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LAND AT FARM LANE/CHURCH ROAD
LECKHAMPTON, CHELTENHAM
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

Final report

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Appointment and background

Landscape Design Associates was commissioned by Cheltenham Borough Council in March 2003 to prepare a landscape and visual appraisal of an area of land to the southern edge of the town between Farm Lane, Church Road and Shurdington Road, Leckhampton.

Landscape Design Associates are specialist landscape consultants based in Oxford with extensive experience of landscape assessment and countryside planning on a diversity of projects across the county. We have worked extensively within Gloucestershire and have recently completed landscape character assessments on behalf of both Gloucestershire County Council and Forest of Dean District Council. In addition, we are currently undertaking a landscape character assessment and environmental guidelines for the Cotswold AONB, the findings of which will inform the emerging Cotswold AONB Management Plan.

1.2 Planning status and background

The Leckhampton land is unallocated 'white land' within the adopted Cheltenham Borough Local Plan and has a long and complex planning history. It was last considered at the 1993 Inquiry into the Local Plan and at this time the Planning Inspector had to assess whether the land should be held as a longer term 'strategic reserve' for development, or whether it should be protected for its own sake.

The Inspector concluded that that the land should not (our underlining) be protected as a strategic reserve but should be protected '*because of its varied topography, landscape history, dense network of footpaths, and pedestrian access from several residential districts.*' He further concluded that it was not necessary in the short term to give the land additional protection through inclusion within the Green Belt, AONB or some other landscape designation, but considered that these options should be explored as part of the next review of the Local Plan.

The land remains unallocated within the emerging Cheltenham Borough Local Plan (Second Review 2002) although in accepting the Inspectors Recommendations to protect the land from development, the Plan includes Policy CO 52 which seeks to resist development on the land through the application of '*a similar policy to that which operates in the Green Belt.*' However, as part of its ongoing review of the Local Plan, Cheltenham Borough Council is considering the potential for additional protection of the land at Leckhampton, and this landscape appraisal has been commissioned to help inform the Councils decision on this issue, and/or any alternative proposals for the area.

1.3 Scope of work

The study has been prepared following a desk-based assessment of existing environmental information and a period of field-based landscape and visual survey. Specifically it has comprised:

- A desk based review to identify the extent, location and significance of any environmental planning constraints affecting the land and the surrounding area.
- A landscape survey of the land to record the existing land use, the character and condition of the landscape, the presence of any notable landscape features and relationship of the land to the wider urban and rural environment.
- A visual survey to assess the overall visual prominence of the land from local public vantage points, adjacent residential development, and land within the Cotswolds AONB which lies immediately to the south of the study area.

The conclusions of this survey and appraisal have been drawn together as part of a landscape evaluation which also considers the overall value of the landscape and its sensitivity to change and/or development.

The study draws upon previous landscape reports for the area including survey information and evidence prepared by the Leckhampton Green Land Action Group (Leglag), and other local groups (in so far as this can be verified within the limitations of this study), landscape evidence submitted to the 1993 Local Plan Inquiry, and evidence submitted by Cheltenham Borough Council to the Tewkesbury Borough Local Plan in respect of land proposed for development south of Brizen Farm which lies to the west of the Leckhampton land.

1.4 Study area

The land considered by this study is the area identified on the Local Plan Proposals Map as 'unallocated land' as illustrated on Figure 1. Hereafter, this area will be referred to as 'the study area.'

However, in order to consider the character of the landscape within the context of the surrounding rural and urban edge environment, the landscape and visual survey has addressed a wider study area including land at the urban edge to the north and east, and the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB to the south.

1.5 Methodology

The study has been completed broadly in accordance with recommended guidance as set out in the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' published jointly in 2002 by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), and the Countryside Agency Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002)

All site survey work was completed during Spring 2003 and this report relates to the status and condition of the study area at that time. The visual assessment has been completed from public roads, rights of way and other publicly accessible locations within the surrounding landscape. Views from private land and residential properties have only been appraised where access could be gained. Photographic panoramas have been used to record the character and condition of the study area and the visibility of the area from surrounding locations. All photographs have been taken with a 50mm focal length lens.

2.0 LANDSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT

2.1 Study area location and context

The study area lies at the junction of the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Borough administrative areas as illustrated on Figure 1. It is located between the southern edge of Cheltenham and the Cotswolds escarpment and AONB which provides a dramatic backdrop to the town to the south and east.

It covers an area of approximately 60 hectares located almost equally to both sides of Kidnappers Lane which crosses the study area from north west to south east linking Farm Lane with Church Road and Leckhampton Road to the south. To the north, the study area is bordered by existing residential development at Warden Hill and Up Hatherley, and by housing and open space to the edge of Leckhampton to the east and south east.

The southern boundary of the study area is defined by Church Road/Leckhampton Lane which lies adjacent to the boundary of the AONB. The study area extends north from the boundary of the AONB to the A46 Shurdington Road which defines the northern boundary and provides the main arterial route into Cheltenham from the south west. The road corridor is defined by extensive residential estates to the north and by open land to the south with the exception of the recent residential development at 'The Lanes' to the west of the study area.

Land to the south west of 'The Lanes' outside Cheltenham Borough is proposed for housing within the emerging Tewkesbury Borough Local Plan as indicated on Figure 1. Cheltenham Borough Council objected to the allocation of this land in representations made to the Tewkesbury Local Plan Public Inquiry which closed in March 2003. In addition, land at Brizen Farm to the west of 'The Lanes' is being promoted for residential development by others, and representations were also made to the Tewkesbury Local Plan Inquiry in respect of this land. The Inspectors recommendations in relation to these two sites is expected in December 2003.

2.2 Landscape planning designations

The study area is not covered by any existing landscape designations and remains as an area of unallocated land as defined within the emerging Cheltenham Borough Local Plan and protected by Policy CO 52. Cheltenham Borough Council is however, currently reviewing whether additional protection should be given to the land, and if so, what form that protection should take. This report will be used to inform further consideration of this issue as part of the current local plan review process.

Notwithstanding this, the study area abuts the boundary of the Cotswolds AONB, lies close to the boundary of the Gloucester to Cheltenham Green Belt and earlier studies have referred to a number of important and/or protected features within the study area. As such, a review of existing designations has been completed as part of this study and the current statutory and non-statutory designations affecting the study area, and surrounding area, are described below and illustrated on Figure 1. Given the location of the study area at the junction of two local authority areas, these designations have been identified with reference to both the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Borough Local Plans and in consultation with Gloucestershire County Council.

2.3 Cotswolds AONB

As outlined above, the boundary of the Cotswolds AONB abuts the study area to the south where the land rises significantly toward Leckhampton Hill providing an impressive backdrop to the town. The study area is however, strongly influenced by the character and quality of the adjacent AONB landscape with which there is a high degree of inter-visibility i.e. there are clear views from within the study area across the AONB and vice versa. The nature of this relationship is discussed later in this report.

2.4 Green Belt

The study area lies outside the boundary of the Cheltenham to Gloucester Green Belt as designated within the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Borough Local Plans. The boundary of the Green Belt is however, contiguous with the AONB boundary to the south of the study area as indicated on Figure 1.

The boundary of the Green Belt in the Leckhampton area was set in 1968 although the reasons for its precise alignment are not clear. Amendments to the boundary were made by Tewkesbury Borough Council in 1985 in the Cheltenham Environs Local Plan. In the Deposit version of this plan, the Council had proposed that the study area should also be included within the Green Belt, but this was not endorsed by the Inspector and the land remains undesignated.

However, the longer term inclusion of the Leckhampton land within the Green Belt remains a possibility and the Inspectors report into the 1993 Local Plan Inquiry which considered the need for special protection of the land, concluded that it would not be necessary *'to give the land additional protection in the short term by making it green belt, a landscape conservation area, or part of a new conservation area, although all these options should in my view, be rigorously explored as part of the next review process.'*

2.5 Special Landscape Areas

Special Landscape Areas (SLA's) were designated by the County Council in the early 1990's as part of a review of the Cotswold AONB boundary in areas which were either removed from the AONB at that time, or were not included within it. The detailed designation criteria are not clear although no SLA's were identified within Cheltenham Borough.

It seems however, that the exclusion of the Leckhampton land from the SLA was largely a result of it not being proposed for inclusion within the AONB. Whilst the County Council have previously advised it felt unable to designate the land as a SLA, it is not clear whether this conclusion was based upon a formal assessment of the land against identified and consistently applied landscape criteria. However, on the basis of this appraisal, the landscape quality of the study area would appear to be entirely consistent with the quality of other Special Landscape Areas within the County.

In the interim, techniques for landscape assessment have moved on and assessments based on measuring the relative quality of different areas have now been largely superseded by a landscape character based approach. This approach is set out in national planning policy guidance (PPG7) which addresses the issue of landscape designations and landscape character, and states in paragraph 2.14, that *'The Government's Policy is that the countryside should be safeguarded for its own sake and non renewable and natural resources should be afforded protection.'*

PPG7 acknowledges the importance of a landscape character based approach which recognises that all landscapes matter and which seeks to identify the differences and distinctions between areas. This approach is central to Countryside Agency guidance set out in its 2002 publication '*Landscape Character Assessment, Guidance for England and Scotland*.' In response to this, a landscape character appraisal of the study area and the wider landscape is included in Section 3.0 of this report.

2.6 Protected open space

The study area is segregated from housing to the edge of Leckhampton to the east by the open land at Burrows Sports Field which is protected as Public Green Space under Local Plan Policy GE 36, and by an area of private allotment gardens protected by Policy RC 106.

2.7 Scheduled Ancient Monuments

A Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) is located within the study area in the field to the north of Church Farm. This is the site of a moat and fishponds dating from the 14th Century and as a nationally important monument, is protected by Local Plan policy BE 34. There is evidence of extensive earthworks to the north of the moat outside the scheduled area, which may be medieval in origin and relate to the desertion of the original village in the late 19th century.

In addition, the study area contains extensive evidence of pre enclosure agricultural practices in the form of ridge and furrow which survives most notably within Lott Meadow to the east of Kidnappers Lane and are further testimony to the rich cultural heritage still present within the study area.

2.8 Listed Buildings

The study area contains 3 grade II Listed Buildings and there are a number of other Listed Buildings in the vicinity, which are indicated on Figure 1.

Within the study area, two listed thatched cottages, Field Cottage and Moat Cottage are located to the west of Kidnappers Lane. The listed farmhouse at Leckhampton Farm lies to the western edge of the study area within a small enclave of new houses now known as Leckhampton Farm Court. Records indicate that Moat Cottage dates from the 16th Century and is the oldest surviving cottage in Leckhampton with Field Cottage being only slightly later in construction. Both buildings can be identified on the 1746 Ordnance Survey Plan of the area included as Appendix A. These buildings remain within a strongly rural setting despite recent development around the periphery of the study area.

