

Leckhampton with Warden Hill Neighbourhood Plan

Landscape Character Assessment Update with an evaluation of Landscape Value

September 2022



LEPUS CONSULTING
LANDSCAPE, ECOLOGY, PLANNING & URBAN SUSTAINABILITY



Leckhampton with Warden Hill Neighbourhood Plan

Landscape Character Assessment Update

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About this report & notes for readers

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This Landscape Character Assessment 2022 Update is based on the best available published information at the time of writing. No attempt to verify secondary data sources has been made and they have been assumed to be accurate as published. This report was prepared in May-September 2022 and is subject to and limited by the information available during this time. This report has been produced to update the 2017 Landscape Character Assessment of the study area identified by Leckhampton

with Warden Hill Parish Hill in order to inform the Neighbourhood Plan.

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Acronyms & Abbreviations

ALC	Agricultural Land Classification
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BMV	Best and Most Versatile
CROW	Countryside and Rights of Way
GI	Green Infrastructure
GIS	Geographical Information System
ha	Hectare
JCS	Joint Core Strategy
LCT	Landscape Character Type
LGS	Local Green Space
LVIA	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
NL	National Landscape
NCA	National Character Area
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
OS	Ordnance Survey
PPG	Planning Practice Guidance
PRoW	Public Rights of Way
SM	Scheduled Monument
TGN	Technical Guidance Note

Executive Summary

About this report

- E1. Lepus Consulting Ltd has been appointed by the Leckhampton with Warden Hill Neighbourhood Plan (NP) working group to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and an evaluation of the value of the landscape within an identified study area in the parish of Leckhampton with Warden Hill (LWH). Lepus Consulting Ltd is an environmental planning practice based in Gloucestershire.
- E2. The LCA will be used as part of the evidence which supports the policies in the NP. It will also be used to raise awareness and appreciation of the character and value of the landscape found in the study area. This assessment updates the findings of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal undertaken by Lepus in 2017¹.

Summary

- E3. The study area for this assessment is located at the southern edge of Cheltenham at the foot of the Cotswolds escarpment, forming part of the designated nationally important landscape, the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty(AON). The study area lies within Cheltenham Borough Council planning authority area.
- E4. The majority of the study area lies in the Settled Unwooded Vale Landscape Character Type (LCT) in the published Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment², with a small part in the south of the study area lying in the Escarpment LCT, reflecting the location of the study area at foot slopes of the Cotswolds Hills.
- E5. The landscape qualities and value of the study area have been subject to consideration through various local plan and joint planning processes and through numerous planning applications which have come forward over recent years. **Appendix B** of this report summarises comments from Planning Inspectors relating to the landscape value of the study area.
- E6. This report updates the previous Landscape Character Assessment of the study area, undertaken by Lepus in 2017. Changes in landscape character have occurred locally, as a consequence of recent development including the development of the High School Leckhampton within the site and the residential development at the Brizen Park site to the west of the study area. At the time of the field survey, construction of residential development at the Newlands site had commenced and the site was being cleared.

¹ Lepus Consulting (2017) 'Leckhampton with Warden Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan Landscape and Visual Appraisal'

² LDA Design (2006) Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/ecology-and-landscape/landscape/> [Date Accessed: 17/05/22]

Valued qualities

E7. In 2021 the Landscape Institute published guidance to inform the assessment of landscape value for areas lying outside national landscape designations. The indicators set out in the LI guidance have been used to inform this assessment of the value of the special qualities of the study area, as described in **Chapter 6**. In summary, the following indicators have been identified:

- A **strong landscape pattern** in many parts of the study area, created by the vegetated historic field boundaries;
- A sense of **visual unity** created by the consistent pattern of grasslands combined with vegetated field boundaries and watercourses;
- A good sense of **tranquillity** and providing opportunities for contact with nature;
- A **range of habitats** for biodiversity, including protected species, such as dormice and bats, as well as Priority Habitats, such as Traditional Orchards, and irreplaceable habitats, such as the Veteran oak tree;
- **Historic associations**: The landscape of the study area is likely to be considered to form the setting to designated heritage assets, such as Moat Cottage and Field Cottage;
- Links to market gardening and nursery businesses, reflecting **soil quality and fertility**;
- Part of the **setting to the designated landscape of the Cotswolds** Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The study area lies at the footslopes of the escarpment to the Cotswolds Hills, which allows opportunities for views towards and from the ridgeline and to appreciate this geomorphological feature, one of the identified Special Qualities of the Cotswolds AONB.
- The study area has strong **visual connectivity** with the nationally important landscape and forms part of the transitional landscape between the designated landscape and the suburban edge of Cheltenham;
- The study area is an excellent example of **multifunctional green infrastructure** providing a range of services and functions for biodiversity, natural water management, carbon storage and recreation;
- **Highly valued for informal recreation**, reflected in the designation of the majority of the study area as a Local Green Space (LGS) and providing opportunities to benefit local residents' physical health and well-being.

Landscape Management Guidelines

E8. Landscape management guidelines to help to protect and enhance the study area's identified valued qualities have been provided in **Chapter 7**.

1 Introduction

1.1 Appointment and scope of work

1.1.1 Lepus Consulting Ltd has been appointed by the Leckhampton with Warden Hill Neighbourhood Plan (NP) working group to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and an evaluation of the value of the landscape within an identified study area in the parish of Leckhampton with Warden Hill (LWH). The LCA will be used as part of the evidence which supports the policies in the NP. It will also be used to raise awareness and appreciation of the character and value of the landscape found in the study area.

1.1.2 This assessment will update the findings of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal undertaken by Lepus in 2017³.

1.1.3 Lepus Consulting Ltd is an environmental planning practice specialising in landscape and ecological impact assessment. This report has been prepared by Neil Davidson (BSc, MSc, CEnv, CIEEM, CMLI) and Rebecca Gregory (BSc, PGDipLA).

1.2 Purpose of this report

1.2.1 The findings of the LCA should be used for the following purposes:

- To identify, conserve and inform the management of the distinctive landscape characteristics of the study area;
- To inform the development of the NP and provide evidence for landscape and character policies;
- To identify the special landscape qualities of the area to help ensure that new development proposals are of an appropriate design and complement the existing local character;
- To be used by developers and their architects to help them understand the local character; and
- To inform decision makers in relation to planning applications.

³ Lepus Consulting (2017) 'Leckhampton with Warden Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan Landscape and Visual

1.3 Summary of the landscape context of the study area

1.3.1 The parish of Leckhampton with Warden Hill lies to the south of the town of Cheltenham in the Cheltenham Borough Council planning authority area. A Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared, the Plan Area for which is the southern part of the parish. The Neighbourhood Plan Area and the study area are shown on **Figure 1.1**. In landscape terms, the parish sits on the footslopes of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), recently renamed as the Cotswolds National Landscape (NL). This is a national landscape designation which protects and enhances the identified special qualities of the landscape.

1.4 Structure of this report

1.4.1 The following summarises the structure of this report:

- **Chapter 2** – Landscape planning policy context
- **Chapter 3** – Methodology
- **Chapter 4** – Landscape character assessments
- **Chapter 5** – Landscape character of the study area
- **Chapter 6** – Evaluation of landscape value
- **Chapter 7** – Recommendations to plan, manage and protect special qualities
- **Chapter 8** – Summary and conclusions.

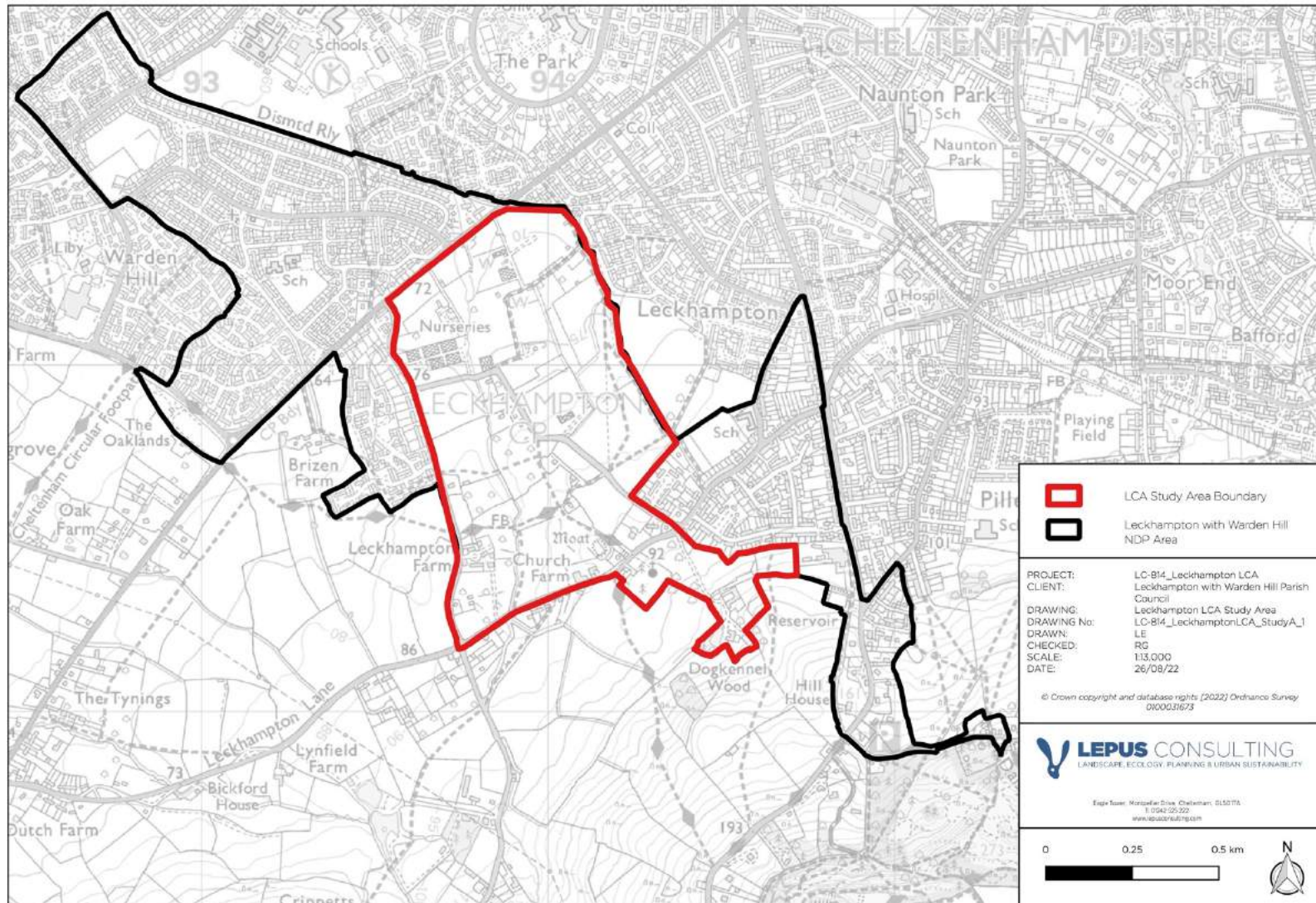


Figure 1.1: Location plan

2 Landscape planning policy context

2.1 The Joint Core Strategy Adopted December 2017⁴

2.1.1 Extracts of policies relating to the protection and enhancement of landscape character and the protection of landscape features, such as trees, are provided below.

Policy SD4: Design Requirements

Where appropriate, proposals for development - which may be required to be accompanied by a masterplan and design brief - will need to clearly demonstrate how the following principles have been incorporated:

i. Context, Character and Sense of Place;

New development should respond positively to, and respect the character of, the site and its surroundings, enhancing local distinctiveness, and addressing the urban structure and grain of the locality in terms of street pattern, layout, mass and form. It should be of a scale, type, density and materials appropriate to the site and its setting. Design should establish a strong sense of place using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, and having appropriate regard to the historic environment

ii. Legibility and Identity;

New development should create clear and logical layouts that create and contribute to a strong and distinctive identity and which are easy to understand and navigate. This should be achieved through a well-structured and defined public realm, with a clear relationship between uses, buildings, routes and spaces, and through the appropriate use of vistas, landmarks and focal points.

iii. Amenity and space;

New development should enhance comfort, convenience and enjoyment through assessment of the opportunities for light, privacy and external space, and the avoidance or mitigation of potential disturbances, including visual intrusion, noise, smell and pollution

iv. Public realm and landscape;

New development should ensure that the design of landscaped areas, open space and public realm are of high quality, provide a clear structure and constitute an integral and cohesive element within the design. The contribution of public realm designs, at all scales, to facilitate the preferential use of sustainable transport modes should be maximized.

v. Safety and security;

New development should be designed to contribute to safe communities including reducing the risk of fire, conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians, and the likelihood and fear of crime.

vi. Inclusiveness and adaptability;

⁴ Gloucester City Council, Cheltenham Borough Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council (2017) The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) 2011 – 2031. Available at: <https://www.jointcorestrategy.org/adopted-joint-core-strategy> [Date Accessed: 17/05/22]

New development should provide access for all potential users, including people with disabilities, to buildings, spaces and the transport network, to ensure the highest standards of inclusive design. Development should also be designed to be adaptable to changing economic, social and environmental requirements

vii. Movement and connectivity;

New development should be designed to integrate, where appropriate, with existing development, and prioritise movement by sustainable transport modes, both through the application of legible connections to the wider movement network, and assessment of the hierarchy of transport modes set out in Table SD4a below. It should:

- *Be well integrated with the movement network within and beyond the development itself*
- *Provide safe and legible connections to the existing walking, cycling and public transport networks;*
- *Ensure accessibility to local services for pedestrians and cyclists and those using public transport*
- *Ensure links to green infrastructure;*
- *Incorporate, where feasible, facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles;*
- *Be fully consistent with guidance, including that relating to parking provision, set out in the Manual for Gloucestershire Streets and other relevant guidance documents in force at the time.*

Detailed requirements of masterplans and design briefs, should the Local Planning Authority consider they are required to accompany proposals, are set out in Table SD4d. These requirements are not exhaustive.

Policy SD6: Landscape

1. *Development will seek to protect landscape character for its own intrinsic beauty and for its benefit to economic, environmental and social well-being;*
2. *Proposals will have regard to the local distinctiveness and historic character of the different landscapes in the JCS area, drawing, as appropriate, upon existing Landscape Character Assessments and the Landscape Character and Sensitivity Analysis. They will be required to demonstrate how the development will protect or enhance landscape character and avoid detrimental effects on types, patterns and features which make a significant contribution to the character, history and setting of a settlement or area; and*
3. *All applications for development will consider the landscape and visual sensitivity of the area in which they are to be located or which they may affect. Planning applications will be supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment where, at the discretion of the Local Planning Authority, one is required. Proposals for appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures should also accompany applications.*

Policy SD7: The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

All development proposals in or within the setting of the Cotswolds AONB will be required to conserve and, where appropriate, enhance its landscape, scenic beauty, wildlife, cultural heritage and other special qualities. Proposals will be required to be consistent with the policies set out in the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan.

Policy INF3: Green Infrastructure

1. *The green infrastructure network of local and strategic importance will be conserved and enhanced, in order to deliver a series of multifunctional, linked green corridors across the JCS area by:*
 - i. *Improving the quantity and / or quality of assets;*

- *A layout and form that respects the existing urban and rural characteristics of the vicinity*
- *A layout and form of development that respects the character, significance and setting of heritage assets that may be affected by the development*
- *A layout and form of development that respects the visual sensitivity and landscape character of the site as part of the setting for the AONB*

Policy GI1: Local Green Space

Development will not be permitted within a Local Green Space, designated either within the Cheltenham Plan or an approved Neighbourhood Plan, unless there are very special circumstances which outweigh the harm to the Local Green Space. Particular attention will be paid to the views of the local community in assessing any development proposals that affect a designated Local Green Space.

The sites listed in Table 8 are designated as Local Green Spaces within the Cheltenham Plan.

Policy GI2: Protection and Replacement of Trees

The Borough Council will resist the unnecessary (Note 1) felling of trees on private land, and will make Tree Preservation Orders in appropriate cases.

For protected trees (Note 2), the Council will require:

- a) any tree which has to be felled to be replaced, where practicable (Note 3); and*
- b) pruning, where it is necessary, to be undertaken so as to minimise harm to the health or general appearance of a tree and to be in conformity with British Standard for Tree Work (BS3998, 2010).*

In cases where trees are not protected by a Tree Preservation Order or by being in a Conservation Area, but contribute to the townscape and character of the town, the Council will consider including such trees in a Tree Preservation Order.

Policy GI3: Trees and Development

Development which would cause permanent damage to trees of high value (Note 1) will not be permitted.

The following may be required in conjunction with development:

- a) the retention of existing trees (Note 2); and*
- b) the planting of new trees (Note 3); and*
- c) measures adequate to ensure the protection of trees during construction works.*

2.2.2 Table 8, referred to in Policy GI1, includes the Leckhampton Local Green Space, further details about this designation are provided in section 2.4 of this chapter.

2.2.3 Local Green Spaces also form part of the wider groups of open spaces referred to in the Cheltenham Plan as 'Green Spaces'. Paragraph 16.4 describes the importance of Green Space,

“Green space in the urban environment has worth for its townscape, environmental, wildlife and recreational values. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Para. 73) describes the contribution open spaces make to the health and well-being of communities. The Borough Council will take this into account when making development control decisions and formulating local plan policies”.

2.3 Cotswolds National Landscape

2.3.1 The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated in 1966 and extended in area in 1990. In 2020, the Cotswold AONB was renamed as the Cotswolds National Landscape (NL)⁶.

2.3.2 AONB designation is the highest level of protection for landscapes in England, recognising the special qualities of these places. AONBs are protected by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act). AONBs are landscapes whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation’s interest to safeguard them. The statutory purpose of AONB designation is to conserve *and* enhance the natural beauty of the landscape.

2.3.3 At 790 square miles (2,038 square kilometres) it is the largest AONB – and the third largest protected landscape, including National Parks – in England. The AONB stretches from Bath and Wiltshire in the south, through Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire to Warwickshire and Worcestershire in the north. It cuts across 15 local authority areas.

2.3.4 The consideration of landscape ‘setting’ has long been considered in relation to protected landscapes. Paragraph 176 of the NPPF sets out the national policy protection for landscapes and their settings (Lepus emphasis).

“Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas”.

2.3.5 As described above, Policy SD7 of the JCS relates to the protection of the Cotswolds AONB and its setting and the need for development proposals to be ‘consistent with’ the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan.

⁶ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/the-cotswolds-aonb-gets-a-new-look-and-a-new-name/> [Date accessed 26/05/22]

2.3.6 The ‘setting’ to a protected landscape does not have a defined boundary, it is determined on a case-by-case basis. Development and change outside the designated landscape but which is considered to adversely affect the identified ‘special qualities’ of the designated landscape is likely to be considered to adversely affect its setting. Such changes can include adverse impacts on views to and from the protected landscape, as well as other changes such as reduced sense of tranquillity, amongst others.

2.3.7 The special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB are the key attributes for which for which the AONB is considered to be important. The Cotswolds AONB/NL⁷ website describes some of the most distinctive features of the landscape,

“Its central feature are the Cotswolds Hills which rise gently from the broad, green meadows of the upper Thames to crest in a dramatic escarpment above the Severn Valley and Evesham Vale. Rural England at its most mellow, the landscape draws a unique warmth and richness from the famous limestone beauty of its buildings”.

2.3.8 Perhaps the special quality that is most unique to the Cotswolds AONB is the unifying character of the limestone geology, including its visible presence in the landscape and its use as a building material. Other special qualities of the AONB include its: internationally important, flower-rich grasslands and ancient, broadleaved woodlands; escarpment; dry stone walls; river valleys; high wolds; tranquillity and dark skies; vernacular architecture and distinctive settlements; accessible landscape offering quiet recreation; and significant archaeological, prehistoric, historic and cultural associations.

2.3.9 The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan (2018-2023)⁸ is a statutory plan which sets out the vision, outcomes and policies in order to protect and enhance the natural beauty of the protected landscape and increase people’s understanding and enjoyment of the landscape. Chapter 2 of the Management Plan sets out the Special Qualities of the landscape:

- The unifying character of the limestone geology – its visible presence in the landscape and use as a building material;
- The Cotswold escarpment, including views from and to the AONB;
- The high wolds – a large open, elevated predominately arable landscape with commons, ‘big’ skies and long-distance views;
- Variations in the colour of the stone from one part of the AONB to another which add a vital element of local distinctiveness;
- The tranquillity of the area, away from major sources of inappropriate noise, development, visual clutter and pollution;
- Extensive dark sky areas;

⁷ <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/our-landscape/> [Date accessed 25/05/22]

⁸ Cotswolds Conservation Board ‘Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023’ Available at <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Management-Plan-2018-23.pdf> [Date accessed 27/05/22]

- Distinctive settlements, developed in the Cotswold vernacular, high architectural quality and integrity;
- An accessible landscape for quiet recreation for both rural and urban users, with numerous walking and riding routes, including the Cotswolds Way National Trail;
- Significant archaeological, prehistoric and historic associations dating back 6,000 years, including Neolithic stone monuments, ancient drove roads, Iron Age forts, Roman villas, ridge and furrow fields, medieval wool churches and country estates and parks; and
- A vibrant heritage of cultural associations, including the Arts and Crafts movement of the 19th and 20th centuries, famous composers and authors and traditional events such as the Cotswolds Olympics, cheese rolling and woolsack races.

2.3.10 The Management Plan includes a number of policies to achieve the aims of the plan. Of particular note in relation to the study area the subject of this report are points 1 and 2 of Policy CE1 which states,

“Policy CE1: Landscape

1. Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB, should have regard to, be compatible with and reinforce the landscape character of the location, as described by the Cotswolds Conservation Board’s Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines.

2. Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB, should have regard to the scenic quality of the location and its setting and ensure that views – including those into and out of the AONB – and visual amenity are conserved and enhanced...”

2.4 Local Green Space Designation

2.4.1 In 2013 the Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council developed a Concept Statement to support designation of approximately 26ha of land, known as the ‘Leckhampton Fields’, as a Local Green Space (LGS).

2.4.2 Paragraph 77 of the 2012 NPPF⁹ set out the criteria against which the LGS designation of Leckhampton Fields was considered. These remain substantially unaltered in the 2021 version of the NPPF which states in paragraph 102,

⁹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) ‘National Planning Policy Framework’ Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf [Date accessed: 25/05/22]

“The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;

b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and

c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

2.4.3 Paragraph 103 of the 2021 NPPF sets out the level of protection given to LGS,

“Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts”.

2.4.4 In relation to Leckhampton Fields, in 2015 the Parish Council submitted an application to Cheltenham Borough Council for LGS designation. Policy GI1 of the Adopted Cheltenham Plan¹⁰ includes LGS designation for Leckhampton Fields LGS, amongst a number of others, the extents of which are shown on **Figure 5.1** of this report.

2.5 Planning applications

2.5.1 There are several planning applications in proximity to the study area that are being considered by the Local Planning Authority or have recently been granted planning permission and which are at different stages of construction and occupation.

Brizen Park

2.5.2 This site lies outside the study area immediately west of Farm Lane. The site has planning permission for the development of 377 homes. At the time of the field survey the development was still under construction, although many of the homes had been built and some homes were occupied. There is an access to the site from Farm Lane.

¹⁰ Cheltenham Borough Council (2020) Cheltenham Plan. Available at:
https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/downloads/file/8169/cheltenham_plan. [Date Accessed: 17/05/22]

The High School Leckhampton

- 2.5.3 Planning permission was granted for a new secondary school on land east of Farm Lane under planning application number 19/0058/CHR3MJ¹¹. The application details show the location of the school buildings and two sports pitches to the south of the site. As part of the ecological mitigation associated with the application, off-site ecological enhancement has been implemented on two field parcels to the west of Kidnappers Lane and in proximity to Moat Cottage. The scheme proposes planting and management of new native shrub planting and the associated grassland will be seeded and managed in order to enhance the biodiversity of these land parcels.

Newlands Site

- 2.5.4 A site to the north and east of Kidnappers Lane, known as the Newlands Site, was granted outline planning permission for the development of 25 homes. The application was subsequently revised and the current permitted scheme is for the development of 22 homes and associated landscaping. The details of the permitted scheme can be found under planning application number 21/00847/REM¹² on the Cheltenham Borough Council website. A further application for the development of five houses has been submitted on a land parcel associated with a bungalow called 'Charletyne'. Details of the application can be found under planning application number 22/00535/FUL. The application for permission had not been determined at the time of preparing this report.

Land at Shurdington Road

- 2.5.5 Miller Homes submitted a planning application (20/01788/FUL) for 350 homes on land to the north of Kidnappers Lane, part of the site allocated under Policy MD4 of the Cheltenham Plan. This application was refused planning permission on 3rd May 2022 on the grounds that the proposals did not meet the policy requirements to adapt to, and mitigate the impacts of, climate change. Given this site has been allocated for housing development, it is likely that a revised scheme will be brought forward.
- 2.5.6 A small scheme for the development of 12 homes on land to the south of Shurdington Road (and lying within the allocated land identified in Policy MD4) was allowed at appeal on 17th June 2022.

¹¹ <https://planning.gloucestershire.gov.uk/publicaccess/simpleSearchResults.do?action=firstPage>

¹² <https://publicaccess.cheltenham.gov.uk/online-applications/simpleSearchResults.do?action=firstPage>

3 Methodology

3.1 Overview

3.1.1 The methodology for this study has been derived from aspects of:

- ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual and Impact Assessment Third Edition’ (2013)¹³;
- The Countryside Agency Topic Paper 6 (2002) ‘Techniques and criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity’¹⁴;
- Natural England (2014) ‘An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment’¹⁵.
- Natural England (2019) ‘An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management’¹⁶;
- Landscape Institute (2021) ‘Assessing landscape value outside national designations’ Technical Guidance Note 02/21¹⁷

3.1.2 The assessment can be summarised as having five stages:

1. Define the purpose, scope and study area for the project;
2. Desk study and field study to identify landscape character types and areas;
3. Classification and description of landscape character areas and types;
4. Evaluation of landscape value; and
5. Landscape management objectives to protect, manage and enhance landscape qualities.

¹³ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition) Abingdon: Routledge

¹⁴ The Countryside Agency (2002) Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5601625141936128> [Date Accessed: 03/11/20]

¹⁵ Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types> [Date Accessed: 03/11/20]

¹⁶ Natural England (2019) ‘An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management’ Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/817928/landscape-sensitivity-assessment-2019.pdf [Date Accessed: 12/05/22]

¹⁷ Landscape Institute (2021) ‘Assessing landscape value outside national designations’ TGN 02/21 Available at <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/publication/tgn-02-21-assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations/> [Date Accessed: 12/05/22]

3.2 Step 1: Define purpose and scope of the project

3.2.1 The LWHNP working group instructed Lepus to update the 2017 Landscape Character Assessment in order to provide an updated landscape evidence base document to support the Neighbourhood Plan. During the project, Lepus shared the findings of the study with the LWHNP working group to confirm the aims and objectives of the project, shaping the scope of assessment.

3.3 Step 2: Desk study and field study

3.3.1 An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' describes the landscape as having many different components, grouped into three types, 'natural', 'cultural and social' and 'perceptual and aesthetic', as illustrated in **Figure 3.1**.

