

CHEL TENHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER, SENSITIVITY AND CAPACITY ASSESSMENT OF COTSWOLD
AONB WITHIN THE CHELTENHAM BOROUGH ADMINISTRATIVE AREA**



APRIL 2015

CHELTENHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

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CONTENTS	PAGE
GLOSSARY	I
1. INTRODUCTION	2
1.1. BACKGROUND TO STUDY	2
1.2. BACKGROUND AND LOCAL CONTEXT	3
1.3. PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT	3
1.4. IMPORTANCE OF LANDSCAPE	4
1.5. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)	5
1.6. NATIONAL PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE (NPPG)	6
1.7. LOCAL PLANNING POLICY	6
1.8. EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION (FLORENCE CONVENTION)	6
1.9. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT	10
1.10. EXISTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS	10
2. METHODOLOGY	12
2.1. THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT	12
2.2. DESKTOP STUDY	12
2.3. FIELD SURVEY COMPONENTS (CHARACTER AND SENSITIVITY)	12
2.4. EXISTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS	13
2.5. LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT	14
2.6. LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY	16
2.7. VISUAL SENSITIVITY	17
2.8. FIELD SURVEY COMPONENTS	18
2.9. LANDSCAPE VALUE	19
2.10. LANDSCAPE CAPACITY	20
2.11. DEFINING OUTCOMES OF DESK BASED AND FIELD SURVEY COMPONENTS	20
3. OUTCOME OF THE ASSESSMENT	22
3.1. PRESENTATION OF ASSESSMENT	22
3.2. SUMMARY OF INDIVIDUAL SITE CONSTRAINT CLASSIFICATION	22
3.3. GENERAL PLANNING PRINCIPLES	24
3.4. LEGEND TO ACCOMPANY PLANNING PRINCIPLES FOR SITES WITH DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY IDENTIFIED	26
4. SITE ASSESSMENT AND PHOTO SHEETS	27
APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A – EXAMPLE OF FIELD ASSESSMENT SHEET	
APPENDIX B – FIGURES	
APPENDIX C – TOPIC PAPER 6	
APPENDIX D – COTSWOLDS AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN EXTRACT	

FIGURES

FIGURE 01 – TOPOGRAPHY

FIGURE 02 – STATUTORY AND LOCAL DESIGNATIONS

FIGURE 03 – PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY AND RECREATIONAL ROUTES

FIGURE 04 – EXISTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

FIGURE 05 – ASSESSMENT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES AND WARD BOUNDARIES

FIGURE 06 – ASSESSMENT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES AND AREAS

FIGURE 07 – ASSESSMENT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

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GLOSSARY

HORSICULTURE – REPRESENTS A LANDSCAPE WHERE HORSES ARE KEPT, TYPIFIED BY POST AND WIRE, POST AND RAIL AND ELECTRIC BOUNDARY FENCING, STABLES AND SHELTERS.

LAND PARCELS – AREAS OF LAND IDENTIFIED BY THE GREEN BELT REVIEW AND ALSO SUGGESTED BY LANDOWNERS/DEVELOPERS AS POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES.

LANDSCAPE – AN AREA, AS PERCEIVED BY PEOPLE, THE CHARACTER OF WHICH IS THE RESULT OF THE ACTION AND INTERACTION OF NATURAL AND/OR HUMAN FACTORS.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER – A DISTINCT, RECOGNISABLE AND CONSISTENT PATTERN OF ELEMENTS IN THE LANDSCAPE THAT MAKES ONE LANDSCAPE DIFFERENT FROM ANOTHER.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTIC – ELEMENTS, OR COMBINATIONS OF ELEMENTS, WHICH MAKE A LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DISTINCTIVE.

LCA – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA. THESE ARE SINGLE UNIQUE AREAS WHICH ARE THE DISCRETE GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS OF A PARTICULAR LANDSCAPE TYPE.

LDA – LANDSCAPE DESIGN ASSOCIATES

LCT – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE. THESE ARE DISTINCT TYPES OF LANDSCAPE THAT ARE RELATIVELY HOMOGENOUS IN CHARACTER. THEY ARE GENERIC IN NATURE IN THAT THEY MAY OCCUR IN DIFFERENT AREAS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, BUT WHEREVER THEY OCCUR, THEY SHARE BROADLY SIMILAR COMBINATIONS OF GEOLOGY, TOPOGRAPHY, DRAINAGE PATTERNS, VEGETATION AND HISTORICAL LAND USE AND SETTLEMENT PATTERN AS WELL AS PERCEPTUAL AND AESTHETIC ATTRIBUTES.

LANDSCAPE RECEPTORS – DEFINED ASPECTS OF THE LANDSCAPE RESOURCE THAT HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO BE AFFECTED BY A PROPOSAL.

VISUAL RECEPTORS – INDIVIDUALS AND/OR DEFINED GROUPS OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO SEE OR OTHERWISE BE AFFECTED BY PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.

I. INTRODUCTION

I.1. BACKGROUND TO STUDY

In March 2015, Cheltenham Borough Council [the Council] commissioned Ryder Landscape Consultants to undertake a Landscape Character, Sensitivity and Capacity Study of the Cotswold AONB and Cheltenham Urban Fringe as part of its emerging Cheltenham Plan. The Council required an assessment of the landscape character and sensitivity of the landscape, the visual amenity and the value and potential capacity to accommodate new development in the AONB.

If the Council is to provide for the full objectively assessed needs for housing and employment for the Borough, the Council will need to examine all reasonable options along Cheltenham's urban edge, which includes land within or immediately adjacent to the Cotswold AONB. The choice of which sites on the urban edge and within or immediately adjacent to the Cotswold AONB are most suitable and sustainable for new development will be based on an assessment that considers a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues. These issues include landscape character and visual amenity.

