

Cotswold District Special Landscape Areas Review

July 2026



COTSWOLD
District Council

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SECTION A

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Update

- 1.1 The purpose of Special Landscape Area (SLA) designation is to protect locally significant and valued landscapes that have particular intrinsic qualities or character. Although not nationally designated, in some cases they provide important settings and effective buffers for the Cotswolds National Landscape.
- 1.2 The Cotswold District Council (CDC) SLA system has evolved from county-level policies and allocations, which were originally set out before the Cotswolds National Landscape was designated and then refined in the 1980s. CDC has commissioned a number of studies regarding Special Landscape Areas (SLA) within the district, including the 2001 and 2017 studies by White Consultants. The purpose of this study is to bring these documents into one report and ensure it is up to date with current planning policy, guidance and baseline information.
- 1.3 The original reports are appended to this report for reference and clarity (Appendix 1: Local Countryside Designation Review: Special Landscape Areas (*Cotswold District Council and White Consultants, February 2001*) and Appendix 2: Special Landscape Areas Review: Landscape Context and Physical Changes (*Cotswold District Council and White Consultants, May 2017*)).

Overarching justification and statement of need for SLAs

- 1.4 The Cotswold District is probably the most rural and sensitive of the districts in Gloucestershire with around 80% of its area covered by the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL)¹. It encompasses a range of attractive rural landscapes featuring scarp and dip slope, wold and valley. These landscapes are complemented by fine Cotswold stone settlements built largely due to the area's prosperous sheep farming heritage. As the area was bypassed by the industrial revolution, many of the settlements remain unspoilt, although 20/21st century development is encroaching in parts. The area is therefore highly desirable for those seeking a high quality of life/environment. It is easily accessed from the M4 to the south, the M5 to the west and the M40 to the north east, with accompanying accessibility to London, Bristol and Birmingham. Railways run through the district linking with Swindon and London, with stations at Kemble and Moreton-in-Marsh. Cirencester is the largest settlement and is located on the edge of the CNL.
- 1.5 There are significant pressures on the District to accommodate development at all scales, on the edge of settlements as well as in the countryside itself. The constraint of the CNL, where

¹ <https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/LA-Boundary-Map.png>

great weight is placed on the protection and enhancement of landscape by National Policy, places additional pressure for development on the landscapes outside the National Landscape (NL).

- 1.6 Some of the landscapes within the SLAs represent a continuation in character to the adjoining areas of National Landscape or are a transition from that National Landscape character to other landscape character types. An example of this continuation beyond the National Landscape boundaries is the boundary of the Cotswolds National Character Area² (NCA) that extends beyond the nationally valued National Landscape area. Some neighbouring character types act as part of the setting to the CNL and such areas are also given strong protection by National Policy. Therefore, where this is the case, it is considered that these landscapes have a value above ordinary and it could be argued that there is a need to protect them as far as possible, balanced with the need for sustainable development. Other SLAs or parts of SLAs display high quality distinctive landscape character and features that are of a greater value than the general countryside and their qualities and features are therefore worthy of additional protection and consideration.
- 1.7 The role of an SLA is to protect, enhance and facilitate better management of the best of the District's landscapes outside the CNL. Overall, this review considers that the SLAs continue to fulfil the appropriate criteria for designation. Individual assessments describe qualities and justify designation in more detail.
- 1.8 A number of landscape character assessments are available that describe the District's landscapes as a whole. These are:
 - Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment (LDA Design, 2006)³;
 - Landscape Character Assessment of the Cotswolds AONB (AONB Partnership and LDA Design, 2002)⁴; and
 - Cotswold Water Park Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (LDA Design, 2009)⁵

² <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5900626>

³ https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/6800/glca_report_severn___other_vales_text_2006-51673.pdf

⁴ <https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/about-the-cotswolds-national-landscape/landscape-character-assessment/>

⁵ cotswold.gov.uk/media/3xrnffaz/cotswold-water-park-landscape-character-assessment.pdf

2.0 PLANNING POLICY AND PUBLISHED LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT CONTEXT

- 2.1 The planning context in relation to landscape matters is discussed below. These include the main policies, which relate to SLA and landscape planning guidance. In the consideration of landscape, current guidance suggests that nature conservation, historical and cultural values should be taken into account.
- 2.2 In addition to the planning policy context, the hierarchy of published Landscape Character Assessments present within the district are also discussed below.

National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF)⁶

- 2.3 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.
- 2.4 Section 15 of the NPPF relates to *'conserving and enhancing the natural environment'*. Paragraph 187 highlights that *'planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment'* of relevance to SLA are the following two criteria from the paragraph:
- a) *Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan); and*
 - b) *Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.*
- 2.5 Paragraph 188 states that *'Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework⁶⁵; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.*
- 2.6 Paragraph 189 states that *'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which*

⁶ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf

have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas’.

Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 (Adopted 3rd August 2018)⁷

- 2.7 The NPPF requires each local planning authority to produce a Local Plan that plans positively for the development and infrastructure required in its area. The NPPF also requires local plans to be prepared with the intention of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development.
- 2.8 The aim of the Cotswold District Local Plan is to set out policies and proposals to meet the challenges facing the area over the period 2011-2031. A number of these policies relate to landscape character and the environment. The most pertinent policy to this study is EN6: Special Landscape Areas. The policy is reproduced in full below:

Policy EN6

SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

Development within Special Landscape Areas (as shown on the Policies Map) will be permitted provided it does not have a significant detrimental impact upon the special character and key landscape qualities of the area including its tranquillity.

Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) were introduced in Gloucestershire in 1982. There are six SLAs in Cotswold District. The purpose of SLA designation is to protect locally significant and valued landscapes that have particular intrinsic qualities or character. Although not nationally designated, in some cases they provide important settings and effective buffers for the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

SLA designation is based on a formal assessment of each area. The Cotswold District designations were reviewed in February 2001 and again in May 2017. The 2017 review validates the work carried out in 2001 while updating the context, any physical changes and adding qualities. Both reports, or any successors produced by the Council, should be considered together. In assessing the impacts of development proposals on the areas’ character and qualities the whole of the Council’s evidence base regarding SLAs including

⁷ <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/k2kjqvq3b/cotswold-district-local-plan-2011-2031-adopted-3-august-2018-web-version.pdf>

description, key landscape qualities and justification for recommendation should be taken into account. Regard must also be had to the general requirements of Policy EN4 (The Wider Natural and Historic Landscape). For the avoidance of doubt, Policy EN6 applies to all development in SLAs including the development of sites allocated in this Local Plan.

The SLAs in Cotswold District are shown on the Policies Map and area:

- Barrington Downs;
- Coln Valley (north of Fairford);
- Kemble/Ewen;
- Moreton-in-Marsh surrounds;
- North Cirencester; and
- Norton Hall.

Published Landscape Character Assessments

2.9 The characterisation process is a non-value judgement process; therefore, classifying landscapes into distinct areas does not suggest that one character is more sensitive than another or valued by people more or less.

2.10 The Landscape Character Assessment process reviews the wider landscape character at a national level and then explores more detailed character features at a district/local level, before analysing site-specific land use that informs local distinctiveness and sense of place. The published assessments that influence the SLA areas are set out below.

National Character

2.11 Natural England's Character Map of England (formerly the Countryside Agency) identifies broad National Character Areas (NCA) for the whole of England. These NCAs provide a broad appreciation of a large area of landscape, which at a national scale share characteristic features.

Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment⁸ (GLCA)

2.12 This report comprises a landscape character assessment of the Severn Vale, the Upper Thames Valley area and the land on the northern fringe of the CNL within the Vale of Moreton and Vale of Evesham and completes a detailed review of Gloucestershire's landscape character. The purpose of the GLCA is to observe, analyse, describe and classify the variations and distinctive patterns of the landscape.

