



GLOUCESTERSHIRE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Landscape Character Assessments for the following Study Areas:

The Severn Vale

Upper Thames Valley

Vale of Moreton

Vale of Evesham Fringe

January 2006

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This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with BS EN ISO 9001: 2000

The Gloucestershire Landscape

Gloucestershire is a much cherished English county, renowned for the diversity and scenic beauty of its landscape and wildlife, and the legacy of man's occupation of the land over many millennia. The remarkable variety of its landscapes is principally due to the underlying geology. The range of rock types found in Gloucestershire makes it unique within the country, containing rocks from nearly all of the major divisions of the geological timescale from Pre Cambrian through to the Quaternary. Only the Cretaceous period is missing, and this outcrops not far from Gloucestershire to the south of Swindon. In response to this wide range and varying characteristics of the underlying rock types, the county displays very different and diverse landscapes and landforms. In the west of the county, the imposing wooded hills of the Forest of Dean, the deep gorge of the Wye Valley and the distinctive form of May Hill are underlain by older Palaeozoic rocks. The impressive steep slopes of the Cotswolds escarpment extends across the central part of the county, with almost a complete sequence of Lower, Middle and Upper Jurassic limestones represented. East of the escarpment, the Cotswolds high wold and broad, gently sloping dip slope extends down to the Thames floodplain. Between the Cotswolds and the Forest of Dean is the expansive, low lying Severn Vale mainly underlain by Permo-Triassic sandstones and Lower Jurassic Lias Group clays, but also by much older rocks in the south of the county. The series of outliers that extend beyond the Cotswold escarpment such as Robins Wood Hill, and Peaked and Cam Long Downs to the west of Dursley, are also distinctive features.

The Influence of Geology

Geology has had a strong influence on landscape character. The topography, soils, vegetation cover and wildlife change in response to the underlying rock types. At a broader scale, the pattern of human occupation and resulting heritage features and historic landscape has also been influenced by these natural features. The masking of the solid geology with more recent superficial deposits, together with the effects of geomorphological processes, have resulted in further local features such as the river terraces that rise above the Severn Vale defined by a series of distinctive low hills which have provided favoured locations for settlement within the Vale. Superimposed on this geologically led structure, socio economic factors have also influenced the character of the landscape, in particular the changing agricultural landscape and the pattern of tenure and management within this predominantly rural county.

River Systems of National Significance

Gloucestershire is drained by two of England's major rivers. The Severn, Britain's longest river, is the principal river system, with much of the west of the county lying within its catchment area. It flows southwards into the broad sweep of the Seven Estuary, which

progressively widens to form a major natural feature of considerable biodiversity as well as economic and cultural importance. In the east of the county, the headwaters and tributaries of the River Thames flow across the Cotswolds dip slope and drain into the River Thames. This other great river rises at Thameshead north of Kemble and flows across the low lying Thames basin. In the north east of the county further streams rise in the Vale of Moreton and flow southwards to drain into the River Evenlode, a tributary of the Thames. The major watershed between the Severn and Thames catchment areas, and between the western and eastern sides of England, crosses Gloucestershire along the high wold of the Cotswolds.

Cultural Associations

Gloucestershire has strong cultural associations which are also of national significance. Over the years, the diversity, beauty and rural tranquillity of its landscape has influenced many writers, poets, and artists. Musicians have also found a special link with the county, where the qualities of the landscape inspired the emergence in the early 20th century of the quintessentially English pastoral music, attributable to a coterie of English composers who lived in, or had strong associations with Gloucestershire and adjacent Worcestershire. It was also in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that the Arts and Crafts Movement blossomed, and became intrinsically linked to the county. William Morris, who moved to Kelmscott in the south of Gloucestershire within the Thames valley, motivated many followers of the movement to also settle in the county, particularly in the Chipping Campden area, where the beauty of the landscape, and its villages and vernacular architecture provided a continuing inspiration for their ideals.

Landscape Character Assessment

This report comprises a landscape character assessment of the Severn Vale, the Upper Thames Valley area and the land on the northern fringe of the Cotswolds AONB within the Vale of Moreton and Vale of Evesham and completes a detailed review of Gloucestershire's landscape character. Earlier studies for the county commenced with a desk study review of the county's landscape typology, and went on to undertake detailed assessments of the Forest of Dean and the Cotswolds AONB. The findings of this report combines with these earlier studies to provide a new landscape character map of the county at 2005 that defines the pattern and contrasts in landscape character across the county. The purpose of the Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment is to observe, analyse, describe and classify these variations and distinctive patterns.

In common with the previous assessments, this study has been undertaken in accordance with the most recent guidance and methodology set out by the Countryside Agency. The guidance acknowledges that all landscapes matter, not just those that are particularly well known or evoke strong images, and that each

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landscape character type and landscape character area has a recognisable and consistent pattern of elements that makes it different from another. Character makes each part of the landscape distinct, with a particular sense of place, regardless of perceptions of quality or value.

The combined landscape character assessment for the whole of Gloucestershire has identified a total of 38 landscape character types. This unusually large number of types for a county wide assessment is a reflection of the great diversity of the Gloucestershire's landscape as a consequence of the remarkable range of the underlying geology and the pattern of social, economic and cultural responses to this diversity.

Purpose and Application of the Landscape Character Assessment

It is intended that the findings of this report, together with the earlier parallel reports prepared for the Forest of Dean and the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessments, will provide a valuable tool in the spatial planning and decision making processes. It will provide a comprehensive baseline for Gloucestershire County Council and its partners to direct the management of landscape change and ensure that the pattern of landscape character and local distinctiveness is celebrated, protected and enriched.

1.1 Appointment and Brief

In October 2004 Gloucestershire County Council, in association with the partnership District and Borough authorities¹, appointed LDA Design to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) of those sections of Gloucestershire County for which a detailed LCA has not been carried out. Assessments have been completed for the Forest of Dean District and the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The remaining areas within the county which require a detailed LCA comprise:

- **The Severn Vale**, encompassing the vale landscape between the Forest of Dean and the Cotswolds AONB. This includes land within Stroud District, Gloucester City, Cheltenham Borough, and Tewkesbury Borough.
- **Upper Thames Valley**, comprising the area of land on the southern perimeter of Cotswold District that lies outside of the Cotswolds AONB, and extending into the upper section of the River Thames Basin and the Cotswold Water Park. In addition to this land to the south and east of Cirencester, further small detached areas are located to the south west of Kemble, and to the south of Little Barrington.
- **The Vale of Moreton**, comprising the area of land on the north-eastern side of Cotswold District that lies outside of the Cotswolds AONB, and which extends to the north and south of Moreton-in-Marsh.
- **The Vale of Evesham Fringe** on the northern perimeter of the Cotswolds comprising land extending from Teddington to the west of Broadway within Tewkesbury Borough, and land to the north west of Chipping Camden within Cotswold District.

1.2 The Scope and Context of the Study

Figure 1 shows the entire county together with the four separate areas that are the subject of this study. For context, the extent of the Forest of Dean LCA and Gloucestershire section of the Cotswolds LCA is also indicated.

The assessment includes a description of the physical (geology and soils, landform, hydrology, land cover, woodland and trees), and human (archaeology, history, land use, enclosure patterns, settlement patterns and buildings styles) attributes of the landscape. An appraisal of past and present perceptions of the area, including those of national and local artists, musicians and writers did not form part of the brief.

1.2.1 Urban Area Assessments and Boundaries

This study is an assessment of the rural landscape. The principal urban areas of Cheltenham and Gloucester, and the major towns of Cirencester, Stroud / Stonehouse, and Tewkesbury / Ashchurch are excluded from the study area, as agreed with Gloucestershire County Council and the partnership local authorities. As a consequence, separate urban character or townscape assessments have not been undertaken for these settlements as part of this study.

The boundaries of these urban areas have been defined through consultation with the relevant local authorities within which the urban areas are located. They have been confirmed by the partnership authorities and represent the current limit of the built areas at the time of the assessment, and a working boundary for the purpose of undertaking the LCA. The boundaries do not imply, however, any formal status or delineation in respect of an adopted or emerging development plan designation and should not be used to in the context of planning considerations and decisions.

Other built areas, comprising villages and other settlements, are regarded as an integral part of the wider rural landscape they occupy. The land within the development limits of these settlements was not studied in detail as part of the LCA, and descriptions therefore apply to the undeveloped area surrounding these settlements. Nevertheless, the pattern and form of these settlements within the rural landscape make an important contribution to landscape character, and where relevant, this is referred to in the descriptive text. Furthermore, where there are notable landmarks or built form within villages and hamlets, such as distinctive church spires these are also described since they influence the wider landscape and form important reference points.

The findings of the LCA provide the context and framework for a future programme of more detailed townscape assessments for the urban areas, should these be required. Such studies would allow for further analysis of the distinctive character, composition, form and setting of the county's principal urban areas and major towns, and their capacity to accommodate change. The LCA also provides the context for more local studies of smaller settlements, such as Village Design Statements and Parish Plans.

1.2.2 Related Studies

This completion of the Gloucestershire County LCA uses as a framework the County Scoping Study², commissioned in February 2002 which itself used, as a starting point, the Countryside

1 Cotswold District Council, Cheltenham Borough Council, Gloucester City Council, Stroud District Council, Tewkesbury Borough Council.

2 Landscape Character Assessment: Gloucestershire and Forest of Dean: County Scoping Study and County Typology, November 2002, Landscape Design Associates.

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Agency's Character Map of England and the National Landscape Typology. In addition, the assessment has been informed by a range of existing LCA studies within the county, notably the Forest of Dean³ and Cotswolds AONB⁴ LCAs, and an earlier assessment for Stroud District, together with existing and emerging LCAs for neighbouring county and district authorities.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose of the assessment is to complete the detailed landscape assessment of Gloucestershire and provide the County Council and others with a comprehensive understanding of the Gloucestershire landscape and the forces for change that have shaped them in the past, and those that continue to shape them. Consistent with the previous detailed landscape assessments for the county, an holistic approach has been adopted that considers these remaining parts of Gloucestershire as a mosaic of different landscape types and character areas, each with particular characteristics.

The landscape character assessment has the following main objectives:

- to provide an assessment of the character, distinctiveness and qualities of each of the separate study areas, including the cultural and natural heritage resources, and to identify and describe the component landscape character types and landscape character areas;
- to summarise the key characteristics associated with each landscape type to inform the principles in respect of landscape change; and
- to promote awareness of landscape character and the importance of landscape conservation, enhancement and restoration.

1.4 Approach and Methodology

Landscape characterisation is the practical process by which areas of distinctive character are classified, mapped and described. In this assessment landscape character types and landscape character areas have been identified.

- **Landscape Character Types** are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they

share broadly similar combinations of geology, landform, drainage patterns, vegetation, and historical land use and settlement pattern.

- **Landscape Character Areas** are single, unique areas and form discrete geographical areas of a specific landscape type.

An important feature of the approach adopted in this assessment is that it is objective. The underlying principle is that all landscapes matter and not just those which are designated or are regarded as being of higher quality than others, so no judgement is made of a particular landscape's value, or whether it is of higher quality than others. Written descriptions avoid value-laden terminology such as beautiful, bland, attractive and degraded, although particular attention is given to identifying characteristics that are distinctive, rare or special. In this way, the descriptions help raise awareness of an area's local distinctiveness and encourage appreciation of variations in character across the county.

The assessment has been completed in accordance with the most up-to-date Countryside Agency methodology⁵ in respect of landscape character assessment. The main tasks were:

- a detailed review of the various LCAs within and immediately surrounding the county where these adjoin or are in close proximity to the separate assessment areas;
- familiarisation with the study areas through reconnaissance, information gathering, GIS interrogation, overlay mapping at 1:50,000 scale and compilation of field survey forms. A list of core data sets is attached at Appendix 1;
- background research into the physical and cultural attributes of the landscape;
- site survey including completion of field survey forms for landscape character types and landscape character areas; detailed mapping of landscape character types and landscape character areas to 1:25,000 scale, with final mapping in GIS at 1:10,000 scale; preparation of a digital photographic record; integration of completed field survey forms into a geo-referenced Access Database. Example field survey forms and prompts sheets are attached as Appendix 2.
- consultation with local authorities and statutory agencies; and
- report and digital map preparation.

3 Forest of Dean Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Design Associates for Gloucestershire County Council, Forest of Dean District Council and the Countryside Agency, 2002

4 Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment, and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines, Landscape Design Associates for Cotswolds AONB Partnership and the Countryside Agency, 2003

5 Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland, Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002

A flow diagram of the landscape character assessment process is presented in Appendix 3.

1.5 Structure of the Report

This report presents up to date findings on landscape character and key characteristics for the study areas. It will provide a valuable source of information for those with an interest in the Gloucestershire landscape, and responsible for land management and planning in the county.

Section 2, Review of Existing Landscape Character

Assessments describes the national level of assessment to provide a context to the subsequent review of assessments that have been undertaken within the county, and in the district and county authorities that are contiguous with the study areas. A comparison of the range of landscape character types and areas that have been identified within these various assessments are summarised in Tables 1A and 1B.

The landscape patterns evident today have evolved gradually through the interaction of natural and human forces. **Section 3** describes the **Evolution of the Landscape of the Study Areas**. The principal influences that have shaped these landscapes are considered, and important geological, topographical, cultural and historic, and natural features are recorded, and their distribution described.

Section 4, The Landscapes of the Study Areas introduces the subsequent review of the Landscape Character Types and Areas for each of the study areas, and summarises the range of types and areas in table form. The landscape character types and character areas that occur within each study area are described in Sections 5-8. A description of the key characteristics and physical and human influences for each landscape type are followed by more detailed descriptions for each character area. An understanding of landscape character and scale, and the interplay of characteristics derived from geology and landform, habitats, field and settlement patterns, historic land use patterns and vernacular building styles, provides the basis for subsequent development of a landscape strategy and guidance on how the landscape may be able to accommodate future change.

Section 9 of the report provides a **Glossary** of key terms, followed by **Section 10**, which lists the **Core References**. Finally, **Section 11, Acknowledgements**, identifies the stakeholders and consultees who made valuable contributions to the character assessment.

2.1 Introduction

This section commences with a review of the national level of landscape character assessment, and summarises the Character of England and National Landscape Typology which underpins all landscape character assessments across the country. It then summarises the most recent assessments that have been undertaken within Gloucestershire, together with current and emerging assessments for the authorities that extend up to or are located in close proximity to the study areas.

The review has provided a basis for comparison and cross reference of the range of existing landscape character type and area classifications, their boundaries and names, and the scale of the assessments. These are summarised in Table 1A, covering the County Council and Cotswolds AONB Assessments, and Table 1B for the Borough and District Councils and Unitary Authority Assessments. For further clarification, Tables 2A and 2B set out a more detailed cross reference of the terminology used for the final Landscape Character Types (LCTs) identified in this assessment of the study areas with those used for contiguous LCTs by the local authorities adjoining Gloucestershire.

The intention has been to integrate with these adjacent assessments, and share contiguous boundaries and names where these are appropriate to the Gloucestershire findings. As the foregoing review reveals, a wide range of terminology and boundary delineation has been adopted by the various adjacent authorities. It has not been possible, therefore, to achieve correlation between all of the assessment findings.

2.2 National Level Assessment and Context

2.2.1 The Character of England

The former Countryside Commission, in conjunction with English Nature and English Heritage, produced a map of England entitled '*The Character of England: landscape, wildlife and natural features*'. The character of the landscape is depicted at a national scale. Computer based statistical analysis was combined with landscape character assessment to identify 159 character areas based on physical and human influences. In addition to this, a series of countryside character descriptions were developed for each of the character areas.

The following Countryside Character Areas (CCAs) extend across the four study areas:

- 106, The Severn and Avon Vales;
- 107, The Cotswolds;
- 108, Upper Thames Clay Vales; and
- 96, Dunsmore and Feldon (limited section only on west of CCA)

These Character Areas, are described in Countryside Character Volumes 4 and 5⁶. For context, the distribution of CCAs across Gloucestershire is illustrated on Figure 2.

2.2.2 National Landscape Typology for England⁷

The Countryside Agency has prepared a national landscape typology for England. This was undertaken to divide the 159 CCAs into distinct and relatively homogenous tracts of land. The National Landscape Typology for England analysed the three strongest determinants of landscape character (physiography, land cover and cultural pattern) through national GIS data sets in a series of complex overlays. The resultant output is a map of 120 generic landscape character types (LCTs) which exist within the framework of the CCAs. Each LCT is allocated a three-letter code, which are representative of descriptions of physiography, land use and cultural pattern. A review of the National Landscape Typology identified 18 LCTs within Gloucestershire. Their extent and distribution, together with the CCAs, is illustrated on Figure 2.

Based on this initial classification of landscape types, the LCT and CCA maps were combined as part of the national study, to identify geographically distinct Landscape Character Type Areas (LCT Areas). Through this process 587 LCT Areas were identified across the country. Full details of the national typology project, and the methods of assessment used, are contained within two reports⁸ prepared by consultants on behalf of the Countryside Agency. These describe and map the LCT Areas in detail and should be referred to as part of any future studies.

2.3 Gloucestershire Assessments

The most recent LCAs that have been undertaken for the county, including District and Borough level assessments, are listed below in chronological order. The Cotswolds AONB LCA is also included as this covers a substantial part of the county. The earlier assessments for Stroud District, and the '*Landscape within Cotswold District that lie outside of the Cotswolds AONB*' were undertaken prior to the publication of the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage '*Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Wales*', 2002. They therefore made no reference to the emerging National Typology or had the opportunity to utilise GIS datasets.

⁶ Countryside Character: Volume 4: East Midlands and Volume 5: West Midlands; Countryside Agency, 1999

⁷ National Countryside Character Decision Support Database, Technical Report, Countryside Agency, 2002

⁸ National Countryside Character Decision Support Data Base, Data Report, and Map Report - South West Volume, Countryside Agency, 2001

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- Assessment of Landscapes within Cotswold District that lie outside of the Cotswolds AONB, 2000
- Stroud LCA, 2000
- Draft Gloucestershire LCA, 2002
- Forest of Dean, 2002
- Cotswolds AONB LCA, 2003

2.3.1 Draft Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment

In February 2002 the Countryside Agency, in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council and the Forest of Dean District Council, commissioned Landscape Design Associates (now LDA Design) to undertake a desk based LCA for Gloucestershire.

A principal requirement of the assessment was to use GIS to develop a digital landscape typology for the county, with reference to the Countryside Agency's Character Map of England, the emerging National Landscape Typology for England, and the *'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland'*. The national typology was used as a starting point and basis for testing and refining the typology for Gloucestershire. The assessment was also guided by the findings of previous landscape character assessments and related studies, and by drawing together essential county-wide datasets wherever possible. Subsequent to the completion of the draft county typology, the findings of the desk study were then used to inform and undertake a full LCA of the Forest of Dean District (see 2.5.2).

The findings of the Draft Gloucestershire LCA provided an initial description and classification of the Gloucestershire landscape into county landscape types, which linked directly into the national typology framework. It also enabled subsequent district, borough and other assessments to fit within this nested hierarchy of landscape types and areas, with each level of assessment adding more detail to the one above. This 'nesting' process has now been undertaken in respect of the Forest of Dean District and the Cotswolds AONB assessment (see sections 2.3.2 below) whereby further refinement of the draft desk based county typology has been confirmed.

The overall purpose of the assessment was to provide Gloucestershire County Council, and others, with a more detailed understanding of the Gloucestershire landscape. It also provided advice on 'rolling out' the landscape character assessment across the remaining district and borough councils. This current project therefore takes the process forward by completing the coverage of landscape character assessment for the remainder of Gloucestershire.

2.3.2 Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy⁹

In October 2002 the Cotswolds AONB Partnership appointed Landscape Design Associates (now LDA Design) to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for the designated area. This now replaces the earlier ADAS study undertaken for the AONB in 1994. As a substantial part of the AONB is located within Gloucestershire the study enabled the draft Gloucestershire LCA to be tested and refined. Through further desk studies and detailed field assessment, more accurate mapping of the landscape types was undertaken. Additional Landscape Types were also identified and some of the Landscape Types were renamed. Within the Gloucestershire section of the AONB 15 Landscape Types were classified, a number of which form part of, or adjoin the study areas. These are confirmed in Table 1A.

2.4 County Assessments on the Perimeter of the Study Areas

The counties that extend up to the boundaries of the four study areas either have completed LCAs, or assessments that are in an advanced stage of completion. These are briefly described below, together with their completion date or current status, and hierarchy of typology. Table 1A provides a comparative review of the types and areas that have been identified; those that are contiguous with the study areas are highlighted in bold on the table.

2.4.1 Worcestershire¹⁰

The Worcestershire LCA was completed in 1999 and has been adopted as SPG. The assessment identified twelve broad Regional Character Areas across the county and classified eighteen Landscape Types, three of which were further divided into sub sets. Each landscape type was also divided into Land Description Units (LDUs) with geographically distinct names.

⁹ Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment, and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines, Landscape Design Associates for Cotswolds AONB Partnership and Countryside Agency, 2003

¹⁰ Shaping the New Worcestershire SPG Draft Landscape Character Assessment, Worcestershire County Council, 1999

2.4.2 Warwickshire¹¹

The Warwickshire Landscape Project was established in 1987 to consider the unique and distinctive landscapes of Warwickshire and to develop a new methodology tailored to the needs of lowland England¹². The study was concerned with the assessment of both local and regional landscape character and the report identified Regional Character Areas and Local Landscape Types.

In 2002, the County Council commissioned more detailed studies across the county and further refinement of the character assessment, working in conjunction with the 'Living Landscapes Project'. Working within an integrated GIS based spatial framework, this more detailed study identified Landscape Description Units (LDUs) that nest within larger scale landscape types.

2.4.3 Oxfordshire¹³

The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) three year demonstration project was completed in 2004. Its principal aim has been to explore the relationship between landscape character and biodiversity and to produce a strategic framework for decision making. The landscape assessment was based on the National Typology of Landscape Description Units derived from the national datasets. The Regional Character Areas defined within Oxfordshire were subdivided into LDUs derived from GIS mapping. The field survey and characterisation process then identified Landscape Types and Local Landscape Character Areas. Eight Landscape Types extend up to the eastern boundary of Oxfordshire in the vicinity of the Upper Thames Valley, the most extensive of which are Estate Lowlands and Lowland Village Farmland. The Thames valley bottom is defined as River Meadowlands.

2.4.4 Wiltshire¹⁴

The Wiltshire LCA commenced in 2004 and is now published as a consultation draft. The study was undertaken by Land Use Consultants for Wiltshire County Council and identified 16 Landscape Types, two of which extend up to the southern perimeter of Gloucestershire adjacent to the Thames Valley study area. These comprise the Open Clay Vales and Limestone Lowlands Landscape Types. Landscape Character Areas have also been identified within each of the types.

2.5 Borough, District and Unitary Authority Assessments within and bordering the county

The LCAs that have been undertaken at borough, district and unitary authority level are reviewed below, and include studies completed either within the county or for authorities that extend up to the boundary of the study areas. The typology and range of landscape character types and areas in the vicinity of the study areas are summarised on Table 1B. As with the review of the county studies, the types and areas that are within, or contiguous with the study areas, are highlighted in bold.

2.5.1 Cotswold District Council¹⁵

In 2000 Cotswold District Council commissioned WHITE Consultants to undertake an assessment of the landscape character of those parts of the District that lie outside of the Cotswolds AONB. The study informed the review of the District-wide Local Plan, and adopted the guidance in the Countryside Agency's Interim Landscape Assessment Guidance, 1999. The geographic areas covered by the assessment coincide with the current study areas and were named Cirencester/ Upper Thames Valley; Moreton-in-Marsh Surrounds; and The Vale of Evesham. A total of six landscape types were identified within the study areas, comprising Cotswold Lower Dipslope; Lower Dipslope Valleys; Dipslope/Thames Valley Transition; Thames Valley; Cotswold Fringe Clay Vales; and Clay Vale of Evesham. Geographically specific landscape character areas were classified within these landscape types.

2.5.2 Forest of Dean Landscape Character Assessment¹⁶

The Forest of Dean LCA undertaken in 2002 verified and further refined the desk based draft Gloucestershire LCA. It signified the first stage in the process of establishing a full LCA for the county and has set the framework and benchmark for subsequent studies. The Severn Vale Study Area extends up to the eastern perimeter of the Forest of Dean and therefore shares a number of the landscape types and character areas. These are highlighted in Table 1B.

11 Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines, Warwickshire County Council, 1993

12 Assessment and Conservation of Landscape Character - The Warwickshire Landscape Project Approach (CCP 332) Countryside Commission, 1991

13 Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study, Oxfordshire County Council, 2004

14 Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment, Land Use Consultants for Wiltshire County Council, 2005

15 Assessment of Landscapes outside of the Cotswolds AONB, WHITE consultants for Cotswold District Council, June 2000

16 Forest of Dean Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy, Landscape Design Associates for Gloucestershire County Council, Forest of Dean District Council and Countryside Agency, 2002

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2.5.3 North Wiltshire District¹⁷

A landscape character assessment was undertaken in 2004 by WHITE Consultants for North Wiltshire District. The study identifies a range of Landscape Types; those extending up to the Upper Thames Valley study area comprise Alluvium River Terrace Farmland; Lowland Clay Farmland; and Lowland Limestone Farmland. These, together with the Landscape Character Areas, are indicated on Table 1B.

2.5.4 South Gloucestershire¹⁸

South Gloucestershire Council commissioned Chris Blandford Associates in 2001 to undertake a landscape assessment for the Unitary Authority, to support Local Plan Policies, promote good quality design and help raise local awareness of the landscape. Following wide community and stakeholder involvement co-ordinated by South Gloucestershire Council, the findings were amalgamated to formulate the South Gloucestershire LCA, and issued as draft Supplementary Planning Guidance. Adoption was deferred in anticipation of further revisions arising from the Local Plan Inquiry.

The draft landscape character assessment identified eight landscape character types, four of which border the Severn Vale study area within Gloucestershire. These comprise the Shallow Ridge landscape character type (comprising Wickwar Ridge and Vale landscape character areas); Parkland Vale landscape character type (comprising Fallow Vale landscape character areas); Undulating Ridge landscape character type (comprising Severn Ridges landscape character area); and Estuary Shoreline and Levels landscape character type (comprising Oldbury Levels and Severn Shoreline and Estuary landscape character areas).

2.5.5 Stratford-on-Avon District

Although no detailed landscape character assessment has been undertaken for Stratford-on-Avon District, the Council uses the findings of the Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines which define both Regional Character Areas and Local Landscape Types.

2.5.6 Stroud District¹⁹

The Stroud Landscape Assessment (2000) was undertaken by Landscape Design Associates (now LDA Design) for Stroud District Council to provide an overview of the visual character of the landscape, and its variety and distinctiveness. It is used as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Stroud District Local Plan. The assessment identified twelve landscape character types, eight of which comprise the Severn Vale Lowland Landscapes, and fall within the Severn Vale study area. The findings of the assessment also informed the draft Gloucestershire LCA, and subsequent Cotswolds AONB assessment. There is a strong correlation between these studies, although the two later studies benefited from the availability of more comprehensive GIS data. Consequently further refinements to the landscape type boundaries and nomenclature were undertaken.

2.5.7 Swindon Borough²⁰

The draft Swindon Borough Assessment identified eight Landscape Types. One of these types, the Clay Vales, borders the south-eastern boundary of Gloucestershire, and hence the Upper Thames Valley study area.

2.5.8 Vale of White Horse District²¹

The Vale of White Horse District Landscape Strategy identified four distinct Landscape Zones in the district. Two of these zones have been further sub divided into component landscape types. One Landscape Zone and one of its component sub types were identified as bordering the south eastern extremity of Gloucestershire: Zone 1 Thames Valley and Corallian Ridge (comprising the Golden Ridge and Oxford Heights sub type).

17 North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment WHITE consultants for Cotswold District Council, June 2004

18 South Gloucestershire Draft Landscape Character Assessment, Chris Blandford Associates for South Gloucestershire Council, 2002

19 Stroud District Landscape Assessment, Landscape Design Associates for Stroud District Council, 2000

20 Draft Landscape Assessment of the Borough of Swindon, Swindon Borough Council, 2001

21 Vale of White Horse Adopted Local Plan November 1999 - Supplementary Planning Guidance, Landscape Strategy, Vale of White Horse District Council, 2000

2.5.9 West Oxfordshire District²²

West Oxfordshire District Council commissioned Atlantic Consultants in 1997 to undertake a district-wide landscape assessment. The main aims of the assessment were to increase understanding of the landscape resources of the district, assist with policy formulation and development control, and target resources for enhancement and management. The study drew from the Countryside Commission guidance document CCP423, and was completed in 1998.

Within the Regional Character Areas of the Cotswolds, and the Upper Thames Clay Vales, the study identified thirteen Landscape Character Areas, three of which adjoin the Upper Thames Valley study area. These comprise Shilton Downs, Bampton Vale, and Western Thames Fringes Character Areas. The assessment also identified Landscape Types within these Character Areas. Those that border the small areas of land that lie outside of the AONB in this study area comprise semi-enclosed limestone wolds in the Shilton Downs; open flat vale farmland in the Bampton Vale; and semi-enclosed flat vale farmland in the Western Thames fringes.

2.5.10 Wychavon District

No detailed landscape character assessment has been undertaken for Wychavon District. The Council uses the findings of the Worcestershire LCA which defines Regional Character Areas and county-wide Landscape Types, and local level Landscape Description Units.

2.6 Summary and Conclusion

Within Gloucestershire, both the Forest of Dean and Cotswolds AONB LCAs stem from the draft desk based LCA and correlate closely with the county character types that were identified. Through the more detailed level of assessment, however, verified by field evaluation, a number of the character types and boundaries were refined, and some new character types were also identified or type names revised to reflect observed characteristics. However, the strong correlation with the draft county study still remains. Similarly, the Stroud assessment closely concurs with the draft county landscape types since the findings of this earlier study were taken into account. As a continuation of this process, it is intended that the detailed studies for the Severn Vale, Upper Thames Valley and Vales of Moreton and Evesham Fringe will nest within and display a strong match to the desk based county assessment, thus achieving a strong correlation of types and boundaries across the county, cascading from county down to district / borough level.

The preceding review of current and emerging landscape character assessments on the perimeter of Gloucestershire demonstrates that there is a wide spectrum of classifications, terminology and scales of assessment beyond the county. Tables 1A and 1B bring these findings together and further demonstrate the numerous character type and area terms that have been defined either adjacent to each other, or overlaying at different scales from county down to district / borough studies. Thus, the principle of 'nesting' of assessments, with common boundaries retained at each scale of assessment but further sub-divided at the more detailed level, has not always been achieved. Furthermore, there is limited correlation of boundaries and typology names either between adjacent assessments on the perimeter of Gloucestershire, or with the draft County Types and subsequent verified boundaries for the Forest of Dean and Cotswolds AONB.

It is concluded that in view of the range of LCA findings along the Gloucestershire boundary, it will not be possible for the Gloucestershire assessment generally, and the four study areas in particular, to marry into these adjacent assessments in respect of the naming of types and areas and determination of boundaries. Nevertheless, through cross reference with these adjoining studies, there has been an endeavour to integrate with the findings and make connections where appropriate, and this has been achievable in a number of locations.

2.0

REVIEW OF EXISTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

Table 1: Review of Current and Emerging Landscape Character Assessment within and contiguous with Gloucestershire

1A: County Council and Cotswolds AONB Assessments

County / Cotswolds Conservation Board	Gloucestershire County Council Draft County LCTs 2002	Cotswolds AONB Assessment 2003	Oxfordshire County Council 2001-2004	Warwickshire County Council Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines, 1993	Wiltshire County Council LCA, Consultation Draft. 2005	Worcestershire County Council Draft LCA /SPG 1999
Summary of Assessment Hierarchy	Draft County Landscape Character Types	Landscape Character Types and Areas	Regional Character Areas (RCAs) Landscape Description Units Landscape Types and Local Landscapes Character areas	Regional Character Areas (RCAs) Landscape Types Landscape Description Units	Landscape Character Types and Areas	Regional Character Areas (RCA) Landscape Types / Sub-Types Landscape Description Units
Landscape Character Types and comparison of LCA terminology	<p>1 Wooded Valleys 2 Limestone Hills 3 Limestone Plateau 4 Wooded Scarp and Lower Scarp Slopes 5 Wooded Syncline and Settled Forest Margin 6 Unwooded Vale 7 Drained Riverine Farmland & Grazed Saltmarsh 8 Littoral Sands and Rock Outcrops 9 Undulating Farmland 10 Ridges and Valleys 11 Wooded Hills 12 Floodplain Farmland 13 Vale Hillocks 14 Low Hills and Orchards 15 Undulating Hill Farmland 16 River Meadows 17 Wooded Outlier 18 Settled Unwooded Vale 19 Farmed Slopes 20 Clay Vale 21 Broad Valley Floor Farmland 22 High Wold 23 High Wold Dipslope 24 Dip Slope Lowland 25 River Basin Lowland 26 Escarpment 27 Secluded Valleys 28 Escarpment Valleys 29 Low Sandstone Hills 30 Low Limestone Ridge 31 Gently Undulating Lowland Farmland 32 Low Wooded Hills 33 Urban</p> <p>Notes</p> <p>1: <i>Text in italics</i> signifies Landscape Character Types that do not occur in Gloucestershire;</p> <p>2: <u>Underlined text</u> signifies new Landscape Character Types that were introduced following the more detailed desk based and field assessment;</p> <p>3: (Text in brackets) signifies the revised name of the Landscape Character Type following the more detailed desk based and field assessment;</p>	<p>1 Escarpment Outliers (Wooded Outliers) 2 Escarpment 3 Rolling Hills and Valleys (Escarpmennt Valleys) 4 Broad Limestone Valley 5 Settled Valley 6 Ironstone Hills and Valleys 7 High Wold 8 High Wold Valley 9 High Wold Dip Slope 10 High Wold Dip Slope Valley 11 Dip Slope Lowland 12 Dip Slope Lowland Valley 13 Low Limestone Plateau 14 Cornbrash Lowland 15 Farmed Slopes 16 Broad Floodplain Valley 17 Pastoral Lowland Vale (Clay Vale) 18 Settled Unwooded Vale 19 Unwooded Vale</p> <p>1: <i>Text in italics</i> signifies Landscape Character Types that do not occur in Gloucestershire;</p> <p>2: <u>Underlined text</u> signifies new Landscape Character Types that were introduced following the more detailed desk based and field assessment;</p> <p>3: (Text in brackets) signifies the revised name of the Landscape Character Type following the more detailed desk based and field assessment;</p>	<p>RCAs on the eastern perimeter of Gloucestershire: Cotswolds Upper Thames Vale Landscape Types on the eastern perimeter of Gloucestershire: Farmland Slopes and Valley Sides Estate Farmlands Lowland Village Farmland Terrace Farmland River Meadowland</p>	<p>Cotswolds RCA Landscape Types: The High Wold The Wold Plateau Redlands and Edge Hill Cotswold Fringe Feldon RCA: Landscape Types: Vale Farmlands Feldon Parklands Avon Valley RCA: Landscape Type: Vale Farmlands The Wold Landscape Types subdivided further into Landscape Description Units</p>	<p>Landscape Character Types and Areas on the southern perimeter of Gloucestershire Open Clay Vale Limestone Lowland Landscape Character Areas: Landscape Character Types and Areas on the southern perimeter of Gloucestershire</p>	<p>Vale of Gloucester Landscape Types: Principal Village Farmlands Village Claylands Cotswolds and Bredon Hill RCA Landscape Types: Principal Wooded Hills Wooded Hills and Farmlands Limestone Wolds Vale of Evesham RCA Landscape Types: Principal Village Farmlands Village Claylands Landscape Types subdivided further into Landscape Description Units</p>

Note: Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas located within or contiguous with the Study Areas are shown in bold

2.0

REVIEW OF EXISTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

1B: Borough Council, District Council, and Unitary Authority Assessments

Authority	Forest of Dean District Council	Cotswold District Council	North Wiltshire District Council	South Gloucestershire Council	Stratford-on-Avon District Council	Stroud District Council	West Oxfordshire District Council	Wychavon District Council
Name, Status and Date of Landscape Character Assessment	Forest of Dean LCA, 2002	Assessment of Landscapes outside of the Cotswold AONB, 2000; WHITE consultants for CDC Approved as SPG	North Wiltshire LCA, 2005 WHITE consultants for NWDC	Draft Landscape Character Assessment, 2002; Chris Blandford Associates for SGC; Emerging as SPD	Use of 1993 Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines, plus update	Stroud District Landscape Assessment and SPG, 2000; Landscape Design Associates for SDC	West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment, 1998; Atlantic Consultants for WODC	Use of Worcestershire Draft LCA / SPG, May 1999
Principal Names and Typology Note: Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas in bold are located within or contiguous with the Study Areas	Landscape Character Types & Areas (suffixed by a, b, etc) 1 Wooded Valleys 2 Limestone Hills 3 Limestone Plateau 4 Wooded Scarp & Lower Scarp Slopes 5 Wooded Syncline & Settled Forest Margin 6 Unwooded Vale LCAs: 6a Severn Vale - Stratford / Sedbury 6b Severn Vale 6c The Leadon Vale 7 Drained Riverine Farmland & Grazed Salt Marsh 8 Littoral Sands & Rock Outcrops LCAs: 8a The Severn Sands 9 Undulating Farmland 10 Ridges and Valleys 11 Wooded Hills 12 Floodplain Farmland LCAs: 12a Walmore Common 13 Vale Hilllocks LCAs: 13a Corse Wood Hill 13b Woolridge 14 Low Hills & Orchards 15 Undulating Hill Farmland	LCT: Cotswold Lower Dipslope LCAs: Kemble Dipslope; Cirencester North Fringe Dipslope; Ampney to Southrop Dipslope LCT: Lower Dipslope Valleys LCAs: Churn Valley Coln Valley LCT: Dipslope / Thames Valley Transition LCAs: Ewen Cirencester Southern Fringe Lower Churn Valley Driffield & Meysey Hampton LCT: Thames Valley LCA: Cotswold Water Park – Western Section; Down Ampney; Fairford Airfield and Cotswold Water Park East; Kempsford and Lechlade; Lechlade Water Park; LCT: Cotswold Fringe Clay Vales LCAs: Upper Stour Valley and Hills; Vale of Moreton; Upper Evenlode Valley; LCT: Clay Vale of Evesham LCAs: Saintbury Grounds; Norton Hall Ridge; Mickleton; Scarp Fringes;	Landscape Character Types: Lowland Limestone (Forest Marble) Farmland Alluvium River Terrace Farmland;	Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) adjacent Gloucestershire: LCT: Shallow Ridge LCAs: Wickwar Ridge and Vale LCT: Parkland Vale LCAs: Falfield Vale LCT: Undulating Ridge LCAs: Severn Ridges LCT: Estuary Shoreline and Levels LCAs: Oldbury Levels Severn Shoreline and Estuary	See Table 1A Warwickshire LCTs and LCAs	Landscape Character Types: Rolling Agricultural Plain; Undulating Lowlands; Lowland Ridges; Severn Vale Hillocks; Severn Vale Grazing Marshes; Sandstone Ridge; Triassic Ridge; Wooded Cambrian Ridge; Kingswood Vale;	Landscape Character Areas adjacent to the Upper Thames Valley and Vale of Moreton: Each LCA is further subdivided into a series of local landscape types eg semi-enclosed limestone wolds; valley floor farmland; and parkland. Shilton Downs Landscape Type: Semi-enclosed limestone wolds Bampton Vale Landscape Types: Semi-enclosed rolling vale farmland Western Thames Fringes Landscape Type: Floodplain pasture; Floodplain wetlands; Semi-enclosed flat vale farmland; Open fault vale farmland Northern Valleys & Ridges Semi-enclosed clay wolds Valley floor farmland	See Table 1A for Worcestershire LCTs and LCAs

2.0

REVIEW OF EXISTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

Table 2: Final Landscape Character Types (LCTs) for the Study Areas

Cross reference of terminology used for contiguous LCTs within local authorities adjoining the Gloucestershire

2A: County Council and Cotswolds AONB Assessments

Gloucestershire: Final LCTs for the Study Areas	Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment, 2003	Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study, 2001-2004	Warwickshire: Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines, 1993	Wiltshire: Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment, Consultation Draft, 2005	Worcestershire Draft Landscape Character Assessment & SPG, 1999
Littoral Sands and Rock Outcrops					
Drained Riverine Farmland and Grazed Salt Marsh					
Floodplain Farmland					
Riverside Meadows					Riverside Meadows
Unwooded Vale	Unwooded Vale		The Wold; Vale Farmlands (Avon Valley);		Estate Farmlands; Settled Farmlands; Village Claylands; Principal Village Farmlands;
Settled Unwooded Vale	Settled Unwooded Vale				Settled Farmlands; Principal Village Farmlands;
Low Triassic Ridge					
Low Sandstone Hills					
Gently Undulating Farmed Lowland					
Low Wooded Cambrian Hills					
Vale Hillocks					
Low Hills and Commons					Unenclosed Commons; Principal Settled Farmlands; Principal Settled Farmlands associated with sandy soils; Estate Farmlands;
Rolling Hills and Valleys	Rolling Hills and Valleys				
Settled Valley	Settled Valley				
Escarpmment Outlier	Escarpmment Outlier				
Pastoral Lowland Vale	Pastoral Lowland Vale; Farmed Slopes				
Undulating Lowland Vale	Pastoral Lowland Vale; Farmed Slopes		Cotswold Fringe		
River Basin Lowland		Terrace Farmland; River Meadowland; Vale Farmland;		Open Clay Vale	
Cornbrash Lowlands	Cornbrash Lowlands; Dip Slope Lowland	Lowland Village Farmland;		Open Clay Vale	
Dip Slope Lowland	Dip Slope Lowland	Estate Farmlands; Farmland Slopes and Valley Side		Limestone Lowland	
Dip Slope Lowland Valley	Dip Slope Lowland Valley			Limestone Lowland	

Note: Shaded box denotes that there are no areas within the assessment that share a boundary with the Gloucestershire Landscape Character Type (LCT).

2.0

REVIEW OF EXISTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

2B: Borough and District Councils, and Unitary Authorities

Gloucestershire: Final LCTs for the Study Areas	Forest of Dean LCA, 2002	Cotswold District Council Assessment of Landscapes outside of Cotswolds AONB, 2000	North Wiltshire District Council North Wiltshire LCA, 2005	South Gloucestershire Council Draft LCA and SPG, 2002;	Stroud District Council Landscape Assessment and SPG, 2000;	West Oxfordshire District Council Landscape Assessment, 1998;
Littoral Sands and Rock Outcrops	Littoral Sands and Rock Outcrops			Estuary Shoreline and Levels	Severn Vale Grazing Marshes	
Drained Riverine Farmland and Grazed Salt Marsh	Drained Riverine Farmland and Grazed Salt Marsh			Estuary Shoreline and Levels	Severn Vale Grazing Marshes	
Floodplain Farmland	Floodplain Farmland				Severn Vale Grazing Marshes	
Riverside Meadows						
Unwooded Vale	Unwooded Vale	Clay Vale of Evesham		Parkland Vale; Shallow Ridge;	Kingswood Vale;	
Settled Unwooded Vale					Rolling Agricultural Plain	
Low Triassic Ridge				Undulating Ridge;	Triassic Ridge	
Low Sandstone Hills					Sandstone Ridge	
Gently Undulating Farmed Lowland				Undulating Ridge; Parkland Vale;	Undulating Lowlands; Lowland Ridges	
Low Wooded Cambrian Hills				Parkland Vale	Wooded Cambrian Ridge	
Vale Hillocks	Vale Hillocks				Severn Vale Hillocks	
Low Hills and Commons						
Rolling Hills and Valleys					Rolling Valleys	
Settled Valley					Secluded Valleys	
Escarpment Outlier					Escarpment	
Pastoral Lowland Vale		Cotswold Fringe Clay Vales				Northern Valleys and Ridges: Semi-enclosed clay wolds; Valley floor wetland
Undulating Lowland Vale		Cotswold Fringe Clay Vales				
River Basin Lowland		Thames Valley	Alluvium River Terrace Farmland			Western Thames Fringes: Floodplain wetlands; Floodplain pasture; Semi-enclosed flat vale farmland; Open flat vale farmland
Cornbrash Lowlands		Dipslope/Thames Valley Transition	Alluvium River Terrace Farmland			Western Thames Fringes: Semi-enclosed flat vale farmland
Dip Slope Lowland		Cotswold Lower Dipslope	Lowland Limestone (Forest Marble) Farmland			Shilton Downs: Semi-enclosed limestone wolds; Bampton Vale: Semi-enclosed rolling vale farmland
Dip Slope Lowland Valley		Lower Dipslope Valleys	Lowland Limestone (Forest Marble) Farmland			

Note: For LCT terminology used by Stratford-on-Avon District Council, refer to Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines; and for LCT terminology used by Wychavon District Council, refer to Worcestershire LCA.

3.1 Introduction

The landscape has been shaped by the complex interplay of physical and human influences. An understanding of these influences is central to the assessment process and provides the basis on which to define and describe landscape character.

3.2 Gloucestershire and the Study Area Landscapes

The Forest of Dean District and Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessments (LCAs) provide a comprehensive description of the evolution of their respective landscapes, and together cover a substantial part of Gloucestershire. Many of the physical and human influences and processes that are described in these two assessments are relevant to the whole of the Gloucestershire landscape, including the study areas, and reference should therefore be made to these two documents for a more comprehensive understanding of the evolution of the landscape.

In order to complete the review of the evolution of the Gloucestershire landscape, this section principally focuses on the Severn Vale and the Upper Thames Valley. These are the largest of the study areas. At a national level the Severn Vale is identified as part of the Severn and Avon Vales Countryside Character Area, and is separate and physically distinct from the Forest of Dean and the Cotswolds. The Upper Thames Valley, although not as extensive as the Severn Vale, nevertheless comprises a broad and discrete tract of land, forming part of the Upper Thames Clay Vales Countryside Character Area. In contrast, the remaining study areas are much smaller and fragmented in extent and form northern and eastern extensions of the Cotswolds AONB. Consequently the descriptions given in the Cotswolds AONB LCA largely covers the physical and human evolution of these latter areas. The review below is therefore principally confined to the Severn Vale, and Upper Thames Valley but where relevant, further detail is given in respect of the remaining study areas where these are not adequately covered in the existing Cotswolds AONB LCA.

Physical Influences

The underlying geological structure, and the juxtaposition and character of the succession of rocks, is fundamental to the form and structure of the landscape. While the underlying solid geology is responsible for the principal pattern and elevation of the landform, the differential responses of the various rock strata to the effects of erosion and weathering processes have altered the detailed form of the landscape, influenced drainage and soils, and in turn the subsequent patterns of vegetation, land cover and land use. The deposition of material during the most recent Quaternary era has also been important in moulding and modifying landform patterns.

3.3 Geology and Soils

The diversity of rock types found in Gloucestershire makes it unique within the country, with nearly all of the major divisions of the geological timescale represented. The solid and drift geology across the county is illustrated Figures 3 ((Drift) and Figure 4 (Solid and Drift). Rocks dating from the Cambrian through to the Quaternary Systems are represented, with only the Cretaceous and Tertiary periods excluded. The surface expression of the sequence and range of rock units display a range of landforms. This varied geology has given rise to the distinctive features and landscape character for which the county is renowned, including the Oolitic limestone escarpment and wolds of the Cotswolds, the wooded ridges of the Forest of Dean, the deep gorge of the Wye Valley, the low-lying area of the Severn Vale and the series of outliers within the Vale such as Robins Wood Hill.

3.3.1 The Severn Vale

Rock formations from the Cambrian / Ordovician period through to the Middle Jurassic period are represented within the Severn Vale. The majority of the rocks are from the Mesozoic Era, however, with older Triassic rocks to the west, and younger Lower Jurassic Lias Group rocks to the east. These extend up to the Middle Jurassic Inferior and Great Oolitic limestone escarpment that define the edge of the Cotswolds.

The north and west of the Severn Vale is underlain by Triassic Mercia Mudstones, formerly the Keuper Marl, over which are more limited outcrops of the younger and harder Penarth Group, formerly the Rhaetic Beds, and comprising a mix of shales and limestone. The rest of the vale to the east is underlain by the Lower Jurassic Lias Group formations comprising warm sea deposits of shales and mudstones interbedded with clayey limestone characterised by ammonites, and belemnites, as well as distinctive ferruginous bands.

As a result of earlier periods of major earth movements, the underlying solid geology is more complex in the southern part of the Gloucestershire section of the Severn Vale, with the alignments and sequences of rocks bearing evidence of this activity. Major structural lines intersect in the vicinity of Sharpness where the south west/north east aligned Severn Axis crosses the north/south Bath Malvernian Axis. Here, Old Red Sandstone rocks of the Devonian period have been brought to the surface and are evident at Berkeley, and Tortworth Green, immediately to the south of the county, and form anticlinal folds forming hills. To the east there are outcrops of Silurian rocks, notably exposed on the banks of the Severn at Tites Point to the east of Sharpness.

