

**Land East of Keynsham**

## **Landscape and Visual Appraisal**

**A Report on behalf of Mactaggart and Mickel Homes Ltd**

November 2013

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Nicholas Pearson Associates was appointed by Mactaggart & Mickel Homes Ltd to undertake a preliminary appraisal of the landscape around Keynsham (which lies between Bristol and Bath) and a more focussed appraisal of the land between Keynsham and Saltford (termed the Site). The appraisal was undertaken:

- because the potential impacts on landscape character and visual amenity are a key consideration in determining the acceptability of development;
- to aid decision making and
- to inform the preparation of early concept master plans for potential residential led mixed use development.

The context for the appraisal is based upon the identification of sites by Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) Council, through previous Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and/ or Environmental Capacity Study work, and the preparation of Development Concept Options work as part of preparation for the Core Strategy. This work identified potential opportunities for development at four sites around Keynsham.

The findings of this appraisal have been used to inform the initial design proposals for the site so as to provide a positive landscape led approach towards successfully integrating development into the local context. Such an approach will also maximise opportunities to avoid, reduce or mitigate potential landscape and visual impacts.

### *Assessment Methodology*

The appraisal process draws on the principles set out for Landscape Character Assessment (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage 2002), in 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', produced by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, in GLVIA 2 in 2002, and GLVIA 3 published in 2013. Field survey work was undertaken in May 2013. Photographs were taken using an SL digital camera (Nikon D40), (with 35mm or 18mm lens setting and presented to give the digital equivalent of 50mm lens (for standard 35mm format camera), viewed at a distance of



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250mm at A3) in accordance with Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/04 entitled ‘Use of Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Assessment’<sup>1</sup>; and updated March 2011.

The appraisal work has been undertaken by Chartered Landscape Architects with experience of undertaking similar studies.

## **2.0 LANDSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT**

### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

Three of the twelve core planning principles in NPPF Para 17 relate to landscape and are as follows:

- “always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- “take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas ... recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;
- “contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework.

The NPPF also recommends that “planning policies and decisions should aim to .... identify and protect areas of tranquillity which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value”, and recognise “the wider benefits of ecosystem services”. By encouraging good design, planning policies should limit the impact of light pollution on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

## **2.1 Landscape Designations**

Figure 1 shows landscape designations in the local area within a 4 km radius of the site. The site is outside any nationally designated area (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), but there is intervisibility between some areas of the site and the Cotswolds AONB scarp, which is located on the higher land to the east.

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<sup>1</sup> Landscape Institute (2011); ‘Use of Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Assessment’, Landscape Institute.

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## 2.2 Local Planning Context

The relevant policies in the B&NES Local Plan Saved Policies in the chapter on THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT are as follows:

POLICY NE.1 Landscape Character states that development should *‘conserve or enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape’*.

POLICY NE4 Trees and Woodland Conservation states that

- i. *Development will only be permitted where: it does not have an adverse impact on trees and woodlands of wildlife, landscape, historic, amenity, productive or cultural value; and*
- ii. *it includes the appropriate retention and new planting of trees and woodlands; and*
- iii. *it does not have an adverse impact on a veteran tree;*

*In the case of an unavoidably adverse impact on trees and woodlands of wildlife, landscape, amenity, productive or cultural value, compensatory provision is made.*

POLICY NE.5 Forest of Avon. Development in the Forest of Avon, as shown on the Proposals Map, will only be permitted where it:

- i. *respects the existing and developing woodland setting; and*
- ii. *does not conflict with the objectives of the Forest Plan.*

The Forest of Avon (Community Forest Partnership) has been established around Bristol and its surrounding towns and villages to promote the creation, regeneration, and multi-purpose use of well wooded landscapes, providing wildlife and amenity benefits and opportunities for economic diversification. It aims to improve the quality of the urban fringe and enable more people to enjoy the countryside close to home and is supported by the Forestry Commission.

POLICY NE.12 Natural Features: retention, new provision and management

Development will only be permitted where it:

- i. *retains features of the landscape such as trees, copses, woodlands, grasslands, batches, ponds, roadside verges, veteran trees, hedgerows, walls, orchards, and watercourses and their corridors if they are of amenity, wildlife, or landscape value, or if they contribute to a wider network of habitats;*
- ii. *provides, where appropriate, for the creation of new features and habitats; and*

- 
- iii. *makes appropriate provision for the management of such features and habitats where they are of major importance for wild flora and fauna. Where the loss of such features is unavoidable because the reasons for the development outweigh the need to retain the features:*
- a. *any harm to the features is minimised, and*
  - b. *compensatory provision of at least equal and has regard to its aims in the layout of development,*

*Bath and North East Somerset Council Green Infrastructure Strategy (November 2012)*

This strategy (linking with the Draft Core Strategy policy CP7: Green Infrastructure) sets out objectives for ensuring ‘*that the natural environment works for the community, by making the most of the benefits that the natural environment can and should be providing for people, places and nature.*’

*Manor Road Community Woodland*

This is an existing ‘asset’ adjoining the site and comprises a community woodland, owned by B&NES and managed by the council in partnership with the Friends of Manor Road community group.

### **3.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS (see figure 3)**

#### **3.1 National Character Areas**

The landscape context of Keynsham is located within the National Character Area (NCA) 118: Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges with Saltford on the western edge of the adjacent NCA 107: Cotswolds. The NCA profile describes the landscape characteristics, the Statements of Environmental opportunity and the relevant Ecosystem services for that NCA.

#### ***Statements of Environmental Opportunity for NCA 118***

For this area the relevant Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) are:

- *SEO 1: Conserve and manage the distinction between small rural settlements and the densely urban City of Bristol, the urban fringe transitional zone and the commuter settlements; and ensure that new development is sensitively designed to contribute to settlement character, reduce the impact of the urban fringe and provide well-designed green infrastructure to enhance recreation, biodiversity and water flow regulation.*
- *SEO 3: Conserve and sustainably manage the gentle clay vales and limestone ridges and downs of the rural agricultural landscape and enhance the network of semi-natural habitats, linking them together to create a coherent and resilient ecological network, enabling ecosystems to adapt both to climate change and for the benefits to landscape, biodiversity, water flow, water quality, soil quality, soil erosion, rural heritage and culture.*
- *SEO 4: Protect and manage the landscape, heritage and biodiversity associated with the Avon River corridor, other river valleys and lakes, planning for a landscape-scale enhancement of wetlands, wet woodland and semi-natural grasslands along river flood plains for the benefits to biodiversity, climate regulation, water quality and flooding mitigation.*

### **Ecosystem services for NCA 118**

The key relevant ecosystem services for the area are:

- Food provision through farming.
- Water availability – relating to the River Avon and local tributaries.
- Regulating water flow – with noted floodplain issues along River Avon.
- Recreation – noting Forest of Avon Community Forest, the River Avon Trail, the Bristol and Bath Railway Path, a number of other long-distance trails and National Cycle Network routes together with a dense network of rights of way and significant areas of open access land of importance to the highly populated area.

### 3.2 Local Planning Authority Landscape Character Areas

(For further information refer to References section in the Appendix.)

The landscape around Keynsham lies within various areas of the B&NES Rural Landscape Character Assessment. The following areas are relevant to the study area:

- B&NES LCA 9 Stockwood Vale – this relates to an area west of Keynsham;
- B&NES LCA 5 Dundry Plateau - this relates to an area south west of Keynsham;
- B&NES LCA 2 Chew Valley - this relates to an area south of Keynsham;
- B&NES LCA 6 Hinton Blewitt and Newton St. Loe Plateau - this relates to an area south east of Keynsham;
- B&NES LCA 14 Avon Valley - this relates to an area north west and an area north east and east of Keynsham.

North of the River Avon, which provides the boundary between B&NES and South Gloucester Council, the following South Gloucester (SG) LCA is relevant since it forms part of the wider landscape context.

- SG LCA 16 Avon Valley - this relates to an area north and north east of Keynsham

#### ***Local Character Areas (see figure 4):***

As part of the appraisal work carried out for this report, six local landscape character areas have been defined and are set out below, with reference made to key features of the B&NES and SG LCA as appropriate. The landscape at the boundaries as shown demonstrates some transition between adjacent areas:

#### **Area 1 - Queen Charlton Vale**

This character area lies within the northern part of B&NES LCA 9 Stockwood Vale, for which the main noted aspects are as follows:

Landscape character:

- The landscape has an open character with views across the valleys. Longer views are contained by ridges, making the skyline important, incorporating tall hedges, often with dead or dying elm trees and in places the urban edge of Keynsham.
- Tranquil valley bottom occasionally disrupted by noise from activities around the urban fringe.