Immediately beyond the study area boundary to the south 'The Rectory' on Church Lane is Grade II Listed, and the parish church of St Peter and Leckhampton Court to the south of Church Road are both Grade II* Listed. The church has features dating from the 12th and 14th centuries and the church spire provides a notable landmark in views toward the AONB from public footpaths within the study area. The presence of these Listed Buildings within and around the study area, together with the ancient monument and features described above, indicates the historical value of the area.

2.9 Conservation areas

The study area is not included within a Conservation Area but at its nearest, lies only 120 metres from the southern boundary of the Central Cheltenham Conservation Area as illustrated on Figure 1.

It is understood that the Borough Council may at some stage consider the designation of a new Conservation Area around the historic centre of Leckhampton to the south east of the study area, although no details of this work have been made available to this study.

2.10 Nature conservation

The study area is not affected by any statutory or non statutory nature conservation designations but contains nonetheless, a number of locally important features which are identified as habitats for protection within the Gloucestershire Biodiversity Action Plan. These include old orchards '*which are particularly valuable to wildlife especially birds and invertebrates*', and streams and species rich hedgerows, both of which are present within the study area. Further details of the nature conservation interest within the study area are provided in section 4.0 below.

2.11 Protected vegetation

The study area contains significant areas of vegetation including hedgerows, treebelts and several magnificent mature trees. Three large mature Oaks in Lott Meadow are protected by a Tree Preservation Order (Ref. TP 321) and a further Preservation Order is in preparation for a belt of mature Poplar to the western edge of Kidnappers Lane.

A detailed hedgerow survey has not been completed as part of this study although many hedgerows within the study area are very well established and appear to follow the line of pre enclosure field systems. It is likely therefore, that a number of hedgerows would be regarded as 'Nationally Important' under the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations. The Regulations include a strong presumption against hedgerow removal, which can only be carried out with the express consent of the planning authority.

3.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

3.1 Background

The importance of landscape character in the planning and decision making process has gained considerable weight over recent years and is now recognised at a national level by both central Government and the Countryside Agency as a cornerstone of sustainable development. As a tool, landscape character assessment can make a significant contribution to environmental protection objectives and can be a powerful tool in the planning, design and management of landscapes. It recognises that all landscapes matter and seeks to identify the characteristics that make places different or distinct.

The following text describes therefore, the character of the wider landscape with reference to existing national and regional landscape character assessments. These studies are then used as the basis for assessing the particular character of the land at Leckhampton.

3.2 National landscape character

The Countryside Agency and English Nature, with support from English Heritage, have produced the 'Character Map of England'. This combines English Nature's natural areas and the Countryside Agency's countryside character areas into a composite map of joint character areas. The map and supporting descriptions provides the top tier of the hierarchy of landscape character assessment in England and provides the national framework for subsequent character assessments at the regional or district scale.

Reference to this confirms that the study area lies at the junction of two character areas, namely the Severn and Avon Vales (Area 106) and the Cotswolds (Area 107). As such, the study area can be regarded as part of a transitional landscape where the two areas merge, and features of each character area are evident within the study area. This transition can be clearly seen from elevated vantage points within the AONB to the south of the study area.

The Severn and Avon Vales are characterised by flat and undulating landscapes united by the two river valleys. The area contains little woodland, is often very open and has views of prominent hills including the Cotswolds. Orchards are abundant throughout although many older and traditional orchards have been replaced with bush forms and the surrounding poplar shelterbelts are now a prominent feature of the landscape.

By contrast, the Cotswolds are characterised by a dramatic scarp rising above adjacent lowlands with scarp foot villages and beech woodlands. Whilst varied in character, the landscape has an overall unity provided by the honey coloured limestone buildings, beech woods, landscape parks, valley bottom meadows and a strong sense of history evident of a long period of settlement and human activity.

3.3 County landscape character

The Countryside Agency Map of England can be used to provide the basis for the preparation of regional and district landscape character assessments, which have now become widely adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by many local authorities. To date, no character assessment has been completed for Cheltenham Borough although a recent draft assessment completed by Landscape Design Associates on behalf of Gloucestershire County Council provides an important new resource which will hopefully encourage a programme of further work across the county.

This county study is a broad brush assessment designed for use at the strategic level and still requires verification by the County Council. As such, is not yet available for release or publication. In addition, a landscape character assessment of the Cotswolds AONB has recently been commissioned by the AONB Partnership in association with the Countryside Agency although no details of this study are currently available for use within this assessment.

The initial desk based character assessment of Gloucestershire County, places the study area at the edge of the 'Settled Unwooded Vale' landscape character area close to the junction with the Cotswold escarpment and the main urban area of Cheltenham which lies to the north east. The key characteristics of the vale landscape can be defined as follows:

- Flat or gently undulating landform ranging from 0 - 100m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).
- A high number of brooks and streams draining neighbouring slopes and uplands areas.
- A mosaic of improved grassland and arable land with small areas of neutral grassland.
- An absence of woodland although small geometric copses and deciduous shelterbelts are conspicuous.
- Evidence of numerous moated sites, mottes and earthworks.
- Medieval churches, farms, houses and tithe barns are conspicuous.
- Numerous footpaths criss-crossing the landscape

In addition, the character description also acknowledges the strong influence that is exerted over wide areas of the vale landscape from the urban centres of Cheltenham and Gloucester.

In general terms, the character of the Settled Unwooded Vale is broadly consistent with the character of the land at Leckhampton although the proximity and visual prominence of the AONB which defines the southern boundary to the study area, and the containment of the area from surrounding built up areas has a significant influence on the character and quality of the local landscape.

3.4 Local landscape character

The character of the study area is defined by a mosaic of land uses, vegetation and historical features which combine to create a varied landscape which has a distinctive rural character and a strong sense of place.

The majority of the land is laid to pasture and comprises a network of small to medium sized fields interspersed with areas of mature vegetation and bounded by a network of established hedgerows. Large mature trees, principally Oak, Ash and Willow along field boundaries, and as isolated specimens within fields, are notable features of the local landscape and small areas of remnant orchard provide added diversity. Steams crossing the study area are flanked by belts of native trees and shrubs which provide strong linear features and a diversity of habitats for fauna and flora.

Whilst there are small areas of housing and two active nurseries within the study area, it retains nonetheless, a strongly rural character which is closely linked both physically and visually to the landscape within the AONB immediately to the south. The proximity of the AONB, in conjunction with the high degree of inter-visibility between the study area and the AONB (i.e. there are clear views from within the study area across the AONB and vice versa), and the physical and visual containment of the study area from adjacent built up areas, reinforces the rural character of the study area which is distinct from the main urban area of Cheltenham to the north and east.

The landscape is largely unspoilt by the effects of modern development. Whilst views of surrounding development and infrastructure are possible from certain locations within the study area, these do not dominate and the overriding impression is of an attractive rural landscape.

The character of the study area is also influenced by the presence of numerous historic features including the scheduled ancient monument, 16th and 17th Century Listed Buildings, evidence of pre enclosure hedgerows, and areas of ridge furrow. These features are of both national and local historic importance adding an extra dimension to the landscape. These qualities were recognised by the Inspector in his report on the 1993 Cheltenham Borough Local Plan inquiry who described the study area as '*a complex mosaic of uses and features, full of historic interest and highly visible from the important Cotswold scarp. It is possible to walk on rural public footpaths from virtually the edge of the Central Conservation Area (CCA), to the top of Leckhampton Hill, passing through some very attractive landscape, such as Lott Meadow.*'

3.5 Landscape quality and condition

The landscape of the study area is largely intact and provides a strong sense of character which is relatively unaffected by significant intrusive or detracting features. The majority of trees and hedgerows are in good condition, fields are actively used and managed and streams, fences and footpaths are well maintained. Although areas of modern development at Leckhampton Court Farm, Church Farm and Vineries Close are clearly visible from areas within the study area, this development influence only small parts of the study area and has no significant urbanising effect on the character of the landscape.

4.0 LANDSCAPE SURVEY

4.1 Introduction

Previous studies of the study area over recent years have provided a wealth of detailed information on the nature and condition of the existing landscape and historic importance and its value as a refuge for wildlife. However, some of this information is now several years old and changes may have occurred within the study area over the intervening period. As such, a field based landscape survey was carried out as part of this study during Spring 2003 in order to record the current status of the study area. The conclusions of this survey are summarised below and illustrated on Figure 2.

4.2 Landform

The study area lies at the foot of the Cotswold escarpment and falls steadily to the north from 90m AOD to the south, to approximately 70m AOD to the north. To the east of Kidnappers Lane the land falls relatively evenly at a gradient of about 1:50, whilst to the west of the lane, the landform is more varied and undulating due in part to the presence of Hatherley Brook which lies within a narrow valley passing through the western study area.

4.3 Land use

The study area contains a variety of land uses including pasture, market gardens, old orchards, watercourses and areas of built development including residential properties and two active plant nurseries along Kidnappers Lane as illustrated on Figure 2. The majority of land is laid to pasture and used for the grazing of livestock including pigs, cattle and goats. Lott Meadow to the east is crossed by several footpaths and also appears to be used as an area of informal public open space.

To the west of Kidnappers Lane, a patchwork of small fields enclosed by dense hedgerows is punctuated by old orchards and divided by a belt of vegetation along the banks of Hatherley Brook which is a significant feature of the local landscape. With the exception of the housing at Leckhampton Farm Court and the buildings at Church Farm Business Centre, development to the west is limited to a few isolated cottages and houses along Kidnappers Lane.

To the east, Lott Meadow is a large open field which is bounded to the east by a significant belt of vegetation along Moorend stream and by a dense hedgerow to the north west. To the north, the field pattern is smaller scale and the land is in mixed use including pasture, orchard and an area of market gardens and smallholdings to the north east corner of the study area. This area contains a number of small sheds and outbuildings and is visually discrete from the remainder of the study area to the south due to the presence of established hedgerows to the south and east

Two garden nurseries are still in operation within the study area, both located along of Kidnappers Lane, and a children's nursery (Nursery Rhymes) can be found at the bend in the lane. The nurseries include glasshouses and a range of outbuildings which are partially visible from the lane but which are generally well screened by perimeter vegetation and do not therefore, intrude significantly upon the rural character of the study area.

4.4 Watercourses and drainage

The study area is crossed by two watercourses both of which retain a natural profile and are flanked by significant belts of tree and scrub vegetation. Hatherley Brook flows through the west of the study area in a northerly direction crossing Kidnappers Lane before exiting under the A46 and continuing into the residential estates at Hatherley. It is bordered by mature native trees and scrub and provides an attractive and substantial green corridor through the study area.