2.13 Landscape characterisation is the practical process by which areas of distinctive character are classified, mapped and described. In this assessment Landscape Character Types (LCT) and Landscape Character Areas (LCA) have been identified:

⁸ https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/6800/glca_report_severn___other_vales_text_2006-51673.pdf

- **Landscape Character Types** are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogenous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, landform, drainage patterns, vegetation, and historical land use and settlement pattern.
- **Landscape Character Areas** are single, unique areas and form discrete geographical areas of a specific landscape type.

2.14 An important feature of the approach adopted in this assessment is that it is objective. Written descriptions avoid value-laden terminology but particular attention is given to identifying characteristics that are distinctive, rare or special. In this way, the descriptions help raise awareness of an area's local distinctiveness and encourage appreciation of variations in character across the county.

Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment⁹

2.15 This Landscape Character Assessment provides a detailed review of the Cotswolds National Landscape. This assessment has identified 19 Landscape Character Types (LCT) and 68 Landscape Character Areas (LCA). Each of the generic landscape types is described within the assessment. The key characteristics are summarised followed by a review of landscape character, and the physical and human influences that have shaped the landscape and contributed to its character. Descriptions of the unique LCAs that occur within each LCT, and a summary of the principal features that are particular to each follow this.

Cotswold Water Park Integrated Landscape Character Assessment¹⁰

2.16 The purpose of the study is to provide a Landscape Character Assessment specifically focused on the Cotswold Water Park. It recognises that all landscapes matter, not just those that are particularly well known, or evoke strong images. The assessment acknowledges that each landscape character type and landscape character area has a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements that makes it different from another. Character gives each part of the landscape a particular sense of place, regardless of perceptions of quality or value.

2.17 Landscape characterisation is the practical process by which areas of distinctive character are classified, mapped and described. In this assessment, LCT and LCA have been identified using the same definitions as those used within the Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment.

⁹ <https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/about-the-cotswolds-national-landscape/landscape-character-assessment/>

¹⁰ <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/3xrnffaz/cotswold-water-park-landscape-character-assessment.pdf>

3.0 RATIONALE AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

3.1 The rationale behind the findings of this study on SLA's is set out below:

Purpose of SLA Designation

3.2 The purpose of SLA designation is to provide a second tier of landscape protection below the national designations of National Landscapes (and National Parks).

3.3 It is important to emphasise that the SLA designation identifies those landscapes which are of particularly high intrinsic value and which may require special protection for their own sake as part of the District's landscape resource. The designation is based on a formal assessment of the qualities of the area. It is not intended to be a multi-purpose designation to protect landscapes for other reasons, such as to prevent urban sprawl and the coalescence of settlements, to protect the setting of settlements or to maintain corridors of green space within urban areas for the purposes of recreation or general amenity.

Designation Criteria

3.4 The criteria used to evaluate the SLA areas recognises that the landscape is not simply a scenic or visual resource but that factors such as ecology, history and culture have a bearing upon the way the landscape is experienced and valued. Separate designations for areas of nature conservation and historic value already exist or can be made. Within the context of landscape evaluation, they add value and inform the valued qualities of the areas.

3.5 The guidance relevant to this study is set out below:

- *Guidance for Assessing Landscape for Designation as National Park or AONB in England, Natural England, updated June 2021*¹¹;
- *Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations, Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21*¹²; and
- *Guidance on Local Landscape Designations, Nature Scot, 2006*¹³.

Relationship with Cotswolds National Landscape

¹¹ https://www.surreyhill.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Guidance-on-Assessing-Landscapes-for-Designation-Updated-2021_final-30.6.21_2ndtestpdf.pdf

¹² <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/publication/tgn-02-21-assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations/>

¹³ <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2020-10/Guidance%20on%20Designating%20Local%20Landscape%20Areas.pdf>

- 3.6 In some places, there is no clear distinction in landscape character and qualities between the National Landscape and adjacent non-National Landscape areas. Therefore, some of the key CNL characteristics extend outside the National Landscape; these marginal areas form integral parts of the National Landscape character and its setting. They may be of comparable value to the CNL in terms of landscape qualities but also in terms of the level of protection given by national policy.

Boundary Criteria

- 3.7 The criteria for defining boundaries is:
- The inclusion of areas of similar character or topography;
 - Adoption of boundaries which follow clearly defined features on the ground;
 - The inclusion of features of ecological or historical value;
 - The inclusion of boundary settlements where they add to the quality of the area but not otherwise; and
 - Exclusion of large scale:
 - o Visually intrusive industry
 - o Mineral extraction
 - o Other inharmonious development.
- 3.8 In many cases, the definition of exact boundaries is difficult as the change in character and value changes gradually without an obvious cut-off point. The land either side of a proposed boundary may therefore not show clear differences.

SECTION B

SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS STATEMENTS OF IMPORTANCE

4.0 BARRINGTON DOWNS

Illustrative material contained within Figure 1

Summary of Key Landscape Qualities

The key landscape qualities identified within the 2001 and 2017 studies of the area are as follows:

- Large-scale regular grain of typical wolds landscapes;
- Gently sloping transitional landscape falling from the high wold to the dip slope lowland;
- Simple, uncluttered open landscape and skylines with occasional enclosure provided by regular plantations;
- Stone walls form many of the field boundaries;
- Mix of trimmed and outgrown hedges in addition to stone wall boundaries;
- Few and inconspicuous buildings including isolated farmsteads;
- Regular woodland blocks and shelterbelts;
- Elevated area widely visible to the south and with long views;
- Straight linear public rights of way including D'Arcy Dalton Way; and
- Tranquil landscape away from the A40 and B4425.

These key landscape qualities remain relevant to current guidance.

Description of Area

- 4.1 This is an area of High Wold Dip Slope to the north west, falling 45m to the Dip Slope lowland. It lies to the south of the Windrush valley with the A40 to the north and the B4425 Aldsworth to Burford Road to the south. Elevated in comparison with the Windrush Valley and dipping generally southward, it is a spacious landscape with wide views to parts of the CNL to the south. To the east, views extend to the distant Ridgeway, and from the northern edge, alongside the busy A40, there are panoramic views. It is typical of the distinct enclosure landscape of the wolds, having regular fields bounded by stone walls and some hedges in varying states of repair, and blocks of plantation woodland and some shelterbelts. This is a landscape of mainly arable farming with scattered, isolated farmsteads and barns. The former airfield buildings with grain silos alongside are the only minor unattractive features, close to the CNL boundary. The large proportion of the area to the east is unaffected by these structures.
- 4.2 The SLA lies entirely within the Cotswold National Character Area (NCA), NCA107. It forms part of the dip slope in the transition from the High Wold to the lowlands to the south east. This

landform and later planned enclosure in the area with its arable farming and limestone drystone walls and buildings give the area a sense of unity with the surrounding CNL.