Landscape change and condition:

Diverse pressures for change include:

- Increased urban fringe pressures such as use of several fields as horse paddocks.
- Hedge and tree removal, now halted to suit modern agricultural practice.
- Small increase in woodland.

*Area 1 Description*

This area comprises an open but narrow valley, well featured by mature hedgerows bounding large fields laid to pasture. To the north at the bottom of the valley the fields become smaller and are used for 'horsiculture'. The land is steeply sloping in parts with more gentle contours toward the urban edge. Elevations range from 85m at Queen Charlton village down to 20m AOD at the valley bottom to 95m AOD on the western edge of Keynsham.

Given the proximity of the urban edges of Bristol, Stockwell, and Keynsham, this area has a sense of some remoteness and tranquillity with the hamlet of Queen Charlton at the head of the valley to the south. The hamlet has many traditional rural elements and listed buildings.

A network of public footpaths and a track provide access across the valley but there are no roads.

To the east, the western urban fringe of Keynsham is largely concealed by dense layers of overgrown hedgerow vegetation and in places woodland and plantation, retaining the rural setting. To the west, the suburbs of Bristol are not apparent.

Overall the existing urban edge is generally bounded by established vegetation and has very limited influence on the adjoining wider open landscape character, which comprises strongly featured countryside.

#### Area 2 - Parkhouse Plateau

This character area lies within the northern part of B&NES LCA 5 Dundry Plateau, for which the main noted aspects are as follows:

Landscape character:

- The landscape has an open and windswept form. The elevated character of the area gives extensive views.
- The hills of the Dundry plateau are visible over a wide area forming a backdrop to many views.

Landscape change and condition:

- The landscape appears to be in good condition, with little change to the landscape structure for some considerable time (evidenced from OS mapping).
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- Smaller fields based on the medieval strip field pattern; only a few hedges have been removed to rationalise these smaller fields.

#### *Area 2 Description*

To the east of Queen Charlton Vale lies an area defined for the purposes of this appraisal as Parkhouse Plateau. Parkhouse Plateau is an elevated area of landscape at around 75m AOD with various commercial and residential uses on the urban edge, giving way to agricultural land further south.

In the north western part of this area, west of the open access land and Parkhouse Lane, lies the urban edge of Keynsham, defined by a horizontal line of residential development running roughly east - west to the north of the plateau. The residential area and an area of public open space to the immediate south is well contained by vegetation to the south and east.

Further south and separated from the above area by mature vegetation, Parkhouse Lane provides access to another part of the southern urban fringe of the western part of Keynsham.

Along the southern part of Parkhouse Lane on the western side, there are houses interspersed with various urban business uses, but there is also a working farm with grazed fields to the east of Parkhouse Lane. To the north east, the urban edge of Keynsham is clearly apparent.

Overall the area comprises a mixed and varied landscape, contained to the north by a defined urban edge. Moving south the landscape comprises open countryside.

### Area 3 -Chew Vale

This character area lies within the southern part of B&NES LCA 2 Chew Valley, for which the main noted aspects are as follows:

Landscape character:

- The landscape is distinctive and generally harmonious, resulting from the balance of hedges, trees, and woodland within the enclosed farmland and from the well 'treed' setting of the settlements which are generally well integrated into the topography. This balance reflects the historical evolution of the landscape.
- However, there are less tranquil areas dictated by proximity to main roads and to local activities and land uses.



Landscape change and condition:

- The landscape appears to be in good condition, with relatively little change apparent to the landscape structure for some considerable time (evidenced from OS mapping).

### *Area 3 Description*

To the east of Parkhouse Plateau and south of Keynsham, lies Chew Vale, which comprises a valley landscape with elevations ranging from 50m on the valley sides to 20mAOD at the bottom of the valley.

The main use is pasture with some ribbon development in the form of terraced houses or older detached houses.

A variety of rights of way traverse the area including the Two Rivers Way (Recreational Route),

From the western side of the valley, looking across the valley, the eastern part of Keynsham is seen against a wooded backdrop on the higher valley slopes, with the Cotswold scarp in the distance.

Looking broadly westwards the valley comprises an undulating well vegetated rural landscape.

The scattered, ribbon development along the valley floor provides local interest and a settled character. The landscape in the northern part becomes a narrow 'strip' between urban areas of Keynsham.

Overall the area comprises an enclosed, mixed and varied valley landscape, with a limited relationship with the urban edge toward the south, and a correspondingly stronger relationship to the urban edges either side of the valley as it narrows to the north.

#### Area 4 - Uplands Gentle Slopes

This character area lies within the B&NES LCA 6 Hinton Blewett and Newton St Loe Plateau Lands, which describes the landscape and its condition as follows:

Landscape character:

- Varied topography generally open and undulating gives rise to many extensive views.

Landscape change and condition:

- The landscape appears to be in good condition, although it has experienced considerable change resulting from field enlargement and hedge removal, reflecting the widespread use of the land for arable crops. Irregular field outlines are the remnant references of the medieval enclosure of the open field system.
- Tree within hedgerows are characteristic of the area
- In places hedges are 'gappy' as a consequence of no longer being required to hold livestock.
- Post war development has had a significant impact on views. Housing at the edges of settlements is often prominent within views and lacks the organic and well-integrated characteristic form of the original settlement.
- Around many of the settlements are horse paddocks.

#### *Area 4 Description*

To the west of Chew Valley lies Uplands Gentle Slopes. The area comprises an open, elevated agricultural landscape with limited vegetation. The land is gently sloping with a northerly aspect. Elevations range from 110m to 65m AOD.

The urban edge of Keynsham is undefined, seen against a backdrop of fields and woods with the more distant higher land at the eastern edge of Bristol (Kimber Coombe between

Hallam and Bitton) on the skyline. The landscape becomes increasing rural to the south and east of the area.

Other built form comprises Uplands Farm and hamlet on the B3116 and further east and locally well-contained by hedgerows, Burnett Business Park and Depot.

To the east the open plateau area is physically and visually contained by a belt of mature woodland running north/south to the edge of Saltford.

Overall the area comprises an open, elevated landscape, with a limited relationship with the poorly integrated existing urban edge. To the south the landscape has an increasing relationship with the open countryside.

#### Area 5 - East Keynsham Gently Undulating landscape

This character area lies within the southern part of B&NES LCA 14 Avon Valley, for which the main noted aspects relevant to this landscape area are as follows:

Landscape character:

- Although the landscape has an open character with views out to the surrounding higher ground, longer views are restricted by adjoining settlements, tall hedges, trees or the railway in/on embankment.
- Development at the edges of the settlements is often a major component of views especially around and between Keynsham and Saltford.
- The Kelston Round Hill and the Cotswold ridge to the north east with its group of trees is an important landmark.

Landscape change and condition:

- There have been agricultural changes locally leading to amalgamation of fields.

- Most recent changes come about as a result of urban fringe pressures, indicated by the presence of utility works, sports pitches, and locally the use of fields as horse paddocks.

#### *Area 5 Description*

To the north of the Uplands Gentle Slope Landscape lies an area defined as East Keynsham Gently Undulating Landscape. It lies just above the river terrace, at an elevation of around 20 to 25m AOD, between the urban areas of Keynsham and Saltford. This landscape broadly comprises a mix of arable farmland, open access grassland and maturing woodland (Manor Road Community Woodland). Fields vary in size with definition afforded by hedgerows.

The area is variously enclosed by housing to the east (western edge of Saltford) and the maturing woodland and the eastern edge of Keynsham to the west. To the north, ribbon development housing intermittent with trees, adjoins the A4 (Bath/Bristol Road).

Rights of way comprise several footpaths across the open grassland together with land with open access associated with the community woodland.

In the distance, the Cotswold scarp higher land is visible on the skyline.

The area provides physical separation between the settlements of Keynsham and Saltford, although in terms of landscape character this is compromised by the influence of the urban areas and the extent of ribbon development along the A4 road.