The oldest rocks in the Severn Vale are Cambrian in age. In the vicinity of Damory in the extreme south of the county, the Upper Llandoverian beds are exposed near Damory Mill. The Lower Ludlow shales or mudstones are also seen at Berkeley and Purton where the upper part is Aymestry Limestone.

3.0

EVOLUTION OF THE LANDSCAPE

The Quaternary history of the Severn Vale area is one in which erosion has dominated over deposition. Nevertheless, there are significant remnants of drift deposits associated with events that occurred during the Pleistocene period. At the height of the Anglian glaciation, the Severn Valley was blocked as far south as Gloucester by a glacier deriving from Wales. This glacier, together with the further effect of glaciers moving eastwards across the Bristol Channel, and also from the north and north east, and the Jurassic escarpment and land mass, confined the drainage into a vast glacial lake named Lake Harrison. Drainage from this lake occurred through overflow gaps in the escarpment at about 125m AOD, and through the Moreton Gap to the north east.

The series of terraces of the River Severn are represented by notable landforms within the Severn Vale. Only the Woolridge Terrace is regarded as fluvioglacial, however, and hence directly related to an ice front. It is considered to be the outwash of the Severn Valley glacier that was partly responsible for ponding up Lake Harrison. The remaining terraces within the Severn are attributable to sequential erosional phases of the river, and are evident as a series of distinctive hillocks at accordant heights that link each terrace. Superficial deposits of river sands and gravels across these terraces are further evidence of their formation.

There are also notable deposits of Quaternary sands within the Severn Vale which have given rise to the presence of the 'Cheltenham Sands', renowned both for the free draining qualities and high quartz content. It is considered that the Sands were formed from wind blown deposits.

3.3.2 The Upper Thames Valley

The northern part of the area is underlain by a sequence of White Limestone and Forest Marble of the Middle Jurassic Great Oolite Group. The Cornbrash, a coarse crumbly limestone, outcrops to the south of these strata extending across the central part of the study area in a distinct east-west line. South of the Cornbrash, the Upper Jurassic Kellaways Clays and Kellaways Sand, comprising a combination of mudstones, calcareous sandstones, is followed by the Oxford Clay Formation. These latter Upper Jurassic rock formations have been extensively masked by superficial deposits of river terrace sand and gravels and alluvium along the valley floors of the River Thames, and the lower reaches of the Churn, Ampney Brook, Coln and Leach. In some areas these recent deposits are extensive and of sufficient depth to eradicate all visual evidence of the nature of the underlying solid geology. Where Oxford Clay is evident above the sand and gravels, some areas form small but locally prominent hillocks in the flat or gently undulating landscape. Exposures of the more limited areas of White Limestone, located on the northern edge of the study area, are principally confined to the valley sides of watercourses. Overlying the geological formations are soils that are mainly alkaline in nature and fairly well drained due to the underlying limestones. In contrast, heavier clay soils have developed over the Oxford Clay.

3.3.3 The Vale of Moreton

The Lower Jurassic Lias Group clays form the bedrock of the area. They are softer than the limestone, and have eroded more easily. As a result there is a distinct rim to the west and the north west where land rises from the lower clay vale towards the higher Oolitic Limestone wolds. Although the wolds of Warwickshire and Oxfordshire to the east are less pronounced, they nevertheless continue the sense of enclosure of the Vale of Moreton. Extensive deposits of boulder clay overlay the Lias Group clays, with pockets of glacial sand and gravel. To the south of and surrounding Moreton-in-Marsh, much of the boulder clay remains on the broad floor of the vale creating an expanse of relatively flat land. To the north, the boulder clay deposits have been dissected to form rounded hills and ridges between the valleys.

3.4 Landform (refer to Figure 5)

3.4.1 The Severn Vale

At a regional level the Severn Vale forms a gently undulating and low lying landform unit contained between, and contrasting with the elevated landforms of the Cotswolds escarpment and wolds to the east, and the Forest of Dean to the west. North of the Vale the distinctive line of The Malvern Hills is also visible as a significant feature. Despite the relatively subdued relief of the Vale, it nevertheless displays a wide variety of landforms in response to the underlying complexity and differential weathering responses of the sequence of solid and superficial geology as well as terrace deposits of the Proto Severn. As a consequence there are notable elevated areas across the Vale including the sequence of 'Vale Hillocks' that correlate with the sequence of Severn River Terraces, the most notable being Woolridge Hill which defines the Woolridge Terrace, and the highest and oldest terrace. The variation of landform at this more detailed and local level contributes to the patterns of local distinctiveness that contribute to the character of the vale.

On the eastern side of the Severn Vale there are further elevated areas and isolated hills which form remnants and outliers of the retreating Cotswold escarpment. The most notable within the study area are Robins Wood Hill and Chosen Hill to the south and north of Gloucester respectively. These are significant landform features and warrant classification as a distinctive and separate landscape type. Others are less significant, where outliers have been substantially eroded, but are nevertheless of local importance. These local hillocks and former outliers are characteristic of the wider Vale in the vicinity of the escarpment. Further landform variations occur where differential erosion of the Lias Group rocks have occurred and where harder Triassic rocks outcrop.

The essence of the Severn Vale is therefore that of a broad plain at a regional scale, but at a local scale displaying immense variety and local diversity, which in turn is reflected in the local landscape character and land cover and management of the land.

3.4.2 The Upper Thames Valley

The River Thames flows through an extensive floodplain. This low lying area is characterised by very shallow slopes, and in many areas is perceived as flat particularly where the extensive floodplain borders the river channel. There are notable variations to this pattern, however, with intermittent areas of Oxford Clay rising above the general levels of the low lying floodplain to form locally distinctive hillocks. Their relative prominence is further defined by a number of small settlements which occupy the summit areas and upper slopes of these hillocks, benefiting from the slightly higher land above the general level of the floodplain.

Rising above the Thames floodplain the progressive exposures of the Cornbrash Formation and Great Oolite Limestones form the broad Dip Slope Lowland area that defines the south easterly termination of the Cotswolds. This undulating landscape on the northern margin of the Upper Thames Valley generally slopes south eastwards towards the Thames, following the general geological grain and dip of the strata. Where the sequence of tributaries of the Thames have cut into the landscape, distinctive valleys have formed, which in their lower reaches are often shallow sided.

3.5 Hydrology and Drainage

3.5.1 The Severn Vale

The River Severn is one of England's principal rivers. At 338 km in length, it rises in the Cambrian Mountains in Wales flowing southwards to its mouth in the Bristol Channel. It is also renowned as Britain's longest navigable waterway. Within Gloucestershire, the Severn has a profound influence on the county influencing the character of the Severn Vale and its landform, land use and communication patterns.

Numerous tributary rivers drain into the Severn. On the east bank of the river within the Gloucestershire section of the Severn Vale, these include the Little Avon River / Berkeley Pill in the south of the county, the River Frome, whose source is deep in the Cotswolds, and the River Avon which joins the Severn at Tewkesbury. On the west bank within Gloucestershire, the Wye, Lyd and Leadon Rivers flow into the Severn, and form the principal catchment area for the Forest of Dean. There are also numerous secondary tributaries that flow into this network of rivers.

A large part of Gloucestershire, including the Forest of Dean and all of the Severn Vale area, falls within the extensive Severn Catchment. To the east of the Cotswolds escarpment, however, the headwaters of a series of rivers rise and flow eastwards across the dip slope towards the upper reaches of the River Thames. This separation between the Severn and Thames catchments defines a major watershed across the county.

3.5.2 The Strategy for the Severn Estuary

In view of the regional importance of the Severn Estuary a Partnership of local authorities, government agencies and other key organisations has developed a comprehensive Strategy for the Severn Estuary. This seeks to bring an holistic approach to the management of this important resource and examines the effect and interrelationships between a wide range of topic areas. The Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities (ASERA) has been set up to develop a scheme of management for the European marine site.

3.5.3 The Upper Thames Valley

A number of shallow valleys flow through the study area, carrying both permanent and winterbourne streams. Most notable is the Ampney Brook and those forming the upper reaches of the River Thames, including the River Churn, Coln and Leach. The Thames and its tributaries are small, and it is only between the confluence of the Coln and Thames that a sizeable river becomes evident. Together, these multitude of small streams and brooks drain the area. A number of streams also feed large man made lakes, established on the site of restored gravel workings.

3.5.4 The Vale of Moreton

The Vale of Moreton is of regional significance since the watershed between the River Thames and Severn is located on an east west line through the centre of this area. To the south, the headwaters of the River Evenlode, a tributary of the Thames, gather from the springs around the edge of the broad Vale of Moreton and flow southwards to the upper reaches of the Evenlode Valley. To the north, Knee Brook and Paddle Brook flow in generally eastward courses to join and form the River Stour. This river flows northwards into the Avon and eventually to the Severn. Compared to the upper reaches of the Evenlode catchment, the north flowing tributaries of the Knee Brook within the upper Stour catchment are at a lower level. These tributary streams occupy more pronounced valley forms, and the transition into the Severn catchment is identified by a locally distinctive slope.

3.6 Biodiversity

The distribution of wildlife habitats and natural features throughout Gloucestershire is determined by the nature of the underlying geology, landform, past land use patterns and the cultural history of individual areas. At a very broad scale these wildlife habitats and natural features have been identified by English Nature, which has divided England into a number of Natural Areas, each with a characteristic association of wildlife and natural features. These areas provide a way of interpreting the ecological variations in terms of natural features and illustrate the distinctions between one area and another. Each Natural Area possesses a unique identity resulting from the interaction of natural and human influences.

3.0

EVOLUTION OF THE LANDSCAPE

3.6.1 Biodiversity Action Plan for Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire has a particularly diverse and rich natural environment with many habitats. The Gloucestershire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), which was launched in April 2000, sets out a series of objectives and targets in relation to the biodiversity resource. In particular, it contains a series of Habitat Action Plans for a range of key habitats such as Estuaries, Saltmarsh and Mudflats; Unimproved Neutral Grassland; Woodlands; Unimproved Limestone Grassland; Reedbeds; and Standing Open Water habitats. It also sets out Species Action Plans for a wide range of species, including farmland birds, water vole, otter, bats, stag beetle, arable wildflowers and stoneworts.

The county holds many habitats and species of national and international importance, so the delivery of the Gloucestershire BAP forms a vital part of the national strategy embodied in the UK BAP. Nature Conservation Designations and Local Assets within the county are shown on Figure 8. Long term partnership working is the key to delivering Gloucestershire's BAP and managing this precious resource. The Gloucestershire Biodiversity Partnership encompasses around 60 organisations that are united in their commitment to protect and enrich the county's biodiversity. These range from the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, English Nature, local authorities, the Environment Agency, farmers and landowners to businesses and communities.

3.6.2 The Severn Vale

The majority of land lying within the Severn Vale comprises the Severn and Avon Vales Natural Area. The Natural Areas of the Severn Estuary and the Cotswolds also extend into the margins of the Severn Vale to the west and to the east respectively.

The Severn Estuary is subject to a very large tidal range which creates a distinctive, highly dynamic environment. A range of habitats have developed in this unique estuarine environment including salt marshes, and sand banks which support a vast array of over-wintering birds. The biodiversity value of the Severn Estuary cannot be underestimated. A substantial part of the Severn Estuary, including the section extending into Gloucestershire, is designated as a Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site), and also designated as a SPA for birds under the EU Birds Directive. The role of ASERA (see Section 3.5.2 above) in the co-ordinated management of activities is important.

Much of the land within the Severn Vale lying adjacent to the River Severn remains subject to seasonal flooding and there are remnant wetland sites and other associated riparian features such as old pollarded willows, wet pastures as well as numerous ditches and outgrown hedges.

The key characteristics of the Natural Areas lying within the Severn Vale are listed in the table below. Although only very small margins of the Cotswolds Natural Area occur within the Severn Vale, the full schedule of the key characteristics are included as these provide a context for the association of this adjacent landscape and Natural Area which forms the setting to the Severn Vale.

Natural Area	Key Characteristics
Severn and Avon Vales	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tremadoc, Llandovery and Wenlock rocks and fossils• Exposures of Quaternary sediments including river gravels and glacial deposits• Some areas of lowland oak and mixed deciduous wood.• Some wet woodland in the river valleys• Several areas of lowland wood pasture and parkland• Unimproved neutral grasslands, especially old meadows and pasture• Important areas of lowland hay meadows and dry neutral grassland• Small areas of lowland heathland
Cotswolds	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cotswolds scarp and clay vales• Limestone exposures in Cotswolds scarp and crest• Cotswold stone buildings and walls• Internationally important lowland beech and yew woodland on scarp slopes and in valleys• Well distributed, significant lowland oak and mixed deciduous woodland• Characteristic lowland wood pasture and parkland• Some large blocks of conifer plantation• Nationally significant lowland calcareous grassland (on limestone)• Neutral grassland including species-rich meadows and pasture on lower slopes• Remnant wet grasslands along river valleys
Severn Estuary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Substantial Areas of Saltmarsh.• Substantial areas of intertidal sandflats and mudflats.• Extensive areas of highly mobile sandbanks.• Extensive subtidal reef of <i>Sabellaria alveolata</i>

The Severn and Avon Vales Wetland Partnership

The Severn and Avon floodplain meadows are of considerable biodiversity importance. This vulnerable habitat, and its associated historic agricultural management regime, has suffered a progressive decline, with dramatic losses of floodplain habitats and key species of flora and fauna. To address these growing concerns, and in recognition of the need for a co-ordinated catchment level approach covering a wide range of interests, the Severn and Avon Vale Wetland Partnership (SAVWP) was set up in 2000. It embraces a wide range of partners including English Nature, the Environment Agency, County and District authorities, the Wildlife Trusts, Defra and FWAG. The purpose of the partnership is to encourage the recovery, creation, enhancement and appropriate management of wetland habitats linked to a sustainable rural economy.

The Stroud Valleys Project

The Stroud Valleys Project (SVP) is a community development charity that operates across Stroud District. Its principal aim is to encourage people to cherish their local environment and work towards protecting and enhancing its biodiversity. The Project also encourages the sustainable use of resources and guiding the setting up of new initiatives such as Farmers Markets. Integral to the project, the SVP has set up the People and Ecology Project (PEP) with the purpose of helping parishes to plan the integration of biodiversity enhancement with the social and economic needs of the parish. The Cam People and Ecology Project was the first PEP and has been a particularly successful demonstrator of the benefits of parish-wide biodiversity work and raising local people's awareness and enthusiasm.

The Severnside Project

The Severnside Project is managed by Gloucester City Council and promotes the environmental and leisure uses of the open land on the fringe of the city between the River Severn and the Sharpness Canal from the Gloucester Docks area to Stonebench. It is primarily funded by the Gloucestershire Environmental Trust together with landfill tax contributions donated by Cory Environmental. It has a Project Manager who is responsible for co-ordinating the many activities, ranging from restoration of arable land to wetland grassland, to a programme of local walks.

The Severn Vale Biodiversity Project

The Severn Vale Biodiversity Project, formed in 2004, is a partnership of the SVP, the Severnside Project and FWAG, and administered by English Nature. The project is promoting an holistic approach to wildlife conservation, with the principal purpose of helping 12 parishes within the Severn Vale to create a thriving natural environment that meets the needs of wildlife, communities and the local economy. Funding for this project is through Defra's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund.

The Gloucester Vale Conservation Volunteers

The Gloucester Vale Conservation Volunteers, which is affiliated to the BCTV, has been working in the Severn Vale for 20 years and has made an important contribution to the management and enrichment of the biodiversity value of many sites within the Vale.

The Gloucestershire Orchard Group

The Gloucestershire Orchard Group (GOG), which was founded in 2001, seeks to conserve and promote the restoration of traditional orchards within Gloucestershire, many of which are present within the Severn Vale. The biodiversity value of Old Orchards is recognised in the Gloucestershire BAP, and a Habitat Action Plan (HAP) has been prepared for the county's orchards, setting out their landscape, wildlife and historic importance and the requirements to safeguard and improve them. GOG has an important role in achieving the targets set out in the HAP.

Delivering the Gloucestershire BAP and Targets within the Severn Vale

Together, these many initiatives and projects within the Severn Vale are working towards delivering and fulfilling the targets of the Gloucestershire BAP. This will enrich the biodiversity and landscape character of this area.

3.6.3 The Upper Thames Valley

The northern part of the Upper Thames Valley, incorporating the Dip Slope Lowland and the Cornbrash Lowlands landscapes, consists of the Cotswolds Natural Area, whilst the southern portion extending across the Thames river basin comprises the Upper Thames Clay Vales Natural Area. The key characteristics of these two Natural Areas comprise the following:

Natural Area	Key Characteristics
Upper Thames Clay Vales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcrops of Oxford and Kimmeridge Clays in brickpits Mostly northerly deposits of Wealden rocks in Britain Upper Jurassic 'Corallian' limestones and fossil remains in classic area Most northerly exposures of Portlandian rocks Many clay-bottomed rivers, mostly forming tributaries to the Thames Extensive marl lake system Extensive ditch system Wet neutral grasslands in river valleys Significant dry neutral grasslands including mostly small lowland hay meadows
Cotswolds	See previous table

Biodiversity within the Upper Thames Valley and the Cotswold Water Park

The Upper Thames Valley supports a wide range of habitats including the numerous lakes that have been created as a consequence of the sand and gravel extraction in the Valley, and which now form a unique wetland complex called the Cotswold Water Park. The biodiversity resource within the Cotswold Water Park is of considerable importance supporting internationally important wintering waterfowl, and nationally important winter and breeding populations of birds. There are also important assemblages of aquatic plants and wildflower meadows, while the limestone streams and rivers that flow through the Water Park to the Thames support fish, otter, water vole and native crayfish. Some of the sites are designated as SSSIs. With some further extension of the gravel extraction areas proposed, as set out in the adopted Gloucestershire Minerals Plan, the Park has the potential to become the largest freshwater wetland complex in Europe.

The Cotswold Water Park Biodiversity Action Plan

In recognition of the need to protect and manage this unique and precious wildlife resource, a Cotswold Water Park Biodiversity Action Plan (CWP BAP) was prepared and launched in 1997 to cover the period 1997-2007. In common with the Gloucestershire BAP, the CWP BAP is implemented through partnership working, including the local authorities, nature conservation bodies, landowners and the gravel companies, and co-ordinated by the Cotswold Water Park Society. The CWP BAP is currently under review.

The Cotswold Water Park and Strategy

Following the designation of the Cotswold Water Park in 1967, the Cotswold Water Park Joint Committee (CWP JC) was formed. The principal purpose of the CWP JC, which is represented by all the county and district authorities that extend across the Park, is to provide a co-ordinated approach to the management and forward visioning of the area. The CWP Strategy covers the period 2000-2006, and provides a framework for addressing and balancing the complex range of issues that affect the area, including existing and future gravel extraction, hydrology, nature conservation and biodiversity, residential and leisure development, sport and recreation, and traffic and access.

3.6.4 The Vale of Moreton and Vale of Evesham Fringe

The Vale of Moreton and the Vale of Evesham Fringe lie within the Cotswolds and Severn and Avon Vales Natural Areas respectively. Reference should therefore be made to the key characteristics of these Natural Areas, as detailed above.

Human Influences

3.7 Introduction

The diversity of the landscape character across Gloucestershire is in part due to the interaction between humans and their environment. The concept of 'time depth' indicates the successive periods of landscape change, with the modern landscape forming a palimpsest of the earlier periods of occupation, and historic events and processes. These interactions have had a profound effect on the evolution of the Gloucestershire landscape. The principal events are described in more detail in the Cotswolds AONB LCA, as at a broader scale these are common to man's activities within the Severn Vale and the other study areas. The distribution of Land Cover across the county is illustrated on Figure 6 and the Heritage Designations on Figure 7.

3.7.1 Severn Vale

There is only scattered evidence suggesting that the Severn 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 GLEVUM and designated as a 'Colonia' AD97, to the wider Roman world. The principal route shared the course of the modern A38 through the vale that 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.

Many of the villages within the wider Severn Vale 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 major 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.

3.7.2 Upper Thames Valley

Prehistoric settlement of the gravel terraces is likely to have been widespread although extraction has removed much of the archaeological record in this area. A number of prehistoric long barrows & burial mounds present within areas of the Dip Slope Lowland & Dip Slope Lowland Valleys suggest occupation of the land since the Neolithic. It also suggests that this lower part of the Cotswolds would also have been extensively cleared of trees from this period to ensure visibility of these symbolic features and territory markers, as well as to enable cultivation of the land to support these early sedentary farming communities. The valleys within the area were also likely to form important trade and communication routes.

The Roman roads of Akeman Street, Ermin Street and Fosse Way radiate out from the Roman town of Cirencester (Corinium) signifying the importance of the Roman occupation of this area.

Airfields are also conspicuous 20th century historic features of the landscape, some of which were established in preparation for the D-Day landings. Fairford Airfield is still functioning as a major military airfield with USAF interests; others at Kemble, Down Ampney and South Cerney are no longer active airfields although Kemble is used for recreational use including microlites.

3.7.3 Vale of Moreton

It is likely that early prehistoric communities, possibly resident in the valleys on the neighbouring uplands, would have exploited wetland and marginal habitats in the vale for game and fish. From the advent of farming, however, it is likely that the gravel terraces bordering rivers may have been the focus of some settlement. The low, poorly drained landscape may have remained marginal up until improved plough technology in the Romano-British and Saxon periods allowed the more heavily water-logged soils to become workable.

The Romans constructed the Fosse Way (A429), and in addition to this major routeway, their presence is signified by the site of a Roman settlement located at Dorn, to the north of Moreton-in-Marsh and adjacent to the Fosse Way.

Throughout the medieval period, pressure on land elsewhere and improved drainage techniques allowed increasing areas of the landscape to enter production. Villages expanded and new settlements were established, including the market town of Moreton-in-Marsh, which was established by charter in 1226. This medieval town was laid out with burgage plots on either side of the Fosse Way. The remaining settlements within the area were also developed during the medieval period. Indeed, place name evidence indicates that the majority of modern towns and villages of the vale have Saxon origins. Alongside Knee Brook, three deserted medieval village sites can be found, complete with ridge and furrow earthworks of their open fields. Another deserted village overlooks this valley at Lemington. Only small hamlets remain at these sites.

The Severn Vale, Upper Thames Valley, Vale of Moreton and the Vale of Evesham Fringe

4.1 Introduction

This assessment completes the detailed review of the Gloucestershire landscape and recognises that all landscapes matter, not just those that are particularly well known, or evoke strong images. Landscape character assessment acknowledges that each landscape character type and landscape character area has a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements that makes it different from another. Character gives each part of the landscape a particular sense of place, regardless of perceptions of quality or value. In conjunction with the linked studies of the Forest of Dean and the Cotswolds AONB this assessment provides a descriptive map of the county, and draws attention to the contrasts in landscape character that is so often taken for granted.

4.2 Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas

The assessment has used the Draft Gloucestershire Landscape Typology, 2002 as a framework for the study, together with the findings of the more detailed LCAs for the Forest of Dean, and the Gloucestershire section of the Cotswolds AONB. Reference has also been made to earlier landscape character assessments undertaken within the county and in neighbouring county and district / borough / unitary authorities and study areas. These are summarised in Section 2 and Tables 1 and 2. The 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance', 2002 published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage sets out the methodology and spatial hierarchy for the assessment process with a top down cascade from the National Typology down to local level. As a further clarification of the assessment methodology employed, a flow diagram is presented in Appendix 3.

Building upon this framework and methodology, the Landscape Character Assessment has identified a total of 20 landscape character types and 44 landscape character areas across the four study areas. These are listed in Table 3 at the end of this section and their distribution shown on Figure 9, confined to character types only. Figure 10, comprising a more detailed map at 1:80,000 scale at AO, indicates both landscape character types and character areas, and their nomenclature.

Following this introduction, each of the generic landscape types is described. The key characteristics are summarised followed by a review of landscape character, and the physical and human influences that have shaped the landscape and contributed to its character. This is followed by a description of the unique landscape character areas that occur within each landscape character type, and a summary of the principal features that are particular to each.

4.3 Stroud Valleys Landscape Character Types

In addition to the 20 landscape character types identified in this study, two further types occur within the Stroud Valleys section of the Severn Vale study area, both of which are identified and described in the Cotswolds AONB LCA. These comprise Settled Valleys and High Wold Valley (Types 5 and 8 respectively in the Cotswolds assessment). The areas comprise fragmented and generally small areas of land that lie outside of the built area as defined in this LCA, and also outside of the Cotswolds AONB. They occur within the valley area occupied by the Stroud / Stonehouse built up area and also extending south to the Nailsworth Valley. In view of their classification as an integral part of the landscape types and character areas described in the Cotswolds AONB, reference should be made to that document for their full description. Cotswolds LCA Type 5 is represented by the landscape character areas of 5A: Nailsworth, and 5B: Frome Golden Valley and Stroud. In respect of Cotswolds LCA Type 8, this is represented in the study area by the landscape character area 8B: Painswick and Slad Valleys. For cross reference, the representation and colour coding of these areas of Settled Valleys and High Wold Valley on Figures 8 and 9 are correlated with their representation on the Cotswolds AONB LCA and mapping.

4.4 Boundary Determination of Landscape Character Type and Areas

The boundaries of the landscape character types and areas were initially mapped to 1:50,000 scale, using the range of data sets that were made available at this scale, and subsequently verified and refined in the field. Reference to 1:25,000 scale maps was also made as an integral part of the desk study and throughout the field studies, to provide a more informed and detailed analysis of mapped features, including the pattern of field sizes and types. The final mapping of the boundary lines was taken down to 1:10,000 scale and mapped on GIS.

Landscape character rarely changes abruptly or follows clearly defined lines on the ground, and as a consequence the boundaries that have been defined for the landscape character types and areas should be considered as transitional. This is evident, for example, in the subtle transition from the Dip-Slope Lowland to the Cornbrash Lowlands, and the River Basin Floodplain Lowland in the Upper Thames Valley area. Other types are more clearly defined, however, such as the Vale Hillocks and Escarpment Outliers within the Severn Vale. Here, the transition between the adjacent types is more abrupt. Nevertheless, even these distinctive morphological units demonstrate transitional characteristics where the base of the hillocks merges with the surrounding lower lying vale lowland areas.

4.0

THE LANDSCAPES OF THE STUDY AREAS

Despite the transitional nature of landscape character, the provision of a definitive line provides an essential reference point from which to commence the determination of specific outputs from the LCA, including interrogation in GIS. Throughout this study, therefore, the boundaries to landscape character types and areas are all shown as definitive lines, mapped to 1:10,000 on GIS. In recognition of the transitional nature of landscape character, however, these boundary lines represent the centre line of the transition based on the determining features associated with geology, topography, soils, cultural patterns and land use. These are then refined to follow field boundaries or the perimeter of well-defined features such as woodlands, roads, tracks and occasionally footpaths.

In many instances, the boundary lines were initially defined by contours where these correlated with a well-defined landform, a change in slope profile or a general height above Ordnance Datum, or a change in the underlying geology that resulted in a significant surface expression. Here the boundary lines were then drawn to

the field boundaries that followed the closest correlation with the landform and mapped contours, or other identifiable features.

Where the assessment of a particular site or area is undertaken that falls close to, or within 0.5km of a boundary line, the characteristics, descriptions and any future management strategies for each of these adjacent landscape types and areas should be taken into consideration. This is particularly important in the evaluation of and guiding management requirements, as well as in the consideration of the development of landscape and environmental projects. Such an approach is particularly important where there is a high degree of intervisibility between neighbouring landscapes. 'Borrowed' characteristics are important not just to the landscape they are in, but also to the landscape they are visible from.

Table 3: Landscape Character Types and Areas for the Severn Vale; Upper Thames Valley; Vale of Moreton; and Vale of Evesham Fringe.

Landscape Character Type	Severn Vale LCAs		Upper Thames Valley LCAs	Vale of Moreton LCAs	Vale of Evesham Fringe LCAs
Littoral Sands and Rock Outcrops	SV 1A	Hill Flats / Hock Cliff / Longney			
Drained Riverine Farmland and Grazed Salt Marsh	SV 2A	Berkeley Pill Riverine Farmland			
	SV 2B	Slimbridge and New Grounds Marshes			
	SV 2C	Arlingham Warth and Longney Riverine Farmland			
Floodplain Farmland	SV 3A	Elmore Back and Minsterworth Ham			
	SV 3B	The Rea Maisemore Ham and Longford			
	SV 3C	The Severn Hams (Gloucester to Tewkesbury South)			
Riverside Meadows	SV 4A	Severn Ham, Tewkesbury			
	SV 4B	Mythe Meadows			
	SV 4C	Twyning and Upham Meadows			

THE LANDSCAPES OF THE STUDY AREAS

4.0

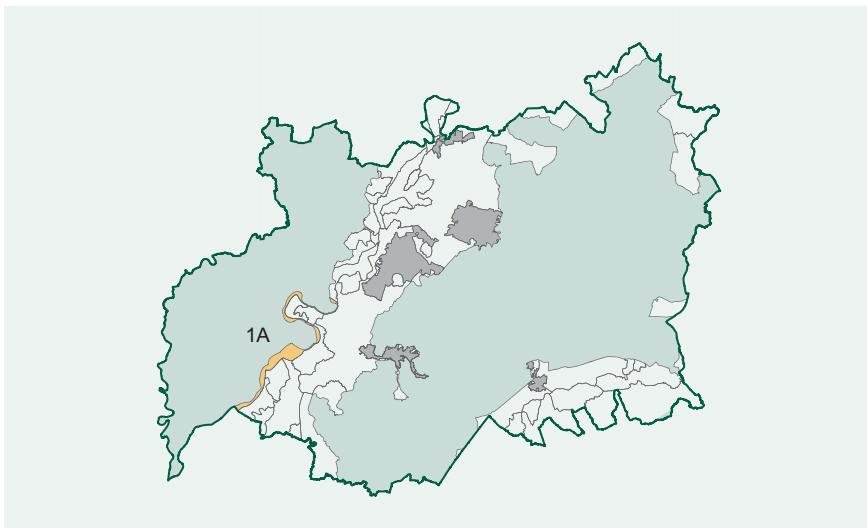
Landscape Character Type	Severn Vale LCAs	Upper Thames Valley LCAs	Vale of Moreton LCAs	Vale of Evesham Fringe LCAs
Unwooded Vale	SV 5A Kingswood and Wick Vale SV 5B Ashleworth, Tirley and Forthampton Vale			VE 1A Teddington and Greet Vale VE 1B Wormington Vale Fringe VE 1C Mickleton Vale Fringe
Settled Unwooded Vale	SV6A Vale of Berkeley SV6B Vale of Gloucester			
Low Triassic Ridge	SV 7A Bevington and Whitcliff Ridge			
Low Sandstone Hills	SV 8A Berkeley and Newtown Hills			
Gently Undulating Farmed Lowland	SV 9A Stone and Berkeley Heath Undulating Lowland			
Low Wooded Cambrian Hills	SV 10A Michael Wood Hill			
Vale Hillocks	SV 11A Overton and Barrow Hill SV 11B Monks' and Hockley Hills SV11C Lassington and Rodway Hills SV 11D Woolridge Hill SV 11E Sandhurst and Norton Hills SV 11F Corse Wood & Barrow Hills SV 11G Apperley Hill			
Low Hills and Commons	SV 12A Twyning Hills			
Rolling Hills and Valleys	SV 13A Dursley, Cam and Uley Valley			
Escarpmment Outlier	SV 14A Robins Wood Hill SV 14B Chosen Hill			
Pastoral Lowland Vale			VM 1A Upper Evenlode Vale	
Undulating Lowland Vale			VM 2A Upper Stour Hills and Valleys	

4.0

THE LANDSCAPES OF THE STUDY AREAS

Landscape Character Type	Severn Vale LCAs	Upper Thames Valley LCAs		Vale of Moreton LCAs	Vale of Evesham Fringe LCAs
River Basin Lowland		TV 1A TV 1B TV1C	Somerford Keynes Down Ampney Fairford and Lechlade		
Cornbrash Lowlands		TV 2A TV2B TV2C	Poole Keynes and Ewen Lowlands Driffield Lowlands Southrop Lowlands		
Dip Slope Lowland		TV 3A TV 3B	Kemble Dip Slope The Ampneys		
Dip Slope Lowland Valley		TV 4A TV 4B	Lower Churn Valley Lower Coln Valley		
Urban					





CHARACTER AREAS

SV 1A Hills Flats / Hock Cliff / Longney

5.1.1 Key Characteristics

- Broad landscape of open water, sandbanks, mudflats and rock outcrops;
- Temporal landscape that shifts and changes throughout the day;
- Open and exposed landscape with uninterrupted views over significant distances;
- Intermittent industrial sites bordering the river are prominent in views;
- Riverine and estuarine habitats rich in wildlife of national and international importance, and noted for their invertebrate, fish and bird populations; and
- Breakwaters and rock outcrops evident along the banks of the river.

5.1.2 Landscape Character

Upstream from Longney and Waterend, the width of the River Severn is fairly constant and forms an integral part of the landscape surrounding it. Downstream from this point, however, it begins to broaden, with sandflats and mudflats becoming a continuous feature at low water.

The strong tidal action results in a visually diverse landscape ranging from the exposed mudflats, sandbanks and ragged rock outcrops to the fast flowing estuarine waters of the Severn. These contribute to a temporal landscape which shifts and changes hourly; at high tide, the area is almost entirely covered by water. The waters are generally turbid with high levels of suspended sediment, creating a mass of grey, brown and yellow water depending on the status of the tide, the light conditions and the weather. As the water level drops, however, a shifting landscape of open water, sands and rocks is revealed. The edge of the landscape is characterised by a muddy interface between land and river.



It is an open and windy landscape with long, uninterrupted views across neighbouring landscapes. These views often extend some distance and end abruptly where surrounding hills, ridges and escarpments form a backdrop. Views to industrial areas are also possible, particularly where these are sited on or close to the water's edge as at Sharpness and Berkeley Power Station.

Moored boats and remnants of wharves and quays are indications of the river's history as an important transportation and communication route. Small pleasure craft may be seen sailing along the river today and add colour and movement to the landscape.

5.1.3 Physical Influences

The Severn River has a diverse geological setting and displays a wide range of geomorphological features, especially sediment deposits. The river flows over both Triassic and Lower Lias Group rocks which emerge in places as rock outcrops where harder interbedded bands of limestone occur. These are sometimes extensive, notably at Hills Flats and Hayward Rock close to the southern boundary of the county, and also at Hock Cliff where the succession of argillaceous limestone bands within the Lias Group clay cliffs continues as a series of rock steps within the river bed. These form dramatic static features in an otherwise soft and shifting landscape.

5.1

Landscape Character Type: LITTORAL SANDS AND ROCK OUTCROPS

The underlying geology also governs the width of the estuary, forming constrictions where these rocks come to the surface. These rock shelves, known locally as benches, were often used as fording points. One such example exists at Arlingham where an ancient crossing point linked it to Newnham on the west bank of the river. At the time of the Welsh Cattle Drovers, this provided an important crossing point and allowed animals from Abergavenny and beyond to pass on to lucrative markets in London.

A feature particular to the river is the Severn Bore. This is a natural phenomenon caused by a combination of the estuary's topography and tides. As the flood tide advances up the estuary, it encounters a rapid constriction in width and depth and is forced upwards to create a surge of water. A constriction of the river occurs in the vicinity of Sharpness, and to the east at Tites Point where the north south alignment of the Malvern - Bath Axis has resulted in harder Lower Palaeozoic rocks of the Silurian and Cambrian systems crossing the river course. Upstream, the steps in the river bedrock arising from the limestone bands in the Lias Group clays further exacerbate the effect of the bore. If the tide is large enough this causes a wave, known as the Bore, to be formed. There can be as many as 260 bores a year and they can exceed three metres in height in mid stream. The main wave forms upstream of Sharpness at Frampton Sand and can continue as far as the weirs above Gloucester at Maisemore. The bore represents a unique physiographical regime with the second highest tide in the world and the effects of extreme dynamics.

Over thousands of years the river has deposited vast quantities of alluvial clay. These deposits have formed extensive mud and sand flats. The sandbanks are known to change rapidly although the main channel and the larger sand banks are more stable. Upstream from the county boundary and the east bank of the river these comprise Saninger Sands, The Ridge Sand, Waveridge Sand, Frampton Sand, the Noose and Pimlico Sand. Although these have remained constant for hundreds of years, the peripheries are constantly changing, new sandbanks appearing without warning, often on a single ebb or flood of the tide. This has been the cause of many accidents on the river, particularly when it was a major trading route.

In places the river has eroded distinctive cliffs, with the most striking occurring at Hock Cliff near Fretherne and north east of Frampton on Severn. The cliffs are a renowned for their geological interest displaying exposure of the Blue Lias clay of the Lias Group interbedded with bands of argillaceous (clayey) limestone. These harder bands have formed distinctive rock steps that extend onto the river edge and bed and are successively exposed according the height of the river. The cliffs and foreshore are also rich in fossils yielding Gryphaea (a kind of Oyster). Indeed, the Fretherne foreshore is internationally famous as a location to find this fossil and is registered as a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS). Belemnites and Ammonites are present in the shales while the limestone bands yield Pentacrinus (a type of sea lily).



The river, intertidal zone and marsh are rich in wildlife and represent some of the most valued estuarine landscapes in the country. The river channel is almost entirely designated as the Severn Estuary and Upper Severn Estuary SSSI, and is also designated as a RAMSAR, SPA and SAC. It is noted for the internationally important estuarine habitats of mud, sand and rock and large populations of migratory fish such as Atlantic Salmon and Common Eel. The area is also of international importance for wading birds, with total wintering populations supporting many thousands of birds which feed on the populations of intertidal invertebrates of high biomass. Bird numbers can be considerably higher during severe winters owing to the river's mild climate, with wader populations moving here from the colder coastal regions around Britain. The Severn Estuary is host to internationally important populations of Curlew and Redshank and nationally important populations of Ringed Plover and Grey Plover. The estuary as a whole is the single most important wintering ground of Dunlin in the country. The northern section of the river is more brackish with freshwater influences.

5.1.4 Human Influences

The Severn has an estuary-wide sedimentary sequence. Rising sea levels in the early Holocene are represented by a thick layer of clay (the Wentlooge Formation) which may be dated to the Mesolithic. On the foreshore to the south of the county these clays, once exposed, have revealed footprints of people, animals and birds and it is possible that the Mesolithic peoples whose prints survive were hunting along the foreshore. Peat layers within the bands of clay are also important. They testify to marine regressions and largely date to the Bronze Age and Iron Age. To the south of, but in the vicinity of the county, the peat layers have revealed wooden buildings which may indicate seasonal and specialised wetland exploitation. Similar remains may await discovery beneath the mud elsewhere along the shoreline.

Because of its great length and the fact that it was navigable far inland, the Severn has always been one of the most important rivers in Britain, serving as an artery for trade and communications from the earliest times. It is possible that Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic communities would have used the river as a route for communications and trade.

Finds of metal and flint implements and pottery sherds indicate that the Severn continued to be an important route of trade and communication throughout the Bronze Age and Iron Age. It is interesting to note that of the twelve Bronze Age or Iron Age boats and boat fragments found in Britain two were discovered in the Severn Estuary.

During the Roman period, at which time iron ore mining had become an industrial concern, maritime activity became increasingly important. Several ports are known to have been established along the river with Gloucester (GLEVM) acting as the main transhipment centre for the distribution of local goods and imported products.



The river was also used by armies to transport troops and invading forces. For example, Norse raids are known to have occurred in the area three times between AD 850 -900 and in 1171 Henry II sailed from Newnham, on the west bank of the estuary, with as many as four hundred ships and 5,000 men to invade Ireland.

Throughout the medieval period the river continued to be an important trade route. Many of the ships built in the area are likely to have been of the Severn Trow variety which was the traditional cargo-carrying craft of the area. The 18th century saw a decline in maritime trade as it began to suffer competition from the country's rapidly improving canal and rail networks. Locally, the construction of the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal was a significant blow as it allowed sea-going vessels to bypass the most difficult stretch of the Severn and sail directly to and from Gloucester, so removing the need to tranship cargoes at the ports of Chepstow and Newnham.

During the 20th century the river's maritime trade all but vanished. However, a number of craft, many rusting and in need of repair, lie the river banks and often lie alongside modern fishing boats or small privately owned craft, grouped together at the remnants of an old quay at the entrance to one of the many Pills. The river is still used for leisure and numerous rowing and sailing clubs exist along its shores.

There can be little doubt that the Severn has a great deal of archaeological potential. Wharfs, ports and quays await discovery and there is potential for finding boat timbers, wrecks or cargoes preserved in the waterlogged conditions along the length of its shoreline.

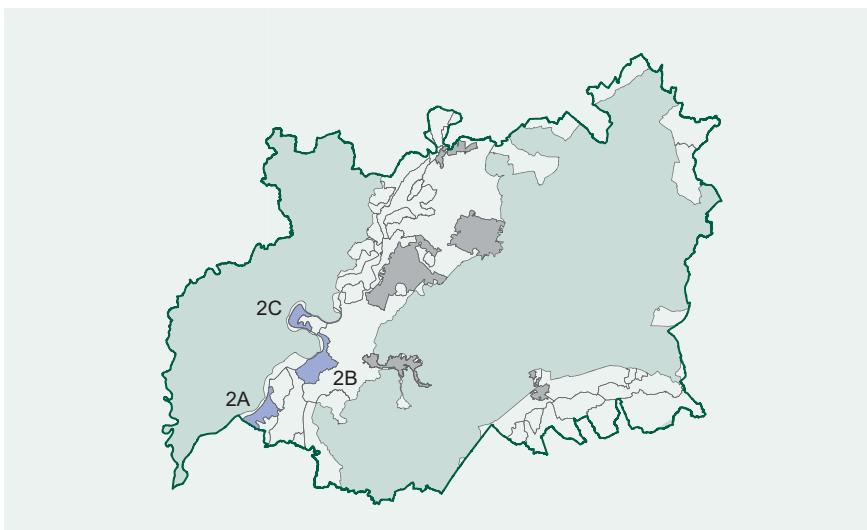
The river was also an important source of food. Mesolithic communities would have fished in the river and scoured the foreshore for edible plants and animals to supplement their diet; the Mesolithic footprints referred to earlier may well belong to a group moving along the edge of the river in search of food. In later centuries fishing became an important industry with ever more elaborate methods of catching fish. Strict controls were placed on fishing rights and fishing laws were introduced. For example, numerous Saxon charters mention fishing rights for land bordering the Severn and are always associated with weirs. In this period these were no more than a means of catching fish and applied to basket weirs made from wattled hazel which were placed in the river between rows of stakes. They were probably similar to what were later called 'putts', a group of which is called a 'puttcher'. The main types of fish caught in the Severn were eels, salmon (the 'Silver Darlings' of the Severn) and lamprey. This latter variety was nicknamed 'Gloucestershire Royal Fish' and was favoured by Norman kings despite Henry I being killed by a 'surfeit of lampreys' in 1135 AD.

5.1.5 Buildings and Settlement

There are no buildings or settlement associated with the shifting estuarine landscapes of the Severn. However, on some of the rocky outcrops small beacons serve to warn passing ships and smaller craft of the dangers they pose. This is particularly notable at Bull Rock and Black Rock offshore from the Berkeley Power Station with further beacons stationed on the river edge at the confluence of the Little Avon River and the Severn.

5.1.6 Landscape Character Areas

The section of Littoral Sands and Rock Outcrops from Hill Flats to Hock Cliff and Longney forms the western extent of the Severn Vale study area and adjoins the same landscape type that is present in the neighbouring Forest of Dean District. As it is the only landscape character area in the Littoral Sands and Rock Outcrops landscape character type in the study area, the text above applies to this single character area.



CHARACTER AREAS

- SV 2A Berkeley Pill Riverine Farmland
- SV 2B Slimbridge and New Grounds Marshes
- SV 2C Arlingham Warth and Longney Riverine Farmland

5.2.1 Key Characteristics

- Low lying open flat landscape occurring intermittently along the edge of the Severn with extensive, uninterrupted views over the estuary towards the Forest of Dean;
- Large scale geometric arable, pastoral and wet alluvial pastures largely divided by a rectilinear man-made network of drainage ditches and banks; hedgerows and scattered hedgerow trees also define field boundaries;
- Exposed and horizontal emphasis across the landscape with expansive skies;
- Limited woodland cover confined to isolated small copse; pollarded willows are a feature;
- Sea wall and flood embankments frequently demarcate the extent of the agricultural landscape and restrict views of the estuary;
- Winding streams, linear drainage ditches, and inundation grasslands provide a network of semi natural wetland habitats;
- Access is generally limited, confined to narrow lanes frequently terminating adjacent to the estuary and only occasional footpaths; large areas remain inaccessible;
- Very limited settlement, confined to isolated farm holdings and hamlets, and often located at the end of dead end tracks; and
- Occasional large scale industrial development is evident, together with pylons which form dominant features within the otherwise flat and open landscape.

5.2.2 Landscape Character

The Drained Riverine Farmland and Grazed Saltmarsh landscape comprises the low lying area that extends along the perimeter of the Severn Estuary. It forms an almost continuous edge to the Severn, interrupted only by the occasional areas of higher land,



notably at Sharpness and Tite Point where more resistant Silurian and Devonian rocks outcrop, and further north where the Vale Hillock of Overton and Barrow Hill occupies a prominent meander in the Severn and isolates an area of grazing marsh at Arlingham Warth to the west and the small and narrow northern extension at Longney. Beyond this, the river margins assume a character associated with floodplain farmland with no evidence of periodic tidal inundations and associated saltmarsh grazing. The width of the area varies but generally it extends from 1 to 2 km inland from the river edge and flood banks, although in other locations is much narrower.

The Drained Riverine Farmland and Grazed Salt Marsh landscape is an extremely flat and simple landscape, underlain by extensive deposits of silty estuarine alluvium and clay. This low lying area sits between the mean high water mark and the 10 m contour. It formerly comprised extensive tidal flats and inlets that extended inland and has since been reclaimed and managed as improved pastures for dairy cattle and some arable farming. It is possible that some of these areas have been subject to drainage and farming for many hundreds of years and may cover extensive archaeological remains dating as far back as the Mesolithic. Beyond the drained farmland is often a narrow strip of salt marsh which is typically backed by a sea wall.

5.2

Landscape Character Type: DRAINED RIVERINE FARMLAND AND GRAZED SALT MARSH

Fields are typically large scale and geometric in shape and defined by post and wire fences. A number of man-made ditches and winding natural streams, sometimes controlled by sluices, drain into the Severn through these areas of farmland. These are also used to define field boundaries and are often capped with a hawthorn hedge and lined with pollarded willows. However, these hedges are poorly maintained and often gappy with post and wire fencing being the preferred means by which to fill in the gaps. Woodland cover is minimal. Occasional, small geometric coverts and shelter belts are evident and gain visual prominence in an otherwise flat, open and windswept landscape.



The absence of significant relief features and intervening vegetation allows for extensive views across the grazing land to the Severn and beyond. Long distance views are possible across the wider Severn Vale to the Forest of Dean and the Cotswold escarpment.

Built development is largely absent, confined to isolated farmhouses fringing the drained farmland. Historically these areas would have been avoided due to seasonal flooding and waterlogged conditions. Occasional large scale industrial premises are also evident, notably the Berkeley Power Station and areas to the south of Sharpness. Access to these landscapes is limited and few roads extend to the river's edge. Occasional footpaths provide access across the landscape. The Severn Way long distance path also passes through the area, generally adjacent to the Severn but also further inland on the outer perimeter of the grazed marshes.

5.2.3 Physical Influences

The drained farmland landscape is underlain by soft Triassic mudstones. However, the solid geology is masked by drift deposits of alluvial silts and clay. These have been laid down gradually by the Severn over thousands of years in a succession of transgression and regression episodes. The soils derived from these deposits are rich and fertile, but drainage is required to allow these areas to be farmed.

Intensive drainage and farming means there is little semi natural habitat. The landscape is very important to wildlife, however, due to floodplain and inundation grasslands with winter flood regimes and ditch habitats. These are particularly important to a range of duck and wading bird species and saline and riverbank grasslands are home to several nationally rare species of vascular plants.

The floodbank marks the inner boundary of the saltmarsh. Land on the shoreward side is largely reclaimed grassland dominated by perennial rye-grass and is used for summer stock grazing. The small number of cultivated fields are used extensively by visiting wildfowl for feeding or resting. Thousands of birds such as lesser white-fronted geese and pink footed geese congregate each year in the area and make its of international ornithological importance.

Other habitats include reed beds and some species rich unimproved ridge and furrow fields dating from Saxon and Medieval times. The former supports populations of reed warbler and sedge warbler, while the latter provides ideal conditions for ground nesting birds such as redshank and snipe.

