

COTSWOLD DISTRICT

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SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS REVIEW

LANDSCAPE CONTEXT AND PHYSICAL CHANGES



**Final Report**

for

Cotswold District Council

May 2017

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*Cover photo- overlooking Baunton in the North Cirencester SLA*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. White Consultants were appointed in January 2017 to undertake a review of Special Landscape Areas in Cotswold District as part of baseline evidence supporting the Local Plan (2011-2031). The brief was to carry out a desktop review to :
  - Review the evidence underpinning the current SLA designations (including the fundamental justification for this type of designation in Cotswold District), taking into account the NPPF and any other material planning considerations;
  - Report on any significant issues arising and their implications having particular regard to the soundness of the Local Plan; and
  - Make recommendations/provide options as to how any necessary changes and/or revisions may be dealt with.
- 1.2. A scoping review report was prepared in January and finalised in March which concluded that:
  - SLAs are a valid designation consistent with NPPF and used by three adjacent LPAs.
  - There appears to have been only limited change in or around the current SLAs since 2001 using aerial photos upto 2009 but the latter are not up to date.
  - The current SLAs were thoroughly assessed in 2001 with much of the descriptions and format still valid but there are some omissions.
- 1.3. The scoping review considered that the following additional work was essential to bring the SLAs (see Figure 1) up to date:
  - Adding an overarching justification for why criteria-based policies are insufficient in special landscapes.
  - Set out the relationship of SLAs to the National Character Area profiles and boundaries and relevant contextual information and relevant guidance.
  - Set out the relationship of SLAs to 2006 County LCA descriptions and boundaries and relevant guidance.
  - Carrying out a detailed review of change using up to date aerial photos and site verification of the qualities of the areas and boundaries.
- 1.4. This report now considers these issues. The text should be read in conjunction with the Local Countryside Designation Review: Special Landscape Areas final report, dated February 2001. In Chapter 2 the overarching justification is set out. In Chapters 3 to 8 each of the six Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) below is considered in turn in relation to each of the area criteria set out in 1.3:
  - Barrington Downs
  - Coln Valley north of Fairford
  - Kemble/Ewen
  - Moreton in Marsh surrounds
  - North Cirencester
  - Norton Hall

- 1.5. This report has been undertaken by Simon White DipLA DipUD (Dist) MA CMLI. He is a chartered landscape architect who led and prepared the February 2001 study which identified the current SLAs, as well as the scoping review.



## 2. Overarching justification for SLAs

- 2.1. Cotswold District is probably the most rural and sensitive of the districts in Gloucestershire with around 80% of its area covered by the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). 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 when the area was a prosperous due to sheep farming. As the area was bypassed by the industrial revolution many of the settlements remain unspoilt, although 20/21<sup>st</sup> 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 on the edge of the AONB.
- 2.2. 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 AONB, where great weight is placed on the consideration of landscape by National Policy, places additional pressure for development on the landscapes outside. Some of these landscapes are very similar to the adjoining AONB landscapes, or are a continuation or transition to other landscape character types. Some also act as part of the setting to the AONB. Therefore, where this is the case, it is considered that these landscapes have a value above ordinary landscapes 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 areas have distinctive qualities or features over a reasonably wide area which mean that they have a value above ordinary landscapes.
- 2.3. The role of an SLA would be to protect, enhance and facilitate better management of the best of the area's landscapes outside the Cotswolds AONB. SLAs are focussed on larger scale areas which are of higher landscape value. The existing county-wide landscape character assessments already describe the District's landscapes as a whole.

### 3. Barrington Downs

#### Relationship of SLA to the National Character Area profile and boundaries.

- 3.1. The SLA lies entirely within the Cotswold National Character Area, 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 Cotswolds.
- 3.2. The opportunities relevant to this area include:
  - 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.
  - Promoting the conservation of farmland birds and arable weeds, ensuring that a network of corridors is provided for the movement of species across farmland.

#### Relationship of SLA to Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment (2006) descriptions and boundaries

- 3.3. 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 Cotswolds AONB. Key characteristics applicable to the SLA include:
  - Broad area of gently sloping, undulating lowland with a predominantly south easterly fall.
  - Lowland landform gently detected by infrequent small streams flowing towards the River Thames.
  - Well-managed productive landscape with a general predominance of medium to large scale arable fields.
  - Boundaries comprise network of hedgerows of varying quality together with stone walls and post and wire fencing.
  - Occasional woodland copses and shelter belts, mainly geometric in form.
  - Settlement pattern of isolated farmsteads.
- 3.4. The fields are mainly regular in form, ignoring the former unenclosed cultivation patterns. Cotswold stone is noted for buildings and boundary walls.
- 3.5. The 2006 assessment GIS indicates that the area is called the South and Mid Cotswolds Lowlands Landscape Character Area (LCA). However, a description of the area is omitted in the report text.
- 3.6. To the north west, the SLA is bounded by the High Wold Dip Slope LCT within the AONB. In terms of consistency, the north west part of the area should also have been classified as this as the topography and landcover are similar within the SLA. The only rationale for the boundary appears to be the separate landscape assessments carried out within and outside the AONB rather than landscape features. This observation does not affect the status of the SLA as a transitional area between High Wold and lowland.

