a description of what is important in each LCA and why, comprising:
 - Key Sensitivities and Valued Features which identifies the qualities that are particularly valued for their contribution to landscape character (i.e., if any one of these attributes ceased to exist, it would change the character to the detriment of the landscape); and
 - The Changing Landscape which identifies forces that are driving landscape change in the LCA, under the headings of climate change; climate emergency and nature recovery; land use and cover; and development. This section has been reviewed to ensure that it reflects current pressures on the landscapes of South Gloucestershire as seen through planning enquiries and applications. It is also in line with the Core Strategy, particularly in relation to significant new development, such as growth areas and the development of a new nuclear power station adjacent to the existing power station at Oldbury.
- Guidance which contains landscape strategy guidelines to ensure future change respects the local character. The guidance is arranged under the themes of landscape management; ecology/biodiversity management; and development management. This section has been updated to ensure that the strategic guidance for landscape, biodiversity, and development management is relevant and appropriate to the current pressures within each landscape character area.

Consultation

2.7 Prior to the final reporting, an online consultation workshop was held with Town and Parish Councils on 20th April 2023. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Inform stakeholders about the landscape character assessment update;

- gain information and local knowledge on what is most important about the different landscapes within South Gloucestershire; and
- gather views on what has changed in the landscape, and what forces for change are prevalent now.

2.8 The information gathered through the workshop has been considered and has influenced the Landscape Character Assessment, in particular the 'Key Sensitivities and Valued Features' and 'The Changing Landscape' sections within the LCA profiles.

2.9 The LCA was further updated in December 2024 to address consultation comments received alongside the Local Plan Stage 3 Consultation undertaken in late 2023/early 2024.

References

- 1 Natural England (2014), An approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691184/landscape-character-assessment.pdf

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South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment

Supplementary Planning Document - Chapter 3

South Gloucestershire Council

Final Draft Report proposed for adoption

Prepared by LUC

February 2025

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Note: Each chapter is produced as a separate document for ease of reading and navigation.

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Chapter 3

Formative Influences

3.1 South Gloucestershire is a large unitary authority covering approximately 49,700 hectares. It is situated along and includes part of the Severn Estuary to the west, and the Cotswolds to the east. To the south it encompasses the urban fringes of Bristol. It is bordered by Gloucestershire to the north, Wiltshire to the east, Bristol, and Bath and North East Somerset to the south. South Gloucestershire also has both physical and visual connections with Monmouthshire across the estuary to the west via the two Severn Bridge crossings and views across the Severn Estuary to the Forest of Dean.

3.2 The South Gloucestershire landscape is diverse and varied. The present-day landscape is a reflection of natural processes and human influence, both historically and more recently. This section summarises the physical features and elements in the landscapes across South Gloucestershire, together with the historical and more recent landscape influences, as well as perceptual attributes and qualities that contribute to landscape character and sense of place across South Gloucestershire.

Geology and soils

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

3.4 The Cotswold scarp and plateau forms a significant upland landform in the eastern part of South Gloucestershire. Running from Chipping Campden to Bath and overlooking the lower vales and the Severn, it consists of both Inferior

and Great Oolite Limestone. The Great Oolite overlies the Inferior Oolite and includes a number of formations, including Fullers Earth, Fullers Earth Rock, and Forest Marble, which combine to form a wide tableland that slopes down to the east and south. The Inferior Oolite emerges to the west of the Great Oolite plateau and forms an indented scarp. The softness of the limestone creates a steep slope, often divided by deep valleys. This forms a natural boundary between the ridges and vales to the west.

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

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

3.7 The Coal Measures are present in a very contorted form, divided by bands of limestone and sandstone, their complex pattern strongly affecting the development of the former coal industry. On the Coal Measures, soils are more acidic and tend towards slowly permeable, loamy soils.

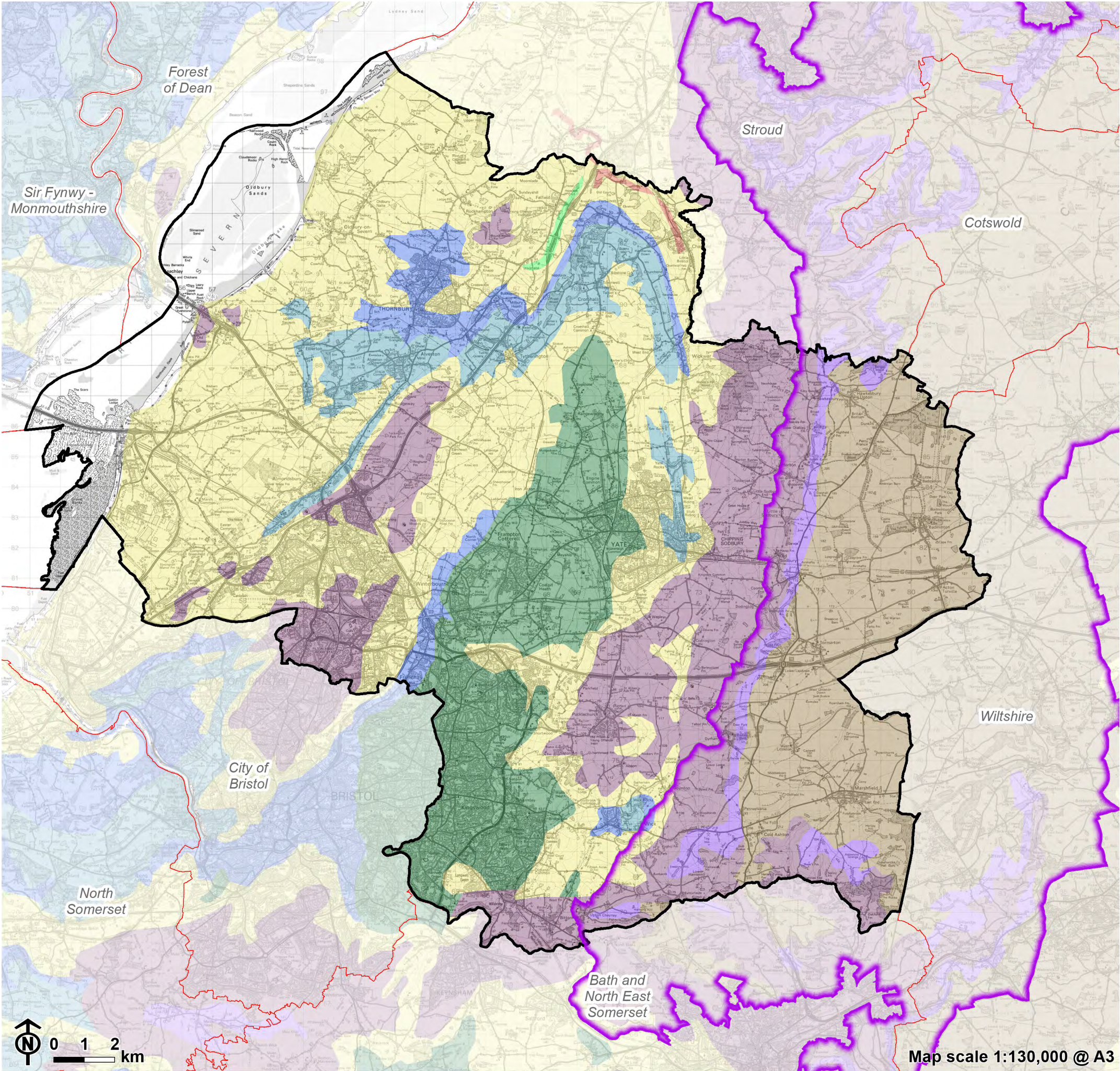
3.8 The western edge of the Bristol basin is formed by another ridge extending irregularly through the area around Almondsbury, roughly parallel with the Severn, composed of a mix of Carboniferous Limestone, Devonian Sandstones, silts, and conglomerates. The soft nature of these rocks gives rise to areas of low relief. The low relief is, however, broken occasionally by undulating ridges, created by outcrops of harder rocks such as Carboniferous Limestone. Carboniferous Limestone also surrounds the northern part of the Bristol Coalfield, extending from Over, north eastwards to Tortworth and then

southwards to Chipping Sodbury. It is then concealed by newer rocks, except in small inliers near Codrington and Wick. West of Bristol, Carboniferous Limestone forms high ground which extends southwards towards Portishead. Interbedded with the Carboniferous Limestone are areas of Devonian Old Red Sandstone and marine shale, which form a group of sedimentary rocks. These result in a number of small inliers north-east of Thornbury that form regular hills and indicate a period of fluctuating shorelines. The limestone-derived soils are shallow and are predominantly Brown Rankers and Argillic Brown Earths. On the sandstone, soils have a tendency towards a higher clay and loam content, with associated poor drainage.

3.9 To the west, the undulating landscape falls away to the flat Levels surrounding the Severn Estuary. The Levels consist of estuarine alluvium, although there are some minor outcrops of limestone and sandstone which provide some topographical relief in the form of isolated outliers. The soils on the Levels, over the permeable alluvium, are loamy gleys, which were formed from periodic waterlogging by a fluctuating water table.