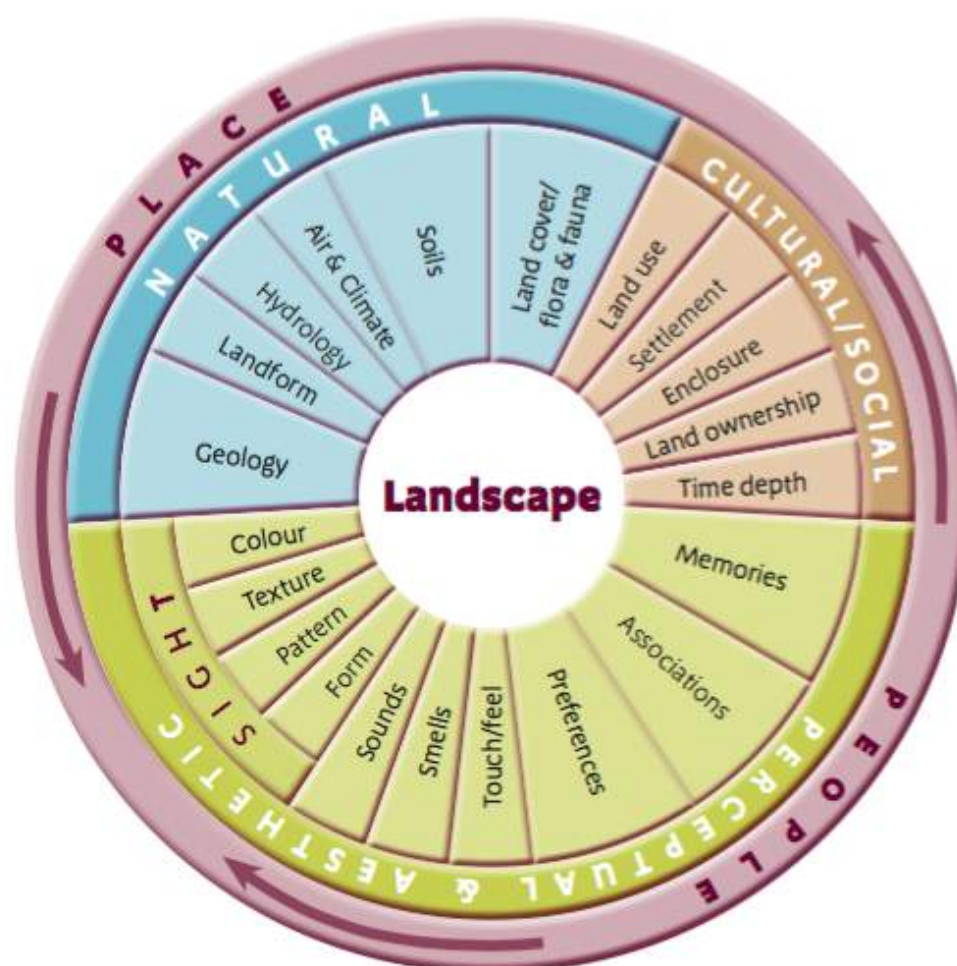


Figure 3.1: What is landscape?

3.3.2 The desktop study stage consists of an information gathering exercise to prepare a baseline review of natural, cultural and social aspects of the study area.

3.3.3 As stated in ‘An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment’¹⁸: *“the field study is an essential part of the Landscape Character Assessment process. It presents the opportunity to observe and understand how all the factors identified as part of the desk study interact and are perceived and experienced, to give us landscapes of distinct character. It also enables the identification of other factors that are not evident from the desk study and the chance to record aesthetic and perceptual aspects”*.

3.3.4 The field visits were undertaken in May 2022 and September 2017. The site visits were undertaken by two appropriately qualified Landscape Consultants in order that observations and judgements could be compared and agreed.

3.4 Step 3: Classification and description of landscape character types and character areas

3.4.1 The third stage of the landscape character assessment guidance from Natural England states that this part of the process deals with the final classification and description of landscape types and character areas, and explains: the difference between landscape types and landscape character areas, and their use; classification at different scales; involvement of people; boundary confirmation; naming landscape character types and areas; how to describe landscape character; and mapping landscape character types and / or areas.

3.4.2 Overall, the landscape classification was informed by these stages which were used to define areas of distinct, recognisable and consistent character, and groups areas of similar character together. The process of Landscape Character Assessment, as described in ‘An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment’ is illustrated in **Figure 3.2**.

¹⁸ Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Accessed on 07/09/17. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types> [Date Accessed: 03/11/20]

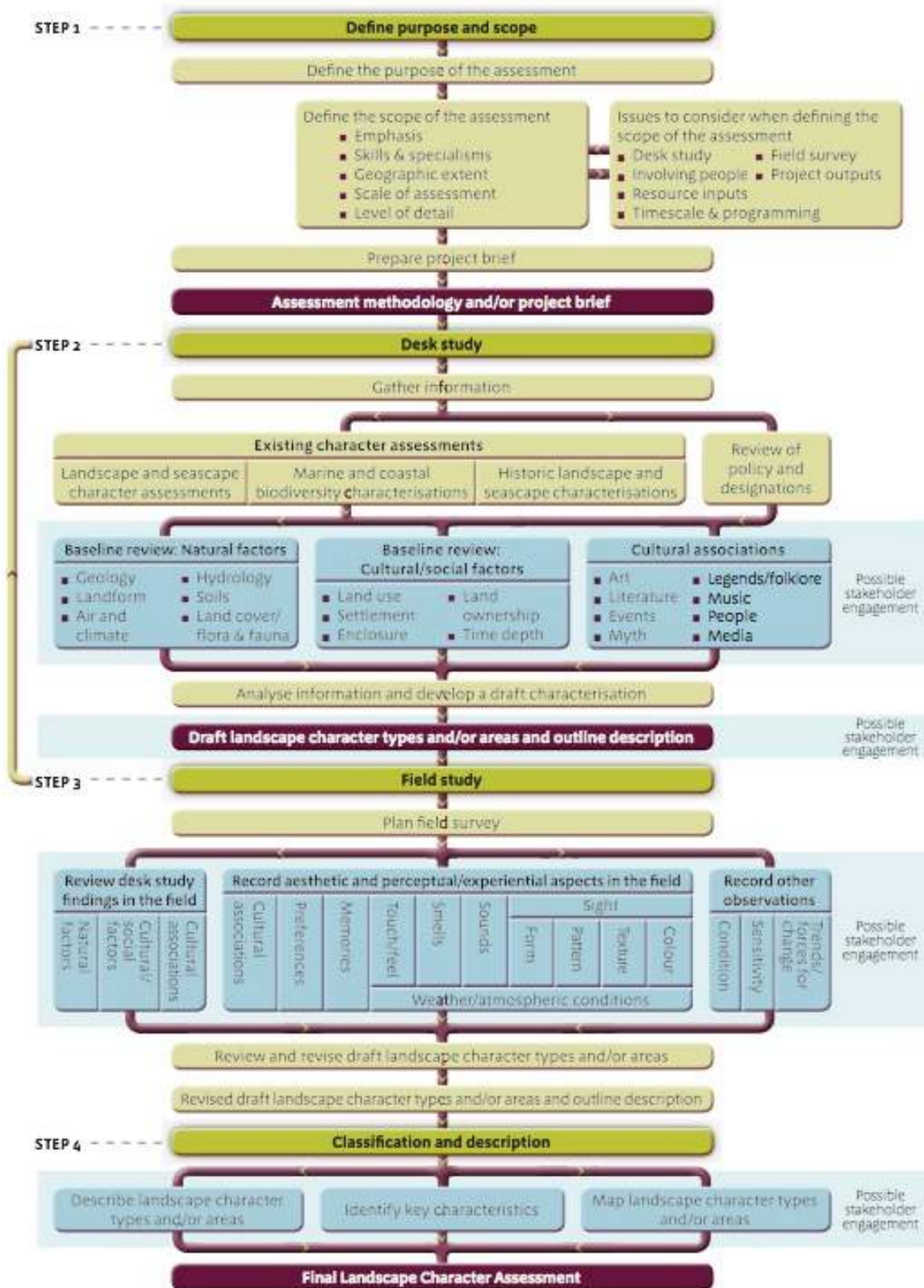


Figure 3.2: Landscape Character Assessment - the process

3.4.3 Landscape classification can be prepared at a variety of scales depending on the purpose and scope of the project. The scale of the area to be assessed determines the likely level at which the differences between homogeneous and distinctive factors are separated to identify character areas. The previous stages of assessment have provided a spatially referenced framework on which landscape character descriptions, and judgements about future policy development, design strategies, or land management may be based. Landscape Character Areas do not, generally, include main settlements, although the LCAs may wash over rural dwellings and farmsteads.

3.5 Step 4: Evaluation of landscape value

3.5.1 During this stage of the assessment the landscape qualities of each landscape character area identified through steps 1-3 are evaluated to provide a judgement about the landscape value of the study area. The evaluation of landscape value is based on Landscape Institute TGN 02/21¹⁹ which identifies a range of factors that can be considered when assessing landscape value, comprising:

- Natural heritage;
- Cultural heritage;
- Landscape condition;
- Associations;
- Recreational;
- Perceptual (scenic);
- Perceptual (wilderness and tranquillity); and
- Functional.

3.6 Step 5: Landscape management objectives to protect, manage and enhance landscape qualities.

3.6.1 The final stage of this assessment is to identify a range of landscape management objectives which seek to protect and enhance the identified landscape qualities of the study area. The recommendations for landscape management are described in **Chapter 7**.

¹⁹ ibid

4 Landscape character assessments

4.1 Landscape Character Assessment hierarchy

4.1.1 Landscape Character Assessment can be undertaken at a range of scales. The vertical hierarchy of landscape character assessments includes the National Character Areas, county level landscape character assessments (where they exist), protected landscape character assessments such as those prepared for national parks and National Landscapes, and at the district level, where landscape character assessments are often prepared to help inform Local Plans.

4.1.2 Neighbourhood Plans sit within the context of this hierarchy. It is important that the preparation of any new landscape character assessment ensures consistency of description across boundaries whilst also facilitating vertical integration within the national to local hierarchy of assessments. The level of detail and cartographic granularity increases as the size of the study area decreases.

4.1.3 The following sections discuss the existing landscape character assessments which help to provide a framework to the landscape context of the study area including:

- National Character Areas;
- Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment (2006);
- Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment (2004).

4.2 National Character Areas

4.2.1 At a national level, Landscape Character Assessment has been defined by the assessment work of Natural England, which has divided England into 159 areas of similar landscape called National Character Areas (NCAs) and the accompanying descriptions are called National Character Area Profiles.

4.2.2 The study area is located within the Severn and Avon Vales NCA (No. 106)²⁰. A description of this NCA is as follows:

“The Severn and Avon Vales is a low-lying open agricultural vale landscape with the Severn and Avon rivers, threading through this large and complex area, providing a unifying feature. The Cotswolds to the south-east, the Forest of Dean to the south-

²⁰ Natural England (2014) NCA Profile:106 Severn and Avon Vales (NE336). Available at:
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/1831421?category=587130> [Date Accessed: 17/05/22]

*west, and the Malvern Hills to the west, form abrupt boundaries providing prominent viewpoints across the vales. To the north, the Avon Vale rises more gently*²¹.

4.2.3 Key characteristics of this NCA include:

- A diverse range of flat and gently undulating landscapes strongly influenced and united by the Severn and Avon rivers which meet at Tewkesbury.
- Prominent oolitic limestone outliers of the Cotswold Hills break up the low-lying landscape in the south-east of the area at Bredon Hill, Robinswood Hill, Churchdown Hill and Dumbleton Hill.
- Woodland is sparsely distributed across this landscape but a well wooded impression is provided by frequent hedgerow trees, parkland and surviving traditional orchards.
- Pasture and stock rearing predominate on the floodplain and on steeper slopes, with a mixture of livestock rearing, arable, market gardening and hop growing elsewhere.
- Highly varied use of traditional buildings materials, with black and white timber frame are intermixed with deep-red brick buildings, grey Lias and also Cotswolds stone²².

4.2.4 The Severn and Avon Vales NCA is covered by 11,148 ha of woodland (5% of the total area), 3,080 ha of which is ancient woodland. Further details of the NCA profiles are available from Natural England.²³

4.3 Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment

4.3.1 The Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment (2006) provides profile information regarding key characteristics, landscape character, physical influences, human influences and buildings and settlement²⁴.

4.3.2 The study area is predominantly located within the Settled Unwooded Vale Landscape Character Type (LCT). This is an extensive LCT which lies between Cheltenham and Gloucester and extends northwards to Tewkesbury. This has been reproduced in **Appendix A**. Key characteristics of Settled Unwooded Vale LCT are described as follows:

²¹ Natural England (2014) NCA Profile:106 Severn and Avon Vales (NE336). Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/1831421?category=587130> [Date Accessed: 17/05/22]

²² Natural England (2014) NCA Profile:106 Severn and Avon Vales (NE336). Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/1831421?category=587130> [Date Accessed: 17/05/22]

²³ Natural England (2014) National Character Area Profiles <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making> [Accessed Date 17/05/22].

²⁴ LDA Design (2006) Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/ecology-and-landscape/landscape/> [Date Accessed: 17/05/22]

- Soft, gently undulating to flat landscape, but with intermittent locally elevated areas that project above the otherwise flatter landform;
- Area drained by a series of east west aligned tributaries of the Severn, including the Cam, Frome and Chelt, and the Stratford Avon flowing into the Severn from the north;
- Mixed arable and pastoral land use enclosed by hedgerow network, in places forming a strong landscape pattern;
- Limited woodland cover with mature hedgerow trees and occasional orchards;
- Rural areas bordered by large urban and suburban areas and interspersed with commercial and industrial premises;
- Varied mix of buildings materials including brick, timber and stone, and slate and thatch roofing;
- Proliferation of modern 'suburban' buildings styles and materials;
- Major transport corridors pass through the Vale, frequently aligned north south, beyond which is a network of local roads and lanes linking villages and hamlets; and
- Widespread network of pylons and transmission lines²⁵.

4.3.3 The southern most part of the study area lies in the 'Escarpment' LCT, reflecting its location at the foot of the Cotswolds Hills.

4.3.4 The Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment sub divides LCTs into Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). The study area is predominantly located within the Vale of Gloucester LCA (see **Appendix A**). A description of land use in this LCA is as follows:

*"There is a diverse mixture of land uses in the Vale of Gloucester which combine to create a colourful and textured landscape. Agricultural land use in the vale includes both arable cultivation and pasture in a patchwork of fields that are large to medium in scale and predominantly regular in shape. Grazing sheep and cattle are common features in the landscape with grazing pasture comprising a combination of improved and semi improved pasture with scrubby areas of pasture commonly found adjacent to settlement edges and aligning the course of major communication routes, e.g. the M5. Horse grazing is frequently found on the outskirts of villages and farms in fields sub-divided by either temporary white tape fencing or post and rail. In the wider vale landscape, low hedgerows with scattered hedgerow trees form the common boundary treatment. While these hedgerows are generally well maintained, some are becoming either gappy or overgrown, and in other areas the hedgerow network is beginning to break down, with evidence of field amalgamation and hedgerow trees and scrubby vegetation marking the lines of former field boundaries"*²⁶.

²⁵ LDA Design (2006) Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/ecology-and-landscape/landscape/> [Date Accessed: 17/05/22]

²⁶ LDA Design (2006) Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/ecology-and-landscape/landscape/> [Date Accessed: 17/05/22]

Cotswolds AONB/NL

4.3.5 The northern boundary of the Cotswolds AONB/NL abuts the southern boundary of the study area along Church Road. The Cotswolds escarpment rises steeply to the south of the study area at Leckhampton Hill which provides an impressive backdrop to the town of Cheltenham. The presence of the AONB has a strong influence on the study area regarding visual considerations and landscape character.

4.3.6 A description of the Cotswolds AONB as taken from the AONB Landscape Character Assessment (2004) is as follows:

“The Cotswolds form the best-known section of the extensive belt of Jurassic Limestone that stretches across England from Lyme Bay in Dorset to the North Sea, in North Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. It is in the Cotswolds in particular, however, that the surface expression of the Jurassic Limestone is so well represented. Not only has it determined the structure of the dramatic landform, but has also strongly influenced the pattern of man’s progressive occupation of the land, and the form and appearance of settlements and buildings, and the unique vernacular architecture.

The Cotswolds landscape has long been perceived as a rural idyll. Many of the features associated with this cherished landscape evoke strong images, particularly the dramatic escarpment and expansive high wolds, the network of limestone walls, beech woods clothing the escarpment, and secluded valleys and valley bottom meadows. The built environment is also very evocative ranging from the charm of the many picturesque villages and historic small towns to the individual houses, churches and mansions, and historic landscaped parks. Together these create a strong perception of harmony throughout the area. Despite this unifying pattern of common elements, however, a great variety of landscapes can be observed, each displaying distinctive patterns of landform, vegetation, and landscape elements”²⁷.

4.3.7 The setting of the AONB is an important factor when considering development and potential land use change within the study area. As set out in **Chapter 2**, the protection of the settings of nationally designated landscapes is set out in the NPPF. Furthermore, Policy SD7 of the JCS sets out the policy protection relating to the Cotswolds AONB and its setting, requiring development proposals to conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the landscape.

Policy SD7: The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

“All development proposals in or within the setting of the Cotswolds AONB will be required to conserve and, where appropriate, enhance its landscape, scenic beauty,

²⁷ Cotswolds AONB (2004) Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/our-landscape/landscape-character-assessment/#intro> [Date Accessed: 17/05/22]

wildlife, cultural heritage and other special qualities. Proposals will be required to be consistent with the policies set out in the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan”.

- 4.3.8 The Cotswolds Conservation Board has prepared a position statement on development in the setting of the AONB²⁸. They state that *“The Board considers the setting of the Cotswolds AONB to be the area within which development and land management proposals, by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting materials or design can be considered to have an impact, positive or negative, on the landscape, scenic beauty and special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB”.*
- 4.3.9 The position statement includes information about several matters that include the importance of views into and outside of the AONB. In terms of land outside of the AONB, besides considering the effect on setting, it states that *“the impact of views back towards the AONB, from outside the AONB ... may be a separate material consideration and subject to separate policy and guidance [to that of para 115 and 116 of the NPPF]. Paragraph 109 of the NPPF for example confirms that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment generally including protecting and enhancing “valued landscapes” which may include landscapes outside of nationally protected landscapes”.*
- 4.3.10 Setting of the Cotswolds AONB is clearly an important factor to consider in relation to the study area and, in particular, the visual relationships between the study area and AONB.

²⁸ Cotswolds Conservation Board Position Statement: Development in the setting of the Cotswolds AONB (Second Revision 2016)

5 Landscape Character of the Study Area

5.1 Identification of Landscape Character Areas

5.1.1 Landscape character assessment can be undertaken at a range of scales from the identification of National Character Areas, through to the assessment of the landscape character of particular sites and down to the scale of field parcels. The method for undertaking landscape character assessment is summarised in **Chapter 3** of this report. Natural England’s guidance, ‘An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment’²⁹, explains the process of undertaking landscape character assessment and how it can be used to inform land use planning. **Figure 3.1** illustrates the various components that together make a landscape. These are under umbrella headings of (i) natural, (ii) cultural and social, and (iii) perceptual and aesthetic factors.

5.1.2 Natural England’s guidance³⁰ includes a definition of landscape character areas. This has been reproduced in **Box 5.1**.

Box 5.1: Landscape types and landscape character areas

Landscape character areas:

- Are the unique individual geographical areas in which landscape types occur;
- Share generic characteristics with other areas of the same type, but have their own particular identity;
- Can often be more readily recognised and identified by non-specialists – sense of place is often important to local people and visitors for example;
- May often be more prevalent than landscape character types, because some types will occur in more than one area;
- Can be identified at each level in the hierarchy of assessment;
- Can provide a good spatially referenced framework from where patterns of local distinctiveness, and factors influencing sense of place, can be drawn; and
- Can be used to develop tailored policies and strategies, that reflect the characteristics that make a given landscape different or special.

²⁹ ibid

³⁰ ibid

- 5.1.3 The desk top assessment and fieldwork has been used to inform the following description of the key features and characteristics of character of the landscape within the study area. During the process of collating and evaluating the baseline information, it became clear that the most useful scale for this assessment was to describe the landscape character of the study area as one Landscape Character Area.

5.2 Location and boundaries

- 5.2.1 The study area is located within the central area of the Leckhampton with Warden Hill Neighbourhood Plan area. The extent of the study area, the subject of this assessment, was discussed with the Neighbourhood Plan team prior to the commencement of the project. The study area has been identified to include those areas of the parish which outside the existing built area. The Neighbourhood Plan area and study area are illustrated on the map provided in **Figure 5.1**, which also shows the locations of many of the designations described here.

5.3 Key characteristics, distinctiveness and features

- 5.3.1 The following paragraphs describe the key landscape characteristics using the headings set out in the Natural England Guidance. The panoramic photographs prepared to inform the assessment of the visual qualities and relationships of the land within the study area also help to illustrate the key landscape characteristics of the study area. The panoramic photographs are provided in **Appendix D**.
- 5.3.2 The locations of the fields named in this section are illustrated on the Landscape Management Plan, **Figure 7.1** in **Chapter 7**.

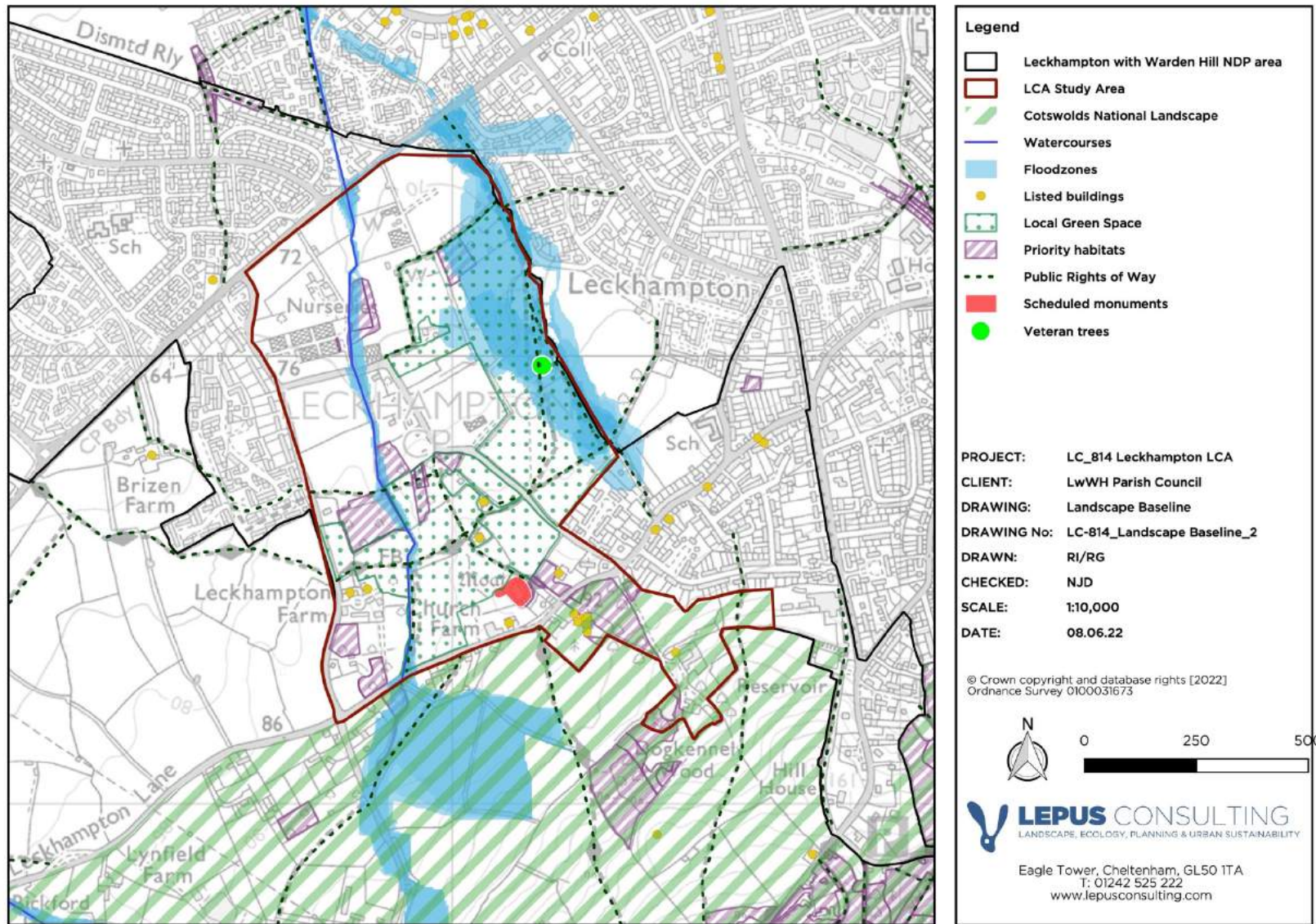


Figure 5.1: Landscape Character Assessment Baseline Map

5.4 Natural factors

Soils

- 5.4.1 Provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) grades are available from Natural England. There are five ALC grades; grade 1 is the best quality land and grade 5 the poorest. ALC Grades 1 to 3a are classified as Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. Provisional mapping does not distinguish between Grades 3a and 3b. A large pocket of Grade 2 BMV agricultural land lies across the majority of the central part of the study area. To the west and south lies Grade 3 land, while to the east the land is classified as Urban. Soilscape mapping³¹ provides an indication of local soil types and shows the majority of the site as having lime-rich loamy and clayey soils with slightly impeded drainage and high soil fertility. The fertile nature of the soil resource is reflected in the current and former land uses within the study area, which include a number of market gardens, traditional orchards and plant nursery businesses.

Hydrology

- 5.4.2 Two watercourses pass through the study area, Hatherley Brook and Moorend Stream.
- 5.4.3 Hatherley Brook crosses through the western half of the study area and flows in a northerly direction from its source on the northern slopes of Leckhampton Hill. The stream enters the study area at Church Road before crossing Kidnappers Lane and exits the study area at Shurdington Road (A46). The brook then travels into Warden Hill and Up Hatherley before reaching the River Severn at Gloucester. Within the study area the stream is lined with mature trees and scrub.
- 5.4.4 Moorend Stream is a smaller watercourse than Hatherley Brook and runs along the eastern boundary of the study area from the south eastern corner of Lotts Meadow to the north eastern corner of the ‘northern fields’. The stream flows in a northerly direction and meets Hatherley Brook within the suburbs of Cheltenham to the west of The Park.
- 5.4.5 Environment Agency Flood Mapping³² shows the extents of Flood Zones 2 and 3 associated with these watercourses and these are reproduced on **Figure 5.1** of this report. The flood zones associated with the Hatherley Brook are relatively narrow and aligned with the watercourse, while Moorend Stream is associated with a wider flood zone occupying a large extent of the fields known as Lotts Meadow.

³¹ Cranfield Soil and Agrifood Institute (no date) Soilscales map. Available at: <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscales/index.cfm> [Date Accessed: 19/05/22]

³² Environment Agency Main Rivers Mapping Available at <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/mapviewer/index.html?layers=292bd32335d34468a57c2cd4fa59759f> [Accessed on 19/05/22]

- 5.4.6 There are also a number of drainage ditches within the study area, located along some of the field boundaries, particularly towards the eastern side of the site.

Land cover

- 5.4.7 The study area has a rural character, reflected in the land cover which is frequently permanent pasture and/or improved grassland. The small to medium sized irregular field parcels are often bounded by hedgerows. At the time of the survey some fields were not being grazed by livestock, with other areas grazed by sheep with some horse grazing to the west of Kidnappers Lane. This could be a reflection of the season; grasslands can be allowed to grow before cutting, followed by animal grazing later in the year. During previous surveys, undertaken in September, many field parcels were found to be grazed by livestock, including sheep and cattle. To the north east of the study area, the field pattern is smaller in scale and is comprised of small holdings used for sheep grazing and keeping poultry, amongst other activities.

Trees

- 5.4.8 Tree cover across the study area includes field boundaries, orchards and sporadic woodland (which forms part of the National Forest Inventory) located north of Kidnappers Lane and to the south of Church Road in proximity to St Peter’s Church and the Leckhampton Court Hospice. Many trees found across the study area are native species, with domestic species associated with residential dwellings, including Horse Chestnut and evergreen conifers.
- 5.4.9 The most significant presence of trees to the north of Church Road are located along Hatherley Brook and Moorend Stream which are lined with ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), oak (*Quercus robur*), numerous white willow (*Salix alba*) and crack willow (*Salix fragilis*). Lotts Meadow has two mature oak trees which give this area a parkland character. Both trees have distinctive characteristics, including large trunk diameters, expansive canopies and numerous cracks and fissures which add to their distinctive character and provide potential bat and invertebrate habitat. Both oak trees have substantial trunk diameters are likely to be of a considerable age. The most northerly of the two oaks has been identified as a veteran tree³³.
- 5.4.10 The NPPF³⁴ defines sets out the importance of protecting “irreplaceable habitats” in decision-making relating to planning applications, including veteran trees. Irreplaceable habitats are described as,

“Habitats which would be technically very difficult (or take a very significant time) to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed, taking into account their age, uniqueness,

³³ <https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/what-we-record-and-why/what-we-record/veteran-trees/>

³⁴ *ibid*

species diversity or rarity. They include ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, blanket bog, limestone pavement, sand dunes, salt marsh and lowland fen”.

- 5.4.11 Part of Kidnappers Lane is lined with mature poplar trees along its western edge. Two Lombardy poplar (*Populus nigra*) trees were located within the grounds of Moat Cottage but one of these has recently been felled after being broken by wind. Many of the individual trees and hedgerow trees are mature in age and there is a need for new tree planting to support the future of the tree stock. In northern fields there are some lines of conifers that contribute to the visual screening of the site, particularly in views to and from the A46.