- 4.3 Within the GLCA the SLA lies within the Dip Slope Lowland Landscape Character Type (LCT). This is contiguous with the wider area of Dip Slope Lowland that extends south and west into the adjacent CNL. The fields are mainly regular in form, ignoring the former unenclosed cultivation patterns. Cotswold stone is noted for buildings and boundary walls.
- 4.4 The area is also within an LCA called the South and Mid Cotswolds Lowlands as characterised within the Landscape Character Assessment of the Cotswolds AONB (2002). The LCA has a gently sloping mainly south easterly grain with more subtle undulations and shallower slope profiles than in the adjacent Dip-Slope Character Type. There is a consistent pattern of well-managed, productive mixed arable and pastoral landscape across this lower tract of land enclosed by both stone walls and hedgerows with hedgerow trees being a common feature. Woodlands within this LCA vary between the extensive woodlands and plantations within the large estates and a pattern of intermittent smaller woodlands associated with the farmed landscape.
- 4.5 To the north west, the SLA is bound by the High Wold Dip Slope LCT within the CNL. In terms of consistency, the north west part of the area should also have been classified as this as the topography and land cover are similar within the SLA. The only rationale for the boundary appears to be separate landscape assessments carried out within and outside the CNL rather than landscape features. This observation does not affect the status of the SLA as a transitional area between High Wold and lowland.
- 4.6 The north/south running rights of way in the eastern part of the area form part of the D'Arcy Dalton Way, which is a promoted trail. The route links major paths in Oxfordshire running from the Oxford Canal Towpath to the north to the Thames Path and Ridgeway to the south. This adds value to the area.

Justification of Need

- 4.7 This area is very typical of the rolling wolds landscape of the adjacent CNL and an integral part of the broader Cotswold landscape.
- 4.8 Scenically, it is similar to adjacent parts of the CNL, with its simple pattern of stone walls superimposed on the rolling landform. There are wide views and no major atypical features; the former airfield is not particularly obtrusive.
- 4.9 The area is viewed from parts of the CNL and its relationship with the A40 and the Windrush Valley is important.

Explanation of Boundary

- 4.10 The extent of the SLA is defined by the boundaries of the surrounding CNL and the Cotswold District Council boundary.
- 4.11 The northern boundary is contiguous with the CNL boundary and follows the A40 road corridor between the Windrush Camp Plantations in the west and the District boundary in the east.
- 4.12 The eastern boundary follows the District boundary from the A40 to the crossroads with the Little Barrington road on the B4425.
- 4.13 The southern boundary is contiguous with the CNL boundary and follows the B4425 to the boundary between the Aldsworth and Windrush parishes.
- 4.14 The western boundary is also contiguous with the CNL boundary and follows the parish boundary north from the B4425 and then field boundaries around Windrush Camp to the A40.

Key Management Recommendations

- Maintaining, enhancing and restoring drystone walls;
- Targeted planting of woodland buffers – this could be relevant to the south west of the area which is very open;
- Maintaining and reinstating management of small woodlands, windbreaks and copses; and
- Promoting the conservation of farmland birds and arable weeds, ensuring that a network of corridors is provided for the movement of species across farmland.

5.0 COLN VALLEY (NORTH OF FAIRFORD)

Illustrative material contained within Figure 2

Summary of Key Landscape Qualities

The key landscape qualities identified within the 2001 and 2017 studies of the area are as follows:

- Large-scale regular grain of parkland plateau landscape;
- The distinctive pastoral green river corridor into Fairford and its Conservation Area which acts as a setting to the church and other buildings and allows views north from the A417;
- Clearly- defined valley sides and floor;
- The clearly defined valley sides further north which enclose the flat valley floor and are given added drama by woodlands such as The Grove;
- The open, flat valley floor to the east of the traditional settlement of Quenington and its Conservation Area with its unspoilt views, skyline and backcloth of steep valley sides to the east;
- Visual links with Fairford;
- The undeveloped rural character of the SLA between the two settlements, with the exception of the schools;
- Unspoilt character of Quenington;
- The distinctive parkland landscape of Fairford Park including mature parkland trees in grass, plantations, the tree boundary to the east, the linear waterbody of Broad Water and the obelisk;
- Use of Cotswold stone for all buildings, walls and other built features;
- Woodland on valley sides and individual trees relating to river corridor;
- Variety of water features from various periods; and
- The tranquil character of the valley, which is mainly only accessible on foot.

These key landscape qualities remain relevant to current guidance.

Description of Area

- 5.1 Lying immediately to the north of Fairford, this area consists primarily of the LCT defined as lower dip slope valley with the margins being the edges of the lower dip slope plateau. The secluded, very attractive Coln Valley has the typically Cotswold stone village of Quenington nestling on its slopes just above the flood plain in the north. In the south, it extends through

to the heart of Fairford. Here, the beautiful tower of the church, set amongst trees and gardens, and overlooking the meadows, provides good views from the main road.

- 5.2 From within the valley, views are limited and woodland on the slopes adds to the sense of enclosure. The patterns of wooded slopes, small fields bounded by good hedges or stone walls, the meandering river, ponds and mill races with waterside willows combine to give pleasing aspects and a distinct sense of place. This small-scale intimate landscape provides a delightful contrast to the adjacent, more open, large-scale dipslope, here, on the eastern side of the valley; the patterns of large regular fields are enhanced by the parkland layout of Fairford Park. Much of the area is owned and managed by the Ernest Cook Trust. Integrated into this parkland are two schools and their grounds. Within the SLA area are several valley side woodlands and grasslands of high nature conservation value as well as the river corridor itself. The many features relating to the management and use of the river are also of historic interest.
- 5.3 The area is in a gentle transitional landscape between the Cotswolds dip slope to the north and the Thames Valley to the south. The northern part of the SLA lies within the Cotswold NCA107. The southern part lies in the Upper Thames Clay Vales NCA108.
- 5.4 In relation to the Cotswold NCA, the northern part of the area forms the southern edge of the dip slope, which continues north into the CNL. This landform and late planned enclosure with its arable farming lies on the upper slopes. The south flowing river of the Coln runs to the Thames and has pasture on the valley floor and steeper valley sides. These characteristics with the limestone drystone walls and buildings in Quenington give the area a sense of unity with the Cotswolds to the north.
- 5.5 In relation to the Upper Thames Clay Vales NCA, the southern part of the area continues the distinct character of the valley. The late planned field enclosure pattern in arable and parkland use lies on the upper slopes with pasture/meadow on the valley floor.
- 5.6 Within the GLCA the SLA lies within two LCTs – the Dip Slope Lowland Valley LCT to the north and the Cornbrash Lowlands LCT to the south.
- 5.7 The Dip Slope Lowland Valley LCT is contiguous with the same character type that extends north into the adjacent CNL.
- 5.8 The river valley water meadows and floodplain pastures are characteristically flat. Historically this is an intensively farmed landscape. Arable farmland is evident on the drier land that is frequently found on the gentler valley slopes. Woodland cover is characteristic with significant blocks of woodland combining with riverside trees to give the landscape a distinctively wooded character in some areas. Farmed slope woodlands form a backdrop to many views. The Grove woodland is particularly notable occupying the steep south eastern valley slopes. Quenington is designated as a Conservation Area combining the historic core of older stone dwellings with new stone properties.

- 5.9 The southern part of the SLA is within the Cornbrash Lowlands LCT. However, the description does not adequately describe this part of the valley, which has many of the same characteristics as the northern part. The main difference is that the area includes Fairford Park which is a former parkland landscape created for a mansion in the 17th century. This was demolished in the 1950s and a school now stands on the former site. An obelisk remains to the north. There is an extensive water body known as Broad Water, which is the central focal feature of the Park. There is an Anglo-Saxon burial ground located to the north east of Fairford.
- 5.10 The south of the SLA also lies within the Cotswold Water Park Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2009). This covers roughly a third of the overall SLA area. Two LCTs are present within this area – the Cornbrash Limestone Lowland LCT covers most of the area while the River Basin Clay Vale LCT covers a small area in the south.
- 5.11 Characteristically there is little difference between this small part of the SLA and the larger area to the north. Both LCTs present in the south of the SLA are on the edge of their boundaries where transition to neighbouring character types is occurring. This is represented by the common themes published within the key characteristics of both assessments being present. The settlement edge of Fairford to the south represents a hard boundary to the continuation of the prevailing SLA character.
- 5.12 The Southrop Lowlands LCA is characterised by its generally flat topography interspersed by occasional minor undulations. A sense of expansiveness prevails due to the prevalence of panoramic distant views towards elevated land. The hydrological features within the area are generally limited to a few minor streams and brooks that follow the flatter land between undulations. The River Coln flows from north to south through the central section of the Character Area, passing through the grounds of Fairford Park. The flow of the river is regulated by a set of weirs in the north of the park and this has created an extensive linear water body known as Broad Water as a central focal feature of the park.
- 5.13 Arable cultivation is the dominant land use in the character with fields generally large to medium in size and regular in shape. These tend to be bound by hedgerow.
- 5.14 The Fairford and Lechlade Settled Wetlands LCA is predominantly flat and low-lying with hydrological features such as the River Coln and ditches influencing the area. A diverse agricultural landscape predominates with varying field sizes and land uses. In the wider landscape, a mixture of arable and pastoral land use predominates in medium to large scale fields. Low well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows with isolated hedgerow trees are a common boundary treatment in the agricultural landscape. These hedgerows are becoming gappy in places meaning some fields are open to one another.