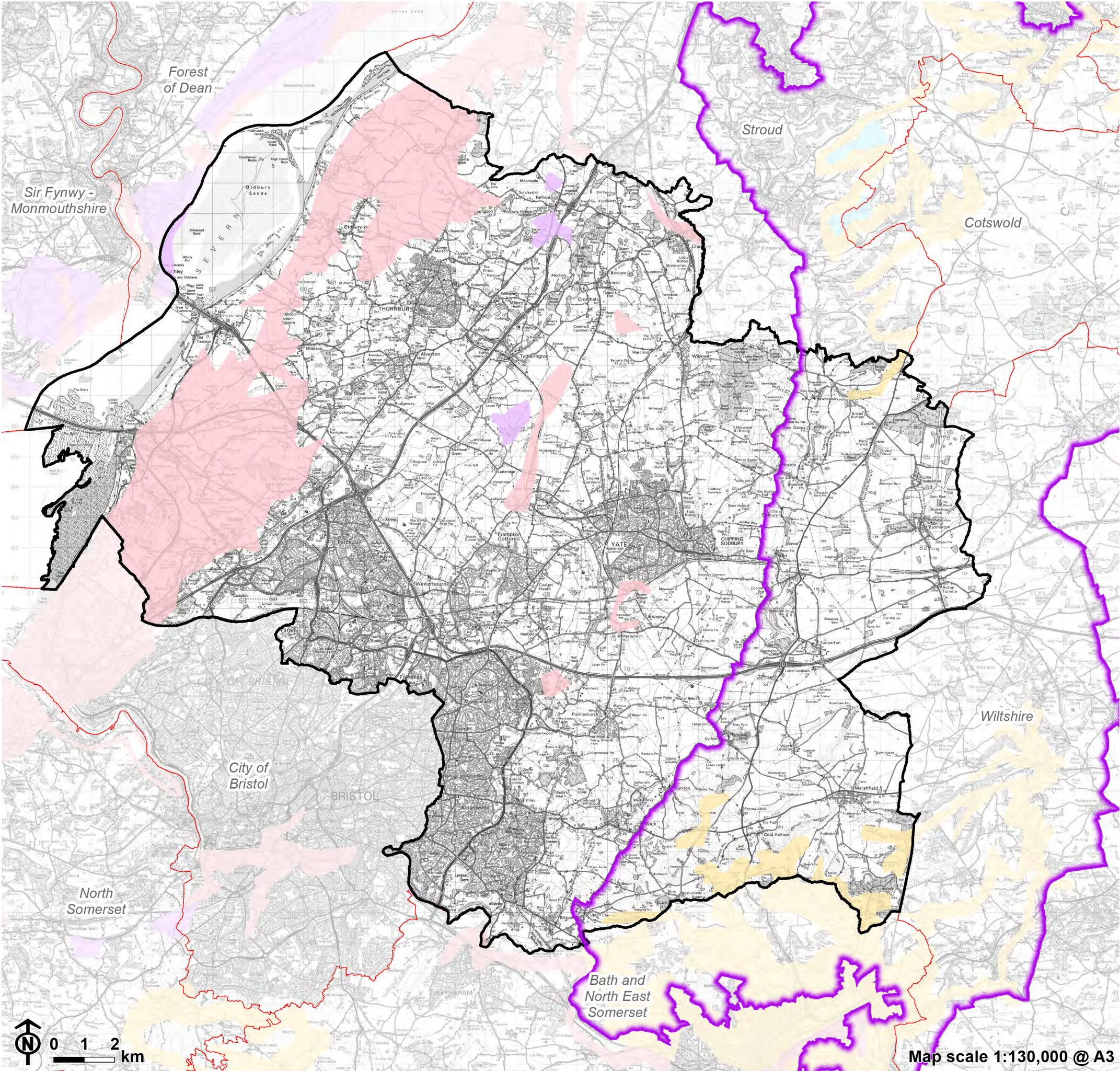
3.10 **Figure 3.1** illustrates the solid, or bedrock, geology that underlies the district, and **Figure 3.2** shows the superficial, or drift, geology.

Figure 3.1: Bedrock Geology



- Council boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- Bedrock geology**
- Limestone With Subordinate Sandstone And Argillaceous Rocks
- Limestone, Mudstone And Calcareous Mudstone
- Limestone, Sandstone, Siltstone And Mudstone
- Mafic Lava And Mafic
- Mudstone, Siltstone And Sandstone
- Mudstone, Siltstone, Limestone And Sandstone
- Mudstone, Siltstone, Sandstone, Coal, Ironstone And Ferricrete
- Sandstone And Conglomerate, Interbedded
- Sandstone, Limestone And Argillaceous Rocks

Figure 3.2: Superficial Geology



- Council boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- Superficial geology**
- Alluvium: Clay, Silt And Sand
- Glacial: Sand And Gravel
- Landslip: rock (undifferentiated)
- River Terrace Deposits (Undifferentiated): Sand And Gravel

Topography and hydrology

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

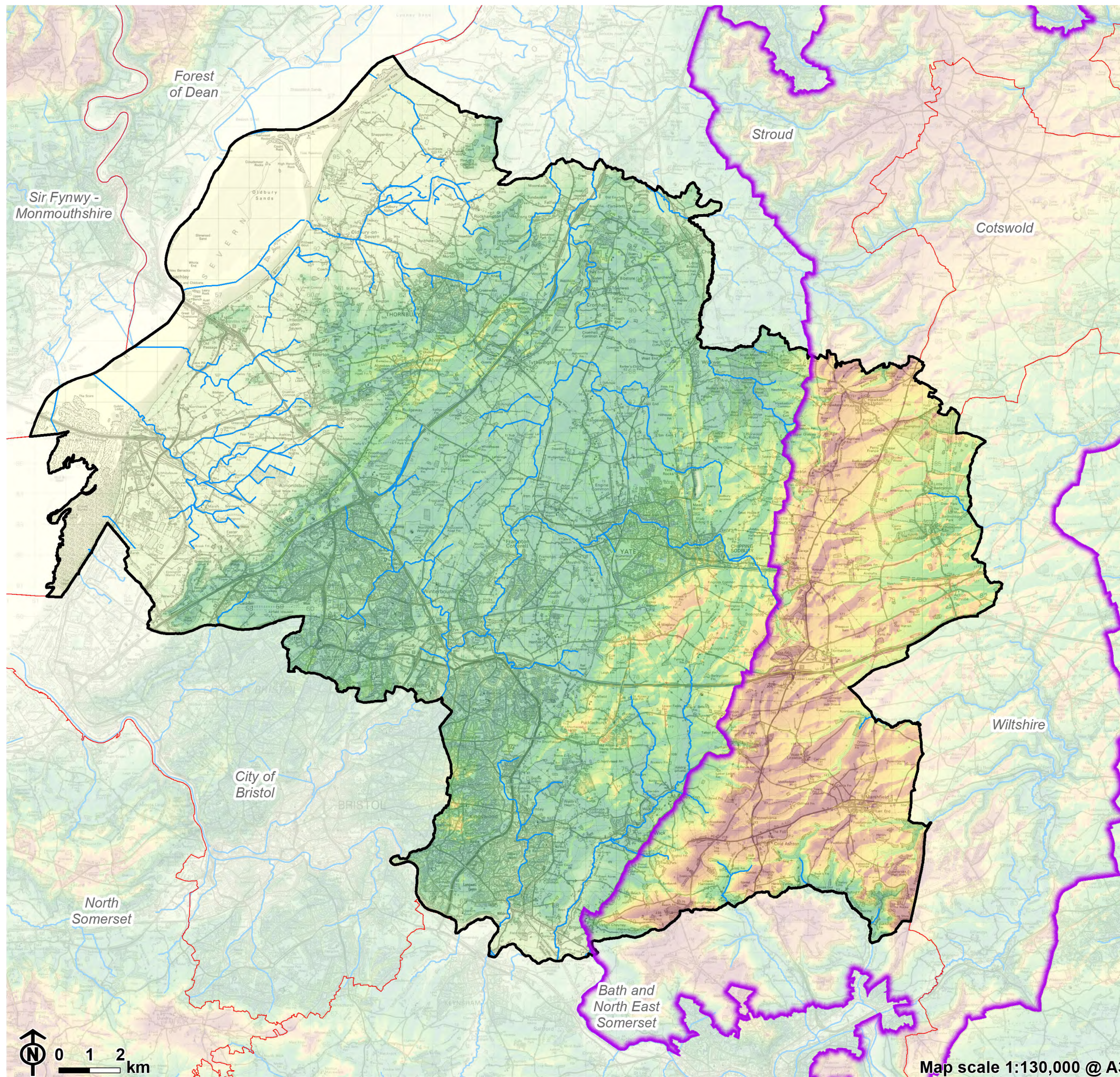
3.12 From the foot of the scarp, the topography changes to a more gently sloping and undulating ridge, which runs approximately north to south from Wickwar to Pucklechurch. The ridge then falls, often quite steeply, to a concave vale to the west with occasional outcrops of higher ground. Surrounded by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

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

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

3.15 **Figure 3.3** shows the landform and drainage, revealing the great variety of topography across the district.