Overall the area comprises a locally enclosed landscape, with a strong relationship with the existing urban areas of both Keynsham and Saltford, together with the ribbon development along the A4. The vegetation of the community woodland is a locally important element, providing a 'softening' of the urban edge and local enclosure.

#### Area 6 - River Avon River Terrace

This character area lies within the southern part of B&NES LCA 14 Avon Valley, for which the main noted aspects relevant to this landscape area are as follows:

Landscape character:

- Although the landscape has an open character with views across the valley floor to the valley sides and hills and plateaux beyond, longer views .. [to the south] .. are restricted by adjoining settlements, tall hedges, trees or the railway in/on embankment.
- The course of the river edged by trees is a particularly important feature throughout the area.
- The former Cadbury factory, the Kelston Round Hill and the Cotswold ridge to the north east with its group of trees are important landmarks.

Landscape change and condition:

- Phytophthora disease has resulted in dead and dying alders beside the river and this is having an impact on the local character of the landscape.
- To the north of the river the River Avon River terrace and floodplain lies within the South Gloucester Council [SG] LCA 16 Avon Valley, for which the main noted aspects relevant to this landscape area are as follows:

*Area 6 Description*

The River Avon Terrace landscape comprises a level and generally open landscape strongly influenced by the River Avon, which is contained to the north by higher surrounding land (including the Cotswold scarp to the east; Bitton and Hallam to the north and west). The river terrace lies at levels around 20m to 10m AOD or less.

Vegetation comprises riverside trees and woodland, together with mature field boundary hedgerows, providing local enclosure in an otherwise extensive open landscape.

The mainline railway (London – Bristol) is a key local feature in the landscape, providing in places a strong boundary and defining feature between the more open river terrace

landscape to the north and the increasingly enclosed landscape with stronger relationship with the urban area to the south.

Land use in the area is varied and includes the former Cadbury's factory at Somerdale (a local landmark), a sewage works, a commercially operated country/wildlife park (Avon Valley Country Park) and sports pitches together with grazed agricultural pasture.

Rights of way include various footpaths (including the Avon Valley Walkway which tend to focus on the river. The Bristol/ Bath Cycleway and Avon Valley Railway lie to the immediate north.

The urban edge of Keynsham is formed by a mix of industrial and commercial land uses which are local detractors, together with residential areas closer to Keynsham railway station. The urban edge of Saltford locally influences the landscape but from the other side of the railway line embankment.

Overall the area comprises an open, low lying landscape with a varied mix of land uses. The River Avon is a strongly defining feature. The urban edge has varied influence on the adjoining landscape which is stronger at the northern edge of Keynsham and at the edge of Saltford adjacent to the A4.

## **4.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SITE**

### **4.1 Landscape Features and Character (see figure 5)**

The proposed development site is located on land east of Keynsham and west of Saltford. The majority of the site lies within the local landscape character "East Keynsham Gently Undulating Landscape" with the northern part of the site north of the A4 lying within the local landscape character area River Avon Terrace, south of the railway line.

The northern boundary of the site is defined by the mainline railway line, and the eastern boundary is broadly defined by the western edge of Saltford.

To the south, north of Manor Road, the site is defined by the community woodland and a belt of more substantial mature trees and mixed woodland.

To the west lies Manor Road Community Woodland and the urban edge of Keynsham which includes Wellsway School and its associated playing fields.

The site comprises generally very gently undulating or level land between 20 to 25m AOD.

North of the A4 the land comprises fields of agricultural grassland, generally bounded by hedgerows, with occasional mature trees, adjoining Glenavon Farm and dispersed development along World's End Lane. A public footpath crosses the land linking the A4 with a bridge over the railway.

South of the A4 the majority of the site comprises large undefined arable fields between Manor Road Community Woodland and the edge of Saltford. An area of smaller fields, bounded by well managed hedgerows is located to the west of the area, north of the community woodland.

Vegetation within the area comprises small copses and mature trees, together with hedgerows. More extensive mature vegetation is located toward Manor Road at the southern boundary.

A series of small watercourses and ditches edge the field boundaries, linking together and flowing north westwards to the site boundary.

A public footpath traverses the site providing access into the community woodland area from the A4. There is no public access to the majority of the site.

There is no built form within the site.

Lighting in the area is limited to that on the highways and from residential area adjacent to the site.

## **4.2 Role of the Site as Separation between Settlements**

The site provides a substantial part of the physical separation between Keynsham and Saltford. However, the rural characteristics of this landscape are compromised to an extent by a combination of the ribbon development along the A4 and the influence of the urban

edge of Saltford. The Manor Road Community Woodland provides a positive feature in the landscape, at the edge of the urban area, and reduces the apparent urban influence.

#### **4.3 Summary**

Overall the southern part of the site has an open character and acts as a transitional landscape, with strong urban influences, between the urban areas in the northern part of the site and outside of the site to the east and west, and the community woodland and the more rural areas to the south of the site.

The wider landscape character is strongly influenced by the urban edges to the north, east and west, by the severance caused by the railway line to the north, and to the south by the wooded areas with open fields further south.

#### **5.0 VISUAL CONTEXT AND KEY VIEWS TOWARDS THE SITE (see figures 6 and 7a – 7e)**

The visual context is determined by a combination of the elevation of the site in relation to the surrounding area, the enclosing effect of vegetation and any intervening built form together with the nature and extent of viewpoints in the locality.

Key local views comprise those from the woodland edge of Manor Road to the south, looking north, north east (see viewpoint 7), from Glenavon Farm Buildings to the north east, looking south west (viewpoint 8) and to the north, looking south east, from the Bridge over the railway cutting (viewpoint 9). In these local, low level extensive views the site is perceived as an area of low lying land, divided into fields by low hedgerows, edged by scrub vegetation, and with some larger trees interspersed in the hedgerows or in small wooded areas. Viewpoint 9 illustrates that the railway line is a strong feature at the boundary of the site.

From the south, there are views across the site to the distant elevated land to the north around Hallam, to the Cotswold scarp to the north east, and Kelston Round Hill to the east. The site itself is not visually distinctive in these low level views. Although physically dissected by the railway and the A4, the landscape adjacent to the urban edge and the Cotswold scarp are visually contiguous.



Views from the north are not possible from the vicinity of the River Avon due to intervening vegetation and built form, including the railway and industrial units in the northern part of the site. Partial views are possible from the railway line itself, when at grade, into the northern part of the site. A view into the site is gained from the bridge over the cutting (viewpoint 9). Other local views comprise those from private properties along the A4 road with back gardens bordering the open green space in the northern part of the site (Viewpoint 8).

East of the site, views are gained from the residential area on the urban edge of Saltford. At ground floor level views of the site are predominantly screened by intervening vegetation, but views are possible from the upper storeys of dwellings.

With increasing elevation, more extensive panoramas are provided, such as from the Cotswold scarp (See viewpoint 10) or from Kelston Round Hill. However in these more distant views, the site is seen as a small element in the wider landscape with Bristol in the distance.

From the south, views are blocked by the wooded areas south of Manor Road, although low level views are gained from the edges of the publically accessible wooded areas towards the elevated land around Hallam to the north and the Cotswold scarp to the north east (Viewpoint 7).

From the west, low level local views are gained from the adjacent school playing fields, where the site is seen as layers of hedgerow and wooded areas against the backdrop of the Cotswold scarp, Kelston Round Hill. Views of Saltford Urban edge are prevented by intervening vegetation.

West of the site, views from the residential area (east of B3159) are generally not possible due to the effect of the intervening mature vegetation, although this may vary in the winter season.

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## 6.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT – LANDSCAPE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE OPPORTUNITIES

The current proposals are for a new residential led mixed use development. As part of this proposal a significant opportunity exists for a substantive new element of strategic Green Infrastructure (GI).

This GI could provide for a series of linking multi-functional-spaces through the site. These would allow the retention of some landscape features and the enhancement of the overall landscape character. The main element could comprise a large area of parkland landscape through the site. This landscape could provide and/ or incorporate:

- Enhanced connectivity;
- Enhanced biodiversity;
- Recreational benefits;
- Sustainable drainage.

The parkland landscape would, importantly, allow for a positive long term approach to maintaining an appropriate separation between Keynsham and Saltford.