Justification of Need

- 5.15 As a landscape resource, this area is typical of the lower dip slope valleys and surrounds before they merge with the Thames Valley.
- 5.16 In terms of the landscape quality, this area is a fine example of the LCTs and displays most of the published key characteristics with little in the way of incongruent features.
- 5.17 Scenically, it has many attractive features where vegetation, stone and water are integrated within a clearly defined valley.
- 5.18 Around Fairford, this area is well used for informal recreation by local people as an interesting and accessible area of countryside.
- 5.19 Conservation interests are well represented here, in particular the ancient woodlands of the valley sides, the historic interest of the parkland and the river.
- 5.20 The relationship of the valley to the historic heart of Fairford helps to make this landscape special.

Explanation of Boundary

- 5.21 The northern boundary is contiguous with the CNL boundary and follows the minor road to the north of Quenington as it crosses the valley. This is from the crossroads with the Coln St. Aldwyns road in the west to Netherton in the east.
- 5.22 The eastern boundary follows the footpath (Quenington Footpath 22) from Netherton southwards and then continues along Leafield Road along the top of the valley from Quenington to Fairford.
- 5.23 The southern boundary is defined by the settlement edge at Fairford.
- 5.24 The western boundary is aligned to follow the minor road on this side of the valley all the way from the Mill Lane junction West End Gardens to the crossroads at Quenington.

Key Management Recommendations

- Maintaining, enhancing and restoring drystone walls;
- Maintaining and reinstating hedgerows management including laying encompassing existing hedgerows, and new hedgerow trees planting;
- Maintaining and reinstating management of small woodlands, windbreaks and copses;
- Maintaining the nucleated settlement pattern of small villages in the valley;
- Conserving the small enclosed pastoral fields of the valleys dip slope;

- Conserving and managing historic parklands to retain their important contribution to landscape character;
- Encouraging the continued use of local stone as a building material and field boundaries, new developments and conservation projects;
- Promoting the conservation of farmland birds and arable weeds, ensuring that a network of corridors is provided for the movement of species across farmland.
- Conserving ponds, species rich ditches, lowland meadow, semi-natural habitats;
- Conserving veteran trees;
- Conserving heritage assets along rivers;
- Improve the condition of locally characteristic features such as ridge and furrow;
- Ensure that design reflects an understanding of historic settlement pattern and traditional building materials and conserves significant heritage features; and
- Consider the physical and functional links between settlements and the wider landscape, such as views and water flow.

6.0 KEMBLE/EWEN

Illustrative material contained within Figure 3

Summary of Key Landscape Qualities

The key landscape qualities identified within the 2001 and 2017 studies of the area are as follows:

- Gently undulating low plateau with medium and large arable fields bounded by good hedges;
- Small pastoral valleys with woodlands;
- Unspoilt sweeping open valleys of the Thames and its tributaries;
- The sinuous headwaters of the River Thames with associated riparian vegetation, valley bottom pasture and woodland;
- The Thames Path, running adjacent to the river and through Ewen;
- Clear open streams providing good habitats and visual interest;
- The well treed dismantled railway and disused Thames and Severn Canal which form strong lines and enclosure across the landscape;
- Linear woodlands forming enclosure and screening;
- Small unspoilt village of Ewen;
- The linear gappy character of Ewen and its Cotswold Stone buildings;
- The Conservation Area at Kemble with the Church spire which acts as a local landmark which is particularly visible in views from the east;
- The virtually straight Fosse Way Roman Road; and
- The tranquillity of the area away from the main roads, particularly associated with watercourses.

These key landscape qualities remain relevant to current guidance.

Description of Area

- 6.1 The Kemble/Ewen SLA lies to the east of the A433 main Tetbury/Cirencester road. This is where the Cotswold lower dip slope merges with the lowlands of the Thames valley.
- 6.2 The arable land of the low undulating plateau is interspersed with the lush pastoral lands of the small valleys that carry the headwaters of the Thames. These valleys form the basis of the SLA and are more pronounced in the western part of the area. Opening out downstream to become shallower and less distinct as they gather to form the young Thames. From the main roads, these valleys with small woodlands add an intimacy to the landscape. Away from the main roads, the area is generally quiet and views are possible across several fields at a time.

- 6.3 The spire of Kemble church is seen from much of the area projecting above the hedge tops. The small village of Ewen, adjacent to the Thames, has many traditional buildings and retains its essentially rural character. Other settlements consist only of a few scattered farms. Crossing the area is a dismantled railway, which now appears as a linear woodland, adding interest and enclosure. This woodland also helps to screen the adjacent airfield in the south, the fringes of Cirencester in the north and defines the north western edge of Kemble. Along, with the remaining tree-lined sections of the disused Thames and Severn Canal there are features of some historic and nature conservation interest. The Thames Path National Trail crosses the area, following this important river from its source at Thames Head, which is just within the CNL.
- 6.4 The area is in a gentle transitional landscape between the Cotswolds dip slope to the north and the Thames Valley to the south, linked by the course of the Thames itself. The majority of the north western part of the SLA lies within the Cotswold NCA107. The south eastern part lies in the Upper Thames Clay Vale NCA108.
- 6.5 In relation to the Cotswolds NCA, the north western part of the area forms the southern edge of the dip slope, which continues north into the CNL. This landform and late planned enclosure with its arable farming lies on the upper slopes. The south east flowing Thames has pasture on the valley floor and gentle valley sides. These characteristics with the limestone drystone walls and buildings in the core of Kemble, Ewen and at Clayfurlong Farm and elsewhere, give the area a sense of unity with the Cotswolds to the north.
- 6.6 In relation to the Upper Thames Vales NCA, the southern part of the area continues the character of the Thames Valley but the river basin lowland is flanked by Cornbrash Lowlands. The late planned field enclosure pattern in arable use lies on the gentle higher slopes with pasture/meadow on the valley floor.
- 6.7 Within the GLCA the SLA lies within three LCTs – the Dip Slope Lowland LCT to the north west, the River Basin Lowland to the south and the junction between the two pinched by the Cornbrash Lowlands LCT to the east and west.
- 6.8 The Dip Slope Lowland LCT is the largest area and is contiguous with the same character type that extends north into the adjacent CNL.
- 6.9 The fields are mainly regular in form, ignoring the former unenclosed cultivation patterns, Cotswold stone is noted for buildings and boundary walls.
- 6.10 The SLA lies in the western part of the Kemble Dip Slope LCA within this type. Here the upper reaches of the Thames and its tributaries are noted with their courses often marked by scattered trees and scrubby vegetation. The pastures are noted as on the periphery of

settlements and in areas along the line of the dismantled railway. The fields are enclosed either by low stone walls or hedgerows of varying condition.

