

South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment

Annex I: Visually Important Hillside

South Gloucestershire Council

Draft

Prepared by LUC

November 2023



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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 A key characteristic of the South Gloucestershire landscape are the hills, ridges, pronounced scarps and valley sides which may provide an important backdrop in views, form focal features or provide points of reference in the landscape. It is important that hillsides considered to be visually important are protected and that their function within the landscape is retained and not diminished by inappropriate forms of development.

1.2 The South Gloucestershire Core Strategy 2006-2027 (adopted 11th December 2013) identified Visually Important Hillsides (VIHs) as strategic green infrastructure (GI) assets on its 'Key – Strategic Green Infrastructure Network' Diagram (Figure 1) supporting Policy CS2: Green Infrastructure. The VIHs were also described and illustrated within the 2014 adopted South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). In 2022 the Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridor Mapping Project considered VIHs and other GI assets to give spatial expression to South Gloucestershire's strategic Green Infrastructure corridors by clearly delineating their boundaries. As part of this project, the boundaries of the VIHs were spatially defined on OS mapping.

1.3 Visually Important Hillsides, as mapped on Policy CS2 Key – Strategic Green Infrastructure Network Diagram (Figure 1) and within the LCA SPD, comprise a mix of distinct hillside landforms (e.g Hanham Hills), outward facing scarps to plateau areas (e.g. Cotswold Scarp delineating the western edge of the Cotswold National Landscape), or prominent valley sides (e.g. northern valley side of the River Avon. In some locations, the Visually Important Hillsides 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.

1.4 This report forms Annex I of the refreshed and updated 2023 South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment SPD. It contains an analysis of the hillsides previously identified, and provides the justification as to why they are categorised as being visually important. The hillsides have been tested against the criteria set out in **Chapter 2**, which relate to the topics of Distinctiveness and Identity; Visual Prominence; and Character and Value.

1.5 All the VIHs previously identified within the CS2 Diagram and 2014 Landscape Character Assessment SPD are considered to either meet all or most of the criteria, with the exception of 'Ram Hill' – an area located to the south-east of Coalpit Heath. Whilst this feature was not indicated on the supporting figure to Policy CS2, it was referred to within the 2014 Landscape Character Assessment SPD and so was taken forwards for consideration in this study. However, the area does not meet the criteria to the extent of it qualifying as a VIH. It is not a distinctive hillside within the landscape and is no more elevated than the adjacent landscape directly to the east.

Chapter 2

Criteria

2.1 This chapter sets out the criteria that each potential visually important hillside has been assessed against, under three topic headings. For a hillside to be categorised as visually important, it has to meet all or most of the criteria depending upon its context within the landscape of South Gloucestershire.

Distinctiveness and identity

- Readily identifiable as a landform feature on OS mapping (e.g. close contour lines, slopes, triangulation pillar, elevated promoted viewpoints and hillforts).
- Distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity (e.g. noted in the 2023 South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment, mentioned in publications such as Conservation Area documents).

Visual prominence

- Prominent/pronounced hillside, plateau edge, scarp, or valley side in views across the landscape (as noted in the 2023 South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment).
- Visible from several public vantage points and/ or a key feature in views from a Strategic Viewpoint (see South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment SPD Annex II).

Character and value

- High visual/sensory/perceptual value (as noted in the 2023 South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment).

Chapter 2 Criteria

- Contributes to the setting of Conservation Areas and/ or the character of Registered Parks and Gardens (RPGs)
- Its character and appearance are largely unspoilt by visual detractors such as inappropriate forms of development, manmade structures, or land use (analysed through mapping and verified on site).
- Provides the opportunity for views across the landscape of South Gloucestershire, and a sense of prospect (e.g. the location of a Strategic Viewpoint).
- Has a role in the landscape e.g. forms a visual backdrop, provides a visual watershed, contains / defines character areas, provides visual separation between settlements.

Chapter 3

Analysis of Visually Important Hillsides

3.1 There are 15 Visually Important Hillsides (VIHs) within South Gloucestershire, identified according to the criteria described in **Chapter 2**. These are set out below and their location is shown on **Figure 3.1** in relation to their associated landscape character area(s).

3.2 A full profile for each VIH is contained within this chapter, providing clear justification against the criteria. A typical view towards each VIH is also provided to illustrate its character and presence within the landscape of South Gloucestershire. Such views may vary depending upon the location of the viewer and length and variation of a given VIH.

3.3 The VIHs are as follows:

- **Ashwicke Ridges** (including Henley Hill, Nimlet Hill, and Hanging Hill). This VIH defines the boundaries of LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges which it is located fully within. It forms a southerly extension to the Cotswold Scarp VIH.
- **Cotswold Scarp** (including Hawkesbury Knoll, Broad Hill, Birch Hill, wooded slopes of Doddington Park and Dryham Park, Tog Hill and Freezing Hill). This VIH defines the boundaries of LCA 4: Cotswold Scarp which it is located mostly within, apart from a small area straddling the south-western corner of LCA 2: Marshfield Plateau at Tog Hill. It adjoins the Ashwicke Ridges VIH in the south.
- **Wickwar Ridge** (including Bury Hill) which defines parts of the western and eastern boundaries of LCA 5: Wickwar Ridge and Vale and LCA 8: Yate Vale respectively.
- **Churchend Ridge** (including Charfield Hill) which is located mostly within LCA 5: Wickwar Ridge and Vale, with a small part extending into LCA 7: Falfield Vale in the north. It adjoins the Wick's/Butcher's Hill and Baden Hill VIH at Tortworth in the north-west.

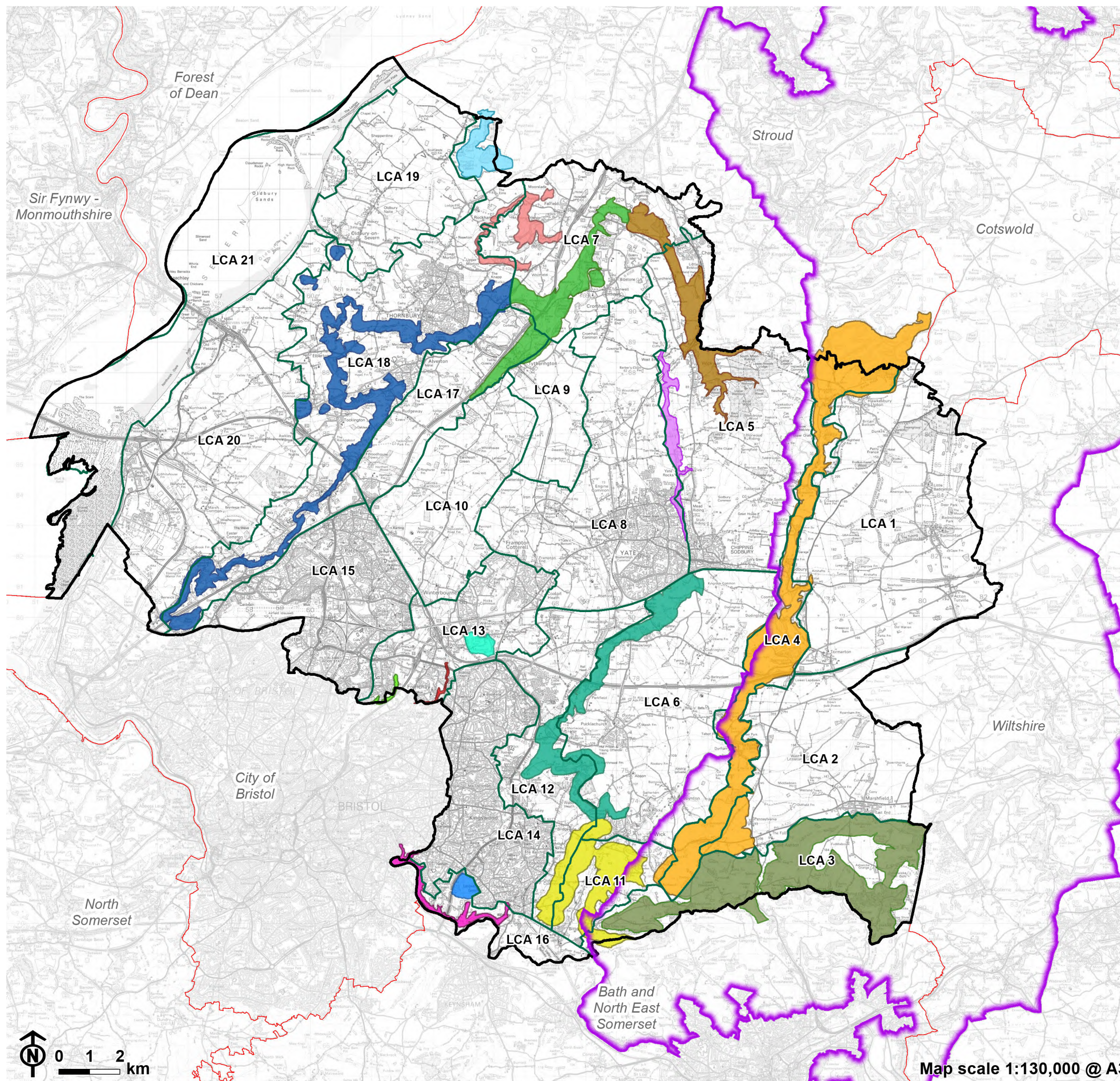
- **Pucklechurch Ridge** (including Shortwood Hill, Siston Hill, Claypit Hill, Westerleigh Hill, Coxgrove Hill and Holbrook Common) which defines parts of the western and eastern boundaries of LCA 6: Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley and LCA 12: Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge respectively. It adjoins the Oldland Ridge VIH in the south at Wick.
- **Wick's/Butcher's Hill and Baden Hill** (including Abbots-side Hill) which is located mostly within LCA 7: Falfield Vale, apart from a small part in the south that extends into LCA 17: Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge. It adjoins the Churchend Ridge VIH at Tortworth in the north-east, and the Severn Ridges VIH in the west at Buckover.
- **Eastwood Park Spur** (including Sundays Hill) which is located mostly within LCA 7: Falfield Vale, apart from the western 'leg' which straddles the edge of LCA 18: Seven Ridges.
- **Oldland Ridge** (including Beach Hill, Cann Break, Bitton Hill, Barrow Hill, Mount Pleasant and Mill Hill) which is located mostly within LCA 11: Golden Valley and straddles the boundary of LCA 12: Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge in the west. Small areas extend into LCA 6: Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley in the north and LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges in the south. It adjoins the Pucklechurch Ridge VIH in the north at Wick.
- **Bury Hill** which is located fully within LCA 13: Frome Valley.
- **Sims' Hill** which is located fully within LCA 13: Frome Valley.
- **River Frome** (steeper valley side) which is located fully within LCA 13: Frome Valley.
- **Hanham Hills** which is located fully within LCA 16: Avon Valley. It adjoins the Avon Valley VIH in the south.
- **River Avon valley** (steep northern side) which is located fully within LCA 16: Avon Valley. It forms a southerly extension of the Hanham Hills VIH.
- **Upper Hill** which is located fully within LCA 18: Seven Ridges.
- **Severn Ridges** (including Fowler's Hill, Titters Hill, Henley Hill, Spaniorium Hill and Milbury Heath, and outlying hills at Cow Hill, St Arilda's Church, Catherine's Hill and Eastcombe Hill). This VIH defines the boundaries of

Chapter 3 Analysis of Visually Important Hillsides

LCA 18: Seven Ridges which it is located fully within. It adjoins the Wick's / Butcher's Hill and Baden Hill VIH in the north-east at Buckover.

3.4 The remainder of this chapter contains the profile for each of the VIHs.

Figure 3.1: Visually Important Hillsides



- Council boundary
 - Neighbouring local authority
 - Landscape Character Area
 - Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- Visually Important Hillside**
- Ashwicke Ridges
 - Bury Hill
 - Churchend Ridge
 - Cotswold Scarp
 - Eastwood Park Spur
 - Hanham Hills
 - Oldland Ridge
 - Pucklechurch Ridge
 - River Avon Valley
 - River Frome
 - Severn Ridges
 - Sims Hill
 - Upper Hill
 - Wicks/Butchers Hill and Baden Hill
 - Wickwar Ridge

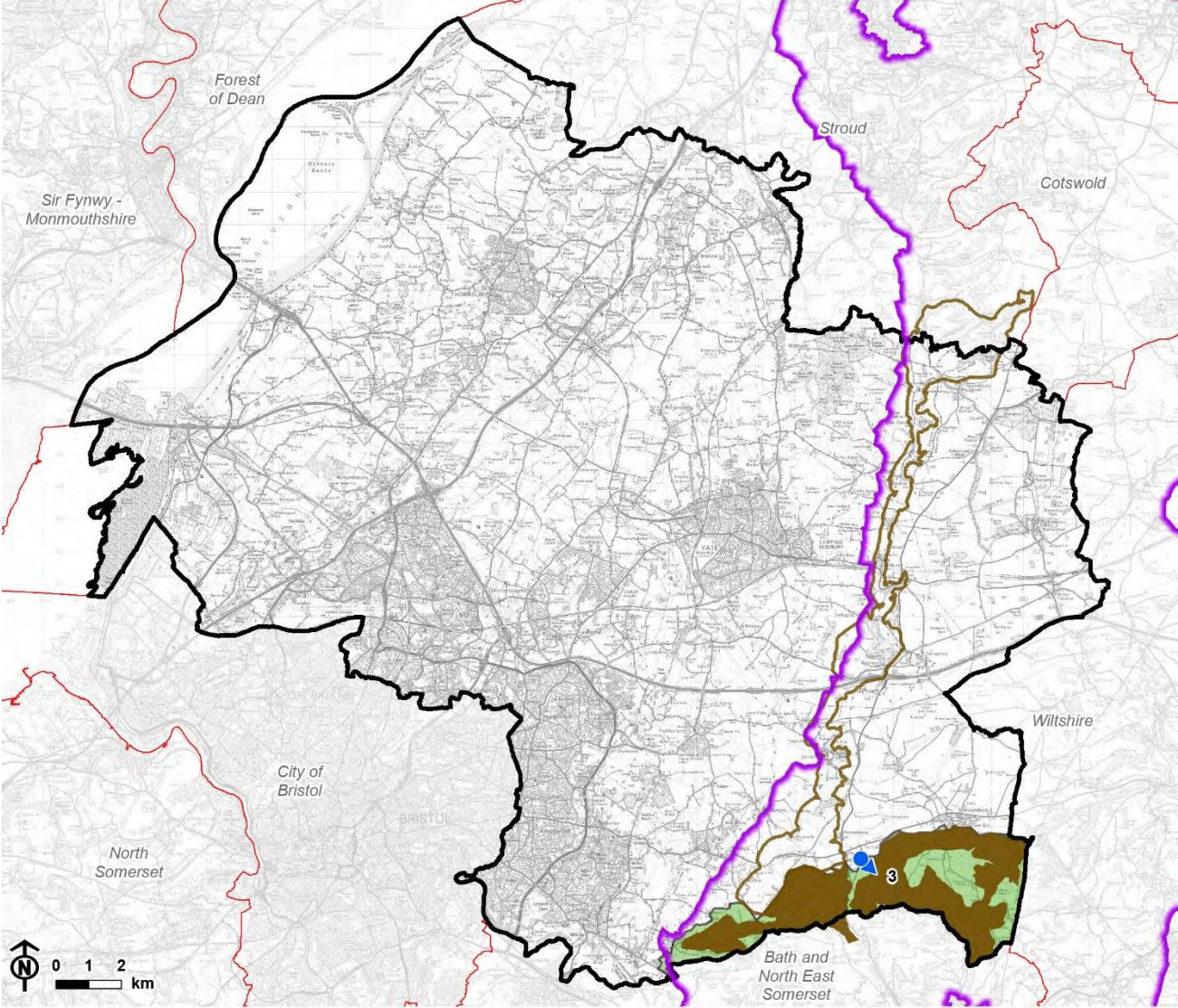


Map scale 1:130,000 @ A3

Ashwicke Ridges - including Henley Hill, Nimlet Hill, and Hanging Hill

The Ashwicke Ridges VIH comprises a complex area of ridges and valleys. It is located along the southern edge of South Gloucestershire and lies fully within the Ashwicke Ridges landscape character area (LCA 3), defining its boundaries. It forms a southerly extension to the Cotswold Scarp VIH. Its elevation on the scarp edge of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) results in it being visually prominent when viewed from the surrounding landscape which is emphasised by the considerably lower-lying Oldland Ridge VIH to the west, for example. The steep ridge and valley pattern is distinctive, contrasting with the broader Marshfield plateau to the north-east, and is a key characteristic of the setting to the settlements of Marshfield and Cold Ashton. The Ashwicke Ridges comprise some of the most prominent and dramatic hillsides within South Gloucestershire, as well as forming an integral landscape feature and characteristic of the CNL. The Ashwicke Ridges VIH also forms an intrinsic part of the setting of the Marshfield and Cold Ashton Conservation Areas, and the Ashwicke Hall RPG (Grade II).

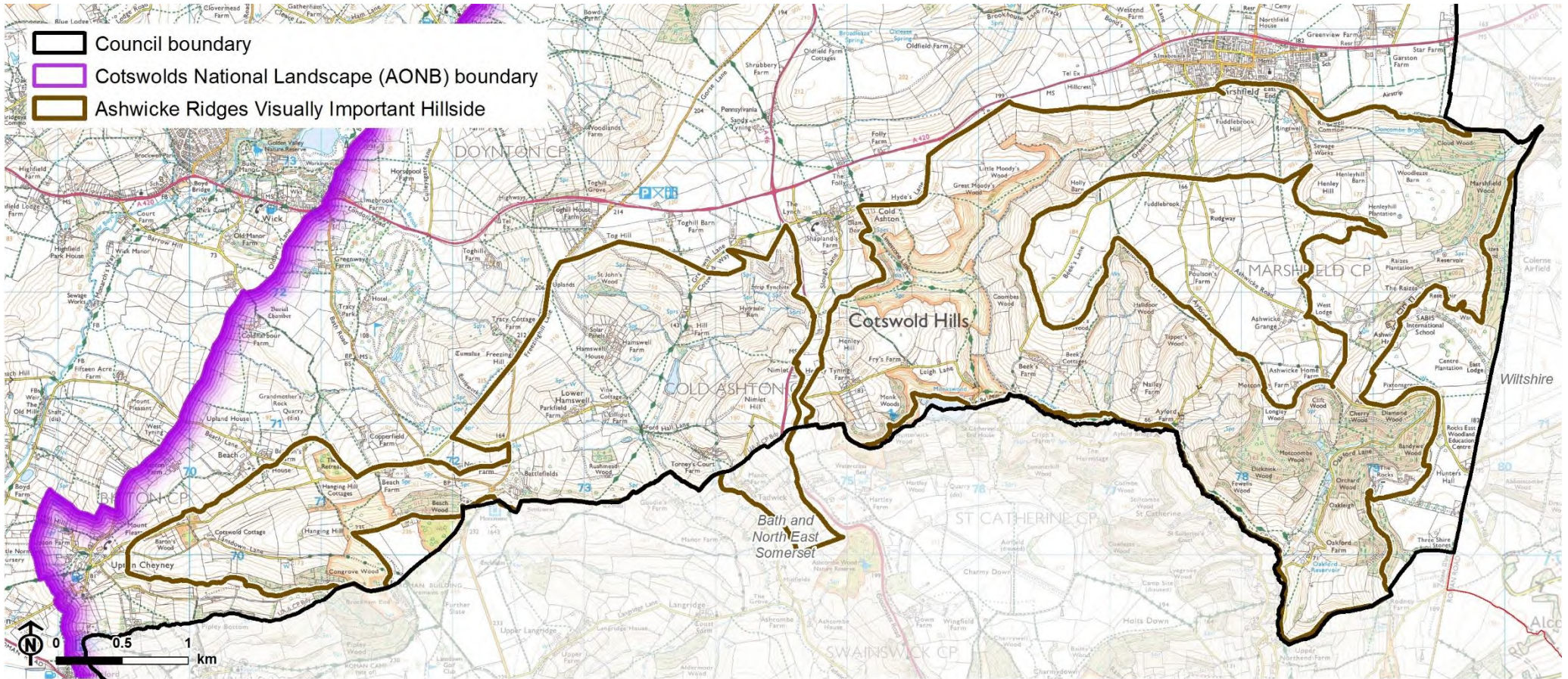
Figure 3.2: Location of the Ashwicke Ridges Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context



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- Ashwicke Ridges Visually Important Hillside
- Cotswold Scarp Visually Important Hillside
- Council boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges
- Photograph location

Figure 3.3: Detailed map of the Ashwicke Ridges Visually Important Hillside



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Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS

Figure 3.4: View of the Ashwicke Ridges from Cold Ashton



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- The Ashwicke Ridges VIH is a readily identifiable landform feature on OS mapping as the steep hillsides are identified with close contour lines, including those forming the slopes of the Lam Brook valley (from Freezing Hill, Tog Hill and Nimlet Hill); the 'v'-shaped Piple Bottom valley and Golden Valley (from Hanging Hill); the St. Catherine's Brook valley (from Henley Hill and Fuddlebrook Hill); and the Doncombe Brook valley (from a second Henley Hill).
- A triangulation pillar marks the top of Hanging Hill and is marked on OS mapping.
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity as noted in the following publications:
 - LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges notes that *"a plateau area rises to Henley Hill in the east near Marshfield. It is separated from the adjacent Marshfield Plateau character area (LCA 2) by the steep sided, easterly draining Doncombe Brook valley and the upper tributary valley of St Catherine's Brook"*; and *"the open ridgelines above the upper Hamswell Valley and Piple Bottom Valley to the west are large-scale landforms"*.
 - The Marshfield Conservation Area document [\[See reference 1\]](#) states that *"the sloping valleys to the south contributes strongly to the character."*
 - The Cold Ashton Conservation Area document [\[See reference 2\]](#) states that *"the village street commands magnificent views over the...steep St Catherine's Valley to the South"*.
- The hills and their incised valley sides are distinctive in separating the valleys from one another, e.g., Henley Hill separates St Catherine's Brook from the Hamswell Valley to the west.

- Part of the area around The Rocks/ Oakford Farm has been identified as forming part of the wider setting of the Bath World Heritage site (noted as an Important green hillside in The City of Bath World Heritage Site Setting SPD [[See reference 3](#)]).

Visual prominence

- The Ashwicke Ridges VIH comprises prominent and pronounced valley sides as noted in LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges which states that *"a saddle landform dividing the valley to the east marks the change to the more undulating form of the Ashwicke Ridges (LCA 3) and the more gently sloping land to the west, towards the Golden Valley (LCA 11)"*. It also notes that *"open views of rolling upland agricultural hills, with ground falling steeply from pronounced edges of high ground, into adjacent textured valleys"* are afforded from Marshfield, the A420, Cold Ashton and the A46 when looking southwards, and that there are views of *"dramatic landform, deep valleys with richly textured, mixed woodlands covering the hillsides"* from country lanes just south of Ashwicke Hall looking south towards Oakford in the St Catherine's Brook valley.
- The VIH is visible from several public vantage points including *"from many points along the upper ridges"* as noted in LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges. It forms a key feature in views from the strategic viewpoints at Marshfield (SVP 25) and Cold Ashton (SVP 26).

Character and value

- A key characteristic of LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges is the *"harmonious relationship between landform, vegetation and settlement, with a strong sense of place"*.
- The VIH contributes to the setting of the Marshfield and Cold Ashton Conservation Areas, which are located on the edge of the VIH and are afforded with views looking across it.