Hedgerows

- 5.4.12 The study area contains a strong network of hedgerows that define field boundaries. Hedgerows across the area are comprised mostly of blackthorn and hawthorn with hazel and elder. Many hedgerows are tall, up to approximately 5m and contribute to the sense of visual containment, particularly in the smaller field parcels to the north of the study area.

Orchards

- 5.4.13 The study area is likely to have once contained numerous traditional orchards. **Figure 5.1** shows areas of Priority Habitats identified by Natural England, including seven Traditional Orchards. Orchards are an important habitat for biodiversity as they support a wide range of wildlife³⁵ and are attractive element, contributing to landscape character.
- 5.4.14 During the field visits, old orchard trees were observed in the smallholdings in the northern part of the study area, as well as close to Leckhampton Farm Court. To the north east of the Church Road junction with Farm Lane a group of old orchard trees can be observed. To the south of Church Road there is a group of old perry pear trees that are protected by Tree Preservation Orders and probably part of the orchards that are shown as covering much more of the area in maps from the eighteenth century and later.

5.5 Cultural and social

Built form and associated land uses

- 5.5.1 There were formerly three garden nurseries located along Kidnappers Lane. These sites had associated glasshouses, outbuildings and land holdings. The former nurseries to the north of the site, bounded by the A46, have now been allocated for housing development in the Cheltenham Plan under planning policy MD4, which also allocates land for a new secondary school. A copy of this policy is provided in **Chapter 2**. The policy states that the proposals will be required to respect the existing urban and rural characteristics of the area and respect the visual sensitivity and landscape character of the area as part of the setting to the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

³⁵ DEFRA (2008) UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat Descriptions – Traditional Orchards. Accessed on 25/05/22. Available at: http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/UKBAP_BAPHabitats-56-TraditionalOrchards.pdf

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- 5.5.2 At the time of the field survey in May 2022 development of the High School Leckhampton had commenced and development of the proposed housing to the north of Kidnappers Lane had not commenced. The school development had progressed to the clearance of the site and construction of many elements of the new buildings. The details shown under planning application number 19/0058/CHR3MJ for the new secondary school show the southern parts of the site will be developed for sports pitches, including a multi-use sports pitch; the sports pitches would be likely to be floodlit at times.
- 5.5.3 In the central part of Kidnappers Lane the Newlands site is currently being cleared. This site has planning permission for the development of 22 homes. The homes will be developed in a central location within this field parcel. The mature vegetation surrounding the development site would be retained and this is likely to serve to filter views towards the new properties. A further application for the development of five houses has been submitted on a land parcel associated with a bungalow called ‘Charletyne’. The application for planning permission had not been determined at the time of preparing this report.
- 5.5.4 Other residential prosperities are found scattered through the study area. There are three, detached residential properties on the west side of Kidnappers Lane. One of these properties, Cherrington Nurseries, operates as a small plant nursery-related business.
- 5.5.5 There is a pair of semi-detached residential properties within Robinswood Field, accessed by a rough track that also serves the fields and is a public footpath. Three other residential properties are located in the south-central area, two of which, Moat Cottage and Field Cottage, are visually attractive Grade II Listed Buildings and date from 16th/ 17th century. Both cottages are visually notable, having a traditional timber frame with render and thatched roofs. These buildings are set in attractive domestic gardens and in a wider rural setting.
- 5.5.6 The planning permission for the High School Leckhampton require ecological mitigation to be provided off site on the fields to the east of these cottages and the west of Kidnappers Lane. The planting proposals appear to be implemented and these fields will be managed in the future to maintain and enhance the biodiversity interest of the grassland and the native shrubby boundary vegetation.
- 5.5.7 A children’s nursery (Nursery Rhymes) is located on Kidnappers Lane and the gardens occupy a corner location. There are a number of fruit trees in the grounds, creating an orchard.
- 5.5.8 The central-western part of Kidnappers Lane accommodates land uses relating to keeping horses, including grazed pasture with post and rail fencing, reinforcing the rural characteristics of the landscape.

- 5.5.9 There is a scattering of, mostly detached, residential properties located on the section of Church Road within the study area, often set in spacious gardens. The Church Farm Business Centre is located on Church Road to the south of the study area and can often be seen from the public right of way network in the adjacent fields.
- 5.5.10 There is a small group of residential properties at Leckhampton Farm Court, to the south west of the area, adjacent to Farm Lane.
- 5.5.11 The study area is surrounded by residential properties to the north and north west at Warden Hill and Up Hatherley and to the east and south east at Leckhampton. Burrow's Sports Field, with a bike track and playground, borders the eastern extent of the study area.
- 5.5.12 Recent residential development at the Brizen Park site lies outside the study area to the west, adjacent to Farm Lane, with an access from Leckhampton Lane and from Farm Lane. While some boundary vegetation has been retained, particularly on Farm Lane, the character of these roads and the views from them have been changed by this recent development to include more built form and suburban landscape characteristics.

Public Rights of Way

- 5.5.13 The study area contains an extensive network of public rights of way (PRoW), this includes public footpaths and the Cheltenham Circular Footpath (promoted route) which passes through the southern part of the study area, from St Peter's Church past the moat and Moat Cottage and then west to Farm Lane.
- 5.5.14 The central fields also have a rich network of smaller footpaths, a point emphasised by planning inspectors in recommending against development in some locations within the study area. Comments from the Planning Inspectors are provided in **Appendix B**. There is a circular walk, referred to as the Leckhampton Fields Circular Walk that provides a two mile circuit of the fields as well as the Leckhampton Local History Society Walk, which follows a circular route through much of the study area. There are various smaller circuits and also a figure of eight circuit, also noted in evidence to inspectors. As well as the public footpaths, there are also other routes on the fields that are open grazing land. Lotts Meadow contains three public footpaths, this includes a footpath that runs adjacent to Moorend Stream.
- 5.5.15 While the public rights of way form the formal footpath network across the area, there is evidence of informal use of various routes across Lotts Meadow as well as across the fields to the south surrounding Moat Cottage.
- 5.5.16 The wider area also contains good numbers of PRoW, this includes the Cotswolds Way National Trail which skirts the escarpment of the Cotswolds AONB at Leckhampton Hill.

Listed Buildings

- 5.5.17 There are a number of Listed Buildings located across the study area.

- 5.5.18 The Church of St Peter and the Lych Gate are Grade II* Listed Buildings located to the southern side of Church Road. The church yard also includes numerous Grade II Listed monuments. Leckhampton Court is a Grade II* Listed Building dating from the 14th century and extended in the 16th and 18th centuries.
- 5.5.19 Two Listed Buildings are located north of Church Road, these are ‘Church Farmhouse’ and ‘The Rectory’ (Grade II).
- 5.5.20 Moat Cottage and Field Cottage (listed as ‘Olde England’) are both located within close proximity of each other. They are accessed via an unnamed road off Kidnappers Lane. As described above, these cottages are visually attractive having thatched roofs with low eaves and constructed with a timber frame with render infill.
- 5.5.21 Two Grade II Listed Buildings are located at Leckhampton Farm Court, adjacent to Farm Lane. These are ‘Leckhampton Farmhouse’ and ‘Barn circa 10 metres west of Leckhampton Farmhouse’.

Conservation Areas

- 5.5.22 The study area is not located within a conservation area. Cheltenham’s central conservation area is located approximately 150m from the northern boundary of the study area.

Scheduled Ancient Monuments

- 5.5.23 A Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) is located within a field to the north of Church Farm. This is the ‘Moated site and fishponds at Church Farm’. Pottery of the 12th and 13th century has been recovered as well as roof ridge tiles from the 14th and 16th centuries. The remains of a wooden bridge with stone abutments dating from the first half of the 14th century have also been revealed³⁶.

Historic trackway

- 5.5.24 There is also a wide ditch north of Moat Cottage that is believed to be the remnants of a Medieval track that came from St Peter’s Church and Leckhampton Manor (built around 1315) and that continued north-west along what is now Kidnappers Lane.

³⁶ Historic England (2017) Moated site and fishponds at Church Farm. Accessed on 24/05/22. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1016994>

5.6 Aesthetic and Perceptual

- 5.6.1 Many parts of the study area have a strong rural feel, being characterised by small to medium sized fields with an irregular field pattern. The hedgerow network and watercourses are associated with strong vegetation including shrubs and trees which serve to restrict views of nearby development from many locations creating a verdant feel and, often, a vegetated setting to built form, where it is visible.
- 5.6.2 During the field work, it became evident that footpaths in the northern and eastern parts of the study area, including the smallholdings and Robinswood Field, along Moorend Stream, in Lotts Meadow and the loop by Moat Cottage are well-used used by walkers, including dog walkers.
- 5.6.3 There are a number of outbuildings and sheds associated with the small holdings, some of which appear to be in poor condition, creating an informal, rural character to some of the northern parts of the study area.
- 5.6.4 The escarpment forming Leckhampton Hill, within the Cotswolds NL, is visible across much of the study area and there is a strong visual intervisibility between the study area and the nationally designated landscape. Visual characteristics are considered in more detail in section 5.7.
- 5.6.5 Tranquillity across the study area is generally good, despite the proximity of Shurdington Road (A46) and Church Road, which are well used by vehicles. The construction operations associated with both the Brizen Farm development site to the west of Farm Lane (outside the study area) and the secondary school site to the east of Farm Lane are temporary aural detractors. It is likely that noise, lighting and activity associated with the operation of both of these sites in the future will reduce the sense of tranquillity to some extent in areas in proximity to these locations.
- 5.6.6 The central part of the study area is generally quiet and peaceful with audible birdsong and only some distant noise from traffic, despite the nearby construction works. Despite high traffic levels in the locality, vehicle noise is relatively low and views are often rural in character with only occasional views of built form.

5.7 Visual characteristics

- 5.7.1 The viewpoint locations have been chosen to illustrate the range of visual characteristics of the study area. They offer a range of views taking in several different aspects around the area of search. For each illustrated photograph, a panoramic view is illustrated using an equivalent focal length of 50mm. All pictures have been taken at an eye level of approximately 150cm.
- 5.7.2 **Appendix C** provides details of the viewpoint locations and the panoramic photographs, representing the view at each location, can be found in **Appendix D**.

- 5.7.3 It should be noted that the following visual appraisal is based on foliage present in May 2022. It is possible that there would be greater intervisibility between different parts of the study area during the winter months when foliage cover is reduced, however, the strength of the boundary vegetation in many locations is likely to help to filter views when the vegetation is not in leaf.

5.8 Typical visual receptors

Outdoor recreational receptors

- 5.8.1 GLVIA3 suggests that outdoor recreational receptors are classified as being highly sensitive to changes in the landscape, especially those associated with enjoying the landscape as part of their recreational experience. Outdoor recreational receptors include cyclists, horse riders and walkers.
- 5.8.2 The study area contains good numbers of PRoW which offer wide ranging views across the area and strong visual connections to the Cotswolds NL.
- 5.8.3 A network of public footpaths (including the Cheltenham Circular Footpath) connect Kidnappers Lane with Farm Lane and Church Road. From these public footpaths, users have opportunities to experience views with a strong rural character. When looking east and north, views are characterised by small to medium field parcels of grassland/pasture, with strong native boundary vegetation, such as hedgerows and willows lining watercourses, represented by **Viewpoint 1**. There are scattered rural dwellings in the views, including views towards the thatched roofs of Listed Buildings called Moat Cottage and Field Cottage which enhance the rural character of the view and sense of time depth in the landscape, as represented by **Viewpoint 2**. Looking south from this part of the study area, there are frequent opportunities to experience views towards the escarpment forming Leckhampton Hill within the nationally designated landscape as represented by **Viewpoint 3** (within the fields in proximity to Moat Cottage) and **Viewpoint 4** (Kidnappers Lane). These views have a strong rural character with few landscape detractors. The meadows/pasture lie in the foreground, with vegetated field boundaries frequently forming the middle ground to the view. The rising land of the Cotswolds Hills forms an attractive undulating skyline.
- 5.8.4 To the north of Kidnappers Lane, the study area is crossed by several footpaths. The three public footpaths located within Lotts Meadow offer clear views across the meadow and towards Leckhampton Hill beyond the residential properties at Vineries Close. These views are represented by **Viewpoints 5** and **6**. These views also have a strong rural character with few landscape detractors. In views to the south of this area there are some occasions where views include residential development located off Church Road and Kidnappers Lane, particularly where the boundaries to these properties have weaker vegetation.

- 5.8.5 The public footpath which runs to the south of the allocated site (under Policy MD4) is generally enclosed by trees and hedgerows but offers occasional, filtered views to the south towards the Cotswolds. **Viewpoint 7** illustrates a view from this right of way, although it is partially restricted by the chain link fence along the eastern side of the path. Views across Robinswood Field are represented **Viewpoint 8**, from where views are characterised by fields of pasture surrounded by vegetation in the foreground, with the Cotswold Hills visible, forming the skyline.
- 5.8.6 **Viewpoints 10, 11, 12 and 13** represent views from the Cotswolds NL towards the study area. Using the guidance provided in GLVIA3, visual receptors at these viewpoints are considered to be amongst the most sensitive to change in the view. These visual receptors are likely to be undertaking recreational activities in a designated landscape, where views of the landscape are a key part of the recreational experience. This is particularly the case for those people following the Cotswold Way National Trail, represented by **Viewpoint 13**.
- 5.8.7 In these elevated views, the study area is clearly visible and creates a soft transition between the designated landscape of the Cotswolds Hills NL and the settlement edge at the southern extent of Cheltenham. The study area forms part of the setting to the designated landscape and changes to the landscape within the study area have the potential to affect some of the identified special qualities of the NL. The recent development at Brizen Farm is a clearly visible element in these views and its unbroken roofscape is a noticeable element which appears to project into the surrounding rural landscape.

Road users

- 5.8.8 GLVIA suggests that drivers and other road users in motor vehicles are considered as medium to high level visual receptors, depending on the reason for the being in the location.
- 5.8.9 The study area is bound to the north by Shurdington Road (A46), partially by Merlin Way to the east, partially by Church Road to the south and by Farm Lane to the west. Kidnappers Lane also crosses through the centre of the study area.

- 5.8.10 Views into northern parts of the study area are unrestricted from some parts of Shurdington Road (A46), represented by **Viewpoint 9**. From this location, the elevated ridgeline of the Cotswolds NL, forms an impressive backdrop on the horizon. Opportunities to enjoy views towards the Cotswolds NL from this location have been specifically referred to by Planning Inspectors as being worthy of protection (see Inspector Ord’s comments in **Appendix B**). The area to the south of Shurdington Road in this location has been allocated for housing development under Policy MD4. This policy requires the detailed proposals for the site to provide a “*layout and form of development that respects the visual sensitivity and landscape character of the site as part of the setting for the AONB*” and that “*Development at this location will need to ensure that the JCS examination’s consideration and findings related to this site are fully taken into account*”. These comments are set out in **Appendix B** of this report and include the need to protect views towards the Cotswolds escarpment from the corner of the A46 and Kidnappers Lane, as well as the need for future proposals to respect the more sensitive areas identified in the Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Plan, also provided in **Appendix B**.
- 5.8.11 At the time of undertaking the field survey in May 2022, access to Kidnappers Lane from the A46 was restricted and the road side in proximity to this location was being used for materials and equipment storage to facilitate on-going construction work.
- 5.8.12 Views across the study area from Farm Lane and Kidnappers Lane are often filtered by the strong network of mature hedgerows and trees. Occasional gaps in the hedgerow offer glimpsed views into the study area (such as at **Viewpoint 4**). The character of views from both of these roads is undergoing a process of change as a consequence of recently permitted development, including the residential development at Brizen Farm, immediately to the west of Farm Lane, and the High School Leckhampton to the east of Farm Lane and within the study area, both of which increase the level of built form visible in views from these local roads, particularly Farm Lane. The retention of existing mature vegetation, including mature trees and hedgerows, helps to soften the impact of the development in the views from Farm Lane and maintain a some of the rural characteristics of the view. Views from Kidnappers Lane are also likely to change in the future as the permitted development of 22 houses at the ‘Newlands’ site are developed. Views towards these houses are filtered from some locations on Kidnappers Lane by a strong line of coniferous trees. While this domestic tree species does not positively contribute to the key rural characteristics of the area, this type of planting is likely to serve to soften views of the future built form.
- 5.8.13 Views into the study area from Merlin Way are highly filtered by the mature vegetation in the local context. The study area is also occasionally visible from the road named ‘Leckhampton Hill’ to the south of the study area within the Cotswolds NL. Views from this direction are represented by **Viewpoint 10** and **11** and the character of the views from these locations has been described above.

Residential receptors

- 5.8.14 Landscape assessment and the best practice guidance provided in GLVIA3, focuses on the assessment of public views and public visual amenity. The Landscape Institute’s Technical Guidance Note on Residential Visual Amenity Assessment³⁷ recognises that the planning system is designed to act in the public interest although there are occasions when private interests are considered,

“Changes in views and visual amenity are considered in the planning process. In respect of private views and visual amenity, it is widely known that, no one has ‘a right to a view.’ This includes situations where a residential property’s outlook / visual amenity is judged to be ‘significantly’ affected by a proposed development, a matter which has been confirmed in a number of appeal / public inquiry decisions...”

- 5.8.15 GLVIA3 suggests that, although views from residential dwellings are often not protected by the planning system, residential receptors are likely to be of **high** sensitivity to changes in views, particularly from rooms and locations within the curtilage of the property that are frequently used during the day.
- 5.8.16 Views into the study area from surrounding residential receptors are varied. Views from the north at Warden Hill are well screened by a hedgerow with trees along the northern side of Shurdington Road (A46). Views from the east are well screened by the line of vegetation and trees that are located along Moorend Stream.
- 5.8.17 Views from houses on the northern side of Vineries Close (to the south east of the study area) look over and into Lotts Meadow. Views from Rectory Court (located to the south of Vineries Close) also look over and into parts of the study area.
- 5.8.18 Views from properties located along the eastern extent of Church Road may experience glimpsed views through trees in their associated gardens and in field boundaries. Views from properties located along the western extent of Church Road (to the east of the Farm Lane and Crippetts Lane road junction) may experience glimpsed views through trees in their front gardens and also by the hedgerow with trees along the northern side of Church Road. This hedgerow is however, gappy in places. Views from upstairs windows are likely to experience clearer views of the study area, particularly during winter months. Views from properties along Church Road are generally restricted to the southern part of the study area.
- 5.8.19 Properties at Leckhampton Farm Court look directly into the study area, this includes Leckhampton Farmhouse (Grade II Listed Building). Views from this location are generally restricted to land west of Hatherley Brook.

³⁷ Landscape Institute (2019) “Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) Technical Guidance Note 2/19 Available at <https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2019/03/tgn-02-2019-rvaa.pdf> [Accessed on 19/01/21]

- 5.8.20 Views from properties located along the western edge of Farm Lane and Kidnappers Lane are likely to experience views from upstairs windows which may look over the mature hedgerow along the western boundary of the study area.

6 Evaluation of landscape value

6.1 What is landscape value?

6.1.1 The definition of landscape value, particularly in relation to landscapes which lie outside a national landscape designation, has been subject to much discussion amongst landscape assessment practitioners since the term was used in the 2019 National Planning Policy Framework.

6.1.2 In 2021, the Landscape Institute published a Technical Guidance Note (TGN), ‘Assessing landscape value outside national designations’³⁸ and the advice provided has been used to inform this assessment of the landscape value of the study area. The TGN does not seek to provide an evaluative methodology to replace that provided in other advisory documents, such as Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Sensitivity Assessment and the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (as referenced in **Chapter 3** of this report). The TGN does, however, set out a series of factors to consider when identifying landscape value (Table 1 of the TGN 02/21 see **Appendix E**). These indicators have been used to form the basis of this assessment. The TGN also sets out some useful definitions relating to the assessment of landscape value.

6.1.3 The study area considered by this report is illustrated on **Figure 5.1**. Part of the study area lies to south of Church Road and within the Cotswolds NL. This assessment of landscape value applies to those parts of the study area which lie outside the national landscape designation.

6.2 Useful definitions (from TGN 02/22)

Landscape qualities: The characteristics or features that are valued

“This term is being used to distinguish landscape qualities from landscape characteristics which are elements, or combinations of elements, which make a particular contribution to landscape character. Landscape qualities (in the sense meant in this TGN) are usually referred to as ‘special qualities’ or ‘special landscape qualities’ in relation to nationally designated landscapes. For example, ‘special qualities’ is a statutory expression used in relation to National Parks, in policy for Scotland’s local landscape designations, and is a term used informally to describe components of natural beauty set out in AONB Management Plans”.

³⁸ Landscape Institute (2021) ‘Technical Guidance Note 02/21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designation’ Available at <https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2021/05/tgn-02-21-assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations.pdf> [Date accessed 27/05/22]

Landscape value: The relative value or importance attached to different landscapes by society on account of their landscape qualities (see Table 1).

“The definition of landscape value used in this TGN draws on, and is compatible with, the GLVIA3 definition of landscape value as well as Natural England’s definition (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, 2013; Tudor, 2014). The definition makes it clear that it is ‘society’ that assigns value to landscapes. However, landscape value means more than popularity and the Landscape Institute suggests that value assessments should be undertaken by a landscape professional, drawing on evidence from stakeholders where available”.

6.2.1 THE TGN goes on to state,

“Landscape value can be assessed as an evaluation stage of a landscape character assessment or as a follow-on study. In this case landscape qualities will be identified in relation to individual character areas or types. Currently these are commonly described as ‘valued landscape characteristics’ or ‘landscape qualities’.

The relative importance to be attached to each indicator is likely to vary across different landscapes. Once evidence for each factor has been collated and assessed, it is important to step back and judge the overall ‘weight of evidence’ in coming to an overall judgement on landscape value.

While condition/intactness of a landscape is one factor that can influence value, poor landscape management should not be a reason to deny a landscape a valued status if other factors indicate value”.

6.3 Inspectors’ comments relating to the landscape value of the study area

6.3.1 The landscape qualities and value of the study area have been subject to consideration through various local plan and joint planning processes and through numerous planning applications which have come forward over many years. **Appendix B** of this report summarises comments from Planning Inspectors relating to the landscape value of the study area.

6.3.2 The comments recognise the distinctive and valued landscape and visual characteristics of the study area. Of note is the Secretary of State’s letter prepared in relation to the 2016 appeal, which includes the conclusion that,

“Though not designated, the site is clearly a locally valued landscaped which paragraph 109 of the Framework states should be protected”.

6.4 JCS Landscape Sensitivity Study

- 6.4.1 A ‘Landscape Characterisation Assessment and Sensitivity Analysis’³⁹ was prepared to support the preparation of the Joint Core Strategy for the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury local planning authorities. The study area lies in area C1, which is described as,

C1: Leckhampton (north): High - medium sensitivity

This compartment tends to be intimate and textural in nature which lends a sense of local distinctiveness. Rough pasture, small-medium irregular field pattern, independent nurseries (some of which are dilapidated), period properties, structurally diverse vegetated boundaries, orchards, ditches and the Hatherley Brook create varying degrees of enclosure and visual interest. Although maintenance and condition of features varies; the rural character is interspersed with formal/ornamental garden planting; and some buildings and boundaries appear in a state of disrepair the zone provides important continuity of the AONB landscape and an amenity resource for local residents.

- 6.4.2 The reasons for the assessment of the area as being of ‘high-medium sensitivity’ include:

- Localised historic significance - moated site, ridge and furrow, traditional/period buildings;
- Unkempt appearance and limited views within the site;
- High doorstep amenity value – including a network of public footpaths;
- Quite tranquil considering proximity to built form and A46;
- Important green/rural buffer between Cheltenham and AONB - readily viewed from the AONB;
- Diverse vegetation structure with potential for high biodiversity.

6.5 Evaluation of the landscape value of the study area

- 6.5.1 The following provides a summary of the assessment of the value of the landscape within the study based on the indicators provided in Table 1 of the TGN 02/21. The ‘Definition’ and ‘Examples of indicators’ for each category have been taken from TGN 02/21.

- 6.5.2 The assessment takes into consideration previous studies and Inspector’s comments relating to the value of the landscape in the study area, as well as the findings of Lepus’ field work and landscape character assessments undertaken in 2017 and 2022.

³⁹ Tewkesbury Borough Council , Gloucester City Council and Cheltenham Borough Council (undated) ‘Landscape Characterisation and Sensitivity Analysis) Available at https://www.gloucester.gov.uk/media/1842/jcs_landscape_characterisation_assessment_and_sensitivity_analysis_septem.pdf [Date accessed 25/05/22]

Table.6.1: Natural heritage indicators

Natural heritage definition	
Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape.	
Examples of indicators	Commentary on the expression of this indicator in the study area
Presence of wildlife and habitats of ecological interest that contribute to sense of place.	<p>There are a variety of habitats across the study area, including evidence of traditional orchards, native hedgerows, semi-improved grassland and watercourses.</p> <p>Lotts Meadow has two free standing Oak trees. The more northerly Oak of the two has been identified as a Veteran tree with a trunk diameter of over 5m. Veteran trees are not as old as ancient trees, but have a number of similar features, including cracks and crevices, which often create habitats for protected species, such as bats, owls or nesting birds, for example as well as being highly likely to support a diverse range of invertebrates.</p> <p>Priority Habitats are identified on Natural England’s mapping, including seven Traditional Orchards and areas of Deciduous Woodland. The presence of the orchards may reflect the high soil fertility in the study area.</p> <p>The planning application accompanying the development of the High School Leckhampton was accompanied by ecological surveys which found the presence of a dormouse in proximity to Farm Lane, which are a protected species. The habitats in the study area may help to support dormice, in particular hazel coppice, hazel dominated hedgerows and areas of bramble.</p> <p>Lotts Meadow was found to support a reptile population, namely slow worms.</p> <p>Various species of bats were found to forage in the open fields and along the hedgerow network, including Common pipistrelle, Soprano pipistrelle, Noctules, Natterer’s and Whiskered/ Brandt’s bats.</p> <p>Badgers and their setts have been recorded in proximity to Hatherley Brook and several species of birds of conservation concern listed under the RSPB Red List were recorded on the site during the breeding bird surveys undertaken by Hankinson Duckett Associates in 2011.</p>
Extent and survival of semi-natural habitat that is characteristic of the landscape type	<p>Semi-natural habitats present across the study area which are characteristic of the Settled Unwooded Vale LCT include: a well-connected network of mixed native hedgerows, including hedgerow trees; semi-improved grassland; and freshwater/watercourses. These features combine to create a strong landscape pattern of small to medium-sized, irregular field parcels.</p>

Presence of distinctive geological, geomorphological or pedological features	The study area lies at the footslopes of the escarpment to the Cotswolds Hills, which allows user opportunities to appreciate this geomorphological feature, one of the identified Special Qualities of the Cotswolds AONB. Local walking guides for the study area, such as the Leckhampton Local History Society Walk, provide information for walkers to them help to identify geomorphological features.
Landscape which contains valued natural capital assets that contribute to ecosystem services, for example distinctive ecological communities and habitats that form the basis of ecological networks	<p>The strong network of native hedgerows and watercourses facilitates the movement of wildlife through the landscape.</p> <p>Improved grassland maintained by grazing livestock supporting foraging for a range of vertebrate and invertebrate species.</p> <p>Watercourses and associated flood zones facilitating natural surface water management.</p> <p>Grade 2 agricultural land which has the potential to support food growing, such as allotments, nurseries and orchards.</p>
Landscape which makes an identified contribution to a nature recovery/ green infrastructure network.	The study area has a strong network of semi-natural habitats and good public rights of way network, supporting a range of multifunctional benefits that Green Infrastructure can provide, such as good ecological networks, access to informal recreational opportunities which benefit health and well-being in proximity to local residents, as well as supporting natural surface water management.
Conclusion	The landscape of the study area expresses a good level of special qualities in this category and is considered to have value in relation to natural heritage indicators.

Table 6.2: Cultural heritage indicators

Cultural heritage definition	
Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape.	
Examples of indicators	Commentary on the expression of this indicator in the study area
Presence of historic landmark structures or designed landscape elements (e.g. follies, monuments, avenues, tree roundels).	St Peters Church and the Lych Gate are Grade II* Listed. The church and its spire are landmark features that can be seen in many views from within the study area, as well as from the elevated landscape of the Cotswolds escarpment. There are numerous Listed monuments within the church yard, some of which date to the medieval period, creating a strong sense of time depth to the local landscape. Leckhampton Court Hospice is a Grade II* Listed Building, and forms a notable building in some views, particularly from footpaths on the footslopes and escarpment. These buildings and their landscape settings also enhance the visual interest in views from Church Road.