### Review of change in the SLA since 2001 and effects on boundaries and qualities.

- 3.7. The apparent changes within the area since 2001 are as follows:
- The growth of some young plantations which has slightly increased enclosure and screening. An example is the mixed plantation and other plantations in the north west corner of the SLA which act as partial screens to the Windrush airfield/ landing strip buildings in views from the north and west. Further plantations to the east have also grown but with less effect on landscape character which generally remains open.
- 3.8. The north south running rights of way in the eastern part of the area are now marked on OS maps as part of the D'Arcy Dalton Way which is a promoted trail. This was devised in 1986 to mark the Oxford Fieldpaths Society Diamond Jubilee and should have been mentioned in the 2001 description. The path 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.
- 3.9. Overall, the changes are positive.
- 3.10. The only potential change in the area around the SLA is the hotel on the ridge at junction of the A40 and the minor road to Windrush. This is disused and surrounded by security fencing. This may have been closed in 2001 but is not mentioned in the description (being outside the area). This is a localised detractor but does not have an effect on the broader qualities of the SLA.
- 3.11. The changes above do not merit any alterations to the boundaries.
- 3.12. The qualities of the area as defined in the SLA report are still relevant. In addition the following apply:
- Gently sloping transitional landscape falling from the high wold to the dipslope lowland.
  - Simple, uncluttered open landscape and skylines with occasional enclosure provided by regular plantations.
  - Mix of trimmed and outgrown hedges in addition to stone wall boundaries.
  - Straight linear public rights of way including the D'Arcy Dalton Way.
  - Tranquil landscape away from the A40 and B4425.

### Overall conclusions on SLA status

- 3.13. It is concluded that this SLA remains valid as a locally designated area and its boundaries should remain the same.