This assessment provides pertinent information which will help to inform the choice of potential sites for release from the urban edge and the Cotswold AONB in the emerging Cheltenham Plan. It will also provide practical guidance for assisting Development Management decision-making.

The document consists of this covering report describing the purpose of the assessment, the methodology used and an overview summary. Included in Section 4 are individual summary sheets for each of the Landscape Character Areas assessed, along with a photosheet depicting the character and context of each of these Landscape Character Areas. An example of the field sheets used as an aid to assessment whilst visiting sites is contained at Appendix A.

The extent of the study area is shown below in Figure 1.

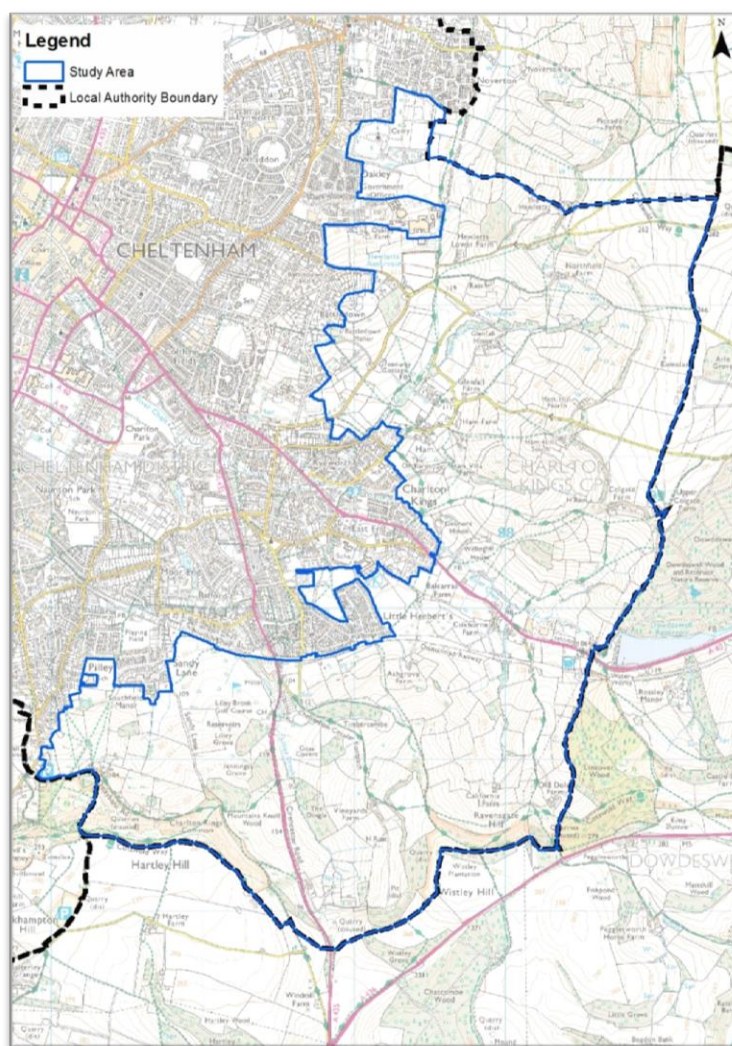


Figure 1. Extent of Study Area

I.2. BACKGROUND AND LOCAL CONTEXT

As part of the process of undertaking the Cheltenham Plan, the Council are undertaking a 'call for sites', in order to identify sites for possible future development.

The process of identifying the sites with possible future development requires a suite of information to inform the identification process. Landscape forms a part of this suite of information, and as such, this study has been undertaken in order to thoroughly understand the local landscape character, its quality and value, and the capacity the landscape may have for any further development.

I.3. PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT

The key purpose of the study is to undertake a landscape character assessment of the urban edge of Cheltenham and the area of the Cotswold AONB that falls within Cheltenham Borough Council. This includes:

- A Landscape Character Assessment;
- Assessment of the sensitivity of identified Landscape Character Areas; and
- Identifies key visual receptors, significant views and viewpoints and sensitivity of receptors to change, considering quality and distinctiveness.

The assessment uses this information to determine how constrained each Landscape Character Area is in terms of landscape using the following three point system:

- Minor constraint
- Moderate constraint
- Major constraint

More information on this three point system to classify Landscape Character Areas by how constrained they are and the resulting capacity is provided in Section 2 – Methodology – Table 6.

Once the level of constraint is identified, the capacity of an area can then be determined. The capacity of an area is assessed on a three point scale as follows:

- Low
- Medium
- High

Additionally the assessment is required to provide key recommendations on how new development, if it were to go ahead, would be best designed to mitigate losses to or improve the current landscape quality. This includes;

- Consideration and making recommendations on how any potential harmful impacts arising from development could be reduced and identify opportunities for mitigation including the retention of important existing features/ landscape elements;
- Identifying broad principles for the location and design of new development to minimise or mitigate effects on landscape character, and views and to maximise benefits through sensitive development; and
- Recommending design principles for boundary treatments for any new ‘urban fringe/edge’.

1.4. IMPORTANCE OF LANDSCAPE

Landscape is more than just ‘the view’. It can be the ever-changing backdrop to our daily lives, as much as the places we seek out for leisure. It can mean a park, a piece of wasteland, a beach, a mountain, a forest. It is also about how people relate to these places and to nature – what they value about it, and how they respond to changes in the landscape.

Some landscapes consist entirely of natural elements. These are typically referred to as ‘natural landscapes’.

Other landscapes can be largely the result of human activity, such as arable farmland or urban areas. These can be referred to as ‘cultural landscapes’.

Landscapes should be managed, planned and, where appropriate, protected to deliver a full range of goods and services. A number of documents exist in order to provide the framework and information to manage, plan and where necessary protect our landscapes.