<p>Presence of historic parks and gardens, and designed landscapes.</p>	<p>None known to be present.</p>
<p>Landscape which contributes to the significance of heritage assets, for example forming the setting of heritage assets (especially if identified in specialist studies).</p>	<p>There are several heritage features located within the study area where the local landscape is likely to contribute to the significance of the heritage asset.</p> <p>St Peters Church and the Lych Gate and Leckhampton Court are both Grade II* Listed Buildings. These buildings are often visible in the landscape and contribute to the sense of time-depth. Moat Cottage and Field Cottage are both Listed Buildings, dating from the 17th century and are accessed from Kidnappers Lane. The cottages may lie along the route of a former historic track. These cottages are visually attractive having thatched roofs with low eaves and constructed with a timber frame with render infill. The surrounding open fields, crossed by numerous rights of way, provide opportunities for the public to enjoy views of these cottages in a rural setting.</p> <p>Four other Listed Buildings are located in the study area. ‘Church Farm’ and ‘The Rectory’ are located to the north of Church Road and there are two further listed buildings located at Leckhampton Farm Court, adjacent to Farm Lane, these are ‘Leckhampton Farmhouse’ and ‘Barn circa 10 metres west of Leckhampton Farmhouse’.</p> <p>A Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) is located within a field to the north of Church Farm. This is the ‘Moated site and fishponds at Church Farm’. Pottery from the 12th and 13th century has been recovered and roof tiles of 14th 16th century date. The remains of a wooden bridge with stone abutments dating from the first half of the 14th century have also been revealed⁴⁰.</p> <p>St Peter’s Church, Leckhampton Court, Moat Cottage and Field Cottage indicate the location and layout of the medieval settlement and this group of features are set within an attractive rural setting which enhances opportunities for the public today to appreciate these historic assets. The areas of ridge and furrow, visible on the slopes to the south of Leckhampton Court (and outside the study area) enhance the appreciation of the historic characteristics of this landscape.</p>

⁴⁰ Historic England (2017) Moated site and fishponds at Church Farm. Accessed on 24/05/22. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1016994>

<p>Landscape which offers a dimension of time depth. This includes natural time depth, e.g. presence of features such as glaciers and peat bogs and cultural time depth e.g. presence of relic farmsteads, ruins, historic field patterns, historic rights of way (e.g. drove roads, salt ways, tracks associated with past industrial activity).</p>	<p>Leckhampton Local History Society produce regular Research Bulletins which collate various sources of historic information relating to the parish. Research Bulletin Number 1⁴¹ includes an article describing the historic field patterns found within the parish. The accompanying plan, reproduced from a plan dating from 1778, illustrates tracks and field patterns that appear to be able to be reflected in the landscape pattern seen today. These historic landscape patterns include the approximate routes of what are now Kidnappers Lane and Farm Lane and the alignment of the Hatherley Brook and Moorend Stream. The locations of the Listed Buildings, including the farmsteads at Leckhampton Farmhouse and Church Farmhouse appear to be marked.</p> <p>Historic mapping dating from 1884⁴² reflects many of the current field boundaries and routes of public rights of way across the study area, creating a good sense of time depth to the landscape.</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>The landscape of the study area expresses a good level of special qualities in this category and is considered to have value in relation to cultural heritage indicators.</p>

Table 6.3: Landscape condition indicators

<p>Landscape condition definition</p> <p>Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure</p>	
<p>Examples of indicators</p>	<p>Commentary on the expression of this indicator in the study area</p>
<p>Good physical condition/ intactness of individual landscape elements (e.g. walls, parkland, trees)</p>	<p>There are examples of landscape elements in good condition, for example, the vegetation associated with watercourses is often willow, which appears to be regularly managed by coppicing and/or pollarding. The mature Oak trees in Lotts Meadow are attractive and well maintained. Most of the grasslands/meadows are maintained through traditional livestock grazing.</p> <p>Domestic properties and their gardens, where visible, are often well maintained.</p>
<p>Good health of elements such as good water quality, good soil health</p>	<p>The presence of former nurseries and traditional orchards indicates that local soils were generally fertile and many areas are likely to be ALC Grade 2 land.</p>
<p>Strong landscape structure (e.g. intact historic field patterns)</p>	<p>The study area has a strong landscape structure, often comprising mature native vegetation, usually associated with historic field boundaries and watercourses.</p>

⁴¹ [https://leckhamptonlhs.weebly.com/uploads/5/8/8/7/5887234/bulletin_no_1_pdf\(1\).pdf](https://leckhamptonlhs.weebly.com/uploads/5/8/8/7/5887234/bulletin_no_1_pdf(1).pdf)

⁴² Available at https://www.francisfrith.com/leckhampton/leckhampton-1884_hosm50975 [Date accessed 08/06/22]

<p>Absence of detracting/ incongruous features (or features are present but have little influence)</p>	<p>Recent planning permissions within and in proximity to the study area have introduced a greater level of built form in the locality. However, the strong landscape structure created by mature vegetation associated with field boundaries and watercourses serves to limit opportunities for views towards the built form, particularly in the summer months when vegetation is in leaf. There are a few informal buildings and structures associated with the small holdings and former nurseries, particularly towards the north of the site, which are used, although may benefit from greater maintenance. In general visual detractors are few and do not substantially influence the special qualities of the study area.</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>The landscape condition of the study area is generally good. Landscape elements, such as trees and grasslands are managed well and there are few landscape detractors which adversely impact the visual character of the study area.</p>

Table 6.4: Associations indicators

<p>Associations definition</p> <p>Landscape which is connected with notable people, events and the arts</p>	
<p>Examples of indicators</p>	<p>Commentary on the expression of this indicator in the study area</p>
<p>Associations with well-known literature, poetry, art, TV/film and music that contribute to perceptions of the landscape</p>	<p>The views from the Cotswold Hills, overlooking the study area have been captured by many artists including the unknown 1840s watercolourist who captured the iconic 19th century view of Cheltenham from the hill, now in the Wilson art gallery⁴³</p> <p>Contemporary artists Daisy Clayton and Toby Moate have also both used the views available from Leckhampton Hill towards Cheltenham and across the study area to inspire their work.</p>
<p>Associations with science or other technical achievements</p>	<p>None known.</p>
<p>Links to a notable historical event</p>	<p>None known</p>
<p>Associations with a famous person or people</p>	<p>Artist, naturalist, surgeon and arctic explorer Dr Edward Wilson (1872-1912) who died with Scott in Antarctica and whose statue stands in the Promenade. Wilson spent his childhood at the Crippetts Farm, Leckhampton, is likely to have known the study area well and looked down on it from his home on the hill. He developed his love of art and the natural world in Leckhampton. Wilson is buried in St Peter’s churchyard.</p>

⁴³ <https://agmlib.cheltenham.gov.uk/Details/collect/10471>

Conclusion

The landscape of the study area expresses a good level of special qualities in this category and is considered to have value in relation to connections to notable people and the arts.

Table 6.5: Distinctiveness indicators

Distinctiveness definition	
Landscape that has a strong sense of identity	
Examples of indicators	Commentary on the expression of this indicator in the study area
Landscape character that has a strong sense of place (showing strength of expression of landscape characteristics)	<p>The landscape of the study area has a strong landscape pattern formed by the mature vegetation associated with field boundaries and watercourses, which follow historic alignments.</p> <p>Many of the field parcels are traditionally managed as grasslands or meadows thorough livestock grazing.</p>
Presence of distinctive features which are identified as being characteristic of a particular place	There are a number of historic listed features associated with the medieval period, including thatched cottages and a moated feature, possibly associated with a sunken trackway connecting to St Peter’s Church.
Presence of rare or unusual features, especially those that help to confer a strong sense of place or identity	In addition to the historic features identified above, there is also a Veteran tree located in Lotts Meadow, identified for its historic interest and presence of features that may provide habitats for wildlife, such as bats, birds and invertebrates.
Landscape which makes an important contribution to the character or identity of a settlement	<p>The landscape in the study area lies at the southern edge of the settlement of Cheltenham and contributes to the sense of arrival in the town for users of Shurdington Road (A46) and for those approaching the town from Church Road.</p> <p>The study area also contributes to views of the town from Leckhampton Hill, within the Cotswolds NL, and helps to form a soft, well vegetated transition between the designated landscape and the settlement edge.</p>
Settlement gateways/approaches which provides a clear sense of arrival and contribute to the character of the settlement (may be ancient/historic)	Church Road lies within the southern part of the study area. Users of this road, arriving in Cheltenham, often experience views with a rural character, with vegetated road verges, mature trees, views towards meadows and historic buildings, built from traditional building materials including limestone.
Conclusion	The landscape of the study area expresses a good level of distinctive special qualities.

Table 6.6: Recreation indicators

Recreation definition	
Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important	
Examples of indicators	Commentary on the expression of this indicator in the study area
Presence of open access land, common land and public rights of way (particularly National Trails, long distance trails, Coastal Paths and Core Paths) where appreciation of landscape is a feature	<p>The study area contains an extensive network of public rights of way, including the Cheltenham Circular Footpath (a promoted route circling Cheltenham) which passes through the southern part of the study area, from St Peter’s Church past the moat and Moat Cottage and then west to Farm Lane.</p> <p>The central fields have a rich network of smaller footpaths. There is a circular walk, referred to as the Leckhampton Fields Circular Walk that provides a two mile circuit of the fields as well as the Leckhampton Local History Society Walk, which follows a circular route through much of the study area. There are various smaller circuits within the study area, frequently used by walkers. Lotts Meadow contains three public footpaths, this includes a footpath that runs adjacent to Moarend Stream.</p> <p>While the public rights of way form the formal footpath network across the area, there is evidence of informal use of various routes across Lotts Meadow as well as across the fields to the south surrounding Moat Cottage.</p> <p>The public rights of way across the study are well-connected to the wider network of rights of way, including the Cotswolds Way National Trail which skirts the escarpment of the Cotswolds AONB at Leckhampton Hill and from where there are views across Cheltenham, including the study area. There is also good public access to the recreation ground at Burrow’s Field.</p>
Areas with good accessibility that provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and spiritual experience/ inspiration	The study area is well-used by the local population. It is likely that the availability of this attractive rural landscape on the doorstep for many local people, would benefit their physical health and well-being.
Presence of town and village greens	Large parts of the study area have been designated as a Local Green Space, reflecting that the designated area is ‘demonstrably special’ to the local community.
Other physical evidence of recreational use where experience of landscape is important	As described above.

<p>Landscape that forms part of a view that is important to the enjoyment of a recreational activity</p>	<p>The study area contributes to the views available across Cheltenham from Leckhampton Hill, within the Cotswolds AONB, including views from the Cotswolds Way National Trail and in views from the Observation Point on Leckhampton Hill. Enjoyment of views of the landscape is likely to be a key part of the recreational experience in views from these special locations within a nationally designated landscape. The rural landscape of the study area helps to form a soft, well vegetated transition between the designated landscape and the settlement edge of Cheltenham.</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>The landscape of the study area is highly valued for recreational use by local residents, large areas are designated as a Local Green Space and the landscape contributes to views from visually sensitive locations within the Cotswolds AONB.</p>

Table 6.7: Perceptual (scenic) indicators

<p>Perceptual (scenic) definition</p> <p>Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense</p>	
<p>Examples of indicators</p>	<p>Commentary on the expression of this indicator in the study area</p>
<p>Distinctive features, or distinctive combinations of features, such as dramatic or striking landform or harmonious combinations of land cover</p>	<p>The landscape of the study area demonstrates a harmonious combination of landscape features, namely comprising the strong field boundary structure combined with the open fields of grassland/meadows crossed by small watercourses, with views of scattered historic dwellings.</p>
<p>Strong aesthetic qualities such as scale, form, colour and texture</p>	<p>Field parcels are often small to medium sized, with well vegetated field boundaries, creating a sense of enclosure in some locations. Unifying characteristics include the use of building materials, including brick and limestone.</p>
<p>Presence of natural lines in the landscape (e.g. natural ridgelines, woodland edges, river corridors, coastal edges)</p>	<p>Many views from public rights of way within the study area have a strong rural character, in the foreground and there are frequent opportunities for views towards the elevated ridgeline of the Cotswolds escarpment.</p>
<p>Visual diversity or contrasts which contributes to the appreciation of the landscape</p>	<p>The network of public rights of way allows opportunities to experience the more open landscape of the fields of grassland and the contrasting sense of enclosure where public rights of way follow the alignment of the strongly vegetated watercourses.</p>

<p>Memorable/ distinctive views and landmarks, or landscape which contributes to distinctive views and landmarks</p>	<p>There are opportunities for views across the more open rural landscape of the study area towards the spire of St Peters Church, set within a wooded context, enhancing the sense of being in a landscape bordering a village settlement.</p> <p>There are frequent opportunities for views from the study area towards the elevated ridge of forming the escarpment to the Cotswolds NL.</p> <p>The scenic qualities of the views from the Cotswolds escarpment towards the study area have inspired the work of visual artists including the contemporary artists Daisy Clayton and Toby Moate, as well as featuring in the watercolour by an unknown artist, now displayed in The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum, Cheltenham (as described in Table 6.4).</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>The landscape of the study area expresses a good level of special qualities in this category and is considered to have value in relation to its scenic qualities.</p>

Table 6.8: *Perceptual (wilderness and tranquillity) indicators*

<p>Perceptual (wilderness and tranquillity) definition</p> <p>Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies</p>	
<p>Examples of indicators</p>	<p>Commentary on the expression of this indicator in the study area</p>
<p>High levels of tranquillity or perceptions of tranquillity, including perceived links to nature, dark skies, presence of wildlife/ birdsong and relative peace and quiet.</p>	<p>Despite the proximity of the study area to areas of settlement and some local roads which are well-used, the landscape provides the opportunity to experience good levels of tranquillity. Throughout much of the central area of the Local Green Space, there is little noise disturbance and audible levels of bird song. Various ecological surveys associated with recent planning permissions identify the presence of protected species such as bats and dormice.</p>
<p>Presence of wild land and perceptions of relative wildness (resulting from a high degree of perceived naturalness, rugged or otherwise challenging terrain, remoteness from public mechanised access and lack of modern artefacts)</p>	<p>The study area is characterised by the field parcels used for grazing and is generally well managed and well used for local recreation. There is a limited sense of wilderness.</p>
<p>Sense of particular remoteness, seclusion or openness</p>	<p>The study area lies in proximity to the suburban edge of Cheltenham and is well used for local recreation, such as dog walking. There is some sense of remoteness, although this is limited.</p>

<p>Dark night skies</p>	<p>Lying at the edge of Cheltenham, there is likely to be some light pollution from public street lighting and from spillage from windows. There are likely to be lower levels of light pollution towards the south of the study area, where there are fewer light sources.</p> <p>‘Dark Skies’ mapping from CPRE⁴⁴ shows the majority of the central part of the site lying in the medium category (2-4 NanoWatts/cm²/sr) with southern parts of the study area having less light pollution and a small area in the north east of the study area having slightly higher levels, reflecting the locations of settlement.</p>
<p>A general absence of intrusive or inharmonious development, land uses, transport and lighting</p>	<p>Central parts of the study area have a strong rural character, with few detractors. Although there have been a number of recent planning permissions granted in recent years, some of which have been implemented, the strong landscape structure helps to limit views of this development, except in close proximity locations, such as on local roads.</p> <p>Development pressure increases the risk of increasing levels of noise and light pollution and increases in views of development in an otherwise tranquil landscape.</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>The landscape of the study area expresses a good level of special qualities in this category and is considered to have value in relation to the sense of tranquillity in the landscape.</p>

Table 6.9: Functional indicators

<p>Functional definition</p> <p>Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape</p>	
<p>Examples of indicators</p>	<p>Commentary on the expression of this indicator in the study area</p>
<p>Landscapes and landscape elements that contribute to the healthy functioning of the landscape, e.g. natural hydrological systems/ floodplains, areas of undisturbed and healthy soils, areas that form carbon sinks such as peat bogs, woodlands and oceans, areas of diverse landcover (benefits pest regulation), pollinator-rich habitats such as wildflower meadows</p>	<p>The landscape of the study area contributes to the healthy functioning of the wider landscape in a number of ways.</p> <p>The study area is crossed by two watercourses, both of which are associated with floodplains, these features help to provide natural rain water management services.</p> <p>Soils associated with the fields used for grazing are likely to remain undisturbed and provide carbon sink services.</p> <p>Many of the grasslands appear to be managed in a traditional manner, where the grasses and associated wildflowers are allowed to grow until late spring before being managed by grazing. This allows flowering to occur, which benefits pollinators.</p>

⁴⁴ Available at <https://nightblight.cpre.org.uk/maps/> [Date accessed: 08/06/22]

<p>Areas that form an important part of a multifunctional Green Infrastructure network</p>	<p>The study area is an excellent example of multi-functional green infrastructure, providing a range services, including natural water management, protection of soils which act as carbon sinks, habitats for a range of wildlife (including protected species) and opportunities for informal recreation and contact with nature which benefits both physical health and well-being.</p>
<p>Landscapes and landscape elements that have strong physical or functional links with an adjacent national landscape designation, or are important to the appreciation of the designated landscape and its special qualities</p>	<p>The landscape in the study area which lies outside the Cotswolds NL is considered to be part of the setting to the designated landscape and has a strong functional link to it.</p> <p>There are opportunities for views from many locations in the study area towards the ridgeline forming the escarpment to the Cotswold Hills. Views from the escarpment are considered to highly sensitive to change as visual receptors are within a designated landscape and may also be using a national trail or at an observation point where enjoyment of the landscape is a key part of the recreational experience. In these views the landscape of the study area serves to create a soft transition between the designated landscape and the urban edge of Cheltenham.</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>The landscape of the study area expresses a strong level of special qualities in this category and is considered to have value in relation to the range of functions the landscape fulfills.</p>

6.6 Summary

6.6.1 The landscape of the study area strongly expresses numerous qualities across a range of indicators that are considered to contribute to its high landscape value, as assessed using the LI TGN21 guidelines. In summary these valued qualities comprise:

- A **strong landscape pattern** in many parts of the study area, created by the vegetated historic field boundaries;
- A sense of **visual unity** created by the consistent pattern of grasslands combined with vegetated field boundaries and watercourses;
- A good sense of **tranquillity** and providing opportunities for contact with nature;
- A **range of habitats** for biodiversity, including protected species, such as dormice and bats, as well as Priority Habitats, such as Traditional Orchards, and irreplaceable habitats, such as the Veteran oak tree;
- **Historic associations:** The landscape of the study area is likely to be considered to form the setting to designated heritage assets, including Moat Cottage and Field Cottage;
- Links to market gardening and nursery businesses, reflecting **soil quality and fertility**;
- Part of the **setting to the designated landscape of the Cotswolds National Landscape (NL)**. The study area lies at the footslopes of the escarpment to the Cotswolds Hills, which allows opportunities for views towards and from the

ridgeline and to appreciate this geomorphological feature, one of the identified Special Qualities of the Cotswolds NL.

- The study area has strong **visual connectivity** with the nationally important landscape and forms part of the transitional landscape between the designation and the suburban edge of Cheltenham;
- The study area is an excellent example of **multifunctional green infrastructure** providing a range of services and functions for biodiversity, natural water management, carbon storage and recreation;
- **Highly valued for informal recreation**, reflected in its designation as a Local Green Space (LGS) and providing opportunities to benefit local residents' physical health and well-being.

6.6.2 This assessment has found the landscape of the study area is highly valuable under the majority of the indicators of landscape value set out in the LI LGN21 Guidelines. This conclusion is supported by numerous other previous assessments of the value and sensitivity of the landscape as well as in the comments from Planning Inspectors made during the preparation of the Local Plans for Cheltenham and the Joint Core Strategy.

6.6.3 The identified special qualities of the landscape should be protected and enhanced for their value to the current and future residents of the local area. **Chapter 7** of this report sets out recommendations to plan, manage and protect these qualities.

7 Recommendations to plan, manage and protect special qualities

7.1 Recommendations

7.1.1 Following the assessment of the key landscape characteristics of the study area and the evaluation of the value of the special qualities expressed in the study area, the following section summarises the recommended landscape management operations to protect and enhance the identified special qualities of the landscape. The locations relating to each recommendation are illustrated on **Figure 7.1**.

Landscape character:

- R1. Protect the special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB and its setting. Resist development and change that would be likely to adversely affect the characteristic features or qualities of these landscapes. In particular, resist development that would either adversely affect views from the AONB and the perception of a soft transition from the designated landscape to the urban edge of Cheltenham or adversely affect opportunities to enjoy the rural character of views from the study area towards the AONB.
- R2. Protect the historic landscape pattern created by the layout of public roads, rights of way and the field pattern, which have good time depth;
- R3. Protect the rural, vegetated character of highways and rights of way and resist sub-urbanising features, for example, concrete curbstones to footways;
- R4. Protect existing vegetated features and watercourses for their contribution to landscape character, soils and surface water runoff management;
- R5. Protect existing semi-improved grasslands and support opportunities to enhance species diversity in the sward, through appropriate seeding and management.
- R6. Manage vegetation along watercourses to support a range of wildlife with a balance of open areas and shelter/enclosure. Willows should be pollarded or coppiced to prevent excessive shading. This can be done every 5-6 years.
- R7. Support hedgerow management to enhance opportunities for dormice, by maintaining phased hazel cutting, maintain honeysuckle and avoiding complete removal of bramble except where necessary to maintain access on public rights of way. Avoid use of flail cutting to manage hedgerows.

-
- R8. Protect existing standard trees for their contribution to landscape character, visual amenity, biodiversity and surface water runoff management;
- R9. Protect the Veteran Oak tree in Lotts Meadow, and the nearby Oak tree which has the potential to be considered as a Veteran tree. Monitor and manage to allow safe senesce and the opportunity to become ancient trees.
- R10. The presence of Orchards in the study area reflects the quality of the soils and former use of the land for market gardening in some locations. Traditional orchards often provide habitats that support a range of wildlife and are identified as a 'Priority Habitat' by Natural England. Community orchards can provide opportunities for social interaction and encourage social cohesion. This can be particularly important where existing communities are experiencing high levels of change, such as new development. Protect existing Traditional Orchards and encourage opportunities for new orchard planting, for example in new developments, or as part of community schemes.
- R11. Support opportunities for tree planting schemes. Small to medium scale tree planting schemes may be appropriate in the study area, such as linear woodlands and copses, which would also maintain the character of the landscape and opportunities to appreciate the openness of views towards the escarpment of the Cotswolds NL.
- R12. Support opportunities to enhance the public's understanding of the special qualities of the landscape of the study area, for example through the provision of information boards.

Views and visual amenity:

- R13. Maintain opportunities to experience the rural character of this landscape and views of the rising escarpment of the Cotswolds NL from publicly accessible locations within the study area;
- R14. Ensure development and other change protects the rural character of the views available from publicly accessible locations in the study area and resist change that introduces visual detractors into these views.
- R15. Protect opportunities to experience views towards heritage assets within a rural setting.
- R16. Support sustainable transport routes to create improved access, such as cycling routes and improvements to pedestrian safety to promote public enjoyment of the landscape;

R17. Protect and, where possible, enhance tranquillity. For example, through carefully considered lighting schemes, while maintaining public safety, and through traffic reduction through improved sustainable transport routes.

Education and Social Capital:

R18. Consider the creation of an outdoor field centre or gateway feature associated with awareness raising about the Cotswolds NL and countryside at the edges of Cheltenham. The centre would be used by local schools and interest groups to learn about for example biodiversity, landscape, history and climate change.

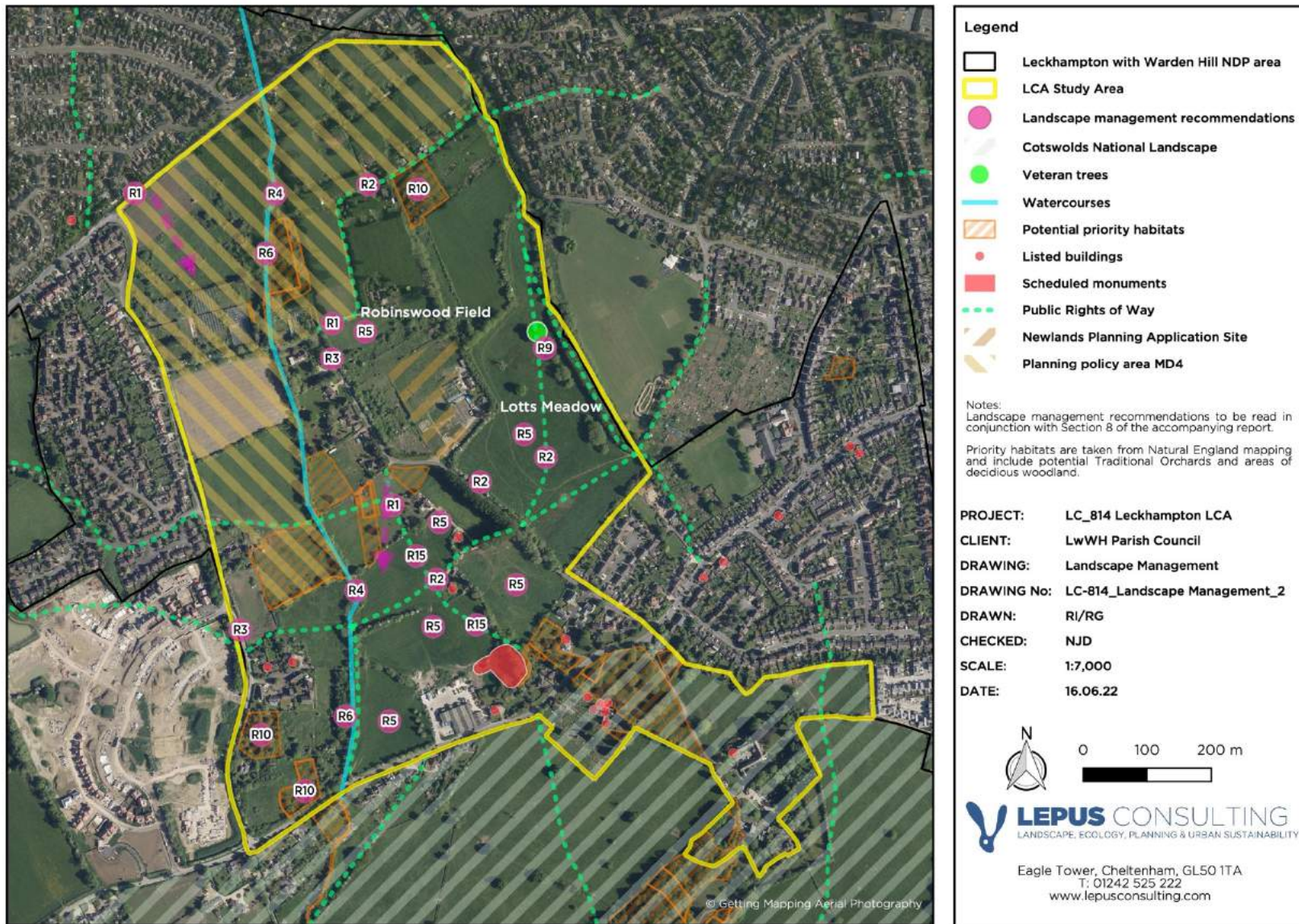


Figure 7.1: Landscape Management Recommendations

8 Summary and conclusions

8.1 Summary

- 8.1.1 Lepus Consulting Ltd has been appointed by the Leckhampton with Warden Hill Neighbourhood Plan (NP) working group to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and an evaluation of the value of the landscape within an identified study area in the parish of Leckhampton with Warden Hill (LWH). Lepus Consulting Ltd is an environmental planning practice based in Gloucestershire.
- 8.1.2 The LCA will be used as part of the evidence which supports the policies in the NP. It will also be used to raise awareness and appreciation of the character and value of the landscape found in the study area. This assessment updates the findings of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal undertaken by Lepus in 2017⁴⁵.
- 8.1.3 The study area for this assessment is located at the southern edge of Cheltenham and foot of the Cotswolds escarpment, forming part of the designated Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The study area lies within Cheltenham Borough Council planning authority area.
- 8.1.4 The majority of the study area lies in the Settled Unwooded Vale Landscape Character Type (LCT) in the published Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment⁴⁶, with a small part in the south of the study area lying in the Escarpment LCT, reflecting the location of the study area at foot slopes of the Cotswolds Hills.
- 8.1.5 The landscape qualities and value of the study area have been subject to consideration through various local plan and joint planning processes and through numerous planning applications which have come forward over recent years. **Appendix B** of this report summarises comments from Planning Inspectors relating to the landscape value of the study area.
- 8.1.6 The comments recognise the distinctive and valued landscape and visual characteristics of the study area. Of note is the Secretary of State's letter, prepared in response to the 2016 appeal, which includes the conclusion that,

“Though not designated, the site is clearly a locally valued landscaped which paragraph 109 of the Framework states should be protected”.