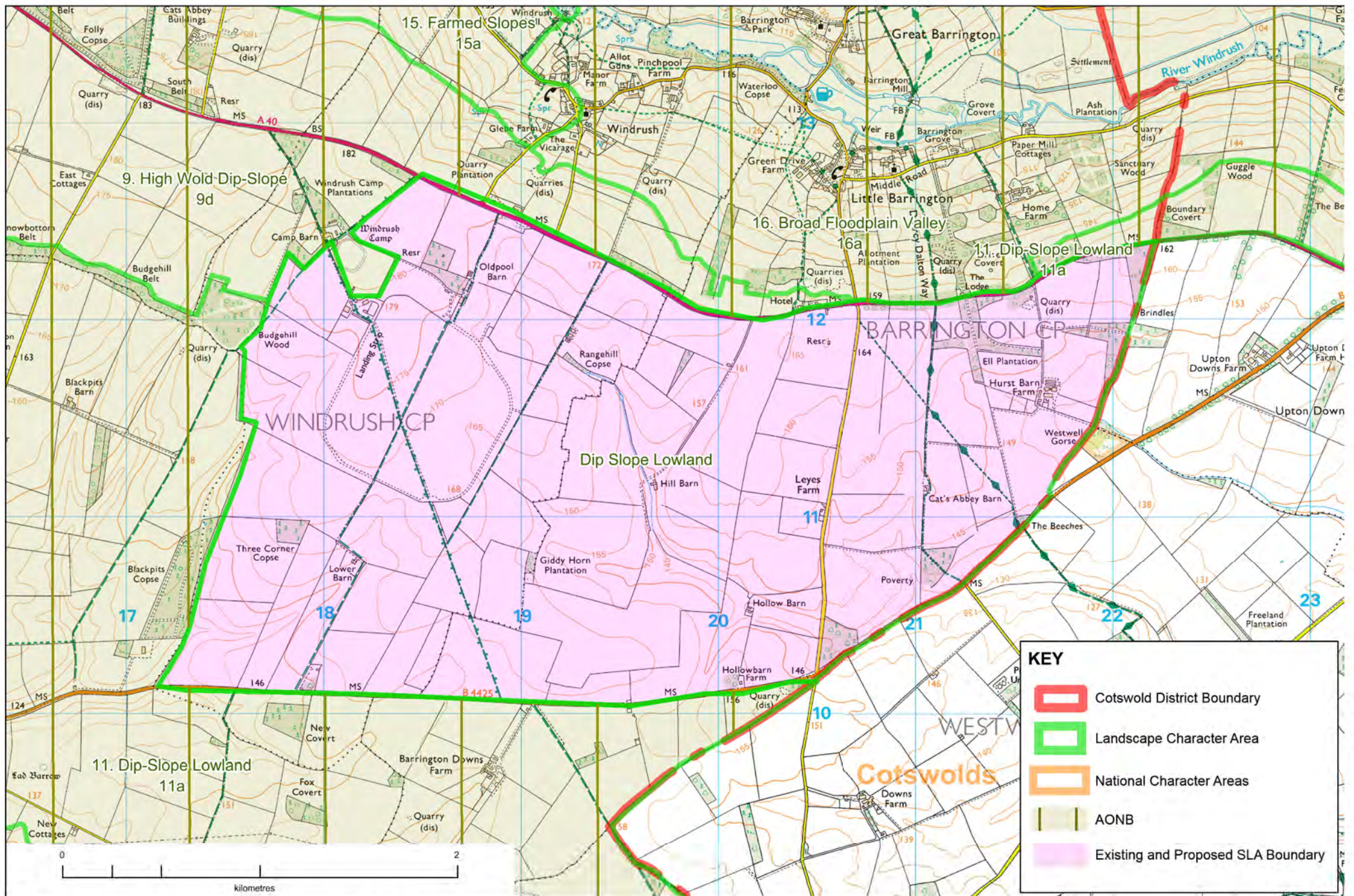


Figure 2 - Barrington Downs Special Landscape Area



## 4. Coln Valley north of Fairford

### Relationship of SLA to the National Character Area profile and boundaries.

- 4.1. 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.
- 4.2. 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 Cotswolds AONB. 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.
- 4.3. The opportunities relevant to this area include:
  - Maintaining, enhancing and restoring drystone walls.
  - Maintaining and reinstating hedgerows 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.
- 4.4. In relation to the Upper Thames Clay Vales NCA, the southern part of the area continues the distinct character of a valley. The late planned field enclosure pattern in arable and parkland use lies on the upper slopes with pasture/meadow on the valley floor.
- 4.5. The opportunities relevant to this area include:
  - 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.

- Consider the physical and functional links between settlements and the wider landscape, such as views and water flow.

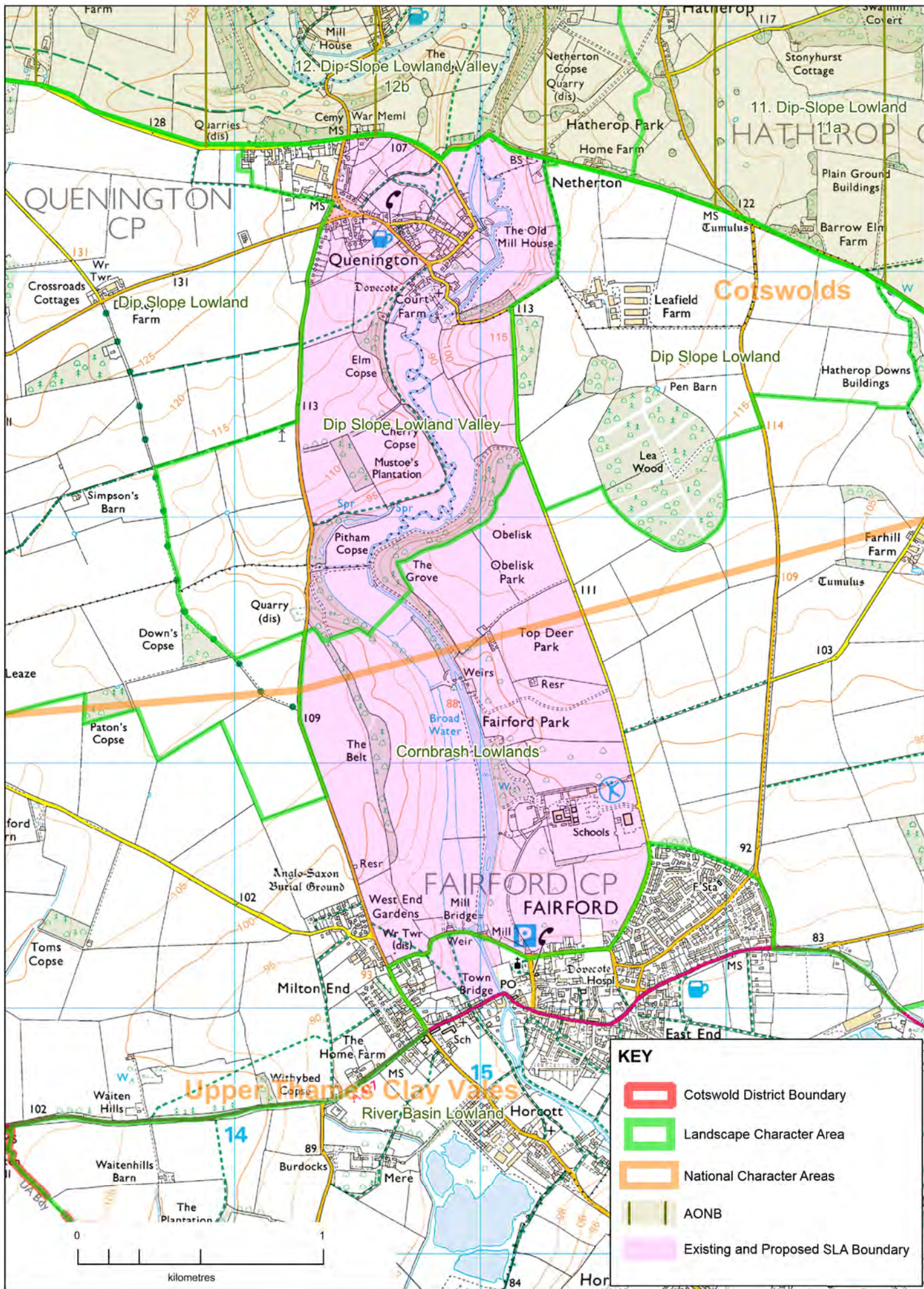
#### Relationship of SLA to 2006 County LCA descriptions and boundaries