- 6.11 Prominent tree lines align with some sections of the dismantled railway. The presence of overgrown hedgerows together with the intermittent woodland copses combine in places to create the impression of a well treed character (to the north east). The character area retains a largely rural character, and beyond the largest settlement of Kemble, there is a pattern of scattered farmsteads and detached dwellings. Within Kemble, stone buildings surround a village green and include the village church with its prominent spire, which forms a local landmark. High voltage pylons have an influence on the landscape and Kemble Airfield is a notable feature. Here, large-scale industrial units in converted hangars and scattered woodland blocks punctuate the landscape.
- 6.12 The southern part of the SLA is within the River Basin Lowland LCT (Somerford Keynes LCA).
- 6.13 The SLA lies in the Somerford Keynes and South Cerney LCA. The land use pattern is stated as small scale regularly enclosed pasture fields within the floodplain adjacent to the River Thames with horse and sheep grazing fields separated by low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows. Occasional medium scale arable fields line the shallow slopes and occasional local hillocks rise above the floodplain. This area also extends to include the lakes of the Cotswold Water Park, which bounds the SLA to the south.
- 6.14 The Cornbrash Lowlands LCT occupies the smallest area of the SLA. The area is defined by the extent of the underlying geology- the Middle Jurassic Cornbrash formation and forms a transition between the Dip Slope Lowland landscapes to the north that extend into the CNL, and the generally flatter River Basin Lowland of the Thames to the south. The area is characterised by a subdued topography, with gentle undulations where the Thames tributaries and their small interconnecting tributary valleys extend across the area.
- 6.15 The area has a predominantly quiet rural character and is in the Poole Keynes and Ewen Lowlands LCA.
- 6.16 The south east of the SLA lies within the Cotswold Water Park Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2009). Two LCTs are present within this area – the River Basin Clay Vale LCT covers most of the area while the Cornbrash Limestone Lowland LCT covers a small area in the west.
- 6.17 Characteristically there is little difference between this small part of the SLA and the larger area to the north west. Both LCTs present in the south east of the SLA are on the edge of their boundaries where transition to neighbouring character types is occurring. This is represented by the common themes published within the key characteristics of both assessments being present.

- 6.18 Within the River Basin Clay Vale LCT is the South Cerney and Ashton Keynes Settled Wetland LCA, a traditional land use pattern of small scale regularly enclosed pasture fields is present with floodplain adjacent to the River Churn and River Thames. Horse and sheep grazing fields are separated by low, well maintained and regularly trimmed hedgerows predominating along the valley bottom. Occasional medium scale arable fields align the shallow slopes with occasional local hillocks that rise above the floodplain.
- 6.19 Within the Cornbrash Limestone Lowland LCT is the Poole Keynes and Ewen Lowlands LCA, which is comprised of a medium to large scale landscape with a very gently undulating landform that can give the impression of being flat. There is a general sense of openness and expansiveness with long distance views to the south, and glimpsed views of the Dip Slope Limestone Lowlands to the north. There is a wide variety of land uses including scrubby pasture, semi-improved sheep pasture, tree plantations as well as arable cultivation, all in fields of varying sizes from small to large. This mosaic of contrasting land uses combines to create a colourful textural landscape.

Justification of Need

- 6.20 This area clearly illustrates the smaller-scale valley/plateau characteristics of the lower dip slope and its transition to the Thames Valley.
- 6.21 Scenically, the gentle landform with small valleys and streams, the wooded areas associated with former railways and canal, and the attractive village of Ewen combine to form a pleasing landscape.
- 6.22 There are a variety of sites with nature conservation interest and some historic interest relating to the former railway and canal and the wetlands of the Thames corridor.
- 6.23 Although close to main routes and towns, this area retains a quiet atmosphere.
- 6.24 These are the headwaters of the most culturally significant river in Britain.

Explanation of Boundary

- 6.25 The western finger of the SLA bounded by the CNL to its north and the edge of Kemble airfield to the south.
- 6.26 The remainder of the north western boundary is contiguous with the CNL boundary along the A433 Fosse Way.
- 6.27 The northern boundary follows field and woodland edges between the A433 and the minor road from Siddington to Ewen.

- 6.28 The eastern boundary follows minor roads and paths, skirting east of Ewen and the Thames.
- 6.29 The south eastern boundary follows field boundaries crossing the Thames and is contiguous with the Cotswold Water Park boundary.
- 6.30 The southern boundary follows minor roads to Kemble and closely skirts around the settlement to the north. It continues along the A429 Kemble/Malmesbury road to the edge of Kemble airfield.

Key Management Recommendations

- Management and conservation of the River Thames corridor;
- Safeguarding the setting of Kemble to the south east in relation to Kemble House;
- Restoration of the Thames and Severn Canal;
- Maintaining, enhancing and restoring drystone walls;
- Maintaining and reinstating hedgerow management including laying encompassing existing hedgerows, and new hedgerow tree planting;
- Maintaining and reinstating management of small woodlands, windbreaks and copses;
- Maintaining the nucleated settlement pattern of small villages in the valley;
- Conserving the small enclosed pastoral fields of the valleys dip slope;
- Conserving and managing historic parklands to retain their important contribution to landscape character;
- Encouraging the continued use of local stone as a building material and field boundaries, new developments and conservation projects;
- Promoting the conservation of farmland birds and arable weeds, ensuring that a network of corridors is provided for the movement of species across farmland; and
- Active/sustainable travel provision on the route of the former Cirencester to Kemble and Kemble to Tetbury railway lines.

7.0 Moreton-in-Marsh Surrounds

Illustrative material contained within Figures 4a and 4b

Summary of Key Landscape Qualities

The key landscape qualities identified within the 2001 and 2017 studies of the area are as follows:

- Wide views to and from higher CNL land to the west;
- Mixed farming with medium to large fields;
- Nationally important ridge and furrow pastures;
- Hedges with trees and stream sides;
- Use of local stone and brick in small villages and scattered farms;
- The distinctive forms of the stone built settlements at Todenham (linear with gaps) and Evenlode (two groups separated by a large gap);
- Archaeological and historic landscape interest relating to Roman and medieval activities;
- The church spire at Todenham is a local landmark visible at a distance from the surrounding valleys and slopes;
- Quiet unspoilt atmosphere;
- The area is generally tranquil and feels remote short distances away from Moreton-in-Marsh and the Fosse Way; and
- The distinctive straight linear character of the Fosse Way and The Cotswolds Line.

These key landscape qualities remain relevant to current guidance.

Description of Area

- 7.1 This SLA is split into two parts, which are located to the north and south of the Moreton-in-Marsh settlement. The northern SLA area is located to the east of the Oxford-Worcester railway line (The Cotswolds Line). The Fosse Way passes through the middle of the area north to south. The southern SLA area is located to the east of the Fosse Way. The Oxford-Worcester railway line (The Cotswolds Line) passes through the middle of the area north to south.
- 7.2 The SLA consists of the Cotswold fringe clay vales landscape character type with, in the south, the broad vale of the upper Evenlode and, in the north, the rounded hills, ridges and gentle valleys of the headwaters of the River Stour. The wide saucer-shaped Vale of Moreton lies in the centre. Mixed farming, hedges with trees, small meandering streams with willows, and unspoilt villages, built of the local orange stone and brick, are seen within sweeping views to surrounding higher wolds. From roads running down eastward from the wolds there are fine wide views over these vales. The patterns of historic land use and settlement are strong. These

features include Fosse Way (an inter-regional Roman Road), the Roman settlement at Dorn, the earthwork remains of several mediaeval villages and areas of ridge and furrow, as well as the more obvious historic villages and patterns of settlement. The young rivers and their associated wetlands are of considerable nature conservation interest and there are several ancient woodlands. This is a quiet, pleasant and well-managed rural landscape.