⁴⁵ Lepus Consulting (2017) 'Leckhampton with Warden Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan Landscape and Visual Appraisal'

⁴⁶ LDA Design (2006) Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/ecology-and-landscape/landscape/> [Date Accessed: 17/05/22]

8.1.7 This report updates the previous Landscape Character Assessment of the study area, undertaken by Lepus in 2017. Changes in landscape character have occurred locally, as a consequence of recent development including the development of the High School Leckhampton within the site and the residential development at the Brizen Park site to the west of the study area. At the time of the field survey, construction of at the Newlands site has commenced and the site was being cleared. Despite these recent developments the landscape character of the surrounding study area has retained many of its valued qualities.

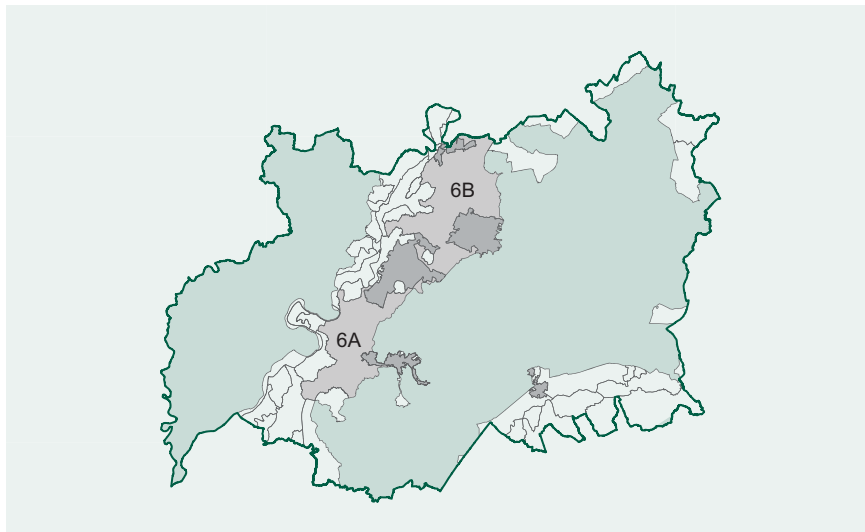
8.2 Valued qualities

8.2.1 In 2021 the Landscape Institute published guidance to inform the assessment of landscape value for areas lying outside national landscape designations. The indicators set out in the LI guidance have been used to inform this assessment of the value of the special qualities of the study area. In summary, these comprise the following:

- A **strong landscape pattern** in many parts of the study area, created by the vegetated historic field boundaries;
- A sense of **visual unity** created by the consistent pattern of grasslands combined with vegetated field boundaries and watercourses;
- A good sense of **tranquillity** and providing opportunities for contact with nature;
- A **range of habitats** for biodiversity, including protected species, such as dormice and bats, as well as Priority Habitats, such as Traditional Orchards, and irreplaceable habitats, such as the Veteran oak tree;
- **Historic associations:** The landscape of the study area is likely to be considered to form the setting to designated heritage assets;
- Links to market gardening and nursery businesses, reflecting **soil quality and fertility**;
- Part of the **setting to the designated landscape of the Cotswolds** Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The study area lies at the footslopes of the escarpment to the Cotswolds Hills, which allows opportunities for views towards and from the ridgeline and to appreciate this geomorphological feature, one of the identified Special Qualities of the Cotswolds AONB.
- The study area has strong **visual connectivity** with the nationally important landscape and forms part of the transitional landscape between the designation and the suburban edge of Cheltenham;
- The study area is an excellent example of **multifunctional green infrastructure** providing a range of services and functions for biodiversity, natural water management, carbon storage and recreation;
- **Highly valued for informal recreation**, reflected in the designation of the majority of the study area as a Local Green Space (LGS) and providing opportunities to benefit local residents' physical health and well-being.

- 8.2.2 This assessment has found the landscape of the study area is highly valuable under the majority of the indicators of landscape value set out in the LI LGN21 Guidelines. This conclusion is supported by numerous other previous assessments of the value and sensitivity of the landscape as well as in the comments from Planning Inspectors made during the preparation of the Local Plans for Cheltenham and the Joint Core Strategy.
- 8.2.3 Landscape management guidelines to help to protect and enhance the study area’s identified valued qualities have been provided in **Chapter 7**.

Appendix A: Extract from the Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment



CHARACTER AREAS

SV6A Vale of Berkeley

SV6B Vale of Gloucester

5.6.1 Key Characteristics

- Soft, gently undulating to flat landscape, but with intermittent locally elevated areas that project above the otherwise flatter landform;
- Area drained by a series of east west aligned tributaries of the Severn, including the Cam, Frome and Chelt, and the Stratford Avon flowing into the Severn from the north;
- Mixed arable and pastoral land use enclosed by hedgerow network, in places forming a strong landscape pattern;
- Limited woodland cover with mature hedgerow trees and occasional orchards;
- Rural areas bordered by large urban and suburban areas and interspersed with commercial and industrial premises;
- Varied mix of buildings materials including brick, timber and stone, and slate and thatch roofing;
- Proliferation of modern 'suburban' buildings styles and materials;
- Major transport corridors pass through the Vale, frequently aligned north south, beyond which is a network of local roads and lanes linking villages and hamlets; and
- Widespread network of pylons and transmission lines;

5.6.2 Landscape Character

The Settled Unwooded Vale landscape character type is the most extensive landscape character type within the Severn Vale study area and comprises the broad swathe of lower lying land that defines the wider perceived character of the Severn Vale. It extends northwards from Dursley and Cam to the southern fringes of Bredon Hill and encompasses and surrounds the principal urban areas of Cheltenham and Gloucester. It also extends up to the western perimeter of the major towns of Stroud and Stonehouse,



and the southern perimeter of Tewkesbury and Ashchurch. The Cotswolds escarpment and escarpment footslopes form the eastern perimeter of this character type, while to the west it is the low lying floodplain farmland, and drained riverine farmland and grazed salt marshes that define its limit. In the north there is a transition with the Unwooded Vale associated with the Vale of Evesham and which is represented in this part of the county to the north of the Oxenton Hill and Langley Hill Outliers eastwards from the village of Teddington. There is a similar transition in the south of Gloucestershire where the Settled Unwooded Vale merges into the more rural Unwooded Vale surrounding the Kingswood and Wick area.

The Settled Unwooded Vale is principally underlain by Lias Group mudstones and sandstone, together with Triassic Mercia Mudstone rock formations to the north and west. In many places these are overlain by extensive areas of drift deposits creating a soft, gently undulating landscape.

The Vale is cloaked in a regular patchwork of arable and pasture fields enclosed largely by neat hawthorn hedges, and a productive agricultural landscape is typical of the wider vale between the settled and more developed areas. Woodland cover is restricted to a limited number of deciduous farm copses, although field and hedgerow trees can sometimes give the local impression that this is a well treed landscape.

Landscape and settlement patterns are heavily influenced by industrial and modern development both in the villages, and on the perimeter of the principal urban areas of Gloucester and Cheltenham, as well as the major towns of Stroud / Stonehouse, and Tewkesbury / Ashworth. Although quieter rural areas still remain in the Vale, a mixture of agricultural, urban, suburban and industrial land uses prevail to impart the overall settled character.

Transportation routes and infrastructure elements have a strong influence on the landscape. The M5 is the principal route through the vale, although dual carriageways, and a number of other major roads and bypasses are also responsible for eroding the rural landscape character bordering transport corridors. Mainline and branch railways also occupy the wider vale landscape and introduce noise and movement to the landscape.

Notwithstanding these urbanising features, the Settled Unwooded Vale landscape type retains areas that have a strongly rural character with an emphasis on agricultural management.

5.6.3 Physical Influences

Much of the Settled Unwooded Vale is underlain by the mudstones of the Lias Group Charmouth Mudstone Formation. To the north and west of Gloucester and Cheltenham, however, a broad outcrop of older Triassic rocks underlies the Severn Vale. These are represented by the Mercia Mudstone Group (former Keuper Marl) and the younger and harder Penarth Group, formerly referred to as the Rhaetic, comprising a mix of shales and limestone. This geological framework, along with isolated drift deposits of sand and gravel, including deposits of the Cheltenham Sands, form a gently undulating landscape that shelves gradually westwards from around 75m AOD below the Cotswolds escarpment to 15-20 m AOD adjacent to the Severn floodplain.

The eastern extent of the vale is marked by the distinct break of slope at the foot of the escarpment where more hummocky land resulting from landslips may be identified. The western limits of the Settled Unwooded Vale are defined principally by the Floodplain Farmland landscape types that extend along the course of the Severn at or below the 10 m AOD contour.

Within the wider lowland vale a number of small low hills are evident. At Bondend to the east of Upton St Leonards a low east-west orientated hill is underlain by Dyrham Formation Silty Mudstone. The solid geology is similar to that on the escarpment to the east and therefore the hill, which rises to just 110 m AOD from the vale level of approximately 50 m AOD, represents a denuded outlier. Because of its small scale, however, it does not warrant classification as a separate outlier and instead, forms a recurring characteristic of the broader vale. To the north of Gloucester, the undulating relief is even more pronounced and intermittent undulations such as at Coombe Hill and Prior's Norton signify the presence and differential erosional response of harder Triassic rocks and exposure of the Penarth Group (Rhaetic) formations where these outcrop to the west of the Lias Group rocks.

A large number of brooks and streams drain neighbouring slopes and upland areas through the wider vale to the Severn. The Frome is a significant river running east-west through the areas and the vale and is fed by narrow tributary streams that occupy shallow, winding valleys, often marked by linear belts of willow and other wetland tree species.

The type is characterised by a mosaic of improved grassland and arable land with small areas of neutral grassland. Woodland is largely absent although numerous small farm copses are conspicuous. Hedgerow and field oaks contribute significantly to local landscape character and help maintain the rural character of some areas by screening views to urban and suburban features. Stone walls also define some field boundaries within the landscape type.

Improvements made to agricultural land and the proximity of urban areas limits the nature conservation value of the landscape although important habitats are found in the stream valleys. Hedgerows, dotted with hedgerow oaks and ash, are also important habitats and provide a network through which wildlife can move.

The landscape is perceived as being more intimate and sheltered in close proximity to the escarpment. Further to the west, and particularly beyond the course of the M5, the declining influence of the scarp slopes, flatter land, generally larger field patterns and fewer woodlands, give the landscape a more open and settled character.

5.6.4 Human Influences, including Buildings and Settlement

Similar to the Unwooded Vale there is only scattered evidence suggesting that the Settled Vale landscape was heavily utilised and inhabited in the prehistoric period. However, following the Roman invasion the vale landscape came to prominence, with the Twentieth Legion establishing itself at Gloucester in AD 49. Roman roads were quickly constructed to link the fort, and later the city of GLEVM (designated as a 'Colonia' AD97), to the wider Roman world. The principal route, now the course of the modern A38 through the vale, linked Gloucester to AQUA SVLIS (Bath) in the south, and SALINAE (Droitwich) in the north. The colonia developed suburbs and a thriving port on the river.

Within the wider Severn Vale, many of the villages originate from the Saxon period, and grew throughout the medieval period taking increasing areas of land into their open fields, remnants of which can occasionally be found as surviving tracts of ridge and furrow. The historic cores of many of these vale settlements contain medieval buildings that are largely half-timbered although many have now been infilled with brick, or have a brick facade. A number of older buildings are also constructed of Cotswold stone. These are often clustered around medieval churches that are also built of stone, the materials of which were obtained from Cotswolds quarries and brought to the vale by packhorse. The spires and towers of these churches gain visual prominence in the lowland

landscape and are important landscape features and landmarks. The most prominent is the 15th century tower of Gloucester Cathedral, which acts as an orientation point in the lowland vale.

Larger vale settlements such as Gloucester continued to grow throughout the industrial period, displaying evidence of this in the rows of 19th century terraced houses, and occasionally mills, that have survived demolition. The vale settlements took advantage of good transport links provided by the Severn, and the numerous roads, canals and railways, for the importation of building materials such as bricks and slate for roofing. Cheltenham and Gloucester also contain fine examples of Regency architecture, the distinctiveness of the buildings much enhanced by the locally available fine Cotswolds limestone used in their construction.

Post industrial and modern urban and suburban sprawl has had a profound impact on the landscape, in terms of physical change to land use and landscape patterns, the built environment, transport and infrastructure. The main north-south route through the Severn Vale established by the Romans still persists, its course closely followed by the M5 motorway, the mainline railway between Bristol and Birmingham, and to the west, the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal. Apart from the visual impact of the transport infrastructure, the further effect of traffic noise and movement, lighting elements and nightglow also impact on the adjacent rural areas within the Vale. The Roman route up the escarpment to Cirencester via Birdlip Hill is also evident and is now occupied by the busy A417(T). Urban fringe sites close to major transport routes are often the site of industrial units and trading estates.

Beyond the main towns and villages the wider settlement pattern is restricted to dispersed hamlets, mainly linear in form and a small number of isolated farms and roadside dwellings. Whilst scattered across the Vale landscape, settlements have mainly developed in valley bottoms or on locally elevated land. The close proximity of the major towns of Gloucester, Cheltenham and Stroud, and their outlying suburbs at Stonehouse, Leonard Stanley and Brockworth has had a dramatic impact on local landscape and settlement character. For example, farm diversification has responded to and exploited the proximity of large local populations, leading to a proliferation of 'horsiculture' features across the rural landscape such as stables, ribbon fences, lighting and jumps. The close proximity of towns is also manifested in the proliferation of urban 'roadscape' features and light industry sites.

Buildings also reflect the influence of large towns, with suburban building styles such as rendering and mock Tudor additions, and materials extending out beyond the limits of the town into local villages, and may often be found in isolated dwellings and hamlets.

Even where urban influences are not obvious in rural areas of the landscape, the character of the Settled Unwooded Vale retains influences from neighbouring urban development, such as those often associated with the proliferation of masts and overhead transmission lines, and more subtly, from the effects of lighting.

5.6.5 Character Areas

SV6A Vale of Berkeley

The Vale of Berkeley consists of an open, gently undulating landscape that extends north of the settlement of Dursley to the southern edge of Gloucester and is broadly bounded by the rising landform of the Cotswolds escarpment to the east and by the flat, low-lying floodplain landscape of the River Severn to the west. Views towards the escarpment and Rolling Hills and Valleys landscape type give a distant sense of enclosure in many areas of the vale and the Robins Wood Outlier and Hockley Hill both form prominent elevated landmark features when viewed from the northern portion of the vale. Distant views towards the Forest of Dean can also be seen from some areas.



The topography of the Vale of Berkeley comprises a large scale, gently undulating landscape but with extensive almost flat areas commonly lying between the undulations. There is a degree of localised variation in the topography of the vale, with undulations being more pronounced in some areas, e.g. south of the village of Standish, whilst the undulations are more subtle in character elsewhere, e.g. to the south east of Eastington and Middle Street. The flatter areas between undulations often mark the line of watercourses and the landform associate with the River Frome floodplain. The areas adjacent to Stroudwater Canal are particularly flat.

There are a number of significant hydrological features within the vale. These comprise the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal in the north, the disused Stroudwater Canal in the west and the River Frome, which flows south east / north west through the central portion of the vale towards the River Severn. In the wider landscape, a system of south east / north west flowing brooks drain the landscape, e.g. Horn Brook and Daniel's Brook, and there are also numerous drainage ditches evident adjacent to the Gloucester-Sharpness Canal which often form field boundaries. Other notable hydrological features in the area include a series of large water bodies on the eastern perimeter of Frampton on Severn which have developed following sand and gravel extraction in this area during the mid-20th century.

5.6

Landscape Character Type: SETTLED UNWOODED VALE

Land use in the Vale of Berkeley comprises a combination of arable and pastoral agriculture with arable cultivation tending to occupy large to medium fields with pasture enclosed in fields varying in size from small to large. Pasture includes a mixture of improved and semi-improved grazing with scrubby pasture commonly aligning watercourses and communication routes, e.g. the M5, the River Frome and the Stroudwater Canal. Low hedgerows form the common boundary treatment in the character area, with their management and condition varying across the landscape. In some areas the hedgerow network appears well-managed and forms a strong unifying element. Elsewhere, hedgerows have become either overgrown and / or gappy, with post and wire commonly reinforcing field boundaries. In some areas the pattern of the landscape appears to be partially deteriorating as there is evidence of field amalgamation, with either field trees or lines of scrubby vegetation indicating the location of former boundaries within the landscape.



There are a number of small woodland blocks scattered throughout the vale that are both deciduous and coniferous in composition. Bengough's Covert, on the south west edge of the vale, comprises an ancient replanted woodland and there are also a number of fragments of semi-ancient broadleaved woodland in the vicinity of the River Frome, e.g. Mole Grove and Five Acre Grove, and in the north of the vale at Fisher's Wood. There are also several orchards at the base of the escarpment and Robins Wood Outlier, in close proximity to the settlements of Brookthorpe and Whaddon. Well treed hedgerows and trees aligning the routes of watercourses and the mainline railway provide additional linear tree groupings in the vale. Woodland on the west-facing slopes of the escarpment and distant views towards the east-facing wooded slopes of the Forest of Dean combine to create the sense of the vale contained within a wider wooded landscape

Although the patchwork pattern of land uses and tree cover in the vale give this area a strong rural character, the presence of several major transportation corridors in the area disrupt the rural tranquillity and contribute to its settled character. The M5 and A38 run broadly parallel to one another and bisect the vale, extending north east / south west through the character area. Views towards both roads can be glimpsed from the surrounding vale landscape and noise generated by traffic using the M5 is readily audible in

many areas. Beyond these major routeways, a network of minor roads, generally aligned north west / south east and north east / south west extend from the A38 to give access to the wider landscape in the form of winding country lanes. Pedestrian access to the countryside of the vale is provided by a relatively dense public rights of way network.

Other communication routes in the area include a mainline railway, broadly running north-south, and numerous high voltage pylons that cross the landscape in the central portion of the vale.

There are a number of moated sites scattered throughout the vale including a moat at Brookthorpe Court, and at Moreton Valence, and moated sites in the settlements of Slimbridge, west of Harefield and adjacent to Sneedham Green. Other heritage features of interest in the area include Frampton Court Garden, a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden, and the A38, which follows the route of an old Roman road. There are also two bowl barrows located to the south east of the settlement of Standish.

Several clusters of Conservation Areas are scattered along the length of the River Frome. These conservation areas generally relate to sites of industrial heritage interest dating from the early 18th century when the River Frome formed the main trade route for the wool trade and associated textile industries based in Stroud.

Settlement forms a strong influence on the overall character of the Vale of Berkeley with views towards built form commonly occurring in the wider landscape. In the north of the character area, the urban edge of Gloucester is clearly visible from the surrounding area with the industrial units at Hardwicke and on the eastern edge of Quedgeley gaining visual prominence when viewed from the flatter areas of the vale to the south. Elsewhere, distant views towards settlements are common from the surrounding landscape and churches frequently form focal points in the wider landscape e.g. the square stone tower of Moreton Valence church and the spire of Slimbridge church.



There are numerous villages scattered throughout the Vale of Berkeley. These settlements generally comprise a mixture of older red brick and rendered properties with new brick infill development within the settlement, e.g. Leonard Stanley, Whitminster and Haresfield. Settlements in the east of the vale often reflect their

proximity to the Cotswolds through the presence of a higher proportion of stone built properties within the settlement, e.g. at Frocester and Standish. The village of Frampton-on-Severn includes a broad range of built form with a varied mixture of architectural styles, materials and ages in the older part of the village. This eclectic mix of dwellings forms part of a Conservation Area that centres around 'Rosamund's Green', an extensive village green that has three ponds and a cricket ground within its 22 acres. The most notable of the buildings on the village green is Frampton Court, a Palladian style 18th century manor house surrounded by specimen trees and a distinctive red brick wall.

Beyond the villages within the Vale of Berkeley there are scattered farms and isolated clusters of dwellings in the wider landscape and farm buildings commonly punctuate the expansive views across the vale.

SV6B Vale of Gloucester

The Vale of Gloucester is bounded by the principal urban areas of Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury to the south west, south east and north respectively. To the east, the Vale is defined by the rising landform of the Cotswolds escarpment and Oxenton Hill. To the west of the Vale lies the Floodplain Farmland landscape character type with the elevated landscapes of the Forest of Dean visible in the distance beyond the River Severn.



The geological structure and topography of the Vale of Gloucester is described under Physical Influences, but the local variations that occur within the vale are of interest. In particular, the intermittent small ridges, hillocks and undulations that rise above the general level of the Vale are important local features, their presence often enhanced by their association with a settlement that has developed on the higher and better drained land as at Coombe Hill and Prior's Norton, or by woodland crowning the summit area, as at Barrow Hill, immediately to the north of the village of Barrow, and east of the River Chert. Some are associated with remnant river terraces while others, as at Coombe Hill, result from outcrops of relatively harder limestone bands within the Triassic Penarth Group (Rhaetic beds). The undulating landform encloses views in some areas whilst in other areas there are distant views beyond the vale landscape towards the Vale Hillocks, the Cotswolds Escarpment, the Escarpment Outliers and distant views towards The Malverns.

The distribution of superficial deposits is also significant, notably the fine grained and pure Cheltenham Sands, which gives rise to particularly free draining areas and sandier soils, in contrast to the heavier clays that derive from the more impervious Lias Group clays and mudstones which occur across much of the Vale. In addition to Cheltenham, a number of smaller settlements have developed over these intermittent patches of sands, eg Swindon, Gotherington and Churchdown. The sands are also prized for their mineral wealth and have been excavated in a number of sites, notably at Wingmoor Farm to the west of Bishops Cleeve, and at Twynning (See Character Area SV 12A).



There are a number of watercourses flowing across the vale landscape including Dean Brook, Hyde Brook and the River Swilgate. These watercourses rise on the Cotswold Escarpment and flow through the low-lying areas between the undulations of the vale towards the River Severn. Other hydrological features include a number of scattered ponds including Walton Cardiff Ponds, located south of Tewkesbury, which has been classified as a Key Wildlife Site due to its associated amphibian interest.

There is a diverse mixture of land uses in the Vale of Gloucester which combine to create a colourful and textured landscape. Agricultural land use in the vale includes both arable cultivation and pasture in a patchwork of fields that are large to medium in scale and predominantly regular in shape. Grazing sheep and cattle are common features in the landscape with grazing pasture comprising a combination of improved and semi improved pasture with scrubby areas of pasture commonly found adjacent to settlement edges and aligning the course of major communication routes, e.g. the M5. Horse grazing is frequently found on the outskirts of villages and farms in fields sub-divided by either temporary white tape fencing or post and rail. In the wider vale landscape, low hedgerows with scattered hedgerow trees form the common boundary treatment. While these hedgerows are generally well maintained, some are becoming either gappy or overgrown, and in other areas the hedgerow network is beginning to break down, with evidence of field amalgamation and hedgerow trees and scrubby vegetation marking the lines of former field boundaries. This is evident, for example, to the south of Sandhurst Hill.

Other land uses in the vale include a number of orchards to the west of Gotherington and sites supporting areas of semi-natural grasslands, e.g. Wingmoor Farm Meadows and Fiddler's Green. There are also numerous nurseries in the vale commonly located on the edge of settlements and/or adjacent to major roads, e.g. at Knightsbridge on the A4019 in the west of the vale and Dundry Nurseries south of Bamfurlong. There is also a landfill site to the west of Bishop's Cleeve at Wingmoor Farm.

Woodland is not a characteristic feature of the Vale of Gloucester and is generally limited to few small copses, such as the group located adjacent to Bozard's Farm, to the west of Gotherington, and a cluster of woodland blocks situated to the west of the settlement of Boddington, including The Larches, Ash Coppice and Crab Tree Covert. The vale also contains a few fragments of ancient semi-natural woodland including Barrow Wood and Prior's Grove, both located to the south of Barrow, and Turvey's Pieces woodland to the east of Deerhurst, which is also designated as a SSSI. Elsewhere in the vale, there are intermittent isolated copses. Where these coincide with overgrown hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees they can combine to create the impression of a greater sense of tree cover in these localised areas.



There is a hierarchy of communication routes in the Vale of Gloucester. The M5 forms a spine through the heart of the vale and although often screened by adjacent embankments, and vegetation, there are frequent filtered views towards the motorway from the surrounding vale landscape and the noise generated by motorway traffic is readily audible. Other major routeways in the vale include the A435 and A38, both extending broadly north-south, the A40(T), connecting the settlements of Gloucester and Cheltenham, and the A4019 connecting Cheltenham with the A38. There is also a mainline railway extending north to south through the vale. Elsewhere in the vale there is a network of minor roads. These take the form of busy, well-used local roads in the east and south of the vale whilst in the west and north minor roads tend to be quieter and more enclosed and narrow. There is also a dismantled railway line to the north of Cheltenham which is visible in the landscape due to the scrubby vegetation aligning its route.

Views towards high voltage pylons are common in the more gently undulating and flatter areas of the vale, particularly in areas that lie adjacent to the Floodplain Farmland landscape type where the pylons tend to gain visual prominence in the flat landscape. Other notable vertical features in the vale include a group of communication masts south of Sandhurst Hill.

There are several notable heritage features in the Vale of Gloucester including a number of moated sites, e.g. the Moat House moated site in Ucklington and a moated site at Hunt Court Farm, and a number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) including the remnants of a Priory at Deerhurst, and the remains of a cross in Tredington churchyard.

The influence of settlement on the character of the vale landscape varies in its nature and extent. Some areas feel deeply rural, with only glimpsed views towards settlement edges and minor intrusion from major communications corridors, whilst in other areas the urban edge of Gloucester, Cheltenham or Tewkesbury exerts a strong influence. For example, the Abbey at Tewkesbury is a notable and prominent feature within the settlement and is readily visible from the surrounding area. Views towards new red brick development on the edge of Tewkesbury can also be seen clearly from many areas in the northern portion of the vale. The urban influence of the major settlements of the vale is felt most acutely in the landscape lying between Gloucester and Cheltenham. A large part of this landscape is occupied by the Gloucestershire Airport at Staverton and its associated landing strips, hangars and large areas of mown grass. In addition to the airport, there are also several industrial parks, a golf complex, a technology park, a sewage works and mobile home parks in the area of the vale extending between Cheltenham and Gloucester.

Immediately to the west of Gloucester the settlement of Hempsted has developed across the locally prominent undulation of Hempsted Hill. The principal urban area of Gloucester and also the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal, has resulted in the detachment of this area from the wider Vale of Gloucester. It is typical, however, of some of the more pronounced local undulations that intermittently project above the vale, and which in this case is probably attributable to its formation as a lower river terrace of the Severn. The steep west facing slopes of the hill that rise from the adjacent floodplain farmland emphasise its local prominence and afford commanding views to the meandering course of the River Severn. Although the greater part of Hempsted comprises 20th century housing, it retains an historic core focused around St Swithun's Church, which was rebuilt in the 15th century. The settlement is mentioned in the Domesday Book as 'Hechanestede' or High Homestead. There is an ancient cross in the village, and also Our Lady's Well on the steep pastures that overlook the floodplain. The stone structure dates to the 14th century and surrounds a natural spring. Both the cross and Our Lady's Well are SAMs. Earthworks at the northern perimeter of the Hill are further evidence of earlier occupation of the area.

Bishop's Cleeve is the largest settlement in the vale beyond the principal urban areas of Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury. It comprises a range of different housing types, of varying architectural styles and ages, with clusters of local shops scattered throughout the settlement in addition to a nucleated village centre. There is an old stone church with a prominent tower in the centre of the settlement with the historic core of the village settlement extending eastwards from the church towards Woodmancote.

In the wider landscape, villages in the western portion of the vale are commonly linear and dispersed in form and generally comprise a mixture of older red brick properties and newer brick or rendered infill development with occasional timber-framed or thatched dwellings scattered throughout the settlements and old stone churches located in village centres, e.g. Boddington, Staverton and Down Hatherley. The village of Tredington has a particularly high proportion of black and white timber framed dwellings within the settlement as well as a distinctive old stone and timber church. In the eastern portion of the vale, stone properties tend to dominate in the villages reflecting their proximity to the Cotswolds and the wider availability of building stones derived from the Oolitic limestones, e.g. Southam and Gotherington.