These include;

- The European Landscape Convention.
(<http://www.coe.int.com>)
- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework-2>)
- The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
(<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance>)
- National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
(<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/12-13-14/97>)
- Natural England – National Character Areas.
(<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/ncal/>)

1.5. EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION (FLORENCE CONVENTION)

Landscape is defined in the European Landscape Convention (ELC) as ‘an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors’.

The ELC recognises that every landscape has a value and acknowledges that the landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday landscapes.

The Convention goes on to reference ‘Actions on the Landscape’, where development may occur. Relevant sections of the ELC relating to planning and protection of landscapes include the following excerpts:

“Landscape planning.... concerns forms of change that can anticipate new social needs by taking account of ongoing developments. It should also be consistent with sustainable development and allow for the ecological and economic processes that may occur in the medium to long terms.

The concept of protection includes the idea that landscape is subject to changes which, within certain limits, have to be accepted. Protective measures, should not be designed to stop time or to restore natural or human influence characteristics that no longer exist; however, they may guide changes in sites in order to pass on their specific, material and immaterial features to future generations. Landscape protection should find the ways and means of acting at an appropriate level, not only on the characteristics present at sites but also on external factors.”

I.6. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)

One of the core principles in the National Planning Policy Framework is that planning should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Local plans should include strategic policies for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including landscape. This includes designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.

Where appropriate, Landscape Character Assessments should be prepared to complement Natural England's National Character Area profiles. Landscape Character Assessment is a tool to help understand the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identify the features that give it a sense of place. It can help to inform, plan and manage change and may be undertaken at a scale appropriate to local and neighbourhood plan making.

I.7. NATIONAL PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE (NPPG)

National Planning Practice Guidance exists in order to assist practitioners in their interpretation and implementation of the policies contained within the NPPF. The Guidance references the relevant sections of the NPPF where relevant, along with links to other relevant planning practice guidance. Each individual section of the guidance has a specific and unique Reference ID.

Relevant sections of the National Planning Practice Guidance to this document include:

- **ID 8:** Natural Environment
- **ID 12:** Local Plans
- **ID 37:** Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities, Public Rights of Way and Local Green Space

I.8. LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

JOINT CORE STRATEGY:

The following policies are pertinent existing and emerging Local Plan policies. They are presented as digital snips to ensure complete correctness of inclusion.

SD 5 Design Requirements

iv. Public Realm and Landscape

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

SD 7 Landscape

Policy SD7: Landscape

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

SD 8 The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Policy SD8: The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

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

CHELTENHAM LOCAL PLAN

CO 1 Landscape Character

POLICY CO 1

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Objectives O9, O10 and O12

Development will only be permitted where it would not harm:

- (a) attributes (note 1) and features (note 2) which make a significant contribution to the character, distinctiveness, quality and amenity value of the landscape; and
- (b) the visual amenity of the landscape.

Note 1

'Attributes' of the landscape are defined as being the inherent characteristics of the locality, including openness or enclosure, key views or vistas, topography, and patterns in the landscape such as those defined by historic land uses, roads and lanes, buildings, hedgerows or water courses.

Note 2

'Features' include those constituent parts of the landscape that either in their own right, or in combination with landscape attributes, give the locality its particular character and distinctiveness, including for example, trees, hedges, geological or geomorphological features, rights of way, watercourses, ponds and buildings as well as other structures.

CO 2 Development within or affecting the AONB

POLICY CO 2

DEVELOPMENT WITHIN OR AFFECTING THE AONB

Objectives O9 and O10

Development which would harm the natural beauty of the landscape within the AONB will not be permitted.

Major developments will not be permitted within the AONB except in exceptional circumstances (note 3).

Note 1

The boundary of the AONB within the Borough is shown on the Proposals Map.

Note 2

See also policies CP 3 (sustainable environment), CO 3 (rebuilding or replacement of buildings in the AONB), CO 4 (extension of buildings in the AONB), CO 12 (farm diversification projects), CO 13 (conversion of rural buildings), RC 11 (recreation and sport in the countryside) and RC 12 (golf courses).

Note 3

In assessing exceptional circumstances regard will be had to:

- (i) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;
- (ii) the cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and
- (iii) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.

GE 1 Public Green Space

POLICY GE 1

PUBLIC GREEN SPACE

Objectives O12, O18 and O26

The development of areas identified as 'Public Green Space' or 'Proposed Public Green Space' will not be permitted.

Note 1

The areas to which this policy applies are shown on the Proposals Map.

Note 2

The Green Space Audit and Strategy will assess quality, quantity and accessibility, and inform the role and function of green spaces. In assessing the role and function of green spaces the Council will apply the principles of PPG17, considering all the functions that open space can perform.

GE 4 Pittville Park and Bouncers Lane Cemetery

POLICY GE 4

PITTVILLE PARK AND BOUNCERS LANE CEMETERY

Objectives O12 and O18

Development which would adversely affect the setting or appearance of Pittville Park and Bouncers Lane Cemetery will not be permitted.

Note

The Borough Council will consult English Heritage, the Garden History Society, and the Gloucestershire Gardens and Landscape Trust on all applications affecting Pittville Park and Bouncers Lane Cemetery.

RC 8 New public green space

POLICY RC 8

NEW PUBLIC GREEN SPACE

Objectives O12 and O26

The Borough Council will pursue opportunities to secure by agreement, or where necessary acquire, and layout, land for use as public green space, specifically:

- (a) where it is essential for the completion of the Chelt Walk.**

RC 10 Allotments

POLICY RC 10

ALLOTMENTS

Objectives O12 and O26

Development involving the loss of allotment land will only be permitted where:

- (a) the site is not included in the allotment strategy as a resource meeting an existing or future need, and where it can be demonstrated that there is no need for alternative outdoor recreational space; or
- (b) the site does not provide a significant or environmental contribution to the town (note 1); or
- (c) appropriate compensatory provision is made in agreement with the Borough Council and the Cheltenham and District Allotment Holders Association which meets the following requirements:
 - i. the new site is in the vicinity and would serve the same catchment as the existing; and
 - ii. the new site provides approximately the same number and size of plots as those in active use at the existing site; and
 - iii. the soil is of a high quality and suitable for cultivation; and
 - iv. the new site is accessible to pedestrians, cyclists and the car-borne; and
 - v. adequate car-parking is available at the new site.

