



South Gloucestershire

Landscape Character

Assessment

Supplementary Planning Document

South Gloucestershire Council

Draft report

Prepared by LUC

November 2023

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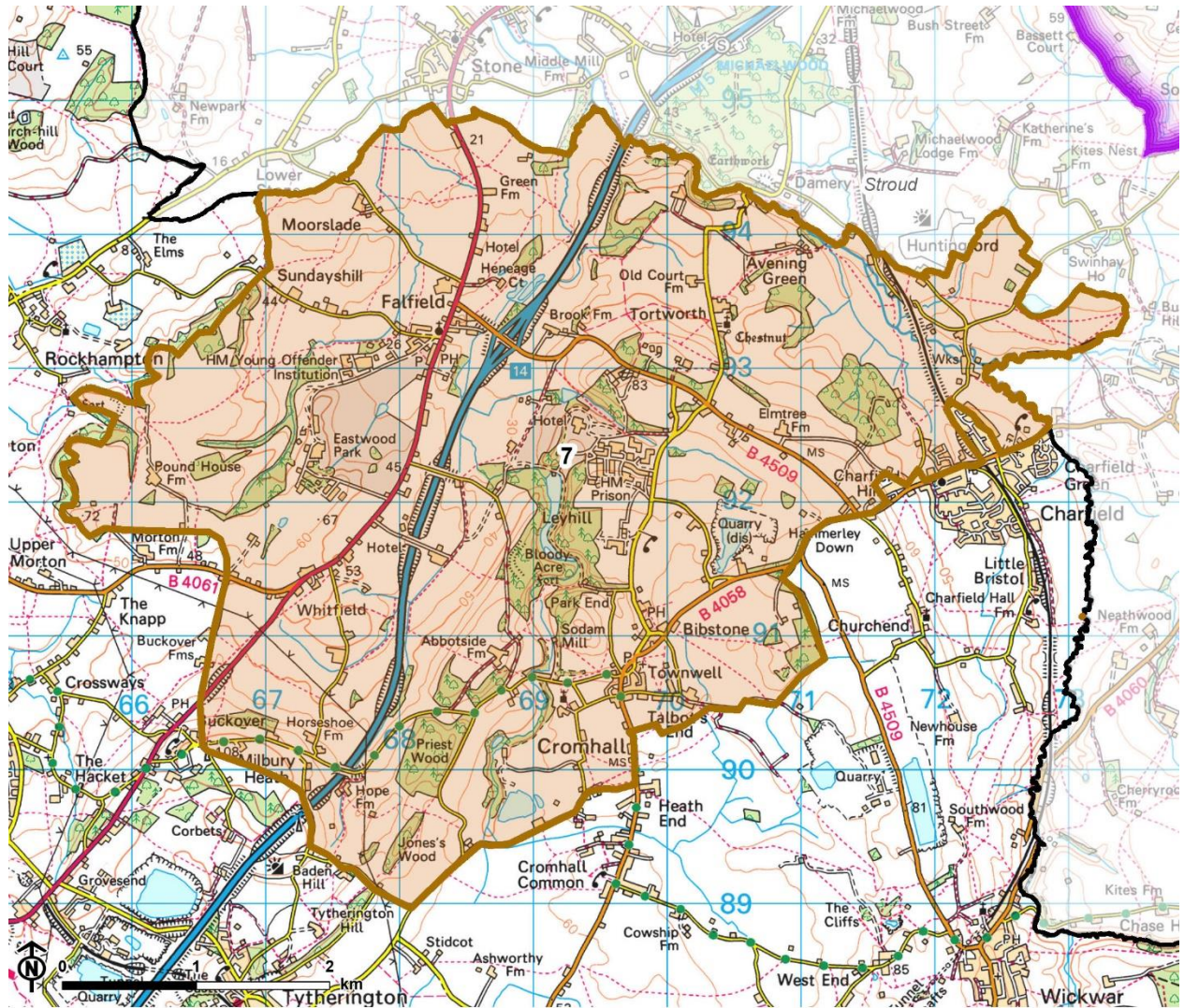
Appendix A.3: Parkland Vale LCT

LCA 7: Falfield Vale



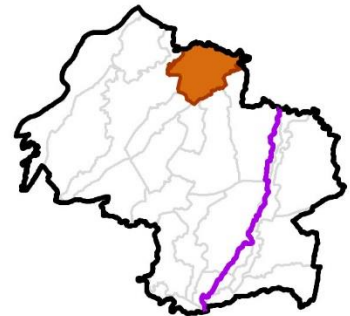
Parkland Vale LCT

Figure 3.1: Location of Parkland Vale LCT



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- Parkland Vale LCT
- Council boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- LCAs within Parkland Vale LCT:
- LCA 7: Falfield Vale



Description

Located in the north of South Gloucestershire, this bowl-shaped vale is strongly influenced by heavily wooded parkland. It is contained to the east and west by surrounding ridges and undulating landform.

Key Characteristics

- A bowl-shaped landform which gradually rises towards ridges to the east and west.
- A strong parkland character, enhanced by the presence of several large houses. Mature ornamental, specimen trees in open grassland is characteristics of the Tortworth Court Park and Eastwood Park estates.
- The Little Avon River and its associated riparian vegetation add visual texture and biodiversity value to the landscape and contribute to the South Gloucestershire wetland strategic network.
- Villages are largely well-integrated within the strong vegetation structure of woodland, parkland and hedgerows. Occasional views of settlement edges and church steeples add to the visual diversity and intricacy of the landscape.
- Extensive views over the vale are an important feature of the landscape. Far reaching views are contained by surrounding ridgelines.
- Settlement, roads and small quarries are generally well-integrated within the strong vegetation framework and are generally not visually prominent.
- The M5 motorway runs north-south through the centre of the area. The A38 runs roughly parallel to the motorway, along which a number of linear settlements have developed.
- To the east of the M5, blocks of mixed woodland combined with dense hedgerows and linear bands of trees surround the irregular pattern of

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mixed pasture and arable fields, providing a sense of enclosure to the landscape.