Figure 3.3: Topography and Watercourses



- Council boundary
 - Neighbouring local authority
 - Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
 - Watercourse
- Elevation (m)**
- High : 323
- Low : 0

Land cover and ecological character

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

3.17 The quality of agricultural land varies across South Gloucestershire. As shown on **Figure 3.4** the majority is grade 3, with significant areas of grade 2 and some areas of grade 1 land including along the M32 corridor and west of Winterbourne/Frampton Cotterell.

3.18 The open and exposed Cotswold plateau is dominated by large, regular fields of mainly arable use. The fields are divided by a mix of Cotswold stone walls, many of which are now in a state of disrepair and linear bands of trees. The plateau also contains a patchwork of woodlands, plantations, and copses, often of beech. The Badminton Estate has exerted a particular influence over the land use and vegetation pattern of the northern part of the plateau, with historic parkland and woodland covering large areas. Linear woodland, often of beech, extends along the Cotswold scarp, supplemented by linear tree belts and copses. These sit amongst the largely pastoral fields on the scarp slope. Incised valleys that cut into the scarp often contain mixed broadleaf woodland of oak, ash, and sycamore.

3.19 A number of historic parklands also occur, often associated with these valley features. These well wooded valleys extend into the patchwork of arable and pastureland on the shallow ridge and broad valleys and vales, leading west and south from the upland plateau and scarp. Some areas of unenclosed common, used for rough grazing, are also scattered between the enclosed agricultural land and woodland.

3.20 Further west, the lower-lying land is characterised by a mix of both arable and improved grassland, divided by trimmed hedges, linear bands of trees or

fencing. Woodland is generally limited, although the numerous woodlands comprising Wetmoor Woods are extensive. To the north-west of Wickwar, there are also areas of mature, ornamental, and native planting with a parkland character.

3.21 These low-lying areas often have a varied land use, particularly close to the urban areas, with recreational uses such as golf courses and playing fields prevalent. The mixed farmland, interspersed with recreational land use continues to and along the northern boundaries of Bristol.

3.22 To the west, the well-wooded Severn Ridge (between Thornbury and Almondsbury) consists of undulating mixed farmland and provides a contrast to the flat landscape of the adjacent Levels. The mixed regular agricultural fields of the Levels are generally divided by a complex series of drainage ditches, rhines, streams, and tidal pills which flow towards the estuary. These are often lined with low, clipped hedgerows, punctuated with individual broadleaf trees, such as willow pollards and alders. The Levels are separated from the warth salt marshes and intertidal mudflats adjacent to the Severn Estuary by a sea wall or bund.

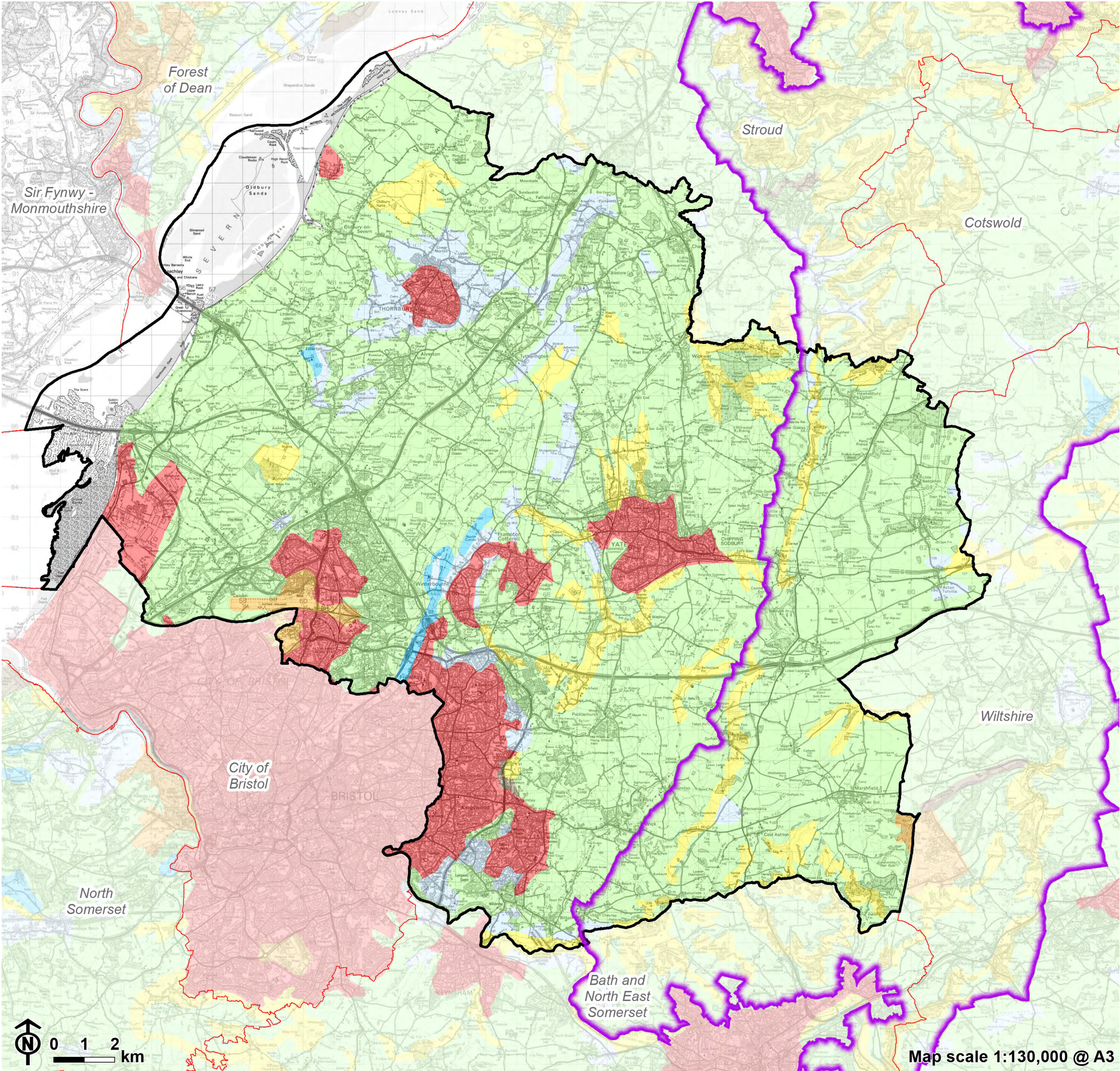
3.23 The geological variations across South Gloucestershire have resulted in widespread exploitation of mineral resources, such as limestone, clays, celestite and coal in rural areas. There is still evidence of numerous former small sites across the area, some of which were excavated for building stone.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

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

can be found in the South Gloucestershire Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-2026
[See reference 1].

3.25 The district's important ecological habitats, recognised through designations (internationally, nationally, and locally) can be seen on **Figure 3.5**. The extent of woodland (including ancient woodland) across South Gloucestershire is shown on **Figure 3.6**.

Figure 3.4: Agricultural Land Classification



- Council boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- Agricultural Land Classification**
- Grade 1
- Grade 2
- Grade 3
- Grade 4
- Grade 5
- Non Agricultural
- Urban
- Exclusion