- 4.6. The SLA lies within two landscape character types - the Dip Slope Lowland Valley LCT to the north and the Cornbrash Lowlands LCT to the south. This is a change from the previous LCAs which were defined as a lower dip slope valley with the lower dip slope plateau on the edges.
- 4.7. The Dip Slope Lowland Valley is contiguous with the same character type that extends north into the adjacent Cotswolds AONB. Key characteristics applicable to the SLA include:
- Intimate, small-scale, settled landscape with landform and woodlands restricting long distance views out of the valley.
  - Predominance of (farmland of improved grassland between intermittent woodlands and copses on steeper slopes and along valley bottoms, together with pockets of arable land, particularly on shallow valley slopes.
  - Access to the valley is generally restricted.
  - Areas of the valley retain a remote rural character and are only accessible on foot.
  - Stone built villages occupy secluded locations in the valley bottoms and sides.
- 4.8. 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 slopes woodlands form a backdrop to many views. The Grove woodland is particularly notable occupying the steep south eastern valley slopes. Quenington is designated as Conservation Area combining the historic core of older stone dwellings with new stone properties.
- 4.9. 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 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.
- 4.10. Overall, the change in boundaries of the landscape character types do not affect the integrity of the designation or merit any alterations to the boundaries.
- #### Review of change in the SLA since 2001 and effects on boundaries and qualities.
- 4.11. There are no apparent changes within the area since 2001 in terms of development, and so the boundaries remain unaltered.
- 4.12. The qualities of the area as defined in the SLA report are still relevant. In addition the following apply:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- The undeveloped rural character of the SLA between the two settlements, with the exception of the schools.
- The tranquil character of the valley which is mainly only accessible on foot.

#### Overall conclusions on SLA status

- 4.13. It is concluded that this SLA remains valid as a locally designated area and its boundaries should remain the same.



**Figure 3 - Coln Valley (north of Fairford) Special Landscape Area**

## 5. Kemble/Ewen

### Relationship of SLA to the National Character Area profile and boundaries.

- 5.1. 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 north western part of the SLA lies within the Cotswold NCA107. The south eastern part lies in the Upper Thames Clay Vales NCA108.
- 5.2. In relation to the Cotswold NCA, the north western part of the area forms the southern edge of the dip slope which continues north into the Cotswolds AONB. 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.
- 5.3. The opportunities relevant to this area include:
  - Maintaining, enhancing and restoring drystone walls.
  - Maintaining and reinstating hedgerows 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.
- 5.4. In relation to the Upper Thames Clay 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.
- 5.5. The opportunities relevant to this area include:
  - Conserving ponds, species rich ditches, lowland meadow, semi-natural habitats.
  - Conserving veteran trees.

### Relationship of SLA to 2006 County LCA descriptions and boundaries

- 5.6. The SLA lies within three landscape character types - the Dip Slope Lowland LCT to the north west, the River Basin Lowland LCT to the south and the junction between the two pinched by the Cornbrash Lowlands LCT to the east and west. This changes slightly from the previously defined LCTs of the Cotswold Dip Slope (Kemble dip slope LCA) with a simple boundary running through Kemble with the Dipslope/Thames valley Transition (Ewen LCA).

- 5.7. The Dip Slope Lowland LCT is the largest area and is contiguous with the same character type that extends north into the adjacent Cotswolds AONB. Key characteristics applicable to the SLA include:
- Broad area of gently sloping, undulating lowland.
  - Lowland landform gently dissected by infrequent small streams flowing towards (*and including*) the River Thames.
  - Well-managed productive landscape with a general predominance of medium to large scale arable fields and smaller scale improved pastures.
  - Boundaries comprise network of hedgerows of varying quality together with stone walls and post and wire fencing.
  - Occasional woodland copses and shelter belts, mainly geometric in form.
  - Settlement pattern of intermittent linear and nucleated villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads.
- 5.8. The fields are mainly regular in form, ignoring the former unenclosed cultivation patterns. Cotswold stone is noted for buildings and boundary walls.
- 5.9. The SLA lies in the western part of The Kemble Slope LCA in 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.
- 5.10. 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 the 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.
- 5.11. The southern part of the SLA is within the River Basin Lowland LCT (Somerset Keynes LCA). The relevant key characteristics are:
- Low-lying, flat to very gently undulating floodplain landscape.
  - Strong presence of water reflected in the rivers, streams and ditches.
  - Wide floodplain pastures with watercourses often line with riparian vegetation, including frequent lines of pollard it Willows.
  - Combination of pastoral land, often in small scale fields and closely associated with watercourses and large scale fields in arable cultivation.
  - Pattern of the linear settlement is dispersed throughout the landscape, with vernacular buildings constructed of stone and brick.
  - Scattered woodland copses in areas closely associated with rivers result in a sense of enclosure and more intimate landscape.
  - Limited major roads and the wider network minor roads providing access to the floodplain landscape.

- 5.12. 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.
- 5.13. The transitional Cornbrash Lowlands LCT either side of the Thames corridor have the following relevant characteristics:
- Very gently sloping landform.
  - A network a tributary streams of the River Thames.
  - A predominance of arable fields bounded by network of hedgerows of varying quality and occasional stone walls.
  - Dispersed settlement pattern of mainly linear villages (Ewen).
  - Occasional, mainly geometric woodland copses.
  - Occasional wide views over productive farmland.
- 5.14. The area is defined by the extent of the underlying geology- the Middle Jurassic Cornbrash formation. The area has a predominantly quiet rural character and is in the Poole Keynes and Ewen Lowlands LCA.
- 5.15. Overall, the SLA previously crossed boundaries of LCTs/LCAs and the updated landscape character assessment does not merit a change in the boundaries of the designation or affect its integrity.