- To the west of the M5, numerous linear woodlands within Eastwood Park, combined with a strong hedgerow structure, enclose and screen many views.

Landscape Character Areas

The Parkland Vale LCT comprises one LCA:

- LCA 7: Falfield Vale

LCA 7: Falfield Vale

The Falfield Vale landscape character area (LCA) is a shallow bowl comprising agricultural land and parkland, with a prominent mosaic of woodland, copses and mature trees on surrounding higher ground.

Photo 1: Pastoral farmland with woodland and mature hedgerow trees near Falfield.



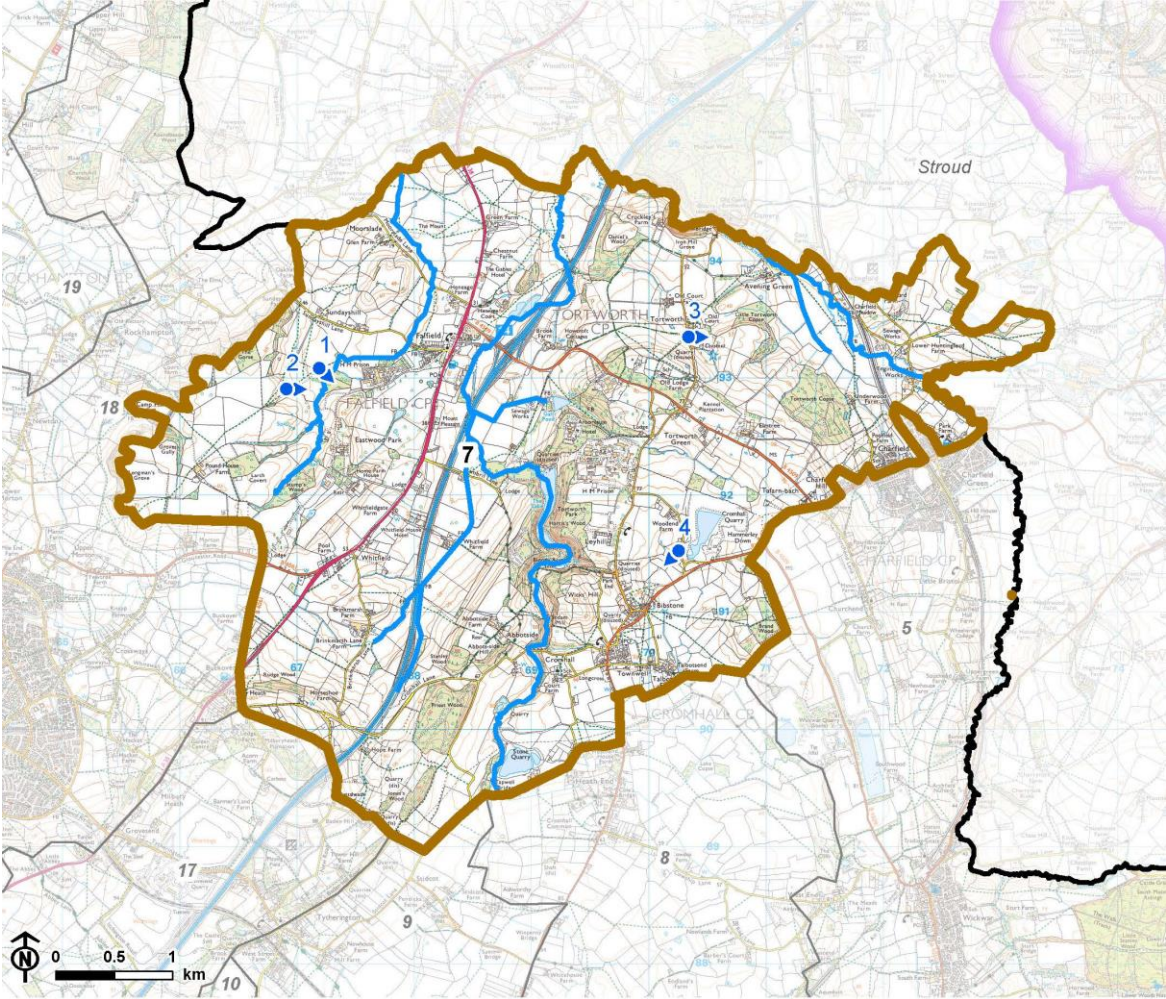
Location

The Falfield Vale landscape character area is located in the north of South Gloucestershire, straddling the M5 corridor.

The northern limits of this landscape character area are defined by the South Gloucestershire Authority boundary and by the Little Avon River. To the east there is a subtle transition in landform and land cover between the Falfield Vale and Wickwar Ridge. The boundary follows physical features of settlement edge, woodland and roads in a southwards direction from Charfield. The southern boundary marks a transition with the northern end of the Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge (LCA 17) and follows the approximate watershed with the Tytherington Plain. The western boundary follows the top of a defined scarp edge of the Severn Ridge, which falls westwards to Rockhampton (beyond this area).