Note 1

Policy GE 2 (private green space) will apply, and development which would alter the open character of the site may not be permitted.

Note 2

Policy RC 10 will apply to all allotment sites shown on the Proposals Map, irrespective of their statutory or non-statutory status.

RC 12 Golf Courses

POLICY RC 12

GOLF COURSES

Objectives O13 and O27

Within the Green Belt or AONB, only golf courses with a single club house serving purely the needs of members will be permitted.

Note 1

All proposals for new or expanded golf courses will also be subject to policy RC 11 which has regard to the environmental impact on the countryside of the new recreational facilities.

Note 2

Policies CO 2 and CO 6 limit new building in the Green Belt and AONB, hence the requirement that the only built structure associated with the golf course should be a club house of limited size. Where possible, an existing building should be used. Proposals linking a golf course to the development of a new hotel or country club complex will not be acceptable.

Note 3

All proposals for new or expanded golf courses will be required to take into account issues of accessibility, particularly by public transport (see policies CP 4: safe and sustainable living and CP 5: sustainable transport).

Note 4

The Borough Council encourages community access to existing and new facilities.

RC 13 Public rights of way in the countryside

POLICY RC 13

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Objectives O26, O28 and O35

Development which would adversely affect existing or new routes of public rights of way will not be permitted unless suitable provision can be made for their retention or diversion.

COTSWOLDS AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN:

The following Landscape Strategy and Guidelines are pertinent for the study area. They are presented within Appendix D to ensure complete correctness of inclusion.

2 Escarpment

7 High Wold

8 High Wold Valley

1.9. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a standard system for identifying, describing, classifying and mapping the variety of landscape: it helps to explain what makes individual landscapes different from each other.

The assessment of landscape is an important aspect in the consideration of development locations throughout the countryside. There are a number of relevant documents that define landscape and its importance, including the following documents:

Natural England - National Character Area Profiles

National Character Areas (NCA's) divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural and economic activity.

As part of its responsibilities in delivering the Natural Environment White Paper, Biodiversity 2020 and the European Landscape Convention as well as its own statutory purpose, Natural England has produced the National Character Area (NCA) profiles to make environmental evidence and information easily accessible to a wide audience.

NCA profiles provide a broad range of information that can be used by individuals and communities to help achieve a more sustainable future.

Two National Character Areas are found within the study area: NCA 106: Severn and Avon Vales and NCA 107: Cotswolds. Figure 4 illustrates their locations and extents.

1.10. EXISTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

Landscape Character Assessment is an objective way of identifying the elements of a landscape which make up its particular character. Such an assessment helps to guide decisions about proposals which may affect that particular character. It is an aid to understanding how and why the landscape is shaped and how to ensure that change and development does not undermine whatever is characteristic or valued about a particular landscape and the ways to improve the local distinctiveness of a place or area.

The following Landscape Character Assessments are relevant to this study:

JOINT CORE STRATEGY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (2011)

The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) Landscape Character Assessment work was undertaken to provide landscape character and sensitivity analysis around the urban centres of Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury. The work comprised of two distinct areas of work, the first was a landscape characterisation process where the landscape was assigned distinct character areas. Once each area had been spatially identified and described, a sensitivity analysis was undertaken. The outcome of the sensitivity analysis was to assign relative value and therefore sensitivity to large scale development, resulting in the production of maps showing the various sensitivities for the specific areas.

This assessment did not cover any of the land within the study area.

THE COTSWOLD AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (2002)

In October 2002 the Cotswolds AONB Partnership undertook a Landscape Character Assessment and produced a Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for the designated area. Within the Gloucestershire section of the AONB, 15 Landscape Types were classified.

The study area falls principally within the Landscape Character Type identified as Escarpment. The southern edge and northeast edge of the study area falls within the High Wold Landscape Character Type, while a small area on the southeast corner of the study area falls within the High Wold Valley Landscape Character Type.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (2006)

The Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment work undertook a County Wide assessment of Gloucestershire and identified a total of 38 landscape character types. The intention of the report was, in combination with the parallel reports for the Forest of Dean and the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessments, to provide a valuable tool for the spatial planning and decision making processes.

This assessment did not cover any of the land within the study area, and therefore did not influence our work.

2. METHODOLOGY

The assessment has been undertaken in two key phases: the Landscape Character and Sensitivity Study and the Value and Capacity Study.

The study comprises of two distinct areas of work: the first is a landscape characterisation process where the study area (the landscape to the east of Cheltenham) was surveyed and divided into distinct landscape character types and landscape character areas. Each type and area was then described following the standard methodology explained below in Section 2.5. Once the landscape character had been spatially identified and then described, the second area of work – a value and capacity analysis followed. The objective of this work was to assign relative value and capacity of the landscape to development, with the main output being the maps that show the various capacity and sensitivities for the specific areas.

2.1. THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT

There were two key parts to the initial baseline phase: desktop study and field survey. Baseline studies for assessing landscape effects require a mix of desk study and field works to identify and record the character of the landscape and the elements, features and aesthetic and perceptual factors that contribute to it. The desktop phase identified all the recorded designations, policies and mapping. The field survey stage allowed the assessor to identify the experience of a landscape and elements associated with an identified landscape parcel that would not otherwise be possible to identify.