Beyond the settlements of the vale, there are numerous recreational opportunities in the wider vale landscape. Cheltenham Racecourse, on the northern edge of Cheltenham, forms a major attraction of national significance. The spectator stands associated with the racecourse and an adjacent belt of distinctive coniferous trees combine to form a prominent feature in the landscape. There are also caravanning facilities and a 'Cheltenham Racecourse Hall of Fame' Museum situated to the west of the racecourse.

Other recreational resources in the character area include a number of rights of way, including the Gloucestershire Way which descends from the Cotswolds escarpment and crosses the vale on a route that follows the Norman and Hatherley Brooks between Shurdington on the eastern perimeter of the Vale to the River Severn in the west. The Wallsworth Hall Museum, to the east of Sandhurst, is dedicated to 'Art inspired by Nature' and other attractions include Staverton Flying School (based at Gloucestershire Airport) and the Sherdons Golf Centre at Tredington. There are extensive areas of new tree planting associated with the course resulting in an uncharacteristically 'well treed' character in the context of the surrounding vale landscape.

Appendix B Comments from Planning Inspectors on the special landscape qualities of the site

B.1 Summary of Inspectors' Comments

B.1.1 Joint Core Strategy (JCS) Inspector's Comments 2016

B.1.1.1 The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) is a partnership between Gloucester City Council, Cheltenham Borough Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council, which sets out a strategic planning framework for the three areas. The JCS was adopted by all three councils in December 2017

B.1.1.2 The following text is taken from the JCS Inspector's comments in her Note of Recommendations from 21 July 2016. This section refers to Leckhampton, visual impact, the Cotswolds AONB and LGS. The Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Plan referred to in this quote has been included, for reference, at the end of this Appendix.

"For the reasons previously given in my earlier reports I confirm that it is my recommendation that no development be allocated on the red, highly sensitive areas shown on the Landscape and Visual Sensitivity plan.

The development proposed would harm visual amenity and in particular striking views of the Cotswold escarpment from within the proposed allocation and from the A46. Development should be designed to preserve as far as possible the view of Leckhampton Hill from the corner of the A46 and Kidnappers Lane.

I have concerns over the impact of the proposed development on the AONB. I have visited Leckhampton Hill on three occasions and it is apparent to me that proposed building on the areas of medium sensitivity, shown yellow on the Landscape and Visual Sensitivity plan, would bring a large mass of development closer to Leckhampton Hill, adversely impacting on views from the Hill.

I have considered the objection letters from the Cotswold Conservation Board and Natural England on the Bovis/Miller application relating to the proposed scale of overall development. Natural England makes the point that this land forms part of the setting of the AONB and contributes positively to its special qualities. I agree. The sale of development would impact significantly on views from the escarpment including important public viewpoints such as the Devil's Chimney and Cotswolds Way National Trail.

In accordance with NPPF paragraph 115, great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and AONBs, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The scale of development proposed on the Cheltenham side of the allocation would not meet with paragraph 115. The proposed scale is too great for this sensitive location.

The quantity of proposed development should be scaled back. I therefore recommend that built development be contained within the green, less sensitive areas of the Landscape and Visual Sensitivity plan towards the north. Built development should, however, avoid the green corridor of Hatherly Brook referenced "HB" in EXAM 121C. The areas I find acceptable for development correspond generally with the fields referenced NE, NW1, NW2, NW3 and NN in EXAM 121C.

I have considered the discussions on the need for a primary school in the area and the ability of a larger scale development to deliver such a school. However, this need would be less pressing with reduced housing and, in any event, it does not override the harm I have identified”¹.

B.1.1.3 The Landscape and Visual Sensitivity and Urban Design report (2012)² that the JCS inspector refers to in her Note of Recommendations includes maps of the JCS area that are coloured on a traffic light scale from red (area of high landscape sensitivity) to yellow (area of medium landscape sensitivity) to green (areas of low landscape sensitivity). The section of this report that includes the NDP area (C6a – South Cheltenham (Leckhampton)) has been included at the end of this Appendix.

B.1.2 Cheltenham Plan Preferred Options (2017)

B.1.2.1 The Cheltenham Plan was adopted on the 20th July 2020. The following paragraphs are taken from the Cheltenham Plan (Part One) 2011 to 2031 - Preferred Options Consultation and relate to land now allocated for development under Policy MD4.

“The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) submission document proposed a Strategic Allocation at Leckhampton. This would have amounted to approximately 650 dwellings within the Cheltenham boundary in that location. The JCS Inspector has indicated that this scale of development would not be sound and recommended that a smaller development of around 200 units would be more appropriate. This means that the site would fall below the size necessary for it to be allocated for development in the JCS. Therefore the Cheltenham Plan will allocate the land at Leckhampton instead. Despite this, the Leckhampton site remains part of the discussions within the JCS and it would be inappropriate at this stage for consultation on the Cheltenham Plan to make any firm proposals for this particular area.

An indicative figure of 200 dwellings has been used for potential development; however, this is based on basic density assumptions so it is likely to change as masterplanning progresses. Any development in this location will have to take into account landscape impacts, highways issues and green space.

A clearer picture of what the Council’s preferred option for this site will be provided in the next stage of consultation. Indicative boundaries are included on the relevant maps. These are based on the JCS Inspector’s comments in her Note of Recommendations from 21 July 2016”³.

¹ Elizabeth C Ord, Inspector (2016) “Exam 259 - Note of recommendations made at the hearing session on 21 July 2016’. Available at: <https://www.jointcorestrategy.org/examination-documents-234-264> [Date accessed: 13/06/22]

² Joint Core Strategy (2012) Landscape & Visual Sensitivity & Urban Design Report

³ Cheltenham Borough Council (2017) Cheltenham Plan (Part One) 2011 to 2031 – Preferred Options Consultation. Available at https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/46/planning_policy/1034/the_cheltenham_plan/2 [Link not accessible online at the time of report preparation]

B.1.3 Further comments and reports from Planning Inspectors

B.1.3.1 **Table B.1.1** to **Table B.1.6** include recommendations and comments from previous planning inspectors in the examination of potential development in Leckhampton.

Table B.1.1: Inspector's Interim Report – EXAM 232, Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy - Inspector Ord, 3rd May 2016.

Reference	Extract
Para 112	In my Preliminary Findings I indicated that I was not minded to find the Tewksbury side of the Leckhampton allocation, West of Farm Lane, sound and that overall, built development should avoid areas of high landscape and visual sensitivity. Having considered additional evidence submitted since then, including Redrow's planning application documents relating to Land West of Farm Lane, I remain of this view.
Para 114	I also note that the Council's Landscape Officer referred to stunning views from Leckhampton Hill from the Devils Chimney and Cotswold Way, which would be negatively impacted, bringing the perception of the southern edge of Cheltenham closer to the viewer with a greater mass of conurbation in view. In my judgement, development on the West of Farm Lane site is environmentally unsustainable mainly due to its impact on the setting of the Cotswold Hills AONB and the high landscape and visual sensitivity of the site.
Para 117	From my site visit observations, the adjacent land, East of Farm Lane, is also highly sensitive to development mainly due to its proximity to the AONB and stunning views into and out of the AONB. The various significant heritage assets in the south of the site add further interest and sensitivity, rendering this area unsuitable for built development on environmental sustainability grounds. Therefore, the area to the south of the allocation, coloured red for high landscape and visual sensitivity on the Landscape and Visual Sensitivity plan ^[113] , should remain as green infrastructure.
Para 118	Furthermore, the Urban Extensions Definition Study shows other areas of high landscape sensitivity ^[114] scattered throughout the site. Additionally, there are important views from the A46 Shurdington Road across the site onto the Cotswolds Hills, the most spectacular being from the junction with Kidnappers Lane ^[115] .
Para 119	Moreover, the site is crossed by an intricate network of footpaths over the fields, providing impressive views of the Hills from the site's own pleasant, rural environment. On landscape and visual grounds Natural England and the Conservation Board objected to the recently dismissed Bovis/Miller planning appeal for development of up to 650 dwellings on the Cheltenham side of this allocation ^[116] .
Para 120	I note that the Cheltenham Assessment of land availability ^[117] states "In general, a site is considered unsuitable where it is assessed as being of 'high' landscape sensitivity". On this basis, a large part of the site would be

Reference	Extract
	unsuitable for built development and, in my judgement, the extent of the proposed development should be significantly reduced.
Para 123	Overall, in my judgement, a limited amount of development could be supported towards the north of the site where public transport is more accessible, subject to the avoidance of land of high landscape and visual sensitivity. Therefore, for reasons of landscape/visual amenity and highway impacts, I recommend that the Cheltenham part of the site be allocated for a modest level of built development in the order of 200 dwellings.
Para 174	As indicated in my Preliminary Findings, in my judgement, the case for Local Green Space designation within both the proposed North West Cheltenham and Leckhampton urban extensions has been made out ^[166] . However, as I am recommending the removal of Leckhampton as a strategic allocation, the Local Green Space designation can be made in either the emerging Cheltenham Local Plan or the forthcoming Neighbourhood Plan.

Table B.1.2: Inspector’s Preliminary Findings on Green Belt Release Spatial Strategy and Strategic Allocations - EXAM 146, Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy – Inspector Ord, 18th Dec. 2015.

Reference	Extract
Para 8	In terms of the designation of Local Green Space (LGS), I find that this is justified in principle at both the Leckhampton site and the North West Cheltenham site.
Para 48	Although that part of the site which lies to the south-west of Farm Lane (within Tewkesbury Borough) was considered by the AMEC GB Assessment to have potential to be added to the GB ^[42] , the report stopped short of recommending its inclusion. The AERC GB Review of Cheltenham ^[43] found that the Cheltenham part of the site did not score highly against defined GB purposes.
Para 49	The Strategic Allocations Report ^[44] and Landscape Report ^[45] indicate that its overall landscape sensitivity is high to medium, and that whilst the site lies generally within flood-zone 1, there are small areas which fall within flood-zone 2.
Para 50	A section of the site’s southern boundary lies adjacent to the AONB and some areas of the site are very sensitive to development. In the SA it 10 scored major negative against the landscape sustainability objective, meaning that it is assessed as having a problematical sustainability effect, with mitigation likely to be difficult and/or expensive ^[46] . It is the only strategic allocation to have scored a negative effect above minor against any objective.
Para 51	The Landscape Report indicates that a large part of the allocation, (including land to the south west of Farm Lane) falls within the highest category of landscape and visual sensitivity. One of the key considerations in the Report is that the site has a <i>“very prominent landform and field pattern to the south adjacent to the AONB which is vulnerable to change and is considered a valuable landscape resource”</i> ^[47] .

Reference	Extract
Para 52	I have reservations about the soundness of developing that part of the proposed allocation which is highly sensitive and which, from my site visit, I noted to be in clear view from within the AONB and other public recreational areas.
Para 53	A number of heritage assets also require careful consideration, including the moated site at Church Farm, the Rectory, Leckhampton Farmhouse and Barn, the Olde England Cottage, the Moat Cottage and Church Farm ^[48] . The Historic Environment Assessment states that “ <i>there are major heritage concerns to development</i> ” due to the high contribution the area makes to the setting of designated buildings and the high potential for archaeological remains of medium regional significance ^[49] . Development should be avoided that could have a significant impact on these assets unless appropriate mitigation were demonstrated.
Para 54	The section south west of Farm Lane, within Tewkesbury’s boundaries, is an existing allocation within the Tewkesbury Borough Plan. However, the Inspector examining the Tewkesbury Borough Plan had reservations about developing this area and recommended its deletion as an allocation ^[50] . This recommendation was not taken forward by the Council.
Para 59	In summary, balancing the harms and benefits of this site ^[56] , in my judgement some residential development is justified on the Cheltenham part of the site. Nonetheless, this should not be on those areas that have high landscape and visual sensitivity. With this proviso, I am minded to find that the Cheltenham part of the allocation is sound. Submissions are invited from the JCS authorities only on what capacity is justified on this site in view of my comments.
Para 65	Turning to the merits of designation, the proposed LGS lies close to the local community, and is well supported by local people ^[60] . Following public consultation, a range of reasons was submitted in support of the designation. Amongst other things, these relate to the beauty and interest of views, the importance of the network of footpaths for dog walkers and others, opportunities for all year round exercise such as jogging, enjoyment of the historic buildings, hedgerows and trees, and the area’s overall tranquillity ^[61] .
Para 66	In my judgement, the evidence suggests that the NPPF criteria are met and LGS designation is justified. The JSC authorities are requested to consider indicative areas for LGS designation based on two scenarios: 1) development not proceeding on the Farm Lane site; 2) development proceeding on the Farm Lane site. Further input from relevant developers and Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council, limited to indicative areas, is invited at the forthcoming hearings. Detailed boundaries are best left for either the Cheltenham Borough Plan or the forthcoming Neighbourhood Plan.

Table B.1.3: Report to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government by P W Clark MA MRTPI MCMI. Inquiry held on 22 - 25 September and 29 September – 2 October 2015. Land at Kidnappers Lane Leckhampton, Cheltenham. File Ref: APP/B1605/W/14/3001717, 11 January 2016 AND Secretary of State covering letter, Julian Pitt, APP/B1605/W/14/3001717, 5 May 2016.

Reference	Extract
<p>Para 19 SoS covering letter</p>	<p>Landscape of the site itself and conclusion on landscape character and appearance</p> <p>Turning to the site itself, the Secretary of State has considered the Inspector’s assessment at IR257-263 and agrees that, whilst not designated, the site has its own intrinsic charm which gives it value (IR260), is a locally valued landscape, and that its value derives from its own characteristics, of which views towards the AONB are only one of a number of charming features (IR263).</p>
<p>Para 20 SoS covering letter</p>	<p>In conclusion, the Secretary of State agrees that development on this site at the present time would harm the character and appearance of the local area through the loss of a valued landscape (IR264). Although development of the site would no harm more structural elements of the wider contextual landscape character, such as the nearby AONB or the setting of Cheltenham as a whole, its development would cause a local loss and would conflict with LP policies identified at IR265.</p>
<p>Para 29 and 30 SoS covering letter</p>	<p>Overall conclusions and planning balance</p> <p>The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector’s overall conclusions at IR299-310.</p> <p>The Secretary of State concludes that granting permission for the appeal scheme would be contrary to the development plan overall due to the severe residual cumulative transport impacts and through the loss of a locally valued landscape (IR300-301). He has therefore gone on to consider whether there are any material considerations that indicate the proposal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan.</p>
<p>Para 32 SoS covering letter</p>	<p>The residual cumulative transport impacts of development would be severe, in conflict with Framework paragraph 32. The development would prejudice the possible designation of Local Green Space, in conflict with Framework paragraph 76, and the guidance indicates that allowing the appeal would be premature in such circumstances. Though not designated, the site is clearly a locally valued landscaped which paragraph 109 of the Framework states should be protected.</p> <p>The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector that all three paragraphs in the Framework indicate that development should be restricted and, in the circumstances of this case, that the appeal should be dismissed (IR305).</p>

Reference	Extract
<p>Para 10 Inspector Clark's Main Report</p>	<p>Nine reasons for refusal were given in the Council's decision letter¹⁰. By letter dated 29 May 2015, the Council advised that it did not wish to pursue refusal reasons 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8 but would continue to submit evidence in support of reasons 4, 5 and 9. The Parish Council, in an e-mail of 16 June 2015, confirmed that it resolved to contest the appeal on grounds of transport, landscape and Local Green Space. Those grounds correspond to reasons for refusal 3, 4 and 5. LEGLAG did not give advance notice of any intention not to pursue any matter. Some third parties, including Mr Pollock, specifically asserted their intention not only to pursue all refusal reasons but also additional matters.</p>
<p>Para 156 Case for Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council</p>	<p>The landscape value of Leckhampton Fields was comprehensively assessed for the Borough Council in 2003 by Landscape Design Associates (the LDA report).⁴⁰³ The landscape, and its value, have hardly changed since⁴⁰⁴</p>
<p>Para 258 Inspector's Conclusions</p>	<p>My site visits, both informal and unaccompanied before the event, and formal and accompanied during the event, convince me that the LDA report referred to by the Parish Council carries the most compelling analysis of the worth of this site rather than the more recent work carried out by the Council and the appellant specifically for this proposal. That earlier report accurately describes the mosaic of land uses, varied topography, landscape history, dense network of footpaths, small to medium sized fields, mature vegetation, established hedgerows, isolated specimen trees, orchard remnants, streams and frequent glimpses of or views to the AONB which combine to make the whole of this site a memorable landscape [156-160]. Those characteristics remain largely unchanged.</p>
<p>Para 260 Inspector's Conclusions</p>	<p>In my view, the landscape value of this site depends less on the fact that it can be seen from the AONB, or that from it can be seen the fact that hills surround Cheltenham; rather, it is its own intrinsic charm which gives it value. That intrinsic charm is well described in the LDA report.</p>
<p>Para 261 Inspector's Conclusions</p>	<p>There has been a succession of planning Inspectors who have recognised the intrinsic landscape value of this site [37-39 and 43]. I have no reason to disagree with them. I concur with the opinion that it would be sad if Leckhampton fields were to be developed in preference to some less interesting but designated Green Belt land.</p>
<p>Para 265 Inspector's Conclusions</p>	<p>It would conflict with those parts of Local Plan policies CP1, CP3, CP7 and CO1 which would permit development only where it would take adequate account of safeguarding attractive landscapes, complement and respect the character of the locality and not harm the visual amenity of the landscape, attributes and features which make a significant contribution to its character, distinctiveness, quality and amenity value. Although consistent with emerging (but not universally accepted) JCS</p>

Reference	Extract
	policy SA1 which allocates the site for development and with emerging policy SD8 which requires development to preserve the special qualities of the AONB, it would also conflict with emerging JCS policy SD7, seeking to protect landscape character.
Para 305 Inspector's Conclusions	Finally, although not designated, the site is clearly a valued landscape. Paragraph 109 of the NPPF advises that the planning system should protect valued landscapes. Therefore, it seems to me that three specific policies in the NPPF indicate that this development should be restricted and the appeal dismissed.

Table B.1.4: *Cheltenham Borough Local Plan Second Review 1991-2011 Inspector's Report, pp 187, DP527 8 March 2005 David Asher BA DipTP MRTPI⁴*

Reference	Extract
10.147	I conclude on this issue, therefore, that the development of the objection site would materially harm the rural character and appearance of the area, and the important contribution that this makes to the landscape within the site and when seen from the AONB.

Table B.1.5: *Tewkesbury Borough Council Local Plan To 2011 Report Of Public Local Inquiry Into Objections PINSM/G1630/429/5 December 2003 - Mary Travers Ba(Hons) DipTP MRTPI - The Planning Inspectorate*

Reference	Extract
2.25.11	The site consists of four fields subdivided by substantial hedgerows that are interspersed with hedgerow trees. It has a gently rolling, topography and an attractive pastoral character that in my view links strongly into the landscape of the AONB immediately to the south of Leckhampton Lane. Generally the contours fall from south to north and from east to west and there is a distinct ridge running roughly northwest-southeast through the site so that the south-eastern corner is the most elevated part. A public footpath that traverses the northern part of the site forms a link in a network of rural paths to the east and west of the site.
2.25.12	As can be observed from public vantage points, the site is highly visible from within the AONB, for example from the lower slopes of Leckhampton Hill and from higher up at the Devil's Chimney. It is also visible partly from the west and in long distance views from the north. There is a substantial hedgerow on the western boundary with the Green Belt but this area drops away towards the Vale of Gloucester. As a result, development on the more elevated south-eastern part of the site would be very conspicuous from the western approach along Leckhampton Lane where it would be seen within the context of the AONB. And looking southwards from the public footpath across the site it is apparent that

⁴ Accessed on 12/10/17. Available at:

http://www.leglag.org.uk/LEGLAG/Evidence_files/Cheltenham%20Borough%20Local%20Plan%20Second%20Review%201991-2011%20Inspectors%20Report%20pp%20187%20DP527%208%20March%202005%20David%20Asher.pdf

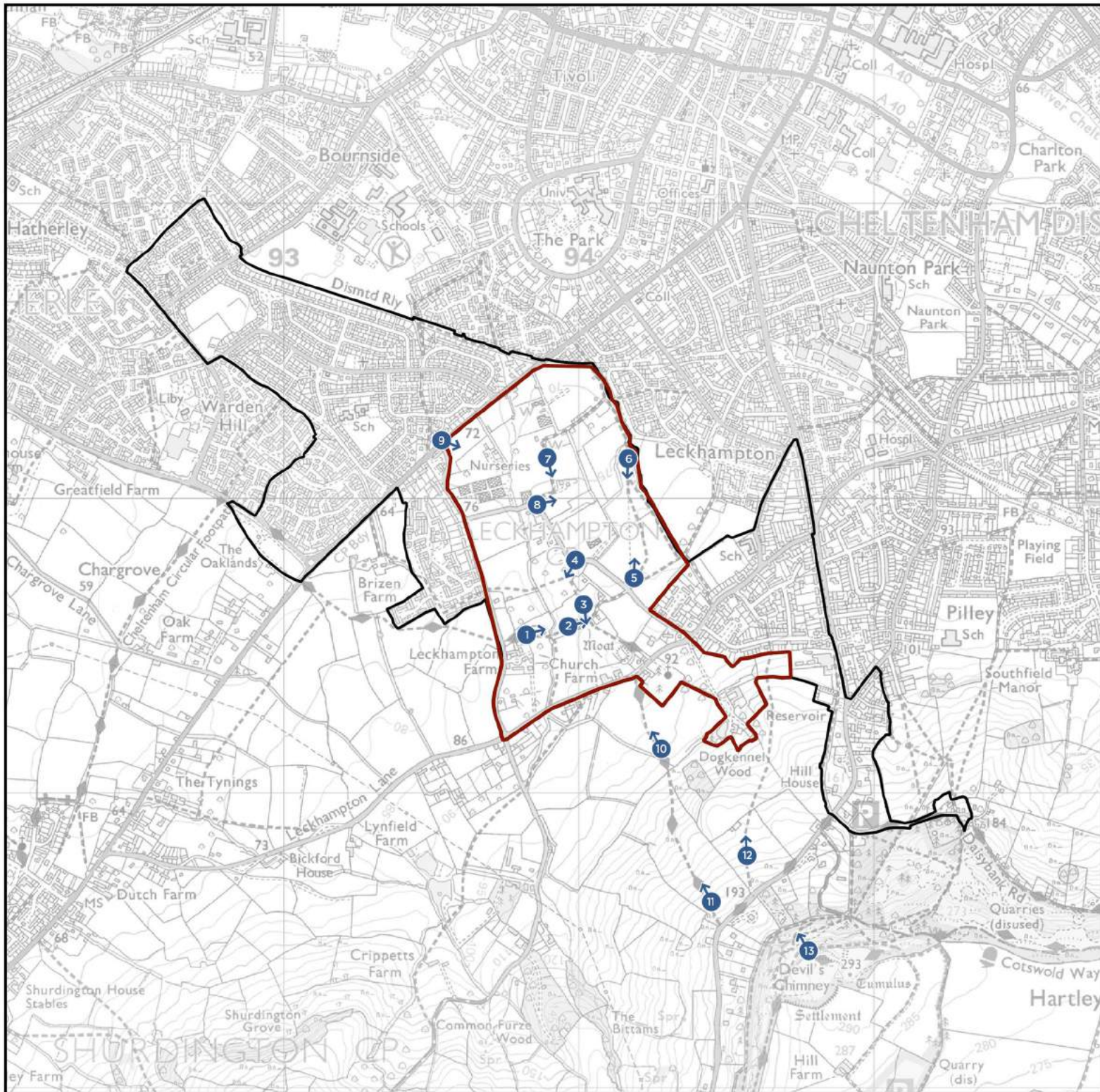
Reference	Extract
	development would. entail a significant intrusion into views of the open countryside and the AONB from the existing edge of the built-up area. It would also sever the link between the rural footpaths to the east and west of the site and replace it with one of an entirely different character. For these reasons and taking into account the scale of the proposed development, I consider that its visual impact on the surrounding countryside would be very significant and that it could not be easily mitigated.
2.25.13	In addition, the site forms part of a swathe of open land that sweeps down from the Cotswolds to pass between Cheltenham and Gloucester and it provides a link between the AONB and the Vale of Gloucester. Development of the site would form an incongruous promontory in this open area, eroding the link and cutting off the rural land to the east of Farm Lane from the tract of countryside to the west. I do not consider that there are any differences in character or appearance between the Cheltenham Borough safeguarded land and the SH1 site that are so significant as to render this incursion less harmful.

Table B.1.4: Cheltenham Borough Local Plan Inquiry (1993) - Inspector's Report




Reference	Extract
6.92	The land at Leckhampton should be protected for its special historical, landscape and amenity value. It represents the last example of the gradual transition between the urban area and the countryside which characterised the Regency town. It should be considered anew for green belt or AONB status, for 'landscape conservation area' status, and as part of a Leckhampton Conservation Area (35A, 129W).
6.95	The land at Leckhampton continues to be farmed with no indication of decline. The structure plan says that development which leads to additional traffic on Bath Road will be resisted, as improvements would be damaging to the environment. The present sewerage system cannot accommodate even limited development on the Leckhampton land, and the Hatherley Brook is loaded to capacity.
6.97	The land at Leckhampton was originally omitted from the green belt with the proviso that the green belt notation might be extended if it appeared at a later date that it should remain open in the long term. The Cheltenham Environs Local Plan (CELP) Inspector concluded that the principles which guided the planners in 1968 applied equally in 1984, and that the land should not be green belt, but should remain open. I have had the benefit of new evidence concerning the character, appearance and historic interest of the land. I have walked over it and examined it from Leckhampton Hill, and reached my own conclusions on its merits. I have also examined Swindon Farm, which the CELP inspector was not asked to do. The Gloucestershire Structure Plan First Alteration (GSPFA) with its strategy of restraint, in great contrast to the high level of development which occurred in the 1980s, was approved only recently (in 1992). In my opinion these

Reference	Extract
	are material changes, which have occurred since 1984, in the circumstances surrounding the question of longer term development in Cheltenham.
6.100	I believe that it would be very sad indeed if development were to proceed at Leckhampton, with its variety and interest.
6.103	The land at Leckhampton appears from the latest available classification (MAFF 1) to be a mixture of Grade 2, 3a and 3b. Although not of the highest quality, the land is in my opinion sufficiently valuable for this factor to be given some weight if it ever becomes necessary to consider whether the land ought to be released.
6.104	The Structure Plan supports the council's contention that Bath Road does not have the traffic capacity to support further development. There is insufficient evidence for me to draw conclusions about the drainage question: there is, at the least, serious uncertainty. Whether these constraints might be overcome in the longer term is not a matter which I need to address. However, they seem to me to be of such importance, and to have implications for such a wide area, that it is reasonable to conclude that the land at Leckhampton would need to be the subject of comprehensive development proposals if it were ever to be developed, as the council suggest. In the meantime, it should in my view continue to be protected from development.