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Figure 3.2: Location and Landscape context of LCA 7: Falfield Vale



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-  LCA 7: Falfield Vale
-  Neighbouring LCA
-  Council boundary
-  Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
-  River

 Photograph location and direction

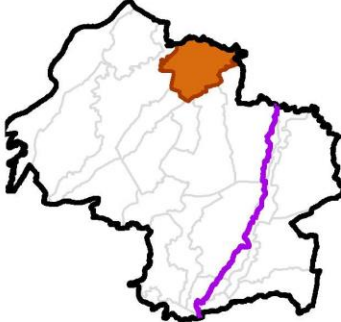
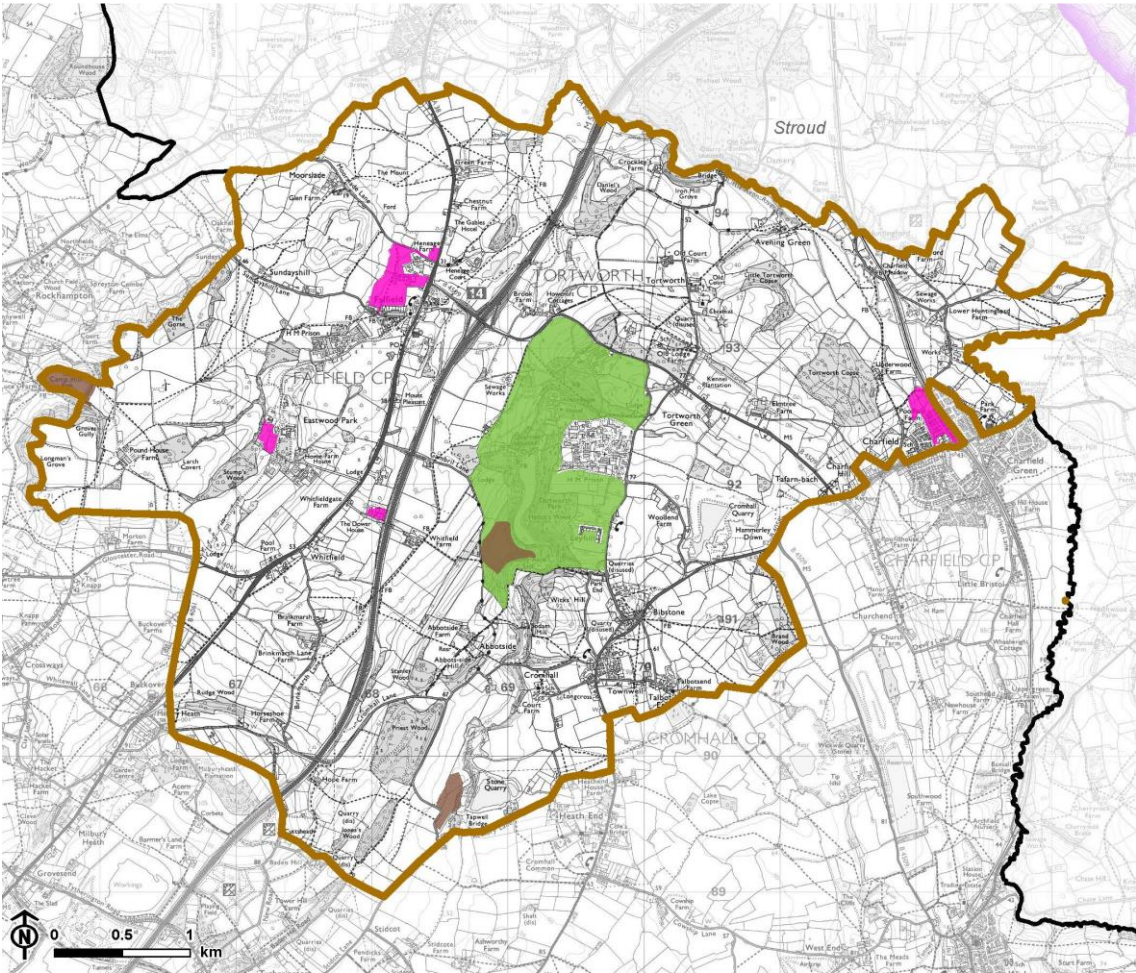


Figure 3.3: Development and Heritage context of LCA 7: Falfield Vale



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- LCA 7: Falfield Vale
- Council boundary
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- Scheduled Monument
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Recent development (since 2014)