2.2. DESKTOP STUDY

- National Landscape Character Assessments.
- Conservation Area Statements.
- Review of existing landscape character type descriptions.
- Planning designations.
- Designations relating to landscape.
- Designations relating to biodiversity and wildlife conservation.
- Designations relating to building conservation.
- Designations relating to historic park and garden conservation.
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments.
- Review of landscape characteristics and patterns identifiable by map studies.

2.3. FIELD SURVEY COMPONENTS (CHARACTER AND SENSITIVITY)

Site visits were undertaken during March and April 2015 by an experienced, chartered landscape architect.

Field assessment sheets were used to record data in a systematic way whilst attending the sites. An example of the field assessment sheet is contained in Appendix A.

Field sheets recorded the key qualities, elements, value and characteristics of the sites.

Photographs were taken to record the character and context of the sites. Photographs were taken according to best practice (Landscape Institute Guidance for photography, Advice Note 01/11).

The field surveys considered the following elements to compile an evidence based analysis of the existing landscape character and its sensitivity.

1. Physical influences and natural factors:

- Landform.
- Hydrology.
- Vegetation types (including tree cover).

2. Human influences and cultural factors:

- Land use.
- Building and settlement pattern.
- Boundaries and field pattern.
- Communications and infrastructure.
- Landmarks and heritage features.
- Amenity value (to include formal and informal recreational facilities and observed intensity of use).

3. Views:

- Key views into and out of an area.
- Number of people able to view the area.

4. Quality and condition of landscape and component features:

- Obvious signs of degradation or dereliction.
- Areas of apparent good land management.
- Potential forces for change.

5. Aesthetics and perceptual qualities to include:

- Aesthetics such as pattern, scale, texture and colour
- Perceptual qualities such as security, tranquillity, noise and naturalness

2.4. EXISTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

Landscape characterisation for this study will reference the Landscape Design Associates (LDA) characterisation work for Gloucestershire (2006) commissioned jointly by the County Council and six district authorities.

The subsequent work conducted to characterise and assess the sensitivity is also relevant (the Joint Core Strategy Landscape Characterisation Assessment and Sensitivity Analysis, 2011).

The key relevant landscape character reference document will be the Cotswold AONB Landscape Character Assessment (LDA, 2002).

Further Guidance:

- Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002);
- An approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England (October 2014)

2.5. LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Given the large scale nature of the existing landscape character assessments, it was identified that a local level landscape character assessment was required in order to more thoroughly assess the character, sensitivity, value and capacity of the landscape within the identified study area.

As described in the guidance document '*An approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England (October 2014)*' a Landscape Character Type is summarised as:

- Distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogenous in character;
- Are generic in nature – they may occur in different area in different parts of the country and will share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historic land use and settlement pattern (this does not mean that every area within a particular type will be identical, but rather, that there is a common pattern which can be discerned in maps and in the fields survey records);
- May occur repeatedly in a study area, or occur in just one place;
- Can be identified at each level in the hierarchy of assessment;
- Can provide a good spatially referenced framework for analysing change (many influences and pressures affect areas with similar character in similar ways); and
- When analysed, can provide a foundation upon which to develop planning and / or landscape management strategies

A Landscape Character Area is summarised as:

- Unique individual geographical areas in which landscape types occur;
- Share generic characteristics with other areas of the same type, but have their own particular identity;
- Can often be more readily recognised and identified by non-specialists – sense of place is often important to local people and visitors for example;
- May often be more prevalent than landscape character types, because some types will occur in more than one area;

- Can be identified at each level in the hierarchy of assessment;
- Can provide a good spatially referenced framework from where patterns of local distinctiveness, and factors influencing sense of place, can be drawn;
- Can be used to develop tailored policies and strategies that reflect the characteristics that make a given landscape different or special.

The desktop and field surveys as described in section 2.2 and 2.3 contributed to the identification of the following Landscape Character Types and Areas (Table 1 below), mapped at 1:10,000 and shown on Figures 5, 6 and 7. The Types are described within Section 4 of this report.

Table 1: Summary of Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas

Reference	Landscape Character Type	Reference	Landscape Character Area
1	Cemetery	1.1	Bouncers Lane Cemetery
2	Community Allotments	2.1	Ryeworth Allotment
		2.2	Little Herbert's Allotments
3	Community Open Space	3.1	Little Herbert's Playing Fields
		3.2	Pilley Playing Fields
		3.3	Oakley Playing Fields
		3.4	Battledown Cricket Ground and Playing Fields
4	Escarpment	4.1	Hartley Hill Escarpment
		4.2	Ravensgate Hill Escarpment
5	Golf Course	5.1	Lilley Brook Golf Course
6	Lowland Pasture	6.1	Noverton Lowland Pasture
		6.2	Ham Lowland Pasture
		6.3	Greenway Lowland Pasture
7	Pasture Slopes	7.1	Oakley Farm Pasture Slopes
		7.2	Hewlett's Reservoir
		7.3	Oakley Pasture Slopes
		7.4	Northfield Farm Pasture Slopes
		7.5	Ham Hill South
		7.6	Dowdeswell Woods Pasture Slopes
		7.7	Ravensgate Hill Pasture Slopes
		7.8	Lineover Wood Pasture Slopes
		7.9	Charlton Kings Farmed Slopes
		7.10	Wellinghill House Farmed Slopes
8	Settled Lowland	8.1	Ham Settled Lowlands
		8.2	Coxhome Settled Lowlands