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- The VIH also contributes to the character of the Ashwicke Hall RPG (Grade II), with the parkland sloping down into the wooded valley of the Doncombe Brook.
- The character and appearance of the VIH is largely unspoilt by visual detractors as the hillsides are mostly undeveloped, with modern development limited to the hamlet of Lower Hamswell, a small number of ground mounted solar panels at Hamswell Farm and a small garden nursery along Greenway Lane; a telecoms mast on Hanging Hill; and overhead electrical cables mounted on wooden poles, scattered farmsteads and dwellings.
- Landcover across the VIH comprises predominantly of mixed agricultural fields and woodland, including extensive areas of woodland on the hill and valley slopes around Henley Hill and the valley slopes of the Doncombe Brook valley.
- The VIH provides the opportunity for views across the landscape of South Gloucestershire, including from the strategic viewpoint at Hanging Hill (SVP 12).
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by defining LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges and forming a prominent backdrop to the surrounding lower-lying landscape.

Summary

The Ashwicke Ridges is categorised as a VIH as it significantly meets all of the criteria. It is readily identifiable as a landform feature on OS mapping; a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity; prominent in views across the landscape; visible from several public vantage points; has high visual/sensory/perceptual value; contributes to the setting of Conservation Areas and the character of a RPG; its character and appearance are largely unspoilt by visual detractors; it provides the opportunity for views across the

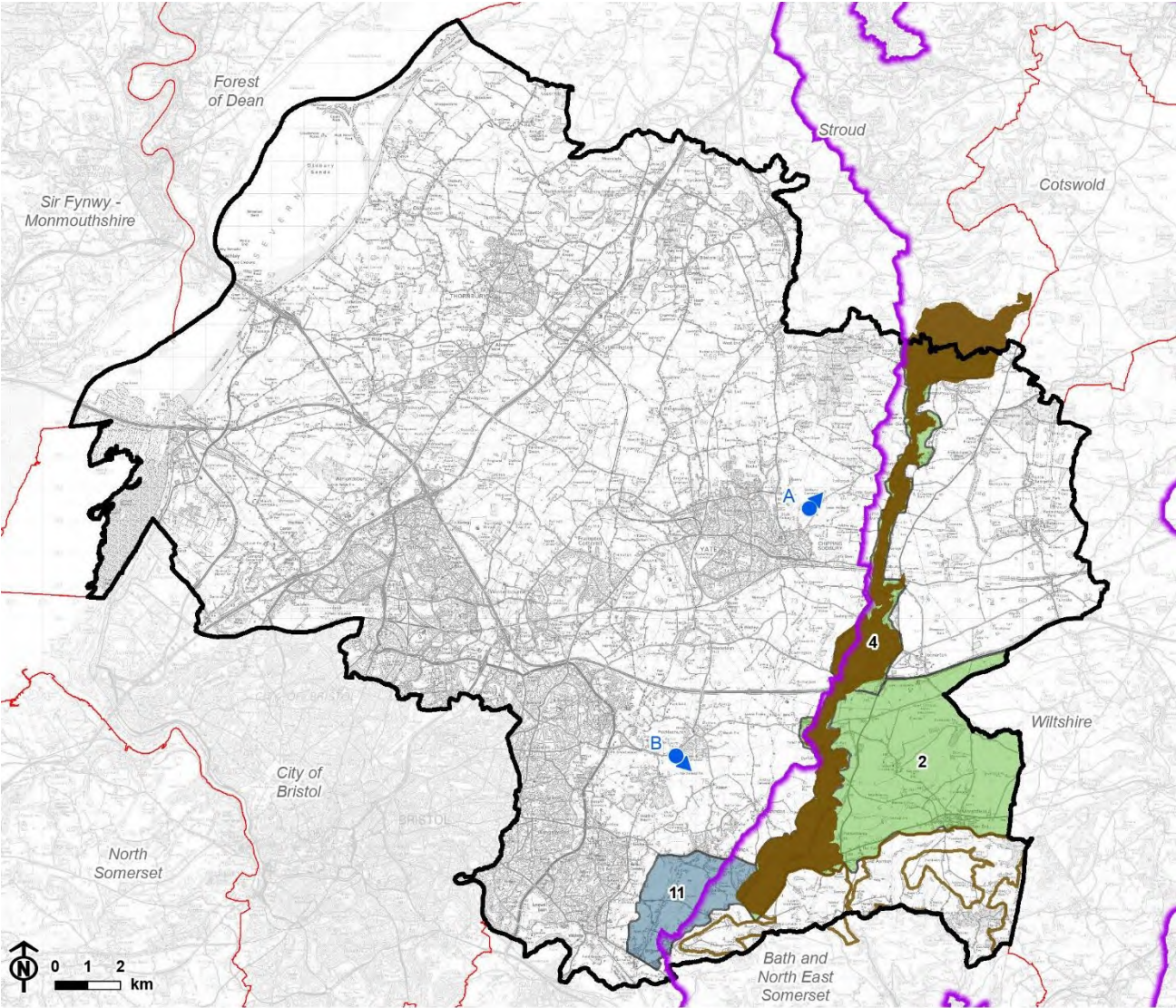
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landscape; and has a role in the landscape by defining a character area and forming a visual backdrop.

Cotswold Scarp - including Hawkesbury Knoll, Broad Hill, Birch Hill, wooded slopes of Doddington Park and Dryham Park, Tog Hill and Freezing Hill

The Cotswold Scarp VIH encompasses a long stretch of escarpment, interspersed with small-scale valleys, and a series of hillsides. The VIH is located near the eastern edge of South Gloucestershire, defining the Cotswold Scarp landscape character area (LCA 4), and spans from the north to south, where it joins the Ashwicke Ridges VIH in the south. Its distinct form and elevation on the edge of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) defines a marked change in character from the considerably lower-lying undulating ridges and vales to the west and the broader plateau/dip slope landscape to the east. As a result, the VIH is visually prominent when viewed from across the majority of South Gloucestershire, and perhaps the most dramatic VIH alongside the Ashwicke Ridges, forming an integral landscape feature and characteristic of the CNL. The Cotswold Scarp VIH also encompasses and influences a number of Conservation Areas and RPGs, forming an intrinsic part of their setting and character.

Figure 3.5: Location of the Cotswold Scarp Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context

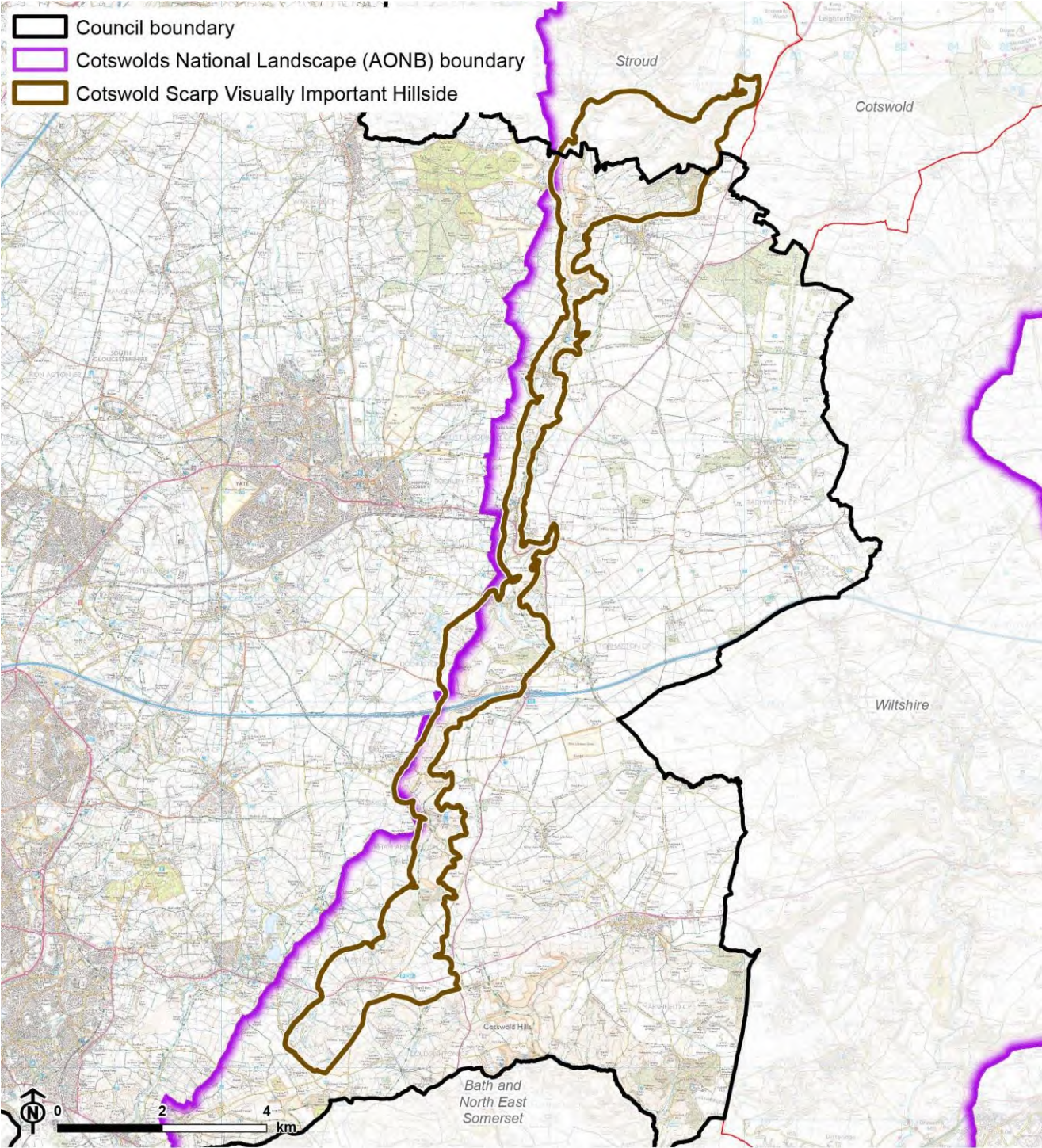


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Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS

- Cotswold Scarp Visually Important Hillside
- Ashwicke Ridges Visually Important Hillside
- Council boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- LCA 2: Marshfield Plateau
- LCA 4: Cotswold Scarp
- LCA 11: Golden Valley
- Photograph location

Figure 3.6: Detailed map of the Cotswold Scarp Visually Important Hillside



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Figure 3.7: View of the Cotswold Scarp from Sodbury Common (Photo point A)



Figure 3.8: View of the Cotswold Scarp from the edge of Pucklechurch (Photo point B)



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- The Cotswold Scarp VIH is a readily identifiable landform feature on OS mapping as close contour lines indicate steep slopes with a westerly aspect (descending from around 200m to 110m). The distance between consecutive contour lines gradually increase outwards from the top of the scarp towards the flatter/ gently undulating vale and plateau landscapes to the east and west respectively. The VIH includes a series of steep hills, including Hawkesbury Knoll, Broad Hill, Birch Hill, Tog Hill and Freezing Hill. These landform features are also easily identifiable on OS mapping due to contour lines forming concentric circles (or ovals).
- A promoted viewpoint is marked on OS mapping along the scarp near Haye's Farm, which implies that a scenic elevated view is afforded from this part of the VIH, and that there is intervisibility with the surrounding landscape. A historic fort near Chipping Sodbury is also evident on OS mapping, indicating a high point.
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity as noted in the following publications:
 - LCA 4: Cotswolds Scarp notes the feature is a "*large-scale, steeply sloping and folded scarp landform, falling from the Cotswold Plateau westwards to lower vales*". LCA 4 also states that the VIH comprises a consistently uniform concave landform feature with limited variation, apart from where it is "*interspersed with small-scale valleys*" which have created "*simple valley forms and a more complicated deeply folded scarp with convex upper slopes, knolls, rounded hills, promontories and descending broad spurs.*"
 - The Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan [See reference 4] identifies the escarpment as a special quality of the CNL, including the views from and to it.

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- The Hawkesbury Conservation Area document [See reference 5] refers to Hawkesbury Knoll (located in the north of the VIH) as being a "*distinctive landscape feature*".
- The Doynton Conservation Area document [See reference 6] refers to the "*dramatic Cotswold escarpment to the south-east*" and notes that long-distance views are "*particularly notable...towards the Cotswold escarpment and Freezing Hill*".
- The Pucklechurch Conservation Area document [See reference 7] refers to the Cotswold Scarp as providing a "*prominent, panoramic backdrop that dominates and encloses views out of the Conservation Area, reinforcing its rural setting*".

Visual prominence

- The prominence of the VIH is noted in LCA 4: Cotswold Scarp, which describes it as a "*prominent landform feature, forming a highly visible and distinctive backcloth in views from the lowland vales and ridges to the west*" and as being "*regionally prominent, being evident from as far away as South Wales*".
- The VIH is visible from several public vantage points and forms a key feature in views from the strategic viewpoints at Sodbury Common (SVP 9), Abson (SVP 22) and Pucklechurch (SVP 27).
- The line of beech trees on Freezing Hill in the south of the VIH and the Somerset Monument in the north are prominent and notable local landmarks on top of the VIH and can be seen within long-distance views, both within and beyond the South Gloucestershire area to the north and west. These features contribute towards the prominence and conspicuousness of the VIH.

Character and value

- The VIH contributes to the setting of the Hawkesbury, Horton and Dyrham Conservation Areas (which are located on the VIH), as it forms a

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prominent backdrop, enclosing these areas. It also contributes to the setting of the Conservation Areas at Doynton and Pucklechurch, as the VIH contains notable landscape features seen in views from these areas.

- The landform of the scarp contributes to the character of the Dodington House RPG (Grade II*) and the Dyrham Park RPG (Grade II*), with steeply sloping parkland.
- The character and appearance of the VIH is generally unspoilt by visual detractors as long stretches of the scarp are undeveloped. Visual detractors are mainly limited to pylons and telecommunication towers close to the Tomarton Interchange along the M4, which given their position towards the top of the scarp, have some visual prominence when seen from the surrounding landscape. An existing turbine near Hinton (66m tip height) is also relatively prominent as it lies at the top of the scarp (just outside of the VIH). The scarp is scattered with nucleated villages, hamlets, farmsteads and dwellings, although many of the villages are located along the lower slopes of the scarp. The M4 crosses near the middle of the scarp in a cutting so is not visually prominent.
- Landcover across the VIH comprises predominantly of pastoral fields with some arable fields extending beyond the base and crest of the slope. Linear woodland and the hedgerow pattern complement the scarp by following the contours of the slope and open grass hillsides with small, isolated tree clumps or scrub reveal the scarp's profile and exposed ridgeline. LCA 4: Cotswold Scarp identifies the woodland as being distinctive and visually prominent in the area.
- The VIH provides ample opportunities for expansive views across the landscape, including from the strategic viewpoints at Little Sodbury Hillfort (SVP 13), Old Sodbury (SVP 14), Tog Hill (SVP 16), Dyrham Park (SVP 17), and Freezing Hill (SVP 18).
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by defining LCA 4: Cotswold Scarp and providing a watershed (as to the west of the scarp, springs flow into the Little Avon River, River Frome, River Boyd and eventually to the Severn, whereas springs and streams on the other side of the scarp flow in an easterly direction). It also forms a highly prominent backdrop to the surrounding lower-lying landscape.

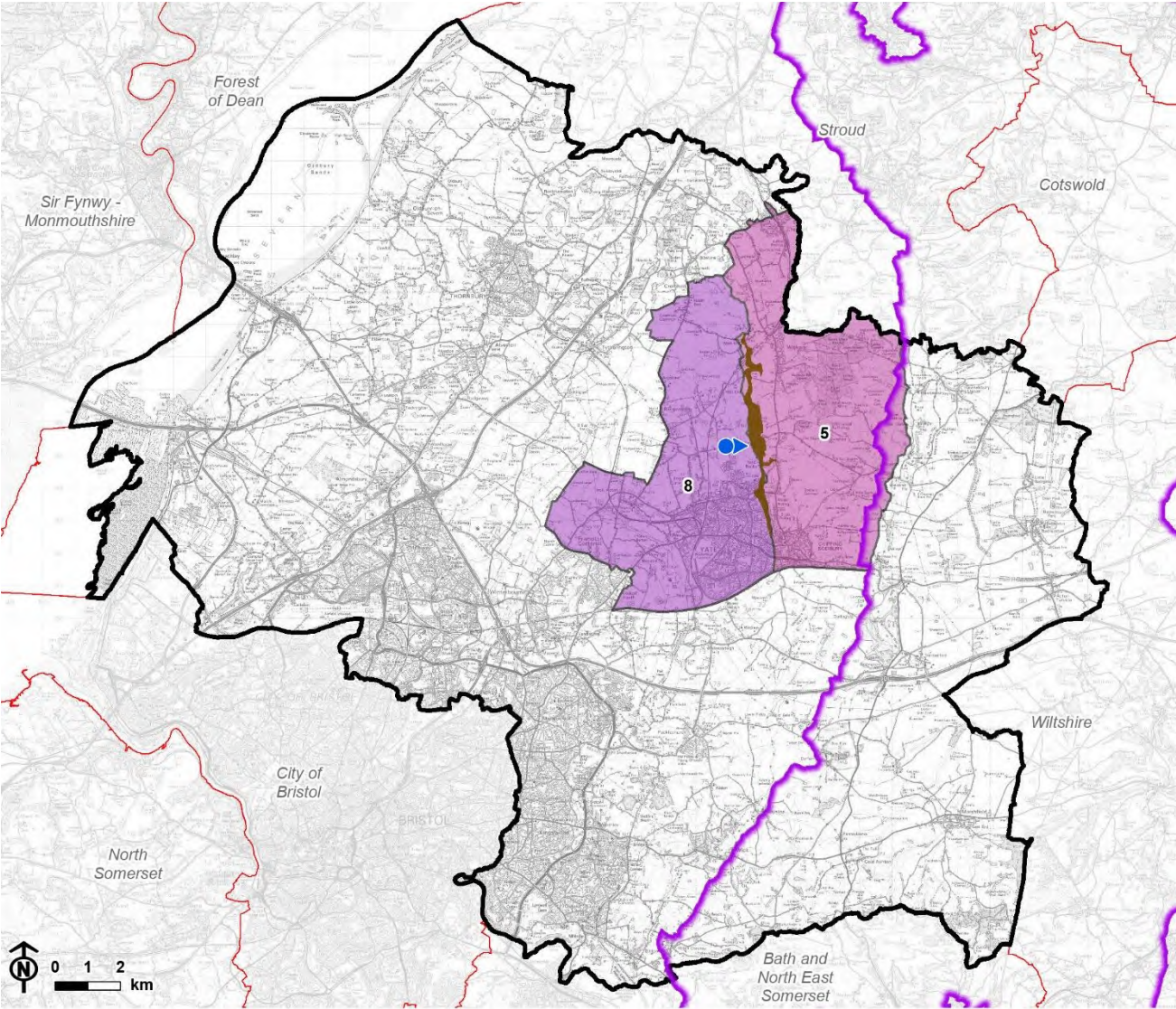
Summary

The Cotswold Scarp is categorised as a VIH as it significantly meets all of the criteria. It is readily identifiable as a landform feature on OS mapping; a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity; prominent in views across the landscape; visible from many public vantage points; has high visual/sensory/perceptual value; contributes to the setting of Conservation Areas and the character of RPGs; its character and appearance is generally unspoilt by visual detractors; it provides the opportunity for views across the landscape; and has a role in the landscape by defining a character area, providing a visual watershed and forming a highly prominent visual backdrop.

Wickwar Ridge - including Bury Hill

The Wickwar Ridge VIH comprises a north-south linear steep ridge, comparatively narrow in width, with the notable inclusion of Bury Hill in its centre and interspersed with small-scale stream valleys. The VIH is located within the centre of South Gloucestershire, where it defines part of the western and eastern boundaries of the Wickwar Ridge and Vale (LCA 5) and Yate Vale (LCA 8) landscape character areas respectively. The southern extent of the VIH spans into the town of Yate and therefore no longer presents as a green, undeveloped hillside. The Wickwar Ridge forms a distinctive landscape feature in views and is emphasised by the surrounding lower-lying vale landscape to the west.

Figure 3.9: Location of the Wickwar Ridge Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context



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Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS








-  Wickwar Ridge Visually Important Hillside
-  Council boundary
-  Neighbouring local authority
-  Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
-  LCA 5: Wickwar Ridge and Vale
-  LCA 8: Yate Vale
-  Photograph location

Figure 3.10: Detailed map of the Wickwar Ridge Visually Important Hillside

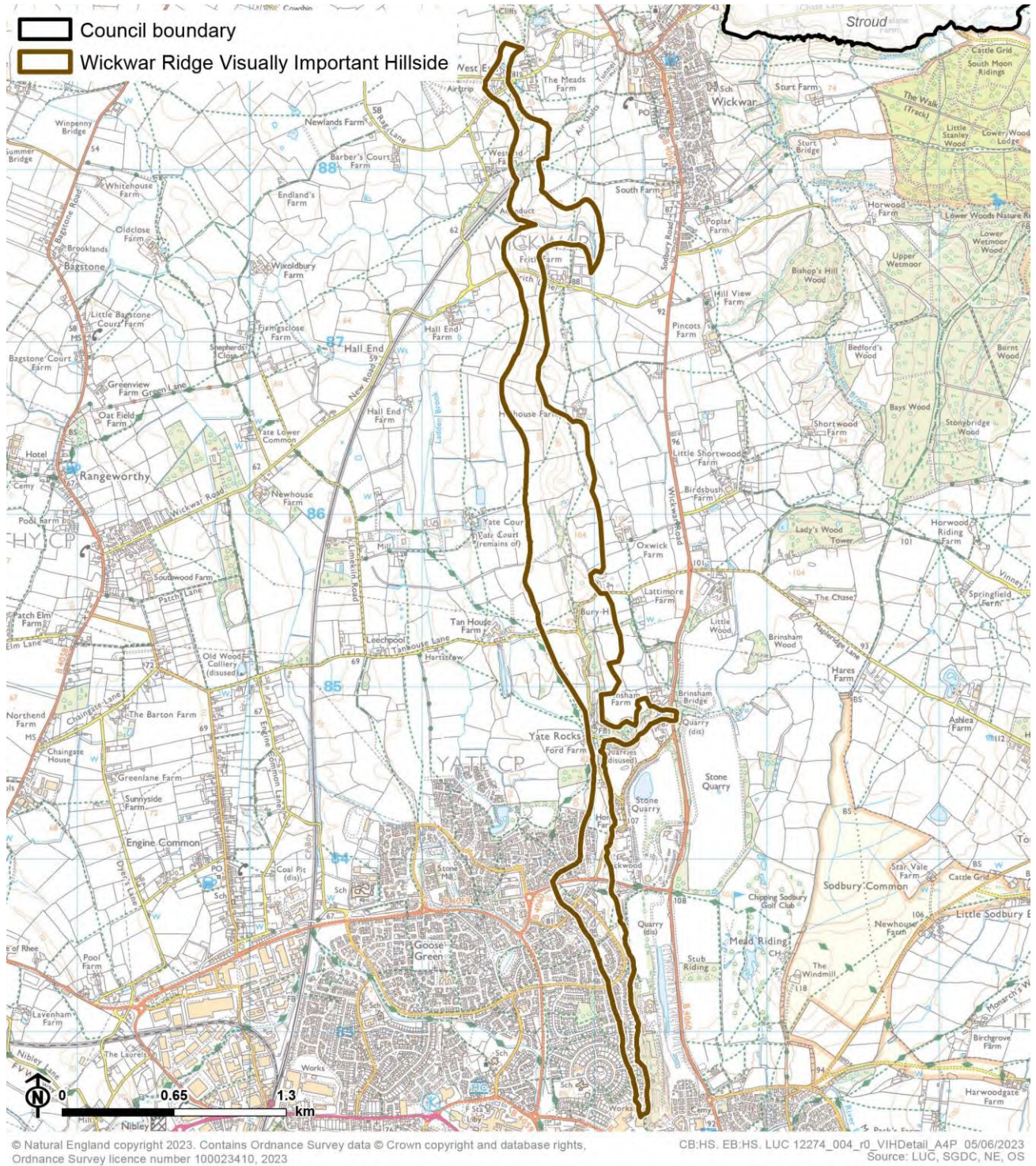


Figure 3.11: View of the Wickwar Ridge from Tanhouse Lane



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- The Wickwar Ridge VIH is a readily identifiable landform feature on OS mapping as close contours indicate sloping hillsides with a westerly aspect (descending from around 100m to 75m). This is clear when seen in context to the adjacent vale landscape to the west (where contours are at much larger intervals). Small stream valley insertions are evident in the north and centre of the VIH, indicated on OS mapping by steep contours that elongate along an east-west axis (perpendicular to the VIH) with streams marked along the lowest point of elevation.
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity as noted in the following publications:
 - LCA 5: Wickwar Ridge and Vale states that the *“The Wickwar Ridge forms a low ridgeline backdrop in views from the adjacent Yate Vale (LCA 8) and that “panoramic views of the Yate Vale, the Tytherington Ridge, the Severn Ridges and the hills of South Wales are afforded from the Wickwar Ridge”.*
 - LCA 8: Yate Vale notes that the area is *“contained by the prominent Wickwar Ridge which rises above the Ladden valley floor”,* and its southern end forms a *“shallow escarpment at Yate Rocks and Bury Hill, before the gradient slackens to provide the slightly elevated shallow bowl within which Chipping Sodbury is located”.*

Visual prominence

- The Wickwar Ridge VIH is prominent in views as noted in LCA 5: Wickwar Ridge and Vale which states that *“the Wickwar Ridge in the west forms a distinctive landscape feature particularly in views from LCA 8: Yate Vale”* and *“provides expansive westward views across the landscape north of Yate”.* It also notes that *“the rising slopes and crest of Wickwar Ridge also form an*

important visual backdrop to the lower-lying Yate Vale (LCA 8) to the west and that it *"makes an important visual contribution to views from the edge of Yate"*.