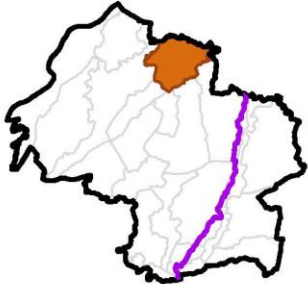
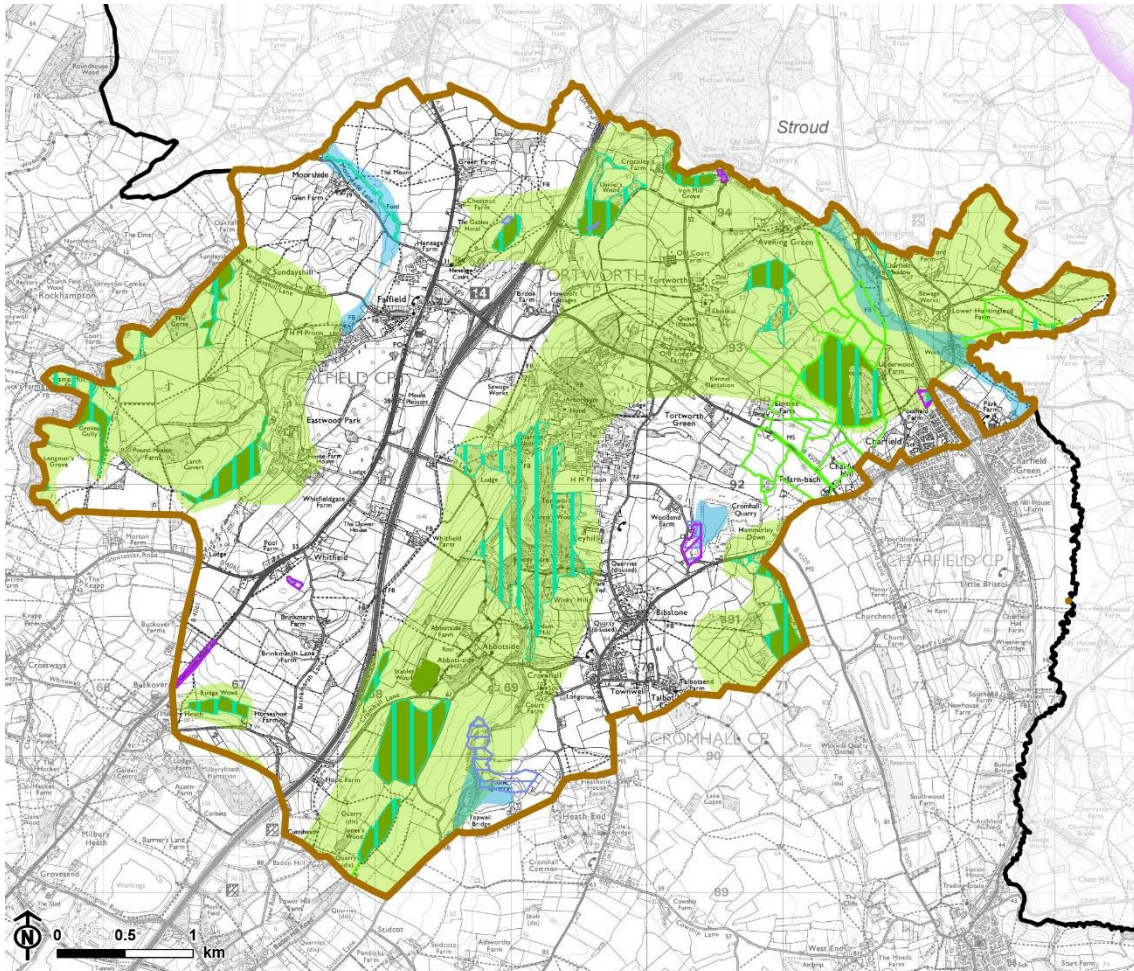










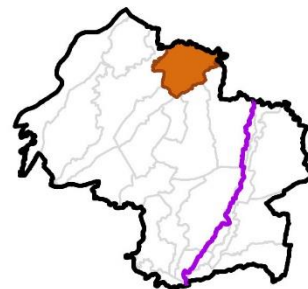


Figure 3.4: Ecology and Biodiversity context of LCA 7: Falfield Vale



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- | | |
|--|--|
|  LCA 7: Falfield Vale |  Regionally Important Geological Site |
|  Council boundary |  Wetland Strategic Network |
|  Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary |  Woodland Strategic Network |
|  Site of Special Scientific Interest |  Important hedgerow |
|  Site of Nature Conservation Interest | |
|  Ancient woodland | |



Landscape Description

Key Characteristics

- Bowl shaped vale, enclosed to the east by the curving slopes of the Severn Ridge and to the west by gently rising ground. Slightly higher undulating land is located east and south of the Severn Ridge.
- Strong woodland framework based on historic parkland estates with ancient woodland, small copses and mature parkland trees that are ecologically and visually important elements of the landscape.
- Parkland character arising from woodland planting and mature specimen trees in open grassland is characteristic of Tortworth Court Park and Eastwood Park estates.
- Scattered pattern of small to medium sized irregular and regular shaped fields of pasture and arable use. Some medium to large regular-shaped arable fields are associated with the parkland estates.
- Fields defined by clipped hedges with sporadic hedgerow trees, intermixed with a strong woodland structure and mature trees which provide habitat connectivity.
- Small areas of calcareous and neutral grassland support a diverse range of flora, including areas of species-rich grassland.
- A small-scale dispersed settlement pattern of historic villages interspersed with large manor houses and rural estate buildings, all characterised by limestone buildings and walls , .
- Major transport corridors M5, A38, B4509 and railway line cut through the landscape, with road traffic locally prominent.
- Two prison complexes at Leyhill and Eastwood, are largely well-integrated into the landscape with historic planting, although they have local influences.

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- One large quarry is located in the east, and several other older/disused quarries, some of which are Sites of Special Scientific Interest for their geology and/or palaeontology.
- Dark skies are experienced across much of the area, with some tranquil areas away from main roads and settlements.

Natural Influences

Geology, Landform and Hydrology

The underlying geology of the Falfield Vale LCA comprises a mix of Jurassic and Carboniferous Limestone, Wenlock Shales, Devonian Sandstone and Alluvium. This range of intricate and interwoven geological strata creates a gradually changing bowl and vale landform. Soils are a similar intricate mix varying from Rankers, Brown Soils, Brown Earth Loam over Clay, Pelo-Stagnogley, typical Argillic Pelosols, typical Stagnogley and Pelo-Alluvial Gley. There are several geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the LCA, including at Cullimore's Quarry, Cromhall Quarry, Slickstones Quarry and Brinkmarsh Quarry, which expose the oldest rocks in South Gloucestershire (dating from the Silurian period, 440-470 million years ago).