**Review of change in the SLA since 2001 and effects on boundaries and qualities.**

- 5.16. The apparent changes within the area since 2001 are as follows:
- At Kemble there is some expansion of housing estates to the west near the station (Abbotts Way) and replacing the large agricultural sheds to the south west of the settlement.
  - At Kemble airfield (Cotswold Airport) there is a greater apparent intensity of use including the storage and dismantling of large planes/airliners, including Boeing 747s, and use by light aircraft. Some smaller peripheral buildings have been removed on the northern edge of the airfield and some hangars have been modernised. The partially dismantled aircraft are large transient features in the landscape, which some may find detractive and others may find of interest. Whilst the airfield appears busier, the built form is more rationalised, and appears less cluttered and run down.
  - The proposed land south of Chesterton urban extension to Cirencester would be located just over 300m north east of the SLA boundary. The network of copses within the SLA would screen this development from the majority of the SLA.
- 5.17. The changes above do not merit any alterations to the boundaries.
- 5.18. The qualities of the area as defined in the SLA report are still relevant. In addition the following apply:
- 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.
- The unspoilt sweeping open valleys of the Thames and its tributaries.
- The tranquillity of the area away from the main roads, particularly associated with watercourses.
- The well treed dismantled railway and disused Thames and Severn Canal which form strong lines and enclosure across the landscape.
- 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.
- The linear gappy character of Ewen and its Cotswold stone buildings.

#### Overall conclusions on SLA status

- 5.19. The area remains focused on the upper Thames valley and its tributaries and the transition between the Cotswold AONB and its Dip Slope Lowland through to Cotswold Water Park to the south. It is concluded that this SLA remains valid as a locally designated area and its boundaries should remain the same.