- The VIH is visible from several public vantage points and forms a key feature in views across the vale.

Character and value

- The character and appearance of the VIH is partly unspoilt by visual detractors within its northern and central parts, with some small, fragmented blocks of woodland around the central area. However, an existing turbine at Oxwick Farm (46m tip height) is relatively prominent as it lies at the top of the ridge (just outside of the VIH). The southern part of the VIH encroaches into Yate and contains a large number of existing houses, and with substantial housing development likely to increase housing numbers in the future. Additionally, several active and disused quarries are present along the south-easterly boundary.
- The VIH provides the opportunity for expansive westward views with Bristol, Purdown ridge and South Wales, forming distant features.
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by providing containment to the eastern edge of LCA 8: Yate Vale, and providing visual separation between the settlements of Chipping Sodbury and Yate. It also forms a prominent backdrop to the surrounding lower-lying landscape.

Summary

The Wickwar Ridge is categorised as a VIH as it meets all of the criteria to some extent. It is readily identifiable as a landform feature on OS mapping; a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity; prominent in views across the landscape; visible from several public vantage points; its character and appearance is partly unspoilt by visual detractors (although its southern part is

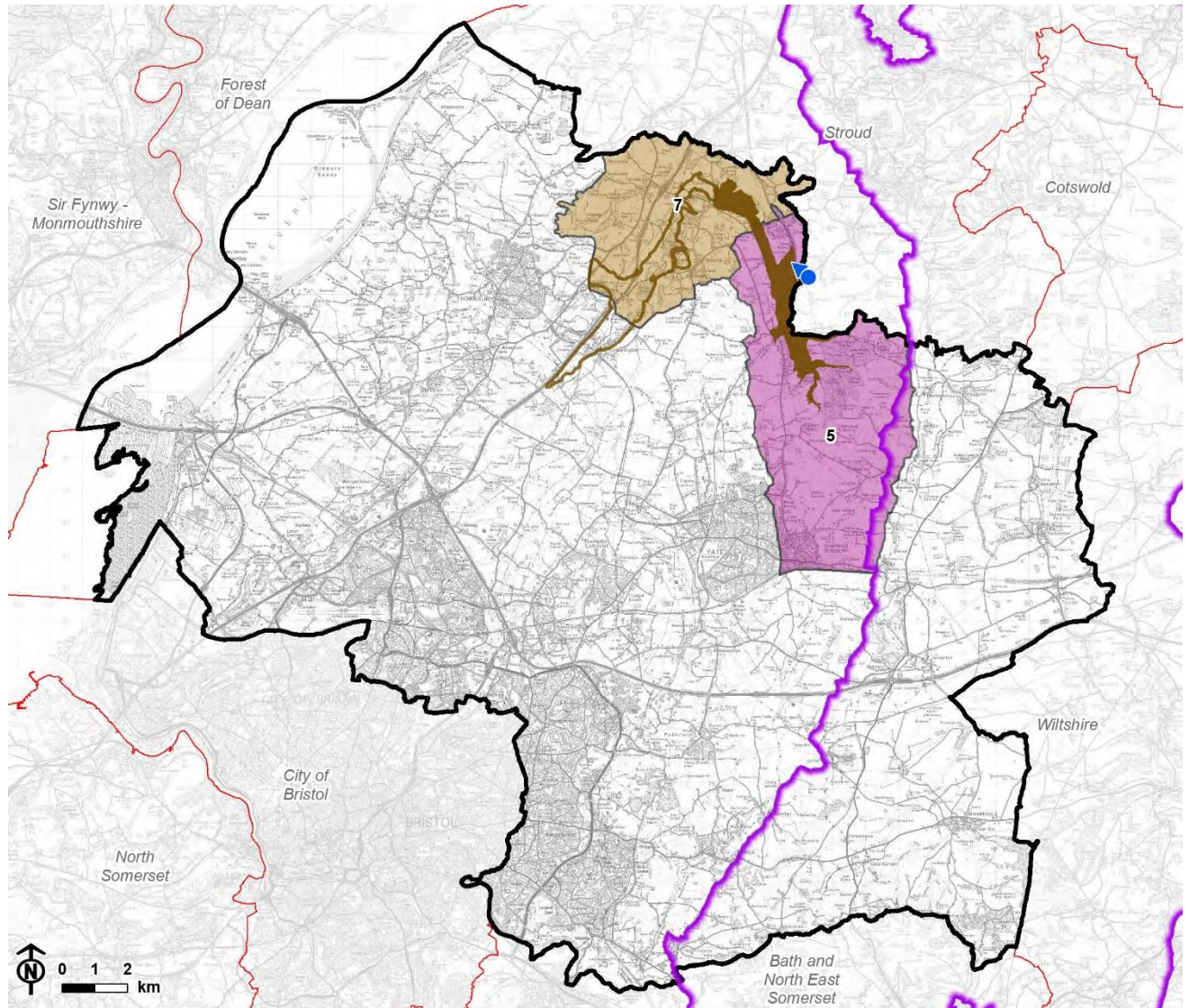
Chapter 3 Analysis of Visually Important Hillsides

influenced by existing housing and future pressure); it provides the opportunity for views across the landscape; and has a role in the landscape by containing a character area, providing separation between settlements and forming a visual backdrop.

Churchend Ridge - including Charfield Hill

The Churchend Ridge VIH comprises 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. The VIH is located along the northern boundary of South Gloucestershire and lies mostly within the Wickwar Ridge and Vale landscape character area (LCA 5), with a small part in the north extending into the Falfield Vale landscape character area (LCA 7), where it adjoins the Wick's/Butcher's Hill and Baden Hill VIH at Tortworth in the north-west. It is visible from the surrounding area due to its exposed setting, and is emphasised by the considerably lower-lying Odland landscape to the west. The western valley side of the Little Avon Valley has a particularly attractive and rural character. The Churchend Ridge VIH forms part of the rural setting of the Wickwar Conservation Area which sits above the Little Avon River.

Figure 3.12: Location of the Churchend Ridge Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context



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Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS









- | | |
|--|--|
|  Churchend Ridge Visually Important Hillside |  Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary |
|  Wicks/Butchers Hill and Baden Hill Visually Important Hillside |  LCA 5: Wickwar Ridge and Vale |
|  Council boundary |  LCA 7: Falfield Vale |
|  Neighbouring local authority |  Photograph location |

Figure 3.13: Detailed map of the Churchend Ridge Visually Important Hillside

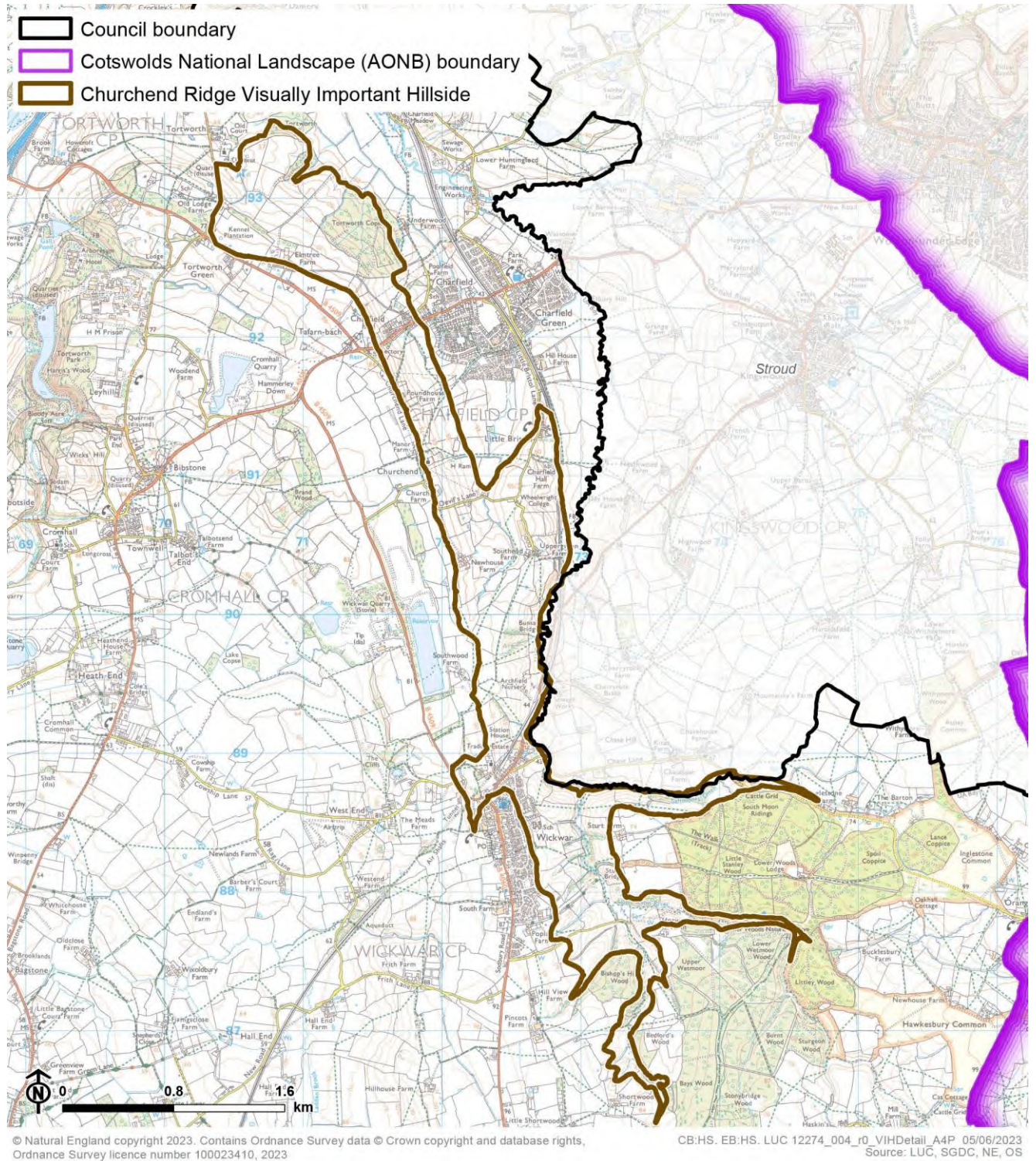


Figure 3.14: View of the Churchend Ridge from Wickwar Road



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- The Churchend Ridge VIH is a readily identifiable landform feature on OS mapping as close contours indicate sloping hillsides with an easterly aspect to the Little Avon River (descending from around 80m to 45m). This is clear when seen in context to the adjacent vale landscape to the west (where contours are at much larger intervals). Contours are particularly narrow in the south of the VIH, where it is incised by the Little Avon River, Bishop's Hill Brook and Saltmoors Ditch, indicating steep intricate valley slopes.
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity, as noted in the publication for LCA 5: Wickwar Ridge and Vale which identifies the distinct topography surrounding the Little Avon River, stating that *“the valley is small-scale and steep-sided with concave lower slopes and convex upper slopes, becoming more open and broader to the north.”*

Visual prominence

- The Churchend Ridge VIH comprises a relatively prominent valley side to the Little Avon River. The area around Lower Woods is noted in LCA 5: Wickwar Ridges and Vale as *“a series of steep, ‘V’-shaped, narrow tributary valleys of the Little Avon”* which become broader near Charfield and are visible from local vantages and upper slopes.
- Built development located on the VIH contributes towards its conspicuousness, as LCA 5: Wickwar Ridges and Vale notes that *“Wickwar is prominent on the upper slopes of the Little Avon River valley, where both building facades and rooflines are clearly visible against the skyline in local views. This is due to the exposed setting, clipped low hedges and very limited tree cover”*. It describes the settlement of Wickwar as stark and intrusive. The Wickwar Conservation Area document [See reference 8] states that *“the*

Brewery building, a significant landmark on Station Road is also highly prominent to the immediate northeast”.

Character and value

- The minor tributary valleys of the Little Avon River, which form part of the VIH in the south-east, are flanked by the distinctive Lower Woods which contributes towards the character of the VIH in this area.
- The VIH contributes to the rural setting of the Wickwar Conservation Area (located on the edge of the VIH), with land falling away from the village to the Little Avon River before rising up again steeply on the other side.
- The character and appearance of the VIH is partly unspoilt by visible detractors as stretches of the hillsides are undeveloped. However, modern development is located upon the VIH including the villages of Wickwar in the south, as well as the villages of Churchend and a small part of Charfield in the north, scattered farmsteads and dwellings. The Cross-Country train line intersects the central area of the VIH.
- Landcover across the VIH is predominantly arable and pasture farmland, punctuated with copses of woodland to the north and the large ‘Lower Woods’ to the south.
- The VIH provides the opportunity for views across the landscape of South Gloucestershire, including from the strategic viewpoint at Churchend (SVP 2), providing a panoramic view north-eastward towards Wotton-under-Edge and the Cotswold Scarp.
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by forming a prominent backdrop to the surrounding lower-lying landscape.

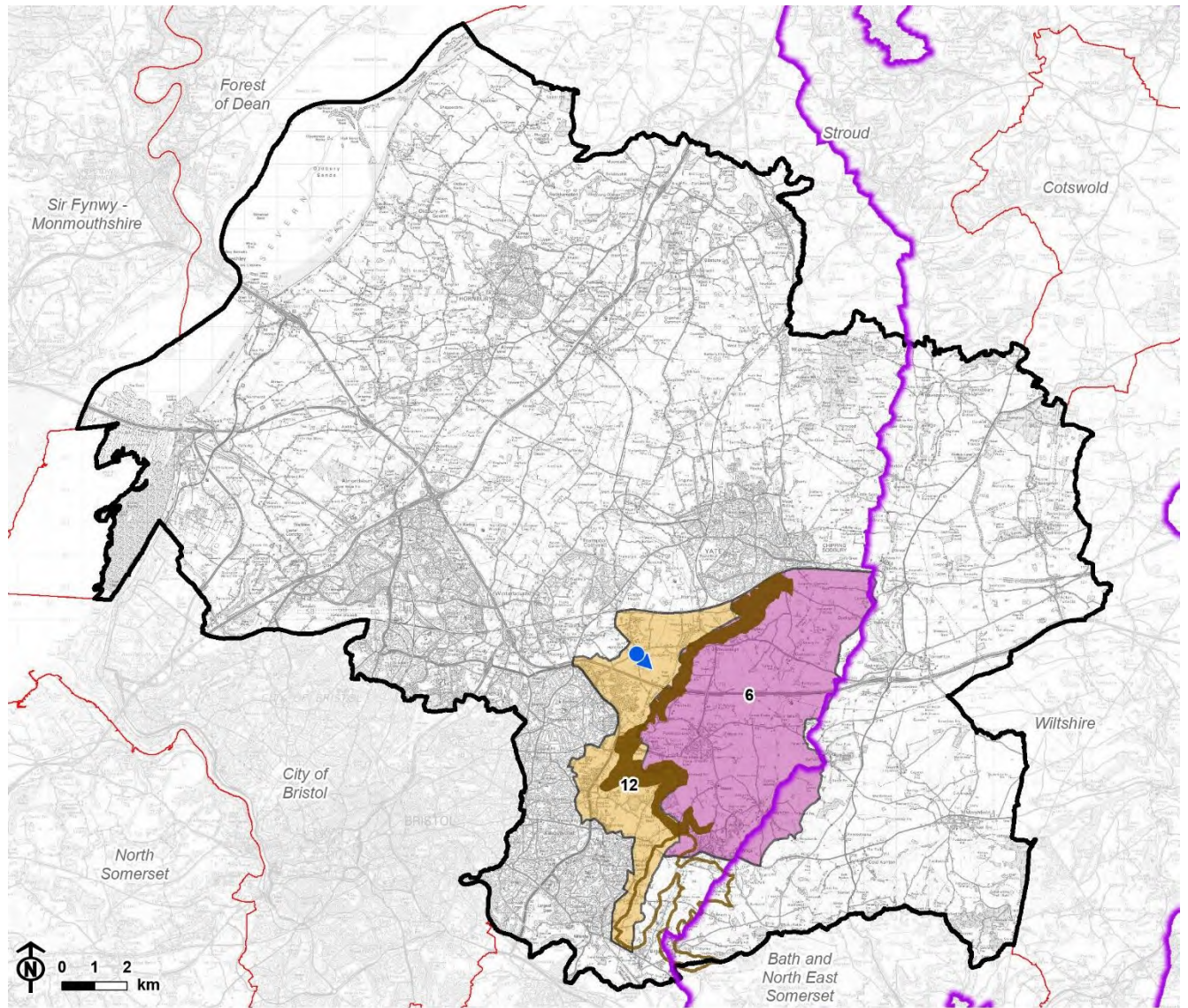
Summary

The Churchend Ridge is categorised as a VIH as it meets most of the criteria to some extent. It is readily identifiable as a landform feature on OS mapping; a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity; has some prominence in views across the landscape; contributes to the setting of a Conservation Area; its character and appearance is partly unspoilt by visual detractors (although influenced by existing settlement); it provides the opportunity for views across the landscape; and has a role in the landscape by forming a visual backdrop.

Pucklechurch Ridge – including Shortwood Hill, Siston Hill, Claypit Hill, Westerleigh Hill, Coxgrove Hill and Holbrook Common

The Pucklechurch Ridge VIH is a distinctive scarp that runs north-south along the eastern fringes of the Bristol conurbation, encompassing a series of hills. It contains a folded landform with occasional, small-scale valley incisions that are fed by springs and tributaries of the Folly Brook. The VIH is located within the centre of South Gloucestershire, where it defines part of the western and eastern boundaries of the Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley (LCA 6) and Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge (LCA 12) landscape character areas respectively. It adjoins the Oldland Ridge VIH in the south at Wick. The Pucklechurch Ridge is a prominent rising landform and skyline feature in comparison to the lower-lying adjacent areas of Westerleigh Vale and Kingswood character areas. Its textured landcover also contributes towards its distinctiveness. The southern part of the Pucklechurch Ridge VIH forms an intrinsic part of the setting to the Siston and Pucklechurch Conservation Areas.

Figure 3.15: Location of the Pucklechurch Ridge Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context

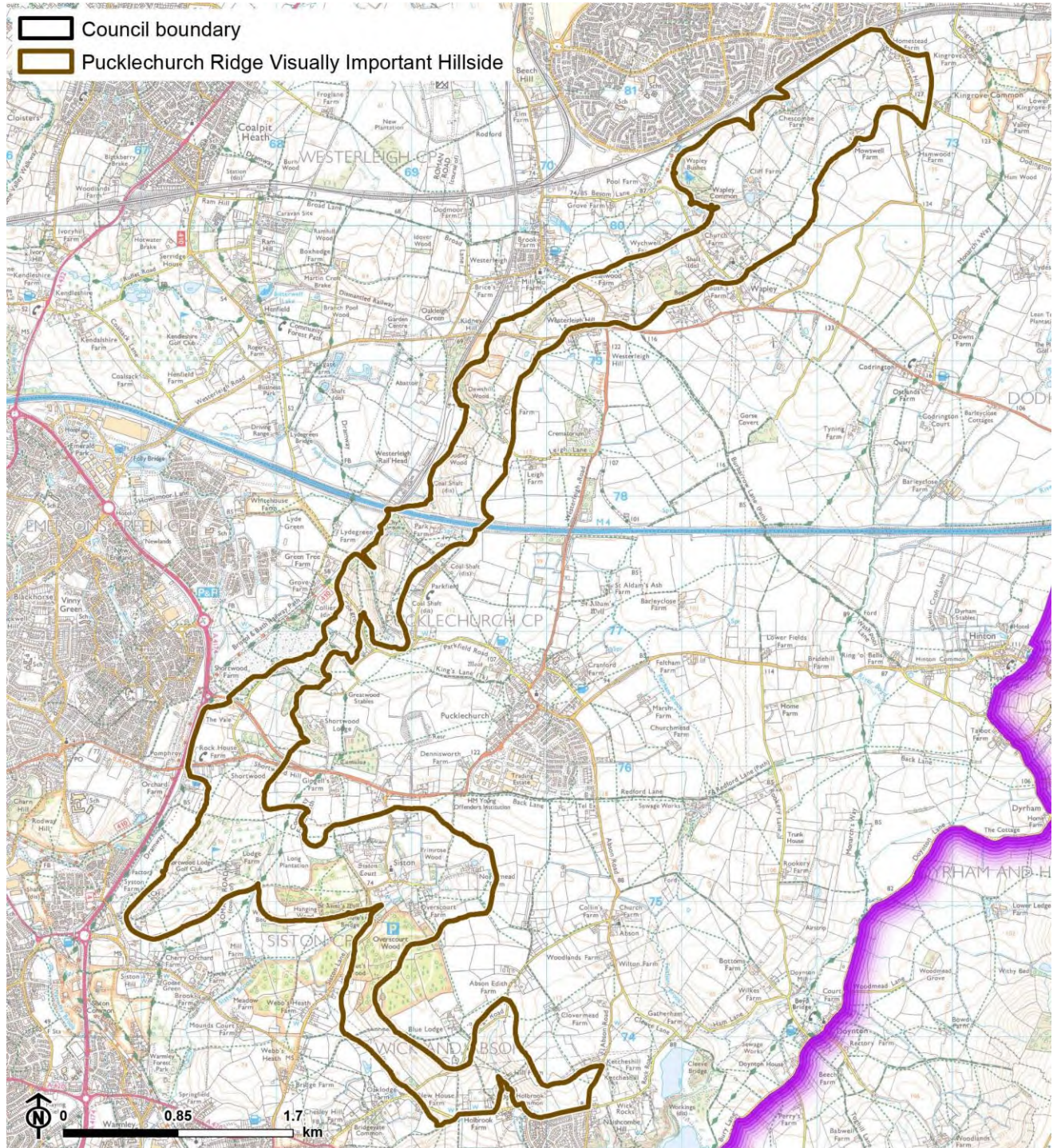


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Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS

- Pucklechurch Ridge Visually Important Hillside
- Oldland Ridge Visually Important Hillside
- Council boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- LCA 6: Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley
- LCA 12: Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge
- Photograph location

Figure 3.16: Detailed map of the Pucklechurch Ridge Visually Important Hillside



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 Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS

Figure 3.17: View of the Pucklechurch Ridge from Westerleigh Road



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- The Pucklechurch Ridge VIH is a readily identifiable landform feature on OS mapping as close contours indicate steeply sloping hillsides with a westerly aspect (descending from around 130m to 80m in the north and around 100m to 65m in the south). This is clear when seen in context of the adjacent vale landscape to the west and plateau landscape to the east (where contours are at much larger intervals). Several small-scale valley insertions are evident throughout the VIH, represented on OS mapping by steep contours that are either rounded or 'v' shaped, indicating both concave and convex intricate valley slopes.
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity as noted in the following publications:
 - LCA 6: Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley states that *“the Pucklechurch Ridge with its distinctive landform and textured land cover, forms a prominent backdrop and skyline to adjacent westerly character areas (LCA 12: Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge and LCA 14: Kingswood).”*
 - The Siston Conservation Area document [See reference 9] states that *“the topography of the landscape contributes significantly to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area”.*
 - The Pucklechurch Conservation Area document [See reference 10] states that *“to the west, the gently rising ground falls away steeply to create the distinctive scarp of the Pucklechurch Ridge that runs north-south along the eastern fringes of the Bristol conurbation”.*

Visual prominence

- The Pucklechurch Ridge VIH is a visually prominent and pronounced feature in the landscape due to the openness and simple undulating nature of the surrounding area, as recognised in LCA 6: Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley which states that *“the Pucklechurch Ridge with its distinctive landform and textured land cover, forms a prominent backdrop and skyline to adjacent westerly character areas (LCA 12: Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge and LCA 14: Kingswood).”*
- The VIH is visible from several public vantage points and forms a key feature in views, including from the Folly Brook valley and the urban edge.
- Two chimneys (which are historic remains of the coal industry) and wooded spoil mounds exist along the scarp’s toe which add texture and form local landmarks, contributing towards the conspicuousness of the VIH.