- 7.3 Located between the two parts of the SLA lies the market town of Moreton-in-Marsh, which is a popular tourist destination with main routes passing through it. Development on its outskirts and the disused airfield, now the Fire Services College, are out of character and detract from the otherwise rural landscape.
- 7.4 The SLA is located within Cotswolds NCA107.
- 7.5 In relation to the Cotswolds NCA, the area consists of valleys cut into the transition to the scarp slope to the north and the dip slope to the south. The Thames/Severn watershed separates the valleys of the River Evenlode, which run south towards the Thames and the Knee Brook and other watercourses, which run north east towards the River Stour, and thence the Avon and Severn. Permanent pasture prevails in the river valleys although there is arable farming on the better-drained slopes. Locally quarried limestone is used in the buildings of scattered settlements such as Moreton-in-Marsh and Evenlode giving the area a strong sense of unity. The area is bounded and crossed by the Fosse Way Roman road.
- 7.6 Within the GLCA the SLA lies in two LCTs- Undulating Lowland Vale LCT to the north and Pastoral Lowland Vale to the south.
- 7.7 The Undulating Lowland Vale LCT is similar to the Pastoral Lowland LCT in the CNL to the north west and benefits from the backcloth of the Farmed Slopes LCT to the south east.
- 7.8 The character area is named as the Upper Stour Hills and Valleys LCA. The Knee Brook occupies a particularly well defined valley form. Many of the fields are bordered by drainage ditches and lush wet meadows. Also evident are a series of springs, issuing from the sloping landform. Whilst current settlement is sparse, several mediaeval villages are located along the course of the Knee Brook indicating that the landscape was once more heavily settled (e.g. Upper and Lower Ditchford). Away from the Fosse Way, the area retains a generally remote character with the main settlement being the linear ridgetop village of Todenham, with its distinctive church spire.
- 7.9 The Pastoral Lowland Vale LCT runs south from the watershed and is contiguous with the Pastoral Vale LCT within the CNL to the west. Generally sparse settlement pattern dominated by scattered farmsteads and dwellings.
- 7.10 The character area is named as the Upper Evenlode Vale LCA. The generally poorly drained fluvioglacial deposits of the vale limited settlement and farming of the area until Romano-

British and Saxon times and have meant a large proportion of pastoral use. The Roman town of Dorn lies on the Fosse Way, north of Moreton. However, the sparsity of settlement and roads through the area remains, meaning it retains a remote rural character, especially away from the A429. Ironstone is evident in buildings and imparts distinctive warm brown colour to the older stone houses and field barns. However, brick is also prevalent with a local supply near Paxford. Evenlode, the principal village in the area to the south, has distinctive (split) nucleated form and village green (and associated ridge and furrow).

Justification of Need

- 7.11 Within the Cotswold District, these areas are the only example of the clay vales that fringe the Cotswold Hills to the east and are therefore important landscape resources within the district.
- 7.12 They illustrate all the key characteristics of the landscape types. Incongruous features are few and are not intrusive within the wider landscape.
- 7.13 The wide vales with sweeping views to the higher land are aesthetically pleasing and have a tangible sense of place.
- 7.14 The areas are generally considered to be an essential part of the Cotswolds, adjacent to Moreton-in-Marsh, a popular tourist destination.
- 7.15 There are many features of archaeological and historic interest within the areas.

Explanation of Boundary

- 7.16 For area north of Moreton-in-Marsh:
 - The north and eastern boundaries follow the District/County boundary with Stratford-on-Avon District (Warwickshire);
 - The southern boundary skirts the Fire Services College grounds and follows the Moreton to Todenham road;
 - The western boundary follows the railway/CNL boundary north of Moreton; and
 - The north western boundary is contiguous with the CNL, skirting Paxford and following the B4479.
- 7.17 For area south of Moreton-in-Marsh:
 - The eastern boundary follows the District/County boundary with West Oxfordshire and is contiguous with the CNL boundary around Adlestrop, the A436 and Oddington;
 - The western boundary is contiguous with the CNL boundary, skirting Broadwell and following the Fosse Way south of Moreton; and
 - The northern boundary skirts the built-up edge of Moreton and follows the A44 to the county boundary.

7.18 Alterations to the boundaries around the Moreton-in-Marsh settlement should be made to take account of baseline changes to the south of the settlement. The areas recommended for removal from the SLA are set out below and highlighted on Figure 4b:

- The dwellings along Croft Holm within the south of the settlement should be removed from the SLA with the boundary redrawn around the development along the neighbouring field boundary;
- Residential development is permitted at 'Land to the East of Evenlode Road'. The permitted site is bound by the settlement edge to the north, water treatment plant to the east, Evenlode Road to the west and partially by the salt depot to the south. The field this permitted development is located within should be removed from the SLA with the boundary redrawn along Evenlode Road and the field boundaries to the south and east; and
- Residential development is permitted at 'Land at Dunstall Farm'. The permitted site is bound by the settlement edge to the north, railway line to the east, Fosse Way to the west and field boundaries to the south. The fields this permitted development is located within should be removed from the SLA with the boundary redrawn along the railway line and field boundaries to the south.

Key Management Recommendations

- Maintaining and reinstating hedgerow management including laying encompassing existing hedgerows, and new hedgerow tree planting;
- Maintaining and reinstating management of small woodlands, windbreaks and copses;
- Maintaining the nucleated settlement pattern of small villages;
- Restoring and conserving the mediaeval field patterns. Particular attention should be given to the protection and management of the nationally important ridge and furrow patterns such as near Todenham;
- Encouraging the continued use of local stone as a building material and field boundaries, new developments and conservation projects;
- Promoting the conservation of farmland birds and arable weeds, ensuring that a network of corridors is provided for the movement of species across farmland;
- Maintaining the intricate rural road network characterised by semi-natural grassland verges and ensuring verges are sympathetically managed for their biodiversity;
- Flood protection – maintaining and enhancing floodplains; and
- The Diamond Way passes through the SLA. Maintenance and enhancement of the corridor for continued community use and biodiversity gain.

8.0 North Cirencester

Illustrative material contained within Figure 5

Summary of Key Landscape Qualities

The key landscape qualities identified within the 2001 and 2017 studies of the area are as follows:

- Large-scale regular grain of elevated plateau landscape;
- Clearly defined valley sides and floor;
- Strong woodland belts on the dip slope, giving shelter and enclosure;
- Well-treed valley sides;
- The simple, relatively unenclosed valley bottom which, with the valley sides, create a clear and unspoilt rural green corridor between Cirencester and Stratton;
- River corridor vegetation;
- The distinctive sinuous braided channels of the River Churn with the network of drains and small low-key bridges;
- Visual links with the old core of Cirencester, in particular views to the Church of St John the Baptist;
- Historic landscapes of the Chester-Master Abbey estate;
- Traditional Cotswold character of Baunton; and
- The Monarch's Way long distance footpath and other public rights of way along the valley floor and lower valley sides.

These key landscape qualities remain relevant to current guidance.