5.2.4 Human Influences

The landscape is almost entirely a result of drainage and land management from the medieval period, although it is likely that incursions by all societies from the Mesolithic onwards hunted or gathered food from these rich estuarine habitats.

By the Roman period marine influence had declined and the flats were sufficiently dry for very large scale and probably military inspired drainage operations. Cycles of erosion and deposition within the Severn Estuary continued throughout the medieval period.

Navigable inlets or 'Pills' occur along the edge of the drained farmland where streams enter the Severn. These are evident at Berkeley Pill, into which the Little Avon flows; at Frampton Pill to the west of Frampton on Severn, and Hope Pill Rhyme south of Arlingham.

The Gloucester and Sharpness Canal is a significant feature within the Grazed Marshes, most notably along the perimeter of the Slimbridge and New Grounds Marshes, where it forms a linear waterway threading through the drained marshes. It was constructed to provide a ship canal between Gloucester and Sharpness in order to bypass the narrow winding stretch of the Severn below Gloucester. Construction of the canal was completed in 1827. In the early days, there were no facilities for cargo handling at Sharpness and all ships passed up the canal to discharge in the basin at Gloucester. When the growing size of ships in service became a problem, a new dock was built at Sharpness in the 1870s to accommodate them. Today the canal is used by pleasure craft and as a channel for River Severn water supplying a large part of Bristol.

Roads through the area are generally sparse, linear and often confined to very narrow or single track roads and frequently terminating in dead ends at farmsteads or the Severn. Within the Berkeley Pill Riverine Farmland, Severn Lane is a typical example, and Passage Road leading from Arlingham to the edge of the Severn.

5.2.5 Buildings and Settlement

There are very few buildings on the drained farmland as the often waterlogged conditions are unsuitable for settlement. However, fringing the landscape is a small number of farms. These tend to consist of a brick farm house surrounded by out buildings and cattle sheds at the end of a long narrow lane. Immediately beyond the area, however, the church spires and towers within adjacent villages present important local landmarks, notably at Slimbridge and Frampton on Severn.

The contemporary building complex associated with the Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Centre is a locally distinctive feature within the otherwise flat and open landscape. This internationally important centre for wildlife attracts many thousands of visitors each year and provides wide public access into this area renowned for its wildfowl populations.

Further south, Berkeley Power Station is a dramatic feature adjacent to the Severn. Although large in scale the expansive nature of the farmland and salt marshes has the capacity to absorb the buildings and associated infrastructure and in the changing light conditions it can assume a sculptural quality. Power lines emanating from the power station traverse the Drained Riverine Farmland and Grazed Salt Marshes and impose an industrial infrastructure across the otherwise peaceful and deeply rural landscape.

Buildings and structures associated with the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal are also noteworthy, introducing a diversity of architectural elements associated with the white painted swing bridges, road bridges, and the canal offices. Both moored and moving canal craft also introduce colour and interest. In some locations, public houses are located on the perimeter of the Severn either associated with the Canal such as at Purton, or signifying an earlier link with former ferry points across the Severn as at Arlingham and the link to Newnham.

5.2.6 Landscape Character Areas

SV 2A Berkeley Pill Riverine Farmland

The Berkeley Pill Riverine Farmland is located on the southern edge of the Severn Vale and extends from the county boundary in the south to Sharpness in the north. This low lying area is contained to the east by the rising landform of the Low Triassic Ridge and Low Sandstone Hills character types, while to the south a limited area of the Gently Undulating Farmed Lowland extends up to the area south of Berkeley. To the west, the area is bordered by the distinctive open landscape of the Littoral Sands and Rock Outcrops, adjacent to the River Severn.



Triassic mudstones underlie the majority of the area, with a band of Silurian marl to the north and east of Berkeley Power Station, with interbedded siltstone and mudstone in the vicinity of the works at Sharpness. Masking much of the solid geology are extensive drift deposits of silty clay with isolated pockets of gravel and clay and silt around the power station. The Riverine Farmland is a low lying, flat and expansive landscape, generally below 10m AOD, and is heavily influenced by the nearby River Severn. Numerous small ponds are also scattered across the area. The flat open landscape allows broad panoramic views across the area towards the Forest of Dean, with the rising landform of Low Triassic Ridge and Low Sandstone Hills forming a backdrop to the character area.

Land cover is a combination of both grazed pastures and arable land in large scale fields creating a simple pattern across the character area. Agricultural improvements and drainage of the landscape has allowed a productive farmed landscape to prevail, where scrubby waterlogged pastures would have once been commonplace. The fields are enclosed by a network of low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows, with isolated hedgerow trees providing punctuation marks and prominent vertical features. Drainage ditches are a frequent feature along the edges of many of the fields. Linear raised embankments defining flood defences or levees are also evident adjacent to watercourses, notably along the perimeter of the River Severn but also along Berkeley Pill. Post and wire fences are evident along the summit of a number of these defences.

Berkeley Pill is the most prominent watercourse flowing through the landscape character area. The confluence of this navigable inlet with the Severn is to the north of Berkeley Power Station. Originally planned to be the terminus of the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal, Berkeley Pill is now only evident by the raised flood defences along its course. The entrance to Berkeley Pill and area to the south of the power station are notable areas of nature conservation interest of international importance, and designated as a Ramsar Site, SPA and SSSI.

5.2

Landscape Character Type: DRAINED RIVERINE FARMLAND AND GRAZED SALT MARSH



Buildings and settlement are extremely sparse across the area, confined to isolated farms, accessed by the limited network of minor country roads entering the area, frequently terminating in dead ends adjacent to the River Severn. In recent times, areas of the Riverine Farmland have been the focus of industrial development with the nuclear power station west of Berkeley, and a sewage works and industrial units also developed south of Sharpness. These developments have brought buildings, tarmac roads and more formal planting to an otherwise rural landscape. The power station is a particularly significant feature, gaining visual prominence in the flat landscape, and the associated lines of high voltage pylons that extend from it are also prominent in the area. Berkeley Castle and settlement occupies the low ridge that forms the adjacent Berkeley and Newtown Hills character area, and is also a notable focal point from this lower lying landscape.

Formal recreational provision is limited to the Severn Way located along the edge of the area, and isolated public rights of way.

SV 2B Slimbridge and New Grounds Marshes

Slimbridge and New Grounds Marshes character area forms a distinctive area of low lying land adjacent to the River Severn, extending between Purton and Slimbridge in the south, and up to the western perimeter of Frampton-on-Severn in the north. This low lying area adjoins the Littoral Sands and Rock Outcrops to the west that border the Severn, and together these define the expansive, open and often windswept character of the Severn estuary, with wide views across to the Forest of Dean. In contrast, the more settled and farmed landscapes of the Vale of Berkeley surround and form a backdrop to the character area to the south and east, together with a limited area of Gently Undulating Farmed Lowland to the south west. Beyond this there are distant views to the Cotswolds Escarpment. This sense of local containment of the flat low lying area continues with the Overton and Barrow Hill Vale Hillock which adjoins the area, and forms a locally distinctive feature and backdrop to the riverine farmland. Much of the character area lies below 10m AOD although an isolated area rises to 13m AOD at Nebrow Hill.



Interbedded mudstones and limestone of the Lias Group Blue Lias and Charmouth Mudstone Formations underlie the entire Slimbridge and New Grounds Marshes character area. Masking much of the solid geology, however, are extensive areas of clay deposits which form part of the tidal flats of the Severn Estuary. Limited areas of sand and gravel are also evident on the southern and eastern edge of the area, the largest deposit occurring adjacent to the village of Slimbridge.

Large scale arable fields and grazed pastures are the predominant land use, divided by a network of low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hawthorn hedgerows. A network of ditches follows many of the field boundaries. These are significant feature across the area, illustrating initial enclosure of the riverine farmland, and measures undertaken to improve drainage and allow fields to be farmed. North west of the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal, ditches are predominantly linear creating a regular and geometric patchwork pattern across the landscape, whilst to the south east they are often more irregular and organic. While field patterns vary, smaller scale fields are evident around the edge of Slimbridge. Isolated mature hedgerow trees, principally comprising oak, ash and willow species form prominent vertical elements in the flat landscape. Together with narrow linear blocks of trees and a number of overgrown hedgerows, they provide the only tree cover within the landscape. Despite limited tree cover within the floodplain, woodland blocks within the surrounding character areas contribute to the sense of tree cover within the wider area. Beyond the agricultural landscape, a number of water bodies contribute to land cover within the Slimbridge and New Grounds Marshes, the largest collection of lakes being at Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Centre, headquarters of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT). Developed as a result of mineral extraction, the centre was founded in 1946 and provides an important wintering area for migrating waterbirds, overlooking nationally and internationally protected wetlands located along the north western edge of the area, including a SSSI, a SPA and Ramsar site. The area surrounding the Slimbridge WWT Centre is described as 'New Grounds', suggesting that the area has been subject to reclamation and drainage to create land suitable for farming. Elsewhere, notable hydrological features include the Gloucester and

DRAINED RIVERINE FARMLAND AND GRAZED SALT MARSH

5.2

Sharpness Canal which passes through the centre of the area, including the Cambridge Arm of the canal fed by the River Cam, the Lighten Brook and Gilgal Brook, Kingston Pill and Frampton Pill. Prior to the opening of the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal in 1827, the Frampton Pill was utilised for mooring boats with development focused at the mouth of the River Cam where it joined the Severn.

Settlement is sparse across the character area, with isolated dwellings and farmsteads located along the limited road network, principally confined to land in the south and south east and along the perimeter of the area. Pedestrian access is also limited, confined to the Severn Way adjacent to the canal and occasional footpaths on the edge of Slimbridge, protecting the nature conservation interests within the area. The Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Centre is a particularly notable information and recreational resource, drawing many thousands of visitors every year to explore and observe this remarkable sanctuary for wildfowl and an enduring reminder of Sir Peter Scott's commitment to set up the Centre. On busy weekends it can result in intermittent traffic congestion on the small local roads that access the Centre. Other recreational facilities include public houses at bridging points and camping, caravanning and youth hostel facilities, also located at a bridging point across the canal.

As there are few strong vertical elements within this flat landscape, lines of high voltage pylons gain visual prominence. Churches also form prominent landmarks, notably the church at Slimbridge. The Slimbridge WWT Centre is also a distinctive local feature. The innovative architectural form and detailing of the buildings and use of subdued natural materials and colours, respects the nature conservation interests associated with the site.



SV 2C Arlington Warth and Longney Riverine Farmland

Situated on the western edge of the Severn Vale, the Arlington Warth and Longney Riverine Farmland is the smallest area of Drained Riverine Farmland and Grazed Salt Marsh within the study area. It is located on the western edge of the Overton and Barrow Hill Vale Hillock, while to the north, south and east, the character area is surrounded by the Littoral Sands and Rock Outcrops on the edge of the River Severn. Whilst panoramic views are possible over the immediate landscape, the rising landform of the adjacent hillock and Forest of Dean provide a backdrop and frame many views. Generally rising to only 8m AOD, with isolated areas at 10m AOD south of Overton and Barrow Hill, this is a flat, simple landscape, although the character of surrounding areas often contribute more complex elements.

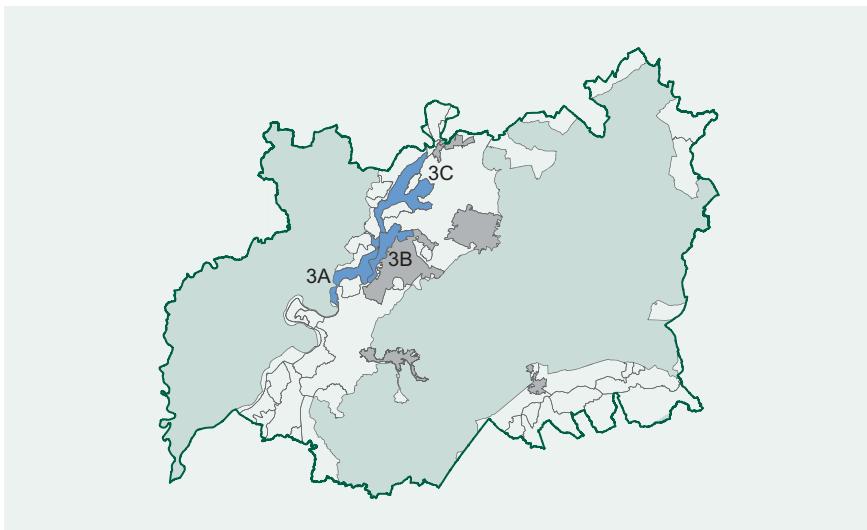


Mudstones with horizons of interbedded limestone of the Lias Group Blue Lias and Charmouth Mudstone Formations underlie the extensive clay tidal flats of the area. Improved agricultural technologies have allowed improvement of these once waterlogged areas, and a pattern of large scale arable and pastoral fields now prevails. Smaller scale enclosures are often evident around farmsteads, however, with a mosaic of irregular, linear and in places unenclosed fields adjacent to the Severn. A network of low and medium height hedgerows enclose the fields, and where gappy, are reinforced with post and wire fences. Intermittent hedgerow trees are scattered along field boundaries, typically oak, ash and willow. Where boundaries have become overgrown, they often appear as lines of trees within the landscape. Elsewhere, drainage ditches and rhynes also align field boundaries, including Westmarsh Ditch, Cottage Ditch, Hope Pill Rhyne and Longmarsh Rhyne. Many of the rhynes and ditches are a product of the enclosure of the farmland, creating a network of fields that could be drained and therefore farmed. The rhynes and ditches continue to drain the fields today, providing wet fences for grazing stock. Along much of the perimeter of the character area, flood defence embankments adjacent to the River Severn are characteristic of the area, restricting only the fields adjacent to the Severn to potential flooding.

As is characteristic of the Drained Riverine Farmland and Grazed Salt Marsh, settlement is very limited and confined to isolated farms and dwellings.

An interesting feature of Arlingham Warth is Passage Road, the single track lane that crosses the area, terminating at the River Severn, and the Old Passage Inn public house. This marks the site of an ancient ford or passage linking to Newnham-on-Severn on the opposite bank of the river. It is reputed that St Augustine, the 1st Archbishop of Canterbury crossed at Arlingham in 604AD to meet Welsh Christians at the Synod of Oak, a few hundred metres upstream. This crossing point was also an important and more direct route for Welsh farmers droving their cattle down from the Welsh hills to the English markets.

Overall, recreational resources are limited, although the Severn Way long distance footpath follows the line of a flood defence embankment that surrounds the perimeter of the area. Beyond this main path, there are a limited number of public rights of way.



CHARACTER AREAS

- SV 3A Elmore Back and Minsterworth Ham
- SV 3B The Rea, Maisemore Ham and Longford
- SV 3C The Severn Hams (Gloucester to Tewkesbury South)

5.3.1 Key Characteristics

- Flat floodplain landscape, with areas subject to annual winter flooding which provides fertile farmland and productive lush meadows and pastures for summer grazing;
- An open and expansive area as a result of the flat landform and very limited tree cover;
- Extensive pattern of ditches, streams, brooks, rivers and rhynes draining the floodplain landscape, a number of which provide important wetland habitats;
- A predominantly pastoral landscape with unimproved and improved grassland, with some areas of arable farming;
- Both active and disused canals present within the landscape;
- Urban and industrial land uses and influences in the vicinity of Gloucester together with road and rail infrastructure;
- With the exception of the section to the west and north of Gloucester, settlement is very limited, frequently associated with former as well as existing crossing points over the river and on higher land at the edges of the floodplain landscape;
- Access very limited with occasional roads, often linking to existing bridging points and former ford or ferry river crossings;
- Recreational activities, including camping and caravan sites and public houses, the latter often associated with former river crossing points or supply points; and
- Areas of wetland meadows, designated as SSSIs and Key Wildlife Sites, and Local Nature Reserves, and managed to retain high biodiversity interest.



5.3.2 Landscape Character

North of Upper Framilode and extending to the south of Tewkesbury an interlinked network of floodplain farmland borders the River Severn. When heavy rain falls higher up in the Severn catchment, in North Wales, the river bed does not have the capacity to carry all the run-off. In most winters, therefore, the riverside farmland is flooded. In addition, high Severn levels mean that smaller local rivers and streams, like the Chelt and Leadon, cannot discharge into the main river. This annual winter flooding results in the deposition of rich alluvial deposits which support fertile grazing land. Although in a wider context the Floodplain Farmland may be perceived as part of the broader Unwooded Vale and Settled Unwooded Vale, these areas are differentiated through their distinctive landscape patterns, management and land use pressures. In addition, the Vales form a natural 'amphitheatre' of higher ground containing the floodplain.

To the west and north of Gloucester the Floodplain Farmland extends into the adjacent urban areas and supports a range of industrial and infrastructure elements interspersed with the farmland. A network of major roads also crosses this area, which together with the associated road embankments, influences the local character of the area.

5.3

Landscape Character Type: FLOODPLAIN FARMLAND

A predominance of large flat grazed pastures with scattered arable fields characterises much of the floodplain landscape. The large rectilinear fields are frequently enclosed by thick, well maintained hawthorn hedgerows that follow the course of deep drainage ditches. Mature hedgerow trees, of which oak species are common, also gain visual prominence within the landscape.

The meadows are of considerable biodiversity interest in particular for wintering wildfowl and for the areas of unimproved grasslands which supports a diversity of flora. A number of the meadows upstream from Gloucester have been designated as SSSIs, notably Ashleworth Ham and Coombe Hill Meadows within which the now disused Coomb Canal is located. These areas are also designated as Local Nature reserves.

5.3.3 Physical Influence

The landform of the Floodplain Farmland is almost flat with levels varying between 8 and 9m AOD. The Floodplain Farmland and associated hams are underlain by both Lias Group clays and mudstones, principally comprising the Mercia Mudstone Group, and by older Triassic rocks. It is the drift geology, however, that is particularly important in influencing the characteristics of the landscape type. Here, the solid geology underlying the valley bottom and floodplain area has been masked by extensive deposits of alluvial clays and silt which in turn have influenced the soil characteristics and agricultural quality.

The landscape is a productive area of grassland pasture with grazing cattle and sheep, fields often of varying condition, with lush improved pastures evident in many areas. In other areas, however, rush and scrub invasion is apparent where soils are more waterlogged and prone to flooding, and management is not intensive. Although limited, a number of pastures are managed as traditional meadows and are of considerable nature conservation interest. Although this is a predominantly pastoral landscape, drainage and advances in agricultural improvement have resulted in the introduction, in some places, of scattered arable fields which provide a visual contrast and varying management regime to the lush meadows. Throughout the Floodplain Farmland, drainage ditches divide up the landscape into relatively regular and often large scale fields, frequently bordered by hedgerows of varying quality. Where overgrown, these boundaries provide a sense of local enclosure, limiting views across the floodplain. In contrast, only lines of pollarded willows and post and rail fences mark a number of boundaries.

Meandering through the broad floodplain landscape, the River Severn is often not visible in views due to the flat topography, areas of screening vegetation and adjacent flood defences, its course identifiable only by riverside trees and vegetation and isolated filtered views towards surface water. Together with drainage ditches, numerous brooks and dykes also drain the landscape. In some of these areas, the combination of drainage features, together with the management regime of the agricultural

landscape has lead to a number supporting important assemblages of habitats of national importance.

Woodlands are not a notable landscape feature of the Floodplain Farmland, although some old orchards can be found scattered through the landscape. These, together with overgrown boundary lines, mature hedgerow trees and lines of pollarded willows can give the impression, in places, of a well treed landscape.

5.3.4 Human Influences

The landscape is almost entirely a result of drainage and land management from the medieval period, although it is probable that Mesolithic hunter gatherers were working the gravel terraces from around 9000BC. At this time, poor water-logged soils and thick woodland cover would have prohibited farming on a large scale and permanent settlement at this time would have been unlikely. The fabric of the landscape as seen today continues to reflect the drainage and land management regimes dating from the medieval period and areas of irregular enclosure that persist in the landscape often reflect former unenclosed cultivation patterns.

The traditional lack of settlement in the Floodplain Farmland continues to this day and this paucity of settlement is paralleled by a generally sparse road network. Where they exist, minor roads tend to either edge around the outer margins of the floodplain or they extend north west / south east towards the River Severn. Some of these minor roads span the River Severn, for example at Haw Bridge, whereas other roads terminate at the river with another truncated road or track on the opposite bank of the river e.g. Ashleworth Quay. These truncated tracks and roads are locally important historic features as they signify former ferry crossing points, often in association with an old inn, and also for locations for coal wharves.

5.3.5 Buildings and Settlement

There are very few settlements on the Floodplain Farmland landscape type. Small villages and hamlets have developed at bridging points across the Severn, as at Maisemore to the west of the Severn, and at The Haw at Haw Bridge. There is also evidence of settlement associated with the former ford or boat crossing points over the Severn, and as discussed in 5.3.3, an old inn is often present. Ashleworth Quay and Chaceley Stock are examples of this. There are also occasional hamlets, isolated farms and dwellings within the floodplain area. These generally overlook the drained farmland from slightly higher ground, to avoid winter flooding, although some are within the floodplain.

To the north and west of Gloucester, urban and industrial development has extended into the floodplain meadows. This development comprises a range of industrial and infrastructure elements interspersed with the farmland. A network of major roads also crosses this area, which together with the associated road embankments, influences the local character of the area.

5.3.6 Landscape Character Areas

SV 3A Elmore Back and Minsterworth Ham

The Elmore Back and Minsterworth Ham character area is located on the western edge of the Severn Vale study area and stretches between Longney in the south and Maisemore in the north. The area occupies alternate sides of the river along its length. Between Longney and Clay Hill and northwards to Elmore Back and Windmill Hill, the character area lies along the east bank of the Severn. Between Windmill Hill and Maisemore, the floodplain extends along the west of the River Severn.



Occupying a wide floodplain landscape, the area extends up to 2.2km from the riverside in places and generally lies below 10m AOD, with limited areas rising to around 20m AOD. The low lying level of the landscape results in frequent winter flooding. The rising landform of the Vale Hillocks provide an immediate backdrop to the character area and punctuate the landscape, while beyond, views to the Cotswolds Escarpment and hills of the Forest of Dean, define the wider landscape. Although located close to the city of Gloucester, evidence of the proximity of the large urban area is limited, within only occasional views of local landmarks, including the distinctive tower of the cathedral. High voltage pylons are also a visually prominent feature within the open landscape.

Interbedded mudstones and limestones of the Lias Group Blue Lias and Charmouth Mudstone Formations underlie the majority of the character area. Areas of mudstone from the Mercia Mudstone Group are also evident around Windmill Hill and to the northern edge of Langley, with a discrete area of mudstone from the Saltford Shale Member on the eastern edge of Lassington and Rodway Hills. Extensive deposits mask the underlying solid geology, predominantly comprising boulder clay, with sand and gravel apparent on the western edge of the area north east of Calcott's Green where land subtly rises to adjoin the surrounding Unwooded Vale, and to the south of Maisemore where there are also limited pockets of boulder clay.

The land cover comprises both arable and pastoral land, with a slight predominance of the latter. As a consequence of the varying management regimes, the floodplain is characterised by a mosaic of uses and textures. Fields are often large in size with smaller

scale pastures located to the west of, and around Elmore Back. Hedgerows of varying quality and condition define the field boundaries, and where overgrown, a local sense of containment prevails. Elsewhere, the low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerow boundaries allow more distant views across the floodplain. Pollarded willows are a characteristic feature, aligning roadsides and ditches and defining fields. Mature trees are also scattered across the area, on occasions appearing as tree lines, and creating a localised sense of a well treed landscape. Whilst woodland cover is extremely limited, woodland on the surrounding hillocks is often evident in views, with orchards also a common feature, in particular around Elmore Back and west of Farley's End and Wick Green. Whilst evidence of nature conservation interest is limited within the area, Groundless Pool, north of Windmill Hill is a Key Wildlife Site. Although not covered by any formal designations, Minsterworth Ham and Corn Ham are reputed to have areas of ecological interest, including breeding grounds for some bird species, with the general lack of access to the area ensuring there is little or no disturbance. These areas also include agriculturally improved grassland, and some arable fields producing mainly cereals and maize.



As is typical of the landscape type, settlement is limited, and confined to isolated farmsteads and scattered dwellings. A number of properties are located along Lake Street, aligned along the southern side of the river, though views towards the Severn are limited by orchard trees and flood defence mounds. The road network is also limited, with the A40(T) providing the only principal road crossing of the area and the River Severn. Elsewhere minor roads provide limited access, terminating in dead ends, for example at Elmore Back and Highcross Farm. The mainline railway is located adjacent to the A40(T).

The Gloucestershire Way and Severn Way are important long distance paths within the area and provide public access to this quiet and often remote area. Elsewhere, recreation provision across the floodplain is restricted, and confined to the network of occasional public rights of way.

5.3

Landscape Character Type: FLOODPLAIN FARMLAND

SV 3B The Rea, Maisemore Ham and Longford

The character area is located to the west and north of Gloucester and extends from the floodplain to the west of Quedgeley and along the eastern side of the Severn to Maisemore Ham in the north. The floodplain also extends eastwards around the northern perimeter of Gloucester as far as Innsworth. Between the northern edge of the character area and Sud Meadow, the River Severn divides into a West and East Channel, with the character area occupying land to the east of the West Channel and encompassing all of the floodplain landscape surrounding the East Channel.



North of Gloucester, Broadboard Brook drains into the East Channel and is in turn fed by Cox's, Hatherley and Horsbere Brooks to the east. The broad, flat floodplain landscape generally lies below the 15m AOD contour, with the exception of a localised high point between Middle Rea and Lower Rea where a height of 20m AOD is reached. In contrast with the other Floodplain Farmland character areas, urban influences are significant with the built edge of Gloucester forming the eastern and northern boundary of the area. Despite these urban influences and development intercepting local views, distant views are still obtained towards the Cotswolds Escarpment to the east, to the wooded hills of Forest of Dean to the west, and also to lowland vale landscape to the north.



The floodplain landscape is underlain by mudstones and interbedded limestones of the Lias Group Blue Lias and Charmouth Mudstone Formations, and the Rugby Limestone Member. Much of the solid geology is masked by extensive drift deposits, however; these generally comprise tidal and alluvial clays, with sands and gravels evident on the edges of the floodplain, most notably to the east of the Severn along the perimeter of the area where it extends along the Horsbere Brook and Cox's Brook.

There is an overall predominance of pasture land within the floodplain farmland, contained in generally regular fields of varying size. The pasture is managed to varying degrees, and interspersed between the mosaic of improved, semi-improved and scrubby pastures are arable fields. Hedgerows of varying condition, together with ditches, streams and post and wire fences, form boundary lines enclosing fields and where hedgerows have become overgrown and hedgerow trees are evident, they can appear as tree lines across the landscape. Numerous meadows and hams surround the River Severn with Maisemore Ham and Port Ham occupying the 'island' between the East and West Channels and the appropriately named Upper Parting and Lower Parting. Further south, Sud Meadow is located on the eastern bank of the river, south of Lower Parting. Originally these floodplain meadows would have formed part of The Severn Hams, with a cycle of flooding in winter and cropped for hay in the summer. A number of fields have now been drained and converted for arable use, or support a range of infrastructure and urban related land uses that link with the suburban edge of Gloucester. These include an electricity transforming station at Castle Meads, an extensive landfill site on the western side of Sud Meadow, and the Gloucester Cattle Market Site.



Despite the urban influences, the area also supports areas of considerable biodiversity interest. Port Ham and Sud Meadow now form part of the Alney Island Local Nature Reserve, with areas designated as Key Wildlife Sites. A number of waterbodies around Walham, which comprise flooded disused brickpits, are also designated as Key Wildlife Sites. The ponds support a rich variety of wetland plants and animals with reedswamp and osier beds. There is also a notable area of unimproved neutral grassland at Innsworth Meadow, around Drymeadow Farm and is the only SSSI within the character area.

Typical of the landscape type, woodland cover is extremely limited with isolated blocks, deciduous in composition around the landfill sites and south of the A417. Elsewhere, tree cover is evident along boundary lines.

Although settlement within the Floodplain Farmland is limited, the close proximity of Gloucester exerts a strong influence on the area. A pattern of isolated farms and dwellings is apparent across the landscape, but unlike other areas of the Floodplain Farmland,

urban features and land uses have a strong influence on character ranging from sewage works, sub stations and industrial units on the edge of the area, as well as a network of principal roads and the main line railway. Between Alney Island and Longford, the A40(T) crosses the area on embankments affording expansive views across the floodplain. Transport infrastructure is particularly dominant in the vicinity of Alney Island, where the embankments and intersection of the A40(T) with the A417, the bridge over the Severn at Over Bridge, and the railway viaduct together form a particularly prominent and busy area that dominates the floodplain landscape. Lines of high voltage pylons are also visually prominent in the flat landscape.

Recreation pursuits across the character area are restricted to a limited network of public rights of way, including the Severn Way located on the eastern banks of the River Severn, and the Gloucestershire Way which is close to the northern perimeter of the area where it follows the Hatherley Brook.



SV 3C The Severn Hams (Gloucester to Tewkesbury South)

The Severn Hams lies to the north east of Maisemore and extends to the south west of Tewkesbury. The Floodplain Farmland generally occupies both sides of the River Severn, extending to a width of around 2km in places, with the exception of the section of the Severn adjacent to Ashleworth Ham. Here, the river flows along the base of the adjoining Sandhurst and Norton Vale Hillock, so the floodplain only extends from the west bank of the river. Extending to the east and forming part of the Floodplain Farmland is the now disused Coome Hill Canal, and the River Chelt and Leigh Brook. The confluence of these two watercourses is located to the north east of Wainlode Hill, shortly after which the combined rivers flow into the River Severn in the vicinity of Fletcher's Leap. The series of Vale Hillocks located to the east and west of the floodplain, together with the gentle undulations of the wider surrounding vale, provide a backdrop and sense of enclosure within the lower lying Floodplain Farmland. Distant views are also possible towards the Cotswolds Escarpment and the Forest of Dean.

Underlying the majority of the area are mudstones of the Twyning and Eldersfield Mudstone Formation and Salford Shale Member. A limited area of interbedded limestone and mudstone is present to

the west of Sandhurst and Norton Hills. As is typical of Floodplain Farmland, much of the solid geology is masked by extensive areas of drift geology, with alluvial clay located across much of the floodplain. Limited areas of sand and gravel also occur to the east of Ashleworth, around The Haw, extending to the east of Chaceley, and within an isolated area west of The Leigh.

Pastoral fields are the predominant land use and subject to a number of management regimes, ranging from traditionally managed meadows and subject to winter flooding, to others that are agriculturally improved or subject to rush and scrub encroachment. Isolated arable fields are also evident, interspersed with the pastures in this agricultural landscape. A network of hedgerows of varying condition borders the fields. Mature pollarded willows are a particular characteristic of the Floodplain Farmland. Other mature hedgerow trees, notably oak, are also evident punctuating the landscape, in places combining with overgrown hedgerows to create lush, well treed boundary lines.



Elsewhere, field boundaries are defined by post and wire fences and also by numerous ditches and streams, such as Horn's Ditch and Newhall Brook. Together, these low-lying meadows, pastureland, ditches and willows between Gloucester and Tewkesbury have resulted in the landscape having a rich wildlife quality with numerous areas of importance. Indeed, the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, together with local residents, farmers and landowners has formed The Severn Hams Forum to promote the effective conservation and management of the area, and to raise the profile of their regional importance within the Severn Vale. Three nature reserves are located within The Severn Hams area, comprising Ashleworth Ham, Chaceley Meadows, and Coombe Hill Meadows, all of which are designated as SSSIs. These local reserves are important for both their landscape and wildlife value, and also provide areas of local recreation value, with effective management ensuring there is no harm to habitats or wildlife. Elsewhere recreational pursuits include a limited network of public rights of way, with the Severn Way located on the eastern banks of the river and a caravan and camping site at The Haw. Avon Sailing Club is located at Chaceley Stock, and at Ashleworth, close to the banks of the River Severn, there is a 15th century stone Tithe Barn owned by the National Trust.

5.3

Landscape Character Type: FLOODPLAIN FARMLAND

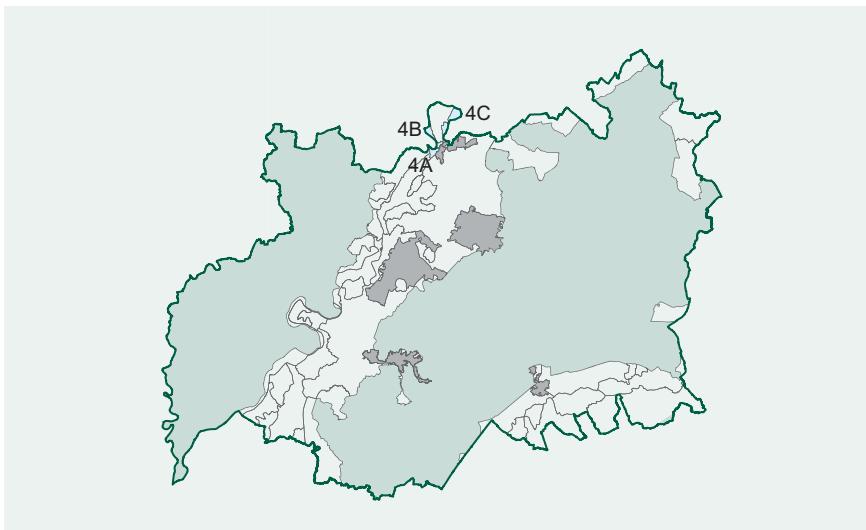


Although woodland blocks are not a typical characteristic of the Floodplain Farmland, isolated examples occur within The Severn Hams, located to the west of Sandhurst and Norton Hills. Limited in size and located on the eastern banks of the River Severn, the woodlands have a deciduous composition with a number located in former brickpits, and classified as Key Wildlife Sites (KWS) and Local Nature Reserves (LNR). For example, to the south east of Ashleworth, the Ashleworth Quay Brickpits KWS are of interest for their aquatic flora and invertebrate populations, while the Sandhurst Brickpits KWS and LNR support a variety of habitat types.



Communication routes are extremely limited across the character area, although in places minor roads border the floodplain landscape to the east and west. Isolated minor roads entering into the character area frequently terminate at the River Severn with a public house located adjacent to the watercourse. These signify a former ferry crossing point across the Severn and also former coal wharves or supply points where essential stocks were set down at key locations. Ashleworth Quay and the link to Rodway Lane on the east bank of the Severn is an example of this, and further upstream at Chaceley Stock where the lane terminates at the Severn opposite the village of Deerhurst on the east bank. The B4213 provides the only road crossing over the floodplain landscape. Low red brick walls are a characteristic local feature that demarcate where roads cross the ditches that drain the floodplain. Occasional lines of high voltage pylons also cross the flat floodplain landscape.

Settlement is extremely limited across the floodplain, with only isolated farms and dwellings located along minor roads. A significant cluster of buildings is located to the south east of Ashleworth, comprising Ashleworth Tithe Barn, Church and Ashleworth Court. This group of medieval buildings are all constructed in the local Blue Lias Limestone. Odda's Chapel, an Anglo Saxon chapel founded in 1056 is also a notable heritage feature located on the east bank of the Severn close to the village of Deerhurst and at the northern perimeter of Apperley Hill Vale Hillock. The nearby Church at Deerhurst is one of the last surviving Anglo Saxon monastic churches in the country.



CHARACTER AREAS

SV 4A Severn Ham, Tewkesbury

SV 4B Mythe Meadows

SV 4C Twyning and Upham Meadows

5.4.1 Key Characteristics

- Flat low lying riverine meadows, overlying river alluvium and subject to periodic flooding;
- Open character with a general absence of hedgerows or fences;
- Lush cow and sheep pastures;
- Limited tree cover but intermittent Oaks are notable local features;
- Evidence of earlier sand and gravel extraction with restored workings including creation of lakes;
- Occasional structures such as water treatment works have a significant local impact;
- Historic links at bridging points particularly at the confluence of the Severn and the Avon, and former ferry connections across the Avon signifying the importance of river edge sites; and
- Meadows and hams provide important local recreational spaces and are also important for their biodiversity interest associated with the meadowland and areas of neutral grassland.

5.4.2 Landscape Character

To the north and west of Tewkesbury, areas of riverside meadows border the Severn and Avon. The meadows are drained by a network of streams, brooks and ditches that connect into the the main rivers, and in most winters are subject to flooding. The annual winter flooding results in the deposition of rich alluvial deposits which support fertile grazing land. Although perhaps perceived to be part of the Floodplain Farmland, the Riverside Meadows are smaller in scale and less extensive, with the floodplain frequently occupying only a limited width.



The pastures and meadows that align the meandering course of the Severn and Avon rivers are bordered by a patchwork of semi-improved and improved pastures and isolated arable fields where land has been sufficiently improved to support cereal production. Woodlands are not characteristic of the meadows, with tree cover restricted to pollarded willows and occasional hedgerow trees. Boundaries are defined by a combination of post and wire fences and low, gappy hedgerows, with the former particularly evident around meadows adjacent to the main watercourses. The lack of tall hedgerows and woodland blocks generally results in a relatively open character, allowing views across the floodplain towards the wider landscape.

Extensive areas of neutral grassland are an important ecological resource within the Riverside Meadows and designated for their notable wildlife and habitat value, and are often managed as wet meadows or hay meadow. The distinctive character of the meadows is, in part, due to their open, unwooded character with elements such as pollarded willows intermittently punctuating the floodplain landscape. These gain visual prominence and provide important local components of the landscape.

Historically, the meadows have not been settled, with development favouring the more elevated river terraces and the surrounding lowland vale landscape. As such, areas of traditionally managed meadows adjacent to watercourses have often remained intact, and provide important landscape features.

Associated with the limited settlement, communication routes are also restricted across the meadows.

5.4.3 Physical Influences

The landform of the Riverside Meadows is largely flat, with levels falling below the 15m AOD contour. The meadows floodplain is generally relatively narrow and small in scale. Underlying the landscape type are mudstones of the Twynning and Charmouth Mudstone Formations. However, the drift geology which masks the underlying geology is a particularly important influence on the characteristics of the area. The deep alluvial beds formed from extensive areas of clay are located adjacent to the main watercourses and bordered by sand and gravel on the outer edges of the landscape type, on slightly more elevated areas of land forming shallow terraces on the edge of the meadow landscape.

The Riverside Meadows occupy only a single side of either the Severn or Avon rivers, the watercourse marking the edge of the county or boundary with the surrounding landscape types. A system of ditches and occasional brooks, often lined with scrubby vegetation, drain the floodplain area.

Pasture is the predominant land use across the landscape type, with fields grazed by cattle and sheep. Horse pastures are also frequent on the edge of the floodplain, often in close proximity to more settled areas. Prone to winter flooding, in places the flat valley bottom contains traditional species-rich summer pastures and meadows which are utilised for growing grass in the spring and grazed in the autumn and early winter. In the more frequently flooded areas, the land often remains open with few hedgerows and trees, and fields largely divided by post and wire fences. Where areas have been drained and cultivated, improved and semi-improved grassland is found, bordered by hedgerows, often low and gappy and reinforced with post and wire fences. Occasional hedgerow trees punctuate the flat landscape, with willow species, including traditionally pollarded willows, a characteristic of the area. Isolated arable fields are scattered amongst the grazed pastures and contained by often gappy and remnant hedgerows, reinforced with post and rail fencing.

Woodland cover within the Riverside Meadows is not a characteristic feature, with tree cover restricted to pollarded willows and occasional hedgerow trees. More extensive woodland is associated within the surrounding landscape types which often form a backdrop to the flat meadows.

Key habitats include remnants of unimproved wet meadows and hay meadow grasslands which owe their species diversity to the seasonal flooding and traditional farming methods. Significant

areas of the neutral grassland located within the Riverside Meadows form important habitats for birds and are notable for their botanical interest. Ditches, streams and localised wet areas are also important and notable for their nature conservation value. The importance of such areas are emphasised through their designation as SSSIs and Key Wildlife Sites.

5.4.4 Human Influences

There is little evidence to confirm whether the Riverside Meadows were settled during earlier periods of occupation, although their seasonal flooding indicates that permanent settlement was unlikely. More typically, settlement would have occupied the surrounding, more elevated areas of land including the higher river terraces and surrounding lowland vale landscape and low hills and commons, with the meadows utilised as seasonal pastureland. Today, settlement within the Riverside Meadows is extremely limited, with only isolated farms occupying the area.

Communication routes are also limited within the Riverside Meadows, confined generally to the boundary of the landscape type, and only minor roads and tracks that terminate in dead ends are evident. An exception to this is the line of the M5 motorway and A38 which crosses the Twynning and Upham Meadows. Footpath access is principally confined to a network of rights of way that are often located adjacent to watercourses or on the edge of the landscape type. To the west of Tewkesbury, the Severn Ham is a more accessible area of meadowland. A number of footpaths cross the area and enables local people to gain access to and enjoy this simple and peaceful pastoral landscape.

5.4.5 Landscape Character Areas

SV 4A Severn Ham, Tewkesbury

Located on the western edge of Tewkesbury, the Severn Ham is the most southern of the Riverside Meadows character area. It comprises an island of meadowland between the River Severn and Mill Avon, with a limited area of land also located to the south of Mill Avon. The majority of land within the character area falls below 5m AOD, with isolated areas on the edge of the meadow lying between 5m and 10m AOD. Providing a backdrop to the character area are more elevated areas of land in the surrounding vale landscape, with distant views towards The Malverns.



Mudstones underlie the character area, which in the northern half are predominantly from the Twyning Mudstone Formation, and in the southern portion predominantly from the Salford Shale Member. However, thick deposits of alluvial clay mask all of the solid geology.

The Severn Ham represents one of the last remaining traditionally managed hay meadows within the Severn Vale. The major habitat in the open, pastoral landscape is one of natural grassland, with most of the area being semi improved. In the northern section of the meadow, the land is excluded from all fertilizer and herbicide treatment in order to preserve the full range of flora and fauna. The quality of the meadows has been recognised through its designation as a SSSI. Managed as hay meadows, the area is also subject to Rights of Common, allowing hay to be sold from the meadow, with profits going to trustees of the common which include occupiers of dwellings fronting onto the meadow. Vegetation along the river bank surrounds the margins of the Ham and provides the only significant tree cover within the character area. Alder, willow and hawthorn scrub is also characteristic of the Ham landscape.



Whilst there is no settlement within the character area, the attributes of the river and floodplain landscape have been utilised for many years. In 1190, the original mill was constructed on the site for the Priory of Tewkesbury, with subsequent rebuilds in years to follow. Further mill buildings were established to the north of the area which now lie within the urban boundary of Tewkesbury and overlook the meadows, together with residential development on the edge of the urban area. South of the Mill Avon, the land is also designated as a registered battlefield, marking the area of the Battle of Tewkesbury. Due to the lack of settlement within the Severn Ham, there are no access roads entering into the area. Footpath access is more extensive, however, with a number of rights of way crossing the meadow, including the Severn Way located on the western banks of the Mill Avon.

SV 4B Mythe Meadows

The Mythe Meadows character area is located to the north west of Tewkesbury, extending to the county boundary, and north east of the River Severn. Lying below 15m AOD, the area comprises a discrete area of low lying floodplain meadows on the edge of the Severn Vale. The mudstones that underlie the area are masked by alluvial clay deposits, with sand and gravel terraces on the eastern edge around Mythe Brook.



A grazed pastoral landscape of medium and large scale open pastures predominates, with smaller scale horse pastures evident on more elevated areas of land on the eastern edge of the area. Where drainage and agricultural improvement have been undertaken, isolated arable fields occur. A network of post and wire fences border the improved and semi-improved pastures and arable fields and are often evident in more distant views by the occasional trees along their length, including characteristic pollarded willows. Other boundaries are more overgrown and scrubby representing remnant hedgerow lines. Elsewhere, ditches border fields with post and rail fences apparent enclosing horse paddocks. An open character prevails across the meadows due to the lack of significant vegetated areas, allowing uninterrupted views across the floodplain, in particular from more elevated areas of land.

The south western boundary of the character area is defined by the course of the River Severn. Other watercourses in the area include the Mythe Brook. In the southern portion of the meadows there is a system of lakes that have been formed from former sand and gravel extraction sites. These areas are designated as Key Wildlife Sites as a consequence of their plant interest.

As is typical of the landscape type, communication routes are extremely limited, with only a minor track providing access to a single dwelling within the character area. Three public rights of way provide pedestrian access to the area, located on the south western and eastern boundaries and crossing the area north of the lakes areas.

SV 4C Twynning and Upham Meadows

The Twynning and Upham Meadows are located to the west of the River Avon. Spilt into three discrete areas, the most southern of the meadows stretches from the course of the Old Avon to the south east of Mythe Farm; the central section extends from north east of Mythe Farm to the south of Twynning; and the most northern area extends from the east of Twynning to the county boundary, east of Showborough House. This is the most elevated of the Riverside Meadow character areas. Generally, the meadows lie below 15m AOD, but in some areas, particularly around Church End and along Downfield Lane, they extend up to 20m AOD.



The meadows are almost entirely underlain by mudstones, with a limited areas of interbedded limestones and mudstones between Woodend Farm and Mythe Farm. Thick deposits of alluvial clays mask much of the underlying solid geology, however, particularly across the southern of the character areas. On the edge of the meadows on the western edge of the central and northern character areas, deposits of glacial sand and gravel define terraces forming slightly elevated areas at around 15m AOD. The area to the east of Twynning has been worked for sand and gravel, at the Showborough Common site, where extensive deposits of the renowned Cheltenham Sands have been excavated, as well as gravels. The aptly named Sandacre Farm in the northern character area is testimony to the resource that underlies this area. The flat expanse of land adjacent to the River Avon is in places quite narrow, for example to the east of Woodend Farm.

A pastoral landscape predominates across the area. The management of the pastures varies with improved and semi-improved fields, and some with substantial areas of scrub encroachment. Isolated arable fields are also evident where agricultural improvements and drainage have taken place, most notably in the central section of the character area. In the most northern section around Upham Meadow the landscape is managed as hay meadow, with Summer Leasow managed as pasture grassland, subject to restricted common grazing rights. In these areas and indeed the low lying areas across the whole of Twynning and Upham Meadows, pastures are subject to annual winter flooding, and as such are of importance for waders and wildfowl as well as their botanical interest. Ditches also provide

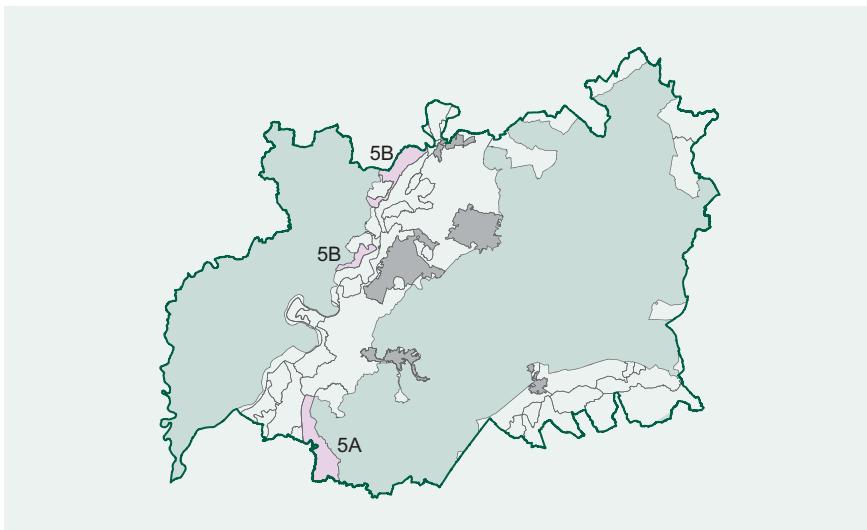
notable areas of interest. In recognition of the importance of Upham Meadows and Summer Leasow, the meadows are designated as a SSSI.

The network of low hedgerows that divide the fields are gappy in places, and reinforced with post and wire fences. In places, where boundary lines have become overgrown, a greater sense of enclosure and tree cover prevails. Views towards the surrounding outliers provide a backdrop for the Riverside Meadows and also contribute to the sense of tree cover beyond the character area. Bredon village located on the east bank of the Avon, and at the base of Bredon Hill, provides a further element visible beyond the floodplain, with the church forming a prominent local landmark.

Whilst settlement is visible beyond the meadows, development with the character area is extremely limited and confined to isolated farms and a Water Works south of the A438. Similarly, communication routes are also relatively limited. Downfield Lane, a minor county road, follows the western boundary of the northernmost area. The raised hedgebanks and low, regularly trimmed hedgerows that contain the Lane provide a sense of enclosure in some areas. Elsewhere, only minor tracks terminating in dead ends provide access. Unlike the other character areas, the Twynning and Upham Meadows are traversed by two major routeways, the M5 motorway and A38, with the A438 forming the boundary of the area for a very limited distance. Although the M5 is a significant road, only occasional filtered views towards it are possible, with audible intrusion being more significant. A dismantled railway also crosses the southernmost section of the area, west of Tewkesbury.