Reference	Landscape Character Type	Reference	Landscape Character Area
		8.3	Daisybank Settled Lowlands
		8.4	Lilley Brook Settled Lowlands
		8.5	Battledown Settled Lowlands
9	Upland Farmland	9.1	Colgate Upland Farmland
10	Wooded Pasture Slopes	10.1	The Hewlett's Wooded Pasture Slopes
		10.2	Glenfall House Wooded Pasture Slopes
		10.3	Ham Farm Wooded Pasture Slopes
		10.4	Ham Hill South Wooded Pasture Slopes
		10.5	Colgate Wooded Pasture Slopes
		10.6	Pilley Wooded Pasture Slopes
		10.7	Timbercombe Wooded Pasture Slopes
		10.8	Wistley Hill Wooded Pasture Slopes
		10.9	Ravensgate Hill Wooded Pasture Slopes
		10.10	Southfield Manor Wooded Pasture Slopes
		10.11	Greenway Wooded Pasture Slopes
		10.12	Wellinghill Wooded Pasture Slopes
		10.13	Little Herbert's Wooded Pasture Slopes

2.6. LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Table 2 below provides a list of key characteristics and attributes indicating higher or lower sensitivity to change brought about by development. The table is not a prescriptive tool, since the list of key landscape characteristics and attributes is not exhaustive. The table is used as a guide to inform the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity. The sensitivity of the Landscape Character Type / Landscape Character Area to change is defined on a three point scale as **High**, **Medium** or **Low** and is based on professional judgement and interpretation of key landscape characteristics.

Table 2: Definition of landscape sensitivity

Sensitivity	Comments / Examples
High	<p>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be unable to accommodate change caused by development. Typically these would be;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of high quality with distinctive elements and features making a positive contribution to character and sense of place. • Likely to contain features and elements that are rare and could not be replaced.
Medium	<p>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to partly accommodate change caused by development. Typically these would be;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprised of commonplace elements and features creating generally unremarkable character but with some sense of place. • Likely to contain some features and elements that could not be replaced.
Low	<p>Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to accommodate changes caused by development. Typically these would be;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprised of some features and elements that are discordant, derelict or in decline, resulting in indistinct character with little or no sense of place. • Likely to contain few, if any, features and elements that could not be replaced.

2.7. VISUAL SENSITIVITY

Table 3 below provides a list of key visual receptors, or viewers, in the landscape indicating higher or lower sensitivity to change brought about by development. The table is not a prescriptive tool, since the list of visual receptors is not exhaustive. The table is used as a guide to inform the overall assessment of visual sensitivity. The sensitivity of the visual attributes within any given Landscape Character Area to change is defined on a three point scale as **High**, **Medium** or **Low** and is based on professional judgement and interpretation of key views.

Table 3: Definition of visual sensitivity

Visual Sensitivity	Typical Receptors
High	<p>Landscape Character Areas with long distance viewing opportunities. Landscape Character Areas including visual receptors with a particular interest in their surroundings or prolonged viewing opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential locations • Visitor or recreational sites • Nationally or locally recognised footpaths and cycle ways • Recognised scenic drives or promoted tourist routes

Visual Sensitivity	Typical Receptors
Medium	<p>Landscape Character Areas with medium distance viewing opportunities.</p> <p>Landscape Character Areas including visual receptors with a general interest in their surroundings or with transient viewing opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General footpaths • Local roads • Public spaces
Low	<p>Landscape Character Areas with short distance viewing opportunities.</p> <p>Landscape Character Areas including visual receptors with a limited or passing interest in their surroundings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views from places of employment • Indoor facilities • Commercial and industrial buildings • Commuters along major roads (typically A and M roads)

2.8. FIELD SURVEY COMPONENTS

Site visits were undertaken during March and April 2015 by an experienced, chartered landscape architect to assess each of the Landscape Character Areas listed in Table 1.

Field assessment sheets were used to record data in a systematic way whilst attending the sites. An example of the field assessment sheet is contained in Appendix A.

Field sheets recorded the key qualities, elements, value and characteristics of the sites.

Photographs were taken to record the character and context of the sites. Photographs were taken according to best practice (Landscape Institute Guidance for photography, Advice Note 01/11).

The field surveys considered the following elements to compile an evidence based analysis of the existing landscape character and its sensitivity.

Assessing:

1. Designations;

- National.
- Regional.
- Local.

2. Other Criteria indicating value;

- Landscape quality (condition).
- Rarity.
- Representativeness.
- Recreation value.
- Perceptual aspects.
- Tranquillity.
- Remoteness.
- Wildness.

- Scenic beauty.
- Cultural associations.
- Conservation interests.

The above notes accord with Box 5.1 of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition) – Pg 84.

2.9. LANDSCAPE VALUE

The assessment of landscape sensitivity based on key characteristics may be modified by consideration of any special values attributed to a landscape (i.e. a landscape with characteristics that suggest relatively low sensitivity may be judged to be more sensitive because of special values attached to it – either as a result of formal designation or other evidence, such as local designation or cultural links).

The value of a landscape reflects communal perception on a local, regional, national and international scale. It is informed by a number of factors including scenic beauty, tranquillity, cultural associations or other conservation interests including current and past land uses.

Landscapes considered to be of the highest value would generally be nationally designated, whereas those considered of lowest value would be represented by undesignated landscapes identified as requiring recovery. Although value is frequently determined by reference to national and local designations, an absence of such a designation does not infer a lack of value, as other factors such as scarcity can render areas valuable as a local resource.

Taking all these factors into account, the degree to which landscape character sensitivity is modified by landscape values is, therefore, a matter of professional judgement.

Table 4: Definition of landscape value

Value	Comments / Examples
High	The Landscape Character Area has many positive qualities associated with landscape value, e.g. landscape designations; is seen as important by the community; limited/ no degradation or erosion of features resulting in a mainly intact landscape with limited/ no intrusion. A Landscape Character Area with strong aesthetic and sensory qualities.
Medium	The Landscape Character Area has some positive qualities associated with landscape value, e.g. landscape designations, some degradation or erosion of features resulting in areas of more mixed character and reduced overall value, partly intact landscape with some intrusions. A Landscape Character area with some aesthetic and sensory qualities
Low	The Landscape Character Area has limited qualities associated with landscape value, e.g. no landscape designations, few valued features, limited use by the community, mixed character and reduced overall value. A disjointed landscape with intrusions. A Landscape Character Area which lacks/has limited aesthetic and sensory qualities.