Description of Area

- 8.1 The area is located immediately to the north of Cirencester and is bound by the CNL to the north, east and west. Two distinct landscape character types are represented, namely the Cotswold Lower Dip slope in the east and one of the Lower Dip Slope Valleys in the west.
- 8.2 In common with other parts of the lower dip slope, the land to the east of the Whiteway generally dips southwards giving wide or panoramic views. This is especially true of the northern more elevated parts of the area. The fine tower of the Church of St John the Baptist is seen rising above trees at intervals from several places.
- 8.3 The historically important approach to the town along The Whiteway borders the rugby ground on its southern most stretch. The regular layout of fields and strong woodland structure lends an ordered, uncluttered appearance to the landscape, which has more enclosed

parkland qualities on the southern slopes. This landscape penetrates between blocks of 20th Century housing close to the historic core of Cirencester and abuts the Abbey Grounds. Together, these landscapes act as a green wedge that penetrates into the centre of the town. Recreational uses, such as the rugby club, cricket ground (near Cirencester) and recreation ground (at Stratton) are included in the SLA as they form an integral part of the landscape close to the settlements. The long distance footpath known as the Monarch's Way also passes through the SLA and provides a recreational walking route through the area.

- 8.4 In contrast, the Churn Valley, typically a distinct and flat-bottomed valley, is much more intimate and finely grained. Although overlooked by housing to some extent on either side, most of it retains its pastoral character. There are small fields, paddocks and allotments, and a variety of trees and small woods on the valley sides, with willows along the small watercourses and grazed water meadow on the valley floor, which also has ecological importance. Stratton and the Bowling Green estate intrude visually to an extent, but their well-treed appearance softens their impact. On the other hand, the small village of Baunton is built primarily of Cotswold stone and nestling on the lower valley side adds to the attractive character of the valley.
- 8.5 Many parts of the area are conspicuous from busy routes into and around Cirencester. However, the 1997 bypass (A417) which cuts through the area, partly in cutting, is not seen or heard at a distance due to a combination of topography and vegetation cover.
- 8.6 Aspects of the important ancient roots of Cirencester are evident in the area. These include the prehistoric Tar Barrow. The Roman roads and ancient Whiteway, and the historic landscape associated with Cirencester Abbey and the Chester-Master estate.
- 8.7 The SLA lies entirely within the Cotswold NCA107 National Landscape Character Area. The western part forms part of the Lower Churn Valley, which continues north into the CNL. The eastern part forms part of the dip slope, which continues further north and east into the CNL. The river valley permanent pasture with its hedge boundaries, the locally quarried limestone of Baunton village together with the dip slope landform and later planned enclosure with its arable farming and limestone drystone walls give the area a sense of unity with the surrounding Cotswolds.
- 8.8 Within the GLCA, the SLA lies within two landscape character types - the Dip Slope Lowland Valley LCT to the west and the Dip Slope Lowlands LCT to the east.
- 8.9 The Dip Slope Lowland Valley is contiguous with the same character type that extends north into the adjacent CNL.
- 8.10 Though the valley forms a distinct slope profile, it is generally broader and shallower than further upstream. Improved pasture predominates. Stone wall boundaries are a regular feature adjacent to settlements. Overall, field boundaries vary along the valley including

hedgerows, post and wire and post and rail fencing. The valley retains a largely open character because of large scale fields and limited woodland cover. The course of the River Churn meanders along the valley floor with numerous braided channels and ditches flowing into the main channel. It is frequently marked by mature trees and riparian vegetation. The Monarch's Way long distance footpath follows the river course along the valley floor.

- 8.11 The Dip Slope Lowland is contiguous with the wider area of Dip Slope Lowland that extends north and east into the adjacent CNL.
- 8.12 The fields are mainly regular in form, ignoring the former unenclosed cultivation patterns. Cotswold stone is noted for buildings and boundary walls.
- 8.13 The SLA lies in the western part of The Ampneys LCA in this type. Here the network of principal roads converging on Cirencester are noted including the A417 and the A419. These form part of the system of Roman roads that linked the town and signify the importance of the settlement during the Roman occupation.

Justification of Need

- 8.14 The proximity of this typical lower dip slope valley and plateau landscape to the historic core of Cirencester reflects an important characteristic of the Cotswolds landscape's relationship with its settlements, with key views from higher ground and along the valley to the Parish church.
- 8.15 The area penetrates into the built area close to the attractive historic core of Cirencester.
- 8.16 This landscape retains its integrity and exhibits many of the key characteristics of the bordering National Landscape types to the north and west. Elements such as the recent bypass, pylons and housing on the edges of the town are detractors, but are not sufficiently intrusive to exclude parts of the area from the SLA.
- 8.17 The scenic qualities of the small-scale enclosed landscape of the Churn valley contrasting with the large-scale regular patterns of the plateau are aesthetically pleasing.
- 8.18 Within the SLA there are a variety of features of historic landscape interest worthy of conservation, e.g. The Whiteway, Abbey Estate, and areas of wildlife interest e.g. Churn Valley.

Explanation of Boundary

- 8.19 The boundaries are drawn close around the built-up areas on the northern side of Cirencester and Stratton so that the SLA forms a strong link between the CNL and the town. Clear boundaries, such as roads or watercourses, have been defined wherever possible.

- 8.20 The northern and eastern boundaries are contiguous with the CNL designation and reflect the fact that the landscape is similar on either side of the boundary. The boundary runs between the edge of Stratton, passing through the village of Baunton, and then following the A429 Stow Road from Shooters Hill south to Burford Road.
- 8.21 The south eastern boundary follows the well-defined line of Burford Road to its junction with Grove Lane to include the Chester-Master estate land. Views over the eastern areas of Cirencester lie to the south.
- 8.22 The south eastern boundary skirts the edge of the town, following the edge of Grove Lane, contiguous with the Conservation Area boundary and the Abbey Grounds. The Bowling Green housing estate forms a northern extension of Cirencester, around which the SLA skirts. The Whiteway forms a well-defined edge before the boundary turns west and then south around the estate down to a track close to the valley floor and skirting the allotments.
- 8.23 The southern boundary is formed by the River Churn/Mill Pound, as this forms a logical edge to Cirencester.
- 8.24 The boundary then turns northwards, where it meets with the CNL and follows this contiguously up the Daglingworth stream. At the Gloucester Road, it carries on northwards, hugging the eastern built-up edge of Stratton, including open space, until it reaches Baunton Lane, which forms the northern boundary.

Key Management Recommendations

- Maintain separation between the settlements of Cirencester and Stratton;
- Protection and enhancement of floodplain, as designated in the Local Plan policies map;
- Continued protection and enhancement of the Local Green Space at the Bowling Green;
- Maintaining, enhancing and restoring drystone walls;
- Maintaining and reinstating hedgerows management including laying existing hedgerows, and new hedgerow tree planting;
- Maintaining and reinstating management of small woodlands, windbreaks and copses;
- Maintaining the nucleated settlement pattern of small villages in the valley;
- Conserving the small enclosed pastoral fields of the dip slope valleys;
- Encouraging the continued use of local stone as a building material and field boundaries, new development and conservation projects; and
- Promoting the conservation of farmland birds and arable weeds, ensuring that a network of corridors is provided for the movement of species across farmland.

9.0 Norton Hall

Illustrative material contained within Figure 6

Summary of Key Landscape Qualities

The key landscape qualities identified within the 2001 and 2017 studies of the area are as follows:

- Low ridge;
- There are glimpsed wide views over the vale from the ridge;
- Medium and large arable fields;
- The area forms a positive unspoilt rural backcloth to the surrounding vale, complementing the nearby scarp from which it extends;
- Numerous small areas of woodland and large hedges;
- The parkland at Norton Hall has mature trees including oaks, woodland and estate fencing;
- Inconspicuous buildings;
- The railway line is discreet and its well treed embankments are an important contributing enclosure to the landscape and form the skyline in parts; and
- Viewed from scarp above and Vale below.

These key landscape qualities remain relevant to current guidance.