Character and value

- The VIH contributes to the rural setting of the Siston Conservation Area (located on the VIH within the Siston Brook Valley). The Siston Conservation Area document [See reference 11] notes that *“the sense of enclosure achieved by a combination of landform and planting contributes significantly to the perception of remoteness and tranquillity, which along with the rural and undeveloped landscape is a defining characteristic of the Siston Conservation Area”*. It also notes that the dips and hollows in the landform contribute to the rich variety in the landscape. The VIH also contributes to the setting of the Pucklechurch Conservation Area as the scarp is a notable landscape feature seen in views from this area.
- The character and appearance of the VIH is partly unspoilt by visual detractors. However, the suburb of Emerson’s Green extends along the toe of the Pucklechurch Ridge, along with claypits and coal industry relics. The linear expansion of the village of Westerleigh to the east, comprising modern detached houses, has extended on to the lower slopes of the Pucklechurch Ridge. LCA 6: Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley notes that *“the terraced properties at Parkfield Rank form a distinctive and isolated landmark feature which intrudes upon the scarp face of the Pucklechurch Ridge, which*

otherwise has very few built features". In addition, the M4 cuts through the VIH.

- Landcover across the VIH contributes towards its distinctiveness, as the scarp's textured cover of intermittent woodland (ancient and copses), rough grassland and scrub, coupled with historic industrial relics and scattered farms, is particularly visible and influences the character of the area. It also comprises a patchwork of arable and pastoral fields. Clipped and overgrown hedgerows, with some intermittent hedgerow trees, run along the contours and down the slope, emphasising the profile of the scarp.
- The VIH provides the opportunity for views across the landscape of South Gloucestershire, the Bristol conurbation and towards South Wales, including from the strategic viewpoint along the Community Forest Path near Siston Court (SVP 10), from Westerleigh Hill (SVP 11), and from the edge of Pucklechurch (SVP 27).
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by providing containment to the eastern edge of LCA 12: Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge, and the western edge of LCA 6: Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley. It also forms a prominent backdrop to the surrounding lower-lying landscape.

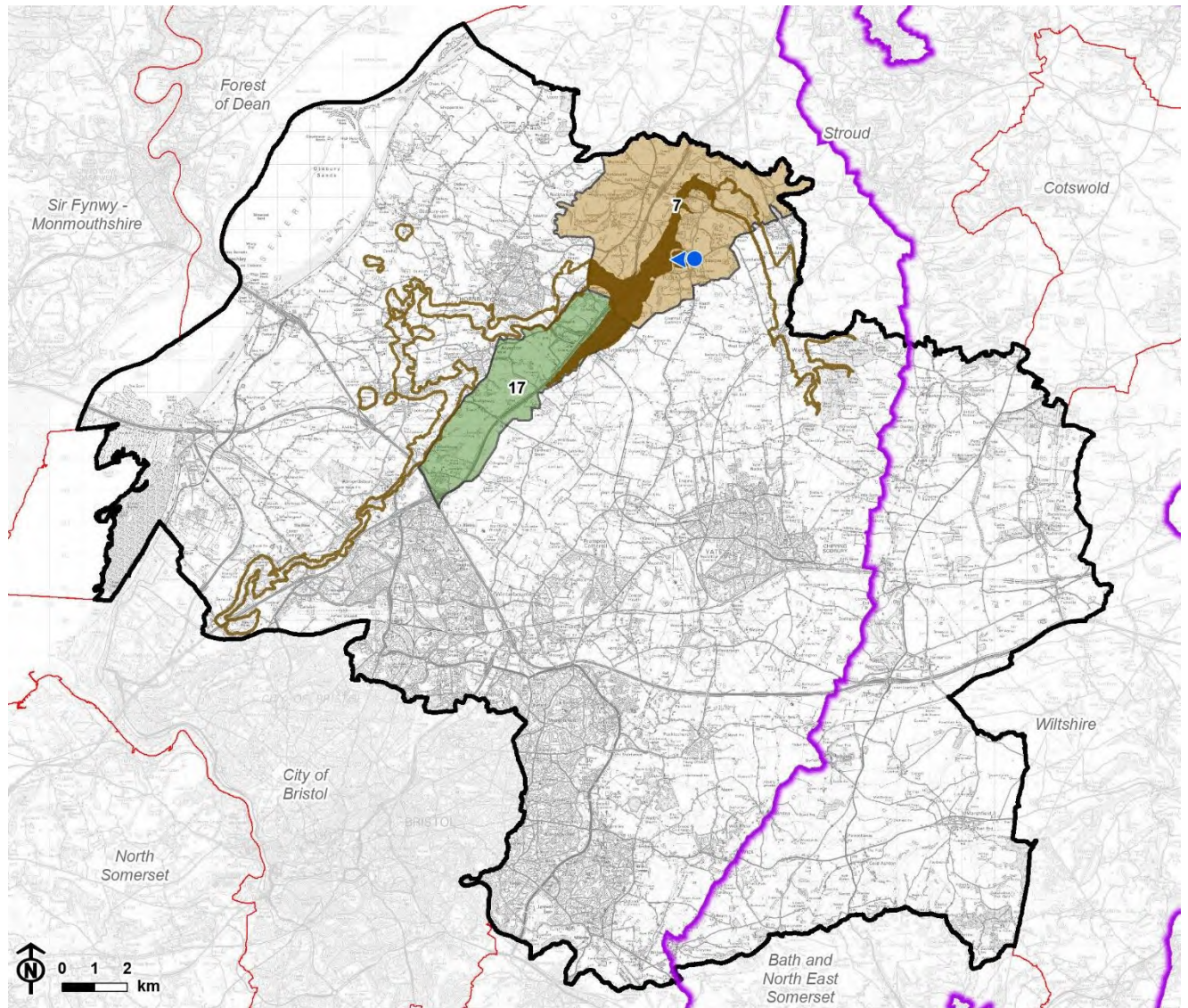
Summary

The Pucklechurch Ridge is categorised as a VIH as it meets all of the criteria to some extent. It is readily identifiable as a landform feature on OS mapping; a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity; prominent in views across the landscape; visible from several public vantage points; contributes to the setting of Conservation Areas; its character and appearance is partly unspoilt by visual detractors (although influenced by existing settlement); it provides the opportunity for views across the landscape; and has a role in the landscape by containing character areas, and forming a visual backdrop.

Wick's / Butcher's Hill and Baden Hill - including Abbots-side Hill

The Wick's Hill / Butcher's Hill and Baden Hill VIH comprises an elevated area, punctuated with three notable hills spanning from Tortworth in the north to Tytherington in the south. Hillsides include Wick's Hill, Baden Hill, and Abbots-side Hill. The VIH is located within the north of South Gloucestershire, where it lies mostly within the Falfield Vale (LCA 7) landscape character area, extending into the Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge (LCA 17) landscape character area in the south. It adjoins the Churchend Ridge VIH at Tortworth in the north-east, and the Severn Ridges VIH in the west at Buckover. Wick's Hill, the largest of the hills in the VIH is distinguishable from the surrounding landscape due to its elevation and pronounced hillsides. Its southern section forms part of the setting of the Tytherington Conservation Area, and its northern section is an intrinsic part of the character of the Tortworth Court RPG (Grade II*).

Figure 3.18: Location of the Wick's / Butcher's Hill and Baden Hill Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context



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Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS










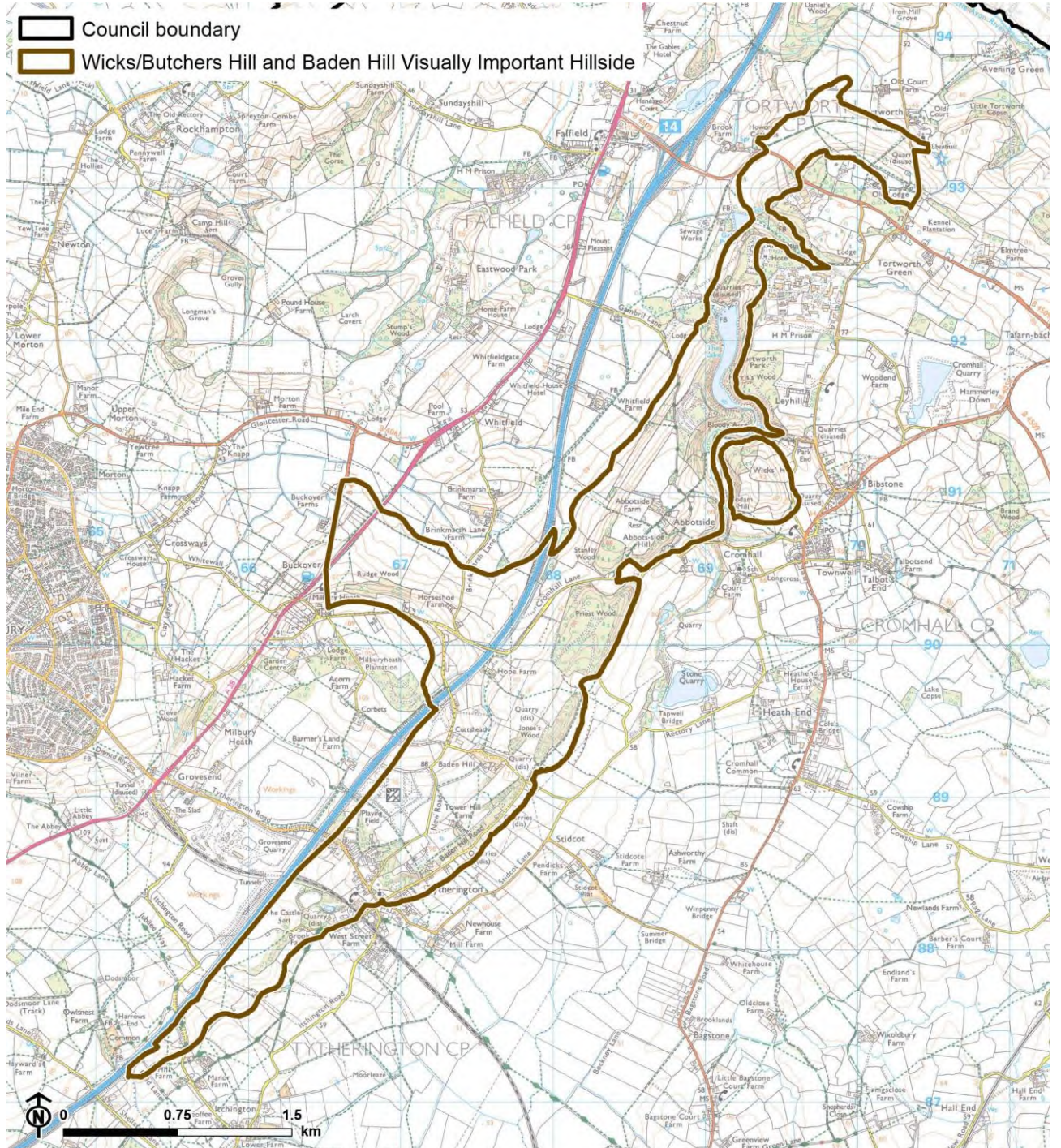
- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
|  | Wicks/Butchers Hill and Baden Hill Visually Important Hillside |  | Neighbouring local authority |
|  | Churchend Ridge Visually Important Hillside |  | Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary |
|  | Severn Ridges Visually Important Hillside |  | LCA 7: Falfield Vale |
|  | Council boundary |  | LCA 17: Rudgeway and Tytherington Ridge |
| | |  | Photograph location |

Figure 3.19: Detailed map of the Wick's / Butcher's Hill and Baden Hill Visually Important Hillside



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CB:HS. EB:HS. LUC 12274_004_r0_VIHDetailed A4P 05/06/2023
Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS

Figure 3.20: View of Wick's / Butcher's Hill from Bibstone



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- Wick's / Butcher's Hill, Baden Hill, and Abbots-side hill are all readily identifiable landform features on OS mapping with contour lines forming concentric circles. The contour lines are close together indicating steep hillsides with both an easterly and westerly aspect (descending from around 90m to 50m). This is clear when seen in context to the adjacent vale landscapes to the east and west (where contours are at larger intervals). A valley insertion from a tributary of the Ladden Brook is evident in the north of the VIH, where the contours are particularly steep (and narrow) with the tributary marked along the lowest point of elevation feeding into a lake at Tortworth Court RPG (Grade II*).
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity as noted in the following publications:
 - LCA 7: Falfield Vale notes the elevation of the hill and its sides, stating that physical processes have formed "*the rounded knoll of Wick's Hill at 92m AOD and the meandering small-scale valley within Tortworth Court Park.*"
 - The Tytherington Conservation Area document [See reference 12] describes the slopes of Baden Hill as an "*impressive escarpment*" providing the village with "*an impressive backdrop of wooded slopes to the north*".

Visual prominence

- Wick's Hill, the largest of the hills in the VIH, is distinguishable from the surrounding landscape due to its elevation and pronounced hillsides as noted in LCA 7: Falfield Vale, which mentions the prominence of Wick's Hill in relation to the dispersed and clustered settlement pattern of the area which is

"generally well-integrated, within the landform, contained by the backdrop of Wick Hill."

- The VIH is visible from several public vantage points with the wooded hillsides forming a prominent backdrop seen within some long-distance views.

Character and value

- The VIH contributes to the setting of the Tytherington Conservation Area (which is located on the VIH in the south), as Baden Hill forms a backdrop to the area.
- The landform of the VIH in the north contributes to the character of the Tortworth Court RPG (Grade II*), which is located on a ridge overlooking the Severn Vale to the west.
- The character and appearance of the VIH is largely unspoilt by visual detractors as the hillsides are mostly undeveloped with modern development limited to linear settlement extending from Tytherington, scattered farmsteads and two solar farms (and a telecoms mast) in the close vicinity to Baden Hill, which can be seen from adjacent roads and the M5 motorway which intersects the westerly part of the VIH.
- Landcover across the VIH is a mix of pastoral and arable fields with regular boundaries and extensive woodland around Wick's Hill, Baden's Hill, and Abbots-side Hill which limits the opportunity for outward views.
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by providing a prominent backdrop to the surrounding lower-lying landscape.

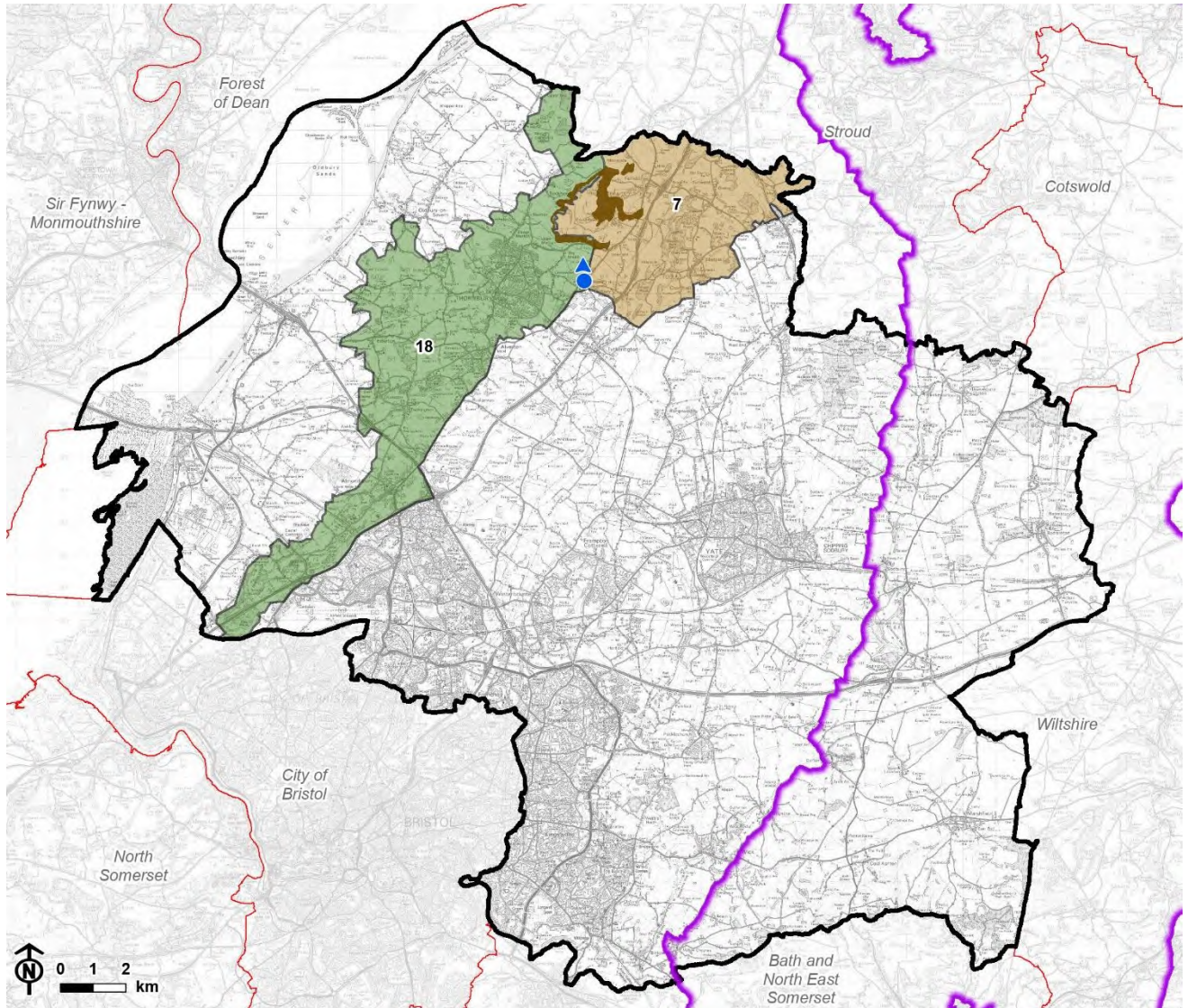
Summary

Wick's / Butcher's Hill and Baden Hill is categorised as a VIH as it meets most of the criteria to some extent. It is readily identifiable as a landform feature on OS mapping; a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity; has some prominence in views across the landscape; contributes to the setting of a Conservation Area and the character of a RPG; its character and appearance are largely unspoilt by visual detractors; and has a role in the landscape by forming a visual backdrop.

Eastwood Park Spur - including Sundays Hill

The Eastwood Park Spur VIH comprises a complex area of ridges and the inclusion of the outlying Sundays Hill in the north-east. The VIH is located in the north-west of South Gloucestershire in between the villages of Rockhampton and Falfield, where it serves as a buffer between Rockhampton and the M5. It is located mostly within the Falfield Vale (LCA 7) landscape character area, with the western 'leg' straddling the edge of the Severn Ridges (LCA 18) landscape character area. It partly encloses the distinctive bowl landform of the Falfield Vale and its presence in views across the landscape is emphasised by the surrounding lower-lying land to the east and west.

Figure 3.21: Location of the Eastwood Park Spur Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context



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Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS

- Eastwood Park Spur Visually Important Hillside
- Council boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- LCA 7: Falfield Vale
- LCA 18: Severn Ridges
- Photograph location

Figure 3.22: Detailed map of the Eastwood Park Spur Visually Important Hillside

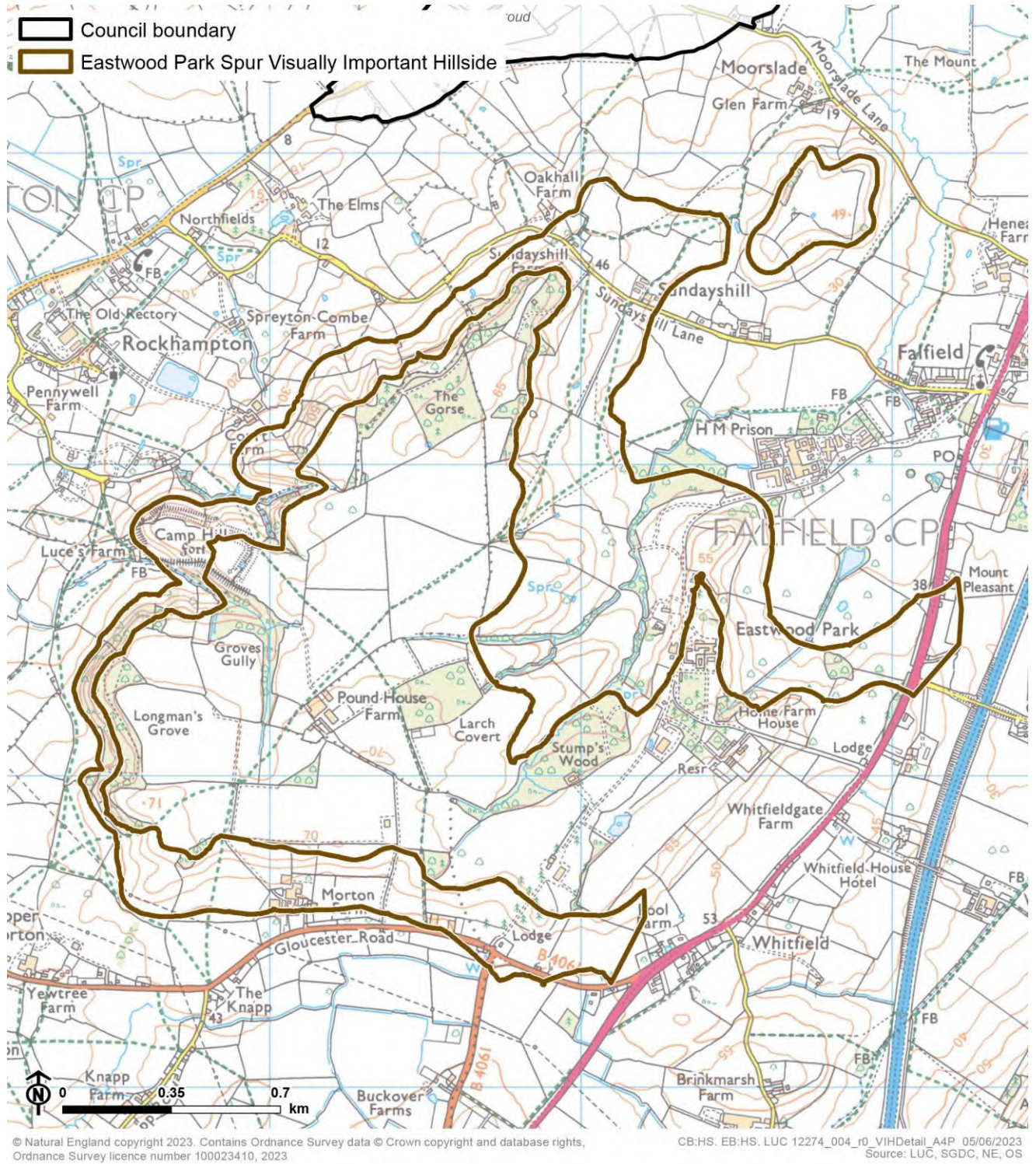


Figure 3.23: View of Easwood Park Spur from Buckover



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- The Eastwood Park Spur VIH is a readily identifiable feature on OS mapping, as a series of long narrow 'tongues' of contour lines drop away from an elevated plateau from a high to low elevation. The relatively steep sides of the spur are indicated by close contour lines (descending from around 65m to 35m). This is clear when seen in context to the adjacent vale landscape to the east and undulating ridge landscape to the west (where contours are at larger intervals).
- Evidence of an Iron Age fort (Camp Hill) is referenced on OS mapping, indicating a high point, where it is positioned on the top of the westerly section of the VIH.
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity as noted in the publication for LCA 7: Falfield Vale, which notes that the VIH comprises a "*defined scarp edge*". It is particularly distinctive in the way it contributes towards the bowl landform of the Falfield Vale.