2.10. LANDSCAPE CAPACITY

Topic Paper 6 – Techniques and criteria for judging capacity and sensitivity (Scottish Natural Heritage / The Countryside Agency (2002))

“Landscape capacity refers to the degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character, or overall change of landscape character type. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed.”

Landscape Capacity is used to describe the ability of a landscape to accommodate different amounts of change or development of a specific type. This should reflect:

- The inherent sensitivity of the landscape itself, but more specifically its sensitivity to a particular type of development in question. This means that capacity will reflect both the sensitivity of the landscape resource and its visual sensitivity;
- The value attached to the landscape or to specific elements in it.

Landscape capacity is summarised below:

Landscape Character Sensitivity (Based on judgements about sensitivity of aspects most likely to be affected e.g. Natural factors, cultural factors, landscape and aesthetic factors).

+

Visual Sensitivity (based on nature of change and interaction with visual aspects of landscape e.g. general visibility, population and mitigation potential).

+

Landscape Value (designations and other criteria indicating value)

=

Landscape Capacity to accommodate a specific type of change

2.11. DEFINING OUTCOMES OF DESK BASED AND FIELD SURVEY COMPONENTS

The first part of the process is using the assessed visual sensitivity combined with the landscape character sensitivity to arrive at an overall landscape sensitivity. The result for the overall landscape sensitivity is then considered in conjunction with the landscape value for the individual character area to determine the level of overall landscape constraint. The overall landscape constraint judgement is then represented as the overall landscape capacity in line with the values represented in Table 6 below.

It should be noted that an average of the sensitivity ratings has been taken to reach the various assessment. In order to avoid the process of assessment being overly prescriptive, professional judgement is utilised in the assessment of Landscape Constraint and consequently Landscape Capacity.

For example, using a table such as that shown illustrates this three step process:

Table 5: Process of arriving at landscape capacity judgement

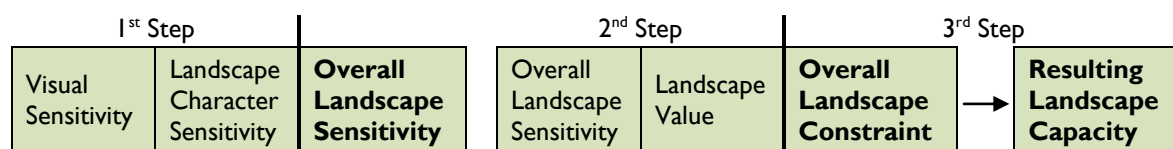


Table 6: Levels of landscape constraint and resulting landscape capacity

Assessment	Description	Resulting Landscape Capacity
MINOR Constraint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A minor constraint that can be satisfactorily addressed without mitigation, or with limited mitigation. A constraint that only affects a small part of the site and can be addressed without significantly reducing the number of dwellings or area for development. 	HIGH Capacity for built development
MODERATE Constraint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A constraint that requires more extensive / costly mitigation to satisfactorily address, but that can be overcome. A constraint that affects a larger proportion of the site – requiring mitigation that would reduce the number of houses or area of development that can be built, albeit it would not prevent development from taking place. 	MEDIUM Capacity for built development
MAJOR Constraint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A significant constraint that requires very substantial / very costly mitigation measures to overcome. Alternatively, a constraint where it is not clear that it is capable of being satisfactorily addressed. A constraint that would very significantly reduce the proportion of the site that can be developed. 	LOW Capacity for built development

3. OUTCOME OF THE ASSESSMENT

3.1. PRESENTATION OF ASSESSMENT

For each landscape character area the following are included to illustrate the various elements of the assessment;

- Assessment Sheet, including site location plan, assessment of landscape character and visual qualities of the site and an overall assessment of value and constraint; and
- Photosheets with supporting photographs taken during field site visits.

When viewing the plans indicating broad planning principles and key views, reference should be made to the Legend contained in Section 3.4 of this report.

3.2. SUMMARY OF INDIVIDUAL SITE CONSTRAINT CLASSIFICATION

A summary of the assessed landscape types, landscape character areas and constraint classification for all the assessed landscape character areas in terms of landscape is set out in Table 4 below;

Table 7: Summary of Site Landscape Character Area Outcomes.

Ref	Land Parcel Types and Areas	Landscape Constraint	Landscape Capacity for built development
1	Cemetery		
1.1	Bouncers Lane Cemetery	Major	Low
2	Community Allotments		
2.1	Ryeworth Allotment	Major	Low
2.2	Little Herbert's Allotments	Major	Low
3	Community Open Space		
3.1	Little Herbert's Playing Fields	Major	Low
3.2	Pilley Playing Fields	Major	Low
3.3	Oakley Playing fields	Major	Low
3.4	Battledown Cricket Ground and Playing Fields	Major	Low
4	Escarpment		
4.1	Hartley Hill Escarpment	Major	Low
4.2	Ravensgate Hill Escarpment	Major	Low
5	Golf Course		
5.1	Lilley Brook Golf Course	Major	Low
6	Lowland Pasture		
6.1	Noverton Lowland Pasture	Major / Moderate	Low / Medium
6.2	Ham Lowland Pasture	Major / Moderate	Low / Medium
6.3	Greenway Lowland Pasture	Major	Low