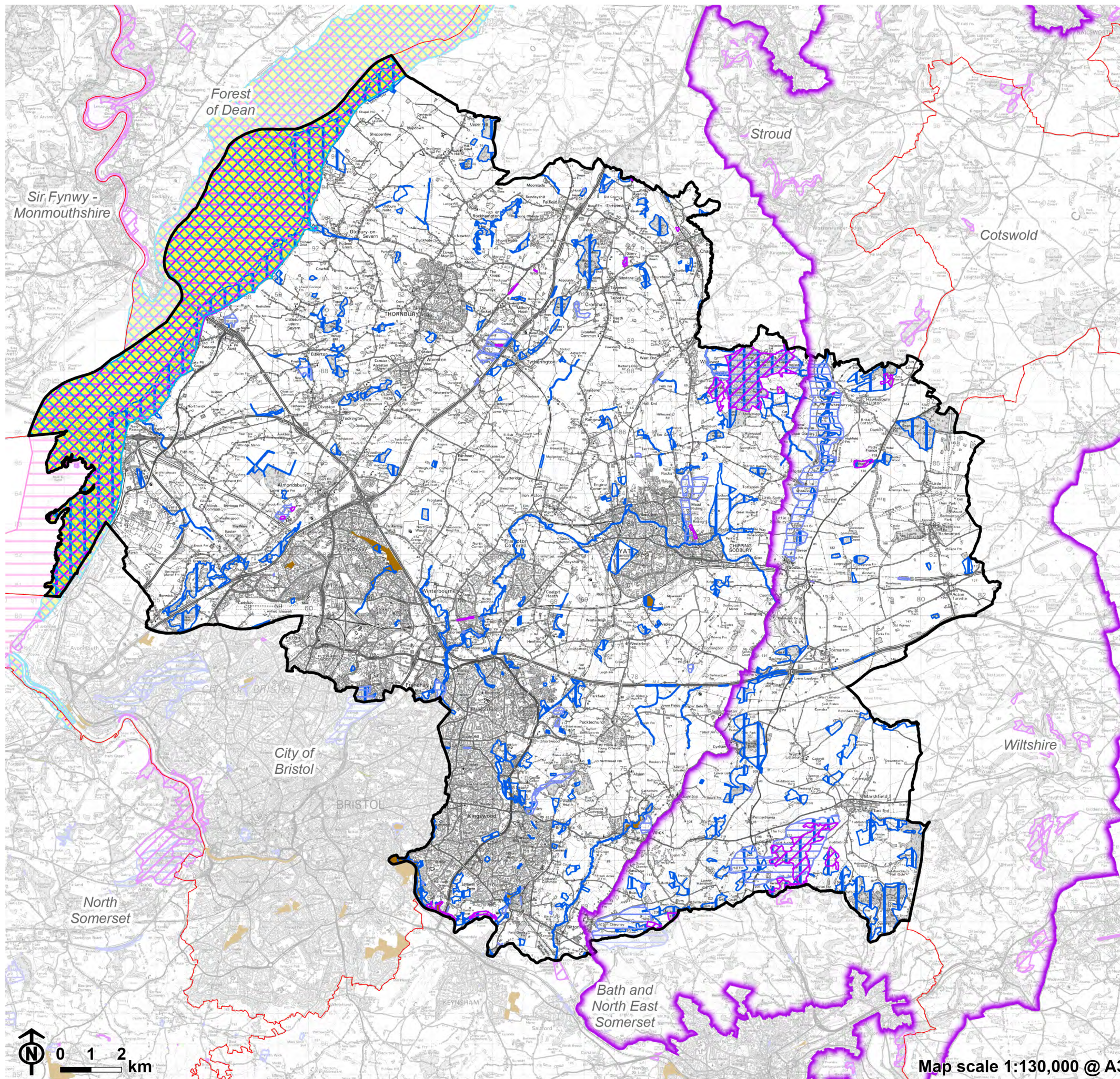
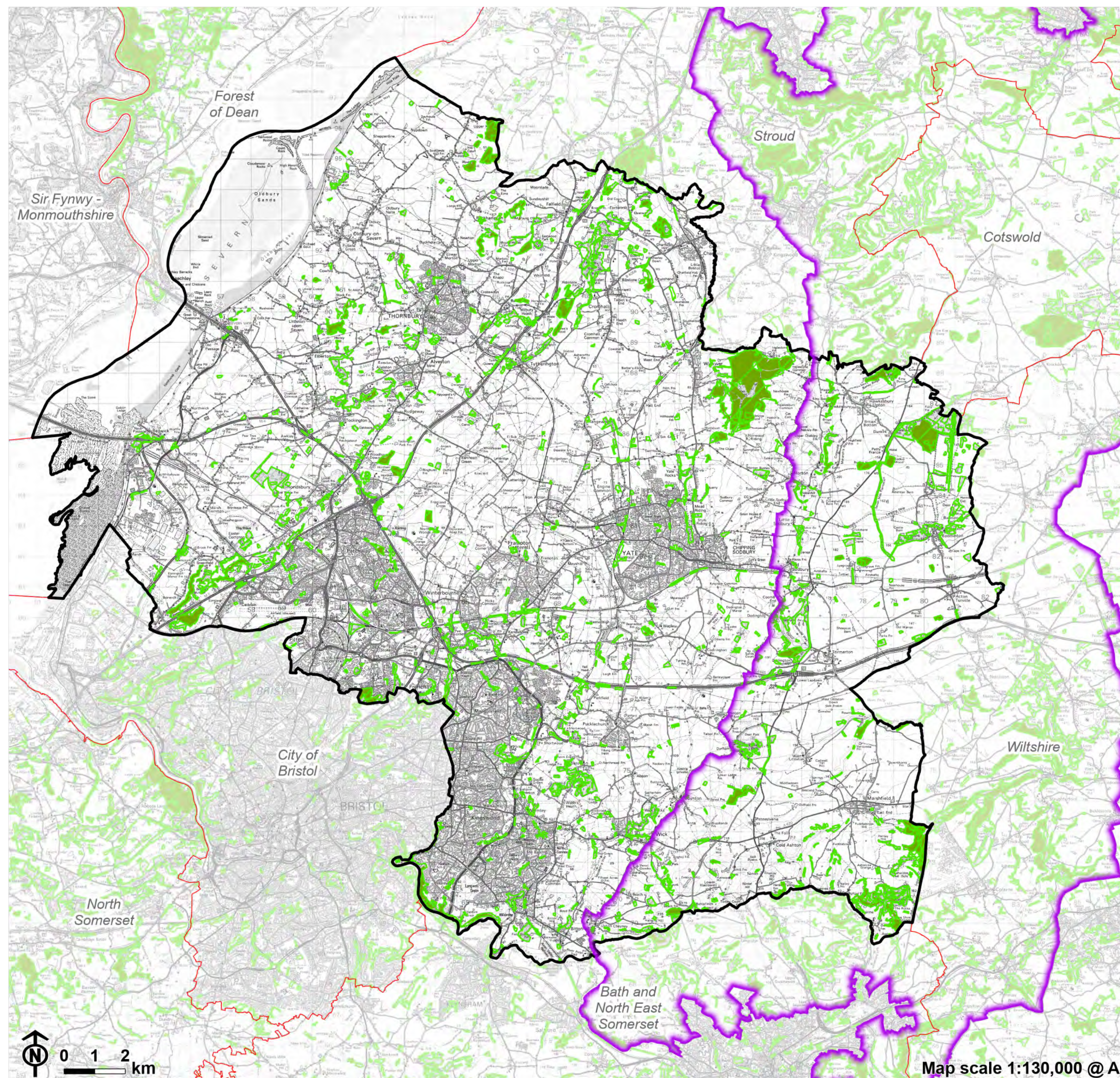


Figure 3.5: Nature Conservation Designations

-  Council boundary
-  Neighbouring local authority
-  Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
-  Site of Special Scientific Interest
-  Special Protection Area
-  Special Area of Conservation
-  Ramsar site
-  Site of Nature Conservation Interest
-  Regionally Important Geological Site
-  Local Nature Reserve

Figure 3.6: Woodland



- Council boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- Ancient woodland
- National Forest Inventory

Historic landscape

3.26 The landscape of South Gloucestershire visible today is the product of continuous change over many centuries, which has transformed it through both natural and human processes. Therefore, historical influences have had a major effect on the present character and development pattern of the landscape. This influence is documented in the Avon Historic Landscape Characterisation Study, undertaken in 1995-8. **Figure 3.7** shows the Scheduled Monuments, listed buildings, Conservation Areas and Registered Parks and Gardens.

3.27 South Gloucestershire has a long and varied history, with human activity in the area dating from prehistory. There is evidence of human activity from the neolithic period (4,000 – 2,500 BC), including several long barrows. There is also significant evidence of Iron Age activity in the area, with higher ground and ridges being of importance for defence and the lower areas attracting settlement, based on agriculture, quarrying, coal and iron. It was probably the high degree of settlement and general importance of the land that formed the basis of the extensive Roman occupation of the area.

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

3.29 During the Middle Ages, open fields surrounded the frequent villages, interspersed with patches of common and remnant woodland. There was, however, extensive open downland on the limestone and a royal forest lay around Kingswood, extending north as far as Thornbury.