Appendix C Viewpoint location map

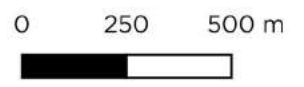


Legend

-  Leckhampton with Warden Hill Neighbourhood Plan Area
-  LCA Study Area
-  Viewpoint

PROJECT: LC_814 Leckhampton LCA
 CLIENT: LwWH Parish Council
 DRAWING: Viewpoint Locations
 DRAWING No: LC-814_1
 DRAWN: RI
 CHECKED: NJD
 SCALE: 1:18,000
 DATE: 25.05.22

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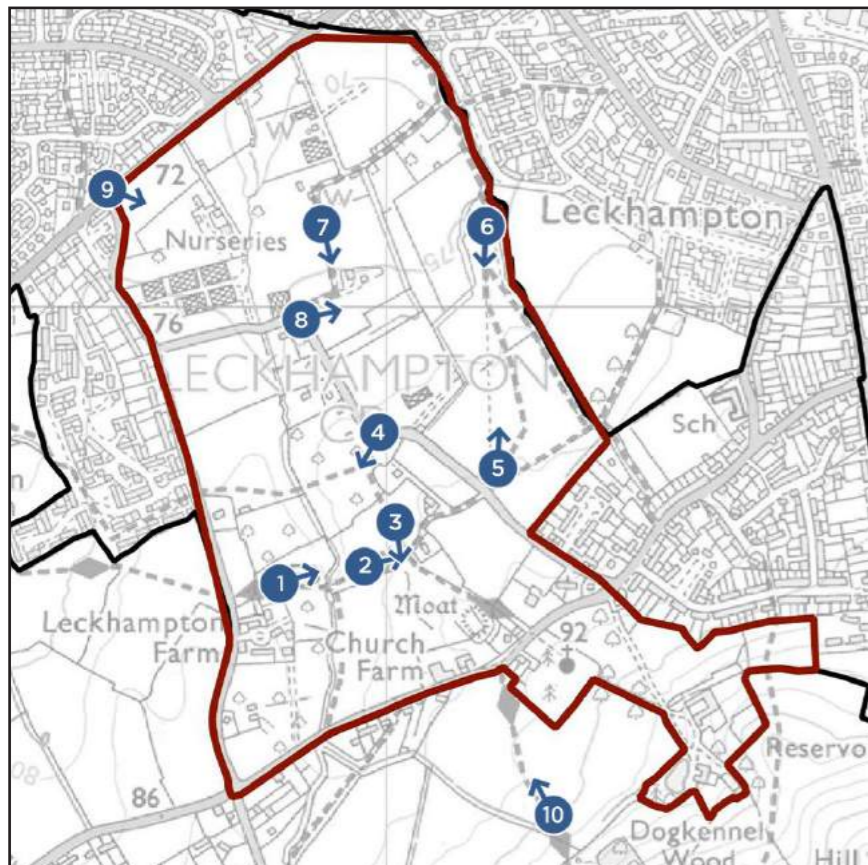


Eagle Tower, Cheltenham, GL50 1TA
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Appendix D: Panoramic photographs of viewpoints

Line of Poplar trees on Kidnappers Lane, contain views in this direction

Line of Willows following the Hatherley Brook serve to create a strongly vegetated character to views in this part of the study area



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Viewpoint 1

PROJECT CODE: LC-814

PROJECT NAME: Landscape Character Assessment

CLIENT: Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council

LOCATION: PROW east of Farm Lane

DISTANCE FROM SITE: On site

DIRECTION FROM SITE: View looking east

GRID REFERENCE: 393796 , 219535

DRAWING: Viewpoint 1

DRAWN: HM

CHECKED: RG

SCALE: Not to scale

DATE: 18.05.22

TIME: 11:00

VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD): 85m

CAMERA: Canon EOS 70D

LENS: 35mm

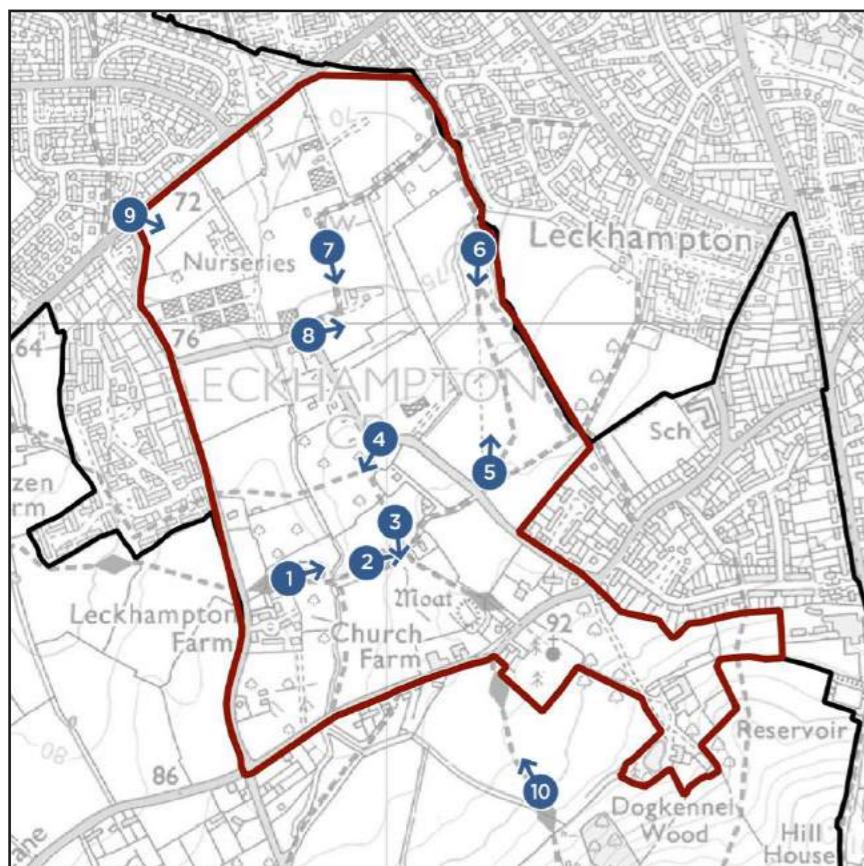
SHUTTER SPEED: 1/120

APERTURE: f/11

Line of Poplar trees on Kidnappers Lane, create a vegetated character to views and contains some views from this part of the study area.

Field Cottage, a Grade II Listed Building, lies just behind the vegetation

Moat Cottage, a Grade II Listed Building, is frequently visible in views from this part of the study area and adds to the strong rural character of the view.



Viewpoint 2

PROJECT CODE: LC-814

PROJECT NAME: Landscape Character Assessment

CLIENT: Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council

LOCATION: PROW near Moat Cottage looking north east

DISTANCE FROM SITE: On site

DIRECTION FROM SITE: Looking north east

GRID REFERENCE: 393966 , 219680

DRAWING: Viewpoint 2

DRAWN: HM

CHECKED: RG

SCALE: Not to scale

DATE: 18.05.22

TIME: 11:15

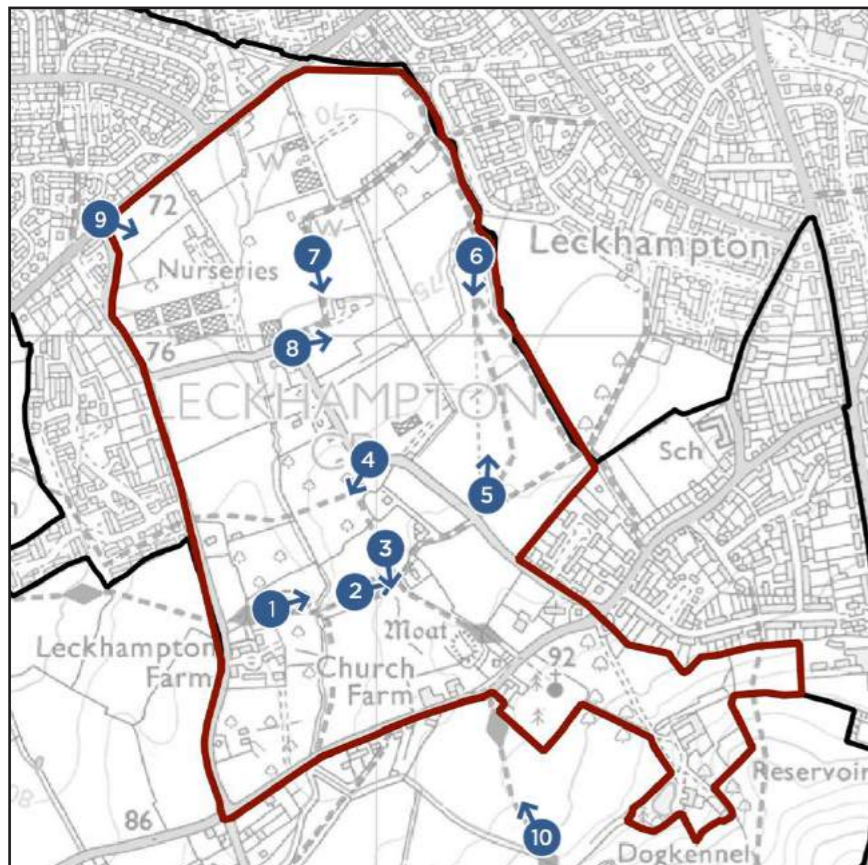
VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD): 80m

CAMERA: Canon EOS 70D

LENS: 35mm

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/120

APERTURE: f/11



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Viewpoint 3

PROJECT CODE: LC-814

PROJECT NAME: Landscape Character Assessment

CLIENT: Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council

LOCATION: PROW near of Moat Cottage looking south

DISTANCE FROM SITE: On site

DIRECTION FROM SITE: Looking south

GRID REFERENCE: 393971 , 219692

DRAWING: Viewpoint 3

DRAWN: HM

CHECKED: RG

SCALE: Not to scale

DATE: 18.05.22

TIME: 11:20

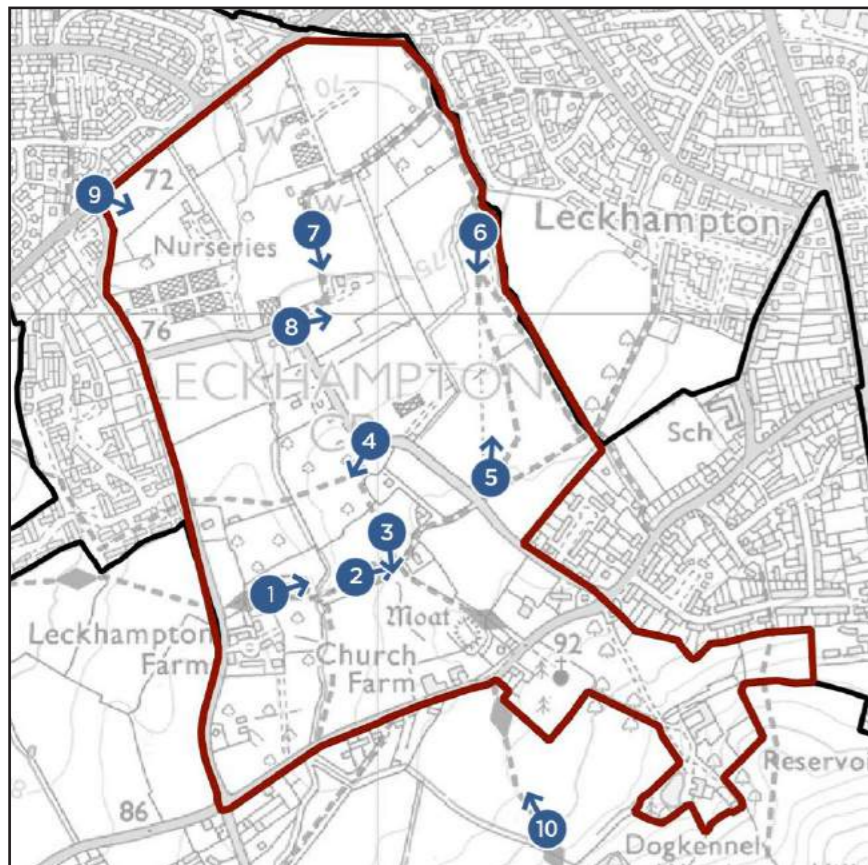
VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD): 80m

CAMERA: Canon EOS 70D

LENS: 35mm

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/120

APERTURE: f/11



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Viewpoint 4

PROJECT CODE: LC-814

PROJECT NAME: Landscape Character Assessment

CLIENT: Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council

LOCATION: Kidnapper's Lane

DISTANCE FROM SITE: On site

DIRECTION FROM SITE: Looking south

GRID REFERENCE: 393970 , 219796

DRAWING: Viewpoint 4

DRAWN: HM

CHECKED: RG

SCALE: Not to scale

DATE: 18.05.22

TIME: 12:25

VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD): 80m

CAMERA: Canon EOS 70D

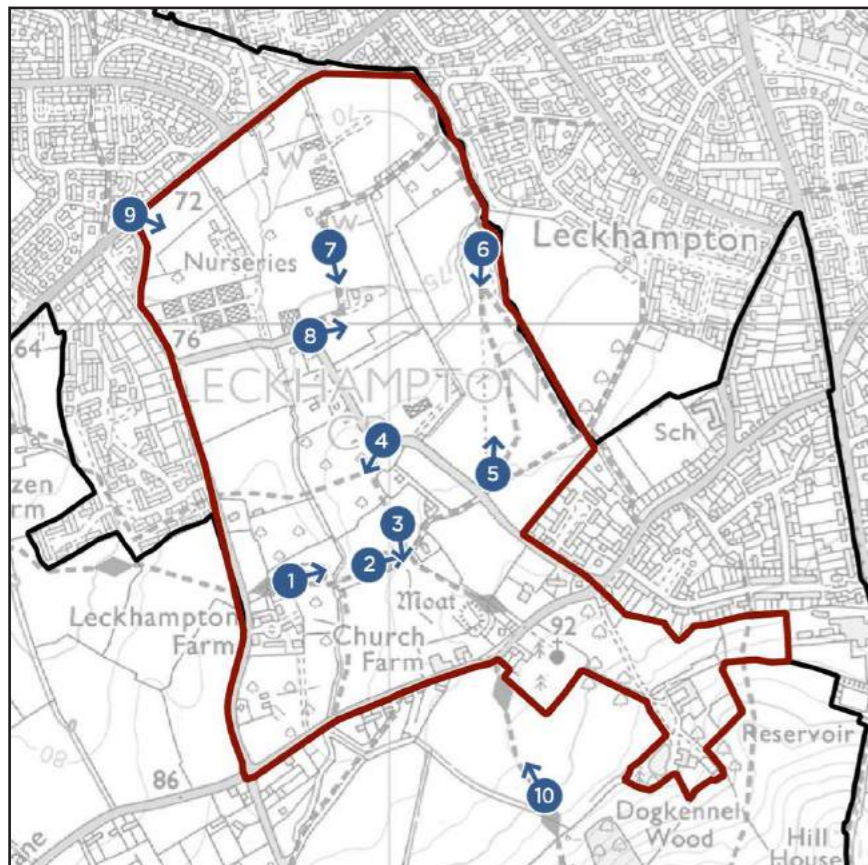
LENS: 35mm

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/120

APERTURE: f/11

Two large free-standing Oak trees,
potentially Veteran trees

Line of Willows along Moorend Stream, limiting
intervisibility with Burrow Field sports ground



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Viewpoint 5

PROJECT CODE: LC-814

PROJECT NAME: Landscape Character Assessment

CLIENT: Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council

LOCATION: Lott's Meadow south

DISTANCE FROM SITE: On site

DIRECTION FROM SITE: Looking north

GRID REFERENCE: 394176 , 219707

DRAWING: Viewpoint 5

DRAWN: HM

CHECKED: RG

SCALE: Not to scale

DATE: 18.05.22

TIME: 11:30

VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD): 80m

CAMERA: Canon EOS 70D

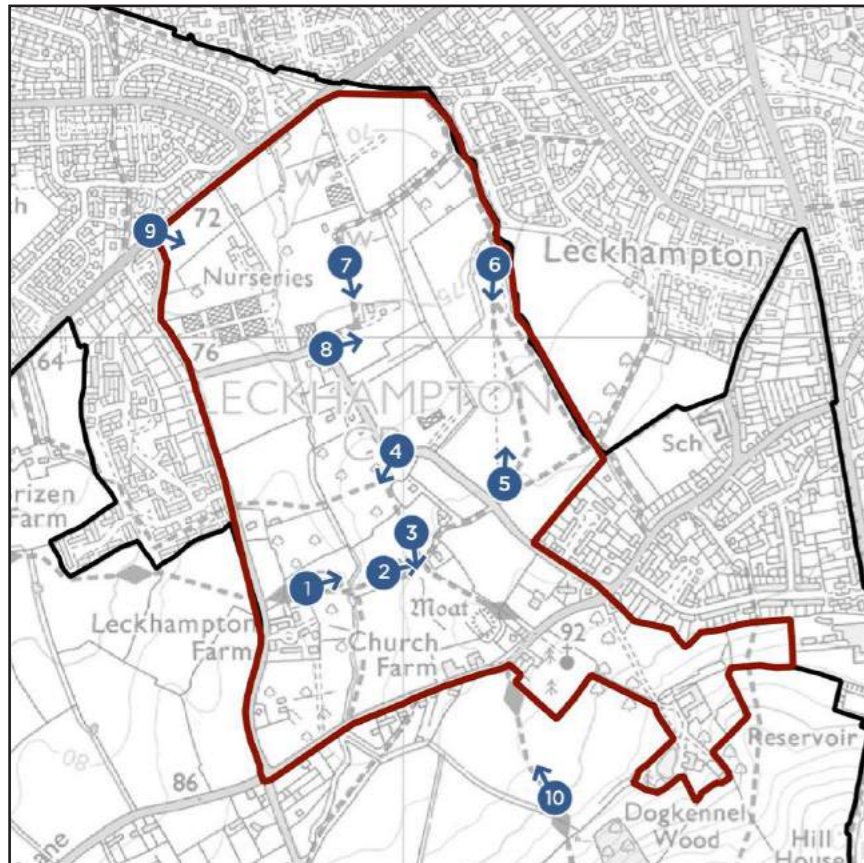
LENS: 35mm

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/120

APERTURE: f/11

There are opportunities to view the Cotwolds Hills from within this part of the study area

Line of Poplars on Kidnappers Lane



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Viewpoint 6

PROJECT CODE: LC-814

PROJECT NAME: Landscape Character Assessment

CLIENT: Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council

LOCATION: Lott's Meadow north

DISTANCE FROM SITE: On site

DIRECTION FROM SITE: Looking south

GRID REFERENCE: 394169 , 220175

DRAWING: Viewpoint 6

DRAWN: HM

CHECKED: RG

SCALE: Not to scale

DATE: 18.05.22

TIME: 11:45

VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD): 75m

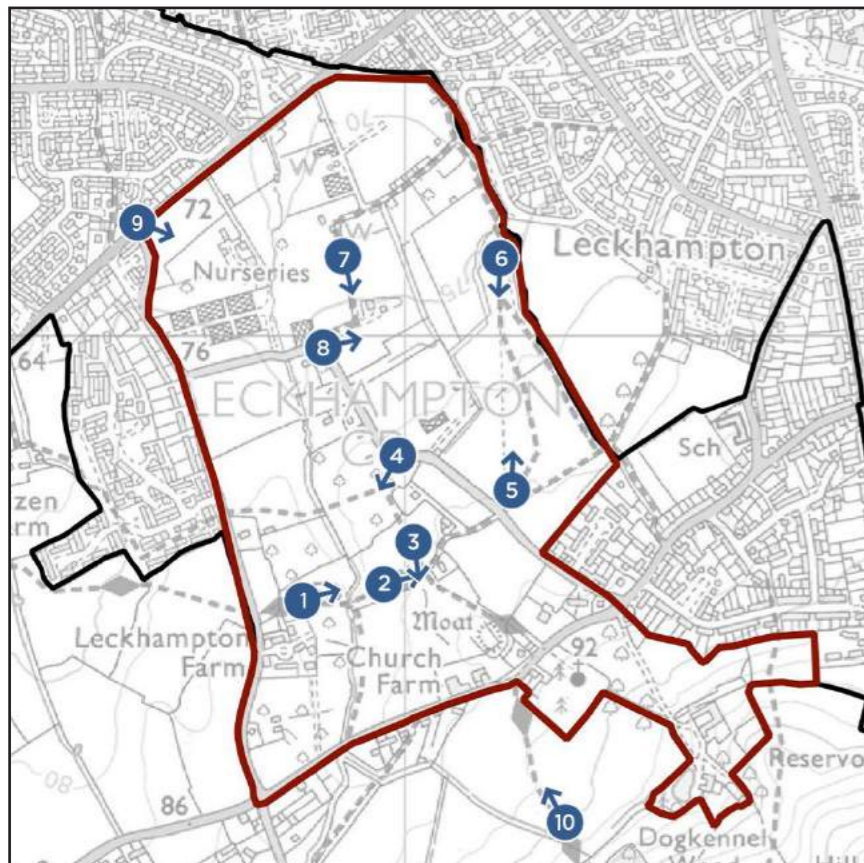
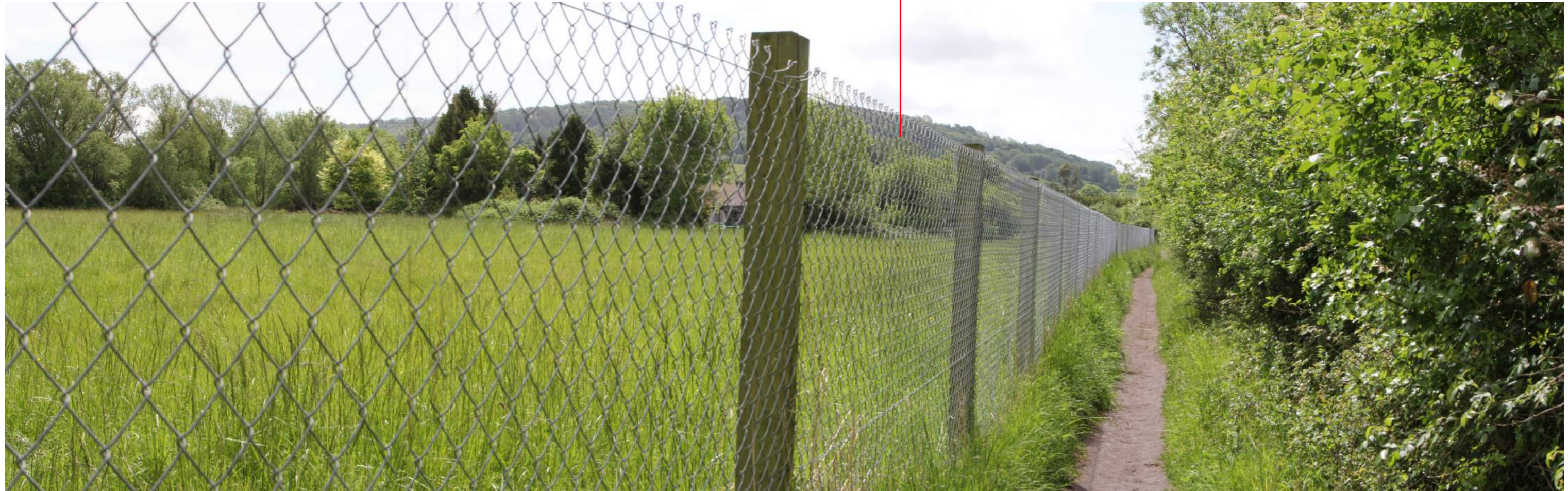
CAMERA: Canon EOS 70D

LENS: 35mm

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/120

APERTURE: f/11

The chain link fence forms a visual detractor in a view which otherwise has a strong rural feel and good intervisibility with the Cotswolds Hills.



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Viewpoint 7

PROJECT CODE: LC-814

PROJECT NAME: Landscape Character Assessment

CLIENT: Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council

LOCATION: PROW south of MD4

DISTANCE FROM SITE: On site

DIRECTION FROM SITE: Looking south

GRID REFERENCE: 393894 , 220143

DRAWING: Viewpoint 7

DRAWN: HM

CHECKED: RG

SCALE: Not to scale

DATE: 18.05.22

TIME: 12:00

VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD): 73m

CAMERA: Canon EOS 70D

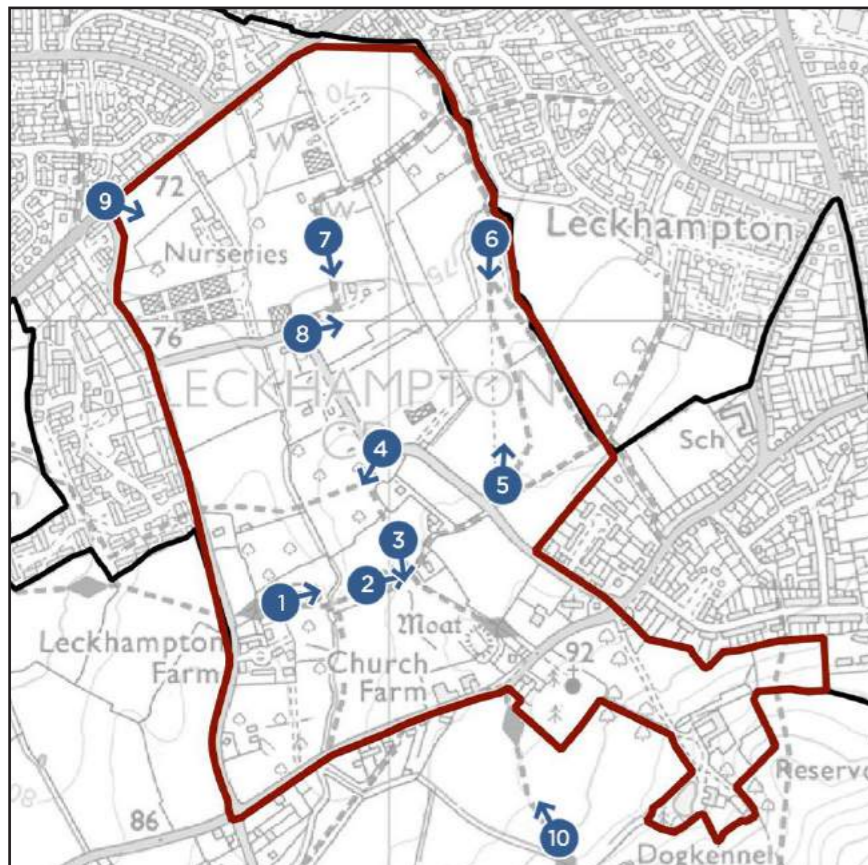
LENS: 35mm

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/120

APERTURE: f/11

The vegetated field boundaries create a well-treed context to the rural view with few visual detractors

The Cotswolds NL forms part of the skyline in many views looking south from this part of the study area



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Ordnance Survey 0100031673

Viewpoint 8

PROJECT CODE: LC-814

PROJECT NAME: Landscape Character Assessment

CLIENT: Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council

LOCATION: PROW Robinswood Field

DISTANCE FROM SITE: On site

DIRECTION FROM SITE: Looking east

GRID REFERENCE: 393858 , 220006

DRAWING: Viewpoint 8

DRAWN: HM

CHECKED: RG

SCALE: Not to scale

DATE: 18.05.22

TIME: 12:10

VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD): 75m

CAMERA: Canon EOS 70D

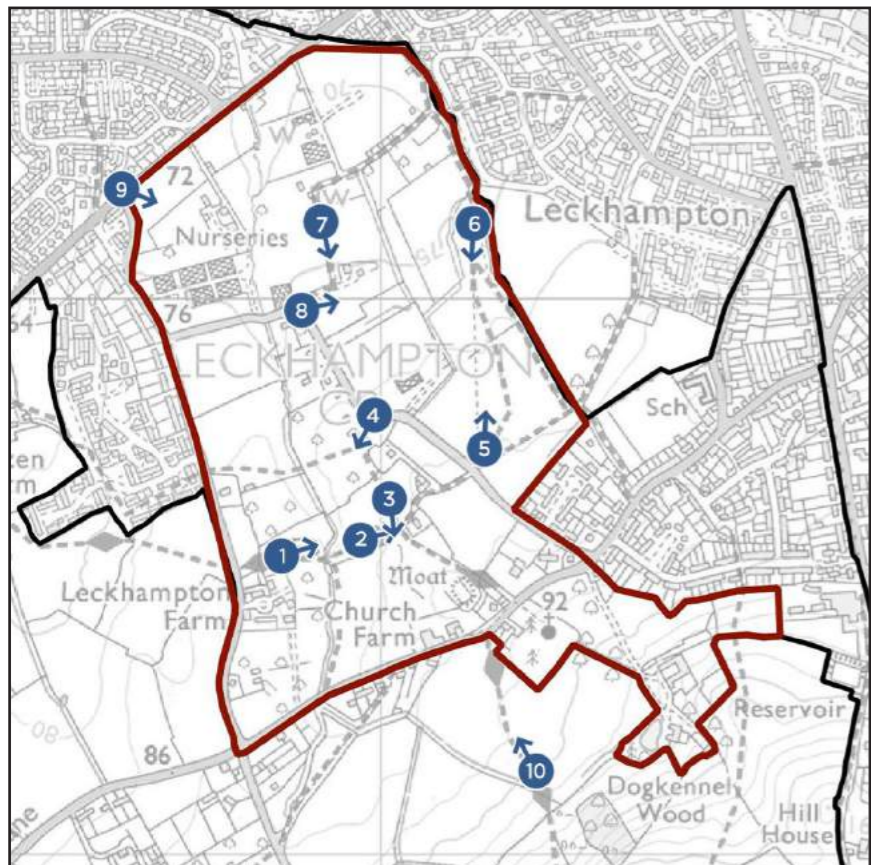
LENS: 35mm

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/120

APERTURE: f/11

Views towards the ridgeline of the Cotswolds NL are a key characteristic feature of this view and should be protected, as described by Planning Inspectors' comments (see Appendix B of this report)