Visual prominence

- The VIH is visible from some public vantage points although LCA 18: Severn Ridges notes that "*the scarp edge is most prominent in the north, around Hill and Rockhampton*". The southern part of the VIH is visible from the strategic viewpoint at Whitewall Lane, Buckover (SVP 5).
- The areas of woodland located along the VIH form prominent features and LCA 7: Falfield Vale notes that they are characteristic along the scarp skyline, merging with woodland on the scarp face below.

Character and value

- The character and appearance of the Eastwood Park Spur VIH is largely unspoilt by visual detractors. These are mainly limited to an existing wind turbine at Poundhouse Farm (67m tip height) and pylons which given their position towards on the plateau above the VIH, have some visual prominence when seen from the surrounding landscape. The VIH is also influenced by the close proximity of Eastwood Park Prison, located along the lower slopes of the VIH in the east and described in LCA 7: Falfield Vale as a "*large complex*".
- Landcover across the VIH comprises predominantly of medium to large-scale pastoral fields with regular and irregular boundaries. Deciduous woodland also makes up a large proportion of the VIH area which contains outward views, including at Longman's Grove, Groves Gully, and the Gorse.
- The eastern part of the VIH forms part of the Eastwood Park estate, where linear woodland, mature tree stands, and specimen trees contribute towards its distinctive parkland character and provides the backdrop and setting for the stately home at Eastwood Park.
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by providing containment to the north-eastern edge of LCA 18: Severn Ridges and by separating the lower-lying villages of Rockhampton and Falfield.

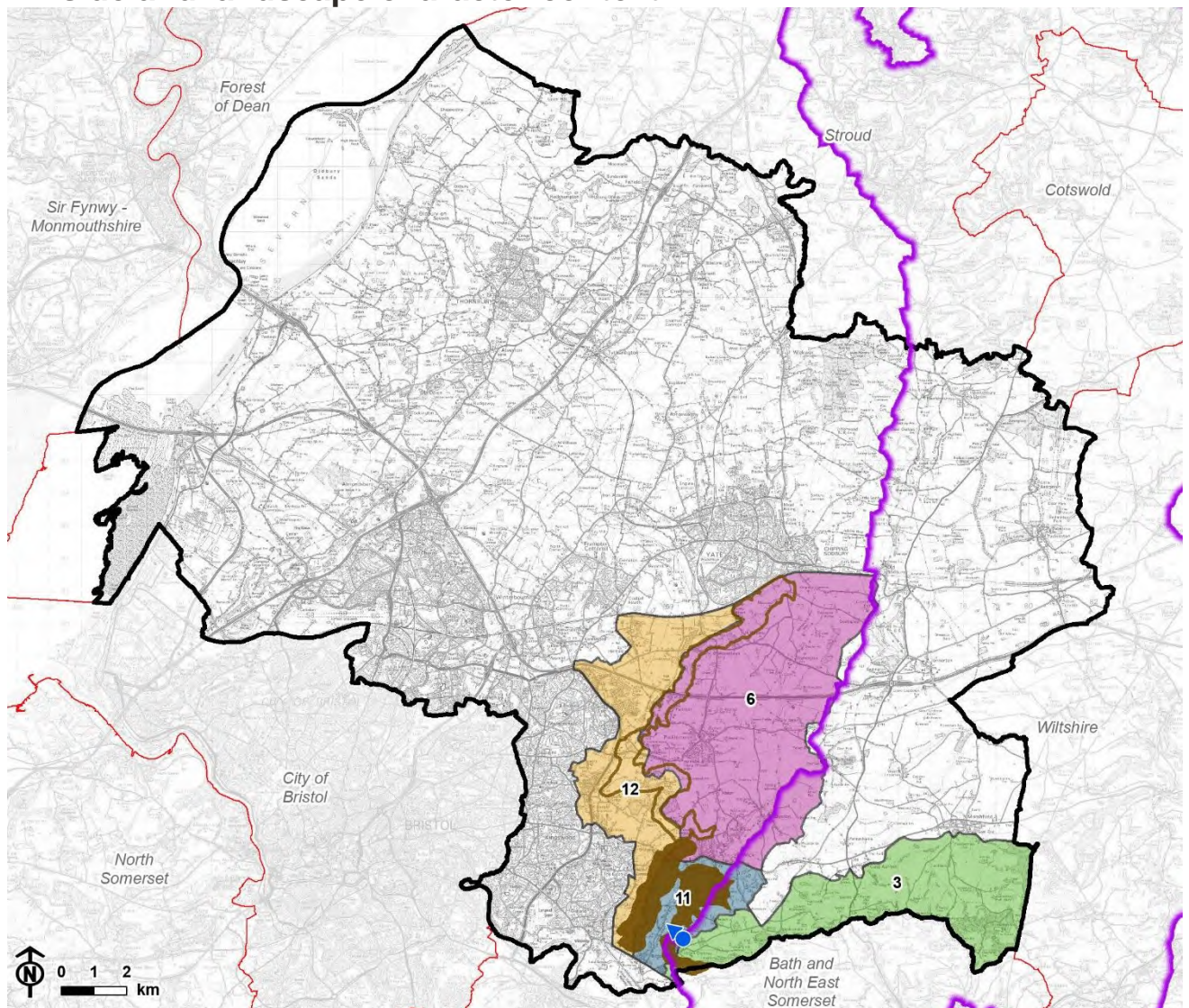
Summary

Eastwood Park Spur is categorised as a VIH as it meets most of the criteria to some extent. It is readily identifiable as a landform feature on OS mapping; a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity; has some prominence in views across the landscape; its character and appearance is largely unspoilt by visual detractors; and has a role in the landscape by containing a character area and providing separation between settlements.

Oldland Ridge - including Beach Hill, Cann Break, Bitton Hill, Barrow Hill, Mount Pleasant and Mill Hill

The Oldland Ridge VIH comprises an area of steep ridges and a series of hills, in the form of two distinctive areas separated by the north-south Golden Valley (River Boyd), which in turn it encloses. It is located along the southern edge of South Gloucestershire and separates the Golden Valley from the urban area of Kingswood to the west. Its eastern edge falls within the boundary of the Cotswold National Landscape (CNL) and is close to the Ashwicke Ridges VIH. It lies mostly within the Golden Valley (LCA 11) landscape character area, straddles the boundary of Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge (LCA 12) landscape character area in the west, and small parts extend into Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley (LCA 6) landscape character area in the north where it also adjoins the Pucklechurch Ridge VIH. The Oldland Ridge forms a visually prominent t horse shoe shaped landform of rising ground with a distinct rural character. The eastern part of the VIH is intrinsic to the setting of the Upton Cheyney Conservation Area, which straddles the steep west-facing valley side of the VIH, and the western part forms a green backdrop to the Bitton Conservation Area.

Figure 3.24: Location of the Oldland Ridge Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context



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Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS

- Oldland Ridge Visually Important Hillside
 - Pucklechurch Ridge Visually Important Hillside
 - Council boundary
 - Neighbouring local authority
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
 - LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges
 - LCA 6: Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley
 - LCA 11: Golden Valley
 - LCA 12: Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge
- Photograph location

Figure 3.25: Detailed map of the Oldland Ridge Visually Important Hillside

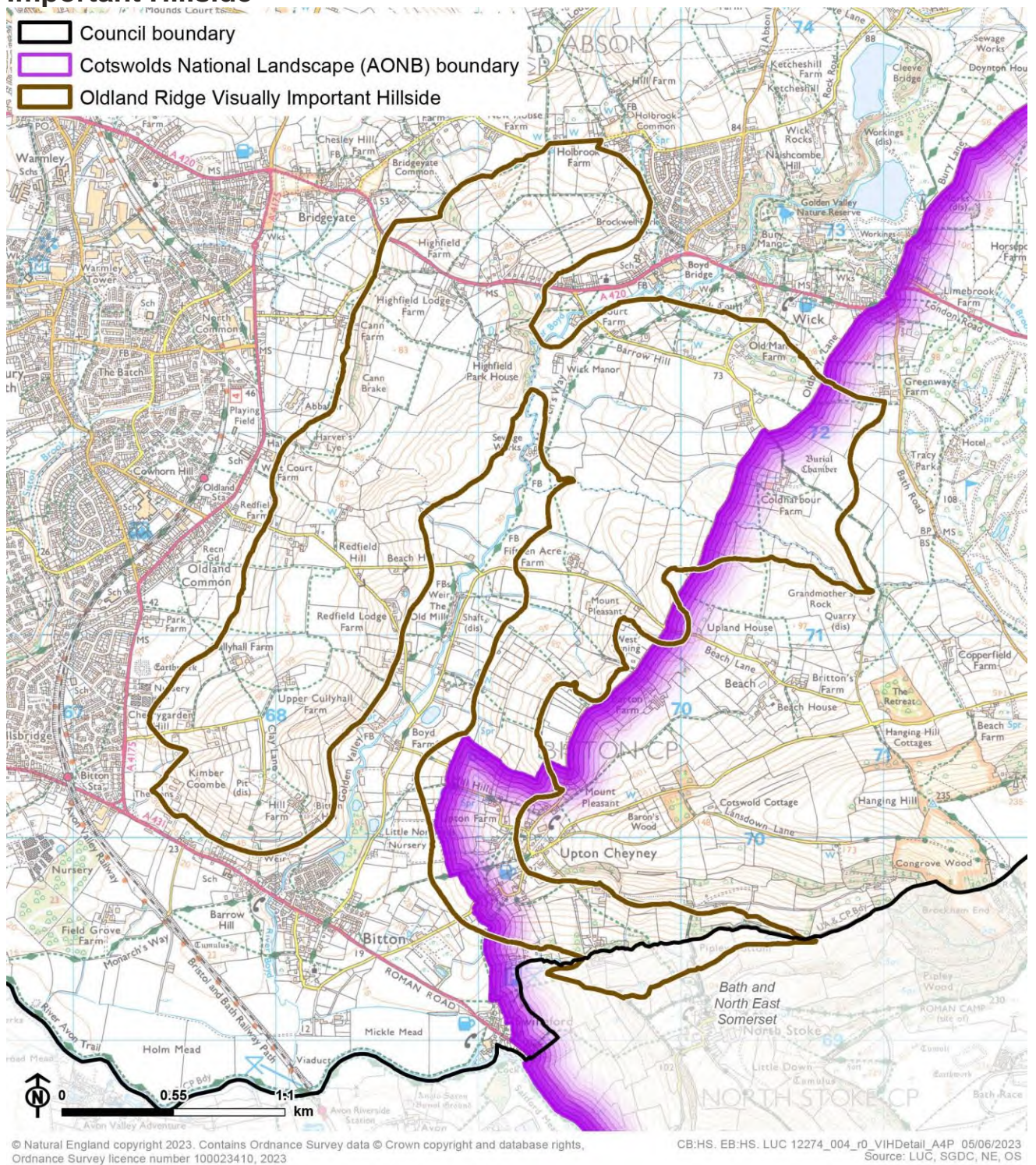


Figure 3.26: View of the Oldland Ridge from Wick Lane



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- The Oldland Ridge VIH is a readily identifiable landform feature on OS mapping, with two distinctive areas separated by the north-south Golden Valley (River Boyd). The western half of the VIH comprises a rounded ridgetop where there is a relatively large gap between contours at the top of the ridge, indicating a linear plateau, and is punctuated by hills marked with concentric circles (or ovals). Close contour lines either side of the ridgetop indicate steep slopes westwards towards the Siston Brook and eastwards towards the Golden Valley (descending from around 90m to 40m). The eastern half of the VIH comprises the middle slopes between the lower Golden Valley and the rising ridgeline of Hanging Hill, with tributary valley insertions, and is identified with close contour lines indicating steep slopes with a westerly aspect that descend from the Ashwicke Ridges VIH in the east towards the Golden Valley (from around 90m to 30m).
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity as noted in the following publications:
 - LCA 11: Golden Valley notes the distinctive upper valley landform within the eastern half of the VIH comprising *"broad, descending spurs with an undulating form"*.
 - LCA 12: Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge is defined along its southern edge by the *"linear and gentle slopes of the Oldland Ridge which rise to the east."*

Visual prominence

- The Oldland Ridge VIH comprises prominent valley sides as noted in LCA 12: Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge which notes that *"the gentle to rolling landscape is contained by the prominent Oldland Ridge."*

- The VIH is noted in LCA 16: Avon Valley as a “*distinctive landform feature*” present in views from the LCA.
- The VIH is visible from several public vantage points and forms a key feature in views from the strategic viewpoints at Hanging Hill (SVP 12), Freezing Hill (SVP18), Hanham Hills (SVP 19b) and the Bristol and Bath Railway Path (SVP 20).

Character and value

- The varied and sloping topography of the VIH contributes to the setting of the Upton Cheyney Conservation Area which is located on the steep slopes of Lansdown Hill, as well as Bitton Conservation Area, which the VIH partly encloses to the north and provides a backdrop to.
- The character and appearance of the VIH is partly unspoilt by visible detractors as stretches of the hillsides are undeveloped. However, LCA 12: Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge notes that the VIH “*to the south has areas where landscape character has been eroded, due to the poor condition of some landscape features and particularly due to the visual prominence of the urban edge, which encroaches upon its lower slopes*”. It also notes the influence of 'horsiculture' within the area having led to the loss or erosion of hedgerows close to the VIH including adjacent to the Oldland Ridge at the settlement edge.
- Landcover across the VIH comprises mixed agriculture, defined by a largely regular field pattern with clipped hedges and occasional fences. Little tree cover exists along the top of the ridge.
- The VIH provides the opportunity for views across the landscape including extensive views westwards over the dense urban development of Bristol and eastwards towards the large-scale landform of the Hanging Hill ridge. LCA 11: Golden Valley states that there are “*extensive views westwards over Bristol and eastwards into the Golden Valley and beyond to the large-scale landform of the Hanging Hill ridge*” from the top of the Oldland Ridge.
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by defining LCA 11: Golden Valley and forming a prominent backdrop to the surrounding lower-lying landscape.

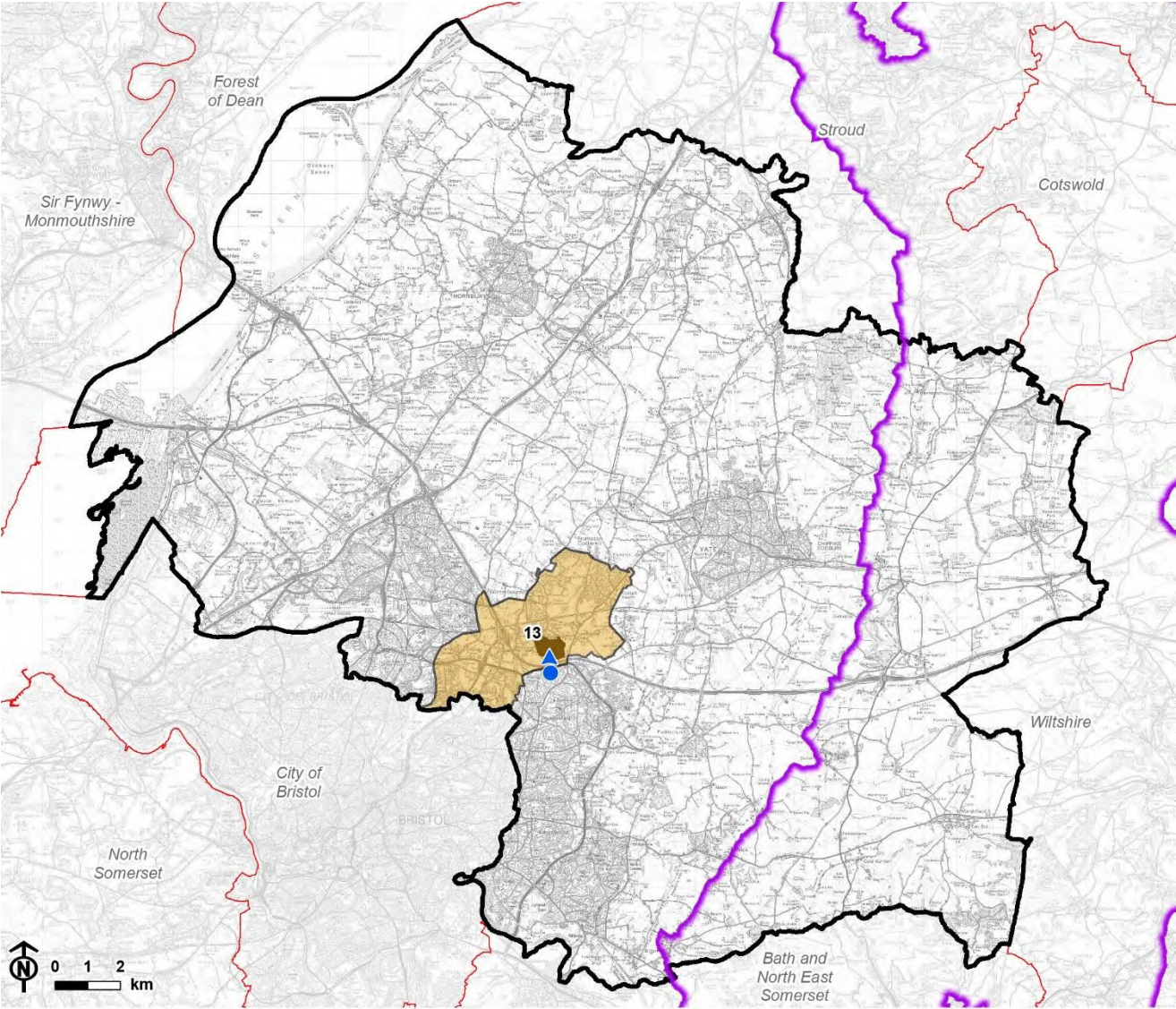
Summary

Oldland Ridge is categorised as a VIH as it meets most of the criteria to some extent. It is readily identifiable as a landform feature on OS mapping; a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity; has some prominence in views across the landscape; visible from several public vantage points; contributes to the setting of Conservation Areas; its character and appearance are partly unspoilt by visual detractors (although is influenced by the existing urban edge); it provides the opportunity for views across the landscape; and has a role in the landscape by defining a character area and forming a visual backdrop.

Bury Hill

The Bury Hill VIH comprises a single hill close to the southern boundary of South Gloucestershire. It is located fully within the Frome Valley (LCA 13) landscape character area, forming an elevated landform feature with the meandering River Frome prescribing the bottom of its north facing slope. . Its western margin includes Bury Hill Camp, a scheduled monument. The relatively steep sides of the VIH combined with the densely wooded area on the top of the VIH, contribute to Bury Hill being a relatively prominent local landscape feature.

Figure 3.27: Location of the Bury Hill Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context



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CB:HS. EB:shayler_h LUC 12274_004_r0_VIH_DDP 05/07/2023
Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS

- Bury Hill Visually Important Hillside
- Council boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- LCA 13: Frome Valley
- Photograph location

Figure 3.28: Detailed map of the Bury Hill Visually Important Hillside

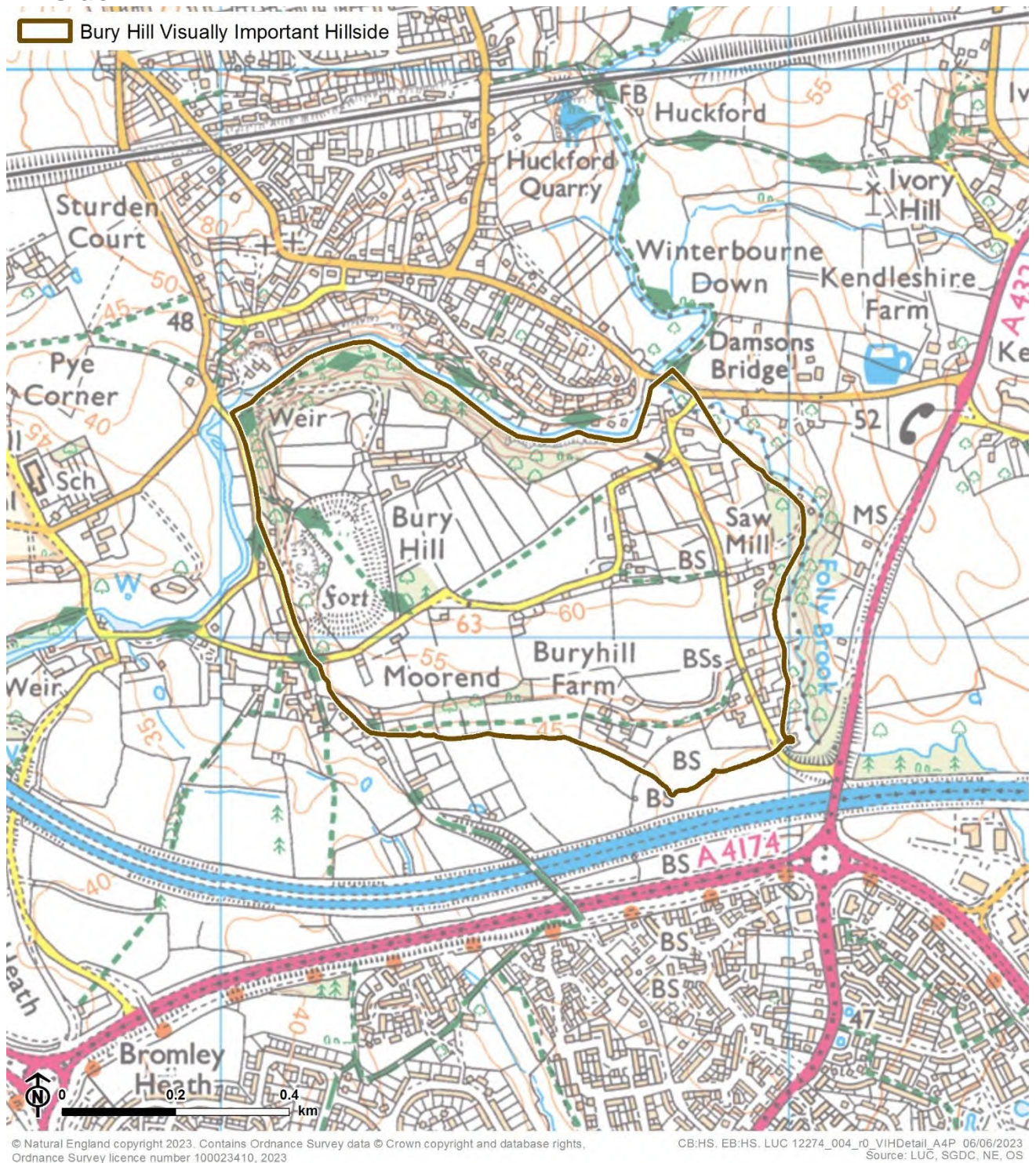


Figure 3.29: View of Bury Hill from M4 overbridge by Emersons Green (Bristol)



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- The Bury Hill VIH is a readily identifiable landform feature on OS mapping, with contour lines forming concentric circles (or ovals), with the smallest circle in diameter representing the hilltop. The contour lines are relatively close together indicating steep hillsides in all directions from the top of the hill (descending from around 63m to 40m). Valley insertions from the River Frome in the north and west, and the Folly Brook in the east are evident, where the contours are particularly steep (and narrow).
- Evidence of an Iron Age fort (Bury Hill Camp) covers a large area of the VIH and is marked on OS mapping, indicating a high point, where it is positioned on the western side of the hilltop.
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity as noted in the publication for LCA 13: Frome Valley, which notes that “*the River Frome is contained within a small narrow gorge and the steep sided slopes of Bury Hill.*”

Visual prominence

- The VIH is visible from local public vantage points and provides a “*wooded backdrop*” as noted in the publication for LCA 13: Frome Valley.