The landform consists of a bowl-shaped vale, defined to the east and south-east by the Severn Ridge which curves in an extended 's' shape, diagonally through the area. This ridgeline varies in height along its length, generally falling from 100m AOD on the southern boundary to 80m AOD in the north, before curving eastwards, merging with the Wickwar Ridge near Charfield (in LCA 5) at 85m AOD. The ridge has a complex form where a steep-sided valley cuts south through the area towards Cromhall, forming the rounded knoll of Wick's Hill (92m AOD) and the meandering small-scale valley within Tortworth Court Park. The north-eastern curve gives way to the Little Avon River valley in the north of the LCA. To the east and south of the Severn Ridge, the land is generally undulating, draining northwards.

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In the west, land gently rises from 30m AOD in the vale to 70m AOD on a scarp edge on the western boundary. Beyond this, the scarp falls steeply westwards towards Rockhampton.

Drainage within the area flows generally northwards as tributaries of the Little Avon River, which follows a tightly meandering course on the northern boundary of the area through a shallow, broad valley, becoming steeper and narrower to the north-west. Near Tortworth Court Park, two small watercourses flow through narrow meandering valleys cut into the Severn Ridge. These streams have been dammed in places to create ornamental lakes and pools within the designed parkland at Tortworth Court.

Land Cover

The Falfield Vale is characterised by a diverse mix of land cover, largely influenced by the estates of Tortworth Court Park and Eastwood Park. Agricultural land use within this area comprises a patchwork of arable and pastoral farmland within and around the designed parkland landscapes.

Field patterns throughout the area vary. Medium to large-scale arable fields of mixed form cover a significant part of the landscape, including within the estates at Tortworth Court Park and Eastwood Park. Small, irregular shaped pasture fields are characteristic in the east, around Bibstone, Townwell and Cromhall, to the north and west of Falfield, and west of Charfield. Fields are typically defined by dense, low clipped hedges and include sparsely distributed mature hedgerow trees. Several large mixed and deciduous woodlands are prominent within the landscape, typically of linear form associated with the Severn Ridge.

The Tortworth and Eastwood Park Estates influence a significant part of the character area through their extensive land ownership which includes large areas of farmland and woodland, as well as parkland. The estate parklands include mature, deciduous and evergreen trees in groups or single specimens set within open grassland, with an arboretum at Tortworth Court Park.

Photo 2: View east across pastoral fields with mature in-field trees, looking towards the Cotswold Scarp on the skyline



Biodiversity

This character area comprises a mosaic of grassland, woodland and arable and pastoral farmland that is dissected by meandering watercourses and punctuated by ponds. Hedgerows, scattered trees, and watercourses provide ecological corridors for wildlife and together these habitats make the Falfield Vale an important habitat for a diverse range of species. The mixed farmland supports many species of ground-nesting farmland birds, including species listed as Globally Threatened Red listed species. The winter stubble provides a precious foraging resource when food sources are scarce for many farmland birds.

The Falfield Vale includes approximately 100 hectares of ancient woodland, mainly in scattered medium size woodlands and copses. Many of these are designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) in recognition of their nationally important flora and fauna, including at Priest Wood, Tortworth Court, Charfield Quarry, Stumps Wood, and Daniels Wood. Key species likely

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to be associated with the ancient woodland include bats and dormice both of which are present across South Gloucestershire and are European protected species with associated Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP). There are three sites within the Falfield Vale designated as SNCIs for the calcareous and neutral grassland and includes areas of species-rich grassland. This diverse habitat supports a range of invertebrates and ant hills are a regular feature. These invertebrates in turn provide a food source for mammals including bats.

Many of the watercourses within this LCA are designated as SNCI, including the stream by Moreslade Lane which is designated for the flowing water and bankside vegetation. These watercourses support a diverse range of species from aquatic macro-invertebrates to fish and water voles. The scattered ponds and pools within the area support amphibians such as great crested newts (a European Protected Species).

The disused and working quarries, including underground quarries, and mines across this area provide an ideal habitat for many species of bat including European Protected Species.

South Gloucestershire Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridor B (Charfield-Alveston-Hallen (*Western Scarp/Severn Ridges*)) covers a significant proportion of this LCA, associated with the woodland strategic network. Blue-Green Infrastructure Corridor I (Huntingford-Charfield-Wickwar (*Little Avon River Corridor*)) covers a small area in the north-east of the LCA, incorporating the Little Avon River corridor and its wetland and riparian habitats associated with the wetland strategic network.

Cultural Influences

Land Use and Time Depth

The parkland estates of Tortworth Court and Eastwood Park exert a strong influence on the overall landscape character of the area both through historic and present day land use .

Tortworth Court Park (a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden) comprises a historic manor house set within woodland and pleasure gardens, including an ornate gateway and lodge buildings. The park historically replaced an earlier deer park based around the hamlet of Tortworth, the bounds of which can be easily traced within the existing landscape pattern. The Old Court includes the ancient Tortworth Chestnut tree, a veteran tree and unique landscape feature, which is at least 800 years old.

Eastwood Park comprises designed parkland which partly overlies a large 16th century deer park, and is locally listed. The field pattern in this area reflects the enclosure of the earlier park, with the boundary of the original park still evident in field boundaries and woodland pattern. Both parks include ornamental lakes and pools, more extensively within Tortworth Court Park, where a small enclosed valley has been dammed.