Moorend Stream is a smaller, shallower watercourse which meanders along the eastern boundary of the study area between Lott Meadow and Burrow's Field. To the north, the course of the stream is defined by a significant belt of vegetation to both sides which contains a number of large, mature Oak, Ash and Willow trees. To the south, the vegetation becomes thinner and sparser and has recently been subject to a degree of felling and clearance. Based on a visual assessment in March 2003, the water quality to both streams appears good.

Drainage ditches run beneath a number of hedge lines and along the edges of fields. A localised depression to the southern edge of Lott Meadow was flooded at the time of survey and the ground flora suggests that this area is regularly under water.

4.5 Trees and woodland

The study area is well vegetated and contains a comprehensive network of hedgerows, treebelts and individual trees as indicated on Figure 2. The most significant belts of vegetation occur along the two watercourses but most notably along Hatherley Brook. Here native hedgerows and scrub provide an understorey to large Ash, Oak and Willow trees which define a strong green corridor through the study area.

Elsewhere, stands of mature Poplar occur to the north of Moat Cottage and two mature Lombardy Poplars mark the entrance to the cottage. Mixed treebelts occur to the south around 'The Rectory' and a row of pollarded Willows line a field boundary to the north west of the Church Farm Business Centre. A row of mature Poplar occur along the western edge of Kidnappers Lane and a stand of Scots Pine in the garden of 'The Nurseries' provide a notable feature.

Individual fields contain isolated mature and semi mature trees, usually Oak or Horse Chestnut, and Lott Meadow contains three mature Oak trees which appear to be a remnant of a much earlier field boundary system. These trees are notable features within the local landscape and dominate the foreground to views across the AONB to the south. Areas of remnant orchard to the north east and south west of the study area provide added variety and contribute to the overall green character of the landscape.

4.6 Hedgerows

The study area contains a network of native hedgerows which define field boundaries and the boundaries of the study area with the surrounding roads and lanes. The hedgerows are dominated by hawthorn and are generally in good condition, particularly the hedgerow around the north western edge of Lott meadow, and hedgerows along Kidnappers Lane and western areas of the study area. These hedgerows make a significant contribution to the character of the study area and the rural lanes. Some variation does however exist and hedgerows to the north east around the area of market gardens are lower ranging from 1.2 -2 m high and maintained as agricultural hedges. To the south and east the hedgerows become more fragmented with gaps and sections of post and wire fencing, they are more diverse in species primarily containing hawthorn, blackthorn and field maple.

4.7 Nature conservation

A Phase 1 ecological survey of the study area was completed by members of Leglag in 1995 under the direction of the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. This study provided a record of the study area at that time and has been acknowledged by GWT as being a very useful addition to the local wildlife record. Whilst no dedicated ecological survey has been completed as part of this study, the survey work confirms that there have been few significant changes to features recorded for the study area in 1995. As such, it is reasonable to assume that the study area retains the same degree of interest for wildlife.

The landscape of relatively small parcels of land including the mosaic of land uses described above delineated by streams, hedgerows, tracks and lanes provides a good variety of habitats typical of a small scale mixed farm landscape. This landscape will support a good range of birds and other wildlife typically associated with less intensely managed farmland.

Some of the hedgerows support mature native trees and a variety of native shrubs. In places, the ground flora contains species such as dog's mercury, bluebell and wood garlic, which combined with the diverse range of trees and shrubs, suggest long standing hedgerows and field boundaries. Given previous records and sightings of road casualties by local wildlife recorders, the study area is likely to be being used for foraging badgers and the mosaic of habitats provides feeding and possibly roosting habitat for one or more species bat.

4.8 Rights of way

The site is crossed by a number of public footpaths which link into a wider network of paths extending east, west and south into the AONB including the Cheltenham Circular Footpath. The network of paths is well connected to the urban edge to the east with a number of access points along Merlin way and across the Burrow's Field.

Within the study area, three footpaths cross Lott Meadow and with the exception of sections of the footpath along Moorend Stream which is partially enclosed by vegetation, none of the paths are bounded by hedgerows and are thus visually open to the land within the study area. To the west of Kidnappers Lane, footpaths provide access across the study area to Farm Lane to the west and Church Lane to the south where they connect with footpaths within the AONB to the south which rises toward Leckhampton Hill.

4.9 Agricultural land quality

A survey of the agricultural land quality within the study area was completed by ADAS on behalf of MAFF in 1995 as part of its statutory role in the preparation of the Gloucestershire Structure Plan. The results of this survey are illustrated on the Agricultural Land Classification Map included as Appendix B.

Reference to this, and the supporting schedule, confirms that that over 29% of the agricultural land within the study area was grade 2 quality, with a further 8.4% classified as grade 3a. This best and most versatile land runs broadly through the centre of the study area on both sides of Kidnappers Lane and is surrounded by areas of Grade 3b land which make up the remainder of the land excluding buildings and other non agricultural uses.

5.0 VISUAL APPRAISAL

5.1 Introduction

An assessment of the visual prominence of the study area within the surrounding landscape is an important consideration in any assessment of the sensitivity of a landscape to change and/or development. Earlier studies have made reference to the visual prominence of the study area from certain vantage points but have not always been underpinned by a systematic or structured approach to visual assessment.

A visual assessment has therefore, been carried out as part of this study in order to establish the nature and significance of views to and from the study area. This assessment has been completed following a period of field survey in Spring 2003 which considered views of the study area from the following key locations:

- Local rights of way and public open space
- Open land and rights of way within the AONB
- Surrounding roads and lanes
- Nearby residential areas

The conclusions of the visual assessment are summarised below and illustrated by the photographs on Panels A, B and C at the back of this report. The location of each photographic viewpoint is indicated on Figure 3.

5.2 Views from local rights of way and open space

The study area is crossed by several public footpaths which link Leckhampton with the countryside within the AONB to the south. There are clear views across the study area from the majority of these footpaths and impressive views toward Leckhampton Hill and the AONB with which there is a high degree of inter-visibility.

To the east of Kidnappers Lane, three footpaths cross Lott Meadow and there are clear and uninterrupted views north across the meadow (Viewpoint 1), and impressive views south toward the rising land within the AONB (Viewpoint 2). From these locations the study area provides the foreground to views of Leckhampton Hill which forms a dramatic backdrop to this edge of the town reinforcing the rural character of the study area.

Further north, a public footpath crosses the study area from east to west defining the boundary between the market gardens to the north, and the pasture and remnant orchards to the south. Whilst sections of the path are screened by adjacent hedgerows, there remain nonetheless, clear views across the study area to the north (Viewpoint 3) and views south to the AONB (Viewpoint 4).

Four footpaths cross the study area to the west of Kidnappers Lane the majority of which pass through open fields and afford views north and south across the study area and toward the AONB. There are clear views of the Listed Buildings at Moat Cottage and Field Cottage and views of historic buildings along Church Road (Viewpoints 5 and 6).

Vegetation along Hatherley Brook screens views of the residential estates to the west of the study area from the majority of footpaths, although recent housing including the Listed Buildings at Leckhampton Farm Court are clearly visible from locations to the west of the brook. In addition, the development at Church Farm Business Centre is clearly visible from footpaths to the west of the study area although this is seen against the backdrop of the AONB and does not intrude significantly on the overall view.

Elsewhere, detached houses along Kidnappers Lane are visible from the lane and footpath locations to the south, and the northern edge of housing at Vineries Close is clearly visible from footpaths within Lott Meadow. The two commercial nurseries within the study area are however, relatively well screened by established vegetation and are not widely visible within the local landscape or the study area

Views across the eastern part of the study area are possible from the public footpath and open space at Burrow's Field to the edge of Leckhampton (Viewpoint 7). From here, the internal study area is visible through the vegetation along Moorend Stream and the large Poplar trees along Kidnappers Lane provide a notable landmark within the local landscape. There are no significant views of the study area from the allotments to the south of the Burrow's although there are glimpses of the tops of trees within the study area from the north western edge.

5.3 Views from the AONB

The study area is visually prominent from a number of locations within the AONB to the south of the study area including footpaths on the escarpment footslopes, footpaths along the scarp edge at Leckhampton Hill, and open land at Leckhampton Common.

South of the study area boundary with Church Road, two footpaths rise up the Cotswold escarpment within the AONB linking paths within the study area to Leckhampton Hill. There are panoramic views across the entire study area from both footpaths although these are most significant from the footpath to the south of St Peter's Church. The nature of these views is illustrated on viewpoint photographs 8 and 9. From these locations the landscape within the AONB and Green Belt merges almost seamlessly with the landscape within the study area which is perceived as an integral part of the rural landscape which defines this edge to Cheltenham. From these elevated vantage points the small areas of existing housing and commercial development within and adjacent to the study area have little influence on the overall character and quality of the views which remain strongly rural.

Further to the south and east the landform continues to rise steeply toward Leckhampton Hill and a number of footpaths run along the top of the escarpment and through the open land at Leckhampton Common. Those footpaths along the lower scarp are contained by dense woodland which precludes long distance views out including those north toward the study area.

However, as the landform rises above the tree line, there are clear and uninterrupted views north across the study area from a number of locations including the footpath and topograph near Devil's Chimney (Viewpoint 10), and the public bridleway along the scarp edge further east (Viewpoint 11). In addition, there are glimpsed views of the study area from the road along Leckhampton Hill (viewpoint 12). From these vantage points the study area is seen as a spur of land which penetrates the urban edge of the town but which is distinct from it, and which merges with the landscape within the AONB and Green Belt to the south and west.

5.4 Views from local roads and lanes

The study area is bounded by roads to three sides namely Shurdington Road to the north, Farm Lane to the west and Church Road to the south. Kidnappers Lane passes through the centre of the study area and the Merlin Way defines a section of the boundary to the north east.

From the majority of locations along Farm Lane, Merlin Way and Church Road, views into the study area are precluded by the presence of tall, dense hedgerows along the boundaries. These hedgerows provide a high degree of physical and visual separation between the study area and the adjacent residential areas and contribute to the rural character of the area. Views into the study area are however possible where gaps in the boundary vegetation occur along Farm Lane (Viewpoint 13), Kidnappers Lane (Viewpoint 14) and Church Road (Viewpoint 15).

The most significant views into the study area are gained from the A46 Shurdington Road where this passes along the northern boundary between 'The Lanes' development to the west and the study area boundary to the north east. From here, the foreground view is dominated by areas of pasture and market gardens within the study area across which there are impressive views toward the Cotswold escarpment and Leckhampton Hill. (Viewpoint 16). From these locations, the study area provides an important part of the approach to the town from the west affording clear views across the study area to the Cotswold escarpment, reinforcing links between the town and its landscape setting.