Description of Area

- 9.1 At the base of the Cotswolds scarp, between Mickleton and Aston Subedge, this area forms the edge of the Vale of Evesham extending northward into Worcestershire. It consists of a low rolling ridge rising above the flat land of the adjacent vale. It provides wooded skylines to nearby parts of the Vale. But is overshadowed by the Cotswold scarp to the south east and Meon Hill to the north. From vantage points on the scarp top, the area is seen in the middle distance as part of wide and far-reaching views. Compared with the intensively cultivated land of the Vale to the north and south, this ridge appears relatively well wooded and natural. The wooded embankments of the railway line passing along the ridge add to this impression. Hidden within its parkland is Norton Hall and there are a few scattered houses, but generally this area is less populated than the rest of the Vale.
- 9.2 The SLA lies entirely within the Severn and Avon Vales NCA106. The Cotswold NCA107 lies just to the south east. Whilst part of the vale area, the SLA forms a transitional ridge linking into the escarpment to the south east, breaking up the low lying landscape, and as such is atypical. The relevant NCA key characteristics indicate that the area is a combination of arable and

pastoral farmland and woodland is sparsely distributed except in parkland, such as at Norton Hall. This parkland is not registered.

- 9.3 Within the GLCA, the SLA lies within the Unwooded Vale LCT, which is associated with the Severn Vale LCTs. It lies to the north west of the Cotswold scarp slope.
- 9.4 The SLA lies within the Mickleton Vale Fringe LCA. The area covered by the SLA is described as a locally distinctive north west/south east aligned ridge of elevated land comprising of muddy limestone within the Blue Lias formation. It forms the remnant of a former outlier of the Cotswolds massif. There are two summit areas - Thistley Hill and New Hill (just outside CDC area). The ridge restricts views to the escarpment from parts of the vale.
- 9.5 Semi-improved and improved pastures are noted around Thistley Hill.

Justification of Need

- 9.6 The area forms an atypical element of the Vale of Evesham landscape within the District.
- 9.7 Its gentle topography and wooded skylines provide a pleasing contrast to the adjacent regular layout of the flat Vale.
- 9.8 The area is unspoilt.
- 9.9 Compared to the intensive agriculture and other activities of the Vale of Evesham, this area has a quiet atmosphere.
- 9.10 The area of parkland contributes to historic landscape value.
- 9.11 This area forms part of important views from the scarp.

Explanation of Boundary

- 9.12 The north eastern boundary is formed by Norton Brook from the District/County boundary to the B4632.
- 9.13 The south eastern boundary is contiguous with the CNL boundary, which follows the B4632.
- 9.14 The south western boundary follows field boundaries along the base of the ridge to the south of Norton Grounds Farm and White's Farm.
- 9.15 The north-western boundary follows the District/County boundary with Wychavon from Far Polden to Norton Brook.

Key Management Recommendations

- Maintaining, enhancing and restoring hedgerows;
- Promoting, managing, restoring and enhancing designed parklands and deer parks;
- Protecting veteran trees in parklands;
- Protecting varied heritage assets such as earthwork remains (Norton-sub-Edge deserted settlement and moated site);
- Protecting and enhancing ancient woodland across the area;
- Targeted planting of new woodland; and
- Protecting species rich grassland.

SECTION C

RELATIONSHIP WITH PROPOSED SITE ALLOCATIONS

10.0 INTRODUCTION TO PROPOSED SITE ALLOCATIONS

- 10.1 The identification of land within or adjoining an SLA does not preclude its allocation for development. SLA designation is intended to ensure that development responds appropriately to the special character and key landscape qualities of the area. It is not an absolute constraint on development.
- 10.2 The SLA Review provides a strategic understanding of the valued landscape qualities that should inform this process. It does not replace the more detailed landscape sensitivity assessment of individual sites. Where development is proposed within or close to an SLA, the allocation policy and subsequent masterplanning should ensure that the scale, disposition and form of development respond to the relevant landscape evidence. Site-specific LVA or LVIA will also be required at the planning application stage.

11.0 PROPOSED SITE ALLOCATIONS

Cirencester

- 11.1 C190 is partially located within the Kemble/Ewen SLA. Development would represent an extension of the existing Steadings development and would introduce built form into countryside that contributes to the southern and western landscape setting of Cirencester. Effects are likely to be most apparent across the more open parts of the site and from approaches to the town.
- 11.2 The allocation could potentially be accommodated be considered appropriate in strategic landscape terms where development is treated as a planned extension of the existing urban area rather than as a separate or isolated incursion into the countryside. The site does not encompass the more intimate river valleys, headwaters of the River Thames or the distinctive settlement of Ewen that are central to the SLA's special qualities. There is therefore scope for any future development proposals to concentrate built form in those parts of the site most closely related to the existing settlement and to use the landscape framework to provide a clear and defensible long-term edge.
- 11.3 Subject to these measures, development could be accommodated while limiting effects on the principal landscape qualities of the Kemble/Ewen SLA. However, a residual change to the rural setting of Cirencester would remain and is acknowledged through the allocation process.

Fairford

- 11.4 Site F57A lies within the setting of the Coln Valley (North of Fairford) SLA rather than within the designated area itself. The SLA is particularly valued for the distinctive pastoral river corridor extending into Fairford, its clearly defined valley landform, historic parkland, wooded slopes, tranquillity and visual relationship with the historic core of the town.

- 11.5 Development on the eastern side of Fairford could increase the perception of urban encroachment into the wider countryside. However, the site's location outside the SLA and its relationship with the existing settlement provide some scope to accommodate development without directly affecting the principal river corridor or the intimate, enclosed landscapes that form the core of the designation.
- 11.6 The site could potentially be accommodated, provided that development is carefully contained and does not detract from the distinctive landscape character or visual prominence of the Coln Valley.

Kemble

- 11.7 K12 lies partly within the Kemble/Ewen SLA and has the greatest potential of the proposed Kemble allocations to affect its special character. K15 lies within the setting of the SLA and could affect the transition between the settlement and the surrounding wooded and pastoral landscape. K9 is entirely within the SLA but has been excluded from the developable area of the strategic site.
- 11.8 The exclusion of K9 from the developable area represents an important landscape-led response. It avoids development within land more directly associated with the SLA and provides an opportunity to retain an open landscape buffer and green infrastructure connection. This substantially reduces the potential for impacts on the SLA landscape qualities.

Mickleton

- 11.9 MK20B and MK19 adjoin the Norton Hall SLA and therefore have the potential to affect its setting rather than resulting in the direct loss of land within the designation. The SLA is valued for its low rolling ridge, wooded skyline, quiet and relatively unspoilt character, parkland and role as a rural backcloth to the Vale of Evesham. It also contributes to views from the Cotswold escarpment.
- 11.10 The sites' relationship with the existing settlement provides some justification for their consideration as potential extensions to Mickleton. Development may be appropriate where it remains visually and physically associated with the village and does not interrupt the wooded skyline that is central to the character of the SLA and restricts views from the Cotswold escarpment and across the Vale

Moreton-in-Marsh

- 11.11 A number of the proposed allocations around Moreton-in-Marsh lie within the Moreton-in-Marsh Surrounds SLA (M19C, M76, M77, M9A, M9C, M12B, M70 and M71B). Collectively, these sites have the potential to alter the rural setting of the town and reduce the extent of open countryside immediately adjoining the settlement, particularly to the south and east.

- 11.12 The SLA designation does not prevent the allocation of these sites. The sites are located around an established principal settlement and, in several cases, relate to existing development, transport corridors or other features already influencing the settlement fringe.
- 11.13 The appropriateness of the allocations will depend on the masterplanning approach and a strategic green infrastructure framework that provide continuity between the settlement fringe and the wider SLA.
- 11.14 Nevertheless, the allocations would result in a permanent change to parts of the rural setting of Moreton-in-Marsh. This residual effect should be recognised within the plan-making balance and addressed through clear, site-specific policy requirements.