N.B The photograph at **Figure 3.29: View of Bury Hill from M4 overbridge by Emersons Green (Bristol)** has been taken from an elevated location but the profile of the hillside varies in prominence as you move through the landscape.

Character and value

- LCA 13: Frome Valley mentions that *“around Bury Hill Camp...the combination of diverse landform, woodland and complex mix of small settlements, creates a distinctive, small-scale and intimate landscape that helps to reduce the impact of the motorway infrastructure.”*
- The character and appearance of the VIH is largely unspoilt by modern development as the hillsides are mostly undeveloped with modern development limited to a few scattered houses and a farmstead on the top of the hill and a cluster of modern houses which slightly encroach onto the bottom slopes of the VIH along Church Lane to the south.
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by providing a wooded backdrop to the surrounding area.

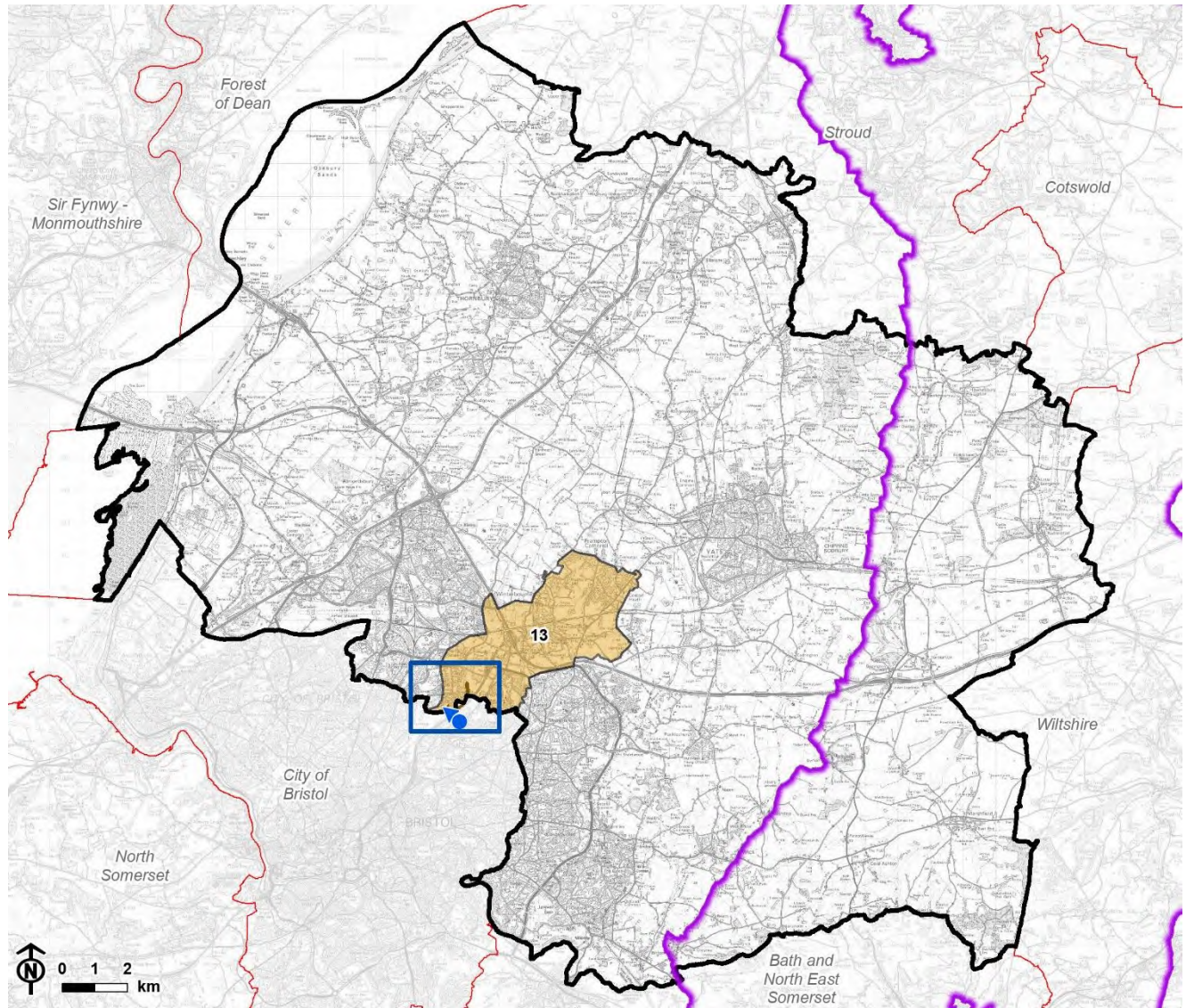
Summary

Bury Hill is categorised as a VIH as it meets most of the criteria to some extent. It is readily identifiable as a landform feature on OS mapping; a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity; visible from local public vantage points; its character and appearance are largely unspoilt by visual detractors; and has a role in the landscape by forming a visual backdrop.

Sims' Hill

The Sims' Hill VIH comprises a short, narrow, steep scarp slope. It is located along the southern edge of South Gloucestershire near Frenchay, and lies fully within the Frome Valley (LCA 13) landscape character area. The boundaries of the VIH are defined in part by the modern developments of the M32 to the south and east, and a housing development on the edge of Stoke Gifford to the north and west. It forms part of a distinctive wooded ridge and its southern part encompasses the steep embankments of the listed historic stately house, Dower House (Grade II*), and Stoke Park RPG (Grade II), which acts as a landmark and gateway feature for those travelling along the M32 motorway into and out from Bristol.

Figure 3.30: Location of the Sims' Hill Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context



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Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS






-  Sims Hill Visually Important Hillside
-  Photograph location
-  Council boundary
-  Neighbouring local authority
-  Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
-  LCA 13: Frome Valley



Figure 3.31: Detailed map of the Sims' Hill Visually Important Hillside

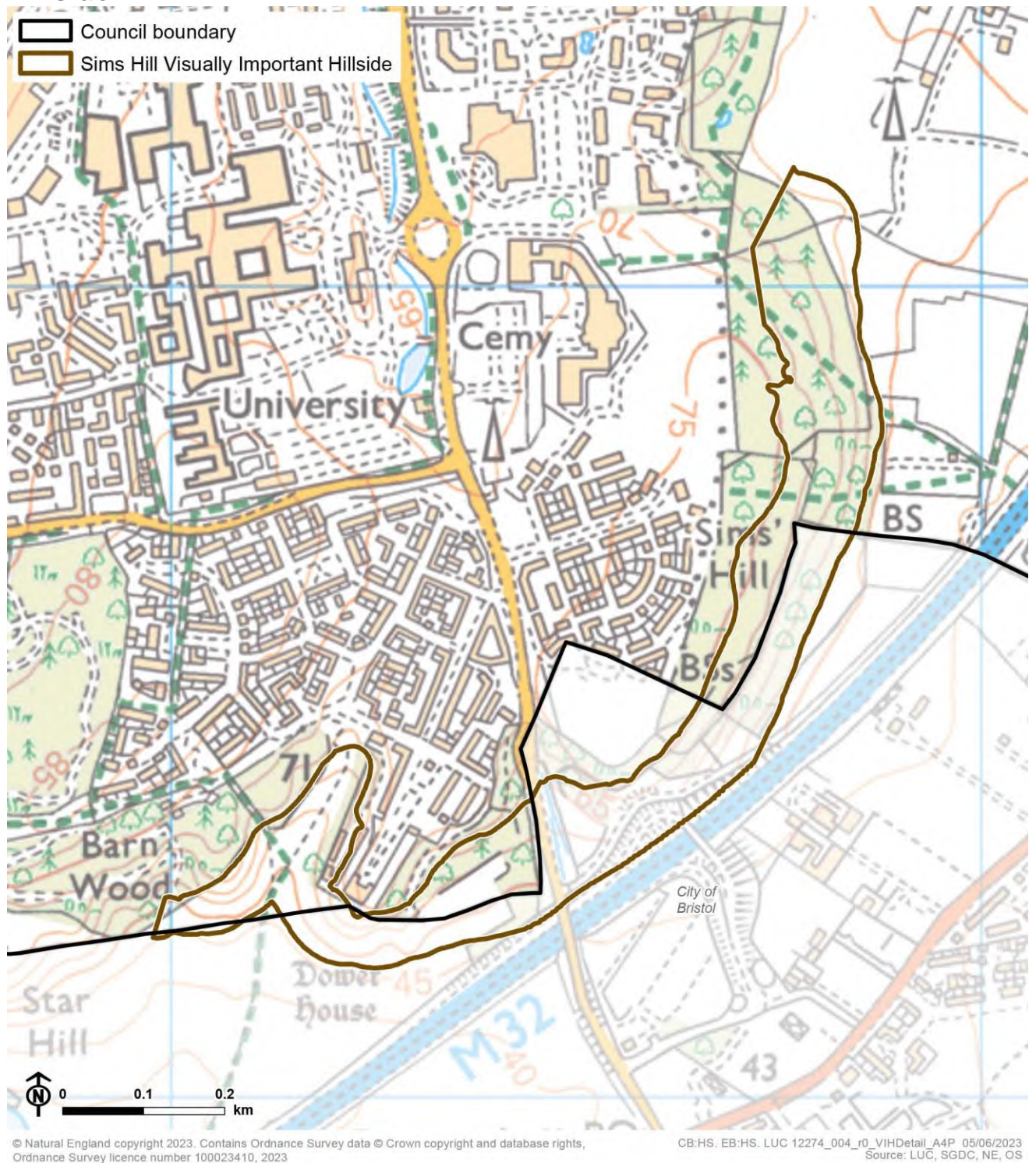


Figure 3.32: View of Sims' Hill from Broomhill (Bristol)



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- The Sims' Hill VIH is a readily identifiable landform feature on OS mapping with close contour lines indicating a steep hillside with an easterly aspect (descending from around 75m to 50m). This is clear when seen in context to the adjacent larger vale landscape to the east and west (where contours are at larger intervals).
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity as noted in the publication for LCA 13: Frome Valley, which acknowledges the pronounced elevation of the VIH stating that the *“topography generally varies between 30 metres in the valleys to 60 – 70 metres AOD on the ridges, reaching 75 metres AOD at Sims’ Hill”*. Additionally, it identifies the VIH as forming *“a scarp slope within Stoke Park and Sims’ Hill, continuing southwards beyond this character area.”*

Visual prominence

- The Sims’ Hill VIH comprises a prominent scarp slope as mentioned in LCA 13: Frome Valley which notes that *“Sims’ Hill woodland, which forms part of the Stoke Park Registered Park and Garden located along the southern boundary of the LCA, is a distinctive and prominent landscape feature in views from the LCA and wider Bristol area”*.
- The historic Dower House located on the VIH in the south-west, the steep parkland slopes and wooded ridges of Stoke Park contributes towards the conspicuousness of the VIH.
- The VIH is visible from several public vantage points and forms a key feature in views, including from extensive areas of Bristol to the south and the M32. The south-western part of the VIH (including Dower House) forms a key feature in views from the strategic viewpoint at Stoke Park (SVP 24).

Character and value

- A key characteristic of LCA 13: Frome Valley is the woodland associated with Stoke Park and Sims' Hill which together form the VIH.
- The landform of the VIH contributes to the character of the Stoke Park RPG (Grade II), which occupies the scarped and indented eastern flank of Purdown with commanding wide views over Kingswood, Bristol and the valley of the River Frome.
- The character and appearance of the VIH is unspoilt by visual detractors, as the southern end forms part of the Grade II listed parkland of Stoke Park, and the northern section is undeveloped. However, modern development is located close to the VIH in the form of the M32 which intersects the parkland of Stoke Park to the south and east, and built development on the edge of Stoke Gifford to the north and west (although contained by woodland of the VIH and screened in views from the east).
- Landcover across the VIH comprises predominantly of woodland, scrub and unimproved grassland.
- The VIH provides the opportunity for views across the landscape of South Gloucestershire and Bristol, including from the strategic viewpoint at Stoke Park (SVP 24).
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by forming a prominent wooded backdrop to the surrounding lower-lying landscape to the south and east.

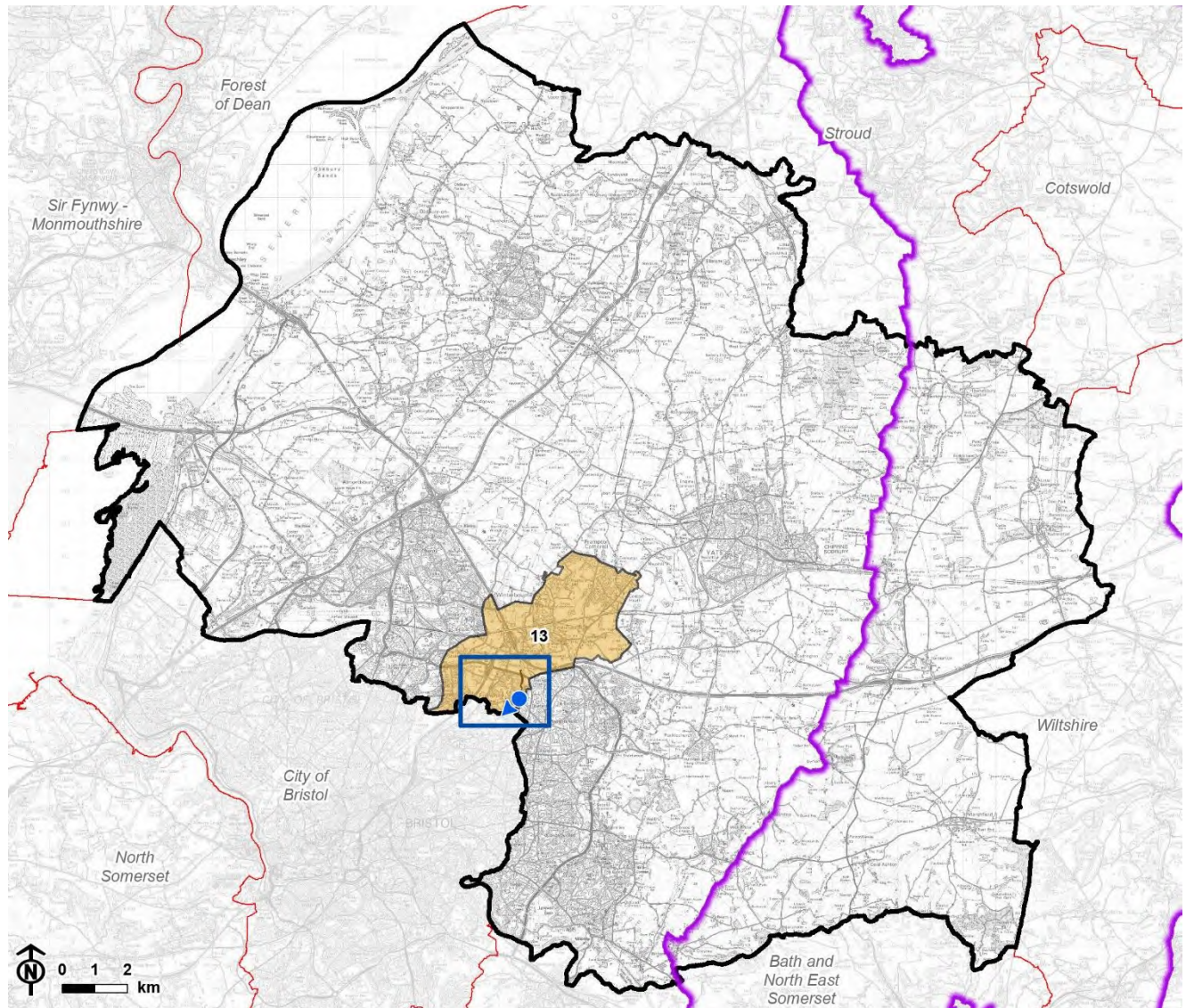
Summary

Sims' Hill is categorised as a VIH as it significantly meets all of the criteria. It is readily identifiable as a landform feature on OS mapping; a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity; prominent in views across the landscape; visible from several public vantage points; has high visual/sensory/perceptual value; contributes to the character of a RPG; its character and appearance are largely unspoilt by visual detractors; it provides the opportunity for views across the landscape; and has a role in the landscape by forming a visual backdrop.

River Frome - steeper valley side







The River Frome VIH comprises the steep western valley side to the River Frome. It is located on the southern edge of the South Gloucestershire boundary and is located within the Frome Valley (LCA 13) landscape character area. The more northerly section of the VIH contributes towards the setting of the river which is confined by the steep wooded valley side, and is associated with views towards and from Frenchay Conservation Area.

Figure 3.33: Location of the River Frome Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context



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CB:HS. EB:shayler_h LUC 12274_004_r0_VIH_DDP_withInsetMap 05/07/20
Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS

-  River Frome Visually Important Hillside
-  Photograph location
-  Council boundary
-  Neighbouring local authority
-  Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
-  LCA 13: Frome Valley

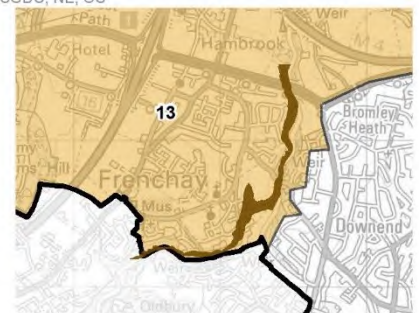


Figure 3.34: Detailed map of the River Frome Visually Important Hillside

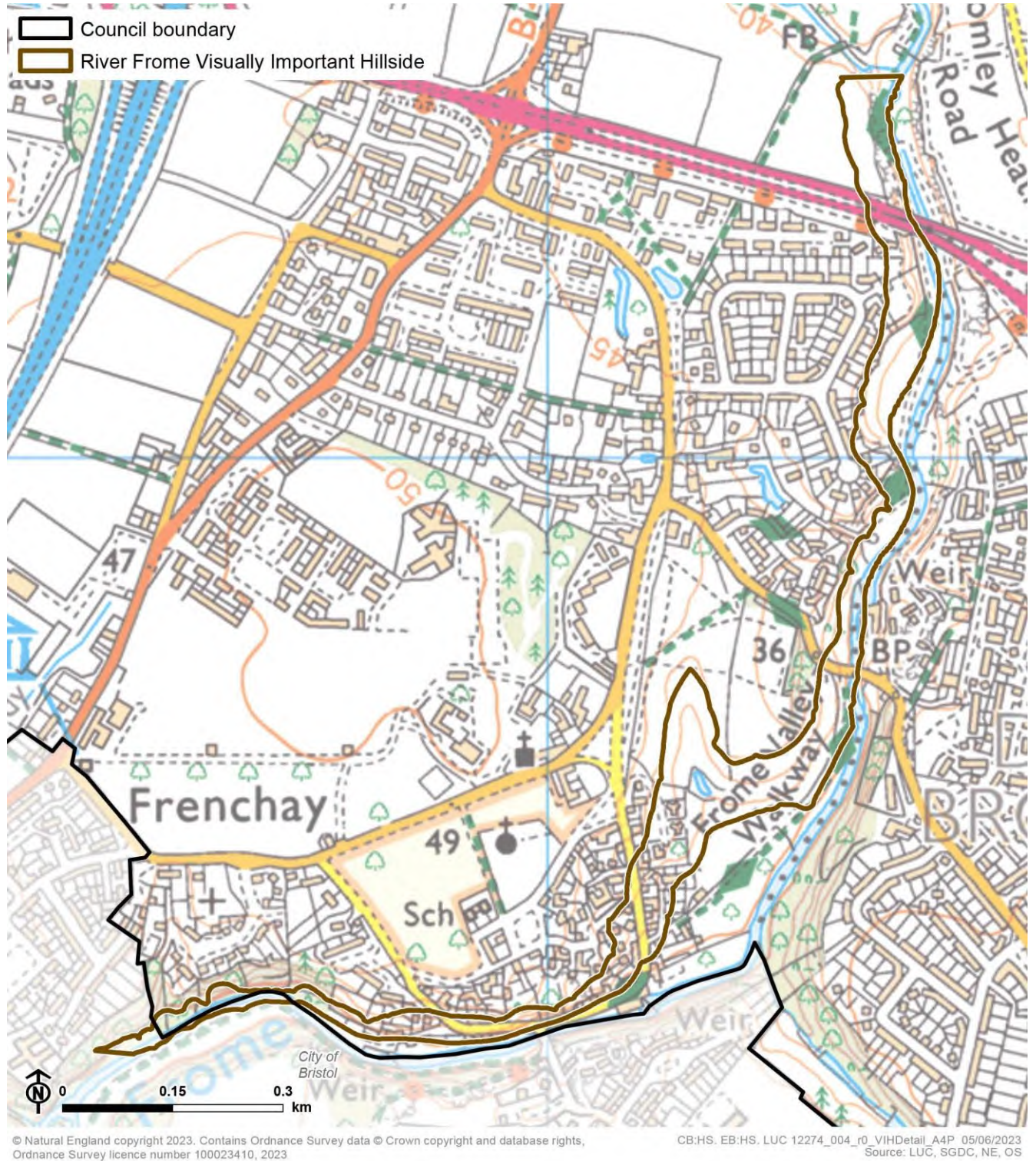


Figure 3.35: View of the River Frome steeper valley side from the Frome Valley Walkway



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- The River Frome VIH is a readily identifiable landform feature on OS mapping as the steep western side of the valley is identified with close contour lines along the River Frome, forming part of the 'v' shaped valley.
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a clear sense of identity as noted in the following publications:
 - LCA 13: Frome Valley notes that *“the river again passes through a small, incised valley and gorge through Frenchay, before flowing south-west, beyond this LCA.”*
 - The Frenchay Conservation Area document [See reference 13] states that *“the river has a dramatic setting with its mainly enclosed character confined by the steep wooded valley sides”*.