5.5 Views from residential areas

Views across the study area from surrounding residential areas are restricted by the screening effect of hedgerows and treebelts which provide a strong edge to the study area segregating it from the surrounding built up areas.

There are no significant views into the study area from residential areas at Warden Hill and Hatherley which lie to the north of the A46, or from housing at Merlin Way and Arden Road to the east. Views from Farm Lane are restricted by the hedgerow along the western boundary although there are views over this hedge toward Leckhampton Hill from sections of the lane, and views will be possible from first floor windows of the older houses along the western road edge.

A number of properties at Leckhampton Farm Court, including the main Listed farmhouse, face directly onto the study area although views from these properties are largely restricted to the land west of Hatherley Brook and to vegetation further east along Kidnappers Lane. Properties along the northern edge of Church Road back onto the study area and views north can be gained from the 'Rectory' and from the rear gardens and elevations of housing at Vineries Close. To the south of Church Road a short row of houses face toward the study area and have views into the south western study area. There are no significant views of the study area from residential areas further east along Church Road or from the centre of Leckhampton.

Views of the study area from houses at Leckhampton Hill and from Leckhampton Court, have not been assessed due to the restrictions of access to these properties.

5.6 Views out from the study area

As outlined above, the study area is well contained by established vegetation along its eastern and western boundaries and there are no significant views out in these directions. This vegetation provides a high degree of containment providing a clear break between the study area and the adjacent residential areas.

The northern boundary of the study area is defined by Shurdington Road, although the road and its associated traffic, is only visible from areas to the north west and the road has little influence upon the overall character or quality of the landscape.

By far the most dominant views from the study area are south across the landscape of the AONB and Leckhampton Hill. These views, combined with the rising landform, are a highly distinctive feature of the study area and are integral to the character and quality of the local landscape. These views link the study area very strongly to the landscape of the AONB reinforcing its rural character and providing a strong and distinctive sense of place.

6.0 LANDSCAPE EVALUATION

6.1 Introduction

This section of the report draws together the key findings of the review of the landscape planning context, landscape character appraisal, landscape survey and appraisal, and the visual appraisal in order to evaluate the landscape value and sensitivity of the Leckhampton site. The conclusion of this evaluation will be used to assess the sensitivity and value of the landscape.

6.2 Landscape planning context

Although not covered by any specific landscape or ecological designations, the study area forms an important part of an attractive rural landscape which is relatively unspoilt by modern development and which lies directly adjacent to a nationally important landscape, the Cotswolds AONB.

AONBs are our finest landscapes and are designated, alongside National Parks, to mark them out for special protection and management. This study has not included an assessment of the Leckhampton land against AONB designation criteria which is a matter for the Countryside Agency to consider as part of any future review of the AONB boundary. The Countryside Agency has notified the Borough Council that there is no early prospect of a Cotswolds boundary review.

This appraisal has however, confirmed that the study area is closely linked physically to the landscape of the adjacent AONB, being no more than a few metres from the AONB boundary, and connected to it via a network of streams and public footpaths. These links are reinforced by the high degree of inter-visibility between the AONB and the study area which provides the foreground view and setting to the AONB from a number of public vantage points. In this context, the study area is considered to be highly sensitive to change or development, particularly to the central and southern areas where development would adversely affect the AONB.

The importance of this issue is recognised by the Countryside Agency in its national guidance on AONBs which in considering development control issues concludes that '*Local authority planning policy should not be limited to what is within the AONB boundary. Inappropriate development outside the boundary may have an adverse impact on the landscape within it.*' This concept is supported by the Cheltenham Borough Council through the inclusion of Policy CO 47A within the emerging Local Plan which relates specifically to development adjoining the AONB.

6.3 Environmental constraints

The study area contains a number of environmental constraints including a Scheduled Ancient Monument, three Listed Buildings, numerous public footpaths, protected trees, and important hedgerows. In addition, the site contains areas of ridge and furrow, remnant orchard and has strong historic associations with the original settlement of Leckhampton. Some of these features are nationally protected and are evidence of the rich cultural heritage of the area. They are important and valued components of the local landscape which should be preserved.

These features are integral to the character of the study area and cannot be viewed individually or in isolation. For example, the Listed Buildings are intrinsically linked to the surrounding landscape which provides their setting, and the protection of the character of the landscape is fundamental to the protection of the setting of these historic and protected buildings. Similarly, the views to the AONB afforded from footpaths across the study area are equally as important as the access and recreational opportunities that these paths provide. Whilst these features may not in themselves present an overriding constraint to development, they do in combination, impose a significant constraint to development across large parts of the study area.

Whilst the landscape to the northern edge of the study area is in use predominantly as market gardens is relatively free from these constraints, the views across this land to Leckhampton Hill and the AONB are an important part of the main gateway into Cheltenham from the south west. These views would be lost were built development permitted in this part of the site.

6.4 Landscape character and value

The study area lies within a transitional landscape at the point where the Severn and Avon Vales merge with the Cotswold escarpment. Whilst the landscape is broadly consistent with the characteristics of the Settled Unwooded Vale, it is not significantly influenced by surrounding built up areas or transport corridors and retains a strongly rural character, reinforced by the strong links with the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB which adjoins the southern boundary of the area.

At a local level, the study area is perceived as a mosaic of land uses, vegetation and historical features which combine to create a rich and varied landscape which has a strong and distinctive sense of place. With the exception of small areas of unmanaged land and redundant buildings, the landscape is generally well managed and in good condition. Hedgerows are generally broad, dense and intact and there are many fine examples of mature trees within the site which provide interest and diversity to the landscape. Listed Buildings within the site contribute to the sense of character and an added historic dimension.

The landscape has a high scenic value and provides the setting to the Cotswold escarpment to the south when viewed from a number of public footpaths, local roads and residential properties. The landscape character remains intact and largely unspoilt by the effects of modern development or other detracting or urbanising influences. Whilst the study area does contain development, this is small scale and typical of the range of land uses found in rural landscapes at the urban fringe. Clear views of modern development outside the study area are limited to a few areas, most notably at Vineries Close and Church Farm Business Centre. As such, the site is well contained from surrounding urban areas and is not perceived as part of the urban fringe of Cheltenham.

In considering the value of this landscape against Countryside Agency criteria, the study area can be regarded as having a high landscape value indicative of landscapes requiring special attention and/or protection.

6.5 Landscape features

The study area contains many notable landscape features including a network of established hedgerows, treebelts and mature specimen trees and two watercourse both flanked by linear mature trees and native shrubs.

A number of trees are protected by preservation orders and it is likely that many of the older hedgerows would be defined as Nationally Important under the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations. Vegetation along the site boundaries provides a high degree of containment to the site segregating it from adjacent residential areas and screening views of the A46 Shurdington Road from the majority of the study area. These features are rapidly being lost through changing agricultural practices and the release of land for development. In areas where a network of features remains intact, these should be protected for their landscape and nature conservation value.

6.6 Nature conservation

The study area is not affected by any statutory or non statutory nature conservation designations but provides nonetheless, valuable habitats for a diversity of fauna and flora including a number of features which are identified as habitats for protection within the Gloucestershire Biodiversity Action Plan.

Whilst no dedicated ecological surveys have been completed at this stage, the site survey work has confirmed a mosaic of land use and a network of streams, hedgerows, tracks and verges which provide green corridors across the study area and a variety of habitats typical of a small scale mixed farm landscape. Features of value include the many mature trees, established hedgerows and tree groups, watercourses, orchards, meadow and wildflower verges.

This combination of features together with the relatively tranquil and undisturbed nature of the study area indicates that it is likely to be valuable to a wide range of species including bats, mammals, birds, invertebrates, and native flora. This is supported by previous records for the site which indicate an abundance of wildlife.

6.7 Public access and recreation

The network of public footpaths across the study area are well linked to both the urban edge and the wider network of footpaths to the south and south west and provide a recreational resource for local people which is well used and actively promoted by the Leglag publication 'Country Walks in and around Leckhampton.

In addition, the Cheltenham circular footpath passes through the study area. This is a 25 mile route based on existing rights of way and passing through attractive countryside around the town. It is an important recreational resource which forms the basis for an annual charity event. Whilst it may be possible to retain a number of footpaths within any development proposal for the site, there would be a significant adverse impact on the character and amenity of these paths.

6.8 Visual prominence

The study area is highly visible from the network of rights of way which cross the site and from at least three Listed Buildings. Whilst the study area is screened from the majority of surrounding roads and lanes by established hedgerows, views are possible from a number of locations where there are gaps in the roadside vegetation. The site is however, openly visible from a section of the A46 where it is seen as the foreground to views of Leckhampton Hill and the AONB which are an important feature of this approach into Cheltenham, reinforcing the links between the town and its distinctive landscape setting.

In the majority of these local views the study area is seen as the foreground to the landscape of the AONB with which there is a high degree of inter-visibility. Whilst existing development is visible in a number of views, this has little influence on the overall character of the view and the study area is perceived as part of the wider rural landscape and distinct from the urban area of Cheltenham.

The study area is also highly visible from locations within the AONB to the south of the site. From footpaths to the lower scarp slopes there are open views across the entire study area which is seen as a continuum of the landscape of the AONB which falls steadily north and which provides the landscape setting to this edge of the town.

From more elevated vantage points on the upper scarp slopes of Leckhampton Hill and the open land at Leckhampton Common, there are panoramic views across the Severn Vale and Cheltenham. From here, the study area is seen as the part of the foreground view at the foot of the Cotswold scarp and is perceived as an integral part of the wider landscape of the AONB and Green Belt, distinct from the urban environment to the north and east.

7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary of landscape sensitivity

The study area forms an important part of an attractive rural landscape, which retains a strong sense of character and is largely unspoilt by the effects of modern development. It is constrained by a number of landscape and historic features, provides the setting to three Listed Buildings and is closely linked to the landscape of the AONB to the south, from which it is highly visible. It contains a diversity of land uses and landscape features including arable farmland, pasture, orchards, tree plantations, hedgerows, watercourses and streams and is of potentially high ecological value.

It is a landscape of high scenic quality which can be easily accessed from Leckhampton and the Central Conservation Area. It is well used by local people for access to the wider countryside and for informal recreation. In addition, it contributes to the setting of the AONB and Leckhampton Hill, and the character of the main approach to Cheltenham from the south west. It is therefore, an area of high landscape value which is considered particularly sensitive to change or development

The study area has previously been promoted for residential development in representations made to the 1993 Cheltenham Borough Local Plan Inquiry. Given the unallocated status of the land, this pressure seems likely to continue in future. Indeed there are objections to the current review which seek the allocation of the study area for mixed use development. This landscape appraisal has identified the site as an attractive rural landscape which has a strong sense of character and which is highly visible from the Cotswolds AONB and other locations.