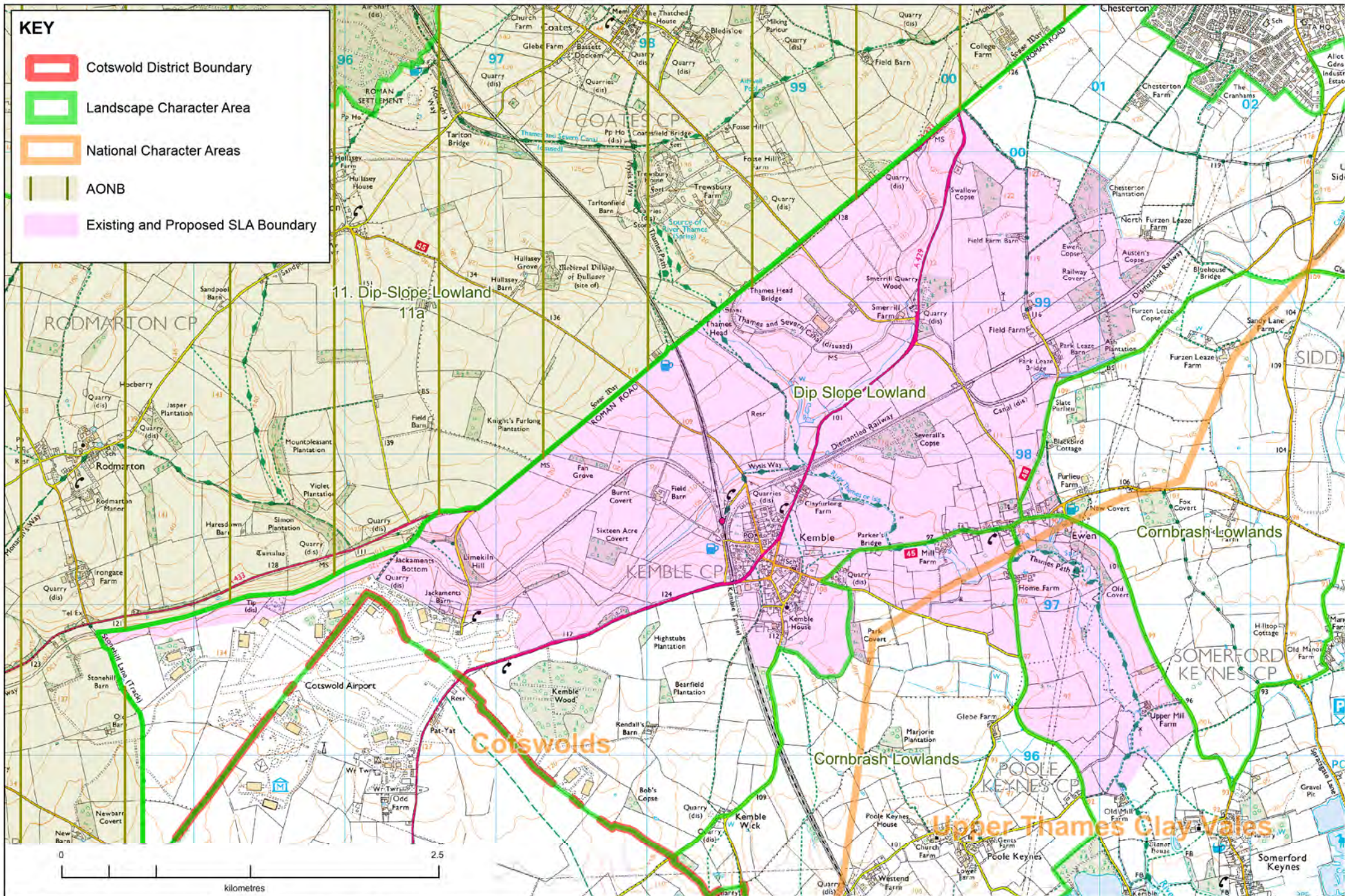


Figure 4 - Kemble/Ewen Special Landscape Area

## 6. Moreton-in-Marsh surrounds

### Relationship of SLA to the National Character Area profile and boundaries.

- 6.1. The SLA lies entirely within the Cotswold NCA107 National Landscape Character Area, although the Severn and Avon Vales NCA106 brushes the north eastern tip.
- 6.2. In relation to the Cotswold NCA, the area comprises 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 runs 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 giving the area a strong sense of unity. The area is bounded and crossed by the Fosse Way Roman road.
- 6.3. The opportunities relevant to this area include:
  - Maintaining and reinstating hedgerows 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 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 value.

### Relationship of SLA to 2006 County LCA descriptions and boundaries

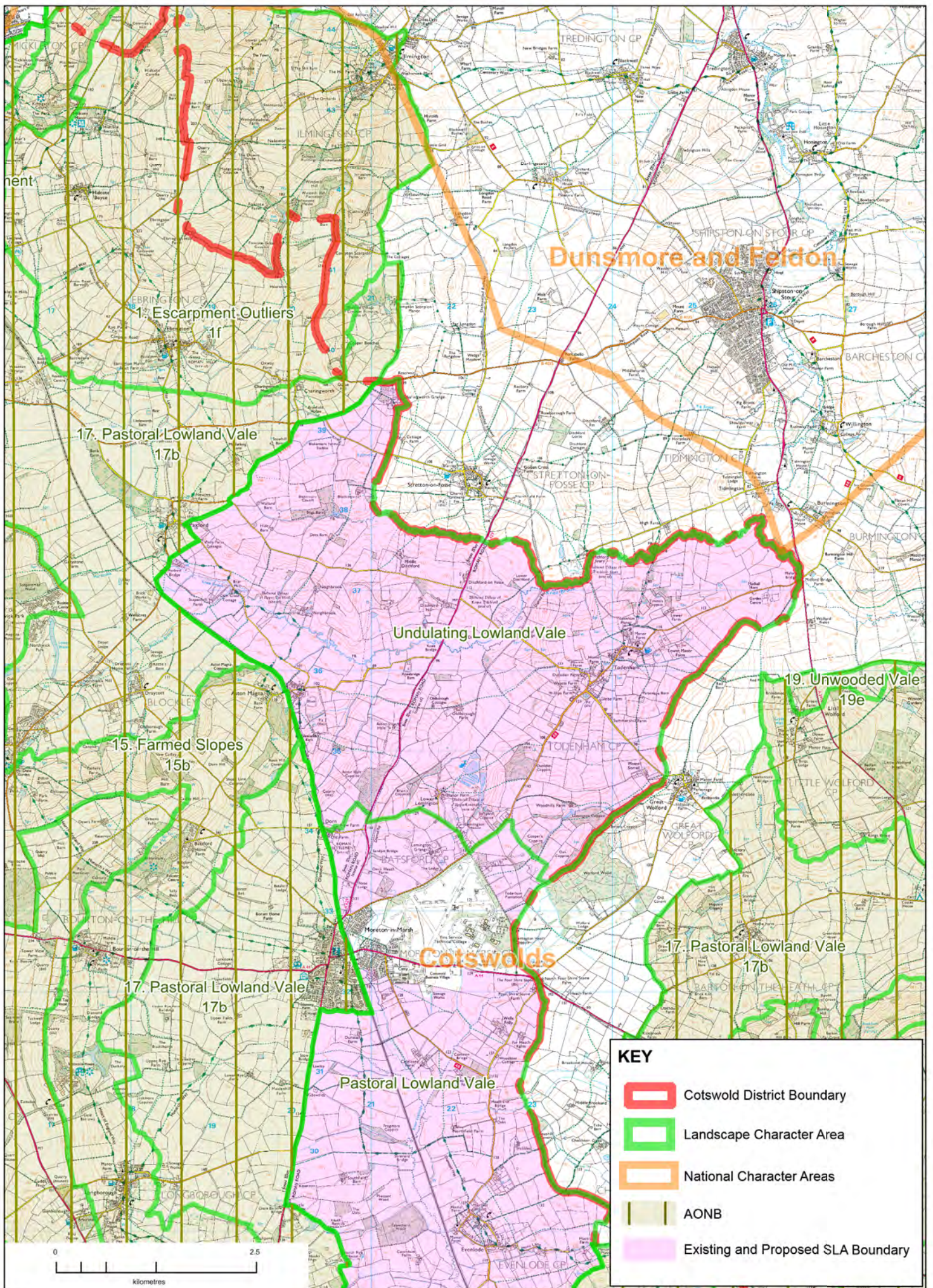
- 6.4. The SLA lies in two LCTs- Undulating Lowland Vale LCT to the north and Pastoral Lowland Vale to the south. This is a change from the 2001 LCA which made the area one LCT- the Cotswold Fringe Clay Vales divided into three LCAs- Upper Stour Valleys and Hills (equivalent to the Undulating Lowland Vale type), and the Vale of Moreton and Upper Evenlode Valley to the south. The change is not significant.
- 6.5. The Undulating Lowland Vale LCT is similar to the Pastoral Lowland LCT in the AONB to the north west and benefits from the backcloth of the Farmed Slopes LCT to the south east. All the key characteristics apply to the northern part of the SLA as the boundaries are shared. In summary, they include:
  - Farmed vale with broad undulating landform of rounded hills and ridges between flat valleys.
  - Pattern of rivers and streams, dominated by Knee Brook and its tributaries.
  - Productive and verdant landscape of pasture and arable land.