Although heritage features are limited within the character area, the line of the A38 broadly aligns with what was once an importance routeway. Indeed, immediately east of the character area crossing the River Avon is King John's Bridge, formerly known as the long bridge, which now carries the main Gloucester to Worcester road over the Mill Avon. King John ordered this bridge to be built at the end of the 12th century, and made allowance for its upkeep. When first constructed it consisted of a narrow stone bridge and a long wooden causeway, but the demands of traffic has necessitated the construction of an earth embankment to widen and strengthen the causeway, together with widening of the bridge.



CHARACTER AREAS

SV 5A Kingswood and Wick Vale

SV 5B Ashleworth, Tirley and Forthampton Vale

5.5.1 Key Characteristics

- A broad, gently rolling landscape that become gentler in places, and appearing almost flat in the context of the wider landscape, together with intermittent locally elevated areas;
- Underlain by Triassic mudstones and sandstones to the north west of the county and by Lias Group clays and mudstones to the east; Quaternary superficial deposits also mask many areas of the underlying solid geology;
- Open, productive agrarian landscape with mixed pasture and arable fields; dominance of improved pastures on heavier clays and arable farmland on freer draining soils;
- Medium to large scale mosaic of hedged fields with a combination of both regular and irregular field pattern;
- Narrow floodplains bordering the streams and small rivers that drain the vale, with occasional locally incised streams;
- Sparsely settled agrarian landscape with nucleated pattern of rural villages and scattered farms and dwellings. Few towns or other urbanising influences give the landscape a strong rural character;
- Woodland is not a characteristic of the landscape although scattered hedgerow and streamside trees, and occasional copses and shelter belts, can sometimes give the impression of a well treed landscape;
- Surrounding hills, ridges, escarpment and outliers form a backdrop to many views across the Vale;
- Varied mix of buildings materials including brick, timber and stone, and slate and thatch roofing, indicative of the range of materials available from both the Cotswolds limestones and clay vales;



- Distinctive timber and half timbered barns associated with many farmsteads in the northern part of the vale; and
- Quiet rural lanes connecting settlements and numerous isolated farms and hamlets.

5.5.2 Introduction

The Unwooded Vale landscape character type forms part of the broad lowland vale that extends across the Severn Vale to the west and north of the Cotswolds, and merging northwards into the Vale of Evesham. Within the Severn Vale study area, the Unwooded Vale is represented in two discrete areas. In the south of the county, in the vicinity of Kingswood and Wick, a broad vale extends along the foot of the Cotswolds escarpment between Hillesley and Nibley Green and northwards from the county boundary to the M5 and main line railway. To the north of the county and west of the River Severn, low undulating land extends between Ashleworth, Tirley and Forthampton. This latter area is contiguous with the more extensive area of Unwooded Vale that is identified in the Forest of Dean LCA, and which borders the eastern boundary of the District for almost its entire length

5.5

Landscape Character Type: UNWOODED VALE

In the north of Gloucestershire, three further areas of Unwooded Vale extend along the northern perimeter of the Cotswolds AONB commencing to the north of the outlier Oxenton Hill, and eastwards towards Mickleton. The first area extends eastwards from Teddington to Greet, to the north of the Winchcombe embayment, to link with other areas of land to the north west of the Cotswolds escarpment, and within the AONB, which are also classified as Unwooded Vale. Two further areas focus around Wormington, and Mickleton extending across the low lying vale at the foot of the northern edge of the Cotswolds escarpment. As with the Ashleworth, Tirley and Forthampton character area, these areas forms part of the vale landscapes that merge into the Vale of Evesham. As a consequence of their location on the fringe of the wider vale, the characteristics that the areas display may not always be typical of those occurring within the heart of the more extensive vale area. There is also a transition from this landscape type to the adjacent Settled Unwooded Vale (Landscape Character Type SV 6) where the influences of urban areas and major infrastructure are more dominant.

In view of the transitional nature of these vale landscapes, studies undertaken by neighbouring authorities provide a further insight into the landscape character of these areas. To the south of Gloucestershire the landscape character assessments undertaken by South Gloucestershire provide a detailed examination of the landscape types and mosaic of landscape character areas that occur across the wider vale. Similarly, Worcestershire County Council's LCA provides a detailed examination of landscape types that occur across the Vale of Evesham Regional Character Area, including land that extends up to the Gloucestershire boundary.

The following descriptions and broad review of the Unwooded Vale is applicable to the sections that occur within the Severn Vale, and also to the further three character areas that form part of the Vale of Evesham Fringe. The three character areas that are located within the latter area are described in Section 8.

5.5.3 Landscape Character

The overall character of the landscape is distinctly rural, small scale and domestic. The soft, gently rolling landform, underlain with Lias Group mudstones and clays in the east, and Triassic strata in the north west are cloaked in a patchwork of arable and pasture fields. Arable farming comprising both cereal and vegetable production is generally confined to areas where fertile free draining soils are prevalent. Pastoral land use is more common on areas of heavier, poorly drained soils. In many instances, such areas were derived from former extensive areas of open fields, less favoured for arable cultivation. Some areas were converted to pasture at the time of enclosure resulting in the preservation of ridge and furrow. Fields are generally medium to large in size, although locally, to the south of Kingswood, in the south of the county, smaller field patterns can be found. Fields are predominantly enclosed by a network of hedgerows, both well maintained and overgrown. In

some areas hedgerow trees are a common landscape element. Elsewhere, however, as in the Teddington and Greet Vale character area these are not a characteristic feature, with only scattered populations of hedgerow ash evident. Stone wall boundaries can sometimes be found within the Unwooded Vale notably in the Kingwood and Wick Vale character areas.

Woodland cover is not a characteristic feature of the Unwooded Vale landscapes, and where present, is generally restricted to small deciduous copses along streams draining the neighbouring Cotswolds escarpment and within landscaped parks, as at Toddington Manor. Where present, woodlands gain local visual prominence in the open, rolling landscape.

A network of small streams weaves through the vale areas. In the south of the county these drain into the Little Avon River. In the north of the county, the tributary streams of the River Severn are often only made visible by the occurrence of alder and willow trees that line their banks. These are typical of the wetland habitats, together with localised wet, rushy meadows evident. Post and wire fences are also conspicuous in wetter meadows fringing the watercourse channels.

The settlement pattern is rural and dispersed with nucleated villages surrounded by farmland. In the vale areas to the east, at the base of the escarpment, villages and hamlets are predominantly small linear clusters bordering the lower slopes and can sometimes be seen extending a short distance on to the escarpment. In the wider vale, nucleated villages are more common. A number of farmsteads, largely dating to the time that the landscape was enclosed in the 18th and 19th centuries, are also located throughout the vale areas.



Ancient churches, and remnants of ridge and furrow of the former open fields, indicate that many of the vale settlements have their origins in the medieval period or earlier. Building materials vary. Within settlements in close proximity to the Cotswolds, and particularly in the northern character areas, the older buildings are mainly constructed from stone. In contrast, some of the more recent developments that occur on the outskirts of these settlements beyond the historic core are constructed from brick. Within the vale settlements generally, many of the older buildings also use timber in their construction, indicating that suitable building

stone was less available than in the adjacent Cotswolds where stone built buildings are prevalent. Since the arrival of the railways and canals, brick has formed the dominant building material within the Vale settlements.

5.5.4 Physical Influences

The Unwooded Vale areas located at the foot of the Cotswolds escarpment are underlain by Lias Group clays and mudstones. In contrast older Triassic rocks form the bedrock to the remaining areas to the west of the Severn and to the north of Tewkesbury. Intermittent areas of superficial deposits of river alluvium and terrace deposits and boulder clay also mask the underlying solid geology.

In the south east of the county the Vale landform falls gently from south east to north west generally from 80 to 40 m AOD. There is a general sense of land rising gradually to the east where the vale merges into the lower slopes of the escarpment. It is within this transitional zone that slips and detached masses of Oolitic limestone debris as well as Lias Group shales create a hummocky landscape and areas of raised landform, and from which more extensive views are possible.

The Triassic marlstones and sandstones that underlie the areas to the west of the Severn are relatively more resistant than the Lias Group clays and the area is therefore more undulating. Deposits of boulder clay, sand and gravel, alluvial clay and alluvium also contribute to local variations in relief and soils. Within this area a series of small hillocks rise above the lower lying vale to average summit heights of 50m AOD. These are sometimes capped by a small copse of trees, emphasising their visual prominence in the landscape. These hillocks are small, however, and an integral part of the vale landscape. Higher hills within the vale have been identified as a separate landscape character type. These comprise the Vale Hillocks, and are associated with the series of distinct river terraces of the River Severn.

To the north east at Teddington, the soft, undulating landform has formed on the Lias Group mudstones and sandstone. The Warren forms a significant low hill within this character area, rising to 136m AOD above the general levels of 60m AOD. Physiographically, it comprises a remnant outlier of the escarpment but is too low to be identified as a separate landscape type and has therefore been included as a local feature within this part of the Unwooded Vale.

Where Lias Group clays underlie the vale this gives rise to heavy, cold and frequently waterlogged soils that tend to limit their capacity for arable farming, and also areas of fertile, free draining soils that are well suited to cereal and vegetable production. Therefore, improved pasture for cattle is prevalent in some areas whereas elsewhere intensive arable farming is in evidence. In areas where heavy soils dominate, ditches have been cut to aid drainage and limit waterlogging. These ditches often border roads

and define, along with hedgerows, regular 'parliamentary' field boundaries that suggest that they were a feature of the 19th century enclosures. In arable areas, and particularly on the highest quality farmland, an intensive character sometimes prevails.

Orchards are well suited to the vale soils and microclimate, and were once a prominent feature of the vale landscape. The vast majority has been grubbed out and the land turned over to more lucrative arable or pasture farming although large orchards for commercial fruit production remain beyond the county in the vicinity of Evesham.

Hawthorn hedgerows define a patchwork of moderate and large fields. These are often well maintained and give the sense of a managed productive agricultural landscape. However, in some areas the hedgerow pattern is breaking down and is increasingly being replaced by post and wire fencing. This is particularly true in areas where permanent pasture is being converted to arable farmland. Some hedges are of great antiquity and possibly predate the enclosures of the 18th and 19th centuries which are prevalent across the vale. These later boundary features may be easily identified in the landscape as the hedges are less species rich and define geometric 'parliamentary' fields. Hedgerow trees are conspicuous across some vale landscapes and offer valued habitats for a range of birds and insects. In other areas, stonewalls provide boundary features.

There is little woodland cover in this long settled landscape and not, therefore, a characteristic feature of the Unwooded Vale. Throughout the landscape it is restricted to linear belts of deciduous woodland along stream courses and occasional small copses in farmland. Woodlands are more conspicuous on the lower slopes of the escarpment and on undulations within the vale and often form a wooded backdrop to farmland that occupies the foreground of views. Occasionally, more substantial areas of woodland are present in the wider extension of the landscape type, notably in the Kingswood Vale beyond the southern boundary of the county at South Moon Ridings and Wetmoor Wood to the east of Wickwar.

A multitude of rivers and streams weave winding courses as they flow towards the Severn and Avon through the Vale. These are often bordered by flatter, gentler landform and wet meadows above thick deposits of alluvium. These areas are periodically flooded and pastures here are often wet and rushy. The watercourses flowing in these meadows are often only visible at crossing points where brick or stone bridges offer excellent vantage points. However, their route can also be traced where alder and willow trees line their banks.

5.5

Landscape Character Type: UNWOODED VALE

5.5.5 Human Influences

There is little evidence to confirm whether the vale was heavily exploited and settled during the prehistoric period. To the east of the Severn, settlement of the gravel terraces bordering the river has been established from at least the Neolithic period. However, it is likely that poor waterlogged soils and thick woodland cover prohibited settlement and farming on a large scale.

With the improved ploughs of the Middle Ages, and a rapidly expanding population, pressure grew for settlement of the poorer land to the east of the Severn. At the foot of the escarpment, and in the wider vale, numerous settlements were established, or earlier settlements expanded. Many would have been surrounded by open fields. The ridges and furrows deriving from this are still evident in the vale landscape today where they have survived beneath permanent pasture established at the time of enclosure. This is particularly evident on areas where heavy clay soils have been used as permanent pasture since the time of enclosure. Elsewhere, particularly where well drained fertile soils are common, modern ploughing has resulted in the loss of substantial areas of ridge and furrow.

Moated sites are evident in the vale landscape. These sites, often barely visible in the landscape, are likely to date from 13th century and rather than representing manorial centres, they are likely to have been the homes of wealthy yeoman farmers, as moated sites were a symbol of wealth and status during the medieval period. Many of the sites of moated farmsteads are in close proximity to more modern farms, indicating a continuity of settlement within the vale.

Perhaps the most potent evidence for human activity in the vale is the dominant pattern of regular hedged fields established during the enclosures of the 18th and 19th centuries. The neat, geometric patchwork created by hawthorn hedges is relentless and a monument to the surveyors and agriculturists that created them. These fields are interspersed with farms, often built at the time of enclosure and made conspicuous by large barns and outbuildings that often enclose a central yard.

Whilst the regular geometric pattern of hedged fields dominates the vale, it may often be observed to sit within a more organic framework of hedged boundaries, watercourses and winding roads. These are the remnants of the ancient open fields that surrounded vale villages into which the enclosures were imposed.

5.5.6 Buildings and Settlement

Villages within the vale are generally nucleated. Their form varies, with linear forms predominant on roads approaching the neighbouring Cotswolds escarpment or the winding lanes that encircle the outliers, and compact forms in the wider vale, where they are often centred at the point where two or more roads meet. The older centres of these settlements have an abundance of

stone, red brick and timber-framed buildings. The older village properties are typically clustered around the church, which are often ancient and imposing stone structures, with a prominent spire visible from some distance from the village.

Beyond these villages the settlement pattern becomes dispersed with farmsteads scattered across the landscape. Farmhouses and individual buildings gain visual prominence when they are sited on the top of local undulations. Roads descending off the escarpment tend to spread out at the foot of the scarp into a multitude of narrow lanes. These are often bordered by neat, square-cut hedgerows, wide grass verges and drainage ditches where land is poorly drained.

Some large settlements exist, notably Winchcombe in the north and Kingswood in the south. Winchcombe, which benefits from the shelter offered by a north facing combe, is typical of a market town established during the medieval period. Indeed Winchcombe was the earliest, and remained the largest market town in the Cotswolds up until the 16th century.

5.5.7 Landscape Character Areas

SV 5A Kingswood and Wick Vale

The Kingswood and Wick Vale extends from the county boundary in the south northwards to the B4066, west of Dursley. To the west the surrounding Gently Undulating Farmed Lowland and the Low Wooded Cambrian Hills define the immediate skyline. Northwards there is a transition to the Vale of Berkeley, which is part of the Settled Unwooded Vale landscape type. Immediately to the east of the character area a further margin of Unwooded Vale extends up to the rising landform of the Cotswolds Escarpment.



The underlying geology of the vale mainly comprises mudstones and interbedded limestones of the Lias Group Blue Lias and Charmouth Mudstone Formations. These have given rise to a gently rolling landscape across much of the area. However, located on the western edge of the areas are older rocks of the Triassic period, including narrow bands of alternating mudstones and limestone, with local landform variations occurring in response to the differential resistance of these rock formations. Sandstones, siltstones and mudstones occur in isolated areas on the western edge of the character area north of Goldwick Farm with some silty

clays on the south eastern edge of the character area, south of Wotton-under-Edge. Whilst drift deposits are limited across the vale, alluvial sand with clay and gravel are evident along the base of watercourses, most notably along the Little Avon River which forms the south western boundary, and its tributary, Ham's Gully Brook. Further limited deposits occur along Doverte Brook.

Located around Ham's Gully Brook in the Kingswood area Cheltenham sands and gravels occur on the gently rising valley sides, with isolated areas of river terrace gravels around Elbury Hill and the Little Avon River. Elsewhere, and located north of Swinhay Lane are scattered areas of undifferentiated clay and silt.

The elevation of the character area ranges from 88m AOD at its highest point in the south of the character area to 25m AOD along the western edge of the vale. The landform comprises a series of broad gentle undulations, at times appearing almost flat.

Numerous watercourses drain the Vale, the most significant being the Little Avon River and its tributary, Ham Gully's Brook, and Doverte Brook north of Upper Wick. The watercourses rise from springs and streams in the surrounding Cotswolds escarpment, flowing through the area before eventually joining the River Severn. Largely inconspicuous within the landscape, the watercourses can often only be identified by their well treed course, frequently defining field boundaries.

The gently undulating landform is cloaked in a regular patchwork pattern of generally medium and large scale arable fields and improved pastures with grazing sheep and cattle. Field boundaries are defined by a network of largely low and regularly maintained hedgerows with gaps reinforced with post and wire fencing, permitting views across this open vale. Tree cover is minimal across the vale, although intermittent hedgerow oak and ash trees are scattered along boundaries. Where these combine with overgrown hedgerow boundaries, the landscape can in places appear more treed. Woodland blocks are also sparse and where present they mainly comprise mixed deciduous trees. Wide views are often possible across this generally open landscape towards the wooded slopes of the Cotswolds Escarpment, which forms a backdrop in many views.

Kingswood is the largest settlement in the character area, and has a distinctive nuclear form clustered around the junction of a number of minor roads. The village, including the church spire, is a distinctive feature in a number of views from within the southern part of the vale. The outer edges of the settlement, including more recent development, are prominent in the approaches to the village. A mix of building styles and materials is evident throughout Kingswood, with a number of old stone properties, notably within its historic core, and stone wall boundaries.

Elsewhere, the rural landscape is settled with scattered farms and dwellings throughout the vale, frequently set back from roads and accessed via minor tracks. Agricultural outbuildings associated with farms vary in style, a number being traditional stone built barns. The road pattern is relatively sparse, with narrow country

lanes bordered by hedgerows and grass verges, as well as stone walls in some areas. Located on the northern edge of the vale, the M5 motorway is intrusive, both visually and physically, and contributes to the settled character of the vale. However, its area of influence is confined to this northern side of the character area. The impact of the mainline railway, which follows the north western boundary of the vale, is more subdued and its presence within the landscape is often unnoticed except for intermittent passing trains which signify its existence.

A network of public rights of way crosses the farmed landscape, and although quite limited in the north of the vale, to the north and south of Kingswood access is more extensive. Beyond this, formal recreational is confined to Canons Court Golf Course located at the base of the escarpment, north west of Wotton-under-Edge and an adjacent camping and caravan site.

SV 5B Ashleworth, Tirley and Forthampton Vale

The Ashleworth, Tirley and Forthampton Vale Character Area is located on the western edge of the Severn Vale. It comprises three detached areas of land adjacent to the Forest of Dean and separated by the Vale Hillocks, which form a backdrop to many views. Commencing at Clay Hill, on the northern banks of the River Severn, the most southern section of the Vale extends towards the southern limits of Lassington and Rodway Hills. Between Lassington and Woolridge Hill, the next section of Unwooded Vale is extremely limited in size and surrounds the River Leadon, forming part of a more extensive vale landscape that extends into the Forest of Dean. Further north, between Woolridge Hill, and Corse Wood and Barrow Hills an area of vale surrounds the settlement of Ashleworth, and extends northwards to the edge of Cork Hill, west of Tewkesbury. These three linked areas form part of a much more extensive Unwooded Vale landscape, which merges westwards into the vale landscapes that surround the Forest of Dean, and northwards and eastwards into the Vale of Evesham.



The vale landscape is predominantly underlain by Triassic mudstones, with areas of limestone occurring around Ashleworth and interbedded limestones and mudstones south of Maidenhead, creating a gently undulating landscape. Drift deposits are confined mainly to the south eastern edge of the character area, with sand a

5.5

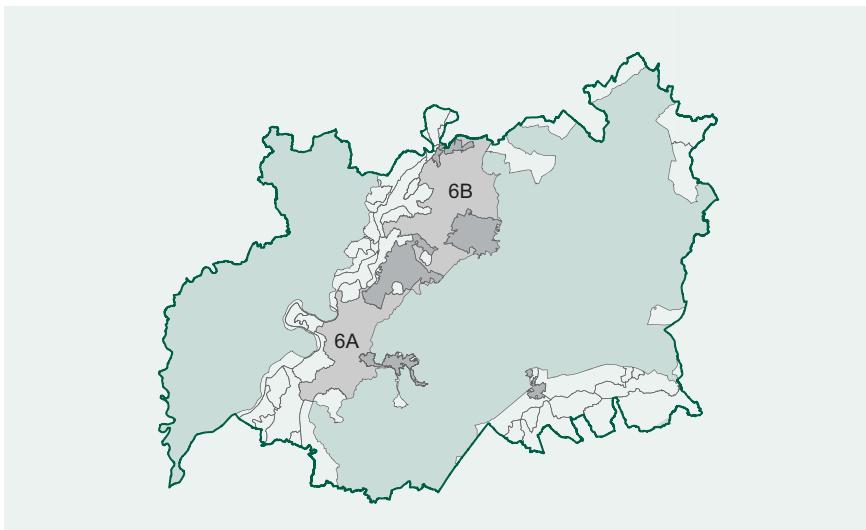
Landscape Character Type: UNWOODED VALE

gravel deposits located adjacent to the surrounding Floodplain Farmland. Limited areas of alluvial clay also occur where watercourses flow through the landscape, their presence often only evident in the landscape by the trees that align their course.

From levels of around 10m AOD adjacent to the floodplain of the River Severn, the vale rises to 53m AOD at its highest point at Forthampton, where the settlement has developed on a local hillock. This gently undulating landscape can at times appear flat, particularly when viewed from higher levels. A patchwork pattern of medium to large scale arable and pastoral fields cloak the area. Pasture is generally improved and semi-improved, with some isolated areas of more scrubby land. Grazed by both sheep and cattle, horse paddocks also occur, often in close proximity to settled areas. The network of low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows that define the field pattern are gappy in places and reinforced with post and wire fences. Some sub-division of larger fields has also occurred with post and wire fences. Woodland cover within the vale is generally sparse, confined to isolated copses of mixed composition. Beyond the character area, however, the woodlands located on the sloping landscape of the surrounding Vale Hillocks can contribute to the impression of a wooded cover within the vale. This is particularly evident in locations where hedgerow trees and field trees, predominantly oak, are more frequent, scattered along boundary lines and forming important local landscape features. Occasionally, more significant areas of woodland can be found, as at Highnam Court. This Grade II* Registered Park and Garden contains a medieval deer park developed in the 17th and 18th century as a landscaped park, with mid 19th century ornamental gardens. In the wider landscape surrounding Highnam Court and Hygrove House to the south are occasional parkland trees adding visual diversity to the landscape. Located between the two houses, Piper's Grove and Corseleas Brake offer the only areas of ancient semi-natural woodland within the Character Area; both areas also designated as Key Wildlife Sites. Other similarly designated areas include Forthampton Oaks, an important area of woodpasture within farmland, north of Forthampton. Beyond these limited wooded areas, scattered orchards are also a characteristic of the vale landscape.

Although retaining a predominantly rural character, a number of settlements are scattered throughout the vale, the largest being Ashleworth. This linear village has developed on the lower slopes of the vale, overlooking the Floodplain Farmland. A range of dwelling types are found within the settlement, with both old and new red brick properties and occasional stone dwellings; timber frame and brick properties are also evident. Elsewhere there are a number of smaller villages, notably Minsterworth and Forthampton. These comprise dispersed linear settlements, with the latter containing both old and new red brick properties, timber framed dwellings, red brick and rendered and also some examples of thatched roofs. Tirley, by contrast has developed as a clustered village, extending north from the B4213.

A network of narrow, winding country lanes dominate the northern section of the character area, the majority of which are broadly aligned north west to south east. Further south, a more extensive and busier road network has developed, with the A40 (T) crossing the vale south of Highnam Court and the A48(T) passing through Minsterworth. Despite the network of roads, large areas remain inaccessible to vehicles. However, there is a relatively extensive network of public rights of way that cross the farmed landscape, including a limited stretch of the Gloucestershire Way which follows the southern edge of the character area.



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.

5.6

Landscape Character Type: SETTLED UNWOODED VALE

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 GLEVIM (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 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 Twynny (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.

5.6

Landscape Character Type: SETTLED UNWOODED VALE

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 Bizard'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.

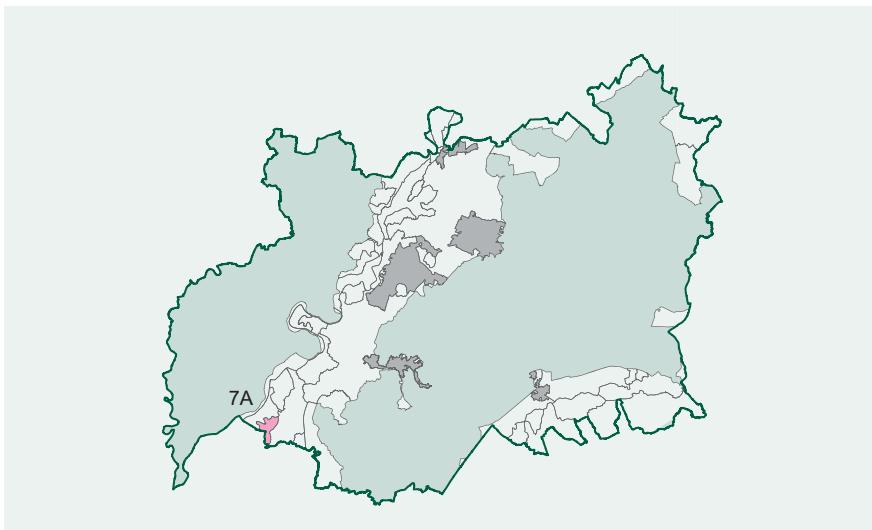
Immediately to the west of Gloucester the settlement of Hempsted has developed across the locally prominent undulation of Hempsted Hill. The principal urban area of Gloucester and also the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal, has resulted in the detachment of this area from the wider Vale of Gloucester. It 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.



CHARACTER AREAS

SV 7A Bevington and Whitcliff Ridge

5.7.1 Key Characteristics

- A low, discrete ridge with steep concave profile slopes rising to approximately to 55m AOD above the surrounding Gently Undulating Farmed Lowland and Drained Riverine Farmland;
- Ridge is dissected by a number of small streams that flow eastwards into the Little Avon River and westwards to the River Severn;
- Parkland pasture and trees dominate the landcover with distinctive summit copses, clumps of pine and oak; and intermittent parkland trees; elsewhere, rough grazing is located on steeper slopes and arable and improved pasture on gentler, lower slopes; these land uses together with the rolling landform and rich red soils combine to create a colourful textured landscape;
- Mixed woodland blocks mainly confined to upper slopes and ridge top, generally associated with the parkland landscape;
- Large scale fields extend over the ridge slopes emphasising the distinctive landform;
- Settlement is limited, confined to the small hamlet of Bevington, and a dispersed pattern of farmsteads;
- A generally inaccessible landscape, with minor roads generally restricted to the base of the ridge, with the exception of a single, winding narrow lane providing access to Bevington; and
- Expansive panoramic views from the ridge, affords expansive views westwards towards the Severn Estuary and the Forest of Dean and eastwards to the Cotswolds escarpment.



5.7.2 Landscape Character

The Low Triassic Ridge landscape type extends from the south western boundary of the county near the village of Bevington northwards to the southern edge of the village of Ham. It comprises a small area of elevated landform that rises above the surrounding lower-lying, flatter landscape of the Severn Vale. Distant views to the Severn Estuary and the Forest of Dean are possible from the higher slopes of the ridge.

The Low Triassic Ridge is surrounded by the adjacent landscape types of the Drained Riverine Farmland to the west and the Gently Undulating Farmed Lowland to the east. The rising landform of the Low Triassic Ridge landscape type forms the northern and central portion of a more extensive ridge of elevated land that extends southwards into South Gloucestershire to Church-hill Wood. Within Gloucestershire, the Low Triassic Ridge is the only representation of this landscape type and it therefore forms a single character area.

Whitcliff Park, a designated historic parkland landscape associated with the Berkeley Castle estate, extends across a large part of the ridge, and creates a continuity of land use along the ridge. The parkland combined with the intermittent blocks of woodland and the

5.7

Landscape Character Type: LOW TRIASSIC RIDGE

undulating landform of the ridge imparts a sense of balance and visual unity, and a strong sense of place. The resulting character of the type is relatively rare within the county, particularly with Whitcliff Park being the last remaining medieval deer park in the Severn Vale.

5.7.3 Physical Influences

The ridge is underlain by Mercia Mudstone Group rocks of the Triassic system, which comprise red dolomitic siltstone and mudstone. There is also a more limited capping of Penarth Group rocks, synonymous with the former Rhaetic beds. The slopes are generally uniformly steep with the upper slopes becoming progressively steeper, forming a concave profile, before levelling off to form a narrow, gently undulating plateau at a height of 55m AOD. This results in a sense of enclosure and shelter at the base of the ridge whilst a more open character prevails on higher slopes. There are topographic variations at the edges and on the slopes of the ridge that form localised undulations and indentations with a series of spurs extending outwards from the western face of the ridge, e.g. at Clapton and Willis Elm Farm. These spurs and localised topographical variations result in the landform often reading as a rolling landscape rather than a ridge when viewed from the base of the western ridge slopes.

Small streams drain the ridge, their valleys forming a series of subtle indentations along the ridge slopes. There are also a number of ponds throughout the type, located both on the ridge top and at the base of the ridge slopes, and associated with many of the farms in the area.

The walled medieval parkland landscape of Whitcliff Deer Park dominates the visual character and land use pattern of the ridge. This parkland landscape comprises parkland trees set in large scale scrubby pasture. It extends down from the crest of the ridge to cover the majority of the upper slopes and the steeper areas of the middle slopes. Below this, larger scale arable fields and smaller scale semi-improved pastoral fields extend across the shallower lower slopes. The dominance of Whitcliff Park creates a strong managed influence on the character of the landscape, and is in contrast with the scrubby appearance of pasture on some sections of the middle slopes.

A significant number of both mature and newly planted parkland trees, including deciduous and coniferous species, are evident on the crest of the ridge and the upper and middle ridge slopes. Some of these trees are declining and have become over-mature and stag headed. Nevertheless, their longevity is linked to the historic importance of the park; indeed, some of the oaks in the park may be over 1000 years old and have been identified as possible Domesday markers. Whitcliff Park has now entered its second 10 year Countryside Stewardship Scheme (now restructured into Defra's Environmental Stewardship Scheme). As part of the management scheme, coniferous trees are being

gradually replaced with native deciduous species, such as oak, to help restore the park's medieval character and the new management and planting of parkland trees is visibly evident in the landscape.

In addition to the parkland trees, woodland also forms a very distinctive element of this landscape type with scattered mixed copse occurring in significant blocks along the summit and upper slopes of the ridge, often seen silhouetted against the sky. Small pockets of orchards also occur in places on the western slopes of the ridge, adjacent to Willis Elm and Bluegates Farm. The scattered copse and areas of orchard combine with the scrubby areas of pasture to create a colourful and textured landscape.



5.7.4 Human Influences

The historic landscape of Whitcliff Deer Park is a Registered Park and Garden and forms a very strong influence on the landscape of the Low Triassic Ridge. Whitcliff Park was first enclosed as a private hunting preserve at the end of the 13th century when deer hunting was reserved for royalty and privileged guests of the Earls of Berkeley. The deer park contains a square moated site and associated fishponds and this moated site is likely to have been the location of the original hunting lodge. Other heritage features associated with the deer park include the natural stone folly of Park House, built in the 19th century, which forms a visually prominent local landmark on north western slopes of the ridge.



The brick wall extending along the upper sections of the lower ridge slopes demarcates the edge of Whitcliff Park and was originally erected in 1770. The parkland landscape itself is open and devoid of boundaries. Elsewhere, field boundaries generally comprise low, well managed and regularly trimmed hedgerows with post and wire or post and rail fencing reinforcing hedges where they have become gappy. Where hedgerows enclose larger scale arable fields, they form prominent linear features in the landscape, sweeping along the ridge slopes emphasising landform. In some areas there has been a significant loss of hedgerows which has further contributed to a new larger scale field pattern on some ridge slopes.

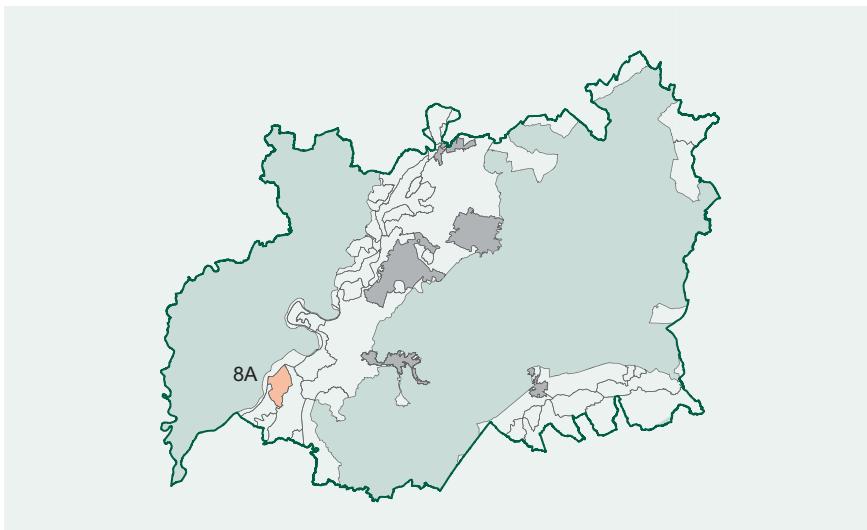
Communication routes within the type are limited to a network of minor roads which are confined to the base of the ridge with the exception of the sunken winding lane that extends up the western slope of the ridge to provide vehicular access to the small settlement of Bevington. The ridge is more accessible for recreational purposes, however, as a number of public footpaths cross both the length and breadth of the ridge.

5.7.5 Landscape Character Areas

SV 7A Bevington and Whitcliff Ridge

The Bevington and Whitcliff Ridge is the only landscape character area associated with the Low Triassic Ridge character type within the county. The descriptions above therefore apply to this single character area.





CHARACTER AREAS

SV 8A Berkeley and Newtown Hills

5.8.1 Key Characteristics

- An undulating landscape of low hills rising above the neighbouring Drained Riverine Farmland and Gently Undulating Farmed Lowland;
- Land use comprises mixed arable and pasture in medium scale fields, enclosed by a network of hedgerows with hedgerow trees;
- Woodland blocks of mixed composition confined mainly to the east of the landscape type;
- Varied settlement pattern dominated by Sharpness and Newton in the north west, and Berkeley to the south, beyond which are dispersed linear villages and isolated dwellings extending out along minor roads;
- Industrial influence from Sharpness Docks and associated Gloucester and Sharpness Canal and railway line;
- A semi enclosed landscape with intermittent views of the River Severn estuary; and
- Pylons, industrial buildings and cranes at the docks gain visual prominence within the landscape.

5.8.2 Landscape Character

The Low Sandstone Hills landscape type is located in the south west of the county and forms an undulating elevated ridge predominantly composed of Old Red Sandstone, approximately 5km in length extending along a north / south alignment immediately to the east of the Severn Estuary. This landscape type is only represented in this part of the Gloucestershire and therefore forms a single landscape character area. It lies adjacent to and



rises up from the Drained Riverine Farmland landscape type to the south west and the Gently Undulating Farmed Lowland landscape type to the east. The elevated land affords a range of views across the Severn Estuary from the western portion of the ridge, including views towards exposed red cliffs of the sandstone ridge, and across the Severn Estuary to the Forest of Dean. Views towards the estuary are sometimes obscured, however, due to local topographic variations of the western face of the hills giving rise to intermittent views and a series of changing horizons. There are also views towards the Cotswold Escarpment from elevated areas in the eastern part of the landscape type.

With the exception of the area around Sharpness and Newtown on the western perimeter of the ridge, the landscape is predominantly rural in character and generally unspoilt. The presence of high voltage pylons in the south are a locally detracting feature, however, as are the impact of recent housing developments. In addition to the industrial influences of Sharpness and the associated docks area, the historic associations of the medieval deer park and landscape associated with the Berkeley Castle Estate and adjacent settlement of Berkeley is also notable.

5.8

Landscape Character Type: LOW SANDSTONE HILLS

5.8.3 Physical Influences

The underlying geology principally comprises Old Red Sandstone of the Devonian System which outcrops unconformably with the older Downton Castle Sandstone of the Silurian System to the east. This latter rock formation is exposed on the Severn foreshore at Tites Point to the north east of Sharpness. The sandstone beds which give rise to the low ridgeline continues to the north on the opposite bank of the Severn Estuary. The underlying geology is also expressed in the landscape through the red colour of the soils, and occasional use of red sandstone in the local vernacular.

The topography of the hills is quite varied. The steepest slope profiles, rising to 44m AOD, occur in the north of the type. The western slopes are dissected by a series of small streams that drain the ridge towards the River Severn, giving rise to a more undulating topography of rolling ridges and valleys along the western face of the hills. The eastern side of the ridge drains towards the Little Avon River. There are fewer watercourses on the eastern side of the ridge with a number of wells and springs evident as local features within the landscape, e.g. Hollywell Spring. The names of the two woodland blocks on the north eastern side of the ridge of Ironwells Grove and Ironwells New Covert are evidence of the iron rich bedrock which has influenced the colour of the well water. There are also a number of small incidental ponds concentrated along the roads and associated with properties throughout the area.



As a result of the rising landform of the sandstone ridge, the Gloucester to Sharpness Canal is located along the base of the northern and north western slopes, following the perimeter of the Estuary. It is an important hydrological and historical feature of the landscape, with its association with Sharpness, the termination point of the canal. In view of its peripheral location within the landscape type, the canal is not evident as a feature, and much of its route is concealed by the surrounding topography.

Land use is predominantly small to medium scale pasture with some areas of larger scale arable farmland, particularly in the north of the type. Small woodland blocks are a common feature throughout the type, although larger tracts tend to be concentrated on the eastern side of the hills, e.g. Penny Grove, Wards Grove and Tintock Wood, and the Ironwells Grove/ New Covert referred to

above. Elsewhere, small copses associated with farm properties, and alder trees extending along small watercourses combine to provide the sense of a well treed feel to the landscape. There are also a few areas of orchards on the lower slopes at the northern edge of the ridge, around Purton, which add local interest.

5.8.4 Human Influences

The settlement of Sharpness and the associated Docks area, together with the linked settlement of Newtown, dominate the lower north western side of the Low Sandstone Hills and influence the local character. This area has a fascinating industrial heritage, with the docks and canal associated with Sharpness exerting an industrial influence on the north of this landscape type since the end of the 18th century when work began on the construction of the Sharpness to Gloucester Ship Canal. The canal's completion in 1827 provided a more direct access route to Gloucester Docks, allowing ships to bypass the narrow winding section of the River Severn south of Gloucester. In the early 19th century there were no cargo handling facilities at Sharpness, with all ships passing from the Severn Estuary, up the canal to discharge in the basin at Gloucester Docks. Sharpness Docks developed in the latter half of the 19th century when a new dock was built in the 1870s to accommodate the larger ships that were too big to travel further up the canal. Warehouses were built beside the new dock, principally to accommodate imported grain, and new houses were built on the dock estate and in the surrounding villages for key workers. Rail links with the Midland and Great Western mainlines were also developed to serve the new docks at Sharpness and provided an alternative to the canal for the distribution of imported cargo and the receipt of export goods.

The link with the industrial heritage remains today, with Sharpness continuing as a successful port, handling bulk cargoes such as cement, fertilizer and scrap metal. The Sharpness to Gloucester canal also remains an interesting landscape feature with colourful long boats and pleasure craft and intermittent small white swing bridges punctuating its length.

With the exception of the industrial heritage features associated with the canal and dockland landscapes, there is a general lack of heritage features in the wider landscape of the Low Sandstone Hills, although there is a medieval moated site and an historic farm identified at Wanswell Court Farm.

Low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows form the common boundary treatment within the type. The field pattern is generally representative of irregular enclosure, reflecting former unenclosed cultivation patterns. There are small areas of regular enclosure but these areas often appear as irregular field patterns in the landscape because hedgerow patterns appear sinuous due to the undulating topography. Many of the hedgerows contain elm suckers, and those that have not been closely trimmed support groups of young elm trees although these dieback at semi-maturity.

Along the small lanes that traverse the undulating hills, hedgerows are often overgrown, containing a high concentration of holly and overhang to create 'green tunnels' during the spring and summer.

A network of roads provides access between the north and the south of the landscape type, with the local roads running broadly north-south, and east-west across the type. A railway connecting Sharpness Docks to the wider mainline rail network cuts across the southern portion of the type. A series of high voltage pylons and power cables linked to Berkeley Power Station also extends across the southern portion of the area. These pylons form strong vertical features in the landscape and in places are visually intrusive, and discordant within the undulating topography. Vehicular access to the north of the type is limited to a single minor road extending along the western face of the hill slopes and serves a series of scattered farms dispersed along this road. A comprehensive footpath network provides pedestrian and recreational access throughout the north and the south of the type.

5.8.5 Buildings and Settlement

The varied settlement forms and patterns are an important and characteristic feature of this landscape. Apart from the occasional rural farm buildings, there is only limited evidence of traditional vernacular buildings in the local red sandstone rock, and hence reflecting the underlying solid geology. The industrial architecture relating to the development associated with the Sharpness Docks is more evident, albeit concentrated on the western side of the ridge, and extending onto the estuary perimeter. The dock buildings and cranes are generally contained by the rising topography with the exception of views from Newtown, and from more distant views on the Cotswolds Escarpment. The industrial architecture and scale of the docks contrast with the surrounding rural landscape, but retain a strong link with the Victorian terraces that make up much of the vernacular architecture in the surrounding villages of Newtown, Brookend and Wanswell. These terraces, built to house the dock workers, form regular linear streets along older country lanes.

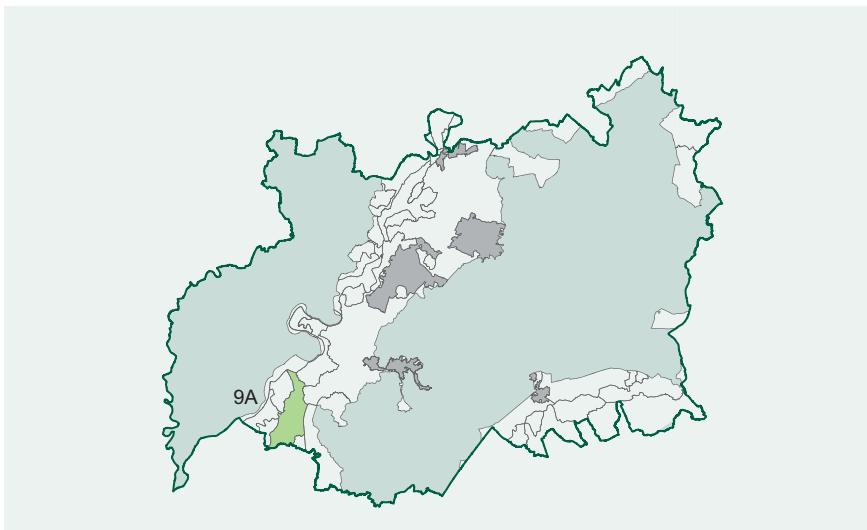
The small village of Purton, located at the northern end of the Low Sandstone Hills, is an attractive settlement associated with the canal and principally comprises a concentration of older buildings and farms. At the southern end of the ridge the historically important settlement of Berkeley overlooks the Little Avon River. This small town was a Saxon Borough and was of sufficient note to have once had its own Mint. It is made up of numerous small brick buildings and narrow streets, with more recent housing estates on its outskirts. Edward Jenner, a local doctor, lived in Berkeley and is renowned for his contribution to immunology and his work on the eradication of smallpox in particular. Berkeley has strongly associations with the impressive and long inhabited Berkeley Castle, situated on the southern edge of the settlement, and within the adjacent landscape type of the Gently Undulating Farmed Lowlands.

5.8.6 Landscape Character Areas

SV 8A Berkeley and Newtown Hills

The Berkeley and Newtown Hills is the only landscape character area associated with the Low Sandstone Hills character type within the county. The descriptions above therefore apply to this single character area.





CHARACTER AREAS

SV 9A Stone and Berkeley Heath
Undulating Lowlands

5.9.1 Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating low lying landform and floodplain areas overlying a complex geological structure of Cambrian and Silurian rocks, and Lias Group mudstones to the east and further influenced by superficial deposits of alluvium and river terrace deposits;
- Dendritic pattern of streams and ditches within the catchment of the Little Avon River and Berkeley Pill to the south, and the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal to the north;
- Farmed landscape with rich texture and colour derived from a mosaic of fields of varying sizes, with both arable and pastoral fields, the latter often bordering watercourses within the floodplain;
- Small, often deciduous farm woodlands scattered throughout the landscape, becoming more frequent in the north of the landscape type;
- Settlement pattern dominated by dispersed linear hamlets and villages and isolated farms. These are often located on raised areas of land above the level of the floodplain;
- Notable historic landscape associated with the Berkeley Castle medieval deer park and Estate;
- Roads frequently aligned along raised areas of land, avoiding low lying areas bordering rivers and streams;
- Gloucestershire mainline railway forms the eastern boundary; and
- Cotswolds escarpment forms a prominent backdrop in views to the east.



5.9.2 Landscape Character

The Gently Undulating Farmed Lowland extends from the southern boundary of the county near the village of Stone northwards to the villages of Breadstone and Gossington. The area is bounded by the line of the mainline railway to the east and the M5 motorway beyond which marks the transition to the Settled Unwooded Vale. To the west, the area is contained by the Low Sandstone Hills and Low Triassic Ridge landscape types. This landscape type is only represented in this part of the Gloucestershire and therefore forms a single landscape character area.

The gently undulating topography unifies this landscape type. The pattern and orientation of these undulations creates a variety of perceptual experiences, providing a sense of openness and expansiveness with distant views in some places, whilst local ridges and areas of woodland provide a sense of enclosure, shelter and intimacy elsewhere.

From the more elevated areas within the types there are clear views to the east towards the wooded skyline of Michael Wood in the foreground and beyond to the Cotswolds escarpment. The radio mast in Michael Wood and the Monument at North Nibley are also visible from elevated areas. To the west, there are views towards the Low Sandstone Hills and Low Triassic Ridge with more distant views towards the Forest of Dean from local hillocks in the vicinity of Newport.

5.9

Landscape Character Type: GENTLY UNDULATING FARMED LOWLAND

Overall, the landscape of the Gently Undulating Farmed Lowland exhibits a strong pattern that is typical of a landscape that has been long farmed. In lower lying areas interest is provided by a variety of agricultural land uses which combine with adjacent areas of woodland to give a textured appearance to the landscape. The elevated areas within the type are characterised by a simpler landscape pattern defined by a series of rolling arable fields with the visibility of adjacent landscape types adding a degree of interest and complexity.

5.9.3 Physical Influences

A varied geological structure underlies the landscape with alluvial deposits and river terraces of the River Severn overlying sandstones, shales and siltstones of the Cambrian and Silurian systems; local ridges are formed by low whalebacks of Triassic Marls whilst the landscape further north is influenced by Lias Group clays, and River Severn gravels.

The main extent of this landscape type lies within the catchment area of the Little Avon River. This more northerly section is drained by minor watercourses flowing to the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal. Landform is typically gently sloping to moderately undulating, rising to 40m AOD. The landscape of the lower reaches of the Little Avon valley exhibits a generally open character whilst the middle section of the Valley comprises a more rolling topography with a clearly defined river valley and narrow flood plain forming distinct features within the landscape. The landscape is heavily influenced by the hydrology, with flatter areas between undulations often containing watercourses, e.g. Doverte Brook, and ditches and streams also commonly aligning the field boundaries. The Little Avon River forms a particularly strong landscape feature as it flows through the mid valley area, with the course of the river and tributary stream channels lined with alders and willows, some of which are pollarded. Ponds are also a common feature in the landscape.

Land use, combined with the subtleties of the local topographical variations, helps to define the subdivisions within the landscape. The less fertile soil found on the ridges is reflected in a predominance of pasture rather than arable land. Old pear and apple orchards also occur on these ridges as well as on the more undulating topography in the north of the area. These orchards form important visual features despite their deteriorating condition. Commercial growing is also evident with market gardening prospering on the lighter and freer draining soils, for example to the south east of Berkeley Heath.

Elsewhere, the Little Avon Valley is characterised by medium to large scale irregular arable fields predominating on the valley sides with small to medium scale permanent pasture following the valley floor. In the lower reaches of the Little Avon valley, land use mainly comprises large scale pastoral fields forming a rectilinear pattern with some smaller areas of arable farmland. Here, a number of fields have been sub-divided to create smaller areas of pasture and

there are also areas of newly introduced plantations. These different land uses combine to give a colourful and diverse landscape.