Prehistoric settlement and land use is indicated by the presence of two Iron Age hill forts within the area. This includes Bloody Acre Camp on the brow of the Severn Ridge within Tortworth Court Park, and Camp Hill on the western boundary of the LCA, within Eastwood Park. The site of a roman villa lies to the south-west of Cromhall. All are designated as Scheduled Monuments.

Historic quarrying in the area is reflected in the presence of several disused quarries at Cromhall (limestone and quartzite) and Slickstones Quarry, as well as several smaller sites within Tortworth Court.

Settlement and Infrastructure

Settlement within the LCA is typically small-scale and dispersed, comprising nucleated villages, hamlets, scattered farms and houses. There are also large houses, estate architecture, buildings and stone walls associated with the Tortworth and Eastwood Estates.

The villages and hamlets of Falfield, Tortworth, Cromhall, Bibstone, Townwell and Talbot's End are located on shallow slopes within the vale, and are united through their use of limestone as a construction material. Boundary stone walls are common, particularly around the estates. More recent brick houses are present within the villages, either as single dwellings or grouped infill.

Falfield is a small nucleated village, located along the A38 within the vale. The church is a focal point. The village is generally constructed of limestone with estate-influenced architecture and some more recent brick houses. Cromhall, Bibstone, Townwell and Talbot's End are small hamlets located close to each other in the south-east of the character area. Properties are largely concentrated around the intersection of country lanes, with some low density roadside development between hamlet centres. On the boundary (but largely within adjacent LCA 5 to the east) is the large village of Charfield. It includes a mix of rendered and brick buildings of a variety of ages and styles, around an historic core, with more recent infill housing development.

Eastwood Park includes a group of old buildings concentrated around a large and imposing stately home, set on elevated ground above the parkland. The large complex of Eastwood Park Prison is located on the northern lower slopes of the estate grounds and is well-screened by mature vegetation.

The Tortworth Estate includes a diverse range of properties in Tortworth, Cromhall, Charfield, Falfield. Tortworth hamlet, located to the north-east, is a small estate settlement with a 'designed' regular layout, dominated by a stone church and surrounded by stone terraced estate cottages. The Leyhill Prison complex, within and to the east of the park, consists of a number of large,

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modern buildings, surrounded by a tall boundary stone wall, playing fields and a small area of housing.

Isolated farms and building groups are scattered throughout the area. These comprise a mix of building styles, principally of limestone or rendered, with stone property boundaries a common feature. A high frequency of individual properties is common along both major and minor roads, creating small sections of low-density ribbon development. Some farms include large modern shed outbuildings, constructed of timber and corrugated sheet materials.

The M5 and A38 dissect the LCA, passing north to south through the centre of the area. The B4508 and B4509 provide further connections across landscape, with narrow country lanes typically running east to west between the adjacent settlements. A short section of the Bristol to Gloucester railway passes through the north-eastern edge of the area on embankment.

There is a relatively low-density of public rights of way within the area. They generally cross higher ground, occasionally descending into the vale with a small concentration of intersecting routes north of Falfield, linking to settlement around Cromhall. One of the series of Circular Rides briefly passes through the south of the area, connecting Cromhall with Tytherington to the west and Wickwar to the east (both outside the LCA). The Avon Cycleway regional cycling route passes through south of the LCA, following rural lanes between Milbury Heath and Cromhall.

Photo 3: Specimen trees and St Leonards Church, Torthworth.



Perceptual Influences

Visual Character

The Falfield Vale landscape character area has a strong historic landscape structure of parkland, field patterns, dense woodland, mature trees, hedgerows and stone walls near farm and estate properties, overlying the large-scale bowl landform.

The vale comprises a mix of open agricultural landscapes of small to medium, regular and irregular shaped fields, with larger regular fields found within the parkland estates. Fields are typically defined by low clipped hedges and sparse native hedgerow trees. Large woodland blocks and linear woodlands provide structure and enclosure along the upper slopes of the bowl-shaped vale.

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The Severn Ridge, rising to the east, is prominent within the area, with large areas of broadleaved native woodland clothing its upper slopes and hill tops. It covers a large proportion of Tortworth Court Park, enclosing features including the stately home at Tortworth Court and its associated buildings, the lakes, ponds and arboretum, plus the narrow steep sided valleys which cut into the ridge. The lower slopes of the Severn Ridge include mature tree specimens, often standing within open fields.

Leyhill Prison complex is largely contained by woodland and a high boundary stone wall. Associated with this complex and visible from the adjacent road, are playing fields and a group of reconstituted stone houses, which are visually different in design, style and materials to the character of the traditional stone buildings in the area. This development has introduced a slight suburban character to the locality. The Eastwood Park Prison complex within the park's grounds is relatively well-screened from wider views across the landscape, primarily visible from Falfield and its approach road. The architectural style of the complex and associated infrastructure of roads and security fencing are visually detractive in local views.

The hamlet of Tortworth, at the centre of Tortworth Estate contributes to the area's visual distinctiveness. The church tower and estate cottages are prominent within local and middle distance views. Views from this area across the Little Avon Valley are extensive, stretching beyond the character area to include the Cotswold Scarp to the east.

To the west, the parkland within the Eastwood Park estate comprises designed linear woodland, mature tree stands and specimen trees, which provide the backdrop and setting for the stately home at Eastwood Park (now used for corporate events and weddings), with an open 'bowl' of parkland around the house, including mature tree stands within pasture fields. Large woodland blocks and linear planting continue westwards along higher slopes beyond the estate boundary. The house and parkland is primarily visible within middle distance views from the Severn Ridge.