Visual prominence

- Due to the incised and wooded nature of the valley, views along the VIH are limited to areas of higher elevation. The Frenchay Conservation Area document mentions that *“Frenchay Bridge and Cleevewood Bridge located high above the river enable good views along the river valley.”*
- The VIH is visible from limited public vantage points including from along the Frome Valley Walkway which runs along the edge of the River Frome.

Character and value

- A key characteristic of the LCA 13: Frome Valley is the *“linear woodland associated with the gorges near Bury Hill and Frenchay and elsewhere along steep riverbanks.”*

Chapter 3 Analysis of Visually Important Hillsides

- The VIH forms part of the Frenchay Conservation Area and contributes to its setting as previously noted.
- The character and appearance of the VIH is largely unspoilt by visual detractors, limited to houses located along the top of the valley sides that overlook the River Frome.

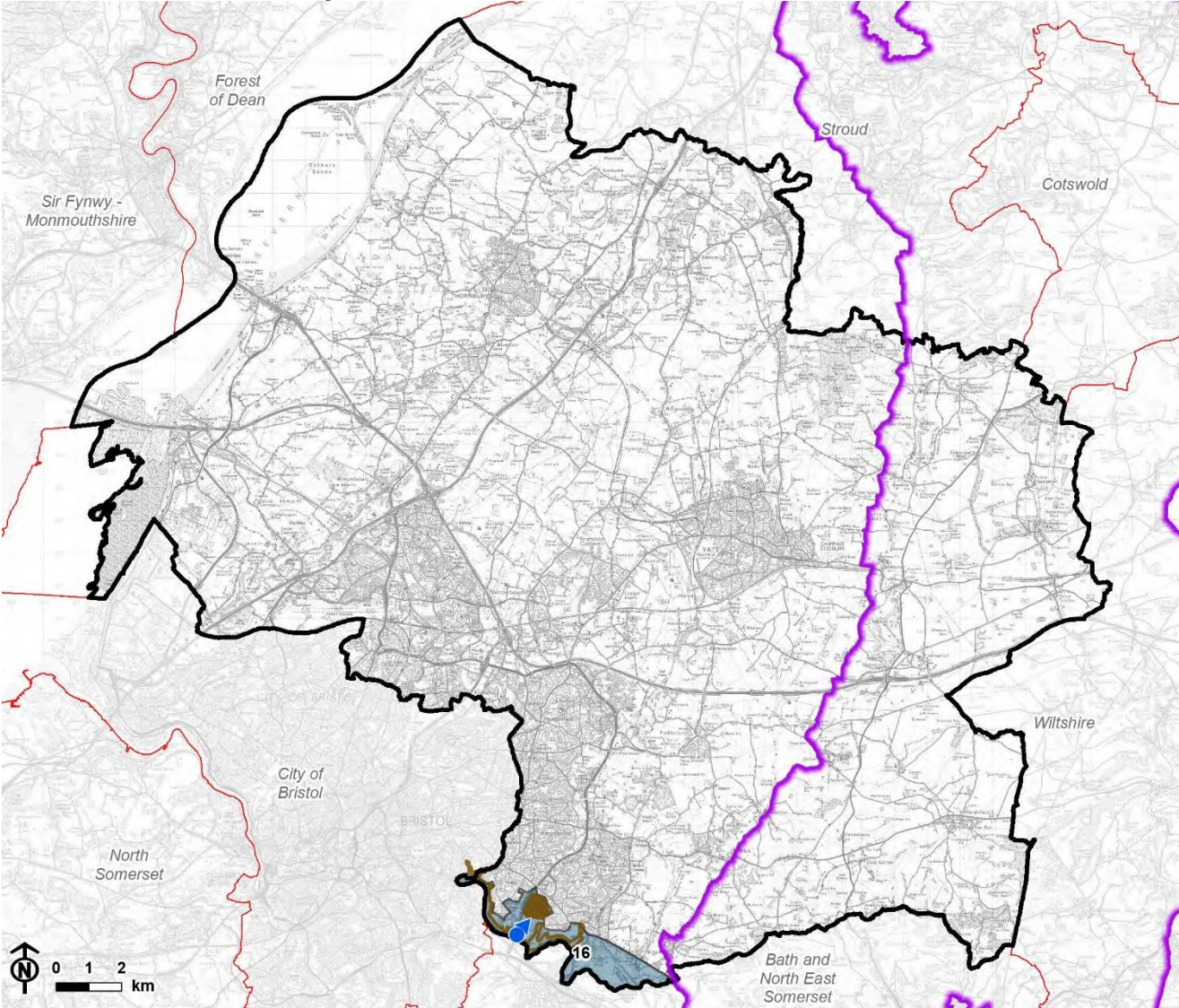
Summary

The steep sloping valley side of the River Frome is categorised as a VIH as it meets most of the criteria to some extent. It is readily identifiable as a landform feature on OS mapping; a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity; has some prominence in local views; contributes to the setting of a Conservation Area; and its character and appearance is largely unspoilt by visual detractors.

Hanham Hills

The Hanham Hills VIH encompasses a steep sided singular hill. It is located along the southern edge of South Gloucestershire and is situated entirely within the Avon Valley (LCA 16) landscape character area, with the northern extent of the LCA defining its boundaries. It adjoins the Avon Valley VIH in the south. The prominent convex landform of the Hanham Hills VIH extends above the River Avon valley, forming a distinctive landform feature in both views towards the urban edge of Hanham and from within the settlement area itself, as well as providing a green backdrop to Hanham Court Conservation Area.

Figure 3.36: Location of the Hanham Hills Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context



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Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS

- Hanham Hills Visually Important Hillside
- River Avon Valley Visually Important Hillside
- Council boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- LCA 16: Avon Valley
- Photograph location

Figure 3.37: Detailed map of the Hanham Hills Visually Important Hillside

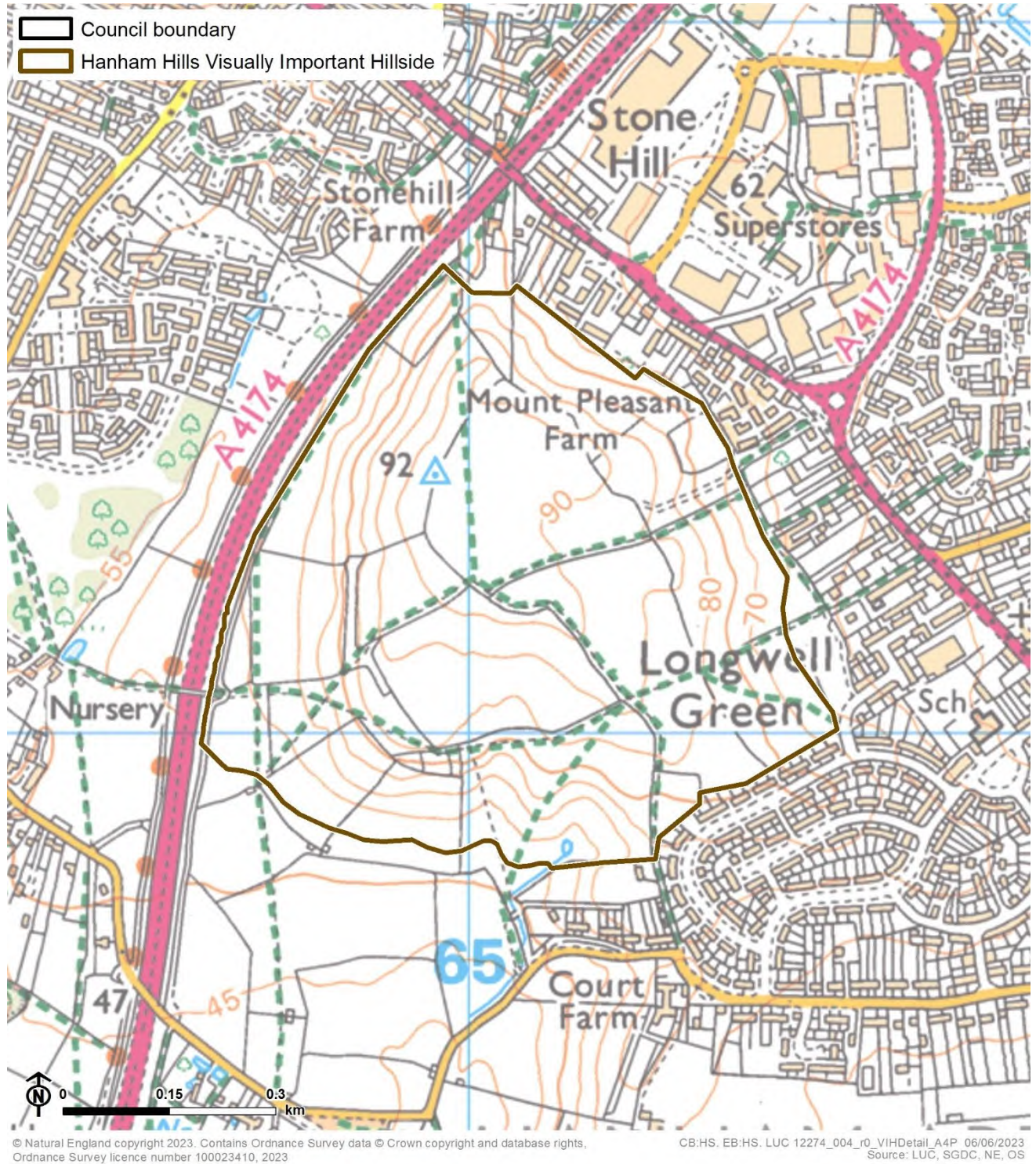


Figure 3.38: View of the Hanham Hills from Hanham Abbots



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- The Hanham Hills VIH is a readily identifiable landform feature on OS mapping with contour lines forming concentric circles (or ovals). The contour lines are close together indicating steep hillsides in all directions from the top of the hill (descending from around 92m to 55m including towards the River Avon to the south and west, and towards the Siston Brook in the east).
- A triangulation pillar indicates the top of the hills and is marked on OS mapping.
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity as noted in the following publications:
 - LCA 16: Avon Valley notes that the “*Distinct hilltop of the Hanham Hills rises above the urban edge, enabling panoramic views over Bristol and to the Cotswold Scarp*”.
 - The Hanham Abbots Conservation Area document [See reference 14] states that the north and centre of the area is “*characterised by the rolling Hanham hills*”.

Visual prominence

- The VIH is a prominent feature in the landscape as noted in LCA 16: Avon Valley which states that “*the Hanham Hills form a prominent rounded landform extending into the urban edge and rising some 30 metres above the adjacent area.*” It also describes the VIH as a “*prominent convex landform, which extends above the River Avon valley and into the surrounding urban edge to the north.*”
- The VIH is visible from several public vantage points and forms a key feature in views, including from extensive areas of Bristol.

Character and value

- The rolling landform of the VIH contributes to the rural setting of the Hanham Abbots Conservation Area, which is located at the foot of the VIH to the south, providing a backdrop in views from the area.
- The character and appearance of the VIH is unspoilt by visual detractors, as landcover across the VIH comprises entirely of agricultural fields and thick hedgerows.
- The VIH provides opportunities for views across the landscape of South Gloucestershire and Bristol, including from the strategic viewpoints at Hanham Hills (SVP 19). LCA 16: Avon Valley notes that "*Extensive views are available towards the Oldland Ridge and Pucklechurch Ridge, the Avon Valley towards the Ashwicke Ridges and the Cotswold Scarp to the east*" and west "*towards the Severn Ridge and Welsh Hills beyond Bristol.*" Dundry Hill is seen in views south-west.
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by forming a prominent backdrop to the surrounding lower-lying landscape and providing separation between the settlements of Hanham and Longwell Green.

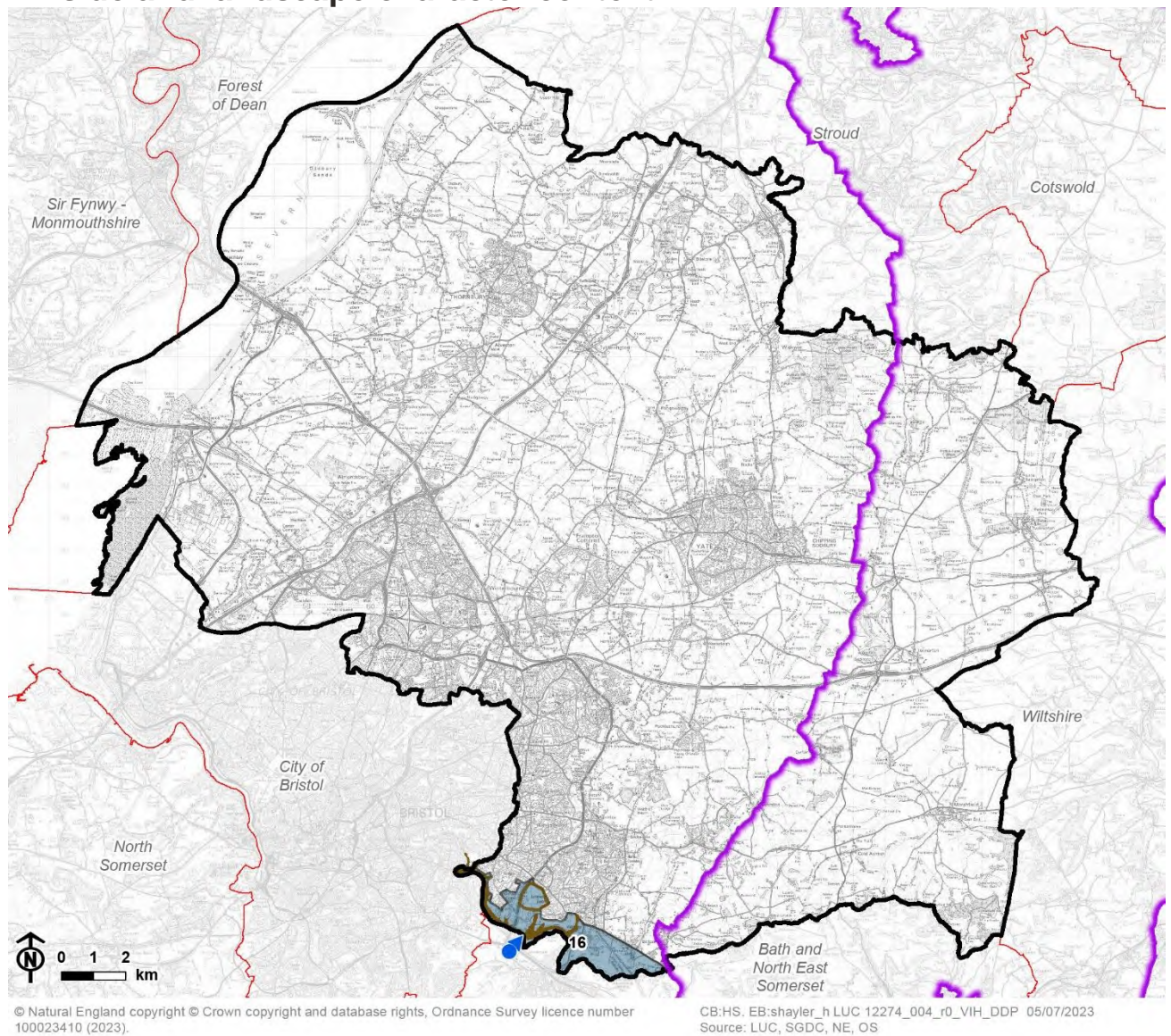
Summary

The Hanham Hills is categorised as a VIH as it meets all of the criteria to some extent. It is readily identifiable as a landform feature on OS mapping; a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity; prominent in views across the landscape; visible from several public vantage points; contributes to the setting of a Conservation Area; its character and appearance is unspoilt by visual detractors; it provides the opportunity for views across the landscape; and has a role in the landscape by providing separation between settlements and forming a visual backdrop.

River Avon - steep northern side

The River Avon VIH comprises a steep northern valley side to the River Avon. It is located on the southern edge of the South Gloucestershire boundary and is located within the Avon Valley (LCA 16) landscape character area. It forms a southerly extension of the Hanham Hills VIH. The VIH contribute towards the setting of the river which is confined by the steep wooded valley sides, and the setting of Hanham Court Conservation Area.

Figure 3.39: Location of the River Avon Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context










-  River Avon Valley Visually Important Hillside
-  Hanham Hills Visually Important Hillside
-  Council boundary
-  Neighbouring local authority
-  Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
-  LCA 16: Avon Valley
-  Photograph location

Figure 3.40: Detailed map of the River Avon Visually Important Hillside

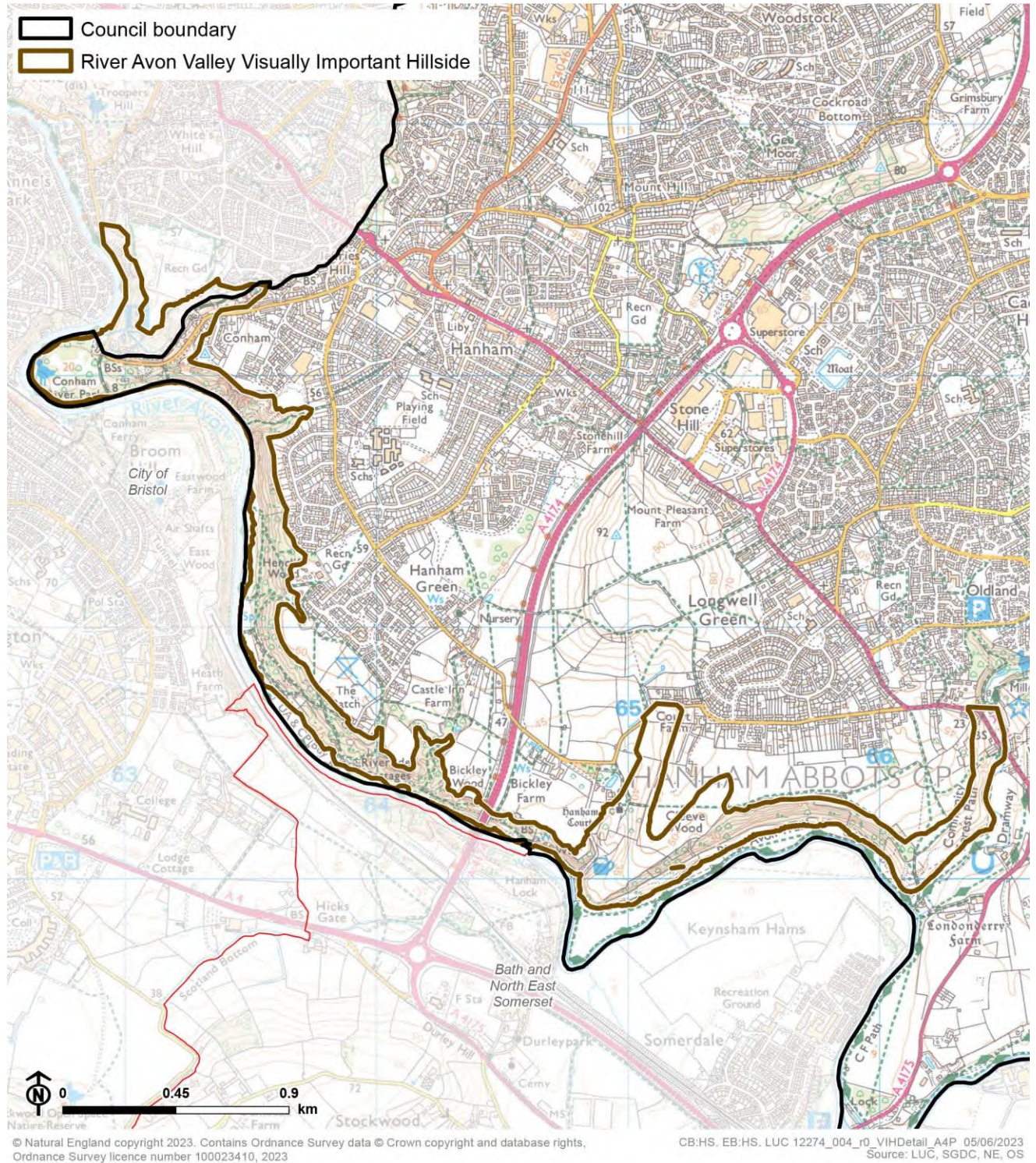


Figure 3.41: View of River Avon, overlooking Hanham Lock



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- The River Avon VIH is a readily identifiable landform feature on OS mapping, as the steep northern side of the valley is identified with close contour lines along the River Avon.
- A triangulation pillar in the western section of the VIH (near Conham) indicates the top of the northern valley side and is marked on OS mapping.
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity as noted in the following publications:
 - LCA 16: Avon Valley notes that *“the valley profile becomes enclosed”* with *“steep sided bluffs rising from the valley floor, with more gentle slopes above”*, and refers to the steep sides of the River Avon valley.
 - The Hanham Abbots Conservation Area document states that the south of the area is *“contained by a backdrop of the steeply wooded slopes of the Avon Valley”*.

Visual prominence

- Due to the incised and wooded nature of the valley, views along the VIH are limited to areas of higher elevation as noted in LCA 16: Avon Valley which states that *“Long views along the valley are possible from the elevated A4174, less so from the A4175 road bridges.”* The LCA also references views from the valley floor, mentioning that *“views are typically more contained from eye level along the valley floor and from slopes, due to the dense woodland cover.”*
- The VIH is visible from limited public vantage points including from along the River Avon Trail which runs along the edge of the River Avon.

Character and value

- A key characteristic of the LCA 16: Avon Valley is *the “steep-sided, densely wooded slopes which enclose the River Avon to the west.”*
- The VIH is partly straddled in its centre by the Hanham Abbots Conservation Area and contributes to the setting of the area. The VIH includes an important historical building group at Hanham Court and Court Farm, which contributes towards the character and value of the area.
- The character and appearance of the VIH is largely unspoilt by visual detractors, limited to roads that cross the valley and small traditional riverside cottages near Conham River Park in the west and at Hanham Lock in the east.
- LCA 16: Avon Valley notes that in relation to the VIH's land cover *“the narrow enclosed river valley to the west includes a combination of linear ancient and semi-natural woodland, clipped hedges, and bands of mature deciduous trees, creating a textured but simple enclosed landscape, which emphasises the sinuous form of the River Avon”.*
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by partly defining LCA 16: Avon Valley.