The extent of woodland cover within the type further compartmentalises the landscape. There is an overall lack of tree cover on the drier soils that occur across the elevated ridges. This contrasts with flatter, lower lying areas where there are numerous scattered woodlands. These include ancient woodland at Red Wood, mixed plantations, small farm copses and tree belts and they combine to give a semi-enclosed character and a secluded feel to many parts of this lowland area. There are also significant numbers of mature free standing oak trees located in fields on the periphery of several settlements, notably around Breadstone, which imparts a parkland character to the landscape in some areas. Mature hedgerow trees, predominantly oak and ash, are commonly found in the lower reaches of the Little Avon valley. These trees are often found alongside overgrown field boundaries and this combination further contributes to the wooded feel of the landscape. Elm suckers in the hedgerows are also a characteristic feature in the Little Avon valley; these remain affected by Dutch Elm disease, however, and die back as they approach semi-maturity.

5.9.4 Human Influences

To the south of Berkeley lies a tract of historic landscape where the river flows through a gap between the Low Sandstone Hills and The Triassic Ridge, and beyond the landscape type to the west becomes Berkeley Pill. Here, a tidal mill and old farm dwellings form important local features, and are appropriately named 'Floodgates Farm'. This low saddle of land is also the site of the estate village of Ham and forms a link between Whitcliff Deer Park and Berkeley Castle. The village of Ham comprises a cluster of several sizeable red brick dwellings, with dark green timber detailing, set around a village green. Crenellations form a visually prominent part of the local vernacular detailing in the northern portion of the village and these form a strong visual link with the crenellated perimeter wall surrounding the Berkeley estate further to the north of the village.

Berkeley Castle lies on the western boundary of the landscape type on the southern perimeter of the settlement of Berkeley. The medieval walled boundary of the Berkeley Castle estate is very distinctive with yew trees and a castle moat extending along the perimeter wall with access over the moat gained by stone bridges with ornate detailing. The castle itself dates from the 12th century with the original keep constructed in 1153 at the command of Henry II. Built as a defensive structure to guard the Welsh borders and the River Severn approaches, it forms one of the March Castles. The castle is the oldest inhabited castle in Britain and has been the home of the Berkeley family throughout that time. It has evolved over the centuries, gradually changing from its original form and function as a Norman fortress to become a stately home set in a series of terraced gardens.

In the lower-lying, more wooded areas within the type there is a strong sense of an historic landscape pattern in the landscape with evidence of many centuries of occupation. Old farm settlements, orchards and moated sites frequently form clusters within areas of small scale pasture, such as the woodland and landscape surrounding the moat west of Newport. In these areas the field pattern is often irregular suggesting an early period of enclosure. Old farm ponds remain in many places and the type is generally unaffected by intrusive development or any recent wholesale agricultural change.

Low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows form the traditional boundary treatment within the type. In lower-lying areas hedgerows have become overgrown in places giving the appearance of linear copses within the landscape. Some hedgerows have also become very gappy with post and wire or post and rail often forming either replacement field boundaries or reinforcing elements within existing hedgerows. This proliferation of boundary treatments combines with a diversity of land uses which can in some areas produce a fragmented landscape pattern.

The communications network in the Gently Undulating Farmed Lowland is dominated by the A38 and the mainline railway both of which are aligned north to south through the type. These major routes tend to follow areas of flatter land, intermittently cutting through localised ridges. Despite the major communication routes bisecting this landscape type, there are still large areas which are secluded, rural and unspoilt. In these more rural areas, access is provided by a network of minor roads which typically avoid the wetter, lower-lying areas within the type. These minor roads often take the form of winding lanes and form part of an intricate enclosure pattern, particularly in the north of the landscape type. Other communications within the type include a disused railway line north east of Berkeley Heath and a series of high voltage pylons to the north of the B4066 which extend in a south west-north east direction and connect with the Berkeley Power Station located in the adjacent Drained Riverine Farmland landscape type.

A network of public rights of way is present throughout the area. These include distinctive long tracks which are indicative of ancient routes; Ironmongers Lane, which passes through Berkeley Heath and links the A38 to the Breadstone Road, is a good example. Recreational opportunities within the Gently Undulating Farmed Lowland are limited but include a camping and caravanning site east of Newport at Hogsdown Farm.

5.9.5 Buildings and Settlements

This landscape type is fairly sparsely settled with the largest settlements occurring at Stone on the higher land above the Little Avon river valley, and at Newport on top of a local ridge of land. The settlement of Stone contains a nucleated historic core centred around an old stone church with significant areas of new and recent brick and stone residential properties extending west from the A38. The settlement of Newport is a linear village extending along the A38. Properties within the village comprise a mixture of new and old brick properties, rendered buildings and new stone dwellings. The Newport Towers Hotel lies adjacent to the A38 and forms a significant feature within the settlement.

Other settlements comprise hamlets and farmsteads scattered through the area on higher ground, often on the crest of undulations, above the wet valley floors. Many of these smaller settlements tend to be very linear and dispersed in character e.g. Breadstone and Berkeley Heath.

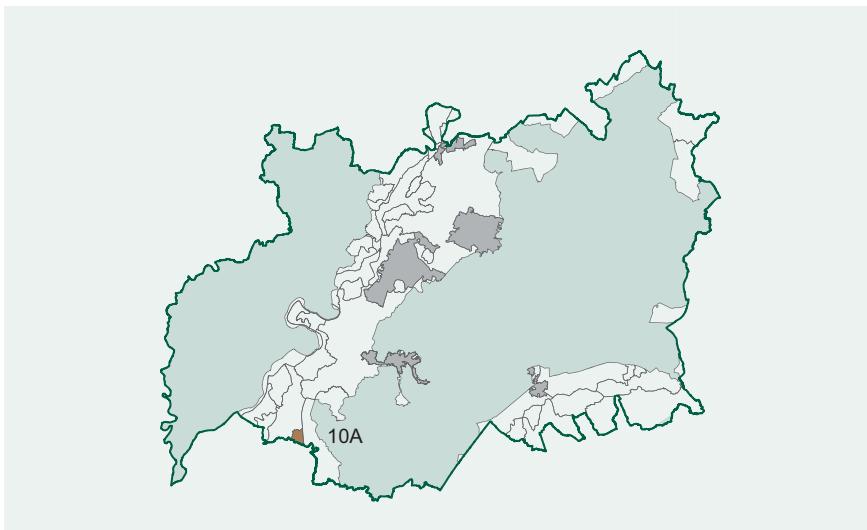
Red brick is a common building material throughout the Gently Undulating Farmed Lowland with both rendered and half timbered properties. Welsh slate rather than Cotswold stone is commonly used as roofing materials and older style rounded-roof corrugated iron barns are features in the wider landscape.

5.9.6 Landscape Character Areas

SV 9A Stone and Berkeley Heath Lowlands

The Stone and Berkeley Heath Lowlands is the only landscape character area associated with the Gently Undulating Farmed Lowland character type within the county. The descriptions above therefore apply to this single character area.





CHARACTER AREAS

SV 10A Michael Wood Hill

5.10.1 Key Characteristics

- Prominent rounded ridgeline rising to 55m AOD, occupying only a small area of the county, but extending some distance into neighbouring South Gloucestershire;
- Varied and sometimes steeply sloping topography forming two discrete hills;
- Land use dominated by woodland cover of varied composition, including plantation and ancient woodland;
- Beyond woodland blocks, both arable farmland and improved pastures are evident, divided by a network of hedgerows;
- Sparsely settled with dwellings confined to lower slopes;
- Little Avon River forms a narrow incised valley on the southern boundary;
- The landscape is bisected by the M5 motorway; and
- Michael Wood Hill forms a local landmark, its prominence increased by dense woodland cover on its summit.

5.10.2 Landscape Character

The Low Wooded Cambrian Hills landscape type comprises one small area of rising landform located in the south west of the county. As this landscape type is only represented in this part of the Gloucestershire it therefore forms a single landscape character area. This type forms the northern limit of a more extensive series of hills, ridges and woodlands that extend southwards into South Gloucestershire Unitary Authority. The extension of the type beyond the county boundary adds weight and visual continuity to the physical presence of this isolated area of rising landform within Gloucestershire and is further emphasised by the extensive area of woodland cover.



The Low Wooded Cambrian Hills has a strong pattern and well defined landscape character associated with the prevalence of woodland cover, which when combined with the prominent elevated areas, creates a dark backdrop when viewed from the surrounding lower lying landscape types. The type is characterised by several attractive and relatively unique features within the county. These include the sinuous, incised valley of the Little Avon River and the twisting lanes that wind around the base of the hill slopes.

Overall there is a sense of enclosure within this landscape type, in particular where the local roads pass through woodland near the base of the hill slopes. However, from more elevated areas within the type there are expansive views towards the north of the Kingswood Vale and beyond to the Cotswold escarpment.

5.10.3 Physical Influences

The area is underlain by the Tremadoc Series rock formation of the Cambrian System. These are the oldest rocks in the county, and are juxtaposed against younger Silurian rocks which outcrop beyond the county to the south, and also to the west. The succession of harder shales, sandstones, and limestones form an elevated ridge, of which this section within Gloucestershire forms the northernmost projection. The area consists of a larger southern

5.10

Landscape Character Type: LOW WOODED CAMBRIAN HILLS

hill, rising to 50m AOD, and a smaller northern hill, rising to 55m AOD, whose physical separation has been emphasised by the construction of the M5 motorway which is located between the two hills.

The Little Avon River meanders along the base of the southern slopes of Michael Wood adjacent to a local road. The river has cut a steeply incised valley from east to west along the southern boundary of the landscape type forming the county boundary. There are numerous springs emerging on the northern slopes of the southern hill which drain towards ditches and streams in the east of the area, often forming field boundaries.



Land use is dominated by significant areas of woodland comprising stands of ancient woodland interspersed with significant swathes of recent conifer planting. Beyond the woodland edge, land use consists of a mixture of arable and pastoral farmland that is small to medium in scale. The woodland cover creates a highly textured landscape with the foliage of deciduous and coniferous trees contrasting with one another with further textural contrast provided by the land uses in the surrounding agricultural landscape. Other peripheral land uses include a disused quarry perched on the steep side of the river valley in the south of the area and horse grazing in fields adjacent to the disused quarry and on the outskirts of Damery.

5.10.4 Human Influences

Evidence of earlier human habitation and settlement patterns within the type is quite scarce. The heritage features visible in the landscape are limited to a Scheduled Ancient Monument comprising the Old Castle earthworks lying adjacent to the disused quarry and Damery and evidence of former unenclosed field patterns reflected by the irregular field enclosures on the lower slopes of the hills.

The M5 motorway bisects Michael Wood, extending between the northern and southern hill, with the saddle of land between the hills accommodating the Michael Wood Services area. Although the motorway is hardly visible beyond the saddle, the noise generated by motorway traffic is audible throughout most of the area. Elsewhere, there is a network of minor roads that are generally confined to the bottom of hill slopes. A twisting lane follows the deeply incised river valley through the south of the type and another lane follows the periphery of the woodland on the eastern edge. Other infrastructure within the area includes a mainline railway which forms the eastern boundary of the area. There is a prominent radio mast within the woodland which forms a local landmark and is readily visible from adjacent character types to the west.

There are very limited recreational opportunities with only a few limited rights of way skirting the edge of the area.

5.10.5 Buildings and Settlement

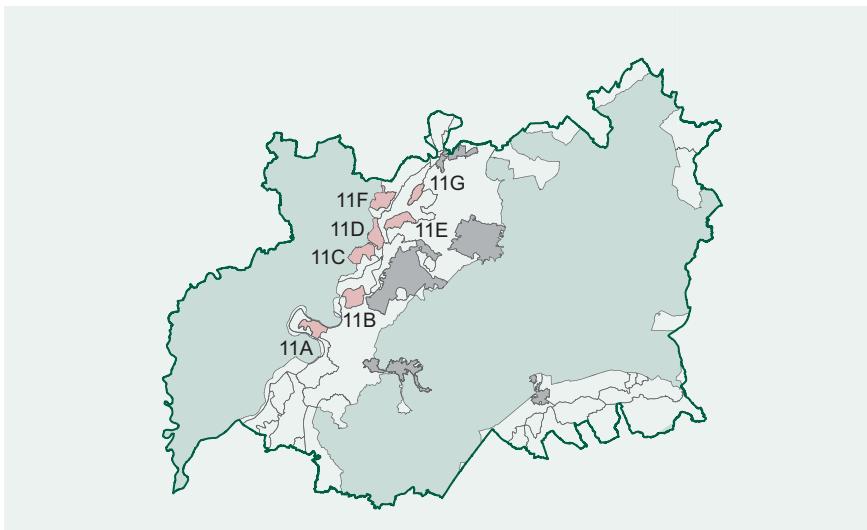
This small landscape type is virtually unsettled except for a limited number of scattered dwellings extending along the southern base of the hill at Damery.

5.10.6 Landscape Character Areas

SV 10A Michael Wood Hill

Michael Wood Hill is the only landscape character area associated with the Low Wooded Cambrian Hills character type within the county. The descriptions above therefore apply to this single character area.





CHARACTER AREAS

- SV 11A Arlington and Overton Hill
- SV 11B Monks' and Hockley Hills
- SV 11C Lassington and Rodway Hills
- SV 11D Woolridge Hill
- SV 11E Sandhurst and Norton Hills
- SV 11F Corse Wood and Barrow Hill
- SV 11G Apperley Hill

5.11.1 Key Characteristics

- Distinct area of low hills and ridges rising above the surrounding vale and floodplain landscape and associated with a succession of River Severn river terraces;
- Rich fertile alluvial soils overlying the terrace deposits and supporting well drained pasture and arable land enclosed in fields of varying size;
- Scrub encroachment evident on steeper hillsides where grazing is not possible;
- Woodland blocks frequently found on sloping land, providing a textural backdrop to the surrounding vale and floodplain farmland;
- Small villages are located on the upper slopes of some of the hillocks taking advantage of the drier land and rich soils that lie above the floodplain; some hillocks are more heavily settled, although overall they avoid the upper slopes and hillock tops;
- Access to the hillocks varies, with a combination of main roads and small winding rural roads, some of which represent ancient sinuous lanes traversing the landscape;
- Where roads border the lower slopes of the hills, they demarcate the boundary of the vale and floodplain landscape beyond; and
- Long distance views possible from roads and footpaths crossing the hillocks over the surrounding areas.

5.11.2 Landscape Character

The Vale Hillocks landscape character type encompasses a series of distinctive low hills that rise above the surrounding lowland and floodplain landscapes of the Severn Vale, in places rising to nearly 90m AOD. These diverse, small scale hills vary in form, from



distinctive rounded profiles to more elongated ridges. They share a common origin forming part of the system of river terraces that have been principally formed by the River Severn.

The hills are located on the western edge of the Severn Vale, with a number extending into the adjacent Forest of Dean. The most southerly comprises Arlington and Overton Hill to the south west of Gloucester and located within a large meander of the Severn. To the north, a series of hills extend as far as Apperley Hill within Gloucestershire. Although the vale hillocks are much lower in comparison with the Escarpment Outliers on the western and northern perimeter of the Cotswolds, their distinctive profiles form locally significant features within the adjacent lowland landscapes. From their summits and upper slopes they afford panoramic views over the surrounding vale and to the wider landscape beyond.

A rich alluvial soil has developed over the sand and gravel terrace deposits that extend across the hillocks. The fertile and free draining soils support agricultural land together with mixed woodland cover, with broadleaved species predominant as well as areas of scrub. Both arable and pasture is evident although the latter predominates, with rough grazing sometimes evident on steeper slopes. Woodland blocks are conspicuous on the steeper slopes, which in combination with the mixed farmland, results in a mosaic of land uses and textural backdrop to the surrounding vale.

5.11

Landscape Character Type: VALE HILLOCKS

Settlement on the Vale Hillocks varies with a number of hillocks being largely unsettled, and others containing more significant village settlements. A number of these settlements are located on the upper slopes and summit areas of the Vale Hillocks, benefiting from the drier land that is free from risk of flooding.

Road networks across the hillocks vary, and whilst a number are confined to the base of the slopes, others pass along and over the steeper landform and in places over the most elevated areas of the hillock.

5.11.3 Physical Influences

The Vale Hillocks are of considerable geomorphological interest, representing the remnants of a series of broad river terraces that have been formed by the River Severn. There is evidence that some of the hillocks are also partly structural and owe their elevation to the presence of more resistant Triassic rocks, as in the case of Woolridge Hill which is underlain by Penarth Group rocks. Nevertheless, the pattern of the hillocks, the accordant heights of their summit plateau areas, and overlying terrace deposits are evidence of the fluvial processes responsible for their formation. The varying heights of the terraces relate to the sequence of erosional phases of the ancient Severn as it cut through the glacial outwash fans deposited by the melting ice sheets. Woolridge Terrace, at 88m AOD is one of the highest of the terraces and is accordant with Norton Hill to the east of the Severn, together with its southern projection as a secondary terrace formed by Sandhurst Hill. Lower and younger terraces are evident, for example at Apperley Hill.

Steeply sloping landform has limited the extent of arable farming in areas, and consequently it is confined to the gentler landform, either on the summit areas or often at the base of the hillocks. The dominant land use over much of the hillocks is therefore pastoral farming. On particularly steep slopes which are unable to be grazed, rough pasture is evident with some scrub invasion. These areas of scrub blend seamlessly with areas of established woodland. Generally well maintained hedgerows with hedgerow trees define the field pattern, dividing the landscape into moderately sized pastures.

Woodland blocks of varying size and composition are characteristic of the Vale Hillocks. Although largely confined to steeper slopes, copses are also located on the lower, gentler slopes. Despite farming practices limiting the nature conservation interest of the landscape as a whole, there are a number of ancient semi natural woodlands, some of which are designated as local nature reserves, for example at Lassington Hill.

5.11.4 Human Influences

There is evidence of long occupation of the hillocks and elevated land that form the Severn Terraces. Both flint implements used by Palaeolithic man and mammoth remains have been found within the terrace gravels. In more recent times, the existing pattern of

hedged fields indicates that prior to enclosure, the hills were common land and likely to have been used by local people to graze their animals. Enclosure often led to the re-planning of local lanes and tracks, and it is possible that a number of lanes date back to the time of enclosure. Such roads were often located along the ridges and areas of higher land to avoid the vale landscape which would have been impassable during wetter periods.

Further evidence of heritage features are generally limited on the Vale Hillocks, although along the boundaries with the adjacent lowland landscape and on lower lying areas of land, a number of notable manors and courts are evident, along with examples of medieval villages. A significant heritage feature is Odda's Chapel, an Anglo Saxon chapel on the northern edge of Apperley Hill and adjacent to the River Severn. There is also a good example of a cruck cottage in Apperley.

A network of minor country roads predominates across the Vale Hillocks. In places, the hillocks remain largely inaccessible, having a more remote character. Others, however, have a more extensive road network, crossing both elevated areas and also skirting the base of the hillock adjacent to the surrounding lowland landscape. Where areas remain inaccessible to vehicles, public rights of way are often evident.

5.11.5 Buildings and Settlement

Settlement on the Vale Hillocks varies. A sparse settlement pattern is characteristic of some hillocks with isolated farms and dwellings scattered along the network of minor roads crossing the hills, together with small hamlets, often linear in form and avoiding the more elevated areas of land. Elsewhere, despite the undulating and sometimes steeply sloping landform, settlement has become more extensive with villages clustered along the road network, frequently at the intersection of a number of roads, such as at Apperley. Other villages have a linear form and are generally confined to the lower slopes. Modern development is evident on some hillocks, notably the extensive housing development at Maidenhall, although the original village settlement is still evident at the base of Lassington Hill. Building materials vary, with collections of brick and half timbered properties, typical of the neighbouring vale and more modern infill development is also apparent.

5.11.6 Landscape Character Areas

SV 11A Overton and Barrow Hill

Overton and Barrow Hill consists of a gently undulating landscape that forms a cluster of elevated areas rising to a height of 62m AOD at Barrow Hill. The elevated land of the hillock forms a backdrop to the lower-lying surrounding landscapes of Arlington Warth and Longney Riverine Farmland to the west and the Vale of Berkeley to the east. From the more elevated areas of the hillock there are open views to the west towards the Severn Estuary and beyond to the Forest of Dean. The River Severn forms the northern and southern boundary of the character area and a

prominent brick wall runs along the length of the flood defences aligning the eastern bank of the River Severn in the north of the character area. Other hydrological influences in the area include occasional ponds scattered across the hillock and a small number of ditches draining the sides of the hillock towards the River Severn.



Pasture is the principal land use across the hillock punctuated by occasional arable fields. The field size is generally medium in scale with smaller scale pasture on rising land. Low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows predominate, but where these have become gappy in places, the boundaries are commonly reinforced by post and wire. There is a mixture of semi-improved and scrubby pasture fields within predominantly medium scale fields, and grazed by cows, sheep, and also with some horse pasture adjacent to settlements. There also appears to be a number of orchards within the area.

A number of scattered woodland copse in the area are generally confined to the eastern portion of the hillock. These copses are deciduous or mixed in composition and regular in shape. There are two fragments of ancient semi-natural broad-leaved woodland in the southern portion of the character area adjacent to the River Severn comprising Smith's Wood and Long Wood. Elsewhere in the landscape, scattered hedgerow trees provide additional tree cover to the hillock. The overall character is that of a quiet rural landscape with smooth fields contrasting with the textured hedgerows and hedgerow trees.

The area is well served by local roads and minor tracks which criss-cross the higher land of the hillock. The local roads generally take the form of narrow winding lanes which have a sunken character due to the enclosing effect of the hedgerows aligning these roads.

High voltage pylons form a prominent vertical feature in the southern portion of the area as they extend east-west across the hillock, connecting Berkeley Power Station with sub-stations to the north east and south east of the area.

Wick Court and an adjacent moat form the only significant heritage features in the landscape. The buildings date back to the medieval period, but are now occupied by the 'Farms for City Children' Charity. There is also a notable area of meadowland associated with Wick Court.

The main settlements of Overton and Arlington are both broadly linear in form with the latter located on the lower slopes of the hillock and the former extending over the more elevated area of Barrow Hill. Both villages comprise a number of old brick houses with some rendered properties. There are some enclaves of new brick properties associated with Arlington. There are scattered farms and isolated dwellings in the wider landscape beyond the settlements of Overton and Arlington, although the northern portion of the hillock remains largely unsettled.

Recreational opportunities in the area include a network of public footpaths giving access to the hillock, the Severn Way extending along the northern and southern character area boundaries and a Working Farm is located in the settlement of Arlington.

SV 11B Monks' and Hockley Hills

Monks' and Hockley Hills character area comprises a series of minor hills including Monks' Hill, Hockley Hill and Windmill Hill. These hills form a composite gently undulating hillock with shallow sloping sides rising to 59m AOD on Hockley Hill. The subtle undulations of the hillock provide extensive views across the adjacent vale landscape to the east from more elevated areas whilst creating a more intimate localised sense of enclosure in lower lying areas within the hillock undulations. Hydrology within the hillock is limited to a number of ditches aligning field boundaries, although small ponds are a common feature adjacent to roads in this character area.



Land use on the hillock is dominated by pasture fields of varying sizes that are generally regularly shaped, with fields on the rising landform often becoming smaller in scale. Much of the pastures appear to be improved, and some scrubby areas of pasture are also evident, often adjacent to settlements. Occasional arable fields can also be found. Low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows form the principal boundary treatment in the area and oaks commonly form a hedge tree species. Where hedgerows have become gappy, however, they are often reinforced with post and wire.

The hillock is relatively well wooded, particularly on the eastern side. The woodland blocks that extend across the hillock are largely deciduous and tend to enclose upper slopes, whilst the summit remains open as grassland. Copses are also located on

5.11

Landscape Character Type: VALE HILLOCKS

the shallower slopes at the base of the hillock. There are two fragments of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland, comprising Church Covert and Shatford Grove, adjacent to the western boundary of the hillock. Further areas of ancient woodland cover includes St. Martin's and Hockley Woods on the northern and western slopes of Hockley Hill, and Hardwicke Farm Covert adjacent to the south east boundary of the character area. The woodland cover combines with the localised undulations of the hillock to give an overall strong pattern to the landscape and these landscape elements also combine to give a sheltered and enclosed character to the landscape in places.



Settlement is relatively limited over the hillock and is principally confined to the lower hillock slopes. Where settlement does occur, it is generally dispersed and linear in form, with a series of small hamlets, as at Elmore, together with farms and isolated dwellings. Traditional stone and old red brick tend to predominate as building materials and there are occasional timber framed properties within the settlements. Orchards and small scale pasture, often scrubby and with grazing cows or sheep, are commonly found on the edges of the hamlets.

An interconnecting network of minor roads encircles the base of the hillock and links the clusters of dispersed hamlets and dwellings. There is also a strong network of interconnecting public footpaths and occasional bridleways that surround and cross the hillock.

SV 11C Lassington and Rodway Hills

Lassington and Rodway Hills character area comprises an elevated area of land that rises above the low-lying landscape of The Rea, Maisemore Ham and Longford area of Floodplain Farmland. Views across the floodplain farmland towards the urban edge of Gloucester and the vale landscape beyond are visible from the hillock and beyond, more distant views to the Cotswolds Escarpment can also be seen from the more elevated areas. The hillock encompasses both Lassington Hill and Rodway Hill which form two distinct areas of elevated land within the hillock. The eastern slopes of the hillock are steeper relative to the other hillock slopes and define the locally incised valley of the River Leader, close to the river's confluence with the Severn. Hydrological features within the hillock are relatively limited and comprise a few small ponds scattered across the area and some ditches draining the northern slopes of Lassington Hill towards the River Leader.

Agricultural land use within the character area comprises medium to large scale arable fields while some scrubby and unfenced areas of pasture are evident around Lassington. Low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows predominate as a common field boundary together with isolated scattered hedge trees.



There are several notable areas of woodland in the character area. Woodland cover in the eastern portion of the hillock on Lassington Hill comprises Lassington Hill Wood and a number of small scattered copses on the north eastern slopes of Lassington Hill, together with a fragment of ancient semi-natural broad-leaved woodland at The Reddings. Lassington Hill Wood is a designated Local Nature Reserve and is notable due to its bird interest. In the western part of the hillock, on Roday Hill, the extensive area of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland of Highnam Woods forms the principal land cover. Rodway Hill Golf Course extends across the lower slopes of Rodway Hill and the smooth mown amenity grass of the golf course contrasts with the textures of the woodland within the Highnam woodlands to the east. There are also some areas of new tree planting associated with the golf course which have a more ornamental and fragmented character.



Minor roads provide access to the elevated areas of Lassington Hill, while major roads skirt the lower slopes, e.g. the B4215 which passes between Lassington Hill and Rodway Hill and sections of the A40 that extends along the southern boundary of the character area.

The Lassington and Rodway Hills character area is the most heavily settled of the Vale Hillocks with the modern red brick housing estate of Maidenhall extending across the south and south western slopes of Lassington Hill and onto the summit area. The

rooflines of the Maidenhall development dominate the horizon when the hillock is viewed from the east and south east. The Maidenhall housing estate has been established adjacent to the linear hamlet of Highnam and remnants of this earlier settlement is evident along the B4215 as a series of older properties including Highnam Chapel. Elsewhere on the hillock the settlement pattern comprises scattered farms and isolated dwellings.



Heritage features of note in the area include the site of the medieval village of Lassington on the lower northern slopes of Lassington Hill. The hamlet of Lassington still remains although confined to a cluster of dwellings comprising a farm, Lassington Court and a small church.

Overall, the Lassington and Rodway Hills comprises a diverse landscape with tracts of open agricultural landscape contrasting with blocks of woodland and adjacent areas of prominent residential development. In some areas of the hillock, the urbanising influence of Maidenhall combines with the visible proximity of Gloucester and views towards high voltage pylons in the north of the area to create a busy and settled landscape.

SV 11D Woolridge Hill

Woolridge Hill forms an elevated ridge of land rising from the adjacent flat low-lying landscape of the Floodplain Farmland. It has given its name to the 'Woolridge Terrace' which is the oldest and highest of the Severn river terraces. Although comprising a series of hills with undulating steeply sloping sides, the landform of the character area appears as a discrete ridge in the landscape. Panoramic views towards the adjacent hillocks of Sandhurst and Norton Hills to the north east and Corse Wood & Barrow Hill to the north are evident from the elevated areas of the hillock, as well as distant views across the vale to the Cotswolds escarpment. The flat landscape of the adjacent Floodplain Farmland is particularly notable from many areas of the hillock with the pylon line that extends along the River Severn floodplain forming a prominent vertical feature in these views. Hydrological features within the area include a number of streams that rise on the hillock slopes and a large lake to the south of Maisemore Court which is fed by a stream that flows towards the Severn.

Land use includes a combination of pasture and arable agriculture in a predominantly large scale field pattern with some areas of very large scale arable fields in the vicinity of the summit of the hillock.



Pasture is generally improved with some areas of semi-improved and scrubby sheep pasture on the north east of the hillock with evidence of soil creep on the steeper north east slopes. Low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows are the common boundary treatment. Hedgerow trees are absent from some field boundaries whilst abundant along others. There are some areas of smaller scale meadows on the hillock and a strip of semi-natural grassland known as Maisemore Roughett extends along the steep north east facing slopes of the hillock south of Longridge End.



There are a number of woodland blocks of mixed composition in the northern portion of the hillock including Dean's Coppice, a fragment of ancient semi-natural woodland in the northern tip of the area. Other notable wooded features in the landscape include a line of poplars that align Over Old road on the summit of the hillock, clusters of parkland trees associated with Maisemore Park and a number of well treed boundaries that often appear as continuations of adjacent woodland blocks in views towards the hillock.

Access to the hillock is gained by a network of minor roads, one of which is a narrow and winding sunken lane that climbs the hill slopes and traverses the ridgeline. The A417 extends over the south and west of the hillock. A limited number of rights of way give pedestrian access to the hillock.

5.11

Landscape Character Type: VALE HILLOCKS

The village of Maisemore is located on southern edge of the hillock and comprises a diverse mix of housing including old white-washed brick houses, isolated thatch dwellings and some old timber-framed properties interspersed with clusters of new residential development. Maisemore Court, to the north of the village of Maisemore, is a local heritage feature and the stone church tower adjacent to Maisemore Court is readily visible from the surrounding lower-lying landscape of the Floodplain Farmland and forms a prominent local landmark. Beyond Maisemore, further settlement in the character area comprises scattered farms and isolated old stone and brick properties extending along Over Old Road and also on the summit of the hillock.



Although the mosaic of settlement, land use and woodland combine to create a diverse landscape character, the visually prominent ridgeline and undulations along the hillock sides provide both a strong pattern and unifying influence on the landscape of Woolridge Hill.

SV 11E Sandhurst and Norton Hills

Sandhurst and Norton Hills form a distinctive area of elevated land rising from the flat landscape of the Floodplain Farmland to a height of 86m AOD at the summit of Sandhurst Hill, and accordant with the Woolridge Terrace. When viewed from the lower-lying floodplain and vale landscape to the east, the hillock forms part of an elevated landscape that includes the Forest of Dean and forms the backdrop to Barrow Hill when viewed from the north. Whilst the eastern slopes are relatively shallow, the hillock slopes rises more steeply on the western side and include a steep cliff face overlooking the River Severn that extends between the mid-slopes of Norton Hill and Wainlode Hill. The almost vertical 'Wainlode Cliff'



displays a distinctive exposure of the Rhaetic and Triassic Keuper Marl rocks, with their characteristic iron rich red colour.

Hydrological features across the hillock are limited to occasional ditches aligning field boundaries and a small number of scattered ponds.



Land use on the hillock includes a mixture of arable and pastoral agriculture with a predominance of very large scale arable fields divided by low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows in the western portion of the hillock. Scrubby pastures in smaller scale fields, and often enclosed by overgrown and gappy hedgerows, tend to dominate the steeper inclines of the hillock.

There are extensive areas of largely deciduous woodland on the north west face of the hillock cloaking the upper and middle slopes and dominating the skyline. These woodland blocks create a strong pattern in the landscape and provide a textural contrast to the smooth appearance of the arable fields. Elsewhere on the hillock there are small scattered mixed copse including Handley Wood, a fragment of ancient broadleaved woodland on the south east facing slopes of the hillock, as well as occasional orchards. The woodland blocks and scattered copse combine with the undulations of the hillock slopes to create some areas that feel enclosed and sheltered, whilst elevated areas remain exposed.



The road network in the area is confined to minor roads running north to south in the eastern part of the hillock with tracks providing access to the woodland block on the north west face of the hillock.

The hillock is very sparsely settled and limited to occasional isolated old red brick properties and scattered farms, the most prominent of which is Court Farm on the lower north eastern perimeter of the hillock slopes and whose boundary is demarcated by a tall red brick wall. Recreational opportunities within the area include a public house and caravan and campsite adjacent to The Cliff on the northern edge of the hillock overlooking the River Severn.

SV 11F Corse Wood and Barrow Hills

Corse Wood and Barrow Hills Character Area comprises a distinctive area of elevated land, rising above the surrounding Unwooded Vale and Floodplain Farmland landscape. The landform comprises a series of hills that often appears as a strongly undulating landform when viewed in close proximity. The largest and most readily recognisable of these hills is Barrow Hill with its distinctive conical summit area, at a height of 78m AOD, and crowned by a copse of trees. From elevated areas of the hillock there are panoramic views over the low-lying vale and Floodplain Farmland towards Apperley Hill in the east and Sandhurst and Norton Hills to the south east. The hillock has been dissected by a series of streams that rise from springs on the hillock slopes, and flow towards the Severn. The vegetation aligning these streams often appears as wooded cloughs on the sides of the hillock or as well-treed boundaries. A number of ponds are also evident on the hillock.



Land use within the hillock comprises a mixture of arable and pasture fields with pasture predominating in irregular fields of varying sizes that extend across the undulating landform. A range of management regimes has resulted in a mosaic of semi-improved, improved and scrubby areas of pasture, grazed by both sheep and cattle. Horse grazing is also common on the edge of settlements. There is evidence of decline in some of the pastures, particularly those at the north eastern base of the hillock. Occasional arable fields often add colour and interest and in some areas, arable fields have been subdivided into strips of different crops with no dividing boundaries. Low well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows form the common boundary treatment with ash and oak predominating as a hedgerow tree species. The

hedgerows have become gappy in places, however, and have become reinforced or replaced with post and wire in others. Elsewhere, hedgerows that have become overgrown often read as linear copses in the landscape.

A number of predominantly deciduous copses cloak the undulating hillock landform. Their size varies, some being large and extensive, e.g. Corse Grove, whilst others are more limited in size, e.g. Horsehill Covert. Corse Grove comprises an ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland that wraps around a spur on the north east face of the hillock. Mixhill Wood is another small fragment of ancient semi-natural woodland lying to the north of Barrow Hill. The distinctive and visually prominent copse on the summit of Barrow Hill forms a local landmark which is visible from adjacent hillocks and from surrounding lower-lying landscape types. Other distinctive trees in the character area include some parkland trees and ornamental specimens associated with Hasfield Court and a line of pollarded willows, interspersed with mature hedgerow oak trees, which align the Ham Road. This road extends along the boundary between the Vale Hillock landscape and the Floodplain Farmland landscape type and the pollarded willows are indicative of this transition in the landscape.



Corse Wood and Barrow Hill forms one of the more accessible hillocks with numerous minor roads and a relatively dense network of public rights of way, with the result that much of the hillock is accessible. The very narrow winding lanes that cross the hillock slopes and Corse Wood Hill summit are generally enclosed by either vegetation and/or landform on the summit and mid slopes, whilst retaining a more open character when traversing the base slopes of the hillock.

Settlement generally aligns the network of minor roads crossing the hillock, and comprises scattered farmsteads and outbuildings and isolated dwellings. Red brick predominates as a buildings material although there are some stone dwellings, e.g. Old School House, and some black & white timber-framed properties. There are also a number of large and distinctive heritage properties on the east facing slopes of the hillock including Hasfield Court, Great House and Tirley Hall. Hasfield Court is surrounded by a prominent boundary wall.

5.11

Landscape Character Type: VALE HILLOCKS

Overall, the Corse Wood and Barrow Hills character area comprises a varied landscape due to the combination of elements that contribute to its character. Areas of smooth undulating fields of arable crops and improved pasture contrast with blocks of woodland and tracts of scrubby pastures. It is a diverse landscape in terms of enclosure, with open and expansive views in some elevated areas whilst in others, contained by the undulating landform, a sense of enclosure prevails. The area also has a number of distinctive local landscape features e.g. the copse on the summit of Barrow Hill, the pollarded willows aligning Ham Road, and the heritage properties that are located along the east facing slope of the hillock.

SV 11G Apperley Hill

Apperley Hill comprises an undulating area of landform which rises to 50m AOD from the flat expanse of the surrounding vale and Severn floodplain to form a locally distinctive hillock. The west facing sides of the hillock appear more pronounced where a series of minor valleys have dissected the hillock slopes. Hydrological features are limited to a series of ponds scattered throughout the area, the most extensive being Handkerchief Pools which forms a linear water body extending along the south west base of the hillock.



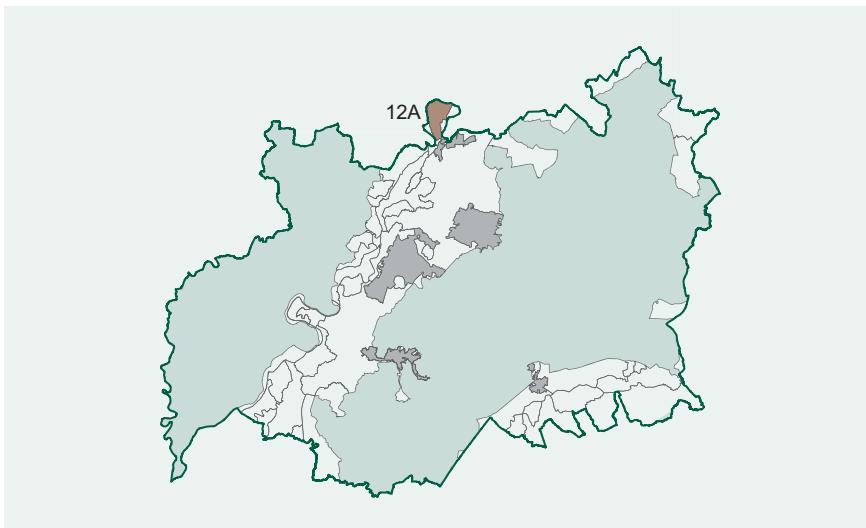
The hillock appears well wooded when viewed from the west with small copses scattered throughout the landscape. The copses comprise both coniferous and deciduous species and include Barrow Grove in the northern portion of the hillock and Apperley Grove in the south. Hedgerow boundaries are also often well treed and contribute to the overall woodland cover. Woodland on the upper slopes of the hillock often limits views towards the wider landscape from the more elevated parts of the character area. Nevertheless, there are filtered distant views towards the Malvern Hills from some parts of the north west portion of the character area, and views towards the Cotswolds Escarpment are also possible from sections of the eastern slopes.

Pastoral land use predominates on the hill sides in small scale enclosures at the base of the hillock, and ridge and furrow is visible in some fields on the north west slopes. Hedgerows are becoming overgrown in places, and gappy in others, and there is evidence that the hedgerow network is breaking down, particularly on the summit of the hillock. Where hedgerows are overgrown they contribute to the wooded feel of the hillock. There are also a number of orchards scattered across the hillock. The combination of the field pattern and woodland blocks accentuate the rising slopes of the hillock.



The B4213 skirts the base of the character area and a network of minor roads provides access to the hillock. Roads over the hillock are winding and narrow and feel enclosed by landform and local vegetation as they ascend the hillock slopes. There is also a relatively dense network of public rights of way that criss-cross the character area.

This is a well settled hillock with dwellings and farms scattered along the base slopes. The settlement of Apperley occupies the hillock summit and in places extends along minor roads down the hillock sides to the middle slopes. In the centre of the Apperley there is a distinctive cluster of old red brick properties and a few black & white timber framed dwelling set around a village green, including a notable cruck cottage. Beyond this, more recent dwellings, including modern bungalow developments, are located on the periphery of the settlement.



CHARACTER AREAS

SV 12A Twyning Hills

Key Characteristics

- Low hilly terrain overlying a complex solid geology of Triassic and Lias Group rock formations and further masked by a mosaic of drift deposits;
- Soils and vegetation cover are influenced by the overlying drift deposits which include boulder clay, and sand and gravel terrace deposits including the 'Cheltenham Sand and Gravel';
- Notable areas of commons on acid sandy soils with distinctive vegetation of regenerating birch and gorse; public access to commons is restricted to infrequent perimeter paths;
- Commercial nurseries with glasshouses as well as open ground tree nurseries impart the sense of a managed and working landscape;
- Motorway network and other major roads cross and pass through the area with localised impact of traffic noise; a secondary network of smaller roads and lanes connect to the range of settlements;
- Nucleated settlements of Twyning and Church End and dispersed farms and private dwellings principally confined to more elevated ground ; some have historic interest with designated Conservation Areas;
- Wider range of dwelling types ranging from a concentration of isolated Georgian mansions or houses to the south, village settlements, new housing and thatched dwellings along the perimeter of the commons;
- Iron Age hill fort occupying a prominent site overlooking the Severn is indicative of earlier occupation of area;
- Recreational uses ranging from golf courses and caravan and camping sites;
- Expansive views to the Malvern Hills from the more elevated areas, as well as to the Cotswolds and Forest of Dean;



5.12.1 Landscape Character

The Low Hills and Commons Character Type is located on the northern edge of the Severn Vale, north west of Tewkesbury and between the Severn and Avon rivers. This discrete area extends from The Mythe in the south to the northern boundary of the county in the vicinity of Junction 8 of the M5. As this landscape type is only represented in this part of Gloucestershire, it therefore forms a single landscape character area, comprising the Twyning Hills. It comprises a series of low, gently undulating hills with occasional steeper slopes. Although only reaching heights in the order of 50m AOD, the sense of an elevated landform appears more pronounced as a result of the adjacent low lying Riverside Meadows which surround the Hills. From more elevated and open locations on the Hillock, the Malvern Hills, Cotswolds and Forest of Dean form a distinctive backdrop to longer distance views across the vale and floodplain farmland.

The landscape of the Low Hills and Commons displays a distinctive pattern, with open commons, frequently invaded by scrub and regenerating species, contrasting with surrounding semi improved pastures and scattered arable fields, enclosed by gappy hedgerows and post and wire and post and rail fencing. The nature conservation value of the commons is frequently recognised through their designation as Key Wildlife Sites, their semi natural grassland often notable as favoured habitats for numerous bird species.

5.12

Landscape Character Type: LOW HILLS AND COMMONS

Tree cover comprises occasional woodland copse and scattered hedgerow trees with isolated orchards. Where scrubby vegetation prevails in the commons, woodland and trees combine to give the appearance of a well treed landscape in places. Pollarded willows aligning minor roads are also evident, along with fields of neat tree lines associated with the nurseries that have developed across the area.

This is a relatively well settled landscape, with development including nucleated villages and dispersed linear settlements, together with a pattern of scattered farms and dwellings in the wider landscape. Building materials vary, including red brick properties, timber frame and thatch, together with prominent and distinctive manors of Georgian origin, reflecting the long settled history of the landscape. A number of features of archaeological interest are evident; these include a hill fort, castle, an ancient routeway and scattered areas of ridge and furrow.

5.12.2 Physical Influences

The underlying geology to the area is complex with the Twynning Hills lying at the juxtaposition of Triassic and Lias Group strata and further masked by a range of superficial deposits. A well defined north south structural division occurs between these two periods that broadly aligns with the A38 that follows a north south route from Tewkesbury to the county boundary. Triassic Mercia Mudstone (Keuper Marl) outcrops to the west of this unconformity, while to the east the oldest rocks within the Lias Group occur, comprising Charmouth Mudstone Formation and above this the Dyrham Formation. Intermittent deposits of Quaternary drift material mask the solid geology and have given rise to economically important sources of sand and gravel including deposits of Cheltenham Sands.

The low hilly terrain of the Twynning Hills is contained between the broader low lying valleys of the Severn and Avon. Rising above these two valleys, the areas of more resistant mudstones attributable to both the Triassic and Lower Jurassic periods have given rise to the undulating low hills and intermittent summit areas. These reach elevations of between 15 to 47 m AOD. Limited bands of mudstone and sandstone can be found around Towbury Hill, while a narrow band of limestone outcrops east of Phelps Farm. Much of the overlying superficial deposits have been worn away, exposing the areas of mudstone and limestone, but sand and gravel deposits still remain on some of the more elevated areas of land including the summit of some of the hills. This has influenced soil characteristics and given rise to areas of sandier soils, many areas of which have developed as common land and colonised by heath vegetation.

The only significant watercourse within the Twynning Hills is the Ripple Brook which rises on Brockridge Common in the north and flows north south towards the Severn. Minor springs are also evident between the rising land with occasional ditches and scattered ponds and pools, the latter being predominantly located on the hillsides.

As the Low Hills and Commons Character Type name infers, areas of common land are a distinctive feature, and unlike other commons within the Severn Vale, they occupy the more elevated and undulating terrain. Characterised by unimproved grazing pastures and scrubby grassland, the commons remain open with no enclosing boundaries and extensive areas of gorse and colonising species such as birch and hawthorn. In places, the extent of scrubby vegetation creates a sense of enclosure, contrasting with open views over the surrounding lowland landscape from some more elevated areas of land. The importance of the commons is recognised by their designation as Key Wildlife Sites. Covering the most extensive area, Brockridge Common is situated in the north west of the Twynning Hills and is designated as a result of its semi-natural grassland. The smaller Shuthonger Common, south of Brockridge is also designated for its semi-natural grassland. Other designated areas include land adjacent to the dismantled Mythe railway, of importance due to its semi natural grassland and plant interest. Elsewhere there is a general predominance of small to medium scale semi-improved grazed pastures interspersed with larger arable fields. Field enclosure varies, although low hedges, often gappy and reinforced with post and wire fences are prevalent, together with post and wire and post and rail boundaries. In places, the depleting boundary treatment can result in a fragmented landscape.

A number of Plant Nurseries have established within the Twynning Hills Character Area, taking advantage of the free draining soils where sandy deposits and horizons are present. The highly managed landscapes associated with these nurseries, with numerous rows of trees together with glasshouses, is a characteristic feature.

Although woodland is not abundant across the Low Hills and Commons, a number of deciduous copse are scattered across the landscape and together with the extensive areas of scrub that are often evident on the commons, a well treed character is apparent in places. Pollarded willows can also be found aligning ditches adjacent to minor roads.

5.12.3 Human Influences

Although archaeological features are relatively limited, there are a number of notable features across the landscape. Traversing the area is the line of an ancient trackway which commences at Bredon Hill. The track runs westwards towards Twynning Fleet, an old crossing of the River Avon, aligned to Midsummer Hill. The track continues through Twynning village, south of Brockridge Common towards Ripple Church. It is possible that it crossed the Ripple Brook around 200 yards below the present road bridge. From the church, the track continues to the wayside cross marking the centre of the village, where it intersects the old coach road running north and south, before continuing along the road to Uckinghall, where another ancient cross marks the divergence of a track to the River Severn. Continuing westwards, the track crosses

the crest of Longdon Heath, around the northern end of Longdon Marsh and on to Midsummer Hill. The track, although now partially following overgrown lanes and grass footpaths, is evident within the landscape, with the crossing of the River Avon now marked by the Fleet Ferry.

King John's Castle is located in the south of the area, to the south west of The Mythe. The castle commands a strategic bridging point on the banks of the River Severn. Although it is now converted into a residential property, it remains an important feature. The site of a Motte is located to the south of King John's Castle. The Iron Age hill fort of Tewbury Hill is located on the western edge of the area, north west of Puckrup, and occupies a prominent position overlooking the River Severn. The hill fort is also designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Despite the limited size of the Twynning Hills, the area is relatively accessible with the A38(T) forming a north south aligned spine road through the landscape, with connections to the M50 motorway that crosses the northern section of the character area. Beyond this is a network of minor, winding rural roads providing access to settlements and the nearby M5 motorway, of which a limited section also passes through the hills at Showborough Common. Although only occasional views of the major road network are possible, an audible intrusion is evident. In the north, whilst the roads form part of an interconnected network of routes, roads and lanes in the south terminate in dead ends adjacent to the surrounding Riverside Meadows. A number of minor tracks provide further access to isolated dwellings on the edge of the landscape type. Beyond the road network, communications are restricted to the line of the dismantled Mythe railway, adjacent to the south western boundary.

A number of recreational opportunities are present within the Twynning Hills, in addition to the interest and facilities that are available in the adjacent settlement of Tewkesbury. Numerous public rights of way cross the landscape. On the common land these are often restricted to the perimeter of the area, although a number of footpaths cross the eastern section of Brockridge Common. Situated to the east and south west of Shothunger are two caravan and camping sites, the latter located on the lower banks of the hills adjacent to the Riverside Meadows. At Puckrup, on the western edge of the character area a golf course has been established in the grounds surrounding Puckrup Hall, with the main hall now developed as a hotel. Numerous areas of recently planted tree and shrub planting have been established within the golf course.