Key themes to develop would be:

### Landscape

*Landscape character* – the proposals would build upon the positive extant characteristics of the landscape and provide a high quality setting for integrating the new development, as well as functioning as separation between Keynsham and Saltford. The key aspect would be significant woodland and woodland belt planting. This would complement and extend that associated with Manor Road Community Woodland

### Ecosystem services

*Recreation and food provision* - Active access and healthy lifestyles – the area could provide excellent accessible routes and links between settlements and to other routes, including the

Bath – Bristol foot/cycle path. Provision could also be made for appropriate recreational activities, including allotments.

The proposals would extend the asset and benefits provided by the existing community woodland, with opportunities for some continuing agricultural activity. Green economy – the existing farm could provide a centre/ focus for activities, as well as offering possible links to Avon Valley Country Park.

*Climate change and water management* – the proposals would include opportunities for incorporating sustainable drainage features, linking with the existing water courses.

*Biodiversity* – providing enhanced woodland, grassland and wetland habitats and reinforcing corridors for a wide range of species. Proposals would target Biodiversity Action Plans

Other elements/opportunities

- Links into/offsite from A4 and existing public rights of way;
- Provision of landscape buffer adjacent to existing properties.

## **7.0 PRELIMINARY APPRAISAL**

In terms of key matters relevant to landscape the issues are as follows:

### ***Planning Policy***

It is considered that the proposals would accord in principle with the policy context in relation to landscape character, both at a national and local level, without unacceptable adverse effects.

The proposals present a significant opportunity to provide a new strategic element of GI, which would be in line with B&NES CI strategy and which would be a substantial benefit to the development and the local area.

### ***Landscape Character***

The general nature of the development – mixed use residential - is considered to be in keeping with local land uses and landscape character. Notwithstanding this, there will be a significant effect upon the local landscape with a change to an urban environment.

The physical ‘gap’ between Keynsham and Saltford would be narrowed. However, with a comprehensive and positive approach the opportunity exists to provide an appropriate and meaningful new landscape framework. Such a strategy would maintain a functional separation between settlements.

Key elements to determine the effect upon the local landscape character will relate to the scale, mass, form, colour and appearance of the buildings, and materials used.

### ***Natural Features***

The development will result in the removal of some of the trees and hedgerows. Key elements of the design will include careful consideration of new/ proposed planting especially as part of the multi functional area of GI.

The opportunity also exists to enhance watercourses and provide new wetland features as part of a site wide sustainable drainage strategy.

### ***Visual appraisal***

At this preliminary stage the visual appraisal considers that there will be substantial local visual effects from adjacent highways, public rights of way and residential properties. Such effects will relate to the change from the views of fields and the current urban edge, to a more enclosed view of the new urban development and associated open space and associated planting.

Due to a combination of the low elevation of the site and enclosing urban form and vegetation, views from the wider area will be limited. Some limited glimpsed views will be available from locations along the river Avon, although these will substantially be concealed by the intervening vegetation and railway.

With increasing elevation north of the river Avon, and to the south of the site, the effects upon views across the site will relate to the extension of the current urban areas. It is considered that whilst such change, when visible, will be substantial the nature of the view itself will not be unacceptable given the existing well settled landscape.

In the view from the edge of the Cotswold scarp, such as that from Prospect Stile, the extension to the existing urban form, whilst noticeable will be set within the panorama, with a limited effect upon the wider open landscapes beyond the existing settlements.

In all views affected the creation of a strong landscape framework will be an important element in the successful integration of the new development. This will be especially so with regard to the character and form of the retained landscape between Keynsham and Saltford.

## **8.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

A preliminary landscape and visual appraisal has been undertaken by Chartered Landscape Architects utilising a methodology which draws upon recognised guidelines for landscape character assessment and landscape and visual impact assessment.

The work has included:

- A desk study of existing landscape character assessment and relevant planning policy.
- An overview of the landscape setting of Keynsham, with the definition of a number of local landscape character areas.
- A landscape and visual appraisal of the site on land east of Keynsham and west of Saltford.

Preliminary proposals propose a strategic residential led development, with opportunities for a significant new element of Green Infrastructure, building upon the existing Manor Road Community Woodland.

Overall it is considered that there is capacity to accommodate development within the local landscape character area of East Keynsham Gently Undulating Landscape and on the south

eastern part of the River Avon Terrace area (that part south of the railway line) without unacceptable harm to the wider open countryside.

Furthermore, whilst any development will have an effect upon the landscape character of the locality, and on local visual amenity, it is considered that the area east of Keynsham has the greater capacity to accommodate strategic scale residential development, with the least impact on the wider open landscape, than elsewhere around Keynsham.

This is as a result of a combination of the strong influence of the existing urban areas of Keynsham to the west and Saltford to the east, together with the influence of ribbon development along the A4, and the general landscape characteristics of the wider area.

However, such development east of Keynsham has the potential to adversely affect the function of the landscape in providing for separation between the two settlements. A comprehensive and integrated approach to strategic landscape design, through the use of strategic green infrastructure is strongly recommended. This will help to maximise opportunities for landscape mitigation and enhancement, and maintain an appropriate degree of separation in terms of landscape form and character.

Such an approach will, it is considered, accord with relevant planning policy and identified strategic environmental opportunities.

## REFERENCES

### Planning Policy relating to Landscape

#### NPPF

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf)

#### B&NES Local Plan

##### Schedule of saved policies

[http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Planning-and-Building-Control/Planning-Policy/Local-Plan/Local-Plan-Archive/schedule\\_of\\_saved\\_local\\_plan\\_policies.pdf](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Planning-and-Building-Control/Planning-Policy/Local-Plan/Local-Plan-Archive/schedule_of_saved_local_plan_policies.pdf)

##### Core Strategy - draft Green infrastructure strategy

[http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/e2389-app.1\\_draft\\_gi\\_strategy\\_0.pdf](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/e2389-app.1_draft_gi_strategy_0.pdf)

#### National Character Areas (NCA)

Link to NCA Profile | 18 NCA Profile: | 18: Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges (NE400)

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4646942?category=587130>

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### Local planning Authority Planning Landscape Character Areas

#### Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES)

The Keynsham area lies within the Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) boundary and the following areas of local landscape character described in the B&NES SPD Rural Landscapes 2003, moving round Keynsham from west to north are relevant:

LCA 9 Stockwood Vale

LCA 5 Dundry Plateau

LCA 2 Chew Valley

LCA 6 Hinton Blewitt and Newton St. Loe Plateau

LCA 14 Avon Valley

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Planning-and-Building-Control/Planning-Policy/Evidence-Base/Urban-Design-Landscape-and-Heritage/RuralLandscapesComplete.pdf>

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### **South Gloucester (SG) LCA**

North of the river, which acts as the boundary between B&NES and South Gloucester Council, the following South Gloucester (SG) LCA is relevant:

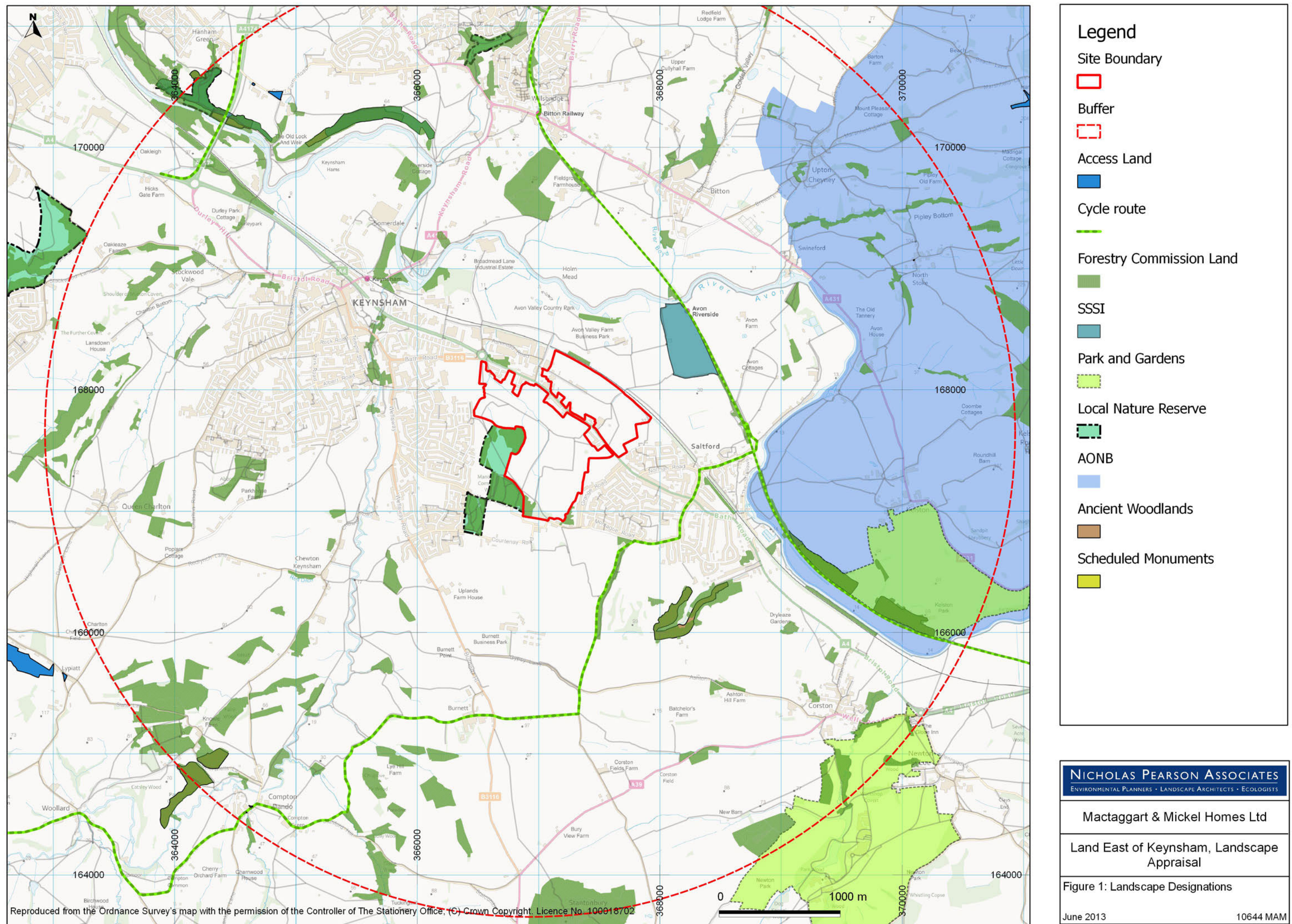
SG LCA 16 Avon Valley

SPD landscape character assessment 2005

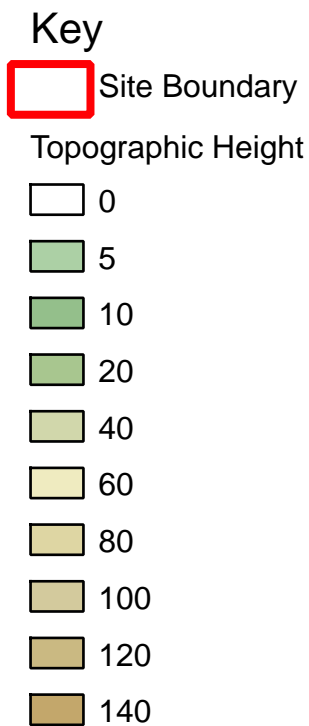
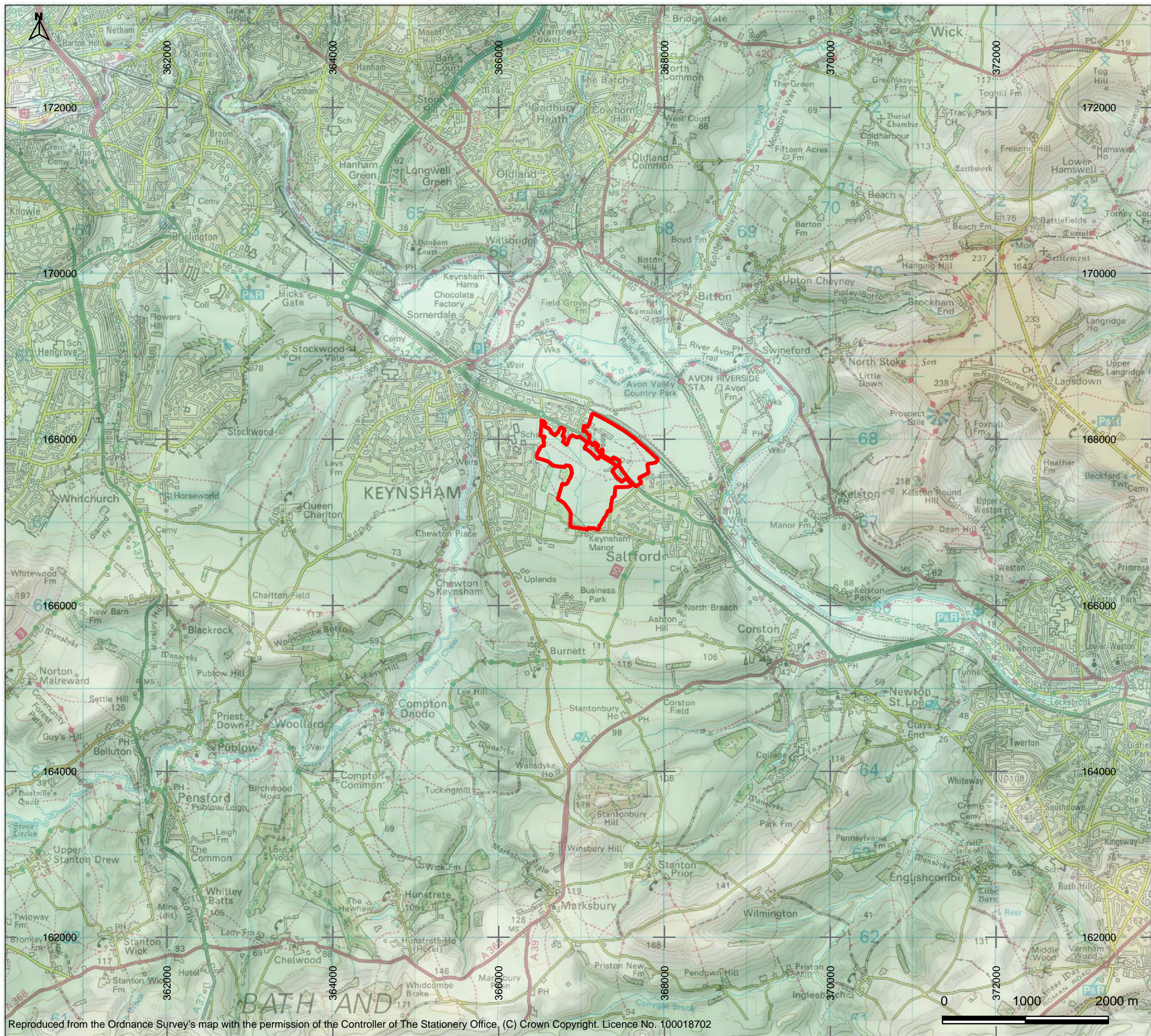
<http://hosted.southglos.gov.uk/landscapecharacterassessment/main%20doc-internetRI.pdf>