Ref	Land Parcel Types and Areas	Landscape Constraint	Landscape Capacity for built development
7	Pasture Slopes		
7.1	Oakley Farm Pasture Slopes	Major	Low
7.2	Hewlett's Reservoir	Major	Low
7.3	Oakley Pasture Slopes	Major / Moderate	Low / Medium
7.4	Northfield Farm Pasture Slopes	Major	Low
7.5	Ham Hill South	Major	Low
7.6	Dowdeswell Woods Pasture Slopes	Major	Low
7.7	Ravensgate Hill Pasture Slopes	Major	Low
7.8	Lineover Wood Pasture Slopes	Major	Low
7.9	Charlton Kings Farmed Slopes	Major	Low
7.10	Wellinghill House Farmed Slopes	Major	Low
8	Settled Lowland		
8.1	Ham Settled Lowlands	Major	Low
8.2	Coxhome Settled Lowlands	Major / Moderate	Low / Medium *
8.3	Daisybank Settled Lowlands	Major	Low
8.4	Lilley Brook Settled Lowland	Major	Low
8.5	Battledown Settled Lowland	Major	Low
9	Upland Farmland		
9.1	Colgate Upland Farmland	Major	Low
10	Wooded Pasture Slopes		
10.1	The Hewlett's Wooded Pasture Slopes	Major	Low
10.2	Glenfall House Wooded Pasture Slopes	Major	Low
10.3	Ham Farm Wooded Pasture Slopes	Major	Low
10.4	Ham Hill South Wooded Pasture Slopes	Major	Low
10.5	Colgate Wooded Pasture Slopes	Major	Low
10.6	Pilley Wooded Pasture Slopes	Major	Low
10.7	Timbercombe Wooded Pasture Slopes	Major	Low
10.8	Wistley Hill Wooded Pasture Slopes	Major	Low
10.9	Ravensgate Hill Wooded Pasture Slopes	Major	Low
10.10	Southfield Manor Wooded Pasture Slopes	Major	Low
10.11	Greenway Wooded Pasture Slopes	Major	Low
10.12	Wellinghill Wooded Pasture Slopes	Major	Low
10.13	Little Herbert's Wooded Pasture Slopes	Major / Moderate	Low / Medium

For ease of reference, these assessment sheets are included within the main body of this document at Section 4.

3.3. GENERAL LANDSCAPE PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Where the landscape capacity rating of **Low/Medium** or above has been reached for any given Landscape Character Area, a sheet summarising the potential landscape planning principles has been produced. The planning principles will outline the type of development that may be considered appropriate in that particular Landscape Character Area and the general landscape principles set out. A sheet is not produced for those with **Low** landscape capacity as they are not deemed appropriate for any kind of development. Some Landscape Character Areas may not fit directly into a specific landscape constraints criterion as a whole, and different parts of the site could vary to the degrees of capacity. The general principles covered are expanded upon below:

General Design Principles

General design principles have been included within the assessment sheets and are based on the information gathered throughout the assessment stage. The design principles look to provide guidance and recommendations for the type of mitigation treatment (including boundary treatments, inclusion of open space, tree planting and conservation or restoration of valued habitats) that should be considered for any given site.

Enhancement of Key Views

Where key views are identified within the study, it should be ensured that an open foreground is retained within proposals to retain these views. Opportunities for public viewing points, Public Rights of Way, cycleways and the like should be considered to take advantage of the existing views.

Conservation Areas

The proximity of Conservation Areas has been taken into account and key views identified within the Conservation Area Appraisals have been noted where applicable.

Vegetation Treatment

Where appropriate, tree planting has been proposed within and around the boundaries of the prospective developments in order to provide visual and physical linkages with the surrounding landscape character. Reinstatement and enhancement of hedgerow boundaries could become an important element of the planted treatment applied throughout the sites.

It should be clearly noted that the retention of hedgerows and trees does not immediately lead to acceptability of a scheme in landscape terms. Native hedgerows are traditional methods of retaining stock or protecting crops in fields rather than acting as enclosures for houses and industrial units.

The retention of existing positive vegetation features should be integrated in a thoughtful way into design proposals so they become a site asset and contribute to the quality of the local environment.

Other less obvious vegetation such as scrub areas and pasture grasslands should be recognised for both their ecological value but also their contribution to landscape character.

Sheets outlining the general planning principles have been produced for the following landscape character areas, which have landscape capacity values considered more than Low:

Table 8: Summary of Landscape Character Areas with assessed capacity greater than Low.








Character Area	Name	Level of Constraint	Level of Capacity for built development
LCA 6.1 Lowland Pasture	Noverton Lowland Pasture	Major / Moderate	Low / Medium
LCA 6.2 Lowland Pasture	Ham Lowland Pasture	Major / Moderate	Low / Medium
LCA 7.3 Pasture slopes	Oakley Pasture Slopes	Major / Moderate	Low / Medium
LCA 8.2 Settled Lowlands	Coxhome Settled Lowlands	Major / Moderate	Low / Medium *
LCA 10.13 Wooded Pasture Slopes	Little Herbert's Wooded Pasture Slopes	Major / Moderate	Low / Medium

* This indicated some small potential for development. However it is considered that the localised area where capacity may be available is indicated includes the road and the existing commercial development. It is considered that the remainder of the Landscape Character Area has a generally higher landscape constraint classification and lower capacity form development. Therefore no planning principles have been included for this character area.

The findings within this study has concluded that there is limited capacity for built development along urban edge of Cheltenham, however Table 8 has identified a number of possible locations that would have less impact on the landscape character and with robust mitigation could accommodate appropriate development.

3.4. LEGEND TO ACCOMPANY PLANNING PRINCIPLES FOR SITES WITH DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY IDENTIFIED

Legend

-  Landscape Character Area
-  Planning Principle Boundary
-  Landscape Capacity
-  Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
-  Suggested Limit of Development
-  Proposed Hedgrow Planting
-  Proposed Intermittent Tree Planting

4. SITE ASSESSMENT AND PHOTOSHEETS