5.12.4 Buildings and Settlement

The nucleated village of Twynning is the main settlement within the Twynning Hills. Occupying the eastern edge of the landscape, the village is aligned along a number of minor roads connecting the settlement with the wider landscape. There are various building materials and styles within the village, with red brick properties particularly evident, as well as a number that are rendered, and also occasional timber framed dwellings. To the south of Twynning is the small nucleated village of Church End. The village is designated as a Conservation Area and includes brick, stone and timber framed properties with both thatched and tiled roofs. Elsewhere, dispersed linear settlements are evident as at Hill End and Shothunger, the latter located along the main A38 through the centre of the hills.

In the wider landscape there are numerous scattered farms and dwellings, often diverse in style and materials, including red brick and timber framed structures with thatched roofs, the latter often evident on the edge of the commons. A notable characteristic of the Twynning Hills are houses with a distinctive Georgian character, generally occupying an elevated position overlooking the surrounding landscape.

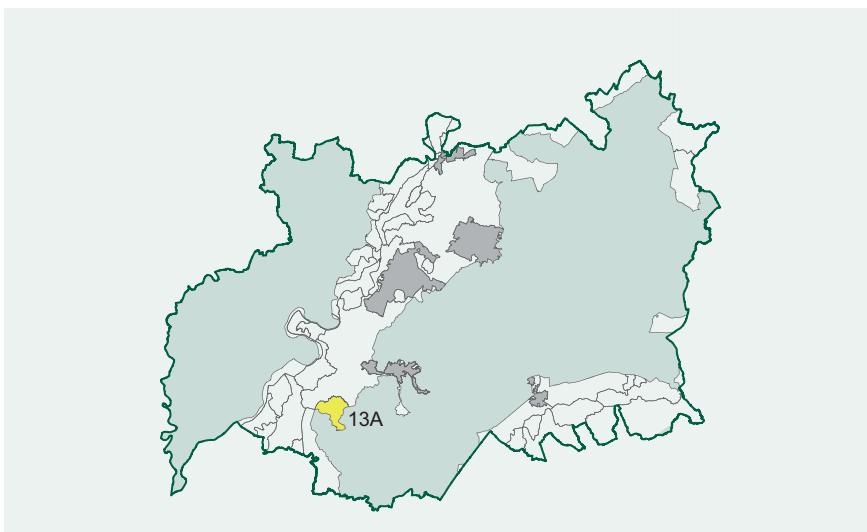
Other prominent and characteristic structures comprise the numerous glasshouses and polytunnels that are located within the area, and which often add visual diversity to the landscape.

5.12.5 Landscape Character Areas

SV 12A Twynning Hills

Twynning Hills is the only landscape character area associated with the Low Hill and Commons landscape character type within the county. The descriptions above therefore apply to this single character area.





CHARACTER AREAS

SV 13A Dursley, Cam and Uley Valley

5.13.1 Key Characteristics

- A generally enclosed and secluded 'secret' character in the upper sections of valleys and within the narrow valley bottoms;
- Broader and more open valley form and developed character where the valleys meet the Severn Vale;
- Elevated views over the vale landscape are possible from the western and northern limits of the landscape type within the Severn Vale study area;
- Woodland is limited beyond the adjoining Cotswolds AONB, although in the wider landscape type the steep sided concave valleys frequently have woodland dominating the steeper upper slopes;
- Valleys drained by several tributary streams that flow into the Little Avon River and River Cam before entering the River Severn;
- Area largely under pastoral use, with occasional areas under arable cultivation, confined largely to the valley slopes and bottom. Areas of scrubby pasture often evident on some upper slopes;
- Fields are generally small to medium scale, enclosed by hedgerows with hedgerow trees frequent on valley slopes and post and wire fences;
- Larger settlements with more pronounced urban influences are frequently located at valley mouths, with smaller, rural settlements along valley bottoms and stream sides and upper valley slopes; and
- Roads located along valley bottoms and tops, frequently cutting across the slopes.



5.13.2 Landscape Character

A small part of The Severn Vale study area forms part of the Rolling Hills and Valleys landscape type which is identified and fully described in the Cotswolds AONB LCA. The area forms the northern limit of the type and extends across the escarpment footslopes from the north west of Dursley up to the M5 motorway, and to the east of Cam. The settlement of Dursley is also included in this area and forms the western limit of the incised Uley Valley. The prominent landforms of Cam Long Down and Peaked Down Outliers define the southern limit of the area. Although the landscape is less elevated and dissected as the valley re-entrants into the escarpment, the area nevertheless displays the characteristics of the rolling landform associated with this type.

For completion and consistency with the LCA process, the entire landscape type within which this area of land is located is described below, with cross reference to the full description in the Cotswolds AONB LCA. In order to inform the description of the character area, however, more specific features associated with this transitional landscape at the foot of the dissected escarpment are also examined.

5.13

Landscape Character Type: ROLLING HILLS AND VALLEYS

The Rolling Hills and Valleys comprise an area of valley complexes that are narrow at source, broadening when joining the surrounding Unwooded Vale and separated by relatively narrow, and often open spurs of land supporting areas of pasture and calcareous grassland. Between Hillesley and Uley a series of valleys encroach into and breach the escarpment. As a result, the escarpment is less well defined than other stretches to the north and south, appearing as a complex of rolling hills and ridgelines separating numerous deeply incised valleys.

The valleys are drained by small, fast flowing streams that rise from springlines and wet flushes on the steep upper slopes and drain into the Severn Vale. Land use within the area is dominated by pastoral fields grazed by sheep, enclosed by a network of hedgerows with hedgerow trees, and on occasions, post and wire fences. Hedgerow trees contribute to the overall wooded feel of the valleys, which contain extensive woodland, particularly on the steep upper slopes and valley rims.

The settlement pattern within the Rolling Hills and Valleys is diverse, responding to topography and drainage, with the principal areas of development located in the broad valley mouths adjacent to the Vale, and also along the narrower valley floors exploiting the lower valley sides and close proximity to spring lines. Development in these areas consists mainly of dispersed linear hamlets with occasional examples that are organic in form. In the northern section of this type the larger linked settlement of Dursley and Cam is a dominant feature. Often the springline is also a location for medieval manor houses and associated villages, with scattered individual dwellings located along a network of minor roads on the lower valley slopes. A number of dispersed hamlets are also found on the valley sides and crests of the rolling hills and valleys.

This is an area of contrasting character although unified by the continuity of the valley form. The physical enclosure and remoteness of the upper sections of the valleys and valleys bottoms, sometimes accessible only on foot, impart a secluded and 'secret' character. In contrast, the lower sections of the valleys at the transition with the Vale have a more developed and urban character, particularly in the vicinity of Dursley and Cam, with settlement encroaching onto the valley sides, as well as bottom.

5.13.3 Physical Influences

The alternating layers of Oolitic Limestone and sandstones, and underlying Lias Group, sandstones and mudstones, and Marlstone Rock Formation have been eroded by a dendritic river system to form distinctive concave valleys, which although narrow at source, broaden and open out onto the surrounding Vale. The valleys extend into what would once have been the escarpment face to create a series of valleys surrounded by spurs of land extending from the surrounding High Wold and High Wold Dip-Slope. Where the Oolitic Limestone and sandstone forms the upper valley sides, steeper slopes have formed creating an abrupt break of slope with

the surrounding High Wold and High Wold Dip-Slope. Deposits of alluvial clay, sand and gravel can be found along the floor of the tributary valleys.

The Rolling Hills and Valleys are drained by a number of tributary streams that flow in both a north-westerly and south-westerly direction to join the Little Avon River for the southern section of this type, and the River Cam for the northern section. Both these rivers drain into the River Severn.

The steeper upper slopes and hill tops of this Landscape Type reach a height of up to 160m AOD and the valleys and escarpment footslopes fall as low as 50m AOD where they meet the surrounding Vale. The steep sides of the valley create a sense of seclusion, which progressively diminishes in closer proximity to the Vale.

Within the hills and valleys extensive woodland is characteristic, particularly on the steep upper slopes and around the valley rims. In places, indigenous broadleaved woodland creates hangers with many of the areas also identified as Ancient Woodland.

Grazing pasture predominates with scrubby areas located on steeper slopes and occasional arable fields that are enclosed by a network of hedgerows and post and wire fences. Hedgerow trees are common, particularly on the valley slopes, increasing the wooded feel and sense of enclosure within the valleys. Fields under arable production are generally larger than those used for pastoral purposes and field amalgamation is apparent. The valley bottoms are typically unimproved or semi-improved pasture, often with rich streamside flora and lines of willow and alder, although surrounding pasture can be rushy in places. Significant blocks of calcareous grassland can also be found, both on the plateau areas of the hilltops and on the valley sides.

5.13.4 Human Influences

It is likely that within the Rolling Hills and Valleys, there has been continuous human habitation since the prehistoric period. With their plentiful supply of fresh running water, productive land and sheltered locations, the valleys are likely to have provided ideal areas in which communities could settle. The close proximity of numerous long barrows located on adjacent areas of High Wold reinforces the idea that such places have been inhabited for a significant period of time. However, much of the evidence of such settlement has been obscured by more recent development, with the exception of strip lynchets and motte and bailey castles that occur on the edge of the Landscape Type, for example at Newington Bagpath and Lasborough. A number of historic houses and associated parks and gardens also occur within the area including Owlpen Manor, Ozleworth Park, Newark Park and Stancombe Park.

5.13.5 Buildings and Settlement

The Rolling Hills and Valleys support a variety of settlement patterns. The distribution of settlement generally reflects topography and drainage with more dense development occurring at the mouth of the valleys where they open onto the surrounding Severn Vale landscape. In more rural areas, settlement tends to be concentrated towards the valley rims or gentler valley slopes. Both organic and dispersed linear settlement patterns are evident along the valley bottoms, although scattered dwellings are also located along valley roads.

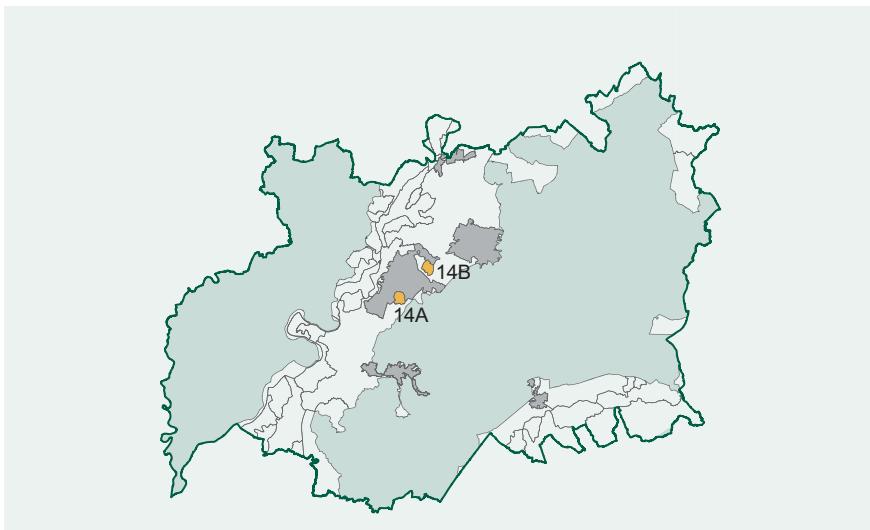
The valleys are well served by communications, with many lanes twisting along the valley bottoms and valley sides. These ancient lanes are often sunken between high banks and surrounded by overgrown coppice and stone walls. The overhanging woodland often located along such roads forms characteristic tunnels of vegetation.

5.13.6 Landscape Character Areas

SV 13A Dursley, Cam and Uley Valley

Dursley Cam and Uley Valley is the only landscape character area associated with the Rolling Hills and Valleys character type within the study area. The descriptions above therefore apply to this single character area.





CHARACTER AREAS

SV 14A Robins Wood Hill

SV 14B Chosen Hill

5.14.1 Key Characteristics

- Distinctive isolated hills detached from the main Cotswolds escarpment, rising above the neighbouring vale;
- Varied and often steeply sloping sides;
- Lower, gentler slopes dominated by improved pastures and arable farmland, with rough grassland and scrub often found on steeper, upper slopes;
- Woodland and tree belts, often located on steeper slopes form interlocking patterns with hedgerows;
- Sparsely settled;
- Panoramic views possible from upper slopes towards the Cotswolds Escarpment, Severn Vale and Forest of Dean;
- Roads generally limited and largely confined to the base of the outliers; and
- Landscape crossed by numerous public rights of way.

5.14.2 Landscape Character

The Escarpment Outliers are representative of remnant areas of the retreating Cotswolds Escarpment that have survived as distinct and discrete areas of upstanding land, rising from the surrounding lowland vale. Whilst the majority of the Escarpment Outliers are located within the Cotswolds AONB, Robins Wood Hill and Chosen Hill are notable exceptions. Located within the Severn Vale Study Area, they lie immediately to the south and east of Gloucester. Whilst these two outliers are comparable in size, in the wider landscape the Escarpment Outliers vary considerably, the largest comprising Bredon Hill to the north of the Cotswolds, and the smallest comprising Peaked Down to the west of Dursley and Cam.

The description that follows is applicable to the wider representation of outliers as a generic landscape type although specific reference is made to the two outliers within the Seven Vale



Study Area where relevant. The Character Area descriptions that follow provide a more detailed and specific descriptions of Robins Wood and Chosen Hills and identify their particular and unique characteristics and features.

The intrinsic character of the outliers is derived from their pronounced relief, woodland cover and field boundaries, which combine to give a strong sense of unity and visual integration. The character of each individual outlier varies, however, and depends upon the extent of woodland cover, the nature of landform and the type of agriculture employed on their slopes. Patterns can also vary across different sides of the same hill and result in each face having a distinct and separate character and sense of place.

Despite their differences, the outliers represent very visible landscapes that frequently frame views and form punctuation marks in the landscape. The elevated landform allows dramatic, long distance views from the upper slopes and even from low elevations, views across the surrounding vale are possible.

The geological, physiographic and land cover elements of the outliers are similar in many ways to the neighbouring escarpment, having once being part of it themselves. Consequently, patterns of land use and historic influences are broadly similar. Hedgerows generally follow the landform, emphasising the sloping land and

5.14

Landscape Character Type: ESCARPMENT OUTLIERS

contributing to the sense of a well wooded landscape. In reality there are few large surviving woodlands, with the majority being small broadleaved copses, often occupying slopes that are too steep to cultivate. Nevertheless, some outliers support notable stands of broadleaved woodland as in the case of both Chosen and Robins Wood Hills.

An agricultural landscape is characteristic of the outliers, with mature hawthorn hedgerows defining productive pasture, and arable land predominant on the lower slopes. These give way to more open areas and larger fields of rough grassland on upper slopes, with scrub encroachment evident in places.

5.14.3 Physical Influences

The Escarpment Outliers represent detached areas separated from the main mass of the Cotswolds to the east. At one time, the escarpment lay very close to the line of the Severn, but over the course of millions of years it has been eroded progressively eastwards leaving the outliers as upstanding remnants of the former escarpment edge. The majority of the outliers are located within the Cotswolds AONB and are therefore described in the LCA for this designated landscape. Robins Wood Hill and Chosen Hill lie outside of the AONB, however. They mark the most westerly extent of the escarpment outliers and form distinctive features within the Severn Vale.

Much of the eroded debris from the escarpment has long since disappeared having been carried to the sea by rivers. As a result, a number of the outliers are of particular geological interest as they afford greater clarity for the study of divisions in the Lower Jurassic system, unlike the same sequence occurring on the adjacent escarpment slopes where divisions are often obscured by slippage of the Lias Group clays and overlying Oolitic limestone debris. The presence of the Marlstone Rock Formation is of particular importance in the case of Robins Wood and Chosen Hills with this harder rock band forming a distinctive bench in the upper section of the hills, and also contributing to their resistance to erosion.

The outliers generally mirror the Jurassic geology of the escarpment. Differences do occur, however, largely due to the dip of the strata and differing rates of erosion. Typically, the top of the outlier is composed of beds of Oolitic limestone, overlying softer sands and blue/grey clayey silts of the Bridport Sand and Whitby Mudstone Formations respectively. Beneath this is the distinctive Marlstone Rock bench, which overlies the shales and alternating bands of limestone and ferruginous bands of the Dyrham and Charmouth Mudstone Formations. Where areas of slip have occurred at the base of the outliers, hummocky ground is evident, usually used as either permanent pasture or occasionally for arable cultivation. Areas of slip are also often marked by gorse, which rapidly colonises disturbed ground as well as areas of sandy and poor soil.

Although woodland cover is not as extensive as on the escarpment, it is evident as small, predominantly broadleaved woodlands, and generally associated with steeper areas of landform. The woodlands often form interlocking patterns with surrounding hedged fields, hedgerow trees and scrubby areas of land to create the impression of a well wooded landscape, in particular when viewed from the surrounding lowland vale. Whilst few woodlands are ancient, possibly indicating that the outliers were extensively cleared for agriculture, in places they are of importance ecologically and have considerable nature conservation value.

5.14.4 Human Influences

The outliers are of symbolic as well as strategic importance. Wide views over the surrounding vale landscape and the natural defences created by the steep slopes of the outliers resulted in the landscape being exploited as the site for hillforts during the Iron Age, for example on the summit area of Chosen Hill. Fine views from the elevated landform over the Severn Vale probably mean they were used as vantage point as far back as the Mesolithic.

During the medieval period, the upper portions of many of the outliers were used as open common land by villages occupying the lower slopes to graze their sheep. Due to the steep slopes and shallow soils, use for agriculture was limited. The names of the hills are often derived from the name of the village or family that the common land was farmed by. Today, the settlements of Churchdown and Robinswood in Gloucester are located at the base of these two outliers. Over time, these settlements have integrated with development on the edge of Gloucester and no longer have an identifiable boundary.

Typically, the lower gentler slopes of the outliers formed part of the open fields that surrounded the villages and which extended into the vale. These were generally large hedged fields divided into furlongs, the ridges and furrows of which are still evident in many locations.

Despite objections, many of the outliers were enclosed during the 19th century, with the open hill pastures divided into a neat patchwork of fields separated by hawthorn hedgerows and stone walls, altering the appearance of the once unenclosed landscape. Consequently, no open common land remains today. There are remnant areas of ancient woodland on steeper slopes, however, providing evidence of the pre-enclosure landscape.

Roads on the outliers are extremely limited, with limited roads or tracks traversing the landscape. Where they do occur they are confined to the base of the outlier adjacent to the surrounding vale or the lower slopes and provide access to only limited areas. These narrow, winding lanes generally follow the contours of the hill and in many instances mark the outer limits of the outlier.

Overall, however, the hills remain inaccessible to vehicles, with small tracks providing informal access. Conversely, public rights of way criss-crossing the outliers are extensive, providing access to vantage points, often on the summit of hills.

The height of the outliers, combined with their proximity to major roads and large urban populations has made them the ideal locations for aerials, a notable example of which is the aerial on the summit of Chosen Hill.

5.14.5 Buildings and Settlements

Settlement on the outliers is very limited, confined to the foothills of the lower slopes adjacent to the surrounding vale. Beyond this are a number of isolated farms and individual dwellings on the hillsides and hill terraces.

5.14.6 Landscape Character Areas

SV 14A Robins Wood Hill

Robins Wood Hill, located on the south eastern perimeter of Gloucester is the southern of the two Escarpment Outliers located within the Severn Vale Study Area, and also the highest, rising to a height of 198m AOD. The name of the hill is derived from the Robins family who leased the land for sheep farming during the 16th to 18th centuries.



The summit of Robins Wood Hill is capped by an exposure of Birdlip Limestone Formation, of the Inferior Oolite. Below this, the full sequence of the Lower Jurassic is represented with local variations in the landform attributable to the response of the various rocks to geomorphological processes. The Marlstone Rock Formation forms a distinctive local bench towards the upper section of the hill, while below this are the shales of the Dyrham and Charmouth Mudstone Formations, with intermittent limestone and ferruginous bands present throughout the sequence. At the Tuffley Brickpit Quarry in the south western perimeter of the hill, iron ore was extracted from the ferruginous basal beds of the Dyrham Formation, while clay was also extracted to supply the nearby brickworks. The quarry now provides one of the best inland exposures of the Lower Jurassic in the country and is designated as a RIGS and SSSI in recognition of its importance.

The earliest evidence of human occupation is from the Neolithic period, with flint flakes and a hand axe evident on the hill. The flint has been traced to areas as far away as Wiltshire and Cumbria indicating that the county was part of a trade network stretching the length of the country. It is likely that clay from the brickworks was used during Roman times to make bricks, tiles and pottery, and it is even thought that the Romans processed iron from the quarry. Records dating from the 18th century identify iron ore being extracted from the hill and smelted in Gloucester, although there is evidence that iron ore was worked here long before then. Charcoal and burnt bone found on the hill also indicates that the Saxons built a temple on the hill to the god, Woden. It is possible that the hill was originally called Whaddon, again derived from the god Woden. Further evidence of Saxon occupation is apparent in Wolf's Leaze, the place in which the finds were discovered, which is thought to be named after the Saxon practice of keeping a timber wolf to guard the site of the temple.

Robins Wood Hill is associated with a long history of water supply to the City of Gloucester. Indeed, the hill has supplied water to the City for over 800 years, with the City Monks being the first to exploit the water supply in 1160 after the surrounding vale could no longer keep up with the increased demand. However, public access to the supply was not obtained until 1630. Around the middle of the 18th century, reservoirs were constructed to store water on the hill. The reservoirs remained in use until around 1946 when they became derelict and were filled in.

A number of wells are also located on the hill, such as Holy Red Well, and Well Cross located on the north western perimeter of the hill emphasising the strong association with water. Well Cross is marked by a recumbent 13th century chamfered stone cross supported by large limestone blocks covering a dry hollow which was once a spring. Higher up the hill behind the Well Cross is a stone structure known as the Well House. Built of large Oolitic limestone blocks, with metal rods protecting the opening, this small building once covered an important spring which was piped to Gloucester. Today the water emerges from a pipe a short distance away and flows down an overgrown valley.

Scattered woodland blocks and extensive areas of scrub extend across much of the hill today. Beyond the woodland and scrub there are intermittent pasture fields, and managed amenity grassland and vegetation associated with the Gloucester Golf Club, located on the south eastern footslopes of the outlier.

Although there is no formal road provision or settlement on Robins Wood Hill, a number of informal tracks provide wide access to the Country Park.

As well as providing an important local resource in the past for iron ore and clay, and a water supply, more recently Robins Wood Hill has provided a valuable recreational resource for local people within Gloucester, as well as for visitors from a wider area.

5.14

Landscape Character Type: ESCARPMENT OUTLIERS

Although there is no settlement on the hill, Robinswood Hill Country Park occupies the western half and summit area of the hill with the headquarters of the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and a Visitor Centre located on the lower north western slopes. The Country Park is also a notable Local Wildlife Site. A dry ski slope has been constructed on the eastern side of the hill, taking advantage of the steeply sloping topography. A network of public footpaths also criss-cross the hill, including a dedicated trail associated with the Country Park facilities. The route includes the summit area from where there are spectacular views across the Severn Vale towards the Forest of Dean, May Hill and The Malvern Hills, and eastwards to the Cotswolds Escarpment.

SV 14B Chosen Hill

Chosen Hill comprises the principal summit of Churchdown Hill, together with less prominent Tinker's Hill to the north. Lying to the east of Gloucester, it is the most northern of the two outliers within the Severn Vale Study Area and the lower, rising to 154m AOD on its south western side. The top of the hill is composed of beds of Oolitic limestone nodules, sandy marlstone, clay and sand. The harder rock band of the Marlstone Rock Formation forms a distinctive bench in the upper section, and has contributed to the resistance of the outlier to erosion.



A mosaic of woodland blocks interspersed with areas of scrub and open grassland dominates the land use across the middle and upper slopes of the hill. Woodlands comprise a mix of oak and ash with thorn scrub. In other areas, predominately mature native broadleaved species are characteristic. There is also a notable avenue of Corsican and Scots Pine which was planted to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Although some of the trees have been felled now that they are approaching overmaturity, they still form a notable skyline feature on the north eastern side of the hill. Before the dependence on cars, the footpath through 'the Pines' was the principal route to the Church of St Bartholomews on the summit of the hill, from Churchdown village. Areas of thorn scrub, and grassland with areas of gorse, bramble and bracken contribute to the character of the upper sections of Chosen Hill. Traditionally, the hills were grazed by sheep; however, the encroachment of bramble and thorn scrub is

often controlled on the upper slopes by grazing cattle and bracken cutting. Beyond the upper slopes, whilst woodland cover is limited, hedged field boundaries and hedgerow trees add to the overall sense of woodland cover. Pastoral fields occupy the lower slopes, together with some arable land in areas, and particularly at the transition with the surrounding vale.

The various habitats on Chosen Hill have led to its importance as a wildlife site. Chosen Hill Nature Reserve, located on the upper eastern slopes comprises an area of semi-natural grassland, whilst on the lower slopes to the north east adjacent to the settlement of Churchdown are Churchdown Hill Meadows, again an area of semi-natural grassland. Native broadleaved woodland and its habitats on the upper slopes of the hill contribute significantly towards regional biodiversity. Much of the woodland is managed by The Woodland Trust, and a comprehensive Management Plan has been prepared.



An Iron Age Hill Fort is located within the woodland and grazed scrubby areas on the Chosen Hill summit area and is testimony to the long history of settlement of the hill. Evidence of a rampart and ditch can be located on the western side of the hill, with indications of earthworks following the remaining sides of the hill near to its crest. The original rampart on the hill is comparable to that at Bredon Hill to the north east within the Cotswolds AONB.

Chosen Hill was also selected in the Middle Ages as the location of the Church of St Bartholomew, which occupies a commanding and spectacular setting on the north eastern perimeter of the summit area. Indeed, the alternative name of Churchdown Hill and the settlement below is associated with the church on the summit of the hill. Although occupying a more secluded site below the church, the Parish Burial Grounds also extend across the summit area.

Vehicular access is generally restricted to the base of the hill and defines the boundary with the adjacent Settled Unwooded Vale landscape type. However, a single track lane ascends the hill from Churchdown to a public car park and provides access to the church and summit area. An extensive network of footpaths and rights of way also cross and encircle the hill. Although concentrated on the

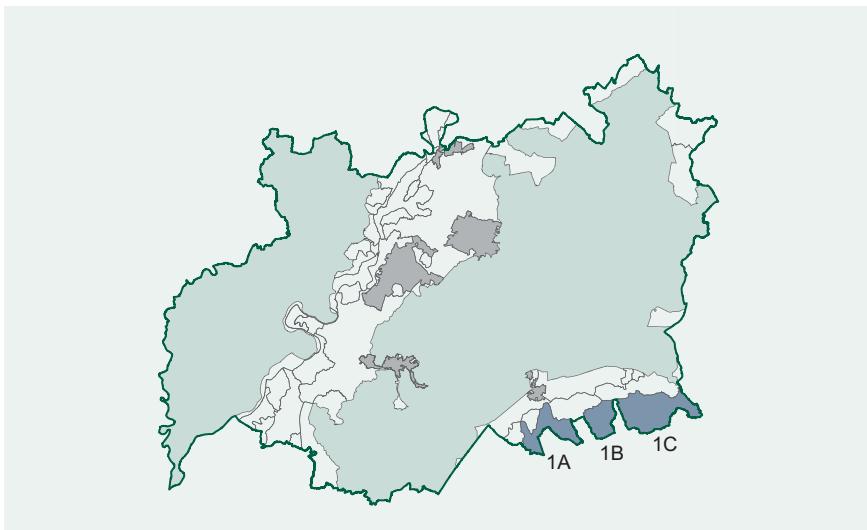
upper slopes, several footpaths descend the hill sides providing access to the lower slopes and wider countryside, including the footpath that follows 'The Pines' avenue which is described earlier, and provides a link from the Churchdown to the summit area.

A large part of the summit area is now dominated by the Severn Trent Water facilities which comprise three covered reservoirs which were constructed in the early part of the 20th century within the Iron Age Camp enclosure. A quarry was also worked within the ramparts of the hill fort in the north western part of the summit. There is now a range of industrial scale and infrastructure elements on the hill top associated with the security fence that encloses the reservoirs, and ancillary buildings, and also the prominent communications mast on the south western perimeter of the summit. Together, these detract from the otherwise rural character of the hill.

Settlement on Chosen Hill is confined to small compact farms and houses that occupy sheltered positions on the middle and lower slopes of hill and reached by narrow tracks, adjoining main roads which encircle the outlier.

As with many parts of Gloucestershire, Chosen Hill has been a special location for musicians, artists, and writers. The hill was beloved by the English composer, Herbert Howells and was also regularly visited by his friends and fellow musicians Ivor Gurney and Gerald Finzi in the period leading up to the First World War. Howells's 'chosen' hill was the inspiration for many of his compositions, notably his string quartet 'In Gloucestershire'. Later, it is recorded that Ralph Vaughan Williams and Finzi, who lived on Chosen Hill for a period, regularly walked together on the hill and sought solace in its peace and commanding views.





CHARACTER AREAS

- TV 1A Somerford Keynes and South Cerney
- TV 1B Down Ampney
- TV 1C Fairford and Lechlade

6.1.1 Key Characteristics

- Low lying, flat to very gently undulating floodplain landscape underlain by extensive deposits of alluvial clay and silt, and sand and gravel that mask the solid geology;
- Isolated hillocks associated with exposures of the Oxford Clay form locally significant features ;
- Strong presence of water reflected in rivers, streams, ditches and extensive network of restored sand and gravel extraction sites;
- Lush wet meadows and wide floodplain pastures, with watercourses often lined with riparian vegetation, including frequent lines of pollarded willows;
- Mosaic of wetland and riparian habitats, together with water based recreational uses associated with lakes created through the restoration of gravel extraction sites;
- Combination of pastoral land, often in smaller scale fields and closely associated with watercourses and larger scale fields under arable cultivation;
- Pattern of nucleated and linear settlements dispersed throughout the landscape, including occasional small towns and large villages, hamlets and scattered farmsteads and dwellings, with vernacular buildings constructed in stone and brick;
- Modern waterside developments comprising holiday or second homes with distinctive architectural style and often located in association with restored lake areas;
- Scattered pattern of woodland copses in areas closely associated with rivers and standing areas of water, which in places results in a sense of enclosure and more intimate landscape; and
- Limited major roads and a wider network of minor roads providing access to the floodplain landscape.



6.1.2 Landscape Character

The River Basin Lowland Character Type forms part of the wider Upper Thames floodplain. Within Gloucestershire, the area extends eastwards from Poole Keynes to Lechlade on Thames. This broad area, although fragmented by the convoluted county boundary, shares a unity of the character with the wider area that extend southwards into neighbouring Wiltshire. It comprises a broad low lying area of pastoral land interspersed with an extensive wetland environment of rivers, streams and ditches and numerous areas of open water associated with restored gravel extraction areas. This latter activity has been particularly notable through the progressive land use changes that have resulted from the widespread extraction of sand and gravel throughout the area and the subsequent restoration to extensive lakes. Since its formal designation in 1967, the Cotswold Water Park has developed as an important area supporting a diversity of rich wetland habitats of important ecological value as well as a range of water based leisure uses. It is now an area of regional and indeed national importance, and through progressive land use and management change has significantly altered the character of this part of the Upper Thames Valley.

The settlement pattern varies from generally sparsely settled areas with intermittent dispersed farms, to large nucleated villages and the small market town of Lechlade on Thames. These are principally focused either on the River Thames or other principal

6.1

Landscape Character Type: RIVER BASIN LOWLAND

tributary rivers. South Cerney to the west is located adjacent to the River Churn; Fairford, on the northern perimeter of the landscape type, is adjacent to the River Coln, and Lechlade to the east has developed adjacent to the River Thames. Beyond the rivers and the Cotswold Water Park, the presence of water is also a common feature in the wider landscape with ditches and small watercourses commonly aligning field boundaries and running adjacent to local roads.

6.1.3 Physical Influences

The area is underlain by the youngest rock formations of the Jurassic period, comprising the Kellaways Beds and Oxford Clay Formations. These impervious clays are overlain by extensive superficial deposits of alluvium and River Terrace sands and gravels. The pattern and depth of these drift deposits have had a significant effect on local character through their varying influence on agricultural activity and the potential for mineral extraction.

In broad terms this low lying area is characterised by very shallow slopes, and in many areas is perceived as flat particularly where the extensive floodplain borders the river channel. The area varies in height averaging from 90m to 70m AOD with the land sloping southwards towards the River Thames. There are notable variations to this pattern, however, with intermittent areas of Oxford Clay rising above the general levels of the low lying floodplain to form locally distinctive hillocks. Their relative prominence is further defined by a number of small settlements which occupy the summit areas and upper slopes of these hillocks, benefiting from the slightly higher land above the general level of the floodplain. Horcott Hill to the east, Marston Hill and Meysey Hampton, all occupy hillocks that reach accordant summits of around 100 -105 m AOD.

Woodland cover is not particularly extensive within the type, but semi-mature copse and new plantations are developing in association with the former sand and gravel workings and watercourses are often rendered visible in the landscape by lines of poplars and pollarded white willows following the course of rivers and streams.

6.1.4 Human Influences

Prior to the commencement of the extraction of sand and gravel within the Upper Thames Valley in the 1920s, the traditional land use within the River Basin Lowland was that of a pastoral landscape of rich water meadows. Pastures are still evident within the farmland that remains between the restored lake areas, but in more recent times there has been a move away from a traditional mix of dairy and livestock towards more intensive grassland and arable production as improvements in land drainage and flood protection have occurred.

The greatest human influence on the character type has been the extensive extraction of sand and gravel from the terraces adjacent to the River Thames both within the River Basin Lowland and further south beyond the county boundary. Quarrying continues to

form a significant visual and audible feature within the type with many extraction sites still active on the remaining gravel terraces. This has resulted in a paucity of indicators of earlier human activity that were likely to have occurred along the Upper Thames River Basin.



The common restoration treatment for the sand and gravel extraction has been the creation of a complex mosaic of lakes, which provide both recreational and wildlife habitats. Many of the lakes are used for a great variety of watersports whilst others form local country parks and provide quiet enjoyment. These lakes are collectively managed as the Cotswold Water Park, which was formally designated in 1967. At that stage it was resolved that 'the area should become a water park serving the interests of aquatic sportsmen, naturalists, and others who wish to enjoy in a general way a stretch of inland water'. The interests of the Water Park are now managed by the Cotswold Water Park Joint Committee, encompassing Gloucestershire and Wiltshire County Councils, and Cotswold and North Wiltshire District Councils. The Cotswold Water Park Strategy 2000-2006 was published in 2000. In 2002 Cotswold District Council adopted the Strategy as Supplementary Planning Guidance and it is a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications within the area of the Park that lies with Cotswold District. The Water Park has three distinct sections, each with a separate character and differing development targets. The western part comprises South Cerney, Ashton Keynes and Somerford Keynes; a central section extends across Latton, Down Ampney and Marston Meysey; and a third eastern part encompasses Fairford, Lechlade and Kempsford.

Human reliance on the River Thames has been a strong influence on the communications infrastructure and settlement pattern within the type with the river providing a major highway for the transportation of goods over many centuries until the end of the 19th century. The significance of the River Thames's influence on the landscape is evident through the numerous mills, locks, weirs, wharves and bridges that form locally notable features along the length of the upper Thames and its tributaries, the River Coln and River Churn. The influence of the Thames is also reflected in local nomenclature with many place names ending in 'ford' indicating the establishment of settlements at strategic crossing points over watercourses, e.g. Fairford, Whelford adjacent to the River Coln and Kempsford adjacent to the River Thames.

6.1.5 Buildings and Settlement

The River Basin Lowland supports a number of settlements of varying size. These generally retain the character of the Cotswolds local vernacular with historic cores, enhanced by the unifying effect of the predominant use of Oolitic limestone. The larger settlements of Fairford and Lechlade have developed a wider range of architecture with 'town houses' as well as typical village properties present, and new perimeter development that endeavours to link to a Cotswolds vernacular. Both Fairford and Lechlade have fine medieval churches. Other villages such as South Cerney and Somerford Keynes retain a character typical of a Cotswolds village but have the further dimension of now being focused towards the Water Park through their proximity to large bodies of water and associated recreational interests. There are also very small and quiet villages such as Down Ampney, which retains the sense of a rural idyll, and a fitting link with Vaughan Williams who was born and lived there as a child. A number of new residential holiday developments have been established within the heart of the Water Park, and present contrasting architectural styles.

The area also supports a pattern of both active and disused military airfields as at Fairford, and Down Ampney. The USAF military airbase at Fairford is a dominant feature in the eastern part of the Upper Thames floodplain although because of the very flat landscape is not immediately evident in views. The surrounding security fencing, however, together with the airborne activity serves as a reminder of its presence.

6.1.6 Landscape Character Areas

TV 1A Somerford Keynes and South Cerney

Large-scale sand and gravel extraction comprises the dominant influence on the landscape character of this area. In addition to extensive areas of post-extraction created lakes, there are a number of areas that are still undergoing active extraction, e.g. Shorncote Quarry. The mosaic of lakes comprises part of a complex of water bodies that extend beyond the county boundary to the south and form the western section of the Cotswold Water Park. Despite the number of lakes, the visual influence of these water bodies within the wider landscape context of the area is somewhat limited as the development of scrubby vegetation and areas of woodland adjacent to many of the lakes restricts views towards the water bodies from neighbouring settlements and local roads. This has resulted in a small to medium scale landscape which feels enclosed, despite the sequence of wetlands and lakes. A network of minor roads align the lakes, broadly running north-south and east-west and the lakes and the road network combine to make a strong overall landscape pattern, with the smooth surfaces of the water bodies contrasting strongly with texture of the surrounding trees and vegetation.

The numerous water bodies within the South Cerney, Ashton Keynes and Somerford Keynes section of the Cotswold Water Park have developed an important nature conservation value and most of these form Key Wildlife Sites within the area. Four of the lakes have SSSI designations and Coke's Pit Lake is designated as a Local Nature Reserve. Other sites with nature conservation value in the Somerford Keynes and South Cerney character area include Wildmoorway Meadows and Elmlea Meadows in the eastern part of the character area, both of which are designated as SSSIs for the invertebrate ecology of their grassland habitats.



Beyond the lakes of the Cotswold Water Park, a traditional land use pattern of small scale regularly enclosed pasture fields continues within the floodplain adjacent to the River Churn and River Thames with horse and sheep grazing fields separated by low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows predominating along the valley bottom and occasional medium scale arable fields aligning the shallow slopes and occasional local hillocks that rise above the floodplain, as at Ashton Down to the west of South Cerney. Where agricultural land abuts areas of former gravel extraction, the landscape often appears marginalised and in decline with hedgerows becoming overgrown and/or gappy in places.



The creation of the Cotswold Water Park has facilitated a proliferation of recreational opportunities in the area with many of the lakes supporting yacht clubs, sailing schools, angling clubs and nature reserves, notably the Somerford Lakes Reserve, designated as a SSSI, and Keynes Country Park, to the west and east of Somerford Keynes respectively. It appears that many of the lakes have been constructed specifically for recreational purposes and

6.1

Landscape Character Type: RIVER BASIN LOWLAND

although some attempts have been made to naturalise these lakes through lakeside planting, many of the water bodies tend to be poorly integrated into the wider landscape. In addition to water-based activities other recreational opportunities in the area include parking sites with picnic facilities, a horse-riding school at Cerney Wick, a wildlife centre on the northern edge of Somerford Keynes and the Thames Path national trail that extends through the southern portion of the area.



Numerous clusters of recently constructed lakeside holiday and second homes and chalets have developed around many of the lakes and these new developments are particularly prominent around the water bodies to the south east of South Cerney. Although vegetation filters views towards many of these developments, the buildings tend to draw the eye as their architectural style is in contrast with the local vernacular of the surrounding village; also, the individual developments do not share a consistent character with one another.



The main settlements associated with this western sector of the Cotswold Water Park are Somerford Keynes and South Cerney. Ashton Keynes is also a notable adjacent settlement but it is located in the county of Wiltshire. Somerford Keynes in the west is a linear settlement and includes a Conservation Area with a distinctive historic core of yellow/grey Cotswold stone-built properties with occasional areas of modern infill scattered throughout the settlement. South Cerney also includes two Conservation Areas with the settlement centred around an historic core interspersed with areas of modern infill. The settlement has developed at the intersection of a crossroads of local roads and a ditch runs east-west through the village in a wide grass verge. There are a few shops and pubs located in the village centre and an industrial area on the southern outskirts of the village including the recent development of the Lakeside Business Park.

Cerney Wick forms a small linear hamlet to the south east of the western sector of the Cotswold Water Park and includes Churn Pool trout fishery on the outskirts of the settlement. Horse grazing is the common land use at both ends of the settlement with evidence of poached pasture both to the north and to the south. Stone walls thread through the hamlet and give an added sense of unity to the settlement.

In the north of the area, beyond the immediate influence of the lakes, the village of Siddington is located on the valley floor of the River Churn. The settlement comprises a complex of new stone built properties, new and old red brick terraces, Siddington Manor, farm buildings, allotments and horse pasture all mixed and clustered together.

Beyond the new lakeside holiday home developments and the villages described above, settlement is very limited within the wider landscape of the character area, although scattered 'Mills' and 'Mill Farms' are associated with isolated dwellings and farms in close proximity to the upper reaches of the River Thames, between Somerford Keynes and Ewen.



TV 1B Down Ampney

This is a low lying and predominantly flat landscape, with landform varying between 80 - 85m AOD. Occasional undulations are of local significance, however, such as Poulton Hill to the north of Down Ampney which rises to a height of nearly 120m AOD and Meysey Hampton to the north at 104m AOD.



This scale and pattern within this landscape character area portrays a subtle shift in emphasis in comparison with the wider characteristics of the landscape type. Arable agriculture tends to predominate as a land use and field sizes are generally larger in scale. There is evidence of field amalgamation in places with isolated field trees marking former field boundaries. Field boundaries vary in condition from gappy and overgrown in places to well-maintained in others. Hedgerows tend to be medium in height adjacent to roads, and low, well maintained and regularly trimmed when forming divisions between fields.

Although there are no extensive areas of woodland cover within the character area, numerous copses are clustered in the south of the area and include Horseground Covert, Poplar Wood, Gally Leaze Copse, The Grove and Bean Hay Copse. These are associated with the planned estate farmland of the village of Down Ampney House and also lie close to or surround the disused airfield to the south east of Down Ampney. The airfield formed one of a number of airfields constructed in the south of the Cotswolds during World War II and is associated with the air attack of the Battle of Arnhem. This historical feature provides a visual contrast with the remainder of the character area with its long vistas within the flat expansive landscape. Coniferous linear copses prevail around the perimeter of the disused airfield, whilst elsewhere in the south of the area copses tend to be predominantly deciduous and more irregular in shape. In this southern part of the character area, overgrown boundaries and hedgerow trees combine with views to distant copses to create an intermittent wooded feel to the landscape with copses, located within the adjacent landscape character type of the Cornbrash Lowlands, often providing the primary horizon feature. The large scale field pattern combines with the distant expansive views to give landscape that is simple and open.

Hydrological influences on the area include a number of streams and ditches draining the landscape and a water body known as Down Ampney Pits in the southern portion of the character area which forms a Key Wildlife Site. The Ampney Brook is the most prominent of the watercourses in the character area and forms the southern boundary to the area and to the county. Its course is delineated in the landscape by mature trees and scrubby vegetation aligning its banks and a distinctive stone bridge crosses the brook on the access road to the west of Down Ampney. The dispersed settlement of Down Ampney lies adjacent to Ampney Brook. This village includes a Conservation Area and comprises numerous traditional grey/brown stone houses with high pitched roofs scattered throughout the settlement. The historic house of Down Ampney House is located in the south of the settlement and fronts onto a parkland landscape demarcated by a parkland fence. The large modern stone development of Broadleaze is located on the northern outskirts of the village. The village has historical associations with the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams who was born in The Vicarage in 1872. Although he only lived there for a few years up to his father's death, he retained a strong association and love of the Gloucestershire landscape and expressed this in a number of his compositions.



The remainder of the landscape area is very sparsely settled, limited to a few isolated farms, with the exception of Meysey Hampton, a nucleated village located in the north of the area. Part of the settlement of Meysey Hampton is designated as a Conservation Area and is set around a village green with a predominance of brown/grey old stone properties and an orchard located in the historic centre. A series of old stone walls thread through the village to impart an additional sense of unity.

There is a limited road network of minor roads broadly running north-south in the area and these roads connect the settlements of Down Ampney and Meysey Hampton with villages in the wider landscape beyond the character area.

The character area forms part of the central sector of the Cotswold Water Park comprising Latton/Down Ampney/Marston Meysey. In comparison with the western and eastern sectors, this area has experienced much less gravel extraction and the landscape character is therefore more influenced by agricultural intensification than restoration to lakes. As the reserves in the first two sectors

6.1

Landscape Character Type: RIVER BASIN LOWLAND

become depleted, however, this area will be vulnerable to change through potential future extraction. The Cotswold Water Park Management Strategy provides the framework to ensure that, a long term vision and management plan for this sensitive area is defined which seeks to ensure that the area is appropriately managed, and, where necessary, restored. The setting and protection of the settlements of Down Ampney and Meysey Hampton will be particularly crucial in managing any future landscape change arising from extraction of the underlying mineral reserves.



TV 1C Fairford and Lechlade

This area comprises a mixture of contrasting land uses that includes areas of agricultural landscape, the Fairford/Lechlade/Kempsford Section of the Cotswold Water Park and Fairford Airfield. The area is predominantly flat and low-lying with the exception of Horcott Hill in the north and Brazen Church Hill in the south. These local hillocks rise to a height of 102m AOD and 91m AOD respectively and comprise upstanding outcrops of the Oxford Clay Formation.

The Eastern Section of the Cotswold Water Park has developed as a result a post-extraction remediation treatment which has created a series of water bodies similar in character to the Somerford Keynes and South Cerney character area, but lake coverage is not as extensive. The lakes are used for a variety of recreational pursuits including coarse and game fishing, water skiing and sailing. Some lakes also have informal paths around their perimeter with viewing benches. There are very limited views to the lakes from the surrounding road network, however, as they are generally well enclosed by surrounding vegetation. Tree and scrub planting adjacent to most of the lakes has created a naturalistic feel to many of the lakeside edges, and serves to better integrate the water bodies into the wider landscape where these are visible. The smooth surface of the lakes contrasts with the texture of the surrounding vegetation to create a simple landscape pattern throughout the area.

Many of the lakes in the Fairford/Lechlade/Kempsford Section of the Cotswold Water Park have been classified as Key Wildlife Sites, two of which have been designated as SSSIs. Beyond the Water Park, other water bodies of nature conservation interest in the Fairford and Lechlade character area include two lakes to the north of Lechlade which form the Edward Richardson and Phyllis

Amey GWT Nature Reserve. Other Key Wildlife Sites in the character area include a strip of semi-natural grassland aligning the dismantled Bryworth Railway Line in the north of the character area, Bushyleaze Copse on the northern boundary of the character area to the north of Lechlade, and Whelford Meadows which includes areas of invertebrate rich grassland, and is also designated as a SSSI.

In addition to the series of lakes within the Cotswold Water Park, other hydrological features and influences in the area include the River Coln; the River Thames, which forms the southern boundary to the area and the county; and an extensive network of ditches, which commonly form field boundaries and align local roads.



A diverse agricultural landscape predominates beyond the Cotswold Water Park with varying field sizes and land uses. In the wider landscape a mixture of arable and pastoral land use predominates in medium to large scale fields. Smaller scale fields are evident, however, on the slopes of the local hillocks, and small scale arable fields and scrubby pasture can be found adjacent to the River Thames. Low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows with isolated hedgerow trees form the common boundary treatment in the agricultural landscape. These hedgerows are becoming gappy in places, however, so that adjacent fields are open to one another. Where hedgerows lie in close proximity to the Thames, they have often become overgrown and in places give a localised sense of enclosure adjacent to the course of the river.



Beyond the areas immediately adjacent to the Cotswold Water Park, woodland is not particularly prevalent in the wider landscape although there are a few small copses associated with the localised hillocks of Horcott Hill and Brazen Church Hill and elsewhere a

number of mature trees along local tracks form linear wooded elements in the landscape. There is a predominance of deciduous species in these copses and within hedgerows with the exception of some stands of coniferous trees around Kempsford.



The active extraction of sand and gravel continues as a significant land use in this area. The most visually and audibly significant areas of activity occur to the west of Horcott Hill, to the west of Brazen Church Hill and to the west of Warren's Cross Farm. Areas of un-restored post-extraction works are evident in the landscape adjacent to the current active works to the west of Horcott Hill.