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The village of Falfield, with its cluster of traditional stone-built properties (including Falfield Lodge), church spire, and stone walls retains a distinctive character. The linear pattern of brick houses near the Leyhill prison entrance are prominent in local views and detract from the character and pattern of the village. Modern brick housing has extended the village north, parallel to the A38.

The dispersed and clustered settlement pattern around Cromhall is generally well-integrated within the landform, contained by the backdrop of Wick Hill and within an intact irregular landscape framework. Open views from adjacent high ground over this area are possible, although views within the area are generally more limited, due to the landscape structure and undulating landform. The northern edge of Charfield remains largely well-integrated. Small pockets of housing along the B4062 are set behind a strong structure of hedgerows and trees.

Cromhall Quarry is well screened by boundary vegetation, however a section of exposed quarried rock face and buildings at Wickwar Quarry (in adjacent LCA 5 to the east) is partly visible within middle distance views from Bagstone Road, south of Townwell.

The Cotswold Scarp to the east and north and east is a strong visual element in long distance views, generally from higher vantage points within the character area.

The M5 forms a prominent built feature within the centre of the area, with two over-bridges and sections of road at grade. The A38 follows slightly higher ground to the west. Both routes have heavy traffic with visible and audible effects within the landscape. The B4509 and network of lanes are typically visually enclosed by tall hedgerows. The railway line embankment forms a significant built landform within the Little Avon river valley, although it is generally well-integrated by scrub and tree cover which connects with the dense riparian vegetation of the Little Avon Valley. The railway is more prominent further south where it passes through Charfield.

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Large modern farm sheds form intrusive visual elements, particularly around the parkland estates, eroding the rural character and small-scale of the locality. Pylon corridors to the south of the area are prominent visual features from the Cromhall area, where they form large built features within a generally low, gently undulating landscape. Pressure for renewable energy developments (particularly wind farms) within this LCA and in adjacent landscapes have the potential to affect landscape character and views experienced from the Falfield Vale LCA.

Photo 4: Traditional buildings nestled within a strong vegetation framework of dense hedgerows and mature trees at Talbots End.



Tranquillity and Dark Skies

The sense of tranquillity experienced in this landscape is limited due to the presence of the M5 Motorway and A38, as well as modern development at Leyhill and Eastwood Park Prison sites, and at Charfield. Pockets of tranquillity exist across the landscape within wooded areas and some of the parkland, although the sound of distant traffic from the two major roads can be heard across much of the LCA. Overall, the landscape experiences relatively dark night skies, with localised areas of light pollution associated with the two prison complexes and around Charfield.

Visually Important Hillsides

The Wicks/Butchers Hill and Baden Hill, and Eastwood Park Spur Visually Important Hillsides (VIH) are located within this LCA. A small part of the Churchend Ridge VIH extends into the north-eastern part of the LCA from adjacent LCA 5: Wickwar Ridge and Vale. Key characteristics of each VIH include the following:

- Wicks/Butchers Hill and Baden Hill VIH: An elevated area, punctuated with three notable hills spanning from Tortworth in the north to Tytherington in the south. Wick's Hill, the largest of the hills is distinguishable from the surrounding landscape due to its elevation and pronounced hillsides, and contributes to the character and setting of Tortworth Court Registered Park and Garden (RPG).
- Eastwood Park Spur VIH: A complex area of ridges, including the outlying Sundays Hill in the north-east. Its presence in views across the landscape is emphasised by the surrounding lower-lying land to the east and west.
- Churchend Ridge (including Charfield Hill) VIH: A north-south linear steep ridge spanning from the south of Wickwar to the north of Charfield and forming the western valley sides to the Little Avon River. It's prominence is emphasised by the considerably lower-lying landscape to the west.

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

Strategic Viewpoints

There are no Strategic Viewpoints located within or near to this LCA.

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

Evaluation

Key Sensitivities and Valued Features

- The distinctive landform of the large-scale bowl shaped vale contained by gently rising land to the east and Severn Ridge to the west.
- The Geological SSSIs at Brinkmarsh and Slickstones Quarries, valued for their geological interest.
- The extensive network of semi-natural deciduous woodland, including ancient woodland, much of which locally designated as SNCIs.
- Ecologically-valuable grassland and aquatic habitats including species-rich grassland and scattered ponds and pools, supporting a range of species.
- Habitat connectivity provided by woodland, hedgerows, scattered mature trees, and drystone walls.
- The historic nucleated villages at Falfield, Tortworth, Cromhall, Bibstone, Townwell and Talbot's End, united by their estate character and vernacular of Cotswold stone.
- Parkland at Tortworth Court (Grade II* RPG) and Eastwood Park, with designed woodland, open grassland, specimen trees, streams and ponds, create locally distinctive historic landscapes.
- The Tortworth Chestnut veteran tree, a unique landscape feature which is at least 800 years old and contributes to the sense of time depth.

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- Prehistoric assets including two Iron Age hill forts and the site of Roman villa (Scheduled Monuments) which provide a sense of history.
- Uninterrupted views towards the Severn Ridge and Cotswold Scarp which contain the landscape, as well as wide views across the vale from elevated areas.
- The network of public footpaths, as well as a Circular Ride and part of the Avon Cycleway route that provide recreational opportunities across the landscape.
- The experience of dark night skies across most of the area.

The Changing Landscape

The following section sets out the changes and pressures to the Falfield Vale 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 may be particularly susceptible to damage from storms and drought.
- Climate change and changing land management practices may lead to potential changes in flora and an increase in pests and diseases.
- Pressure for locating solar farms and wind turbines 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.