Whilst the study area may be able to accommodate small scale development through the redevelopment or conversion of individual buildings, any larger scale development would adversely affect the character and quality of the landscape and significantly diminish the value of the area as a resource for local people. This view was endorsed by the Inspector in the report and recommendations on the 1993 Cheltenham Local Plan Inquiry who, in considering the land at Leckhampton concluded that *'it would be very sad indeed if development were to proceed at Leckhampton, with its variety and interest'* and who recommended therefore, that the land should be protected not as a strategic reserve, *'but because of its varied topography, landscape history, dense network of footpaths, and pedestrian access from several residential districts.'*

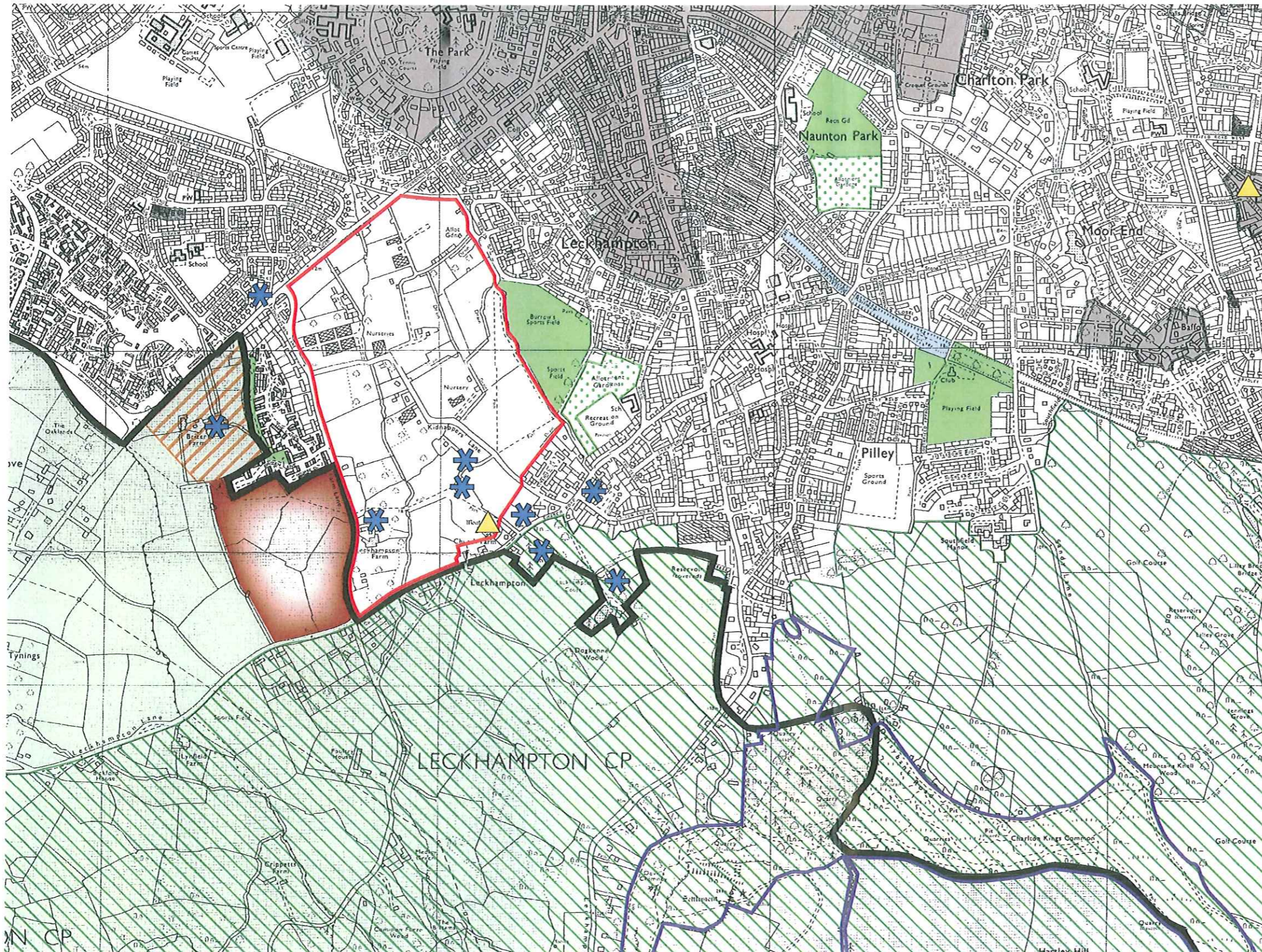
7.2 Conclusion



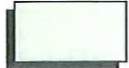




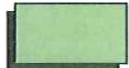

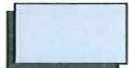




The landscape character and value of the study area derives from the strongly rural and largely unspoilt character of the landscape, the condition and diversity of existing landscape features, the relationship of the landscape with historic buildings and features, the character of the local lanes, the visual prominence of the landscape in views to and from the AONB, and the contribution the area makes to the setting of Leckhampton Hill and the character of the main gateway into Cheltenham from the west.

It represents a valuable and sensitive landscape which is well used by local people as an area of countryside close to the urban area within which large scale development would be visually intrusive and adversely affect views to and from the Cotswold AONB. Whilst the site could accommodate small scale change and development, it is considered highly vulnerable to the effects of large scale development. The protection of the landscape should therefore, continue to be the primary objective.

Land at Leckhampton

Figure 1 Environmental Planning Context



-  Boundary of unallocated land
-  Cotswolds AONB
-  Green Belt
-  Cheltenham / Tewkesbury Borough Boundary
-  Land proposed for development (Tewkesbury Borough)
-  Land proposed for development (Tewkesbury Borough omission site)
-  Leckhampton and Charlton Kings Common (Management Plan Boundary)
-  Public green space
-  Allotments
-  Local nature reserve
-  Leckhampton Hill SSSI
-  Scheduled Ancient Monument
-  Conservation Area
-  Listed Buildings

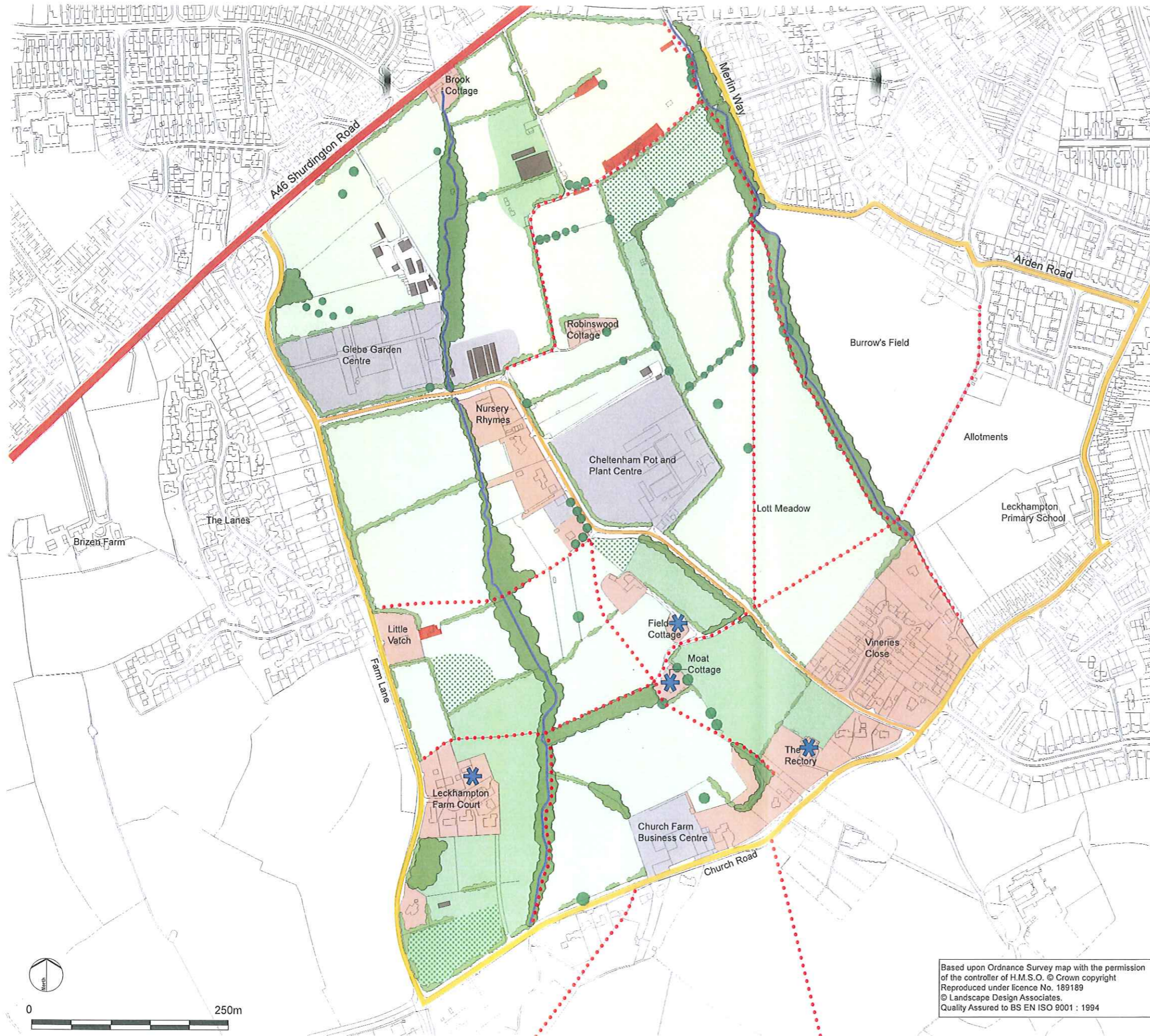











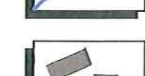
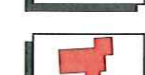

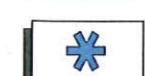



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Land at Leckhampton

Figure 2 Landscape Survey



-  Pasture / grassland
-  Tall herb / unmanaged land
-  Market gardens / small holdings
-  Residential properties including gardens and children's nursery
-  Nurseries / Commercial Uses
-  Significant belts of vegetation
-  Hedgerows / scrub
-  Notable individual trees
-  Remnant orchard and pasture
-  Watercourses
-  Vacant / derelict buildings
-  Outbuildings / built structures
-  Public footpaths
-  Listed buildings
-  Primary Roads
-  Secondary Roads