Early historical and pre-historic landscape features are rare within the area, limited to a single enclosure to the east of Brazen Church Hill. This enclosure forms the northern tip of a group of enclosures that are located to the south of the area beyond the county boundary.

The main settled influences on the area are the village of Fairford and the small market town of Lechlade on Thames. Fairford is located in the north of the area. The settlement includes a Conservation Area and extends outwards from an historic core which hosts a renowned 15th century church with a distinctive square stone tower. There is a compact village centre with an extensive range of shops and stores, eating establishments, pubs and hotels. There is a mixture of architectural styles within the settlement including a few timber framed houses and a new stone built estate at the edge of the village. Old Cotswold stone walls wind through the village forming a common boundary treatment for many residential properties and unifying the ad hoc mixture of historic housing styles in the settlement. Lechlade on Thames is located in the east of the character area and includes a Conservation Area comprising various eras of housing styles associated with the incremental expansion of the settlement. There is a proliferation of new housing on the outskirts of the village including both stone and brick of varying types as well as some rendered properties. The elegant spire of the church is a particularly distinctive landmark within the wider landscape. The settlement has a well developed commercial centre including several pubs, a medical centre, estate agents, a bank and a pharmacy as well as a range of shops. The proximity of Lechlade

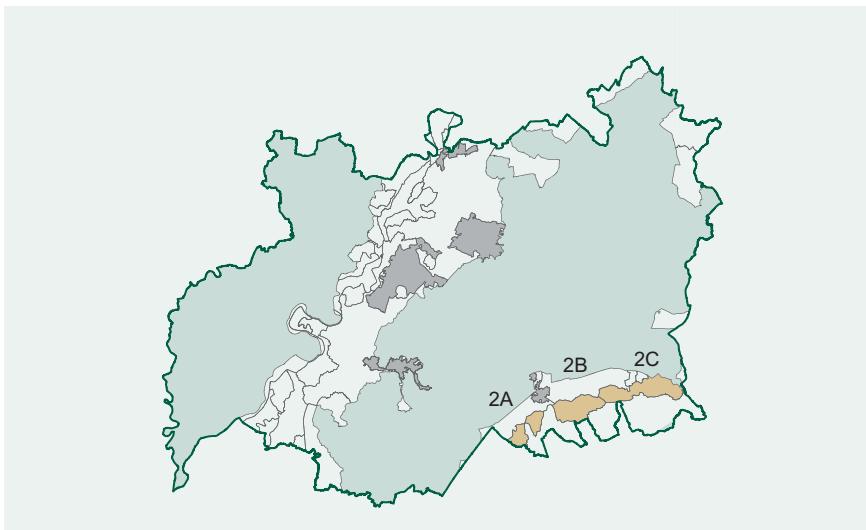
to the River Thames has resulted in a cluster of recreational uses and tourist facilities on the southern periphery of the village including an hotel, the Thames Path National Trail, St. Johns Priory Park caravan park and pleasure craft cruising.



Other settlements in the area include Horcott, a small linear village located at the north west base of Horcott Hill; Whelford, a small dispersed settlement to the east of Fairford Airfield; and Kempsford, a linear village that extends along the northern bank of the River Thames. These settlements generally comprise a mixture of older stone properties and with newer housing clustered at the edges. These smaller settlements have limited facilities with the exception of Kempsford which includes a Conservation Area and has a local primary school, a few public houses and a church with a square stone tower that forms a local landmark visible from the wider landscape beyond the village. Beyond the villages and town described above, settlement is generally very sparse in the wider landscape, comprising isolated farm buildings often located on or at base of the localised hillocks and accessed by minor tracks.

Fairford Airfield is a notable feature in the south west of the area and creates a strong military presence that has a significant influence on the local landscape character. The airfield has been developed across a flat, large scale landscape with expansive areas of hardstanding and mown grass extending beyond the periphery of the runway. A number of large scale buildings punctuate the horizon; these include substantial hangars of varying form, including many rectilinear hangars and a large arching domed structure. Intermittent towers also form prominent vertical features across the airfield and there is also a sequence of large turfed geometric bunkers. The boundary of the airfield is demarcated by a large perimeter security fence. Overgrown hedgerows align most of the airfield boundaries limiting views towards the airfield from the surrounding area but there are filtered views through gaps in the vegetation and at the entrance gates.

The A417 extends across the north of the area connecting Fairford and Lechlade with other settlements along the Upper Thames Valley. Elsewhere, access is very limited with a sparse minor road network connecting local villages and skirting around the edge of Fairford Airfield.



CHARACTER AREAS

- TV 2A Poole Keynes and Ewen Lowlands
- TV 2B Driffield Lowlands
- TV 2C Southrop Lowlands

6.2.1 Key Characteristics

- Very gently sloping landform with subtle undulations linked to small scale tributary valleys that cross the area;
- Network of tributary streams draining from the Dip-Slope Lowland towards the River Thames, their course often marked by scattered lines and groups of trees;
- Predominance of large scale arable fields bounded by a network of hedgerows of varying quality and occasional stone walls;
- Vertical elements such as hedgerow trees gain visual prominence;
- Fertile soils derived from the Cornbrash Formation bedrock;
- Dispersed settlement pattern of mainly linear or nucleated villages, hamlets and farmsteads;
- Occasional mainly geometric woodland copse, comprising broadleaf and coniferous plantations;
- Single principal road bounds or crosses the area together with a limited number of local, and generally straight rural roads; and
- Occasional wide views over productive farmland, limited only by farm copses and woodlands.

6.2.2 Landscape Character

The Cornbrash Lowlands are located close to the southern perimeter of the Upper Thames Valley study area, and extend across an area 2-3 km in width. The area is underlain by the Middle Jurassic Cornbrash Formation and forms a transition between the Dip-Slope Lowland landscapes to the north that extend into the Cotswolds AONB, and the generally flatter River Basin Lowland of the Thames to the south. The area is characterised by a subdued topography, with gentle undulations



where the Thames tributaries and their smaller interconnecting tributary valleys extend across the area. The rich and fertile soils derived from the underlying Cornbrash Formation support a land use focused on arable cultivation, together with more limited pastoral areas, principally utilising wetter areas of land bordering water courses. The area has a predominantly quiet rural character associated with the cultivated arable fields, and a dispersed pattern of small villages, hamlets and farms. Occasional woodlands, mainly geometric in form, and comprising both broadleaved, and mixed coniferous and broadleaf plantations, are present within the area. These provide local enclosure and landmarks within an otherwise undistinguished agricultural landscape. A single major road, comprising the A417, crosses or borders the Thames Valley Cornbrash Lowlands, together with a network of local roads.

6.2.3 Physical Influences

The Cornbrash Lowlands form a transition between the gently rising Dip-Slope Lowland to the north and the extensive generally flatter and lower lying Thames floodplain to the south. The landscape shelves gently from north west to south east, dropping an average of 20m over a distance of approximately 2 km (1.2 mile). The general topographical form is therefore subdued, with the area often perceived as being flat or only very gently undulating, with local undulations occurring where small tributary valleys have

6.2

Landscape Character Type: CORNBRASH LOWLANDS

dissected the area. The course of rivers and local streams are often difficult to trace in the wider landscape except at crossing points or where their course is marked by riverside trees and linear belts of woodland.

The underlying Cornbrash Formation is the youngest rock within the Great Oolite Group, and consists of a coarse, crumbly shelly limestone that outcrops on the perimeter of the youngest Jurassic Formations, comprising the Kellaways Beds and Oxford Clay. The limestone is overlain by brown marl that produces a particularly fertile and friable soil well suited for arable farming. The name of the rock relates specifically to its suitability for arable farming and was coined in the 18th century. Although of very limited value for building, the Cornbrash has been quarried for aggregate, for example at the Shorncote and Dryleaze Farm Quarry west of South Cerney, where it underlies river terrace deposits.

Arable fields predominate and are often located in large or medium sized fields enclosed by a network of generally well-maintained hedgerows and occasional stone walls. Some of the larger fields may have been created by a process of field amalgamation and hedgerow removal. Improved pastures are generally located along the course of the main watercourse, notably the Ampney Brook which flows across the Thames Valley Cornbrash Lowlands.

The woodland cover within the Thames Valley section of the Cornbrash Lowlands is very limited, confined to occasional rectilinear woodlands forming shelterbelts and coverts within the wider agricultural landscape. These comprise a mix of coniferous plantations and broadleaved woodlands.

In this managed agricultural landscape, there are few areas of nature conservation interest, although small remnant areas of unimproved mesotrophic and calcareous grasslands survive.

6.2.4 Human Influences

In common with the Dip-Slope Lowland to the north, it is likely that this landscape has been occupied since the Neolithic period. However, the time layers of occupation and successive patterns of land use and land management have largely been removed or integrated into the field patterns created by the enclosure of the land that occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries. It is this that has had the most significant effect on landscape character, with the resultant strong pattern of medium to large regular fields that extends across the area. Many of the area's farmhouses and barns date to this period. There is some evidence of previous occupational periods, however. The course of the Roman Road, Ermin Way is a significant historic landscape feature which crosses the Cornbrash Lowlands. Other traces of occupation exist, most notably the earthwork at Ranbury Ring to the west of Poulton, and the Anglo Saxon Burial Ground west of Fairford. A section of Salt Way also crosses the eastern part of the Cornbrash Lowlands.

Settlement within the Cornbrash Lowlands is mainly confined to compact hamlets and occasional dispersed villages, and an intermittent pattern of farmsteads and individual buildings. The area is crossed by a number of generally straight rural roads that link the rural settlements. East of Cirencester, the A417 is only major road that passes through the Cornbrash Lowlands, following an approximately east-west route. Despite the local impact of these roads, the area retains a quiet, rural character focused on agriculture.

6.2.5 Buildings and Settlements

Settlement within the Thames Valley section of the Cornbrash Lowlands is sparse and confined to small linear villages such as Poulton and the hamlets of Pool Keynes in the west of the area. There is also a pattern of dispersed farmsteads serving the predominantly agricultural land. The South Cerney Airfield and military airbase is also located within the landscape type, to the west of Driffield.

6.2.6 Landscape Character Areas

TV 2A Poole Keynes and Ewen Lowlands

The Poole Keynes and Ewen Lowlands comprise a medium to large scale landscape with a very gently undulating landform that can give the impression of being flat. There is a subtle rise in the landform, however, with levels rising from around 90m AOD in the extreme south east up to 115m AOD in the north west of the area. There is a general sense of openness and expansiveness with long distance views to the south, and glimpsed views of the Dip Slope Lowlands to the north. Vertical features also gain visual prominence in the open landscape and the eye is often drawn to a number of high voltage pylons that cross the Poole Keynes and Ewen Lowlands. The underlying Cornbrash Formation has given rise to the stony brown soil that is visible on the periphery of arable fields and in the stone walls that are sometimes found aligning local roads and tracks.

The hydrological features within the area are quite limited and consists of small number of ponds scattered throughout the landscape and ditches aligning field boundaries.



In the eastern section of the character area, arable cultivation is the predominant land use with large scale regular fields, whilst in the western section there is a wider variety of land uses including scrubby pasture, semi-improved sheep pasture, tree plantations as well as arable cultivation, all in fields of varying sizes from small to large. This mosaic of contrasting land uses combines to create a colourful textural landscape in the western portion of the character area. Low to medium, well managed and regularly trimmed hedgerows form the common field boundary in the agricultural landscape, punctuated by occasional isolated mature hedgerow oak trees. The hedgerow network is becoming gappy in places throughout the area with hedgerows commonly reinforced with post and wire, particularly in the western part. There is also evidence of field amalgamation and some arable fields are unfenced adjacent to farm tracks in the eastern section of the character area.



There are scattered and predominantly deciduous woodland copses throughout the area. These copses combine with intermittent mature hedge trees to create a well wooded horizon in many areas. There is also evidence of new tree planting along minor roads and tracks leading to farms.

A network of minor roads provides access across the area. The character of these roads varies considerably. For example, there is a distinctive sunken lane to the south of Kemblewick with low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows on either side of the road on the elevated banks; in contrast, the road between Ewen and Poole Keynes is at grade and delineated on either side by road side verges and medium height hedgerows. In the eastern portion of the character area the road network is broadly aligned north-south, east-west with those running north-south tending to be busier whilst those extending east-west are often quieter and more rural in character. There is also a limited number of rights of way giving pedestrian access to the wider landscape. The western section of the character area is also crossed by the main line railway, but as it is largely in cutting it does not form a notable feature in the landscape.

The linear and dispersed settlement of Ewen straddles the eastern and western sections of the character area. Part of Ewen is designated as a Conservation Area. Old stone properties constructed in the local vernacular in golden/grey limestone predominate together with occasional thatched dwellings in the

centre of the village; there is also some modern infill development. Areas of parkland landscape and associated tree avenues on the outskirts of the settlement are a notable local feature.

The settlement of Poole Keynes in the south of the western section of the character area also has a traditional character with numerous old stone built properties with stone boundary walls, as well as a few thatched cottages clustered around the village church. Notable features in the village include the stone built square tower of the church, the village cross (a Scheduled Ancient Monument) and Poole Keynes House, which is surrounded by parkland fencing.



Beyond the settlements of Ewen and Poole Keynes, settlement is generally very limited in the wider landscape and generally consists of scattered farms, associated outbuildings and isolated dwellings, usually constructed from stone, and either lying adjacent to local roads or set back on tracks. There are also some newly converted residential barn dwellings at Westend Farm in the western section of the area.

TV 2B Driffield Lowlands

The Driffield Lowlands comprise a very gently undulating and open, expansive landscape. Although extensive areas are perceived as flat, there are occasional localised undulations, for example the small hillock situated around Old Downs and The Folly on the southern edge of the county boundary. The flat and expansive nature of the landscape allows distant views to the north towards the Dip Slope Lowlands whilst, and also to the Thames River Basin Lowland to the south, although interrupted in places by localised elevated areas of land and woodland blocks.



6.2

Landscape Character Type: CORNBRASH LOWLANDS

The underlying Cornbrash Formation is evident in the landscape through the presence of the stony soils that are commonly found along the margins of agricultural fields and through a number of tumbled-down stone walls found fragmented amongst the hedgerow network. A number of watercourses drain the area and ditches are often found either aligning field boundaries or extending along local roads. The Ampney Brook is the most prominent of these watercourses, flowing broadly north to south through the Driffield Lowlands and the riparian vegetation and scrubby pastures extending along its course are readily visible in the landscape.



The predominant land uses of the character area comprises an extensive network of large to medium scale arable fields with smaller pasture fields commonly aligning watercourses or located adjacent to settlements. The arable fields are generally regular in shape with a variety of crops in cultivation, creating a colourful and textured landscape. Where pasture occurs adjacent to settlement, fields are often used for horse grazing and sub-divided with white tape fencing. Low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows predominate as the main boundary treatment between fields with medium height hedgerows generally aligning roads. In places, however, hedgerows are quite overgrown, and where they are maintained at a low height, they have often become gappy and reinforced with post and wire. The low height of the hedgerows between fields allows extensive views across the Driffield Lowlands and scattered mature hedgerow trees punctuating the landscape gain visual prominence in the perceived flat landscape.

Several woodland copes are scattered throughout the area so that views towards the horizon line are often dominated by distant woodland. The copes vary in composition and include deciduous, coniferous and mixed species stands of trees. The woodland blocks of The Folly and Old Downs are particularly notable due to their prominent location on a localised hillock rising to 101m AOD in the south of the area. The Folly comprises a fragment of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland. Overgrown field boundaries increase the tree cover and sense of a wooded cover in some areas.

The principal roads within the character area comprise the A417 which forms the northern boundary of the character area, and the A419(T) which cuts across the western part. The noise generated by the traffic using these roads, and the visual impact of the lighting infrastructure, together have an intrusive effect within an otherwise rural landscape. Elsewhere, a network of minor roads extends across the landscape, several of which terminate at farms in dead-ends.



Notable heritage features in the area include the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Ranbury Ring, which is located to the west of Poulton and surrounded on its western side by a distinctive belt of woodland, and the Ermin Way, a former Roman Road which follows the route of the A419 through the western section of the character area. Other features of heritage interest within the area include Conservation Areas that have been designated within the settlements of Harnhill, Driffield and Poulton. Driffield is a small linear settlement comprising a mixture of older and new stone properties that extend outwards from a central village core which includes a village pond and a stone church with a low tower. Poulton is another linear settlement with a number of older stone properties interspersed with occasional clusters of modern stone infill and some new red brick and rendered development on the settlement edge. Amenities in the village include a post office, public house and a general store and there is evidence of market gardening associated with the village with poly-tunnels and glass houses located at the edge of the settlement. The settlement of Harnhill comprises a small cluster of traditional stone-built dwellings with a ditch and a series of old stone walls threading through the village. There is also evidence of ridge and furrow in the fields to the north of this settlement. Overall, however, the influence of settlement is very limited with only distant views to settlement edges visible from the wider landscape and views towards occasional isolated farms and dwellings, largely constructed from stone, punctuating the landscape.

Other notable features in the landscape of the Driffield Lowlands include the South Cerney Army Station and airfield located in the western section of the character area. The group of large rectangular air hangars are prominent features in the landscape,

particularly in the context of their location adjacent to the open expanse of the airfield. The housing within the army station is typical of the architectural style used in military premises.



Recreational opportunities within the area include an 18 hole golf course and driving range to the south of Northmoor Lane adjacent to Butts Farm. Some tree groups have recently been established within the golf course. Butts Farm to the north east of the golf course is the location of a Rare Breeds Animal Farm. Other recreational opportunities in the area include a number of rights of way that cross the landscape.

TV 2C Southrop Lowlands

The Southrop Lowlands is characterised by a generally flat topography interspersed by occasional minor undulations. A sense of expansiveness prevails due to the prevalence of panoramic distant views towards elevated land on the southern side of the Upper Thames Valley.



The hydrological features within the area are generally limited to a few minor streams and brooks that follow the flatter land between undulations. The River Coln flows from north to south through the central section of the character area, passing through the grounds of Fairford Park. The flow of the river is regulated by a set of weirs in the north of the park and this has created an extensive linear water body known as Broad Water as a central focal feature of the park. Fairford Park comprises the former parkland landscape that was created for a mansion built in the 17th century. The mansion was demolished in the 1950s and Farmoor School now stands on the former site.

Arable cultivation is the dominant land use in the character area with fields generally large to medium in size and regular in shape. Low hedgerows of varying conditions form the common field boundary to the west of Fairford. Some of these hedgerows are well-maintained, whilst others are gappy in places and there are occasional isolated mature hedgerow trees, some of which are becoming stag-headed. The low well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows combine with the regularly shaped fields to visually unify the landscape and this produces a strong overall landscape pattern. To the east of Fairford, low stone walls predominate as a field boundary treatment interspersed with tracts of overgrown hedgerows. Some of these stone walls are becoming fragmented in places.



There are a number of small, generally geometric shaped copses scattered throughout the character area. These vary in composition and include stands of mixed species and copses of coniferous species. The woodland cover in the area includes the southern portion of the ancient semi-natural woodland of The Grove located to the north of Broad Water in Fairford Park. Views towards Lea Wood can be seen readily from the northern section of the area, although this distinctive oval shaped and visually prominent woodland block is within the adjacent landscape character type of Dip Slope Lowland. The isolated hedgerow trees aligning the hedgerow network also form distinct punctuations as they gain visual prominence in the flat open landscape of the character area. Also notable are recently planted avenues of trees along some minor roads in the area.

Heritage features of interest in the Southrop Lowlands includes an Anglo-Saxon Burial Ground located to the north east of Fairford, the ancient road of the Salt Way, which follows the route of a minor road passing through the east of the character area, a Tumulus at Farhill Farm to the east of Fairford Park, and an obelisk situated in the northern part of Fairford Park. There is a disused airfield to the west of Southrop, which is of military historical interest through its links with the network of World War II airfields that were established in the wider area.

6.2

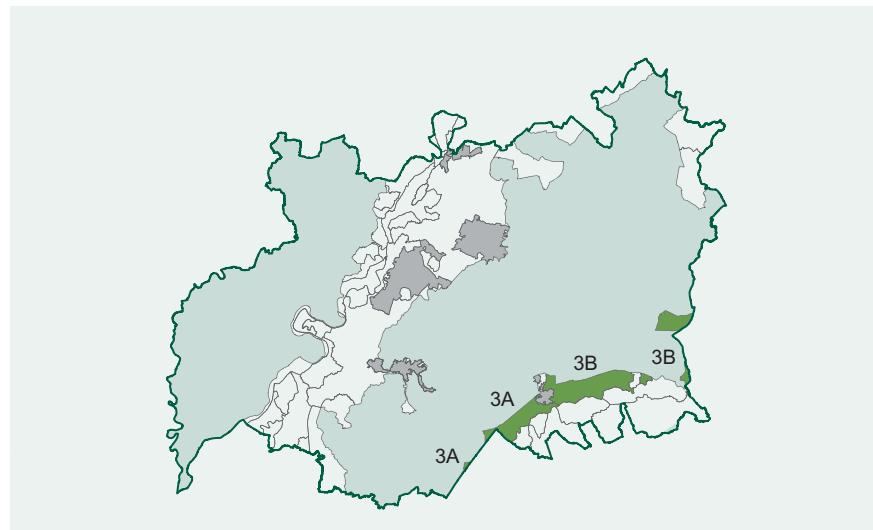
Landscape Character Type: CORNBRASH LOWLANDS

The A417 follows the southern boundary of the western section of the character area. Elsewhere, there is a network of minor roads that form a grid across the landscape, several of which radiate out from Fairford and connect to settlements in the wider area.



Settlement is generally very sparse with the influence of settlement on the character of the area generally limited to distant views towards isolated farms and dwellings and views towards new development on the perimeter of Fairford. Temporary settlement in the area includes the Greenacres Park residential caravan park situated on the south western boundary of the area.

Recreational opportunities in the area include a limited number of rights of way extending through the landscape and a Leisure Centre associated with Farmoor School which now occupies the site of the former mansion at Fairford Park.



CHARACTER AREAS

TV 3A Kemble Dip Slope

TV 3B The Ampneys

6.3.1 Key Characteristics

- Broad area of gently sloping, undulating lowland with a predominantly south easterly fall;
- Lowland landform gently dissected by infrequent small streams flowing towards the River Thames and its principal tributaries, and often inconspicuous within the landscape;
- Well-managed productive landscape with a general predominance of medium to large scale arable fields and smaller scale improved pastures;
- Seasonal variations in colour and texture associated with mixed arable farming;
- Boundaries comprise a network of hedgerows of varying quality, together with stone walls and post and wire fencing;
- Occasional woodland copses and shelterbelts, mainly geometric in form; and
- Settlement pattern of intermittent linear and nucleated villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads.

6.3.2 Landscape Character

The Dip-Slope Lowland forms the northern section of the Upper Thames Valley Study Area, extending from Kemble Airfield in the west, to Lechlade on Thames in the east. It is contiguous with the wider area of Dip Slope Lowland that extends north and west into the surrounding Cotswolds AONB. The southern perimeter of the type is defined by the Cornbrash Lowlands and the outcrop of the Cornbrash Limestone. The tract of Dip Slope Lowland in the study area is broken only by the Lower Coln Valley in the east between Fairford and Quenington.

Underlying the Dip Slope Lowland are limestone formations of the Great Oolite Group, including outcrops of the Forest Marble Formation. It comprises an area of gently undulating lowland,



approximately 150m AOD to 100m AOD, with a gentle fall from north-west to south-east. This area forms part of the Upper Thames Catchment area with the western section located close to the source of the Thames. The area is crossed by the Thames tributaries that follow the regional south easterly dip of the underlying strata, and therefore give the landscape a well-defined grain. Secondary tributary streams are generally infrequent, and where they do occur, they have gently dissected this lowland area resulting in local variations in landform.

Agriculture is the principal land use, with much of the land under mixed arable and intermittent areas of improved pastures, with some permanent pasture predominantly within the valleys. It is generally well managed, within a mosaic of medium to large regular fields, mainly contained by hedgerows of varying quality. There are also areas where stone walls predominate, generally confined to land surrounding villages and adjacent to farms. Woodland is relatively limited, confined to a pattern of small deciduous or mixed copses and shelterbelts, and occasional larger areas of woodland and coniferous stands. Wide views are often possible across the landscape, although the succession of field boundaries intercepts views in a number of areas, creating a more intimate character.

6.3

Landscape Character Type: DIP SLOPE LOWLAND

A pattern of dispersed villages and hamlets extend across the Dip Slope Lowland, together with numerous isolated farmsteads and individual buildings. The Roman market town of Cirencester is the only large settlement within the area. A network of mainly direct local roads connect settlements, with a limited section of the A433 evident on the north-western edge of the Character Type, and sections of the A419(T), and A417(T) extending to the east and south-east from Cirencester. A main line railway also crosses the western section of the Landscape Type.

6.3.3 Physical Influences

The Dip Slope Lowland within the Upper Thames Valley study area is located at the eastern and south-eastern limit of the outcrop of Oolitic Limestone within Gloucestershire, and is underlain by a sequence of limestones and mudstones of the Great Oolite Group, including the Forest Marble Formation.

Drainage across the Dip Slope Lowland forms part of the Upper Thames catchment area. The Thames tributaries of the Churn, Ampney Brook and Coln cross the Dip Slope Lowland in north-west / south-east aligned valleys, following the dip of the underlying strata. Occasional smaller tributary streams and dry valleys link into these rivers, with the valley forms creating subtle but locally significant variations in the topography

Agricultural 'improvements' and ploughing up of much of the Dip Slope Lowland has significantly depleted the once extensive areas of traditionally managed pasture and calcareous grassland. However, a few remnants of calcareous as well as mesotrophic (neutral) grassland remain within the area, although their impact in the wider landscape is very limited. Ancient woodland is also sparse. Much of the woodland areas that cover the area today date from the previous two centuries and the period of enclosure, resulting in a 'planned' character. A pattern of geometric and linear plantations and shelterbelts therefore prevails.

6.3.4 Human Influences

The wider Dip Slope Lowland landscape is characterised by numerous prehistoric long barrows and burial mounds, although only one is evident on the edge of the Landscape Type, to the east of Quenington. Evidence of Roman occupation is also notable within the Upper Thames Valley sections of the character type, with a well defined network of Roman roads converging on the important Roman settlement of Cirencester (CORINIVM). These are represented by Akeman Street (B4425) and its extension as a local road linking to Quenington on the northern edge of the area; the Fosse Way on the north-western edge and to the east of Cirencester which is now followed by the A433; and Ermin Way, which is now the route of the A419 approach into Cirencester from the south east, with links to the A417(T) which bypasses Cirencester to the east.

Field patterns across the Dip Slope Lowland comprise a mosaic of both irregular enclosure reflecting former unenclosed cultivation patterns, and regular enclosure that ignores former unenclosed

cultivation patterns. In the study area, fields are predominantly medium to large scale and rectangular in form, although there are notable clusters of smaller scale fields surrounding the settlements, for example to the east of Ampney Crucis.

Formal recreation provision is generally limited, although numerous footpaths cross the landscape, including the Thames Path National Trail located in the west of the Landscape Type close to the source of the Thames.

Landmarks are limited within the landscape, but in places church towers and spires represent focal features and points of orientation within the lower lying landform. Although infrequent, pylon lines have a significant impact where they occur.

6.3.5 Buildings and Settlement

Settlement within the Dip Slope Lowland is relatively limited, with a dispersed pattern of villages and hamlets. There is a notable cluster of villages to the north of Ampney Brook, however, comprising the linked villages of Ampney Crucis, Ampney St Peter and Ampney St Mary. Aligning the minor road network, the villages frequently have a linear form, although a few display a more nucleated morphology as at Ampney St Mary. Isolated farms and individual dwellings are evident across the landscape, often located adjacent to roads or at the end of short lanes and tracks off roads.

The use of Cotswolds stone for buildings and walls, and tiles or 'slates' for roofing is evident across the type, contributing much to the character of local buildings and local vernacular. Kemble, the largest settlement within the Landscape Type, is located in the western section of the Dip Slope Lowland, and is served by a main line railway Station, with direct links to London Paddington.

Kemble Airfield, a former military air base, is located to the west of Kemble, on the southern perimeter of the county, and also extending into Wiltshire. Part of the Airfield has been converted for light industrial uses, and now accommodates a number of large scale industrial uses and associated buildings which are prominent features within the wider landscape.

6.3.6 Landscape Character Areas

TV 3A Kemble Dip Slope

The Kemble Dip Slope character area forms an extension of the wider Dip Slope Lowland within the Cotswolds AONB to the north and west. It extends from Kemble Airfield in the west to the southern limits of Cirencester in the east; a limited area, detached from the main Kemble Airfield character area, is located to the east of Long Newton. The character area is principally underlain by Great Oolite Group limestones, and in some areas by the Forest Marble Formation. Alluvium of sand, clay and gravel is evident along minor tributaries aligned north west, south east across the character area, including the upper reaches of the River Thames valley and sections of the River Churn.

The area has a gently sloping mainly south easterly grain with more subtle undulations and shallower slope profile than the Dip Slope Character Type further north within the AONB. Within the character area, however, small tributary watercourses are evident, including the upper reaches of the River Thames to the north east of Kemble, and the River Churn south of Cirencester. These watercourses are often marked by scattered trees and scrubby vegetation. Underlying the shallow valleys of the watercourses is a narrow band of alluvial sand, clay and silt.



A consistent pattern of well managed, productive mixed arable and grazed pastoral fields extends across the area, with a predominance of large scale arable fields resulting in a simple, uniform landscape in places. Pastoral fields are scattered across the area, although concentrations occur on the periphery of settlements and in areas along the line of a dismantled railway that is largely confined to the south of the area. Intermittent areas of calcareous grassland are also scattered across the Kemble Dip Slope. The fields are enclosed either by low stone walls, or hedgerows of varying condition.

Whilst woodlands are not extensive, where they do occur they are generally small to medium in scale, geometric in form, and predominantly of broadleaved or mixed composition. Large scale woodland blocks are infrequent, the most notable being Kemble Wood, an area of ancient semi natural woodland which is also designated as a Key Wildlife Site. Prominent tree lines also align some sections of the dismantled railway between Kemble and Cirencester. Notable vegetation associations have developed within some of the railway cuttings that cross the character area and these areas are designated as SSSIs. In some areas, the presence of overgrown hedgerows, together with the intermittent woodland copses, combine in places to create the impression of a well treed character. Woodlands within the surrounding landscape to the north and south also often punctuate the horizon and restrict long distance views.

The character area retains a largely rural character, and beyond the largest settlement of Kemble, there is a pattern of scattered farmsteads and detached dwellings. The village of Kemble, located in the south western section of the character area, is divided by the A429. The settlement contains both old stone dwellings and modern infill development, with the older historic core designated as a Conservation Area. Located in the southern section of

Kemble, stone buildings surround a village green and include the village church with its prominent spire that forms a local landmark. Kemble is located on the main line railway with a Station located on the north western edge of the village that provides direct links to London Paddington. With this transport link to the capital, more recent residential development within the village reflects its growing role as a commuter settlement.



Despite the predominantly rural character of the Kemble Dip Slope, urbanising influences become increasingly evident on the perimeter of Cirencester with post war and modern housing and large scale industrial buildings extending up to the farmland that surrounds the town.

Apart from the network of minor roads which largely follow the grain of the landscape, the A433 Fosse Way Roman road follows the north western boundary, and the A429 also cuts across the character area. High voltage pylons also have an influence on the landscape, particularly in close proximity to Cirencester. Kemble Airfield is a notable feature within the landscape, although it is largely located beyond the character area within Wiltshire. The industrial and developed character contrasts with the surrounding agricultural landscape. Large scale industrial units and converted hangars, together with scattered woodland blocks punctuate the landscape, which in this area is particularly flat in character. The former MOD airfield is currently used by light aircraft and supports services for the aircraft industry, as well as being home to a motor sports track.



Archaeological remains and heritage links are generally limited, and include the Fosse Way, the remains of a settlement to the south east of Chesterton Farm and designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), and a tithe barn to the south of Cirencester, also designated as a SAM.

6.3

Landscape Character Type: DIP SLOPE LOWLAND

TV 3B The Ampneys

The Ampneys character area forms an extension of the wider Dip Slope Lowland within the Cotswolds AONB to the north, and extends from the eastern edge of Cirencester to the east of Quenington. Within the eastern section, The Lower Coln Valley character area (Character Area TV4B) extends across the Dip Slope Lowland resulting in a small and detached area to the east of Quenington. A further small area of Dip Slope Lowland that is detached from the main area of The Ampneys is located to the east of Eastleach Martin adjacent to the Lower Leach Dip Slope Lowland Valley. Underlying the character area is a predominance of Great Oolite Group limestones with areas of Forest Marble Formation. Limited areas of drift deposit are also present, most notably along the valleys of minor brooks within the character area, including the Winterwell and Ampney Brook. In such areas, alluvial silty clays predominate, with areas of boulder clay associated with minor undulations across the Dip Slope Lowland.



Generally falling below 140m AOD, the character area has a gently sloping, mainly south easterly grain with subtle undulations, frequently marked by minor watercourses or dry valleys. The most notable watercourse is the Ampney Brook, which flows adjacent to the A417 and also through the villages of Ampney Crucis and Ampney St Peter. The main course of the brook is also designated as a Key Wildlife Site. Flowing into the brook from the north is a network of minor tributary streams, a number of which pass through, or in close proximity of the village of Ampney St Mary. The brook meanders through the landscape, frequently surrounded by small scale rushy pastures, with only occasional scattered trees and scrub marking its course.

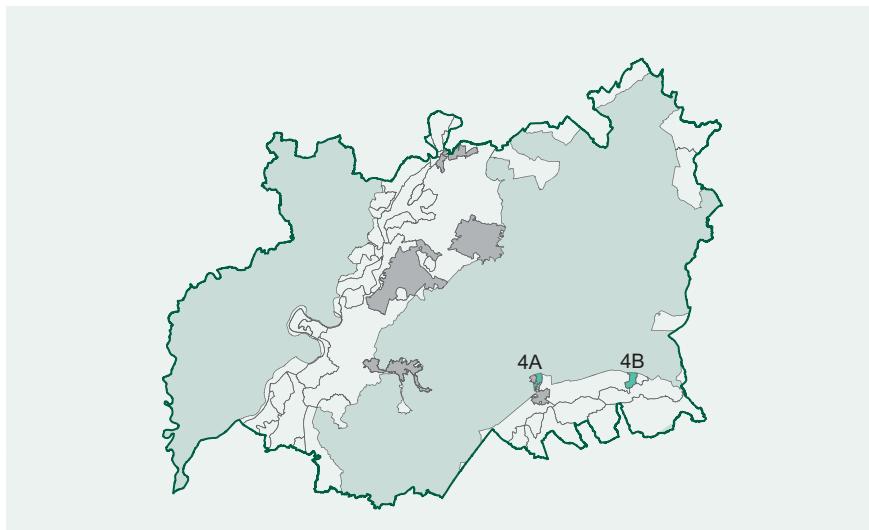
Large scale, well managed arable fields generally predominate, interspersed with pastoral fields often small in scale, both improved and with evidence of scrub encroachment. Concentrations of grazed pastures occur mainly within the subtle undulations and valleys marked by watercourses, with occasional fields of set aside pasture and calcareous grassland. As with the wider Dip Slope Lowland landscape, fields are enclosed by both stone walls and hedgerows of varying condition. A number of small disused quarries, known locally as delves, are evident within the area, and likely to once have been a source of stone for field boundary construction or for local buildings. Where hedgerows are present,

wooden post and wire or post and rail fences reinforce the hedgerows where they have become gappy. Occasional mature trees are scattered along field boundaries, and where hedgerows have become overgrown, they are often perceived as tree lines across the landscape, combining in areas with small woodland copses to create the local impression of a relatively well treed landscape. Whilst significant woodland blocks are not characteristic of the Dip Slope Lowland, a number of small copses, predominantly with a mixed or deciduous composition are scattered across the area, with more evident to the west between Cirencester and Ampney St Peter. In a number of views, these small blocks combine to create a moderately well wooded horizon. Although limited as a whole, ancient semi-natural woodland can be found at Lea Wood and Coneygar Wood, to the south east and north west of Quenington respectively, both of which are also designated as Key Wildlife Sites.

Villages and hamlets are scattered across the character area, with a greater concentration to the west. The majority of villages have a broadly linear form, for example at Ampney Crucis. This village is mentioned in the Domesday Book, and it is believed that a Roman settlement extending to 4 hectares once occupied its footprint. The church is of Saxon origin. By contrast, Ampney St Peter, which is located along the A417, and Ampney St Mary both have a more compact and nuclear form. All the Ampney villages, together with Preston, are designated as Conservation Areas. Ampney Park, on the western edge of Ampney Crucis is set within designed parkland, and although privately owned, the imposing entrance gates are a notable feature on the A417. Beyond the main settled areas is a pattern of scattered farms and dwellings, often accessed via a network of minor tracks, but also located adjacent to roadsides. Surrounding a number of farms are small rectangular woodland copses providing a sense of enclosure and shelter to the farm buildings.

On the western side of the character area, a network of principal roads diverge on Cirencester, notably the A417, A417(T), and the A419. These form part of the system of Roman roads that link into the town and signify the importance of the settlement during the Roman occupation. Beyond this, a network of minor country roads, broadly aligned north-south and east-west, connect the smaller settlements. The frequently low boundaries bordering the road network allows open and often panoramic views across the landscape towards the wider Upper Thames Basin to the south. One of these minor roads bordering the northern boundary of the character area, and marking the southern edge of the Cotswolds AONB, is the Roman road of Akeman Street. A further section of Roman road east of Cirencester and close to the western boundary of the character area aligns with the A429 Stow Road.

There is little in the way of formal recreational provision within the character area, the main emphasis being on the network of public rights of way that cross the landscape.



CHARACTER AREAS

TV 4A Lower Churn Valley

TV 4B Lower Coln Valley

6.4.1 Key Characteristics

- Intimate, small scale, settled landscape with landform and woodlands restricting long distance views out of the valley;
- Predominance of open pastoral farmland of improved grassland between intermittent woodland and copses on steeper slopes and along valley bottoms, together with pockets of arable land, particularly on shallower valley slopes;
- Access to valleys generally restricted, and confined to a single valley side road, or routes that cross the valley at long established bridging points;
- Areas of the valleys retain a remote rural character and are only accessible on foot; and
- Stone built villages occupy secluded locations in the valley bottoms, and on the valley sides, and are often in association with a bridging point or ford.

6.4.2 Landscape Character

Two small and discrete areas of Dip-Slope Lowland Valley are located in the Upper Thames Valley Study Area, comprising the valleys of the Churn and Coln Rivers. Located with the broader Dip Slope Lowland, the valleys extend southwards from the Cotswolds AONB boundary. The well defined valley forms are distinctively separate from the adjacent gently undulating landscape of the Dip Slope Lowland. In the west, a short section of the River Churn and associated valley slopes is located between Baunton and Cirencester. To the east, a short section of River Coln valley extends southwards from the village of Quenington towards Fairford.

The descriptions below are applicable to the wider representation of features that characterise the sequence of Dip Slope Valleys that extend into the adjacent Cotswolds AONB. Although small in scale, the valleys within the Thames Valley study area are generally



representative of this wider range of characteristics of the Dip Slope Lowland Valleys, hence the full description is given. Reference to local variations and influences are provided in the more detailed description of the Landscape Character Areas.

River valley water meadows and floodplain pastures are characteristically flat or very gently undulating with shallow sloping land on either side. The sheltered, intimate, small scale wooded and pastoral pattern of the valleys contrasts with the more open and exposed tracts of the surrounding Dip-Slope Lowland. However, the transition between the Dip-Slope Lowland and valleys is often hard to define, in particular where valley slopes are gentle and woodland cover is not extensive.

Historically this is an intensively farmed landscape, and the focus of communication routes, so centuries of activity have obscured many of the remains of earlier activity. The rich alluvial deposits within the valley contrast with the shallow soils on the surrounding Dip-Slope Lowland and support fertile land for productive pasture farming. Arable farming is evident on the drier land that is frequently found on the gentler valley slopes, and adds seasonal variations in texture and colour to an otherwise verdant pastoral valley bottom landscape.

6.4

Landscape Character Type: DIP SLOPE LOWLAND VALLEY

Woodland cover is characteristic of the Dip-Slope Lowland Valleys, with significant blocks of broadleaved woodland combining with riverside trees and overgrown valley side hedgerows to give the landscape a distinctly wooded character in some areas.

As well as the riverine habitats, elements of the wider landscape provide nature conservation interest. Woodland, scrub and hedgerows provide cover for wildlife and add a variety of feeding and breeding sites to those provided by wet meadows and areas of riverside vegetation. Despite widespread agricultural improvements, areas of calcareous and mesotrophic grassland raise the nature conservation value of the landscape type.

Views are generally restricted by landform and vegetation within the valley and channelled along the valley floor. From the upper slopes, however, more expansive views are often possible and in places offer views along the course of the river. Farmed slopes and woodlands form a backdrop to many views, with seasonal changes in broadleaved woodlands and scattered arable fields adding to the visual appeal of the valleys.

6.4.3 Physical Influences

The Dip Slope Lowland Valleys comprise the lower reaches of the Thames tributaries that rise further north within the High Wold. At this lower elevation their valley profiles are progressively broader and gentler as they approach the River Basin Lowland to the south. Nevertheless, localised areas of incised valley form and steep valley slopes are still evident.

The rivers valleys are underlain by Middle Jurassic limestone, notably the Great Oolite Group White Limestone and Forest Marble Formations, which are evident on upper valley slopes. Historically some of the valleys have proved a valuable source of local building stone and quarry sites may be identified on 1:25,000 mapping, although are not always evident in the landscape. The level valley bottoms are formed from alluvial deposits of silty clay, with boulder clay also present, forming narrow areas of floodplain. The rivers follow sinuous courses, meandering across the flat valley floor.

Soils within the floodplain are often poorly drained, and the valley floor predominantly comprises un-drained wet grazed pasture, with localised areas of meadows also of importance. Along the edges of the floodplain and on the rising valley sides, silty soils support fertile land for productive pasture and in some areas less at risk from flooding, most notably the valley sides, fields under arable cultivation are in evidence. On slopes too steep for improvement and heavy grazing, localised areas of calcareous unimproved grassland have survived.

Riverside trees are frequent in places, including pollarded willows. Intermittent areas of largely deciduous woodlands and copses are also evident, principally confined to steeper slopes, and limit views in areas and reinforce the sense of enclosure and intimacy within the valleys. When combined with hedgerows on the valley sides,

the vegetation cover contributes to the sense of a well treed landscape. Stone walls are also characteristic of the valleys, often found within close proximity to settlements. Post and wire and post and rail fences are also evident within the valley bottom, sections of which have become colonised by tall weed and scrub growth, and weaken the impression of an otherwise robust and well managed landscape framework.

6.4.4 Human Influences

Interconnecting with the wider valley network, the Dip-Slope Lowland valleys would have provided important communication routes in the past, and it is likely that human occupation would have been present from the Neolithic and Bronze Age. Many valley settlements were established in the Saxon or medieval periods and located adjacent to the river at fording or bridging points.

Roads generally run along the upper slopes of valleys, with villages in the valley bottoms accessed via a network of minor roads. These frequently extend across the river connecting with more major roads on the valley slopes. Beyond the village, many stretches of the valleys remain inaccessible to vehicles and can only be accessed on foot. Furthermore, many areas are in private ownership and therefore not accessed by public footpaths, giving some areas a remote character.

The main provision of recreational pursuits is through the network of public rights of way. These largely follow the course of the river and provide access through and linking the valley settlements. A limited number descend the valley slopes. Some longer distance paths traverse the valleys, notably the Monarch's Way which follows a section of Churn Valley, and follows the valley bottom within the Lower Churn Valley.

6.4.5 Buildings and Settlement

Many villages within the Dip-Slope Lowland Valleys are located on the gentle valley slopes above the main course of the river. Linear villages are generally confined to the lower slopes and stretch out along the course of the river, whilst others are located along a network of minor roads, extending from the river onto more elevated valley sides, such as Quenington.

Dip-Slope Lowland Valley villages are generally small and quiet, with vernacular building styles and materials adding to their visual appeal and character. Stone churches are often associated with the villages, although generally not located with village centres. In addition to the historic core of the villages, post war and more recent development is frequently be found either as infill, or located on the periphery of the settlement.

6.4.6 Landscape Character Areas

TV 4A Lower Churn Valley

The Lower Churn Valley Character Area comprises a very limited section of the Coln Valley that flows within the wider Dip Slope Lowland and extends from the south of Baunton on the southern edge of the Cotswolds AONB to the northern edge of Cirencester. To the north, the Middle Churn Valley is contained within the High Wold Dip Slope. To the south of Cirencester, the valley of the River Churn is no longer distinguishable, and it therefore forms an integral part of the wider Dip Slope Lowland character area through which it flows (See Character Area TV3A).

Although the valley form is distinct within the Lower Churn Valley Character Area, the slope profile is generally broader and shallower than further upstream. The valley extends across the White Limestone of the Great Oolite Group, with the Forest Marble Formation exposed where erosion has taken place in the southern sections of the valley and along the upper valley slopes. Alluvial deposits are present in valley bottom, comprising gravels and silty clay.

Improved pastures predominate, extending across the broad, smooth valley slopes, together with scattered areas of calcareous grassland, and some large scale arable fields. Subdivision of larger scale fields with wooden post and rail fencing is common within close proximity of the settlement areas, with fields of grazing horse extending out from settlement edges. Stone wall boundaries are also a regular feature adjacent to settlements. Overall, field boundary treatments vary along the valley, including low and scrubby hedgerows, together with more overgrown boundaries and wooden post and wire and post and rail fencing. The valley retains a largely open character as a result of the large scale fields and limited woodland cover which occurs intermittently along the valley as small, predominantly deciduous copse.

The course of the Lower Churn meanders along the valley floor with numerous minor braided channels and ditches flowing into the main channel. Whilst the latter retains an open course and is intermittently visible as a narrow channel across the valley floor, the course of the river is frequently marked by mature trees and riparian vegetation, with only filtered views possible in places. The

importance of the river and its associated habitat is marked by its designation as a Key Wildlife Site for mammal interest. From crossing points with the valley, primarily in the village of Baunton, more extensive views are possible across the River Churn and the rising valley sides.



Despite limited settlement within the character area, the close proximity of development at Stratton and the northern edge of Cirencester including Bowling Green, exerts an influence upon the character of the valley. Whilst much of the village of Baunton is located within the adjacent AONB, the southern limits of the linear settlement extend into the character area along the valley floor with characteristic stone properties visible in a number of views, most notably from the limited road network which extends along the upper valley slopes on the edge of the area. The golf course to the west of Baunton provides a contrasting land use and backdrop to the character area from elevated roads. Although recreational facilities are limited within the valley, the Monarch's Way long distance footpath follows the course of the Churn along the valley floor.



6.4

Landscape Character Type: DIP SLOPE LOWLAND VALLEY

TV 4B Lower Coln Valley

The Lower Coln Valley Character Area extends for a limited distance into the Upper Thames Valley study area, between Quenington to the north of Fairford Park. The character area shares many of the characteristics of the longer section of the Lower Coln Valley that extends northwards into the Cotswolds AONB within the Dip Slope Lowland.

This section of the Coln Valley flows across the White Limestone of the Great Oolite Group, with limited exposures of the Forest Marble Formation also present in the southern section of the character area on the upper reaches of both the western and eastern valley slopes. Alluvial deposits are also present along the valley bottom, together with limited areas of boulder clay.

Although the valley form is generally less deeply incised than in the upper sections of the Churn Valley, it nevertheless retains a well defined valley form, in particular on the eastern valley side where slopes are significantly steeper resulting in an asymmetrical cross profile to the valley. This is typical of the process of uncinclinal shifting whereby there is a tendency for rivers in areas of gently dipping strata to migrate in the direction of the dip. The longitudinal profile of the Churn also displays the characteristics of an 'underfit river', since it flows through an incised and larger scale valley meander form with interlocking spurs that is disproportionate to the much smaller river that now flows through the valley. This pronounced valley form would have been carved by a more substantial river charged with glacial meltwater at the end of the post glacial period. While the incised valley form and pronounced meanders remain, it is now occupied by a smaller river with a much depleted discharge capacity.