- Medium scale fields enclosed by network of hedgerows of varying quality with scattered hedgerow trees.
  - Limited woodland cover of mainly small scale copses.
  - Sparse settlement pattern dominated by dispersed linear settlements and scattered farmsteads.
  - Relatively limited linear road network.
- 6.6. 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 lush wet meadows. Also evident are a series of springs, issuing on 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.
- 6.7. The Pastoral Lowland Vale LCT runs south from the watershed and is contiguous with the Pastoral Vale LCT within the AONB to the west. All the key characteristics apply to the southern part of the SLA either side of Moreton-in-Marsh. In summary, they include:
- Farmed pastoral vale with flat or gently undulating land defined by the rising slopes of the (virtually surrounding) Farmed Slopes (in the AONB).
  - Pattern of rivers and streams, dominated by the River Evenlode and its tributaries.
  - A generally secluded, intimate scale landscape, interspersed with areas of open character where vegetation cover is minimal and more expansive views are possible from locally elevated areas.
  - Productive and verdant landscape predominance of improved and semi-improved pastures together with areas of arable land.
  - Areas of wet meadow and species rich grassland bordering river channels.
  - Varied field size, although the pastoral land is generally within small to medium scale fields and arable in larger scale enclosures.
  - Network of hedgerows of varying height and condition with intermittent hedgerow trees.
  - Limited woodland cover, although in places hedgerow and waterside trees combine with woodland copses to create a sense of well wooded character.
  - Generally sparse settlement pattern dominated by scattered farmsteads and dwellings.
- 6.8. 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 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).

#### Review of change in the SLA since 2001 and effects on boundaries and qualities.

- 6.9. The apparent changes within the area since 2001 are as follows:
- Development undertaken outside the SLA on the northern edge of Moreton-in-Marsh either side of Nursery Close and in the western edge of the former airfield/Fire Service College surrounds. The trees on the northern edge of the Todenham Road within the SLA remain and with the tree belts within the Fire Service College mean there is an adequate buffer to the SLA.
  - Building out of the commercial estate outside the SLA on southern edge of Moreton-in-Marsh south of London Road with dark/olive green cladding which helps make the buildings relatively recessive.
  - The building of the new North Cotswold Hospital on the A429 Fosse Way, which, though it is within the AONB, is prominent in some views from the SLA.
  - Tree growth in plantations which have slightly increased enclosure in places.
  - A few locally noticeable new large country houses have replaced smaller dwellings, such as in the north west of the area and at Evenlode. Some are raw new stone and are not integrated into the landscape with planting but may fit in time.
- 6.10. The changes above do not merit any alterations to the boundaries. However, estate housing at Croft Holm on the southern edge of Moreton-in-Marsh was in place in 2001 but was included in the SLA area. This appears to be an anomaly and therefore it is proposed to omit this housing from the SLA.
- 6.11. The qualities of the area as defined in the SLA report are still relevant. In addition the following apply:
- The area is generally tranquil and feels remote short distances away from Moreton-in-Marsh and the Fosse Way.
  - The church spire at Todenham is a local landmark visible at a distance from the surrounding valleys and slopes.
  - The distinctive forms of the stone built settlements at Todenham (linear with gaps) and Evenlode (two groups separated by a large gap).
  - Nationally important ridge and furrow pastures.
  - The distinctive straight linear character of the Fosse Way.
- Overall conclusions on SLA status**
- 6.12. It is concluded that this SLA remains valid as a locally designated area and its boundaries should remain the same apart from the minor amendment on the southern edge of Moreton-in-Marsh.



KEY	
	Cotswold District Boundary
	Landscape Character Area
	National Character Areas
	AONB
	Existing and Proposed SLA Boundary

Figure 5 - Moreton in Marsh surrounds Special Landscape Area (north)