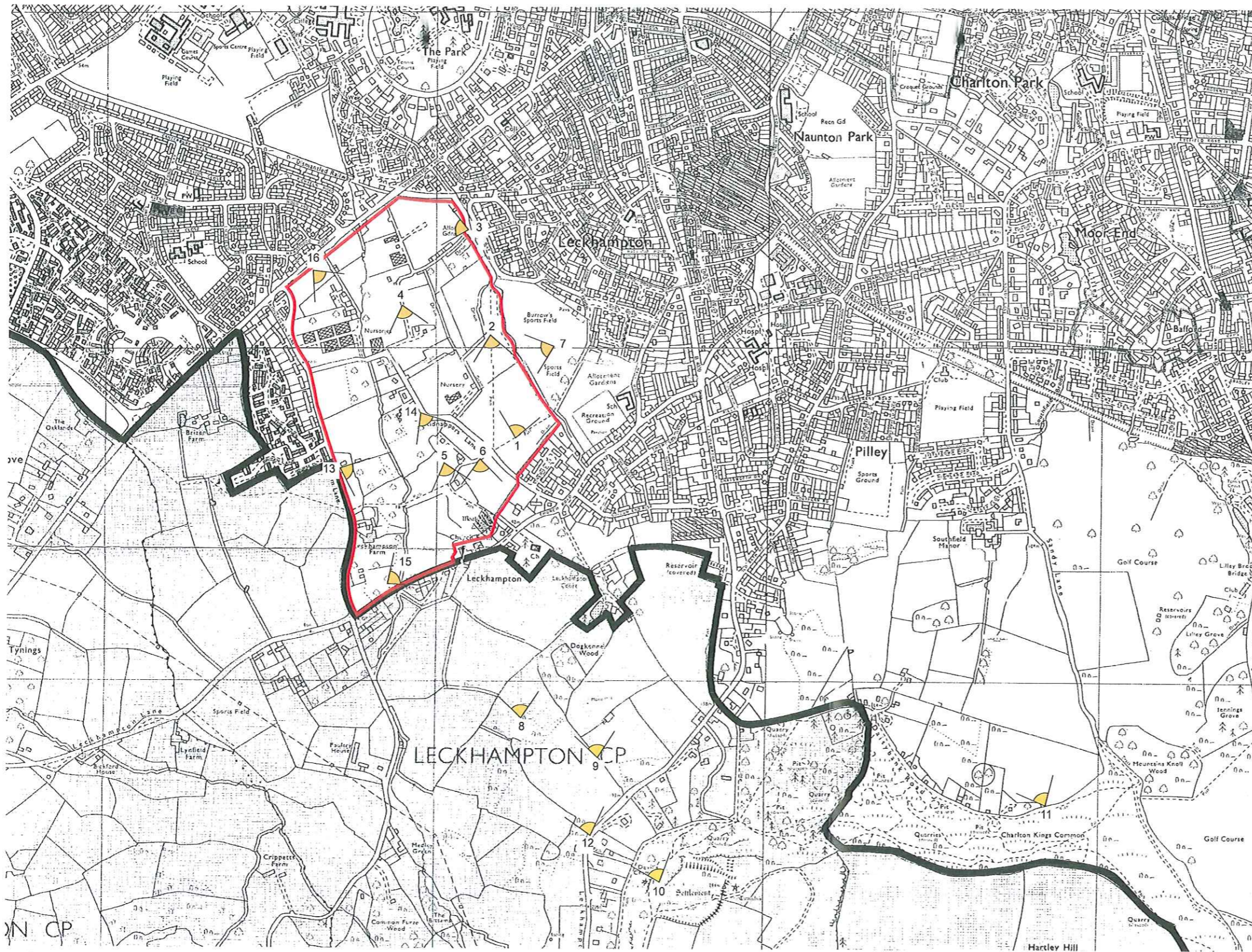
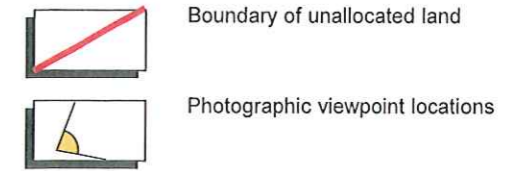
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Land at Leckhampton

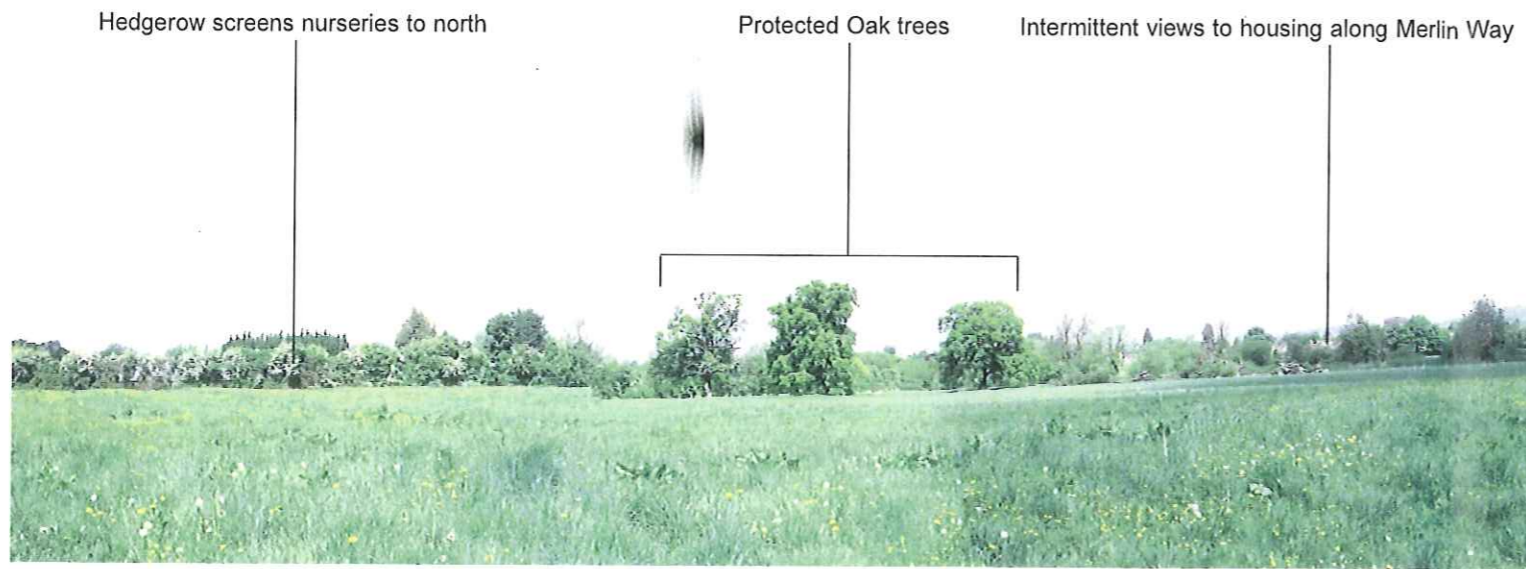
Figure 3 Viewpoint Locations



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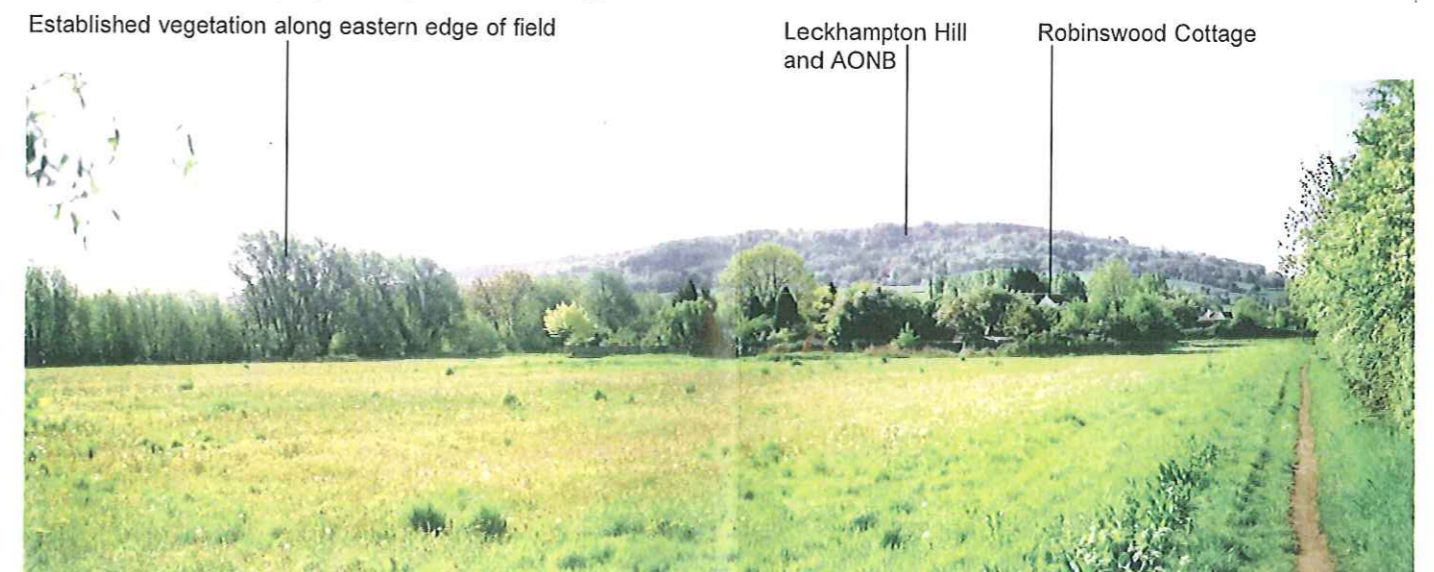
Photograph Viewpoint 1: Looking north east across Lott Meadow