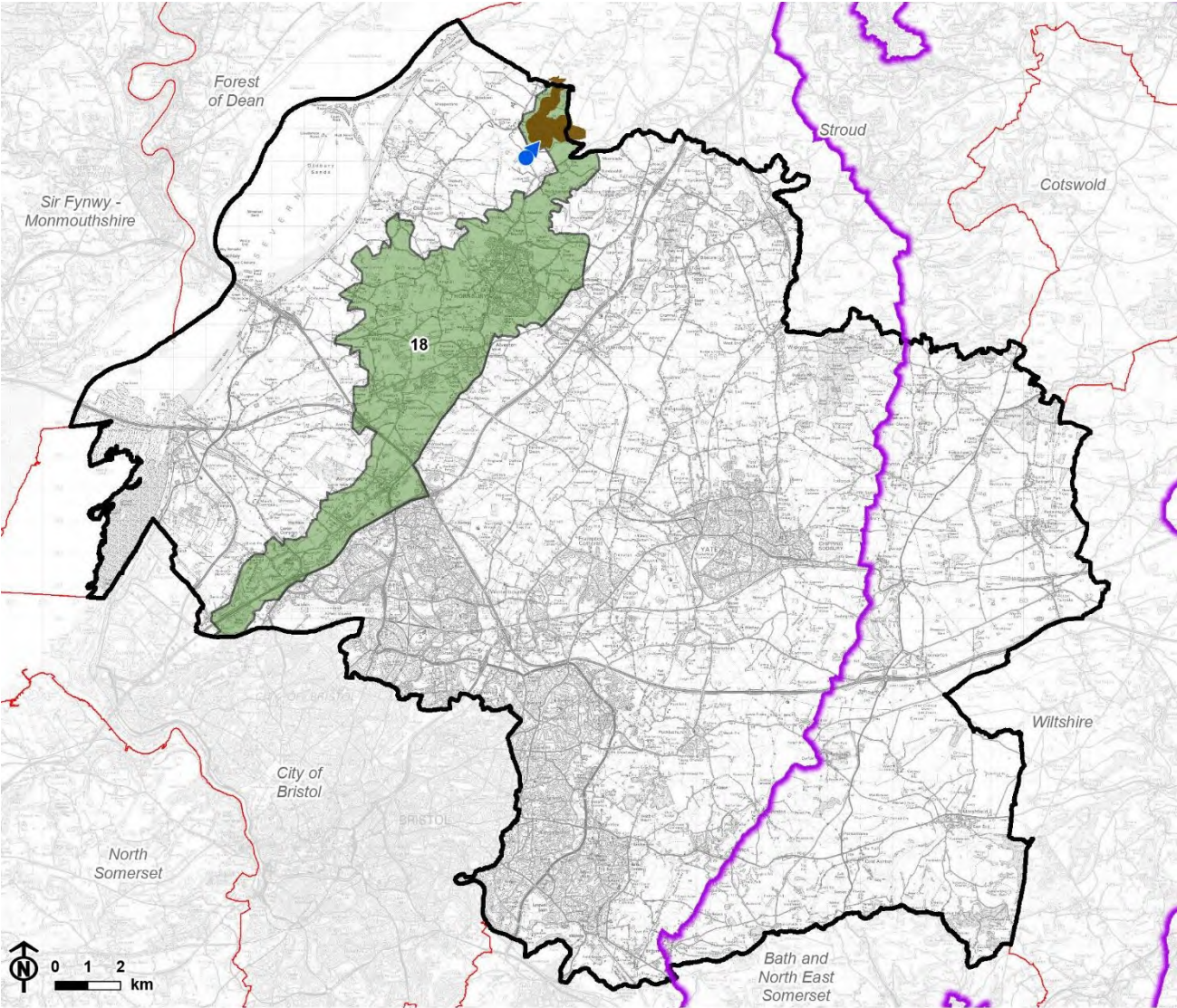
Summary

The steep northern side of the River Avon is categorised as a VIH as it meets most of the criteria to some extent. It is readily identifiable as a landform feature on OS mapping; a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity; has some prominence in local views; contributes to the setting of a Conservation Area; its character and appearance is largely unspoilt by visual detractors; and has a role in the landscape by partly defining a character area.

Upper Hill

The Upper Hill VIH comprises a series of steep scarp slopes which descend from a plateau at the top of the hill. It is located near the north-western edge of South Gloucestershire and lies fully within the Seven Ridges (LCA 18) landscape character area, with the VIH defining the northern extent of the landscape character area. Its elevation and steep sided slopes emphasise the prominence of the VIH when viewed from the low-lying levels landscape to the west and the vale landscape to the east. The VIH has a pronounced rural character and forms a continuation of the ridgeline within Stroud District Council, which takes in the historic landscape of Whitcliff Deer Park, located within the Berkeley Castle RPG (Grade II*).

Figure 3.42: Location of the Upper Hill Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context

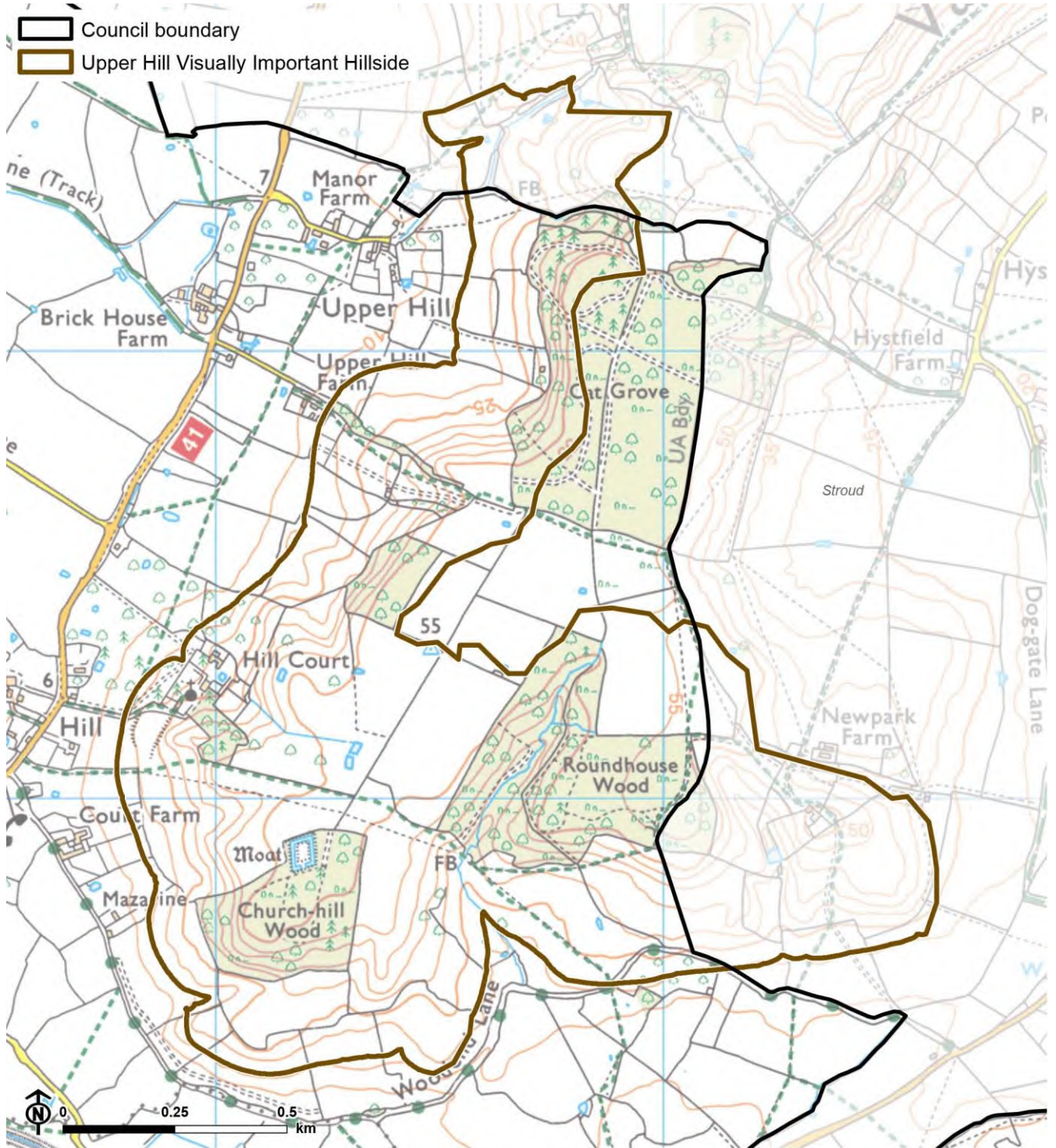


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CB:HS. EB:shayler_h LUC 12274_004_r0_VIH_DDP 05/07/2023
Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS

- Upper Hill Visually Important Hillside
- Council boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- LCA 18: Severn Ridges
- Photograph location

Figure 3.43: Detailed map of the Upper Hill Visually Important Hillside



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CB:HS. EB:HS. LUC 12274_004_r0_VIHDetail_A4P 05/06/2023
Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS

Figure 3.44: View of Upper Hill from Rockhampton Rhine



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- The Upper Hill VIH is a readily identifiable landform feature on OS mapping as close contours indicate steeply sloping hillsides with a southerly and westerly aspect (descending from around 55m to 15m). This is clear when seen in context of the adjacent levels landscape to the west and vale landscape to the east (where contours are at much larger intervals). A small stream valley insertion is evident in the centre of the VIH, west of Roundhouse Wood, indicated on OS mapping by steep elongated contours with a stream marked along the lowest point of elevation.
- A triangulation pillar marks the top of Upper Hill and is marked on OS mapping.
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity as noted in the publication for LCA 18: Severn Ridges which notes that *“the northern scarp at Upper Hill and Rockhampton forms a visually prominent, gently scalloped ridgeline, with simple bold vegetation structure of frequent areas of mature woodland, interspersed with regular shaped fields of pasture (more irregular at Rockhampton), defined by clipped hedges and intermittent trees.”*

Visual prominence

- The prominence of the Upper Hill VIH is acknowledged in LCA 18: Severn Ridges which states that *“the scarp edge of the Severn Ridges is most prominent in the area of Hill and Rockhampton”* which is where the VIH is located.
- The frequent areas of mature woodland on and around Upper Hill (including Church-hill Wood, Roundhouse Wood and Cat Grove) create a notable wooded landform feature that can be seen from several public vantage points and forms a key feature in views.

Character and value

- The character and appearance of the VIH is unspoilt by visual detractors, as the hillsides are undeveloped. Landcover across the VIH comprises mature woodland interspersed with pasture.
- Hill Court (a locally registered historic park) is located upon the slopes of the VIH in the west, where ridge and furrow field patterns are evident on the sloping hillsides along with remnants of an ornamental and designed landscape, a medieval parkland and cleared and ancient woodland, which contribute towards the character and value of the area.
- The VIH provides the opportunity for views across the landscape of South Gloucestershire and the Severn estuary including from the strategic viewpoint at Hill Court (SVP 6).
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by providing containment to the north-eastern edge of LCA 19: Oldbury Levels, and forms a prominent backdrop to the surrounding lower-lying landscape.

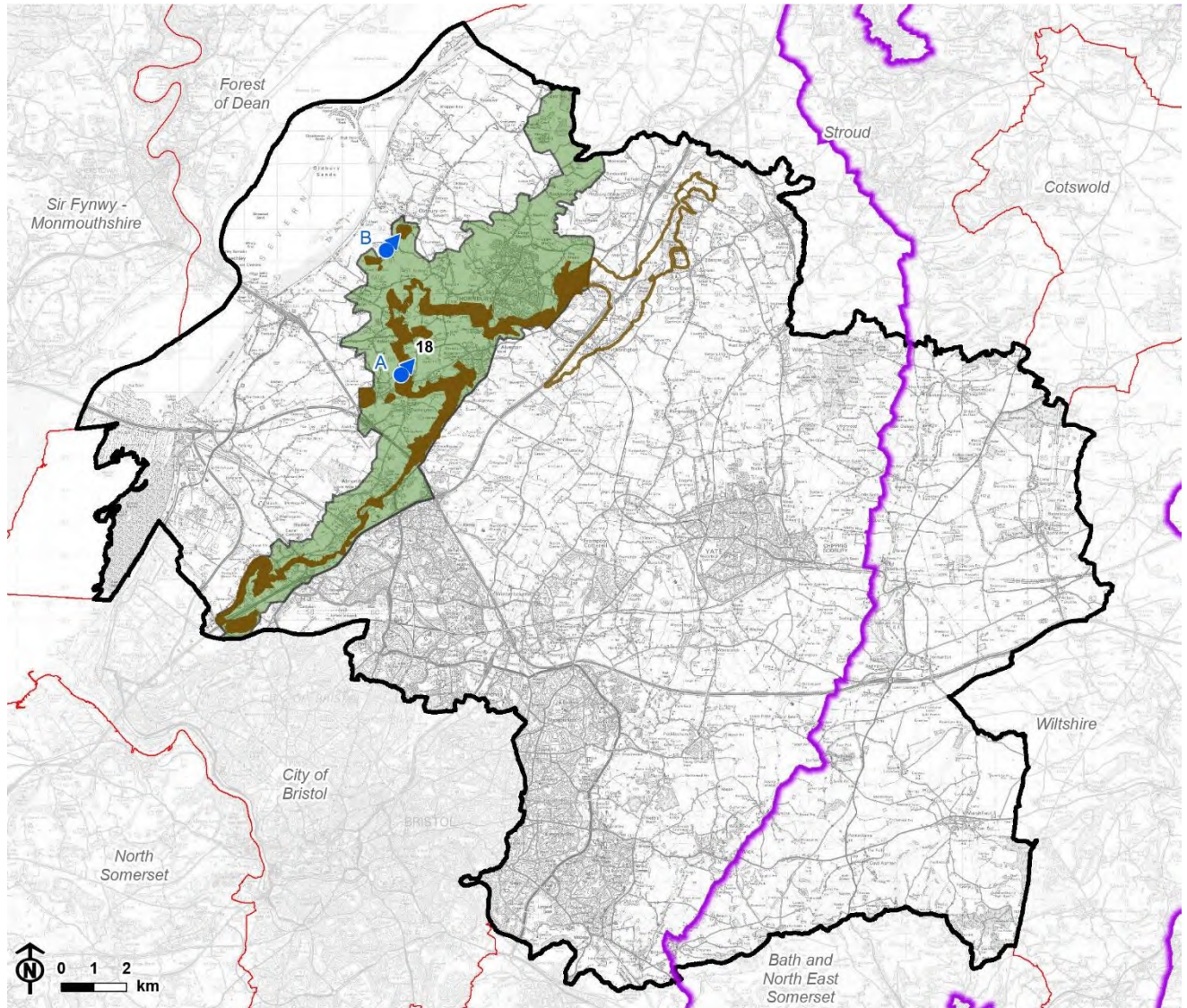
Summary

The Upper Hill is categorised as a VIH as it meets all of the criteria to some extent. It is readily identifiable as a landform feature on OS mapping; a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity; prominent in views across the landscape; visible from several public vantage points; its character and appearance is unspoilt by visual detractors; it provides the opportunity for views across the landscape; and has a role in the landscape by containing a character area, and forming a visual backdrop.

Severn Ridges - including Fowler's Hill, Titters Hill, Henley Hill, Spaniorium Hill and Milbury Heath and outlying hills at Cow Hill, St Arilda's Church, Catherine's Hill and Eastcombe Hill

The Severn Ridges VIH comprises a complex area of ridges, punctuated by a series of hills, and also includes several hill formations lying to the west of the main spine. It is located along the western edge of South Gloucestershire close to the Severn estuary, defining the Severn Ridges (LCA 18) landscape character area, and spans from the north-east to the south-west, forming a S-shape. It adjoins the Wick's / Butcher's Hill and Baden Hill VIH in the north-east at Buckover. Its distinct form and elevation defines a marked change in character from the considerably lower-lying levels associated with the River Severn to its west. As a result, the VIH is visually prominent when viewed from the west, including within long-distance views from South Wales and the Forest of Dean. With the exception of where the southern settlement edge of Thornbury straddles the lower foot slopes of the northern section of the VIH, it represents an undeveloped landscape feature, which provides a green backdrop and setting to several Conservation Areas.

Figure 3.45: Location of the Severn Ridges Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context

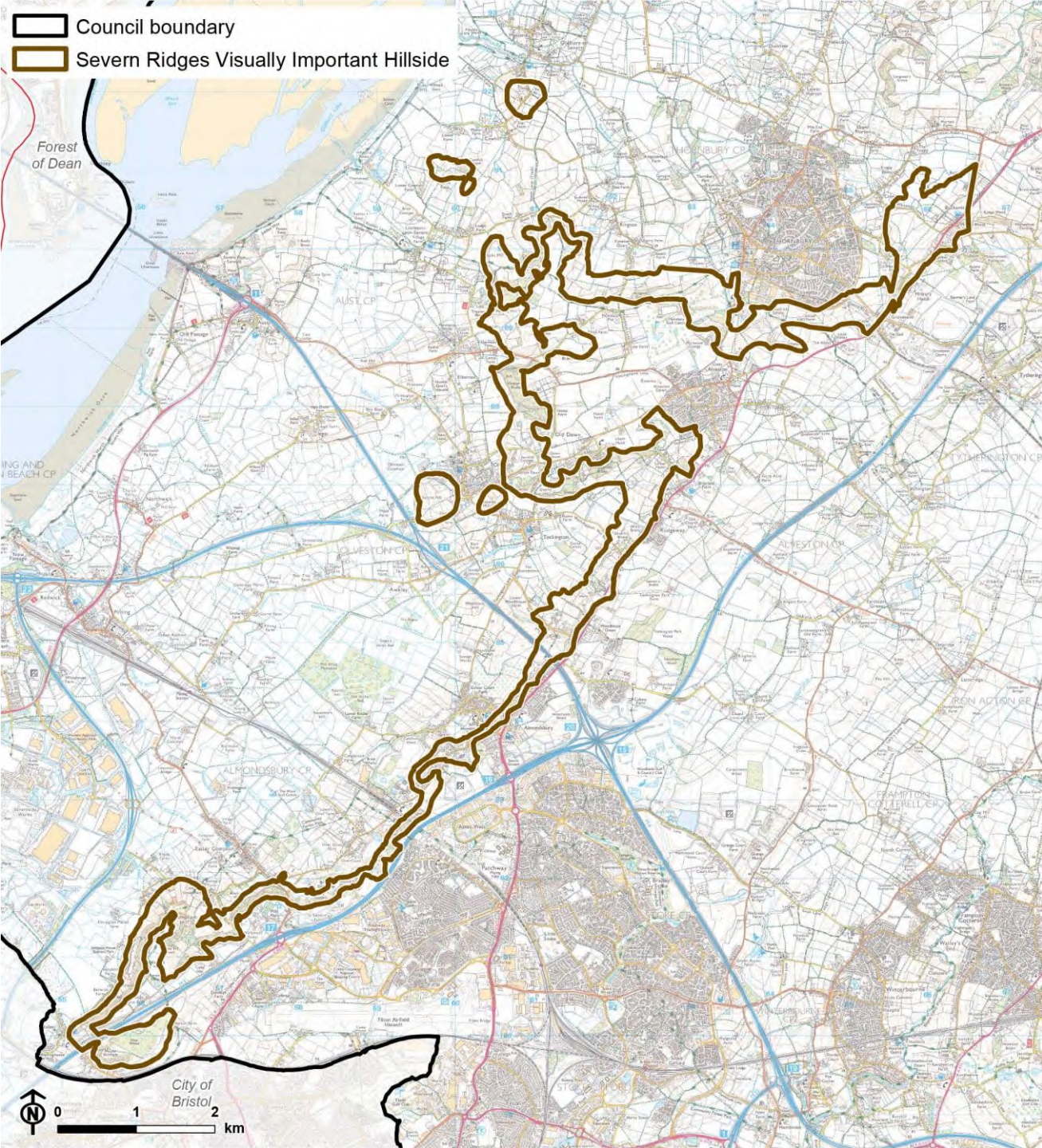


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Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS

- Severn Ridges Visually Important Hillside
- Wicks/Butchers Hill and Baden Hill Visually Important Hillside
- Council boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
- LCA 18: Severn Ridges
- Photograph location

Figure 3.46: Detailed map of the Severn Ridges Visually Important Hillside



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Figure 3.47: View of Severn Ridges from Olveston (Photo point A)



Figure 3.48: View of St Arilda's Church on an outlying hill to the Severn Ridges from Cowhill (Photo point B)



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- The Severn Ridges VIH is a readily identifiable landform feature on OS mapping as close contour lines indicate steep slopes with a northerly and westerly aspect (descending from around 100m to 40m in the north and around 65m to 10m in the south). The distance between consecutive contour lines gradually increase outwards from the top of the ridges towards the flatter levels landscape to the west and the gently undulating ridges/ vale landscape to the east. The Severn Ridges are punctuated with a series of steep hills, including Fowler's Hill, Titters Hill, Henley Hill, Spaniorium Hill and Milbury Heath, as well as the outlying hills of Cow Hill, St Arilda's Church, Catherine's Hill and Eastcombe Hill. These landform features are also easily identifiable on OS mapping due to contour lines forming concentric circles (or ovals).
- A promoted viewpoint is marked on OS mapping along the ridge at Almondsbury which implies that a scenic elevated view is afforded from this part of the VIH, and that there is intervisibility with the surrounding landscape. A historic fort near Elberton is also evident on OS mapping, indicating a high point.
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity as noted in the following publications:
 - LCA 18: Severn Ridges notes the *"Distinctive large-scale landform"* of the VIH and that the *"ridgeline has gentle to steeply sloping scarp slopes"*.
 - The Olveston Conservation Area document [See reference 15] refers to the *"attractive rural landscape within a sheltered valley between a backdrop of the prominent wooded limestone ridge to the east..."* and *"series of low hills including Eastcombe Hill and Catherine Hill extending westwards from the scarp slope ensure that some areas feel sheltered and contained whilst others feel exposed and open, offering extensive views towards the Severn levels"*.

- The Lower Almondsbury Conservation Area document [See reference 16] refers to the "*steep wooded Almondsbury Hill... provides an attractive backcloth to the village and contributes significantly to Almondsbury's character*".
- The VIH is distinctive in separating the northern extents of Bristol and the levels landscape.

Visual prominence

- The prominence of the VIH is noted in LCA 18: Severn Ridges, which states that "*the scarp slopes feature prominently in views from adjacent lowland landscapes and from South Wales and the Forest of Dean, providing the backdrop and physical containment to the Levels and Estuary.*" It also states that "*The scarp edge is most prominent in the area of Hill and Rockhampton to the north, above Olveston centrally and from Rudgeway south to Hallen. Spaniorum Hill forms a rounded promontory in the south before the scarp ends abruptly at Hallen.*"
- The VIH is visible from several public vantage points and forms a key feature in views. The wooded areas at high elevations along the VIH are prominent and notable features that can be seen in views from around the levels and estuary to the west.
- The grade II* listed St. Arilda's Church on the top of an outlying hill in the north-west of the VIH is a prominent and notable local landmark and can be seen within long-distance views, contributing towards the prominence and conspicuousness of the VIH.

Character and value

- The VIH contributes to the setting of the Lower Almondsbury and Olveston Conservations Areas which are partly located on the VIH. It also contributes to the setting of the Tockington Conservation Area (which lies at the base of the main spine) and Thornbury Conservation Area, where the VIH forms part of the distinctive 'bowl' landform that partly encloses Thornbury.

- The character and appearance of the VIH is generally unspoilt by visual detractors as some stretches of the ridges are largely undeveloped. Visual detractors are mainly limited to pylons which cross the VIH in the north, and have some visual prominence when seen from the surrounding landscape given their position on the top of the ridge. The scarp is scattered with hamlets, farmsteads and dwellings, and part of the village of Almondsbury is located upon an upper slope of the VIH. The M4 crosses near the middle of the scarp. Development around the VIH does partly influence its character including the large commercial development of Cribbs Causeway, to the south of the M5, and housing development which has diminished views from the VIH.
- Landcover across the VIH comprises predominantly of pastoral fields with clipped hedges, intermittent mature hedgerow trees and areas of woodland.
- The VIH provides ample opportunities for expansive views across the flat levels, Severn Estuary and towards South Wales, including from the strategic viewpoints at Almondsbury (SVP 3), Old Down (SVP 4), Buckover (SVP 5), Spaniorum Hill (SVP 7), St. Arilda's Church (SVP 15) and Woodwell Meadow (SVP 23).
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by defining LCA 18: Severn Ridges and forms a highly prominent backdrop to the surrounding lower-lying landscape.

Summary

The Severn Ridges is categorised as a VIH as it significantly meets all of the criteria. It is readily identifiable as a landform feature on OS mapping; a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity; prominent in views across the landscape; visible from several public vantage points; has high visual/sensory/perceptual value; contributes to the setting of Conservation Areas; its character and appearance is generally unspoilt by visual detractors; it provides the opportunity for views across the landscape; and

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has a role in the landscape by defining a character area, and forming a highly prominent visual backdrop.

References

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