Climate Emergency and Nature Recovery

- The watercourses, scattered ponds and pools are vulnerable to any loss of habitat including the terrestrial habitat around ponds as well as the ponds themselves.
- An increase in tree planting is required to contribute towards South Gloucestershire's objective of doubling tree cover by 2030, and in accordance with the proposed woodland strategic network which forms part of the West of England's Nature Recovery Network. This may include the establishment of new native woodlands in the 'Tortworth Gap' linking woodlands within Tortworth Park to outlying woodlands (many of which are ASNW), extending northwards to Michael Wood (across the county boundary) and southwards towards Tytherington, across the 'M5 Gap' to link woodlands at Cromhall, and across the M5 to woodlands at Milbury Heath and to the south of Thornbury, as set out in the Forest of Avon's Tree and Woodland Strategy [See reference 1]. This would increase enclosure and extend the wooded character.

Land Use and Cover

- Changes in land use and management could affect the present integrity, habitat value and structure of the landscape, particularly the grassland and woodland habitats.
- The designed parkland pattern and agricultural land use practices around Tortworth hamlet and within Tortworth Court Park and Eastwood Park which have influenced hedgerow, tree patterns and settlements that have changed little for hundreds of years are particularly sensitive to change.
- Cromhall Limestone Quarry is currently inactive, but has an existing permission for further extraction work. There is potential for extraction to continue within the existing quarry site, before expansion of the quarry area is considered. Any future plan to recommence quarrying would introduce some local effects immediately adjacent to the site, but is likely to have limited wider effects upon landscape character. Policies included in the Policies, Sites and Places Plan [See reference 2] and the Joint Waste Core Strategy [See reference 3] seek to ensure that future

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quarrying, landfill and restoration proposals for these sites take account of the need to protect the landscape character, amenity and distinctiveness of the local and wider landscape.

Development

- Strong vertical or horizontal elements are particularly prominent within the vale, e.g. major transport corridors, overhead powerlines and pylons.
- The higher ground surrounding the shallow bowl of the Falfield Vale allows extensive open views across the agricultural landscape. New development therefore has the potential to influence character and be visually prominent in wider views across the landscape.
- Residential expansion has altered the character and form on the edge of Charfield with further ongoing development on the edge of Charfield and Falfield.
- Residential infill development has the potential to alter the traditional, irregular and organic development pattern of most settlements and the spatial segregation of roadside properties.
- Modern building styles using brick or reconstituted stone such as in Falfield and Leyhill are out of keeping with the local character and vernacular, resulting in dilution of local distinctiveness.

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 Strategy and Guidelines [See reference 4], as well as the overarching management strategy objectives of the South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment, as set out in Chapter 4.

Landscape Strategy

Landscape Management

- Maintain the integrity and setting of the distinctive parkland landscapes at Eastwood Park and Tortworth Park.
- Manage the distinctive parkland landscape framework through woodland management (including new woodland and specimen tree planting) and maintaining appropriate grazing levels.
- Limit the introduction of uncharacteristic features such as field subdivision by electrified and post and rail fences which are devoid of habitat value, and the degradation of the sward by overgrazing.
- Ensure that the tranquillity and dark skies of the rural areas is maintained,
- Protect the setting and views of the two scheduled hillforts within this LCA.

Ecology/Biodiversity Management

- Maintain, manage and enhance the characteristic mosaic of habitats and landscape features, including woodland, parkland hedgerows, riparian corridors and ponds, as well as pastoral and arable fields.

- Restore lost/degraded lengths of hedgerows. Further hedgerow tree planting would help to strengthen and improve the biodiversity value of these key features and ensure their conservation for the long term.
- Quarry restoration (e.g. at Cromhall Quarry) should integrate landform and land use of the site with adjacent areas, re-establishing a strong landscape framework and reinforcing biodiversity value. Loss of habitat in underground areas should be avoided.
- Enhance wildlife habitat links across the character area, seeking opportunities to expand areas of species rich grassland and woodland where appropriate to enhance biodiversity value and contribute to local nature recovery networks.
- Protect ancient woodland with appropriate buffers and enhance woodland connectivity, encouraging natural regeneration of appropriate sites; for example, the woodland areas of Tortworth Copse.
- Protect the riparian habitat and water quality of the Little Avon River and seek opportunities to restore and create new riparian habitats where appropriate.

Development Management

- Any future expansion of the prisons or other development within the parkland estates or their settings will require careful consideration of building design and measures for integration, to minimise the impact on the distinctive landscape character of the locality.
- Consider tree and vegetation planting around new developments, as well as along the southern margin of Eastwood Park Prison to reduce the visual impact of the built development in the wider landscape.
- Ensure new built development respects the local vernacular. Encourage the use of local stone and traditional building materials to improve integration with existing building styles.
- The cumulative effect of a multiplicity of smaller impacts, such as loss of walling, the introduction of fencing and the use of reconstituted stone

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materials could have a significant and erosive impact on the distinctiveness of the LCA.

- Ensure that any new vertical elements integrate with the landscape framework and minimise visual impact on the rural and parkland characteristics of the Falfield Vale.

References

- 1 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.
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- 2 South Gloucestershire Policies, Sites and Places Plan (November 2017)
<https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/policies-sites-and-places-plan-ppsp/>
- 3 West of England Joint Waste Core Strategy (March 2011)
<https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/joint-waste-core-strategy/>
- 4 Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (June 2016).
Available at: <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/our-landscape/landscape-strategy-guidelines/>

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