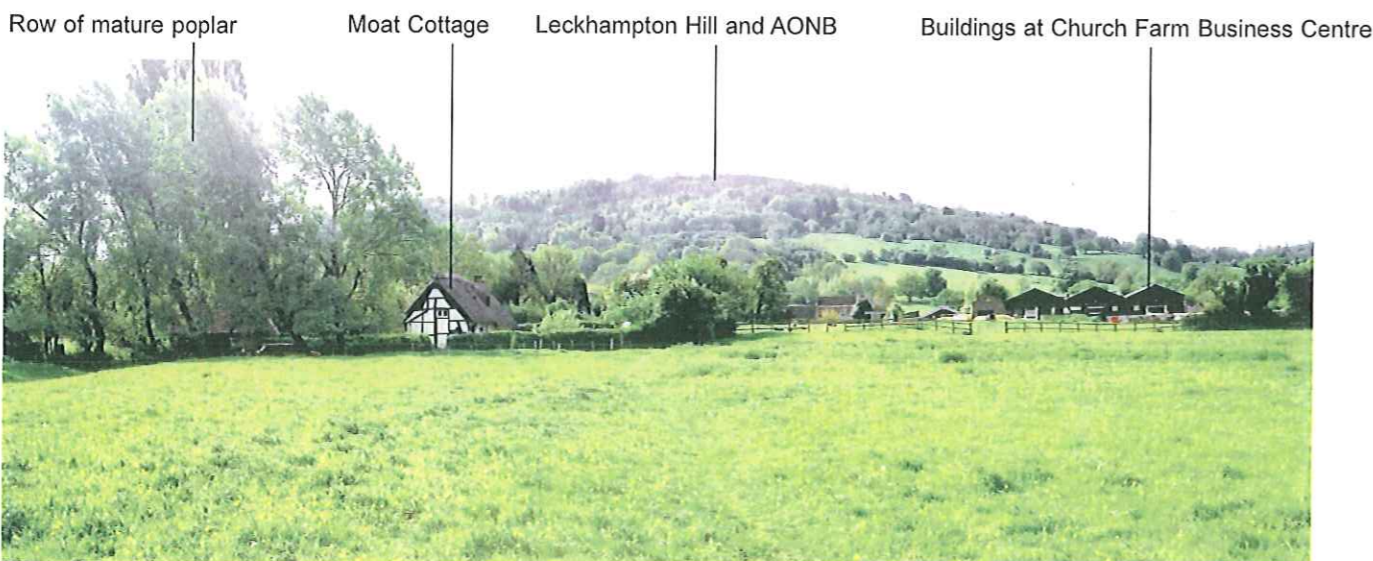
Photograph Viewpoint 2 : Looking south across Lott Meadow to AONB



Photograph Viewpoint 3 : Looking west across market gardens from public footpath



Photograph Viewpoint 4 : Looking south from footpath north from Robinswood Cottage



Photograph Viewpoint 5 : Looking south from public footpath across study area to AONB and Leckhampton Hill



Photograph Viewpoint 6 : Looking south from footpath and access track to Field Cottage

Photograph Panel A

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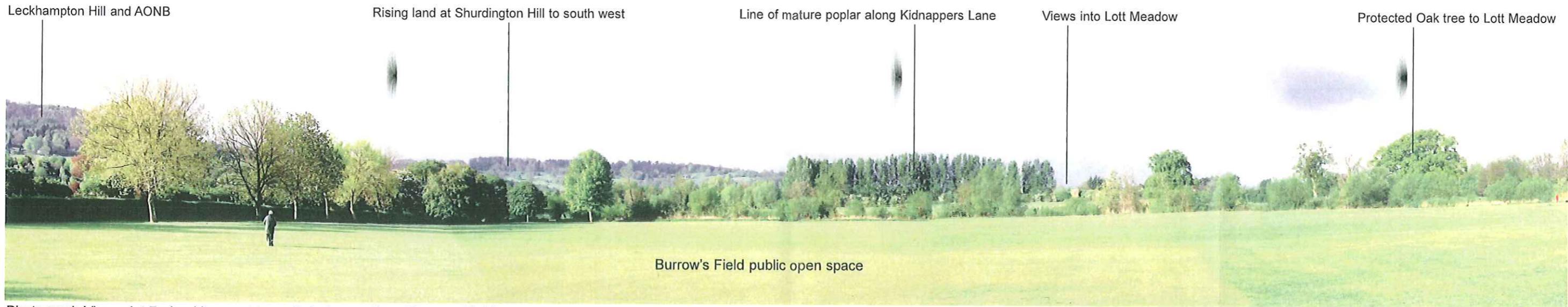
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Land at Leckhampton

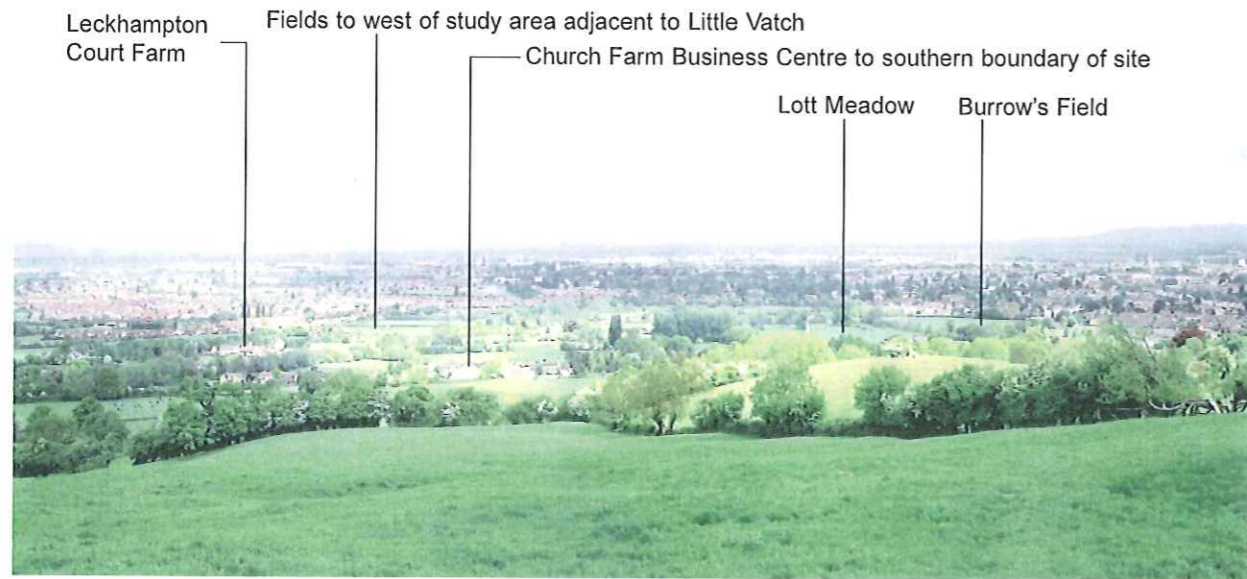


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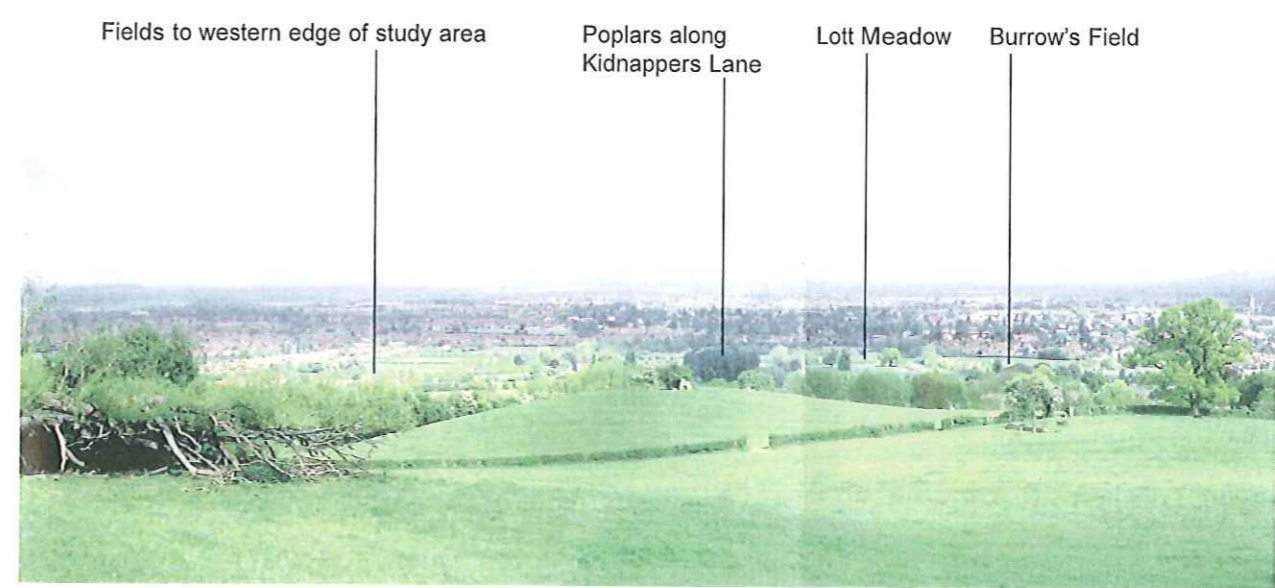
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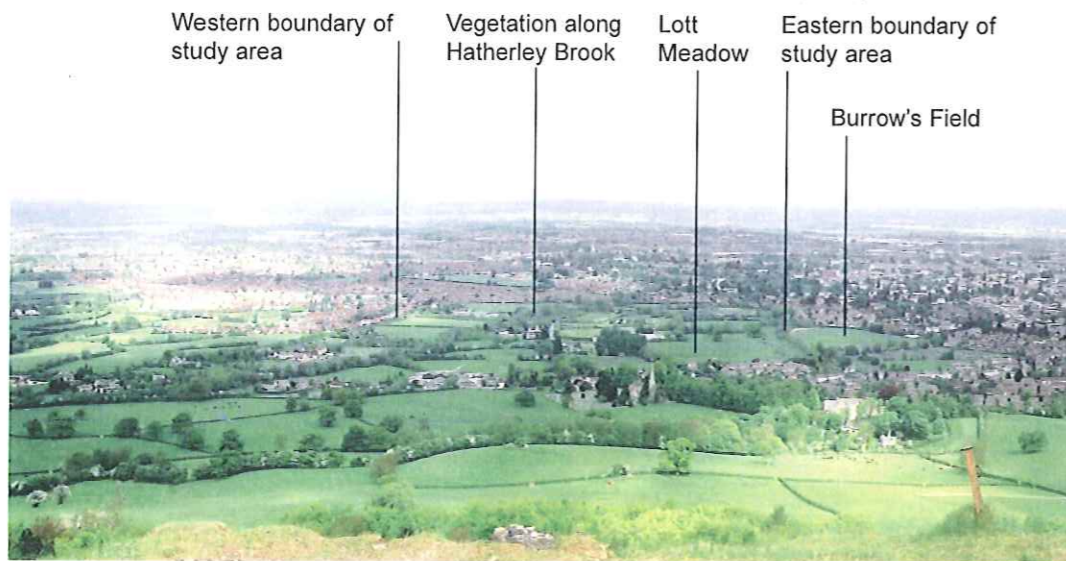
Photograph Viewpoint 7 : Looking west toward study area from Burrows Field