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

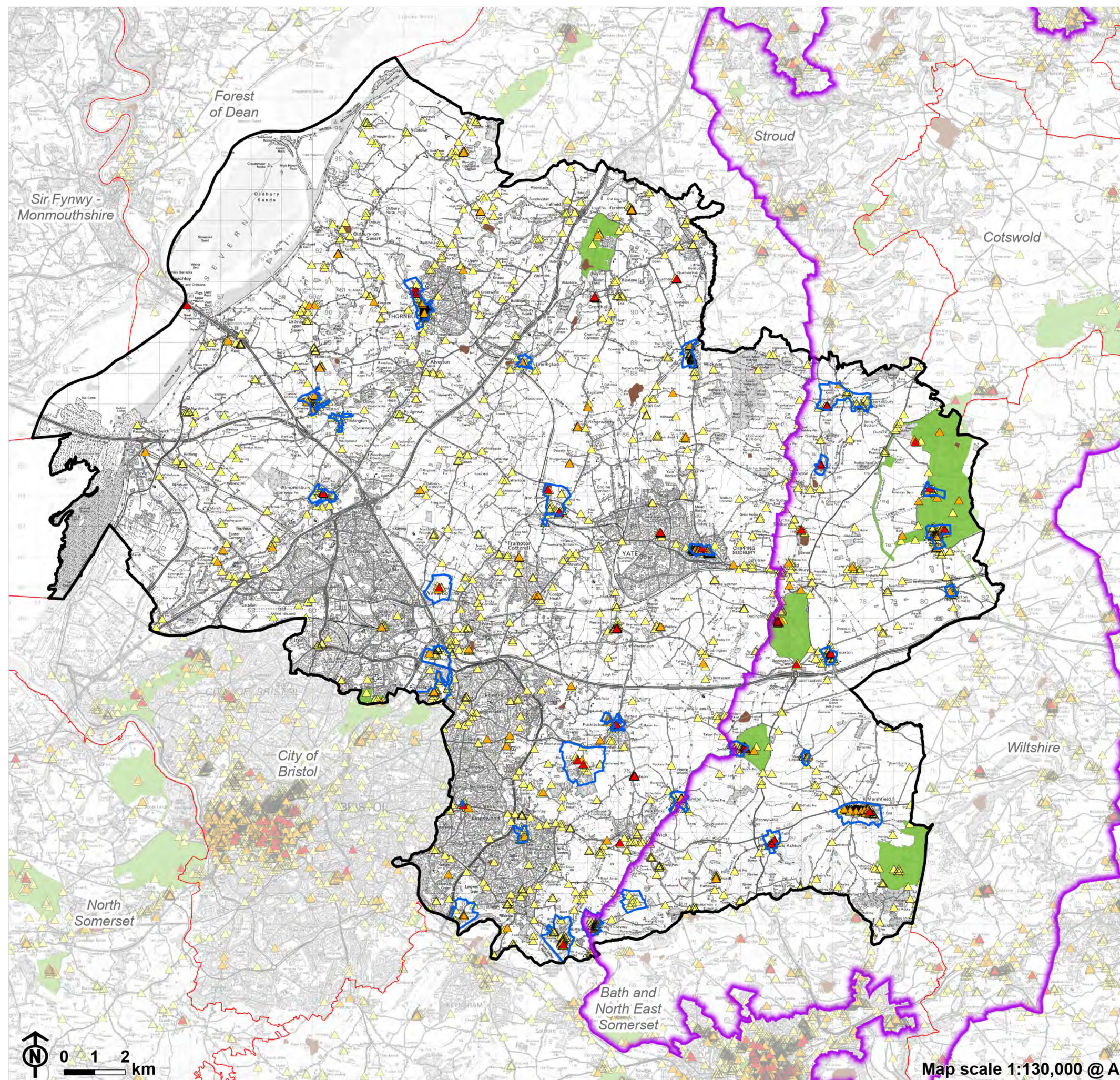
3.31 The dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century enabled the further consolidation of large estates, ultimately leading to fine country houses and historic parks, such as Badminton and Dyrham, being established.

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

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

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

Figure 3.7: Cultural Heritage Designations



- Council boundary
 - Neighbouring local authority
 - Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
 - Scheduled Monument
 - Registered Park and Garden
 - Conservation Area
- Listed building grade**
- ▲ I
 - ▲ II*
 - ▲ II

Present day settlement and development

3.35 Much of South Gloucestershire is a rural, agricultural landscape, within which are located small towns, scattered villages, hamlets, and farms, connected by a complex network of lanes, roads, and long-distance recreational routes (which are shown on **Figures 3.8a and 3.8b**). With the exception of the larger towns of Thornbury, Yate and Chipping Sodbury, settlement is primarily concentrated on the northern and eastern fringes of Bristol, in the south-west of South Gloucestershire.

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

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

3.38 Improved accessibility, brought about by the motorway network, has attracted significant areas of commercial and industrial development around Bristol and the motorway junctions that serve the city. This accessibility to the area has increased development pressures, not only on the urban fringe, but within South Gloucestershire as a whole. The industrial areas and distribution

depots of Avonmouth and Severnside, the commercial and business park developments at Almondsbury and Aztec West, the retail development at Cribbs Causeway and the distribution depot at Emerson's Green, are all large scale, dominant, urban built forms in the landscape.

3.39 The growth and prosperity of Bristol has also affected many of the outlying settlements, such as Yate, Chipping Sodbury and Thornbury. With connections to the major road and/or rail networks, they have developed as centres in their own right and as commuter settlements for Bristol and Bath. The often rapid and significant levels of urban expansion of these towns in the last century, has increased development pressures on the adjacent smaller towns and villages within their vicinity. New neighbourhoods have been established at Cribbs Causeway, north Yate, Thornbury and east of Harry Stoke in response to development objectives in the 2013 Core Strategy.

3.40 Renewable energy developments have become more prevalent across South Gloucestershire including three large-scale wind turbines (100m tip height) near Latteridge. There are also a small number of single, small scale (<100m tip height) wind turbines within the rural landscape. Several Solar PV arrays have been constructed, including at Severn Beach, Almondsbury, to the north and south of Tytherington, south of Gaunts Earthcott and south-west of Yate. A 150 hectare site at the existing Oldbury Power Station is designated in National Policy as a site for a new nuclear power station in order to deliver the government's commitment of 24 Megawatts (MW) of nuclear energy generation by 2050.

3.41 The supply of water and level sites offered by the Severn Estuary and Levels has provided opportunity for industrial development. The industrial complex at Avonmouth and Severnside to the south (within North Somerset district) is visually dominant within the open Levels landscape, as is Oldbury Power Station to the north. The M4, M49 and M48 and the two Severn Road bridges are also prominent, as are the numerous powerlines that cross the flat Levels landscape. Away from these urban influences, however, the landscape of the Levels is one of hamlets, farms, and nucleated villages in a rather dispersed pattern. Settlement is more frequent on the slightly higher ground above the Levels and consists of a mix of stone, brick and rendered buildings of

a variety of ages and styles. These are linked by an intricate network of lanes, roads, and paths, including a number of major recreational routes that follow the estuary edge and cross the Levels, such as the King Charles III England Coast Path National Trail, Severn Way and Jubilee Way.

3.42 Inland, amidst the undulating landscape between the Levels and the Cotswolds, the settlement pattern has been influenced by the development of agricultural and textile industries and, to a lesser extent, by coal and iron industries. On the upland ridge areas, scattered farmsteads and hamlets are linked by a complex network of lanes and trackways. In the rural lowland vale areas, villages are more numerous and there are substantial stone farmsteads and old mills along the streams. In the former mining settlements, such as Coalpit Heath, Ram Hill, Parkfield and Shortwood, frequent groups of brick and rendered cottages and houses occur alongside the roads. These are linked by a complex network of minor roads, lanes, and footpaths, some now forming recreational routes, including the Frome Valley Walkway, Jubilee Way, Dramway and the Monarch's Way.

3.43 Towards the Cotswold scarp and plateau, small villages lie at the scarp foot, in the valley bottoms or on the valley sides within the scarp face, on the gentlest gradients. The settlements on the limestone areas are united through their use of Cotswold stone and are generally consistent in architectural style. The use of stone in walls, cottages, houses, stately homes, and churches dominates villages, which have a distinctive Cotswold style, creating a harmony within settlements and the surrounding landscape. Large manor houses, often set within parkland landscapes are a notable feature along the scarp, including Horton Court, Dodington Park, Dyrham Park and Tracy Park.

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

Chapter 3 Formative Influences

Jubilee Way, and Monarch's Way, which all connect with the Cotswold Way National Trail.