Construction work associated with the development of Cheltenham Secondary School has created some temporary visual detractors



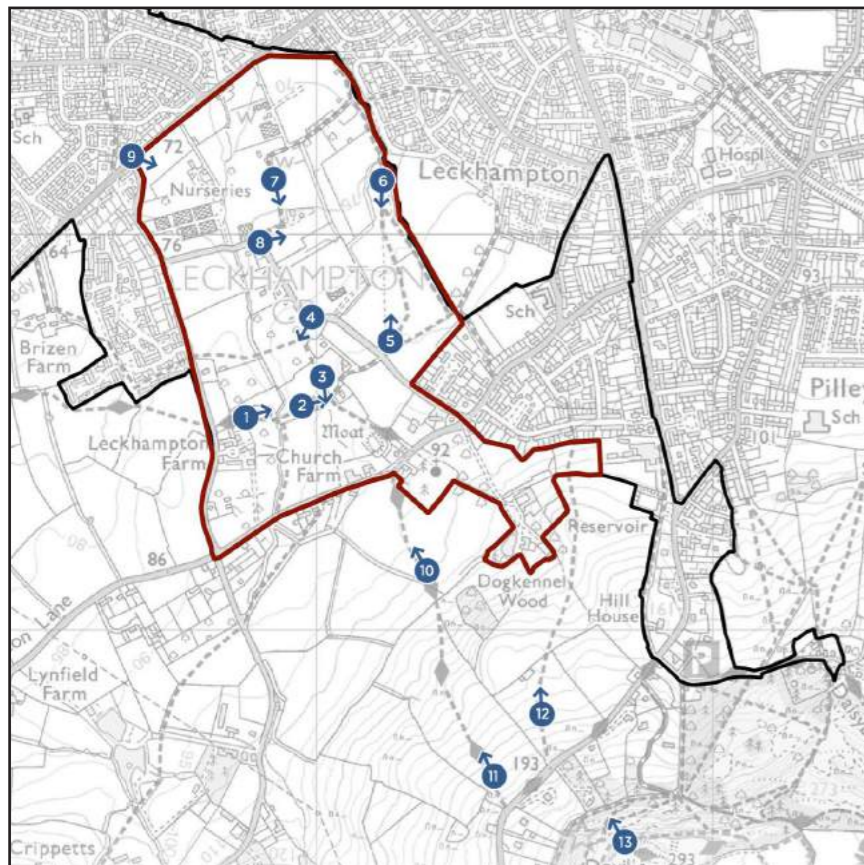
Contains OS data Crown copyright and database right (2016)
Ordnance Survey 0100031673

Viewpoint 9

PROJECT CODE:	LC-814	GRID REFERENCE:	393556 , 220213	TIME:	15:15
PROJECT NAME:	Landscape Character Assessment	DRAWING:	Viewpoint 9	VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD):	72m
CLIENT:	Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council	DRAWN:	HM	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
LOCATION:	Shurdington Road/ Kidnappers Lane	CHECKED:	RG	LENS:	35mm
DISTANCE FROM SITE:	10m	SCALE:	Not to scale	SHUTTER SPEED:	1/120
DIRECTION FROM SITE:	Looking south	DATE:	18.05.22	APERTURE:	f/11

The treed character of the study area serves to limit views towards much residential development in the view. The Church Farm Business Centre is a noticeable element of development with a rural setting

St Peter's Church, located within the study area and within the Cotswolds NL



Viewpoint 10

PROJECT CODE: LC-814

PROJECT NAME: Landscape Character Assessment

CLIENT: Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council

LOCATION: PROW south of St Peter's Church

DISTANCE FROM SITE: 280m

DIRECTION FROM SITE: Looking north

GRID REFERENCE: 394269 , 219133

DRAWING: Viewpoint 10

DRAWN: HM

CHECKED: RG

SCALE: Not to scale

DATE: 18.05.22

TIME: 12:50

VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD): 102m

CAMERA: Canon EOS 70D

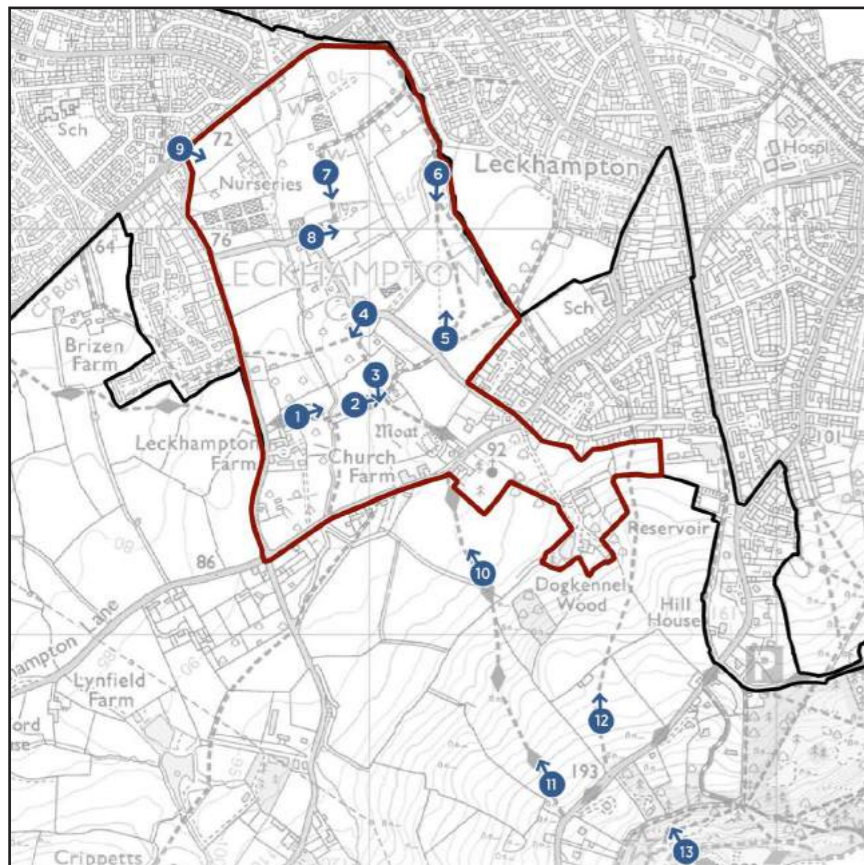
LENS: 35mm

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/120

APERTURE: f/11

The roofscape of the recent residential development at Brizen Farm is a prominent element in the view.

The field parcels and treed character of the study area between Leckhampton Court Farm and Burrows Field create a soft transition between the designated landscape of the Cotswold Hills and the development edge of southern Cheltenham



Viewpoint 11

PROJECT CODE: LC-814

PROJECT NAME: Landscape Character Assessment

CLIENT: Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council

LOCATION: PROW south of Leckhampton Road

DISTANCE FROM SITE: 805m

DIRECTION FROM SITE: Looking north

GRID REFERENCE: 394470 , 218672

DRAWING: Viewpoint 11

DRAWN: HM

CHECKED: RG

SCALE: Not to scale

DATE: 18.05.22

TIME: 13:10

VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD): 185m

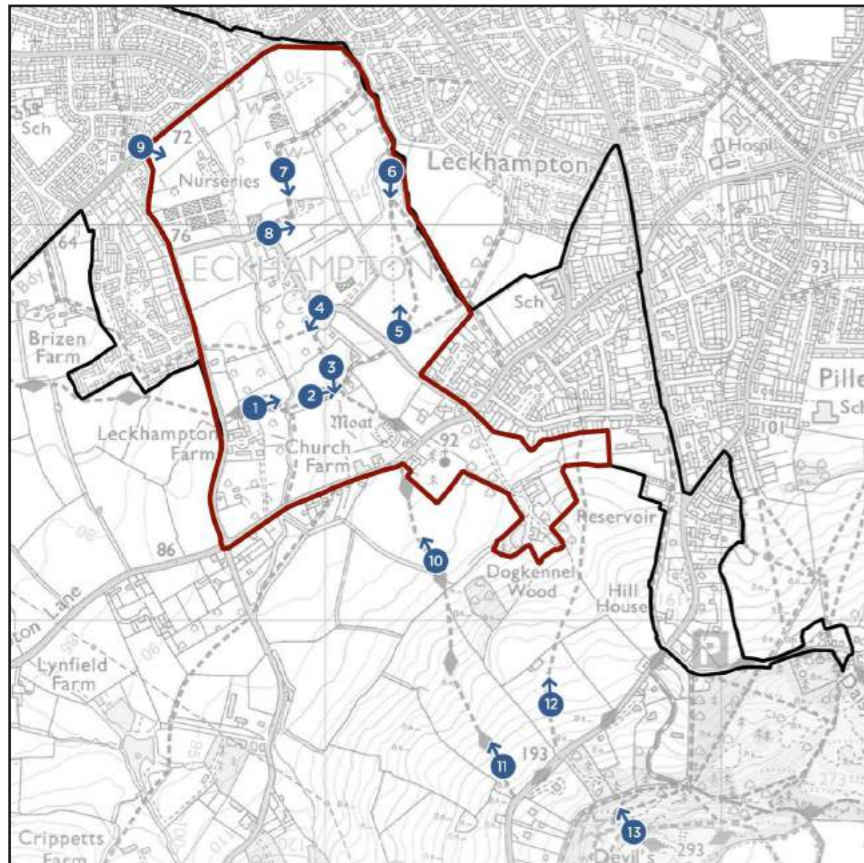
CAMERA: Canon EOS 70D

LENS: 35mm

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/120

APERTURE: f/11

Approximate extent of study area.



Contains OS data Crown copyright and database right (2016)
Ordnance Survey 0100031673

Viewpoint 12

PROJECT CODE: LC-814

PROJECT NAME: Landscape Character Assessment

CLIENT: Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council

LOCATION: PROW 2 south of Leckhampton Road

DISTANCE FROM SITE: 705m

DIRECTION FROM SITE: Looking north

GRID REFERENCE: 394572 , 218805

DRAWING: Viewpoint 12

DRAWN: HM

CHECKED: RG

SCALE: Not to scale

DATE: 18.05.22

TIME: 13:25

VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD): 175m

CAMERA: Canon EOS 70D

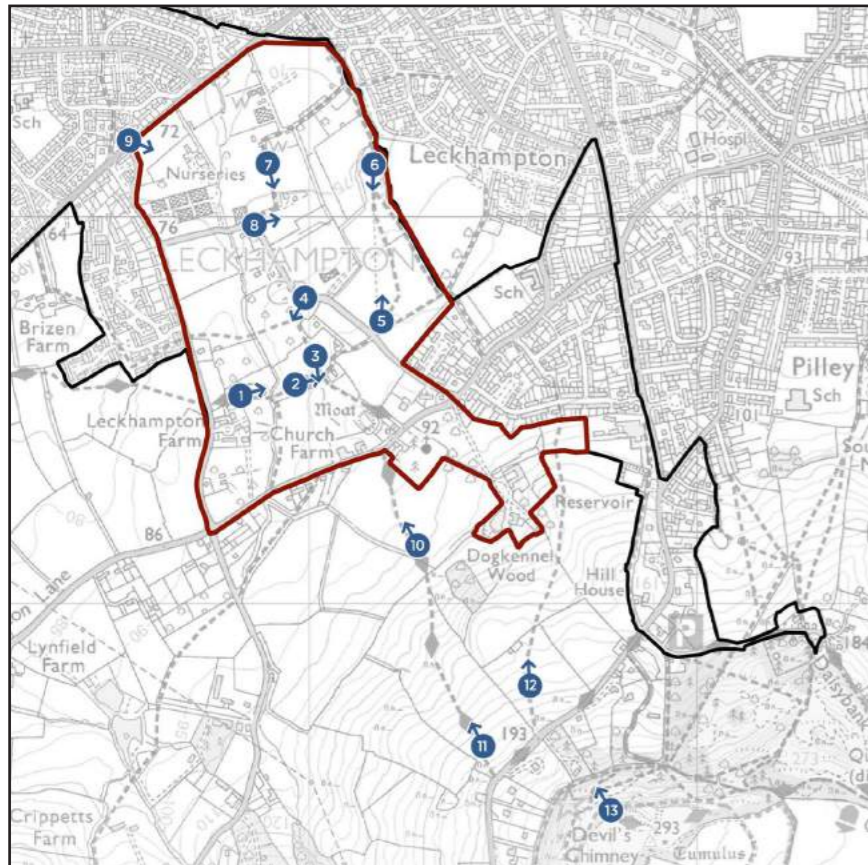
LENS: 35mm

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/120

APERTURE: f/11

Approximate extent of study area, including the Leckhampton Hospice to the right of the study area which lies to the south of Church Road

Leckhampton Court Hospice (Sue Ryder), which lies to the south of the study area



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Ordnance Survey 0100031673

Viewpoint 13

PROJECT CODE: LC-814

PROJECT NAME: Landscape Character Assessment

CLIENT: Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council

LOCATION: Observation point on Leckhampton Hill

DISTANCE FROM SITE: 1.1km

DIRECTION FROM SITE: Looking north west

GRID REFERENCE: 394767 , 218437

DRAWING: Viewpoint 13

DRAWN: HM

CHECKED: RG

SCALE: Not to scale

DATE: 18.05.22

TIME: 14:55

VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD): 290m

CAMERA: Canon EOS 70D

LENS: 35mm

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/120

APERTURE: f/11

Appendix E: TGN 02/21 Table 1

2 Tools to enable practitioners to assess landscape value

This TGN uses the following definitions:

Landscape qualities = characteristics/ features of a landscape that are valued

This term is being used to distinguish landscape qualities from landscape characteristics which are elements, or combinations of elements, which make a particular contribution to landscape character. Landscape qualities (in the sense meant in this TGN) are usually referred to as 'special qualities' or 'special landscape qualities' in relation to nationally designated landscapes. For example, 'special qualities' is a statutory expression used in relation to National Parks, in policy for Scotland's local landscape designations, and is a term used informally to describe components of natural beauty set out in AONB Management Plans³.

Landscape value = the relative value or importance attached to different landscapes by society on account of their landscape qualities (see Table 1).

The definition of landscape value used in this TGN draws on, and is compatible with, the [GLVIA3](#) definition of landscape value as well as Natural England's [definition](#) (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, 2013; Tudor, 2014). The definition makes it clear that it is 'society' that assigns value to landscapes. However, landscape value means more than popularity and the Landscape Institute suggests that value assessments should be undertaken by a landscape professional, drawing on evidence from stakeholders where available.

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Assessments of landscape value (for landscapes which are outside, and not candidates for, national designation) may be required at different stages of the planning process, for example:

- *Local planning authorities (LPAs), neighbourhood planning groups and other parties at the evidence-gathering and plan-making stages;*
- *LPAs, applicants/appellants and others considering a site on which future development or other form of change is proposed, usually at the planning application or appeal stage.*

2.1.2 These scenarios are shown by **Figure 1**, along with the type of guidance that might feed in.

³ National Parks are UK-wide. AONBs are found in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and NSAs are unique to Scotland.



- *NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland (2020) have jointly produced guidance on designating Local Landscape Areas (LLAs) in Scotland which is intended primarily for local authorities to use in taking forward their own designation process. The guidance acknowledges that local landscape designations are a valuable tool in the development plan toolbox and outlines the process for designating new LLAs and refreshing existing designations, noting that ‘designations do not mean other places are unimportant or not valued’ (paragraph 1.16).*
- *NRW has published LANDMAP Guidance Note 1: LANDMAP and Special Landscape Areas (2017)⁴ which sets out an approach for defining Special Landscape Areas in Wales using LANDMAP⁵ information. These areas may be designated for ‘their intrinsic physical, environmental, visual, cultural and historical importance, which may be considered unique, exceptional or distinctive to the local area’ and they should be ‘important for their distinctive character, qualities and sense of place’.*

2.2.7 The guidance produced by NatureScot and NRW may be helpful for other nations that do not have their own guidance.

2.2.8 Where local designations are used, the identification of their spatial boundaries and their landscape qualities should be supported by evidence.

2.2.9 **Table 1** of this TGN sets out a range of factors that could be considered to define the value of a landscape⁶ and to inform the designation process. These factors are intended to be consistent with the factors set out in existing guidance in relation to local landscape designations in Scotland and Wales, as well as guidance in relation to national landscape designations (e.g. guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England). However, they are not intended to be an exhaustive list.

2.2.10 Stakeholder engagement and early collaboration with local communities will add depth to the assessment by helping the landscape professional to understand what people value about the local landscape. Community engagement should be encouraged whenever practicable in line with existing planning guidance.

Evaluative studies linked to landscape character assessment

2.2.11 The guidance on Landscape Character Assessment (The Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage, 2002), which is still in use in Scotland, acknowledges that ‘most assessments will usually move beyond the characterisation stage to the stage of making judgements to inform particular decisions’⁷. Natural England’s 2014 document, which replaced the 2002 guidance in England, also notes that landscape character assessment can be used to identify special qualities and inform judgements (Tudor, 2014). These evaluative studies can be undertaken as an extension to a landscape character assessment, or as a separate follow-on study. Such studies can include the identification of landscape qualities that contribute to the value of landscape areas or types⁸. **Table 1** of this TGN sets out a range of factors that could be considered as part of the process.

2.2.12 In these types of assessments, information from stakeholders (where available) about what is valued should inform the landscape professional’s consideration of landscape value.

Landscape sensitivity studies

2.2.13 Landscape value is assessed as one of the two components of landscape sensitivity in strategic landscape sensitivity assessments. As explained in [Natural England’s An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – to Inform Spatial Planning and Land Management](#) (Tudor, 2019), landscape

⁴ <https://naturalresources.wales/media/680613/landmap-guidance-note-1-landmap-slas-2017.pdf>
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/planning-policy-wales-edition-10.pdf>

⁵ LANDMAP is an all-Wales landscape resource where landscape characteristics, qualities and influences on the landscape are recorded and evaluated.

⁶ It should be noted that designation is a process that may include factors other than landscape value.

⁷ This is a two-stage process with the landscape character assessment being separate from subsequent assessments of value or sensitivity.

⁸ It should be noted that, in Wales, LANDMAP already includes a range of criteria-based evaluations relating to the landscape.



Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England);

- The term ‘landscape condition’ is used in place of ‘landscape quality (condition)’;
- ‘Rarity’ and ‘representativeness’ are combined into a newly-named factor ‘distinctiveness’; and
- A new factor, ‘function’ is included which addresses the value attached to landscapes which perform a clearly identifiable and valuable function.

2.4.3 It should be noted that the factors are not presented in order of importance.

2.4.4 As with Box 5.1 in GLVIA3, **Table 1** is not intended to be an exhaustive list of factors to be considered when determining the value of landscapes, but to provide a range of factors and indicators that could be considered. This TGN is intended to be complementary to GLVIA3.

Table 1: Range of factors that can be considered when identifying landscape value

Factor	Definition	Examples ¹¹ of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence ¹²
Natural heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape	<p>Presence of wildlife and habitats of ecological interest that contribute to sense of place</p> <p>Extent and survival of semi-natural habitat that is characteristic of the landscape type</p> <p>Presence of distinctive geological, geomorphological or pedological features</p> <p>Landscape which contains valued natural capital assets that contribute to ecosystem services, for example distinctive ecological communities and habitats that form the basis of ecological networks</p> <p>Landscape which makes an identified contribution to a nature recovery/ green infrastructure network</p>	<p>Landscape character assessment</p> <p>LANDMAP Geological Landscape and Landscape Habitats Aspects (in Wales)</p> <p>Ecological and geological designations</p> <p>SSSI citations and condition assessments</p> <p>Geological Conservation Review</p> <p>Habitat surveys</p> <p>Priority habitats</p> <p>Nature recovery networks/ nature pathways</p> <p>Habitat network opportunity mapping/ green infrastructure mapping</p> <p>Catchment management plans</p> <p>Ecosystem services assessment/ schemes</p> <p>Specialist ecological studies</p>
Cultural heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or	Presence of historic landmark structures or designed landscape elements (e.g. follies,	Landscape character assessment

¹¹ These examples are not exhaustive.

¹² Evidence may be set out in development plans (or evidence that sits alongside development plans). Online mapping may also provide useful information (see ‘useful data links’ at the end of this TGN).



Factor	Definition	Examples ¹¹ of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence ¹²
	cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape	<p>monuments, avenues, tree roundels)</p> <p>Presence of historic parks and gardens, and designed landscapes</p> <p>Landscape which contributes to the significance of heritage assets, for example forming the setting of heritage assets (especially if identified in specialist studies)</p> <p>Landscape which offers a dimension of time depth. This includes natural time depth, e.g. presence of features such as glaciers and peat bogs and cultural time depth e.g. presence of relic farmsteads, ruins, historic field patterns, historic rights of way (e.g. drove roads, salt ways, tracks associated with past industrial activity)</p>	<p>LANDMAP Historic Landscape and Cultural Landscape Services Aspect (in Wales)</p> <p>Historic environment and archaeological designations</p> <p>Conservation Area appraisals, Village Design Statements</p> <p>Historic maps</p> <p>Historic landscape character assessments¹³ Historic Land Use Assessment¹⁴ and Historic Area Assessments¹⁵</p> <p>Place names</p> <p>Specialist heritage studies</p>
Landscape condition	Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure	<p>Good physical condition/ intactness of individual landscape elements (e.g. walls, parkland, trees)</p> <p>Good health of elements such as good water quality, good soil health</p> <p>Strong landscape structure (e.g. intact historic field patterns)</p> <p>Absence of detracting/ incongruous features (or features are present but have little influence)</p>	<p>Landscape character assessment</p> <p>LANDMAP condition and trend questions (in Wales)</p> <p>Hedgerow/ tree surveys</p> <p>Observations about intactness/ condition made in the field by the assessor</p> <p>SSSI condition assessments</p> <p>Historic landscape character assessments/ map regression analysis</p>
Associations	Landscape which is connected with notable people, events and the arts	Associations with well-known literature, poetry, art, TV/film and music that contribute to perceptions of the landscape	<p>Information about arts and science relating to a place</p> <p>Historical accounts, cultural traditions and folklore</p>

¹³ Historic Landscape Characterisation has developed as a GIS mapping tool to capture how land use has changed and the 'time-depth' of the present-day landscape.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/methods/characterisation/historic-landscape-characterisation/>

¹⁴ Mapping of Scotland's Historic Landscape: <https://hllmap.org.uk/>

¹⁵ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/understanding-place-historic-area-assessments/>



Factor	Definition	Examples ¹¹ of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence ¹²
		<p>Associations with science or other technical achievements</p> <p>Links to a notable historical event</p> <p>Associations with a famous person or people</p>	<p>Guidebooks/ published cultural trails</p> <p>LANDMAP Cultural Landscape Services aspect (in Wales)</p>
Distinctiveness	Landscape that has a strong sense of identity	<p>Landscape character that has a strong sense of place (showing strength of expression of landscape characteristics)</p> <p>Presence of distinctive features which are identified as being characteristic of a particular place</p> <p>Presence of rare or unusual features, especially those that help to confer a strong sense of place or identity</p> <p>Landscape which makes an important contribution to the character or identity of a settlement</p> <p>Settlement gateways/approaches which provides a clear sense of arrival and contribute to the character of the settlement (may be ancient/historic)</p>	<p>Landscape character assessment</p> <p>LANDMAP Visual & Sensory question 3 and 25, – Historic Landscape question 4 (in Wales)</p> <p>Guidebooks</p> <p>Observations about identity/ distinctiveness made in the field by the assessor</p>
Recreational	Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important	<p>Presence of open access land, common land and public rights of way (particularly National Trails, long distance trails, Coastal Paths and Core Paths) where appreciation of landscape is a feature</p> <p>Areas with good accessibility that provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and spiritual experience/ inspiration</p> <p>Presence of town and village greens</p> <p>Other physical evidence of recreational use where experience of landscape is important</p> <p>Landscape that forms part of a view that is important to the</p>	<p>Definitive public rights of way mapping/ OS map data</p> <p>National Trails, long distance trails, Coastal Paths, Core Paths</p> <p>Open access land (including registered common land)</p> <p>Database of registered town or village greens</p> <p>Visitor surveys/ studies</p> <p>Observations about recreational use/ enjoyment made in the field by the assessor</p>



Factor	Definition	Examples ¹¹ of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence ¹²
		enjoyment of a recreational activity	
Perceptual (Scenic)	Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense	<p>Distinctive features, or distinctive combinations of features, such as dramatic or striking landform or harmonious combinations of land cover</p> <p>Strong aesthetic qualities such as scale, form, colour and texture</p> <p>Presence of natural lines in the landscape (e.g. natural ridgelines, woodland edges, river corridors, coastal edges)</p> <p>Visual diversity or contrasts which contributes to the appreciation of the landscape</p> <p>Memorable/ distinctive views and landmarks, or landscape which contributes to distinctive views and landmarks</p>	<p>Landscape character assessment</p> <p>LANDMAP Visual and Sensory scenic quality question 46 (in Wales)</p> <p>Protected views, views studies</p> <p>Areas frequently photographed or used in images used for tourism/ visitor/ promotional purposes, or views described or praised in literature</p> <p>Observations about scenic qualities made in the field by the assessor</p> <p>Conservation Area Appraisals</p> <p>Village Design Statements, or similar</p>
Perceptual (Wildness and tranquillity)	Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies	<p>High levels of tranquillity or perceptions of tranquillity, including perceived links to nature, dark skies, presence of wildlife/ birdsong and relative peace and quiet¹⁶</p> <p>Presence of wild land and perceptions of relative wildness (resulting from a high degree of perceived naturalness¹⁷, rugged or otherwise challenging terrain, remoteness from public mechanised access and lack of modern artefacts)</p> <p>Sense of particular remoteness, seclusion or openness</p> <p>Dark night skies</p>	<p>Tranquillity mapping and factors which contribute to and detract from tranquillity</p> <p>Dark Skies mapping</p> <p>Wildness mapping, and Wild Land Areas in Scotland</p> <p>Land cover mapping</p> <p>Field survey</p> <p>LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect</p>

¹⁶ More about tranquillity can be found in Landscape Institute Technical Information Note [01/2017](#) (Revised; Landscape Institute, 2017).

¹⁷ Relating to extensive semi-natural vegetation, presence of wildlife and presence of natural processes/ lack of human intervention.



Factor	Definition	Examples ¹¹ of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence ¹²
		A general absence of intrusive or inharmonious development, land uses, transport and lighting	
Functional	Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape	<p>Landscapes and landscape elements that contribute to the healthy functioning of the landscape, e.g. natural hydrological systems/ floodplains, areas of undisturbed and healthy soils, areas that form carbon sinks such as peat bogs, woodlands and oceans, areas of diverse landcover (benefits pest regulation), pollinator-rich habitats such as wildflower meadows</p> <p>Areas that form an important part of a multifunctional Green Infrastructure network</p> <p>Landscapes and landscape elements that have strong physical or functional links with an adjacent national landscape designation, or are important to the appreciation of the designated landscape and its special qualities</p>	<p>Land cover and habitat maps</p> <p>Ecosystem services assessments and mapping (particularly supporting and regulating services)</p> <p>Green infrastructure studies/strategies</p> <p>Development and management plans for nationally-designated landscapes, Local Plans and SPDs</p> <p>Landscape character assessments</p>

The practical application of factors in coming to a judgement on landscape value

2.4.5 The following bullet points provide some advice on the practical application of the factors in **Table 1**:

- *The factors to be considered are not fixed as they need to be appropriate to the particular project and location. It is recommended that the factors used to assess landscape value in a particular assessment are, where appropriate, discussed with the relevant planning authority or statutory consultees.*
- *The indicators of value should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account what they contribute (positively or negatively) to a specific landscape. The relative importance to be attached to each indicator is likely to vary across different landscapes. Once evidence for each factor has been collated and assessed, it is important to step back and judge the overall ‘weight of evidence’ in coming to an overall judgement on landscape value.*
- *There are likely to be overlaps between the factors, as well as overlaps with other specialist studies for example in relation to natural and cultural factors. These overlaps should be acknowledged and considered when presenting conclusions on the overall value of the landscape.*
- *While condition/intactness of a landscape is one factor that can influence value, poor landscape management should not be a reason to deny a landscape a valued status if other factors indicate*



Habitat Regulations Assessments

Sustainability Appraisals

Strategic Environmental Assessments

Landscape Character Assessments

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments

Green Belt Reviews

Expert Witness

Ecological Impact Assessments

Habitat and Ecology Surveys



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