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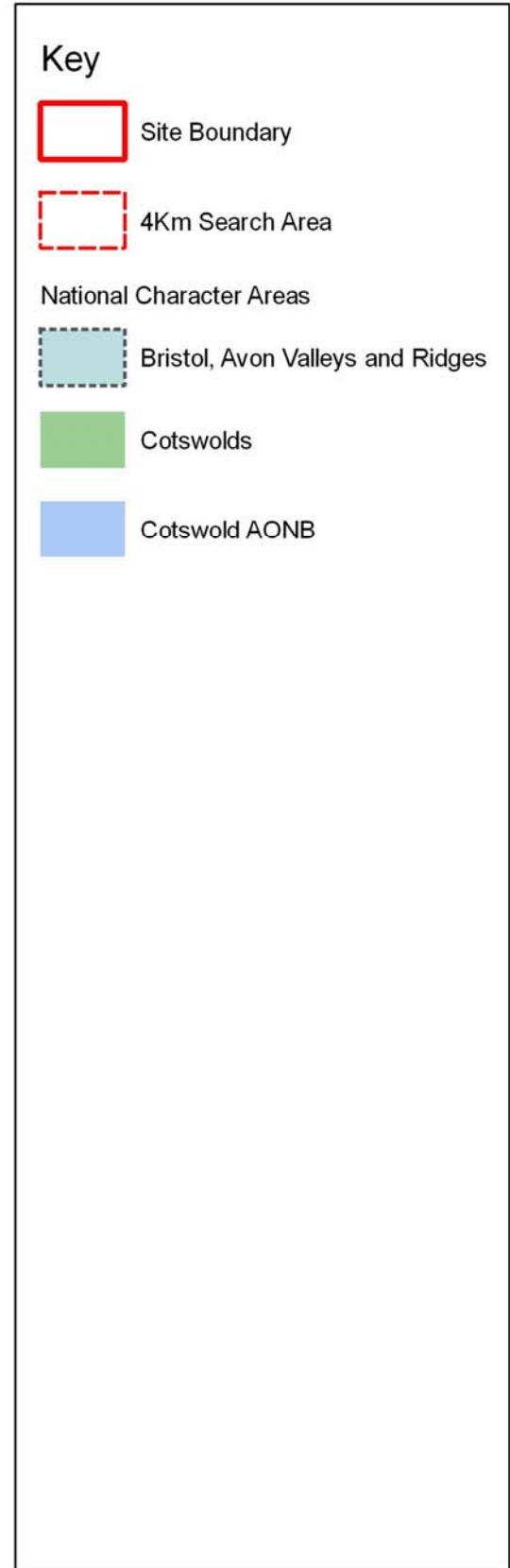
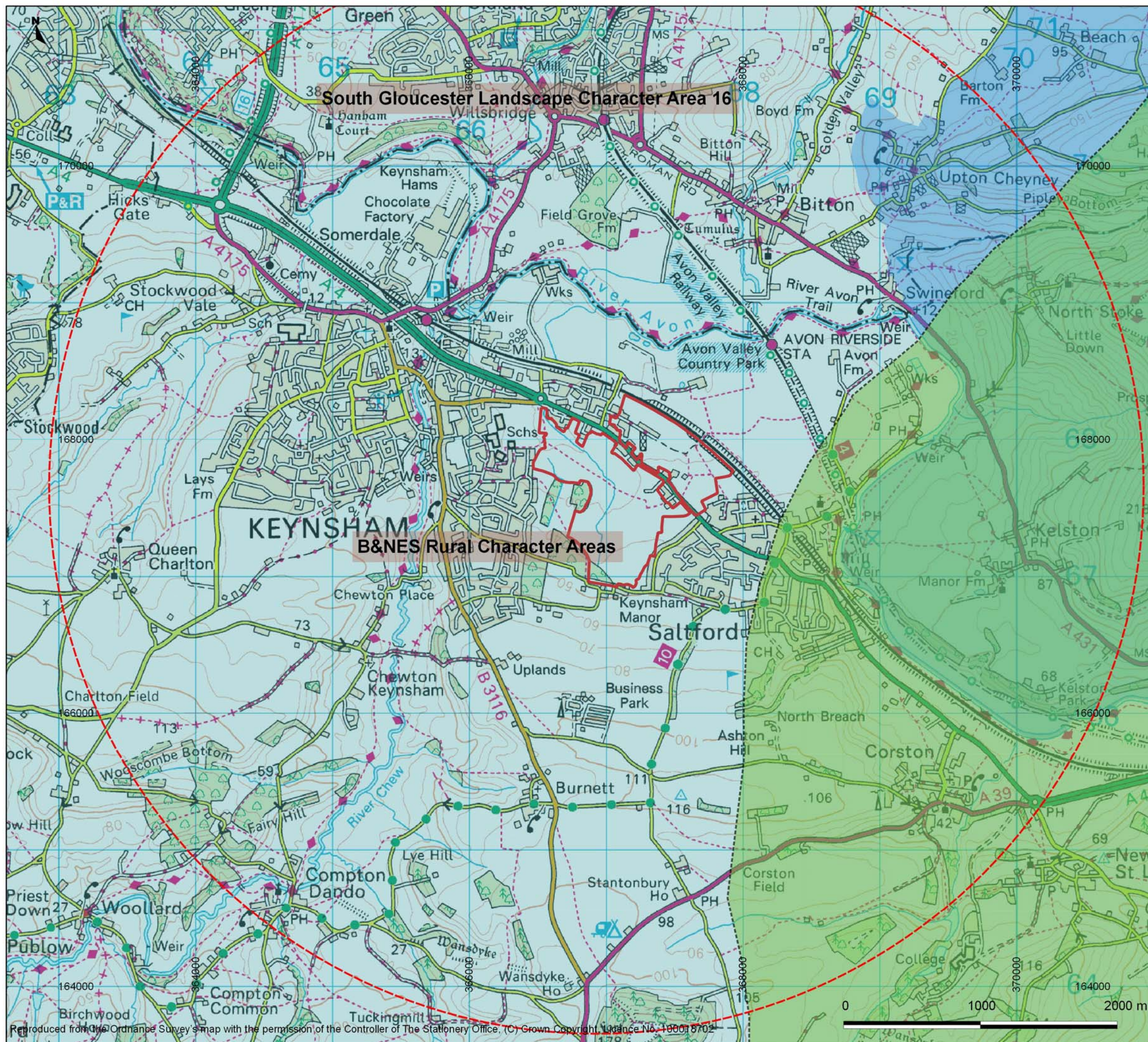
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Figure 2: Topographic Context





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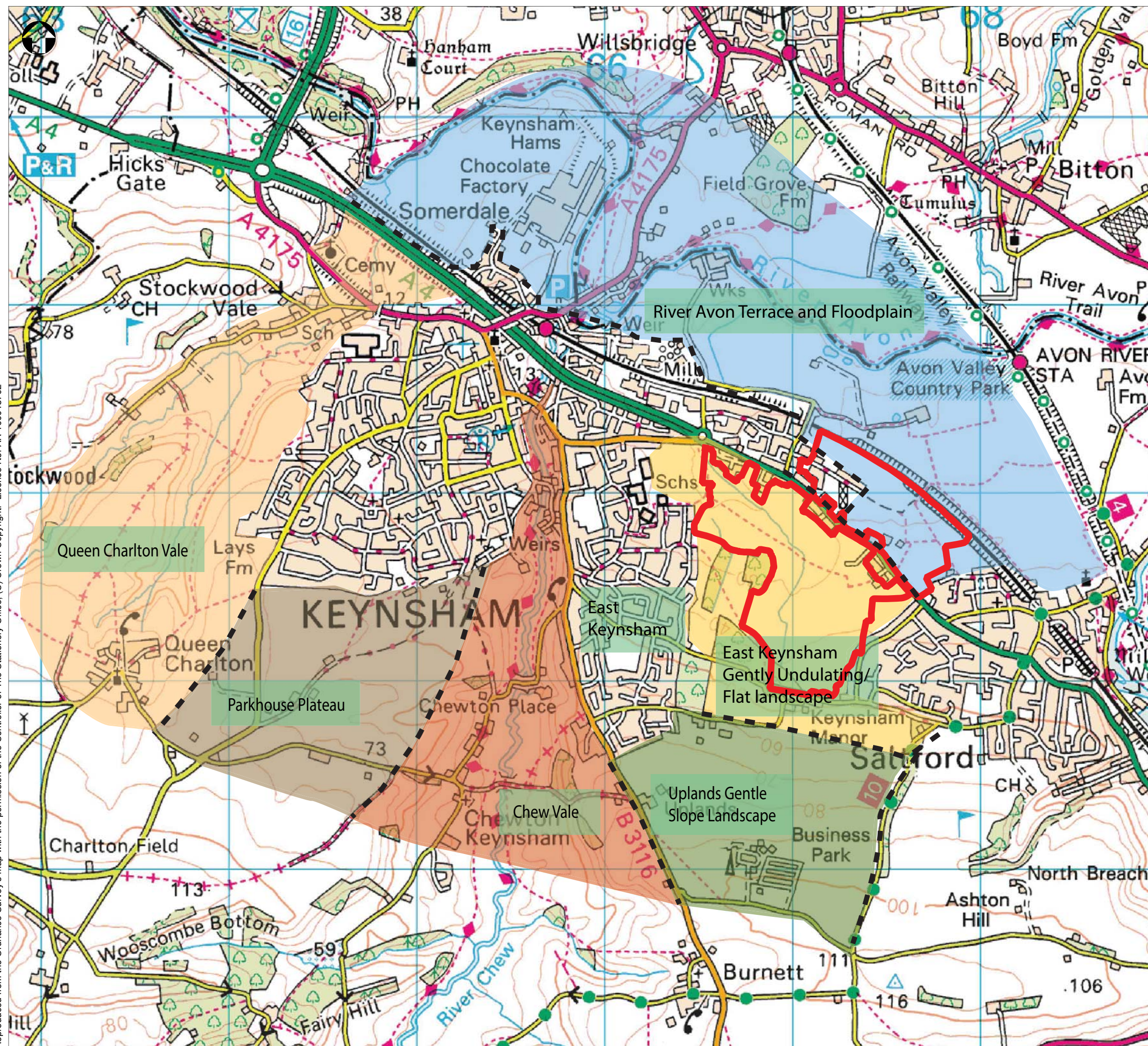
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Figure 3: Landscape Character Areas