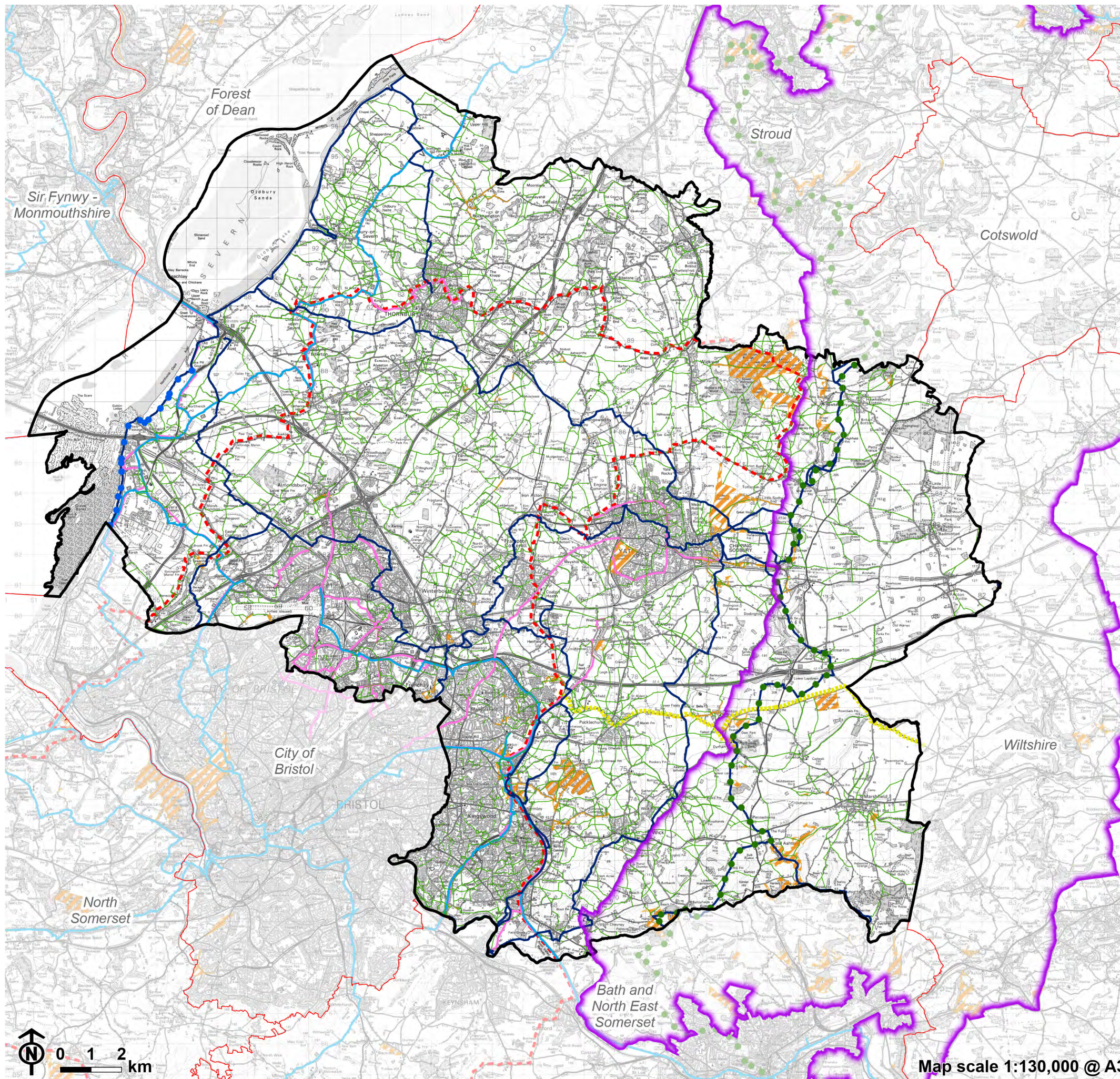
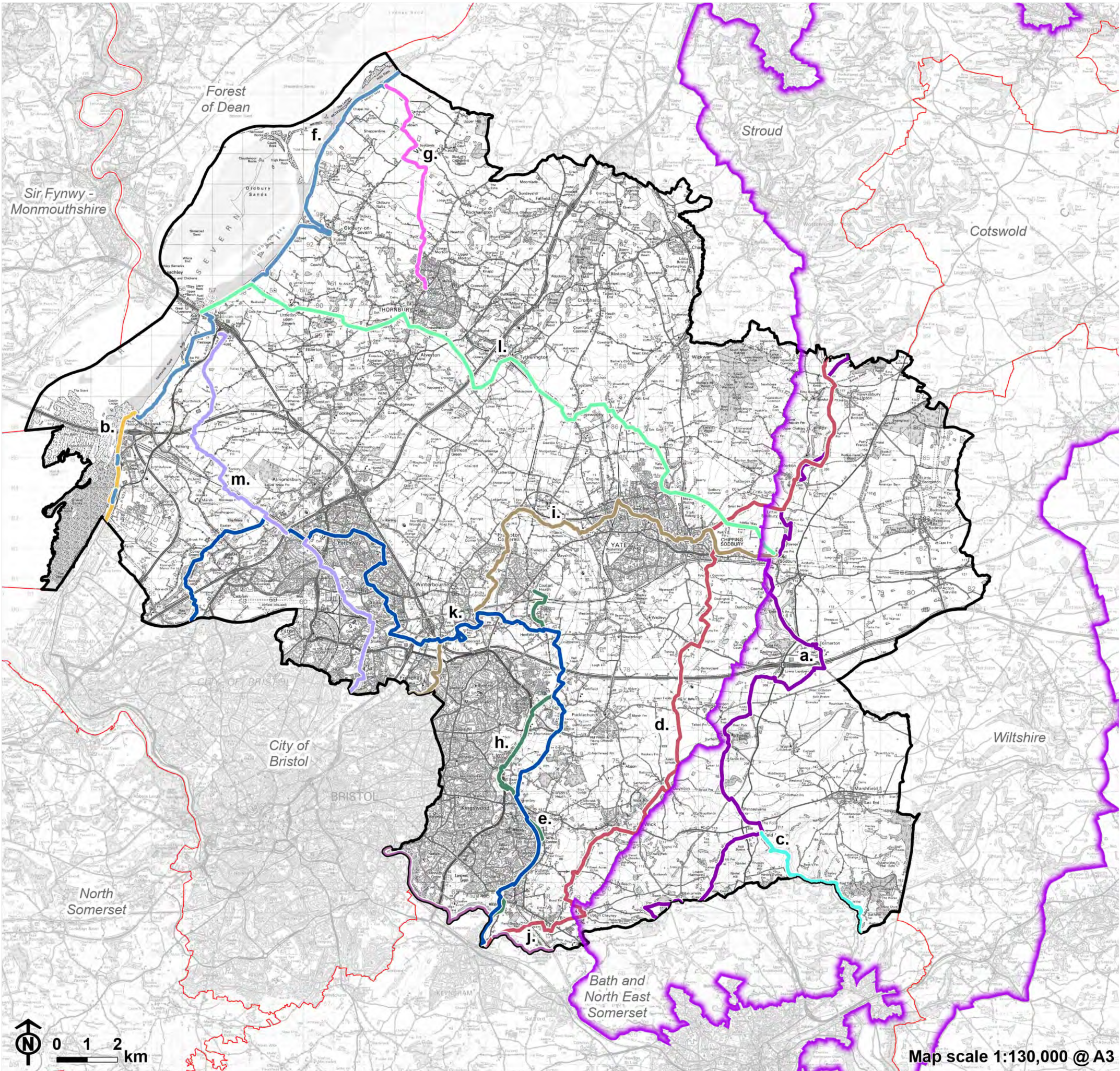


Figure 3.8a: Recreational Routes and Open Access

- Council boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- CRoW Open Access Land
- Cycle route**
 - National Cycle Network
 - Avon Cycleway
 - Cycling City Route 17
 - Local cycle route
- Walking route**
 - Cotswold Way National Trail
 - King Charles III England Coast Path National Trail
 - Promoted route
 - Public Right of Way

Figure 3.8b: Promoted Routes



- Council boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- Promoted route**

a. Cotswold Way (National Trail)

b. King Charles III England Coast Path (National Trail)

c. Limestone Link (Long Distance Path)

d. Monarch's Way (Long Distance Path)

e. Macmillan Way (Long Distance Path)

f. Severn Way (Long Distance Path)

g. Thornbury Link to Severn Way (Local)

h. The Dramway (Local)

i. Frome Valley Walkway (Local)

j. River Avon Trail (Local)

k. Community Forest Path (Local)

l. Jubilee Way (Local)

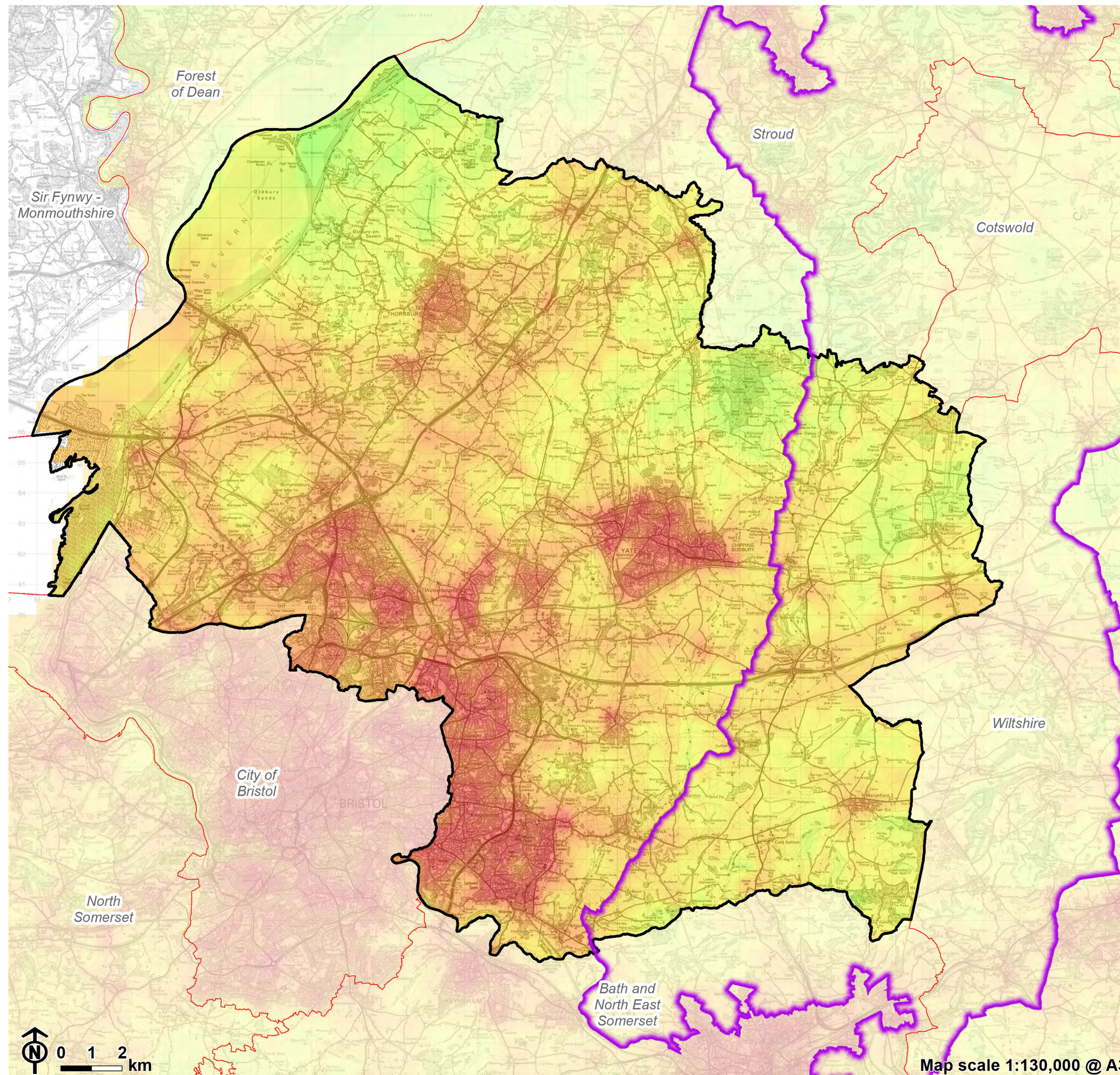
m. Pilgrim's Way (Local)