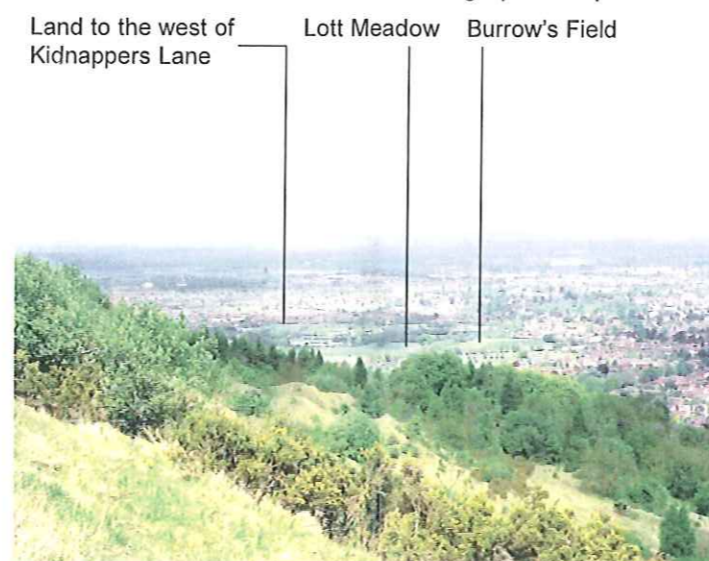
Photograph Viewpoint 8 : Looking north from footpath to lower scarp slopes



Photograph Viewpoint 9 : Looking north from footpath to upper scarp slopes



Photograph Viewpoint 10 : Looking north from Leckhampton Hill



Photograph Viewpoint 11 : Looking north west from Leckhampton Common



Photograph Viewpoint 12 : Looking north from road at Leckhampton Hill

Photograph Panel B

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 SCALE STATUS Final DWG. No. 1786LO/04A

Land at Leckhampton



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Vegetation screens views of Leckhampton Farm Court
Leckhampton Hill



Photograph Viewpoint 13 : Looking south east across the study area from Farm Lane

Dense hedgerows to the east of lane
Mature poplars trees
Orchard
Sheepshead Row
Leckhampton Hill & AONB



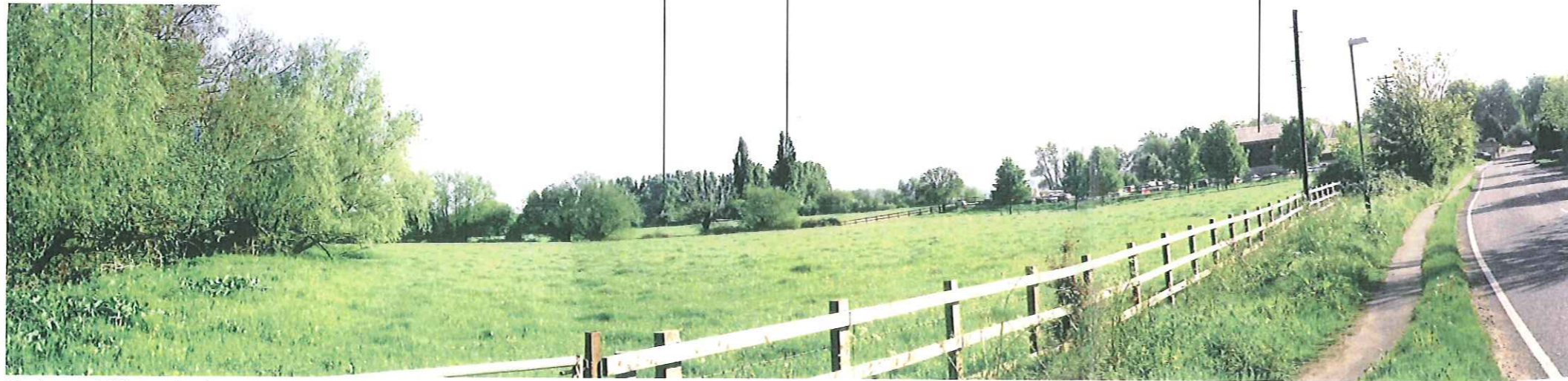
Photograph Viewpoint 14 : Looking south from Kidnappers Lane at junction with public footpath

Vegetation along Hatherley Brook

Poplars along Kidnappers Lane

Poplar to rear of Moat Cottage

Church Farm Business Centre



Photograph Viewpoint 15 : Looking north into the study area from Church Road

Mature Oaks within study area

Vegetation screens views of housing to edge of Leckhampton

Leckhampton Hill

Glasshouses at Glebe Garden Centre



Photograph Viewpoint 16 : Looking south across study area from the A46 Shurdington Road

Photograph Panel C

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Land at Leckhampton



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Appendix A
Copy of tracing of 1746 Ordnance Survey Map
prepared by Mr K Pollock for Cheltenham Civic Society

TRACING OF 1746 MAP OF
LECKHAMPTON COURT LANDS



MAP 3

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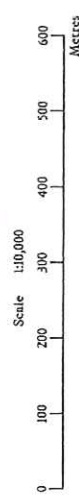
Appendix B
Agricultural Land Classification Map and schedule for the study area

Agricultural Land Classification Leckhampton Cheltenham

Agricultural Land		
Grade	Quality	Area (ha)
1	Excellent	0.0
2	Very Good	12.2
3a	Good	3.5
3b	Moderate	25.8
4	Poor	0.0
5	Very Poor	0.0

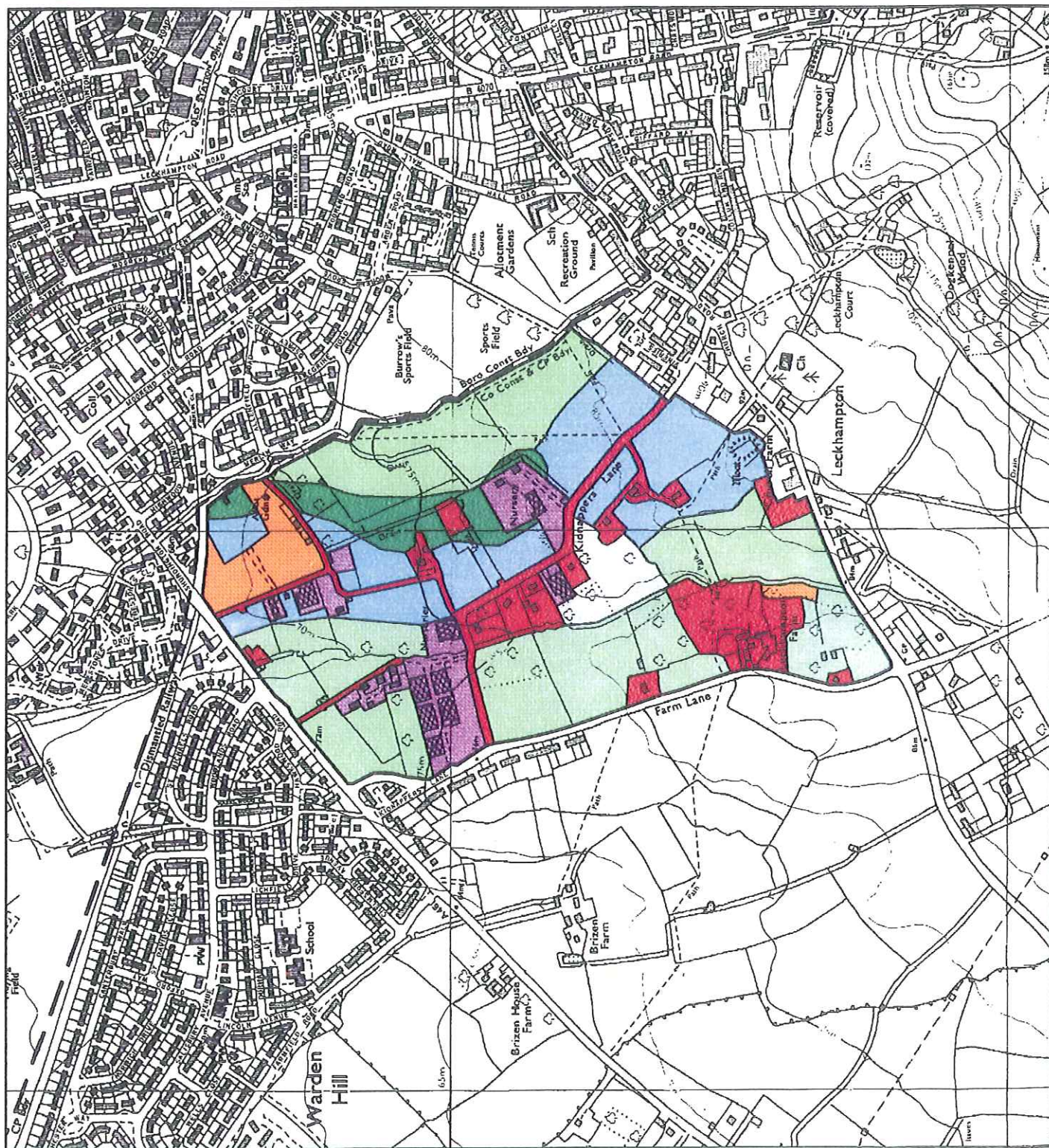
Other Land Categories		
Category	Area (ha)	
Urban	8.5	
Non-Agricultural	2.7	
Woodland	0.0	
Agricultural Buildings	5.5	
Open Water	0.0	
Not Surveyed	2.0	
Total agricultural land area		41.5
Total survey area		60.2

* Grade/category not present within survey area



Further details contained in MAFF (1988) Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales - Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land. MAFF Publications, London SE99 71P. The information is accurate at the base map scale but any enlargement would be misleading. Reproduction in whole or in part by any means is prohibited without the prior permission of MAFF.

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LECKHAMPTON, CHELTENHAM

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION SURVEY

SUMMARY

The survey was carried out by ADAS on behalf of MAFF as part of its statutory role in the preparation of the Gloucester Structure Plan. The fieldwork at Leckhampton was completed in October 1995 at a scale of 1:10,000. Data on climate, soils, geology and from previous Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Surveys was used and is presented in the report. The distribution of grades is shown on the accompanying ALC map and summarised below. Information is correct at this scale but could be misleading if enlarged.

Distribution of ALC grades: Leckhampton, Cheltenham

Grade	Area (ha)	% of Survey Area	% of Agricultural Land (41.5 ha)
2	12.2	20.3	29.4
3a	3.5	5.8	8.4
3b	25.8	42.9	62.2
Urban	8.5	14.1	
Non Agricultural	2.7	4.5	
Agricultural Buildings	5.5	9.1	
Not surveyed	2.0	3.3	
TOTAL	60.2		

38% of the agricultural land surveyed was found to be best and most versatile, mainly Grade 2 with minor limitations due to wetness or droughtiness and some Subgrade 3a moderate limitations due to wetness.

The remainder of the area was found to be Subgrade 3b, with more serious moderate limitations due to wetness.