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KEY

Site Area

0 500m 1km

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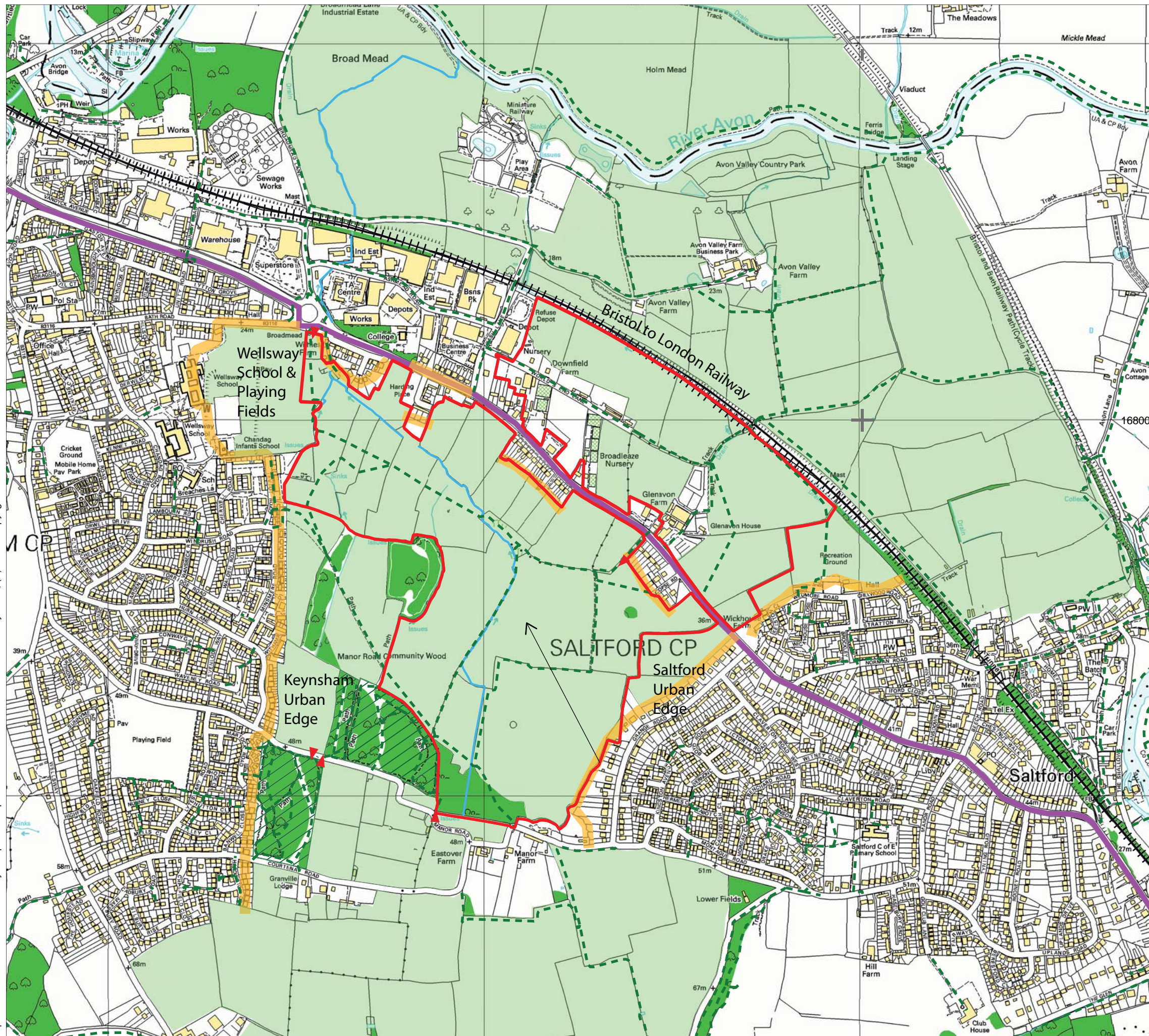
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Figure 4: Local Landscape Character

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KEY

- Site area
- Community woodland
- Existing pedestrian entrances to site
- Gentle slope down
- Grassland with larger fields
- Woodland
- Watercourse
- Public footpath
- Railway line
- A4 Road
- Urban edge

0 250m 500m

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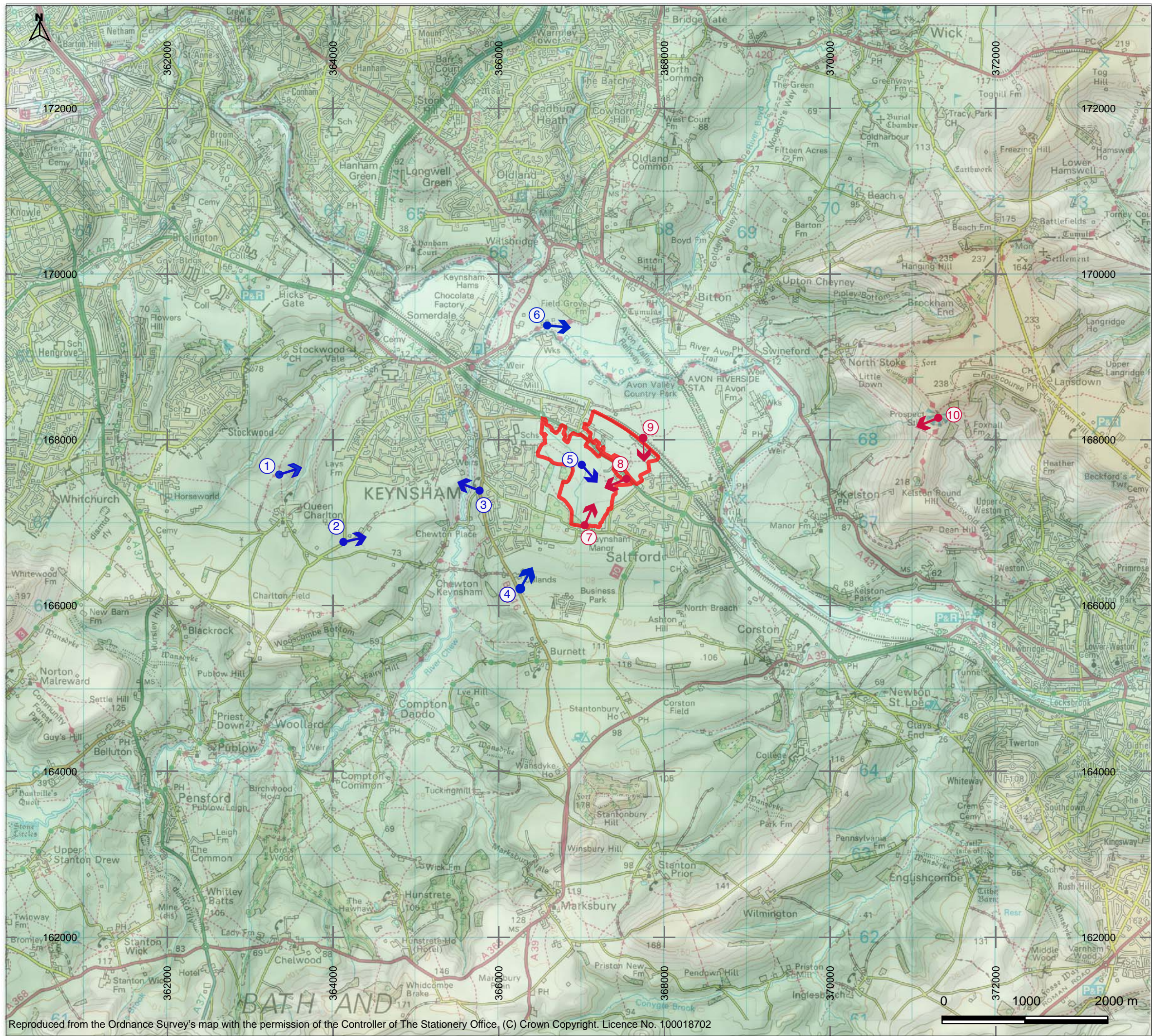
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Figure 5: Site Landscape Elements