Perceptual qualities of the landscape

3.45 Away from the settlements and main roads, many parts of the district enjoy high levels of tranquillity. The areas of highest tranquillity are concentrated in the north, notably around the Oldbury Levels in the north-west and along the Cotswold Scarp in the north-east of the district. This is illustrated on **Figure 3.9**.

3.46 The levels of light pollution and dark night skies within South Gloucestershire are illustrated on **Figure 3.10**. Light pollution decreases with distance from the main settlements and trunk roads. Although much of the district is affected by light pollution, there are notable areas that are free from interference from artificial light, predominantly in the east of the district, within the CNL. Dark night skies are identified in the CNL Management Plan (2023-2025) as a special quality of the landscape and are a contributing factor to its designation as a protected landscape.

Figure 3.9: Tranquility



-  Council boundary
-  Neighbouring local authority
-  Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- Relative tranquility score**
-  Relatively more tranquil
- Relatively less tranquil

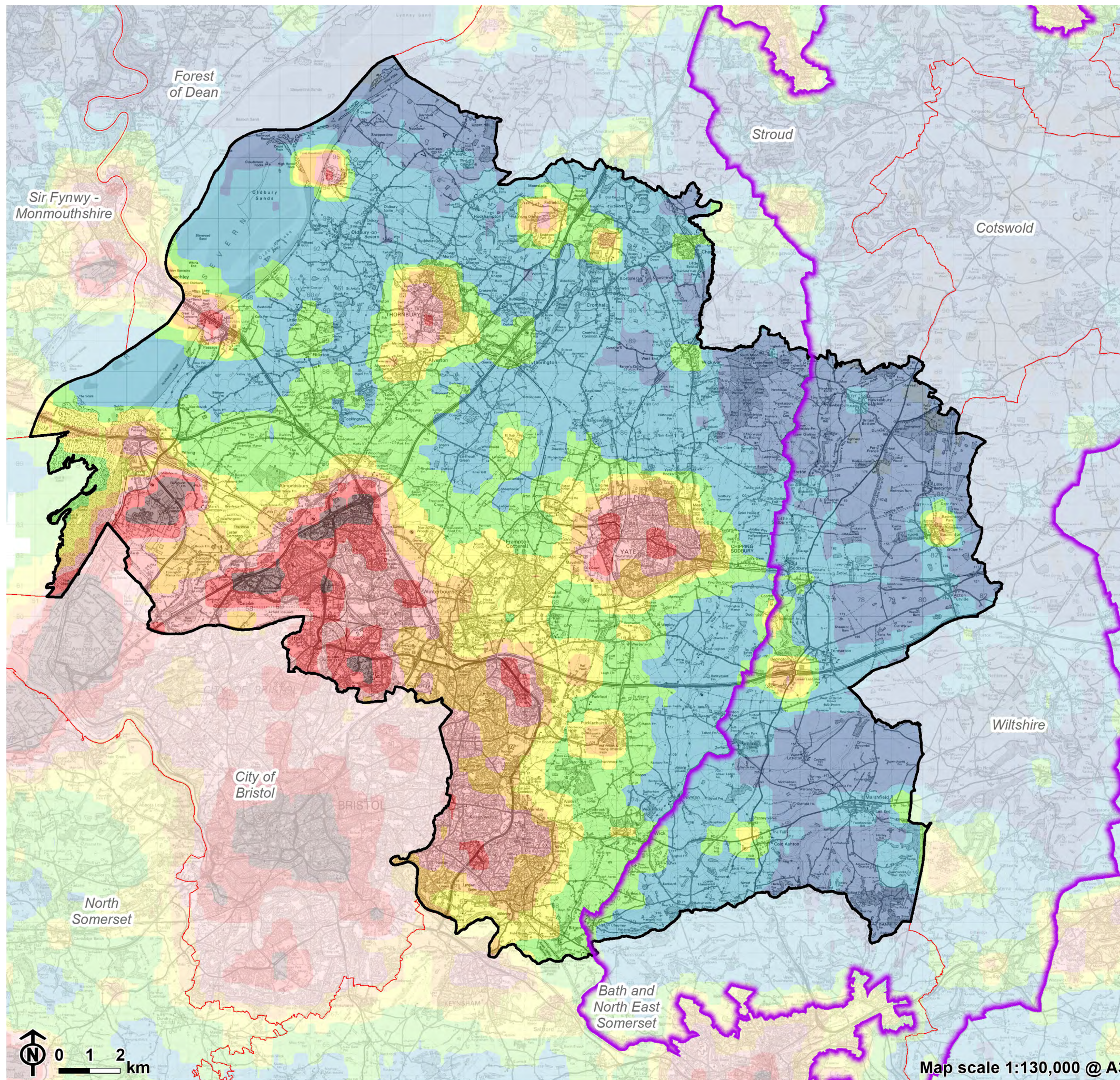
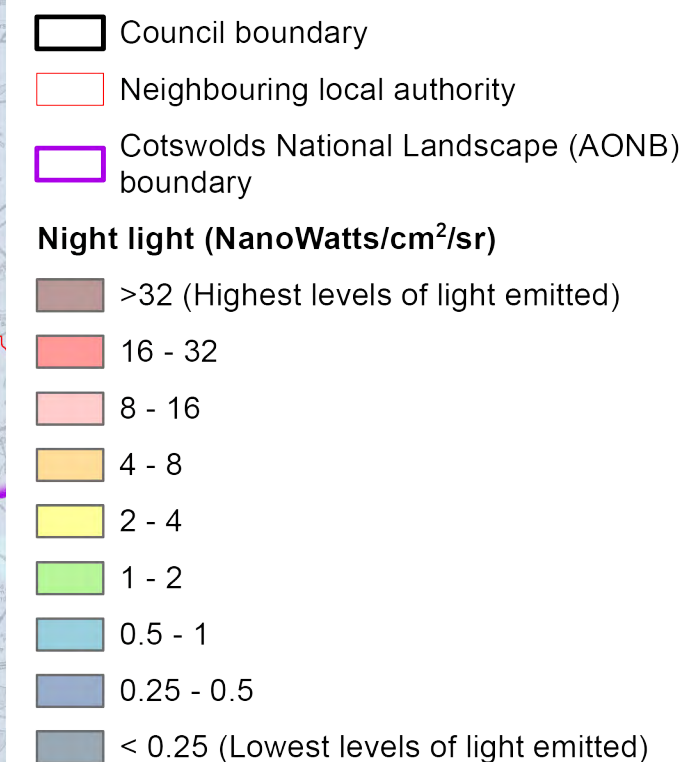


Figure 3.10: Dark Skies



References

- 1 South Gloucestershire Council Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-2026.
Available at:
<https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/static/e25ebdbd66bf0d60a81b9501a5427a7f/Biodiversity-Action-Plan-2016-26.pdf>

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South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment

Supplementary Planning Document - Chapter 4

South Gloucestershire Council

Final Draft Report proposed for adoption

Prepared by LUC

February 2025

Version	Status	Prepared	Checked	Approved	Date
1	Pilot LCT/ LCA profile	E White	K Davies	K Davies	23.01.2023
2	Draft LCT/ LCA profiles	L Jewitt A Palenske	K Davies	K Davies	15.06.2023
3	Draft Report	L Jewitt E White	K Davies	K Davies	05.07.2023
4	Final Draft	L Jewitt E White	K Davies	K Davies	20.11.2023
5	Final Draft Report: Revised and Proposed for Adoption	L Jewitt	K Davies	K Davies	06.01.2025



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Note: Each chapter is produced as a separate document for ease of reading and navigation.

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Chapter 4

Management Guidelines

4.1 The following guidelines apply to the whole district of South Gloucestershire and recommend how the landscape can be managed to ensure future change respects the local character. They should be read in conjunction with the LCA-specific guidelines relating to the key sensitivities and valued features of each LCA, as set out in **Chapters 6-13**.