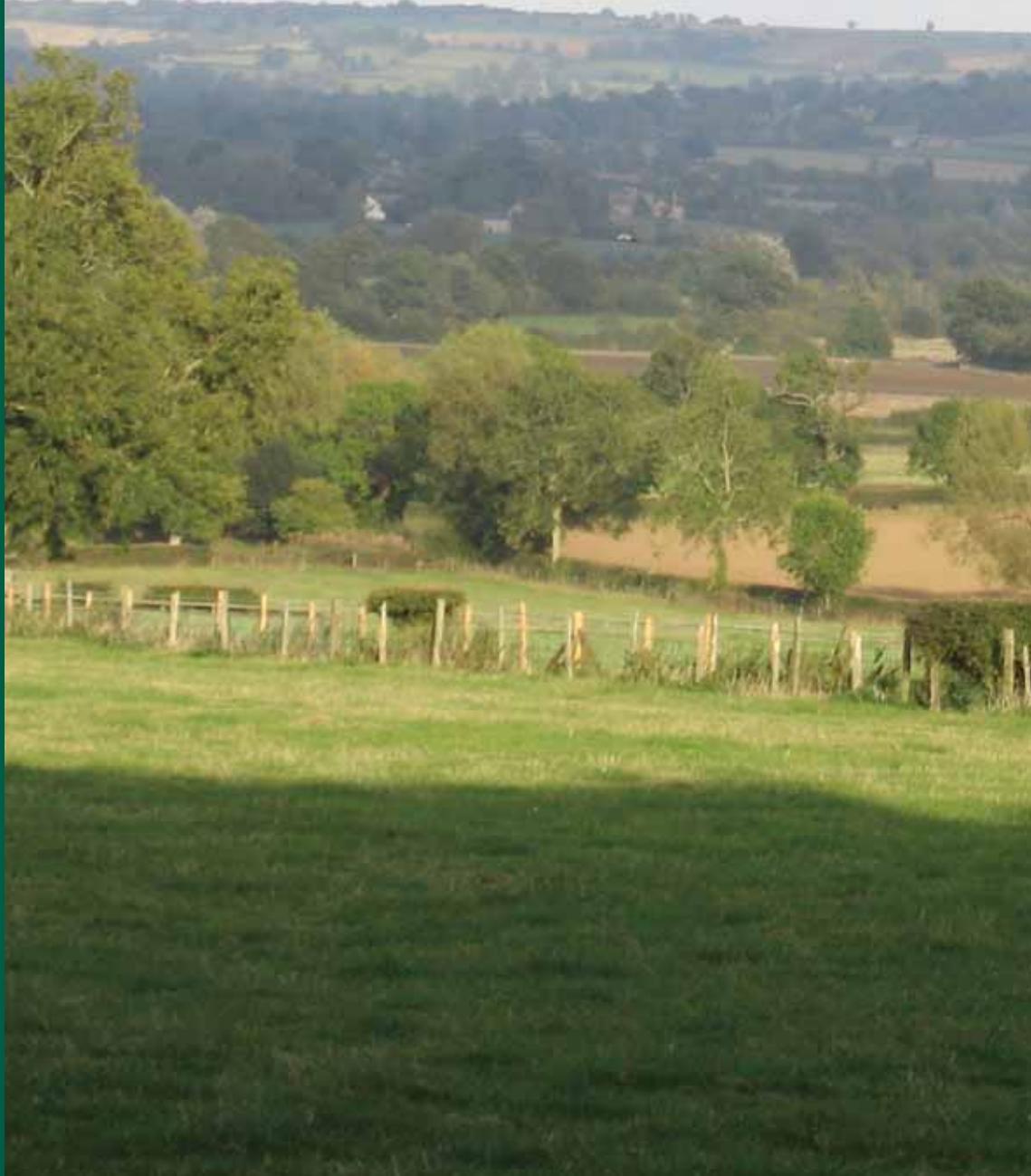
Land use along the valley is a combination of arable and pastoral land, with a predominance of improved grassland and calcareous grassland around the settlement of Quenington. Pockets of setaside land occupy the sloping landform, in particular on the steeper eastern slopes, creating a scrubby appearance to the valley. Whilst arable land is scattered along the valley, concentrations occur within the southern sections in generally large scale fields. Pastoral fields are often rectilinear and small to medium in size, with smaller and often irregular pastures frequent on the edge of villages with larger pastures descending the valley

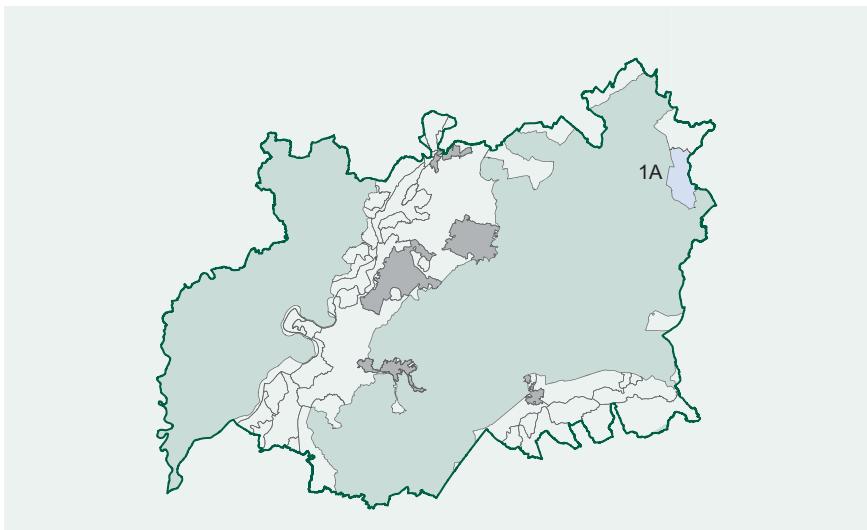
slopes. Hedgerows of varying condition enclose the fields, together with wooden post and wire and post and rail fencing. In close proximity to the valley settlement, stone walls are frequent boundary features.

Meandering across the valley floor, the River Coln is often bordered with pollarded willows, mature deciduous trees and areas of scrubby vegetation. Tree and woodland cover beyond the river encompasses an intermittent pattern of both deciduous and coniferous copses that extend across both the upper and lower slopes. The Grove woodland is particularly notable occupying the steep south eastern valley slopes. It is ancient in origin and also designated as a Key Wildlife Site. The sequence of woodlands and riparian vegetation that follow the valley, together with intermittent overgrown hedgerows, has resulted in a locally well-wooded character in places, although in contrast, other sections of the valley retain an open character.



Quenington is the only settlement within the character area. Located adjacent to two crossing points over the river, the village extends from a valley bottom location and up the western valley slopes. It is designated as a Conservation Area and combines an historic core of older stone dwellings with new stone properties generally concentrated on the outer edges of the village. Dwellings on the southern edge of the village that occupy rising landform of the valley sides are often prominent in views from the country lanes located along the upper western and eastern valley sides, and the perimeter of the surrounding Dip Slope Lowland. Beyond the village of Quenington there is no other settlement within the river valley.





CHARACTER AREAS

VM 1A Upper Evenlode Vale

7.1.1 Key Characteristics

- Farmed pastoral vale with flat or gently undulating land, defined in the wider landscape by the rising slopes of the Farmed Slopes;
- Dendritic pattern of rivers and streams, dominated by the River Evenlode and its tributaries;
- Underlain by Lias Group rock formations masked by extensive drift deposits;
- A generally secluded, intimate scale landscape, interspersed intermittently with areas with an open character where vegetation cover is minimal and more expansive views are possible from locally elevated areas;
- Productive and verdant landscape with a predominance of improved and semi-improved pastures together with areas of arable land;
- Areas of wet meadow and species rich grassland bordering river channels;
- Varied field size, although the pastoral land is generally within small to medium scale fields and arable in larger scale enclosures;
- Network of hedgerows of varying height and condition with intermittent hedgerow trees;
- Limited woodland cover, although in places hedgerow and waterside trees combine with woodland copse to create the sense of a well wooded character; and
- Generally a sparse settlement pattern dominated by scattered farmsteads and dwellings;



7.1.2 Landscape Character

The Pastoral Lowland Vale extends from the northern edge of Lower Oddington within the Cotswolds AONB towards the Undulating Lowland Vale Landscape Character Type north of Moreton-in-Marsh. Here, the low farmed landscapes border the River Evenlode and its tributaries, below the rising slopes of the neighbouring Farmed Slopes that extend across the wider Cotswolds AONB landscape.

The Pastoral Lowland Vale landscape comprises a mixed land use of pastoral fields with areas of unimproved grassland and wet meadows bordering streams interspersed with areas of arable land. Land use and land cover are strongly influenced by the nature of the extensive drift deposits that cloak the underlying solid geology of Lias Group Charmouth Mudstone Formation. Despite the variation in field size from larger scale arable fields to smaller scale pastures, the predominantly hedged fields, undulating landform and field, stream and hedgerow trees combine to create an intimate, human scale landscape. In limited areas, however, where there is a sparse vegetation cover and locally elevated land, a more open and expansive character is prevalent with wider views available.

7.1

Landscape Character Type: PASTORAL LOWLAND VALE

In the wider landscape the rising landform of the Farmed Slopes within the Cotswolds AONB extend around the vale forming a distinct backdrop to the lowland landscape, and adding to the sense of enclosure, intimacy and visual unity.

Settlement, overall, is sparse with a network of narrow winding lanes linking a dispersed pattern of historic towns and small villages on areas of raised landform in the valley bottom above the level of flooding. These often date to the Saxon or medieval period and contain historic churches. In places, ridge and furrow is evident on the edge of settlements. Significant areas display evidence of 18th and 19th century enclosure with a patchwork of neat hawthorn hedgerows defining large and moderately sized geometric fields.

7.1.3 Physical Influence

The glacial and post glacial history has had a significant influence on the character of the Pastoral Lowland Vale. During the Ice Age, and specifically at the height of the Anglian Glaciation, ice sheets from the north and north east as well as within the Severn Vale resulted in the creation of an extensive glacial lake known as Lake Harrison. Drainage from this lake occurred through a number of overflow gaps including through the Moreton Gap, with drainage into what is now the Thames catchment. The outwash fan of this Ice Age lake resulted in the deposition of glacioluvial sands, gravels, and diamicton or boulder clay, together with glaciolacustrine clay, silt and sand, and alluvium within the Evenlode valley. This has resulted in a complex and varied drift geology within the Pastoral Lowland Vale. The deposits that extend across much of the Vale of Moreton mask much of the underlying Lias Group Charmouth Mudstone Formation, and have influenced the local topography and soil characteristics.

The watershed between the catchment areas of the River Thames and River Severn is located on the northern edge of the landscape type. Here, the headwaters of the River Evenlode, a tributary of the Thames, gather from springs to flow south to the wider vale and into the upper reaches of the Evenlode. The tributaries have dissected the area to create a gently rolling landscape of rounded slopes, with a series of shallow valleys. Due to their shallow nature and the rolling character of the landscape, the watercourses can often only be traced by observing lines of pollarded willows and ash. The network of ditches, watercourses and streams indicates that this low-lying landscape is subject to periodic flooding. Indeed, many of the fields are bordered by drainage ditches, with lush wet meadows and wide floodplain pastures lining watercourses.

The farmed landscape comprises a combination of pastoral land together with arable areas in fields of varying size, with a generally well maintained network of hawthorn hedgerows contributing to the

sense of a well managed and productive landscape. The productive and verdant landscape with lush pastures imparts an overall 'pastoral' character, despite the presence of arable land permeating the area.

Copse and belts of trees bordering the meandering course of the numerous streams, together with mature hedgerow and streamside trees, contribute to the sense of a well wooded landscape in places and offer more intimate landscapes and valuable riparian habitats. Although large woodlands are not characteristic of the Pastoral Lowland Vale, small and medium, often geometric shaped broadleaved and coniferous copses occur within the landscape type. Formal planting of linear woodland belts are also associated with the Fire Service Technical College east of Moreton-in-Marsh on the northern perimeter of the area.

7.1.4 Human Influences

It is likely that early prehistoric communities, possibly resident in the valleys on the neighbouring rising land, would have exploited the wetland and marginal habitats in the Vale. From the advent of farming, however, it is likely that the gravel terraces bordering rivers may have been the focus of some settlement. The low, poorly drained landscape may have remained marginal up until improved plough technology in the Romano-British and Saxon periods allowed the more heavily water-logged soils to become workable.

Throughout the medieval period, pressure on land elsewhere and improved drainage techniques allowed increasing areas of the landscape to enter production. Villages expanded and new settlements were established such as Moreton-in-Marsh, which was planned in the 13th century and founded on the site of an earlier Saxon village first recorded in 714 AD.

It is thought that many villages were established on surrounding freer draining land such as the Farmed Slopes, with the vale utilised as seasonal pasture or on the gravel terraces above wetland areas bordering river channels.

The road network within the Pastoral Lowland Vale is limited, with areas retaining a remote rural character. Where minor winding roads do occur, they tend to occupy more elevated areas of land. In the wider landscape, the Fosse Way Roman road borders the Vale of Moreton. Adjacent to the Fosse Way at Dorn is the site of an extensive Roman settlement. Together with limited vehicular access to the vale, access along the public rights of way network is also relatively limited with many footpaths descending the slopes of the Evenlode valley. This section of the Vale of Moreton is also crossed by the main line Worcester to London railway link.

7.1.5 Buildings and Settlement

Where present, villages in the Pastoral Lowland Vale are dispersed and located along minor roads, taking advantage of rising ground away from the main streams. Ironstone, sourced from the Lias Group Marlstone Rock is evident as a building stone, and imparts a distinctive warm brown colour to the older stone houses and field barns. However, brick is also prevalent, with a local supply available from a clay source and brick making works near Paxford, located on the perimeter of the Upper Stour Valley to the north of this landscape type. Evenlode, the principal village in the area, has a distinctive nuclear form and village green. Many of the village properties are constructed in creamy buff Oolitic Limestone and in the local vernacular that characterises Cotswolds villages. In addition to the Cotswolds tiled roofs, a number of the properties are thatched. The advent of the railways also influenced the availability of a wider range of materials for use in construction.



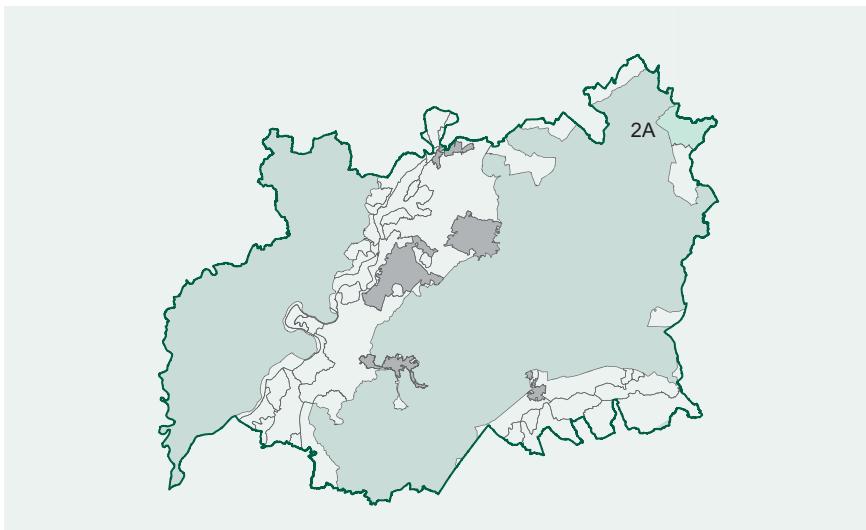
Beyond the villages are a number of medium sized scattered farms and isolated dwellings, located adjacent to roads and also along minor tracks. Many of the farms are post enclosure farms of the 18th and 19th centuries.

7.1.6 Landscape Character Areas

VM 1A Upper Evenlode Vale

The Upper Evenlode Vale is the only landscape character area associated with the Pastoral Lowland Vale character type within the study area. The descriptions above therefore apply to this single character area.





CHARACTER AREAS

VM 2A Upper Stour Hills and Valleys

7.2.1 Key Characteristics

- Farmed vale with broad undulating landform of rounded hills and ridges between flat valleys;
- Dendritic pattern of rivers and streams, dominated by the Knee Brook and its tributaries, flowing into the adjacent River Stour;
- Productive and verdant landscape of pasture and arable land;
- Medium scale fields enclosed by a network of hedgerows of varying quality with scattered hedgerow trees;
- Limited woodland cover of mainly small scale wooded copses;
- Sparse settlement pattern dominated by dispersed linear settlements and scattered farmsteads; and
- Relatively limited linear road network.

7.2.2 Landscape Character

The Undulating Lowland Vale extends from the north edge of Moreton-in-Marsh to the county boundary south of Stretton-on-Fosse. The undulating farmed landscape is drained by the Knee Brook and its tributary the Paddle Brook, which follows and delineates the county boundary to the north. These two brooks flow eastwards to join the River Stour on the eastern boundary of the area, beyond which the Stour flows northwards to the Avon, and in turn, the Severn. The area is underlain by the Lias Group Charmouth Mudstone Formation, although the more elevated areas of land are masked by extensive Quaternary deposits of diamictite or boulder clay and glaciofluvial sands and gravels, while in the Knee Brook valley alluvium and terrace deposits are present. The landform comprises a series of rounded hills and ridges between winding streams. Whilst the undulations provide a local sense of enclosure, longer distance views are possible in the wider landscape, towards the Escarpment Outliers of Bredon and Ebrington Hills, and the Farmed Slopes Landscape Character Type, both described within the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment.



Streams within the Undulating Lowland Vale are at a lower level than those in the Evenlode valleys to the south, forming a distinct slope down from the area north of Moreton-in-Marsh to the hills and valleys in the north. A patchwork of arable and pastoral fields, predominantly within medium scale fields dominate the land use and are interspersed with occasional woodland blocks, largely confined to the upper valley slopes. The predominantly hedged field boundaries, together with numerous mature hedgerow trees contribute to tree cover within the landscape type.

Settlement is sparse, comprising a dispersed pattern of small villages, frequently linear in form, strung out along a network of minor roads. Whilst the current settlement pattern is limited, the sites of several medieval villages are located along the course of the Knee Brook, indicating that the landscape was once more heavily settled. A network of minor roads, broadly aligned north west to south east, and north east to south west occupy more elevated areas of land and connect settlements within the Undulating Lowland Vale.

7.2.3 Physical Influences

The undulating topography and sequence of hills and valleys within the Undulating Lowland Vale is associated with the effects of glaciation during the last Ice Age. The advance of a frozen lake, which developed in the Vale of Evesham and extended into the

7.2

Landscape Character Type: UNDULATING LOWLAND VALE

Stour Valley, has resulted in the creation of the extensive Vale of Moreton, and underlain by the Lias Group Charmouth Mudstone Formation. The legacy of the glacial period is evident by the extensive deposits of glaciofluvial sands, gravels and diamicton or boulder clay that are still present. With the erosion of the Quaternary drift deposits, however, these are now principally confined to the upper slopes and summit areas of the series of rounded hills and ridges that separate the valleys of the Knee and Paddle Brook. Although the Lias Group Charmouth Mudstone Formation is exposed across the lower valley slopes, the valley bottoms are also masked by drift deposits, comprising alluvium and gravelly sand and clay river terrace deposits. The more elevated and better drained areas have been the focus for the development of small linear settlements such as Todenhams.

Numerous valleys dissect the undulating landscape. Streams and brooks meander across the valley bottom, together with linear and more direct ditches, their courses often only traceable by lines of trees. The Knee Brook occupies a particularly well defined valley form. The network of streams that drain the surrounding rising slopes and vale flow north into the River Stour, marking the north eastern edge of the landscape type. The number of tributary streams indicates that the landscape may be subject to periodic flooding. Indeed, many of the fields are bordered by drainage ditches with lush wet meadows and wide floodplain pastures lining watercourses. Also evident throughout the landscape are a series of springs, issuing on the sloping landform between the permeable sand, silt and clay overlying more elevated areas of land, and the underlying impermeable mudstones.

The landscape is intensively farmed with both arable and pastoral land. A network of generally well maintained hedgerows border the fields, although in areas poor maintenance regimes have resulted in reinforcing post and wire and post and rail fences. Medium scale regular shaped fields emphasise the broad undulating landscape, often creating a strong pattern throughout the landscape. Small pastures and contrasting wide floodplain pastures frequently align watercourses, with the valley bottoms also supporting a denser area of indigenous vegetation including scattered trees aligning watercourses. Hedgerow trees are frequent, with occasional field trees, in particular in larger scale fields where amalgamation has occurred.

Overall, the woodland cover is sparse within the Undulating Lowland Vale, although occasional woodland copses, together with streamside and hedgerow trees combine in areas to create a greater sense of woodland cover. Descending the sloping landform towards watercourses, woodlands are often evident within views creating a wooded backdrop and together with hedgerow trees they punctuate and add texture to an otherwise smooth undulating landscape.

7.2.4 Human Influences

In common with the Pastoral Lowland Vale to the south, it is likely that prehistoric communities would have exploited wetland and marginal land in the vale. From the advent of farming it also likely that the gravel terraces adjacent to rivers and streams were the focus of settlement. The most notable and obvious form of past settlement in the vale landscape is the proliferation of medieval settlements, focused on land adjacent to watercourses and on more elevated areas of land. The site of a Roman settlement is located on the south western edge of the landscape type at Dorn, while Aston Magna on the western perimeter is also evidence of earlier Roman occupation.

Access to the lowland vale is limited, dominated by a network of minor roads broadly aligned north west, south east. More major roads, including the Fosse Way Roman road, traverse the area in a north east to south west alignment. Areas of the landscape type retain a generally remote character, however, with either no access or access gained via a network of intermittent public rights of way.

7.2.5 Buildings and Settlement

Settlement pattern within the Undulating Lowland Vale is limited, confined to the linear ridge top village of Todenhams, with its distinctive church spire, and small dispersed hamlets such as Lower Lemington. These are located along a network of minor roads, and have favoured the rising ground away from the main streams and valley bottoms. Beyond the villages and hamlets are numerous scattered farms and dwellings, located adjacent to roads and set back along minor tracks. Building materials are influenced by the availability of local ironstone derived from the Lias Group Marlstone Rock, which is a warm brown in colour, and contrasts with the cream Oolitic limestones prevalent in the adjacent Cotswolds landscape. Bricks are also commonly used benefiting from local sources notably the local clay and brick works site near Paxford.

Despite the limited settlement pattern evident today, the landscape type has a long history of settlement, in particular since improved farming techniques allowed more marginal land to become workable in the Romano-British and Saxon periods. Of notable interest are the sites of medieval villages scattered throughout the area, including the Upper and Lower Ditchford sites within the Knee Brook Valley. The majority are located on locally elevated landform adjacent to watercourses. The site of Upper Lemington occupies a more elevated position on the southern boundary of the landscape type, however, overlooking the undulating landform to the north. In addition to this former medieval village, the historic site is associated with Lemington Manor and includes a network of fishponds and ornamental lakes.

7.2.6 Character Areas

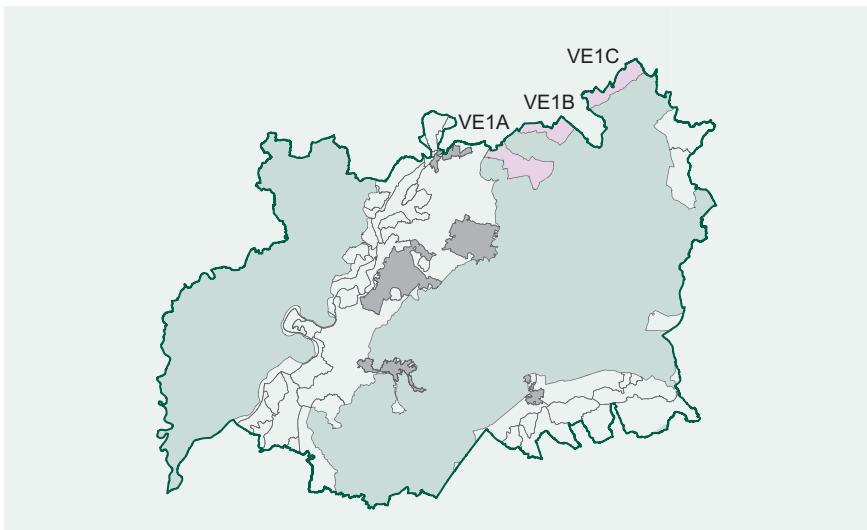
VM 2A Upper Stour Hills and Valleys

The Upper Stour Hills and Valleys is the only landscape character area associated with the Undulating Lowland Vale character type within the county. The descriptions above therefore apply to this single character area.









CHARACTER AREAS

VE 1A Teddington and Greet Vale

VE 1B Wormington Vale Fringe

VE 1C Mickleton Vale Fringe

8.1.1 Key Characteristics

- An irregularly, sometimes broadly undulating landscape that become more gentle in places, appearing almost flat;
- Medium to large scale hedged fields with a combination of both regular and irregular field pattern;
- Contrasting land uses with a combination of both arable and pastoral fields, with a dominance of improved pastures on heavier clays and arable farmland on free draining soils;
- Woodland cover is sparse and generally restricted to small copses. Where hedgerow trees are present, this can create the local impression of a well treed landscape;
- Surrounding escarpment and outliers form a backdrop to many views across the Vale;
- Relatively sparsely settled agrarian landscape with rural villages and scattered farms and dwellings;
- Varied mixed of building materials including brick, timber and stone, and slate and thatch roofing;
- Quiet lanes connecting settlements; and
- Area drained by a network of small streams flowing off the Cotswolds Escarpment .

8.1.2 Landscape Character

For a comprehensive description of the Unwooded Vale, reference should be made to Section 5.1 of The Severn Vale Landscape Character Types and Areas. The characteristics of the generic type and the physical and human factors that influence its character at a broad level are reviewed in this earlier section. Further local detail is provided below in the Character Areas descriptions.



8.1.3 Landscape Character Areas

VE 1A Teddington and Greet Vale

Teddington and Greet Vale Character Area forms part of an extensive lowland vale landscape that extends northwards into the Cotswolds AONB and beyond into the wider Vale of Evesham within Worcestershire. Limited areas of the vale also occur in the south and east, again within the Cotswolds AONB, and surrounding the base of the Cotswolds Escarpment and Outliers. This area of Unwooded Vale lies to the north of the Escarpment Outliers of Oxenton and Dixon Hills, and extends from the A435 in the west, to the line of the Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Railway in the east. The escarpment and outliers provide a backdrop to the area, and combine to create a sense of enclosure within the Vale.

The character area also extends into the northern margin of the settlement of Winchcombe, which takes advantage of a sheltered location within a major embayment extending into the heart of the Cotswolds escarpment.

Teddington and Greet Vale is underlain by Lias Group mudstones and shales of the Charmouth Mudstone Formation, together with more limited outcrops of siltstone and mudstone of the Dyrham Formation. This latter rock formation outcrops within 'The Warren', a more elevated north south aligned elongated hillock that rises to

8.1

Landscape Character Type: UNWOODED VALE

a summit area of 139m AOD. Below this locally significant hillock, the surrounding vale generally falls from 85m AOD at its highest point on the eastern edge down to 30m AOD on the western edge. The Warren represents a much eroded remnant of a former Outlier, with its presence attributable to the relatively more resistant bands of limestone that are interbedded within the underlying Dyrham Formation rocks.



A number of streams rise on the Cotswolds Escarpment and High Wold and flow across the character area. Their course is often evident as shallow undulations in a landscape that appears otherwise to be largely flat, with the exception of The Warren. The watercourses form part of the River Avon catchment and flow into two separate upper catchment areas separated by The Warren. To the east of The Warren the north south flowing River Isebourne is the principal watercourse, which rises on the High Wold at Cleeve Common and flows through the Winchcombe embayment before eventually joining the River Avon at Evesham. West of The Warren, tributaries of the Carrant Brook, drain the area. Located to the north and following the county boundary, the Carrant Brook joins the last sections of the River Avon before its confluence with the River Severn at Tewkesbury.

Underlying many of the watercourses within the character area are superficial drift deposits. Narrow bands of alluvial silty clay align the bottom of watercourses, with areas of gravel located adjacent to streams, with the most significant areas located to the east of the River Isebourne. Sand and gravel terraces also occur to the north west of Little Washbourne and around Great Washbourne.

Land use across the area is diverse, combining both arable and pastoral fields with pockets of calcareous grassland, often creating a mosaic of textures and colours. Whilst fields are generally medium in scale, examples of larger and small scale enclosures are also evident. Indeed, on the more elevated landform around The Warren, field boundaries are largely absent and scrub encroachment is apparent. A number of orchards are present on The Warren are orchards, confined mainly to the western and northern sides. Smaller scale, regular enclosures are evident on the edge of a number of settlements and surrounding farmsteads, including Gretton Fields. Although only occupying isolated areas, market gardening and associated polytunnels further diversify the land use pattern.

Overall, low, regularly trimmed hedgerows predominate as the main field boundary, often gappy in places and reinforced with post and wire fences, although there are numerous examples of overgrown hedges that appear as tree lines within the landscape. Elsewhere, only remnant hedgerows provide boundary lines, dominated by post and wire fences with isolated areas of scrubby vegetation. Ditches and streams are also frequent along field boundaries, with trees often aligning watercourses. An intermittent pattern of hedgerow trees is present, although some hedgerows are devoid of trees resulting in a more open character.

As is typical of the landscape type, woodlands are very scarce. However, a number of woodland blocks are located on the elevated land at The Warren. These are mainly of deciduous or mixed composition and include scrubby vegetation, which together provide a woodland backdrop in views from the east. The woodland on the northern edge at Shetcombe Wood is classified as ancient semi natural and designated as a Key Wildlife Site. Although located outside of the character area, the woodlands that clothe the surrounding outliers and escarpment contribute to the overall sense of woodland cover and add interest in local views.



The principal archaeological and cultural resources within the character area are confined to an earthwork on the summit of The Warren, and the site of a Roman Settlement at Millhampstead. This latter site, which is a ploughed field located close to the B4632, has yielded Roman pottery remains and two burials. It is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The line of the Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Railway, which follows the southern and eastern boundaries of the character area, is also of industrial heritage interest.

The settlement of Winchcombe is located on the south eastern edge of the character area although only the northern section of the town lies within the area. It is located within an embayment within the escarpment, or 'coombe' from which its name derives and commands a spectacular setting overlooked by surrounding elevated land. The town was a seat of Mercia royalty from the old Saxon period. Scattered throughout the remaining character area are the villages of Alderton, Greet and Teddington, the latter two comprising linear settlements, although Greet has now development along a secondary road. Alderton, located on the northern edge of the character area has developed as a clustered settlement along a

number of minor roads. Elsewhere in the Teddington and Greet Vale Character Area are a number of hamlets, including Great Washbourne and Little Washbourne, the former being designated as a Conservation Area, and scattered dwellings and farmsteads. Crossing and bordering the landscape are a number of roads, some of which have a busy character, including the B4077, B4078 and A435.

There is a range of recreational interests in the area that include both formal and informal facilities. For local walking, there is a wide network of public rights of way that cross the landscape, including a limited stretch of the Gloucestershire Way and the Wychavon Way. The Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Steam Railway, is a notable local tourist attraction. The principal terminus of the Railway Centre is located at the intersection of the B4077 and B4632 to the east of Toddington. The 10.5 miles long route operates as a heritage steam and diesel railway between Toddington and Cheltenham Racecourse. An extension to the line between Cheltenham and Gotherington has been progressively restored over a period of years and was opened in 2003. Finally, although much of Winchcombe lies outside of the character area, it nevertheless has an important influence. The town is a major 'honey pot' within the Cotswolds and has many attractions including the inherent attraction of its quintessential Cotswolds vernacular. Of particular importance is the nearby Sudeley Castle which attracts many visitors every year.

VE 1B Wormington Vale Fringe

This small, discrete area of Unwooded Vale extends from the north of the Dumbleton Hill Escarpment Outlier in the west to the north of Buckland in the east. The surrounding Escarpment Outliers and the Cotswolds Escarpment provide a prominent backdrop to the character area to the south, while to the north, intermittent areas of rising land within Worcestershire also contributes to a sense of enclosure in some locations.



Mudstones and shales of the Lias Group Charmouth Mudstone Formation underlies the vale landscape together with more limited outcrops of a narrow band of limestones from the younger Dyrham Formation, extending around Bank Farm and Cullabine Farm in the west of the character area. Drift deposits are limited, although areas of gravel and alluvial silty clay are present along

watercourses, notably to the west of Wormington adjacent to the River Isbourne. A narrow band of boulder clay is also located along the watercourse to the east of Wormington. The gently undulating land, lying between 45 and 75m AOD, rises subtly in the south east towards a narrow area of Unwooded Vale within the Cotswolds AONB, before rising more steeply within the Escarpment landscape type.



A predominance of large and medium scale, regular arable fields extend across the area, interspersed with occasional improved pastures and limited areas of calcareous grassland. Boundaries are mainly formed by low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows, although post and wire fences are also present, and often linked with scrub and remnant hedgerows and occasional hedgerow trees. Areas of ridge and furrow are apparent in a number of pastoral fields. A dispersed pattern of hedgerow trees is evident across the vale, with increased tree cover frequently occurring along the line of watercourses.

Woodland is not characteristic of the Unwooded Vale and indeed of this character area. Those that do occur are confined to the eastern section of the Wormington Vale Fringe Character Area and comprise regular, generally small scale blocks with a largely deciduous composition. Because of the general lack of tree cover, they are prominent in views. Wormington Brake and Wynniatt's Brake are both ancient semi-natural woodlands and designated as Key Wildlife Sites. Orchards, prevalent elsewhere in the wider Vale of Evesham and other character areas are not evident within the Wormington Vale Fringe, indicating that many have been removed and converted to farmland.

Wormington is a small nuclear village, the southern half of which lies within the adjacent Cotswolds AONB. Although small in scale, it is nevertheless the largest settlement in the character area, and aligned along a minor road that follows the character area's southern boundary. An ornate stone bridge over the River Isbourne marks the entrance to the village from the west. Dwellings in the village comprise a collection of older stone properties, a number of which are thatched, numerous brick built dwellings and examples of half timbered houses. More recent development of reconstituted stone is evident on the settlement edges. Connecting the village within the wider landscape is a network of minor roads, broadly aligned north south, and east west,

although overall they are limited. The line of a dismantled railway is located close to the eastern boundary of the character area, identifiable by sections of raised embankment.

Formal recreation provision in the character area is confined to a limited network of public rights of way that cross the landscape.

VE 1C Mickleton Vale Fringe

The Mickleton Vale Fringe Character Area extends from Willersey in the south west to Mickleton in the north east with the rising slopes of the Cotswolds Escarpment forming a backdrop along the south eastern perimeter. The pronounced conical form of Meon Hill, one of the Escarpment Outliers, punctuates the landscape immediately to the east of the character area.

The vale is underlain by the Lias Group Blue Lias and Charmouth Mudstone Formations which have created a gently undulating landscape which appears almost flat in some areas. Drift deposits are limited with isolated areas of boulder clay occurring around the northern end of Poden Lane, and Lower Fields and Low Fields House. Land in the character area rises generally between 75m AOD from the edge of the Cotswolds AONB falling to around 55m AOD on the north western edge. In the central part of the character area, however, there is a locally distinctive north west / south east aligned ridge of elevated land. There are two principal summit areas along this low ridge comprising Thistley Hill (89m AOD), north of Norton Grounds Farm and New Hill (88m AOD), south west of Norton Hall Farm. The presence of this locally elevated land is attributable to layers of muddy limestone that are interbedded within the Blue Lias Formation that are more resistant to erosion compared to the surrounding mudstone. The ridge represents a much eroded remnant of a former outlier of the Cotswolds massif, and although small in scale, it frequently restricts views towards the escarpment from the south west, for example along Poden Lane.



Medium to large scale regular shaped arable fields predominate across the character area, often creating a strong landscape pattern. Unlike the Wormington Vale Fringe, however, semi improved and improved pastures with grazing sheep and cattle become abundant in places, in particular around the Thistley Hill and Badsey Lane. Pockets of calcareous grassland also combine to create a mosaic of land uses across the Mickleton Vale Fringe.

Remnant ridge and furrow in these areas indicates that pastoral land use has been dominant since the time the open fields were enclosed. While the majority of the field boundaries are defined by low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows, a number are gappy and reinforced with post and wire fences. Prominent hedgerow trees scattered along hedgerow boundary lines also punctuate the landscape. A number of nurseries and market gardening businesses are evident across the character area, as well as orchards, in particular around Weston-sub-Edge, and are evidence of a characteristic that extends into the wider Vale of Evesham.

Woodland is not characteristic of the landscape type, and is very limited across the character area. An isolated block of deciduous woodland is located to the east of Willersey Fields Farm, with the main area of woodland groupings occurring on the elevated ridge line to the east of Mickleton Road. Here, woodland combines with trees and copses along the mainline railway, together with parkland trees associated with Norton Hall, to create a locally well treed landscape, particularly when viewed from the north east. Overgrown boundaries, together with hedgerow trees also contribute to tree cover within the character area.

Mickleton is the largest settlement within the landscape, although the settlements of Willersey and Weston-sub-Edge, located adjacent to the character area and within the Cotswolds AONB also contribute to the sense of development within the character area. Aligned predominantly along the B4632, the settlement of Mickleton is likely to have been a linear village that has since expanded, with old stone, rendered and red brick properties adjacent to the main road and newer stone properties evident as infill development. The centre of Mickleton is designated as a Conservation Area, indicating the importance of the historic core of this village. Beyond these main settled areas are a number of scattered farmsteads and dwellings, with the deserted village of Norton-sub-Edge evident to the south east of White's Farm. Industrial style buildings are also prominent along Honeyburn Road. Located to the west of Weston-sub-Edge, Honeyburn Road follows the line of Ryknild Street, a Roman Road. Generally, the road network across the character area is relatively limited with the B4632 located on the south eastern edge and elsewhere a network of roads largely aligned in a north west, south east direction. Extending from the road network at right angles are a number of minor tracks providing access to field barns, particularly prominent in the north eastern section of the character area. The mainline railway between Moreton-in-Marsh and Evesham also cuts across the Mickleton Vale Fringe and is aligned along the south western perimeter of the Thistley Hill / New Hill ridge. There is also a dismantled railway north of Willersey and Weston-sub-Edge.

A network of public rights of way provides access to the area; the Heart of England Way also passes to the north east of Mickleton.

Key Landscape Character Assessment Terms

Analysis: The process of dividing up the landscape into its component parts to gain a better understanding of it.

Approach: The step-wise process by which landscape assessment is undertaken.

Assessment: Term to describe all the various ways of looking at, analysing, evaluating and describing the landscape.

Character: A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.

Characteristics: Elements or combinations of elements, which make a particular contribution to distinctive character.

Characterisation: The process of identifying areas of similar character, classifying and mapping them and describing their character.

Elements: Individual components which make up the landscape, such as trees and hedges.

Features: Particularly prominent or eye catching elements, such as tree clumps, church towers, or wooded skylines.

Land cover: Combination of land use and vegetation that cover the land surface.

Landform: Combinations of slope and elevation that produce the shape and form of the land surface.

Landscape: Primarily the visual appearance of the land including its shape, form and colours. However, landscape is not purely a visual phenomenon. The landscape relies on a range of other dimensions including geology, landform, soils, ecology, archaeology, landscape history, land use, architecture and cultural associations.

Objective: Method of assessment in which personal feelings and opinions do not influence characterisation.

Subjective: Method of assessment in which personal views and reactions are used in the characterisation process.

Other Technical Terms

Alluvium: Sedimentary deposits resulting from the action of rivers, including those laid down in river channels, floodplains, estuaries and lakes.

Ancient woodland: Land continuously wooded since AD 1600. It is an extremely valuable ecological resource, usually with a high diversity of flora and fauna.

Bronze Age: (c. 2,500 - 750 BC) A cultural phase in humankind's evolution when alloying of copper and tin was perfected.

Metalworking technology and new types of flint tool and pottery design were introduced at the start of this period. Changes in society were reflected in the emergence of new burial techniques, particularly round barrows. In the Middle Bronze Age cremation replaced inhumations and in the late Bronze Age social and economic changes led to the abandonment of old funerary rights in favour of less traceable rites.

Combe: A topographic term used in place names which in the chalklands of southern England, refers to the head of a dry valley which terminates in a steep sided amphitheatre. It is also applicable to the limestone topography of the Cotswolds

Cornbrash: Name applied to the uppermost member of the Bathonian stage of the Middle Jurassic formation in England. It is an old English agricultural name applied in Wiltshire to a variety of loose rubble or 'brash' which, in that part of the country, forms a good soil for growing corn. The name was adopted by William Smith for a thin band of shelly stone which, in the south of England, 'breaks up in the manner indicated'. Although only a thin group of rocks (10-25 ft), it is remarkably persistent, and may be traced from Weymouth to the Yorkshire coast. The Cornbrash is a very fossiliferous formation; the fauna indicates a transition from the Lower to the Middle Oolites, although it is probably more closely related to that of the beds above than to those below

Diamicton: Technical term for boulder clay comprising the un lithified equivalent of a diamictite, itself a lithified, conglomeratic, siliciclastic rock which is unsorted, with sand and/or coarser particles dispersed through a mud matrix.

Domesday Book: Conceived by William the Conqueror at Christmas 1085 in Gloucester, the survey was the most comprehensive and detailed record compiled anywhere in Europe in the Middle Ages. The survey's primary purpose was to provide maximum yield from land tax. The name arose in the 12th century to signify, like the day of judgement, there could be no appeal from its verdict

Fossiliferous: Term used to describe rocks rich in fossils, the remains of living organisms preserved by natural causes in crustal rocks.

Geomorphology: The scientific study of the origin of landforms.

Geology: The study of the origin, structure, composition and history of the Earth together with the processes that have led to its present state.

Glacial: Term used to describe a cold phase during an ice age.

Holocene: Term used to describe the whole of recent life and referring to all of the time which has elapsed since the Pleistocene. It is one of the two epochs that make up the Quaternary. The date of the beginning of the Holocene is generally agreed to be 10,000 BP.

Iron Age: (c. 750 BC - AD 43) A cultural phase of humankind's evolution when technical improvements in iron-working enabled iron tools and weapons to replace those of the preceding Bronze Age. Population growth led to competition for land and the development of a more territorial society. Improved farming technology and scarcity of land brought about the cultivation of heavier and poorer soils.

Jurassic: The middle period of the Mesozoic era, preceding the Cretaceous and succeeding the Triassic and named after the Jura Mountains of central Europe. It commenced about 195 million years ago and terminated 135 million years ago during which time dinosaurs reached their maximum size. Rock strata consist of varying thicknesses of clays, limestones and some sandstones that were deposited in fluctuating shallow seas, interspersed with periods of estuarine and fluvial deposition. The principal divisions present in the Cotswolds are (in ascending order) Lias Group (clays and limestones), Inferior Oolite (limestones, clays and sandstones) and Great Oolite (limestones).

Mesolithic: (c 8,000 - 4,000 BC) An archaeological term meaning 'middle stone' age and used to describe the culture achieved during the early Post Glacial when mankind had moved from herd-hunting practices of the upper Palaeolithic, but had not yet discovered or adopted the use of agriculture.

Mesotrophic: Water containing a normal amount of nutrients.

Motte-and-Bailey Castle: The earliest form of Norman castle. These were established along key communication routes after the conquest. An inner courtyard was protected by simple earth and wooden defences.

Neolithic: (c. 4,000 - 2,500 BC) An archaeological term used to describe the 'new stone' age. This applies to the culture achieved during the middle Post Glacial when mankind had begun to polish and grind stone artefacts (a technological advance from the bashing and flaking of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic). The Neolithic also saw the introduction of agriculture.

Oolite: A sedimentary rock made up essentially of ooliths; spherical rock particles formed by the gradual accretion of material around an inorganic (e.g. sand) or organic (e.g. shell) nucleus. Ooliths are small and their appearance has been likened to fish roe (from where their name is derived).

Open Field System: Well established means of land management during the medieval period and was widespread across much of lowland England. The unit of cultivation was the strip (land or selion), which varied in length and width depending on local conditions. The strips were grouped together into furlongs and a number of furlongs formed the field. The up and down ploughing of the strips threw soil into the centre of the strip and over time created the distinctive ridge and furrow landform which may be used to identify remnants of open fields in the landscape today.

Ridge and furrow type landforms are also evident in water meadow landscapes and areas where steam ploughing was employed. Good examples survive where the open arable fields became permanent pasture following the black death in the 14th century and when arable land was enclosed in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Elsewhere, the act of enclosing the land, subsequent consolidation of the strips and continued ploughing for arable production, obliterated the patterns of ridge and furrow.

Outcrop: The area where a particular rock appears at the surface.

Palaeolithic: An archaeological term used to describe the earliest form of human culture. The earliest toolmakers lived during the Pleistocene in Britain after the main glacial periods had passed.

Pleistocene: The first epoch of the Quaternary, which loosely corresponds to the Ice Age.

Quaternary: The younger of the two geological periods of the Cainozoic. This was the era that saw the appearance of mankind. It comprises two epochs, the Pleistocene and the Holocene and deposits consist largely of alluvium, tufa, head, head gravel and river terrace deposits.

Ramsar: Ramsar sites are areas of land listed as Wetland of International Importance under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention 1973).

Ridge and Furrow: See definition of Open Field System

Riparian: Riverbank habitats.

Semi-natural vegetation: Any type of vegetation that has been influenced by human activities, either directly or indirectly.

Stratigraphy: The structure produced when sediments are laid down in horizontal layers (stratum). The term may be used to describe the stratification of solid geology, drift and soils

Topography: Term used to describe the surface features of the earth's surface.

Turnpike: A gate across a highway preventing passage until a toll has been paid. Turnpike roads were administered by turnpike trusts that were authorised by a private act of parliament in 1663 to levy tolls for maintenance of the highway. This replaced the parochial maintenance system and substantially improved communications in England.

Triassic: The first geological period of the Mesozoic era, extending from about 240 million years ago to about 195 million years ago. It succeeded the Permian and preceded the Jurassic. In Britain it consists mainly of shales, red desert sandstones, marls and pebble beds. This period witnessed the evolution of the reptiles and the earliest known dinosaurs.

Underfit or Misfit stream: A term given to streams that are disproportionate in size to the valleys they occupy.

Unicinal Shifting: The tendency of a river within a region of gently dipping strata to gradually migrate in the direction of the dip resulting in an asymmetrical cross profile to the river valley.

Vernacular: Built in the local style, from local materials.

Veteran Tree: A tree that is of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of its age, size or condition.

Water Meadow: Water meadows are provided with channels to carry water on to the pasture and then to drain it off again with the intention of keeping a trickle of water flowing through the roots of the spring growth to warm them and protect from frosts. The result is faster grass growth and an earlier first bite - several weeks earlier if the spring is cold. For over 300 years water meadows supplied early grazing and the first, most valuable hay crop. They have almost all ceased operation due to the cost of the labour required to maintain them and the difficulty of working them with machinery. In many instances all that remains of water meadows is the banks and ditches that controlled the water. These often only survive where pasture has endured and protected the earthworks from ploughing or development.

Abbreviations

AOD:	Above Ordnance Datum
AONB:	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
ASERA:	Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities
ASNW:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland
AW:	Ancient Woodland
BP:	Before Present
BAP:	Biodiversity Action Plan
CWP:	Cotswold Water Park
CWPJC:	Cotswold Water Park Joint Committee
Defra:	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
EN:	English Nature
EA:	Environment Agency
FWAG:	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
KWS:	Key Wildlife Site
GIS:	Geographical Information System
GOG:	Gloucestershire Orchard Group
GWT:	Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
HAP:	Habitat Action Plan
SAC:	Special Area of Conservation; prefix 'c': Candidate;
SAVWP:	Severn and Avon Vale Wetland Partnership
SPA:	Special Protection Area; prefix 'p': Provisional
SSSI:	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SVP:	Stroud Valleys Project

A comprehensive list of Core References are included in the earlier Landscape Character Assessments undertaken within Gloucestershire, comprising the county wide desk study and draft landscape types, and the Forest of Dean and Cotswolds AONB LCAs. The information gained from these references have been taken into account, and where appropriate, integrated into this current study. The documents listed below therefore represent the core references together with new sources that have informed this study for the Severn Vale, Upper Thames Valley, Vale of Moreton and Vale of Evesham Fringe. Documents that have been updated, or their issue status revised since the previous studies, are also included.

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LDA Design acknowledges with thanks the help and support provided by the Steering Group members and other consultees who have contributed to the completion of the Landscape Character Assessment for the remaining areas of Gloucestershire, comprising the Severn Vale, Upper Thames Valley, Vale of Moreton and Vale of Evesham Fringe.

The previous Landscape Character Assessments undertaken within Gloucestershire, commencing with the county wide desk study and draft landscape types, followed by the Forest of Dean, and the Cotswolds AONB LCAs involved wide consultation. Many aspects of the information gained from these earlier consultations have been taken into account, and where appropriate, integrated into this current study. In addition to the consultees listed below, reference should therefore be made to the wide ranging consultees in these earlier studies. Together with those detailed below, they represent a comprehensive range of stakeholders and interest groups in respect of the Gloucestershire landscape.

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Pat Southern	Gloucestershire County Council
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Roger Parnaby	Cartographic Services, British Geological Survey

Photographs

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Core Data Sets

Appendix 2 Field Survey Form and Field Survey Prompts Sheet

Appendix 3 Flow Diagram of Landscape Character Assessment Process

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