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Key

 Viewpoint Locations

 Site Boundary

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Figure 6: Viewpoint Locations

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Viewpoint 1 –View from within local character area Queen Charlton Vale character area looking north east towards the western urban edge of Keynsham



Viewpoint 2 -View from within local character area Parkhouse Plateau looking north towards the southern urban edge of Keynsham.





Viewpoint 3 –View from within local character area Chew Vale looking north west towards the urban edge of Keynsham.

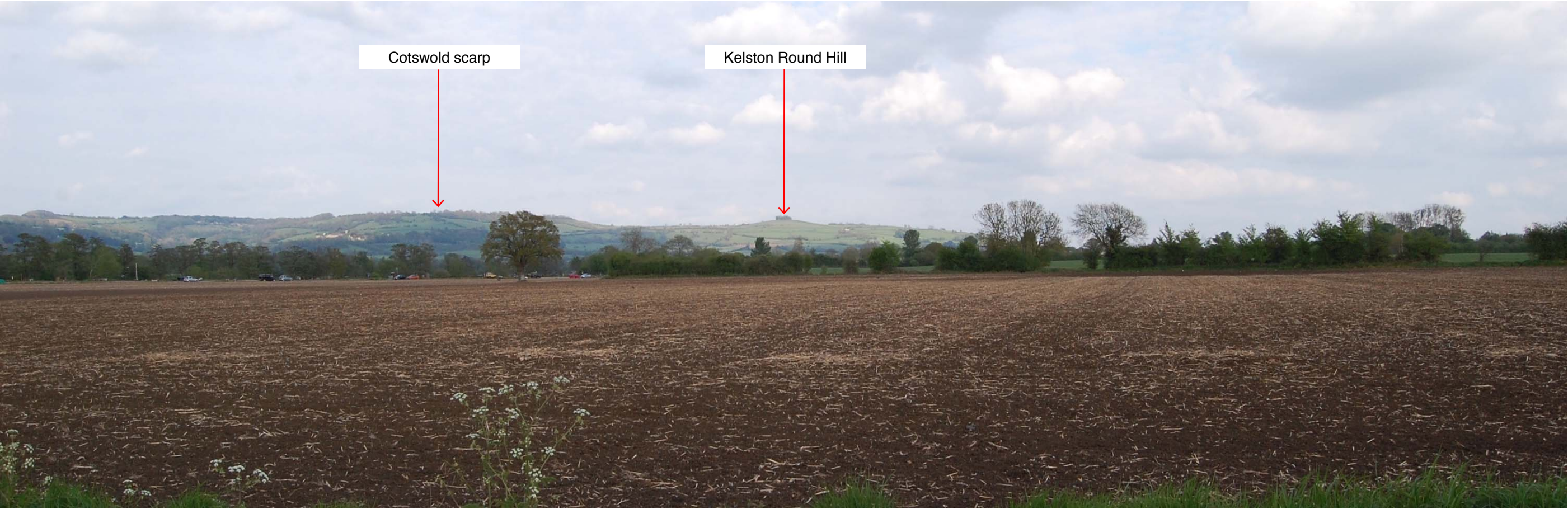


Viewpoint 4 - View from within local character area Uplands Gentle Slope Landscape looking north east towards the site (not visible).





Viewpoint 5 - View from within local character area East Keynsham Landscape looking east towards the urban edge of Saltford.



Viewpoint 6 –View from within local character area River Avon Terrace and Floodplain Landscape looking north east across the floodplain towards the Cotswold scarp.





Viewpoint 7 - View from within local character area East Keynsham Landscape looking north towards the A4 between Saltford and Keynsham.

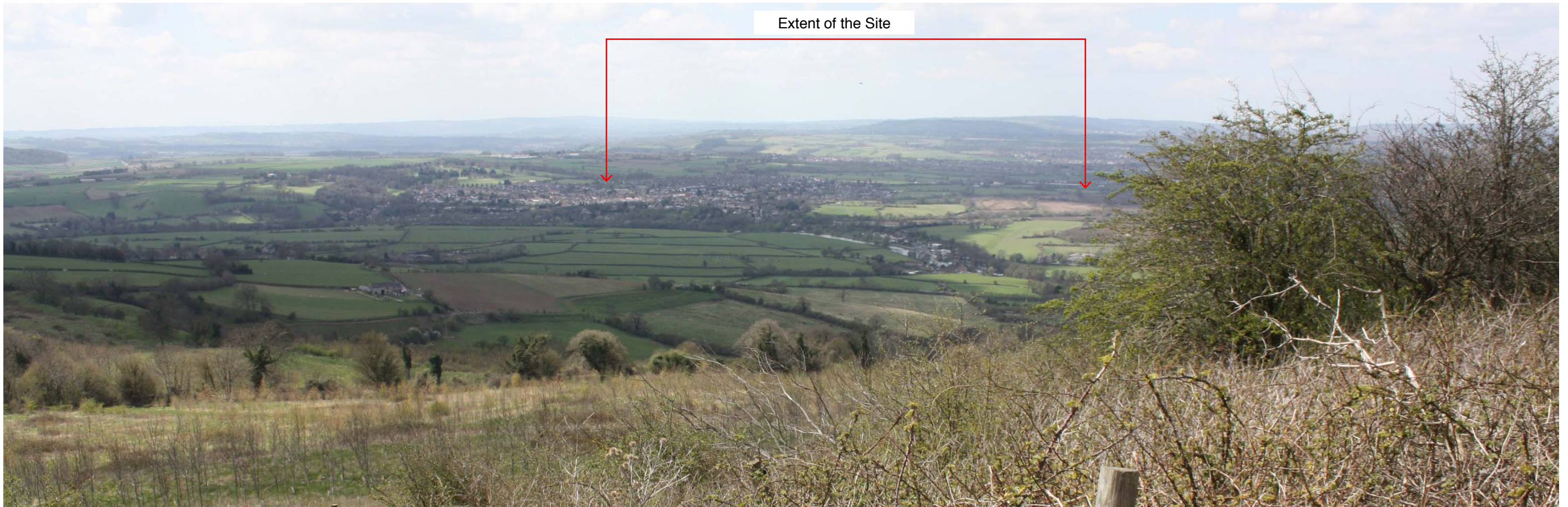


Viewpoint 8 – View from within local character area East Keynsham Landscape looking south west towards the urban edge of Saltford.





Viewpoint 9 -View from within local character area East Keynsham Landscape looking south east towards the north western urban edge of Saltford.



Viewpoint 10 –View from viewing point, Prospect Stile, on the Cotswold scarp.



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Document Title: Land East of Keynsham. Landscape and Visual Appraisal.

Project No: MAM/NPA/10644

This document: Original

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Revision

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Rev Letter:

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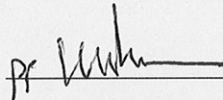
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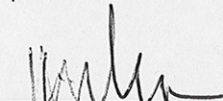
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Landscape Architect

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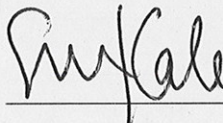
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Chairman

8.11.2013

Approved by: S Kale



Managing Director

8.11.2013

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## REVISION RECORD

Rev Letter	Date Prepared	Prepared by	Checker/ Approver	Description of changes

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