Landscape Strategy

Landscape Management

- Ensure that the special qualities of the CNL are conserved and enhanced with reference to the current Management Plan and other guidance documents, particularly in respect of LCAs 1-4 which fall within the nationally protected landscape. The rural setting and foreground of views towards the Cotswolds Scarp should also be protected.
- Support the objectives set out in Conservation Area SPD **[See reference 1]** and Advice Notes in terms of protecting the landscape setting of Conservation Areas, views towards key landmark features, and reflecting the use of traditional building materials as appropriate.
- Actively manage and where necessary restore the hedgerow, tree, and woodland framework, and discourage the replacement of hedgerows by fencing that erodes landscape character and habitat connectivity.
- Enhancement of the landscape framework should be considered on balance with the open character of the landscape, retaining key views within, across and outward from the LCA.
- Protect Visually Important Hillsides, skylines and the views experienced from Strategic Viewpoints, that contribute to the distinctive character of the locality, or the understanding and appreciation of a landscape.

- Restore and conserve the pattern and fabric of the landscape by actively managing and maintaining dry-stone walls .
- Protect and manage broadleaf woodland, parkland, and hedgerow trees including on the edge of settlements. Plan for succession planting to sustain the differing characters of the LCA into the future, and to maintain and enhance biodiversity value.
- Respect and conserve the historic landscape, including historic field systems, earthworks, landmarks, and other associated features that contribute to landscape character and interest. Protect the rural landscape setting of historic parklands,
- Protect best and most versatile agricultural land from development, deterioration, and fragmentation.
- All new development and land use change should respect the existing quality of the underlying soils and implement a good soil handling and management strategy. Unnecessary cut and fill operations should be avoided.
- Retain, manage, and enhance the mosaic of habitat across the character areas in line with the West of England Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), ensuring no net loss of biodiversity or notable species. Seek to achieve bigger, better and more connected areas of habitat as identified within the Local Habitat Map (LHM). The LHM shows areas of importance for biodiversity (existing designated sites) and focus areas for nature recovery, which are areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity. These areas can be broadly classified as:
 - Woodland network: seek to increase woodland cover in the long term, link areas of ancient woodland, and provide opportunities for natural regeneration; including creation of new wooded copses, enhancement of hedgerows with tree planting, and appropriate planting along linear corridors such as rivers and ditches.
 - Grassland network: promote robust linkages between key grassland habitats, increase areas of rough grassland, and encourage more species-rich grassland through restoration and land management.

- Wetland network: create more diverse, multifunctionally water courses, promote projects that deliver greater resilience to flooding, improve naturalisation of river corridors through removal of engineered barriers and good practice management; this may be demonstrated in the achievement of river corridors with a rougher texture and appearance.
- Seek to increase woodland cover, link areas of ancient woodland, and provide opportunities for natural regeneration, including the creation of new wooded copses, enhancement of hedgerows with tree planting, and appropriate planting along linear corridors such as rivers and ditches.
- Design new tree and woodland planting (including succession planting) to respect the character of the receiving landscape, and to meet the objectives set out in SGC Woodland Opportunity Mapping and Landscape Sensitivity Assessment. All new woodland areas should have a Forestry Commission management plan (or equivalent), addressing broad objectives, supporting their preparation and delivery. Where present in the LCA, focus on Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW), and Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) first, restructuring PAWs and other woodlands away from conifers and to resilient native species characteristic of ASNW in the area.
- Promote robust linkages between key grassland habitats, increase areas of rough grassland, and encourage more species-rich grassland through restoration and land management.
- Increase the ecological and geomorphological diversity of watercourses and promote projects that deliver greater resilience to flooding. Improve naturalisation of river corridors through removal of engineered barriers, and good practice management - this may be demonstrated by enabling a rougher texture and appearance of river corridors, restoring natural meanders, and using buffer strips on arable land to protect water courses from pollution.
- Promote the restoration and recreation of priority habitats, including deciduous woodland, traditional orchards, important hedgerows (under Hedgerow Regulations), calcareous grassland, neutral grassland and lowland meadow, arable field margins, heathlands, rivers, and ponds.

- Protect and conserve irreplaceable habitats with appropriate buffers such as ancient woodlands, veteran trees, ancient hedgerows, unimproved grassland (e.g., traditional lowland hay meadows), and salt marsh.
- Monitor recognised plant diseases and replace street, woodland and hedgerow trees affected by pathogens (such as Dutch Elm Disease or Ash Dieback) with appropriate species/cultivars. This will reduce the negative visual influence that dead trees can have on the landscape character of the locality. For further advice and guidance on species selection, refer to TGN 01/19 – Plant Health and Biosecurity: The Landscape Consultant’s Toolkit [\[See reference 2\]](#).
- Protect the night-time landscape through the retention of dark skies and protect the tranquillity of undisturbed areas.
- Plan for changes to agricultural policy, including the impacts of Brexit and changing Agri-environment policies such as the introduction of the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) and the impacts this may have on land use and landscape character.
- Environmental Land Management (ELM) Landscape Recovery Schemes should seek to respect the character and fabric of a given landscape area alongside being delivering landscape scale projects promoting environmental, climate, and local nature recovery benefits.

Development Management

- Ensure that new development respects and integrates with the historic pattern of the host landscape or settlement pattern and reinforces local distinctiveness through the use of appropriate building materials.
- Strengthen the soft landscape buffers around areas of recent development, recreational development and in association with new developments, to protect and enhance the rural characteristics of the surrounding landscape.
- Where relevant, ensure that new development or change does not adversely impact on the setting to CNL, and conversely that change in

the CNL does not impact on prominent skylines that form the setting to the wider landscape.

- New development including buildings and other structures should use locally appropriate materials such as locally sourced stone of the appropriate colour and texture that respect and enhances local distinctiveness and the traditional character of the area.
- Recreational pressures arising from any new development should be managed for example through provision of adequate green infrastructure within the development, by protecting vulnerable landscape features and habitats and / or by strengthening the structure of the wider landscape.
- Transport proposals including new structures should be sensitively located and designed to protect the character and amenity of the host landscape and wider views.
- Horse keeping and non-agricultural uses should be designed to ensure that the particular character of the wider landscape is conserved. Change of use to the keeping of horses will be resisted where this would affect the character of a given landscape area as a result of:
 - the cumulative impact of additional facilities including hardstanding areas, trackways, buildings, and floodlighting,
 - new facilities that are remote from or poorly related to, existing establishments,
 - subdivision of fields by electrified and post and rail fences; and
 - degradation of the sward by overgrazing.

- Ensure new development (including extensions to settlement edges and areas outside settlement boundaries):
 - respects and enhances the variable and distinctive character, historic pattern and appearance of the host landscapes or settlement;
 - carefully addresses issues such as layout, massing, colour, and texture to ensure high quality views are maintained from surrounding elevated vantage points;
 - reinforces local distinctiveness by use of appropriate/traditional materials that integrate with the local vernacular;
 - avoids the domestication or industrialisation of the rural character of the locality;
 - carefully considers to the distribution and design of roofscapes;
 - incorporates a robust green infrastructure and planting framework that reflects the characteristic landscape features and the field/vegetation pattern of the surrounding area, to ensure the integration of the development within the wider landscape; and
 - provides for the longer term through the implementation of landscape management plans.
- Open space areas within new developments are to be of adequate size to be useable and effective, with sufficient space incorporated around retained landscape features and wildlife habitats, to facilitate their effective protection and management into the future.
- Secure the enhancement and management of existing civic parks, formal and informal open spaces to improve their landscape character, heritage value, contribution to the quality of the public realm, recreational function, sustainability and biodiversity value, and their resilience to the pressures of increased use. Where key to the character of the locality, ensure that the critical balance between the existing urban built form and green open space is maintained and enhanced.
- Seek opportunities to address the current shortfall in allotments as part of development proposals.

- Ensure that any new vertical elements respect and integrate with the scale of the receiving landscape and are sited and designed to minimise the visual impact on views across the landscape and sensitive skyline features.
- Landscape schemes associated with quarry restoration should ensure the creation of a new landscape structure that re-integrates it with the character and appearance of the wider landscape, and its mosaic of habitats.
- Ensure that the tranquillity and dark skies of the rural areas is maintained, and where appropriate enhanced by controlling light pollution, screening visually intrusive elements, repairing and maintaining the landscape structure and removing fly tipping.
- The design of new light sources 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 habitats and species (e.g. bat flight corridors).
- New infrastructure and transport projects should be sensitively located and designed to protect the character and amenity of the host landscape and wider views. Where strategically visually important planting is removed to deliver these projects, replanting schemes and commitments to long term management will need to be secured to ensure successful establishment of compensatory planting. Appropriate mitigation planting will be required to help integrate new schemes into their surroundings.
- Maintain the intrinsic character and features of rural lanes, including the repair, retention, and protection of traditional stone walls. Where highway improvements are proposed seek opportunities to extend the network of Quiet Lanes where appropriate, to enhance recreational access to the landscape.

References

- 1 South Gloucestershire Council Conservation Area Appraisals. Available at:
<https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/conservation-area/>
- 2 Landscape Institute TGN 01/19 – Plant Health and Biosecurity: The Landscape Consultant's Toolkit (2019) Available at:
<https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2019/04/tgn-2019-01-biosecurity-toolkit.pdf>

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