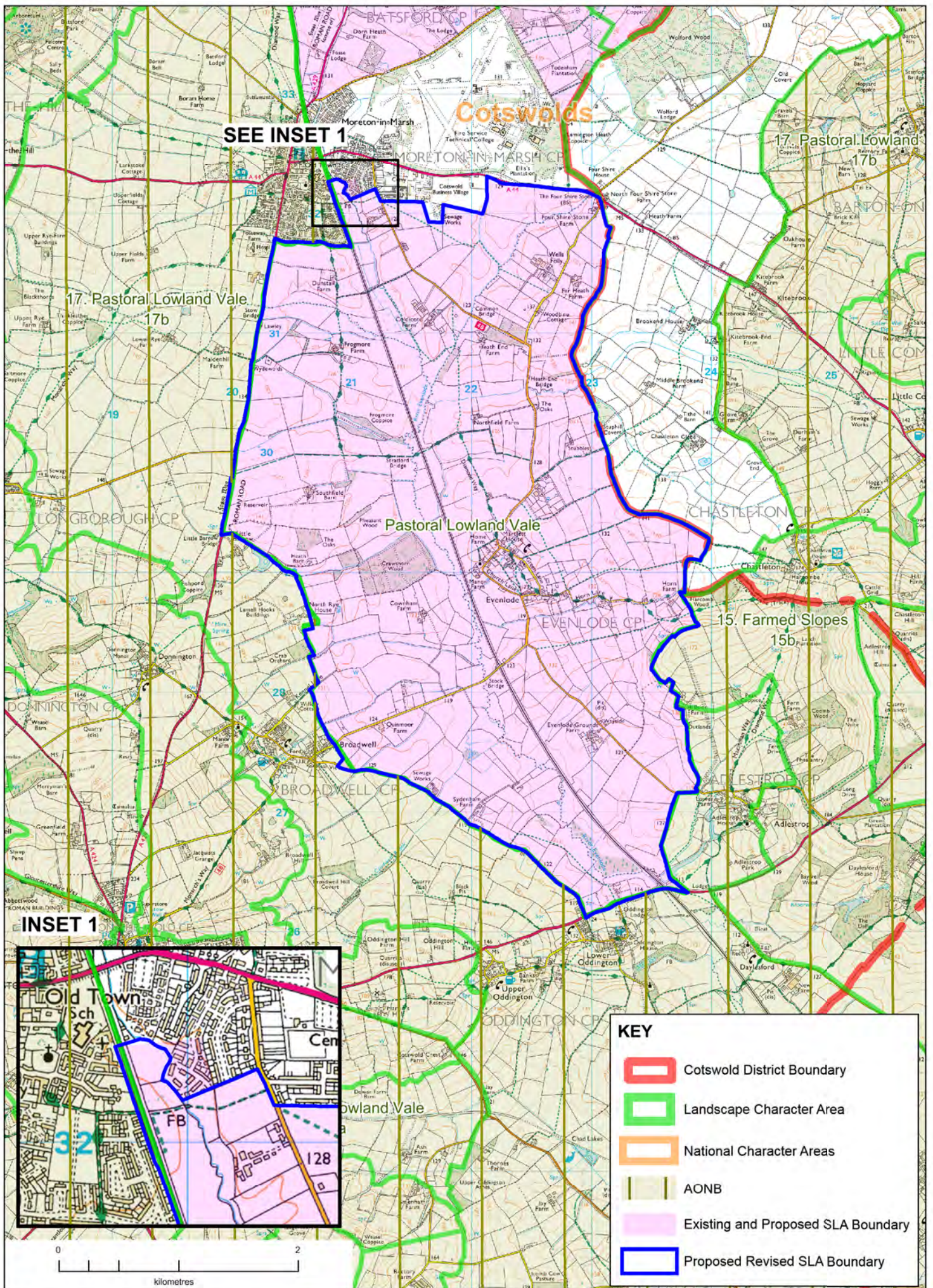


Figure 6 - Moreton in Marsh surrounds  
Special Landscape Area (south)

## 7. North Cirencester

### Relationship of SLA to the National Character Area profile and boundaries.

- 7.1. 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 Cotswolds AONB. The eastern part forms part of the dip slope which continues further north and east into the Cotswolds AONB. 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.
- 7.2. The opportunities relevant to this area include:
- Maintaining, enhancing and restoring drystone walls.
  - Maintaining and reinstating hedgerows 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 dip slope valleys.
  - 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.

### Relationship of SLA to 2006 County LCA descriptions and boundaries

- 7.3. 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. This division is similar to that defined in the 2001 study.
- 7.4. The former is contiguous with the same character type that extends north into the adjacent Cotswolds AONB. Key characteristics applicable to the SLA include:
- Intimate, small-scale, settled landscape with landform and woodlands restricting long distance views out of the valley.
  - Predominance of farmland of improved grassland with woodland on steeper slopes, together with pockets of arable land, particularly on shallow valley slopes.
  - Access to the valley is generally restricted.
  - Areas of the valley are only accessible on foot.
  - Stone built villages occupy secluded locations in the valley bottoms and sides.
- 7.5. The Lower Churn Valley LCA in this type comprises a very limited section of the valley. 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 as result 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.
- 7.6. The Dip Slope Lowland LCT is contiguous with the wider area of Dip Slope Lowland that extends north and east into the adjacent Cotswolds AONB. Key characteristics applicable to the SLA include:
- Broad area of gently sloping, undulating lowland.
  - Well-managed productive landscape with a general predominance of medium to large scale arable fields.
  - Boundaries comprise network of hedgerows of varying quality together with stone walls and post and wire fencing.
  - Occasional woodland copses and shelter belts, mainly geometric in form.
  - Settlement pattern of isolated farmsteads.
- 7.7. The field are mainly regular in form, ignoring the former unenclosed cultivation patterns. Cotswold stone is noted for buildings and boundary walls.
- 7.8. 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.

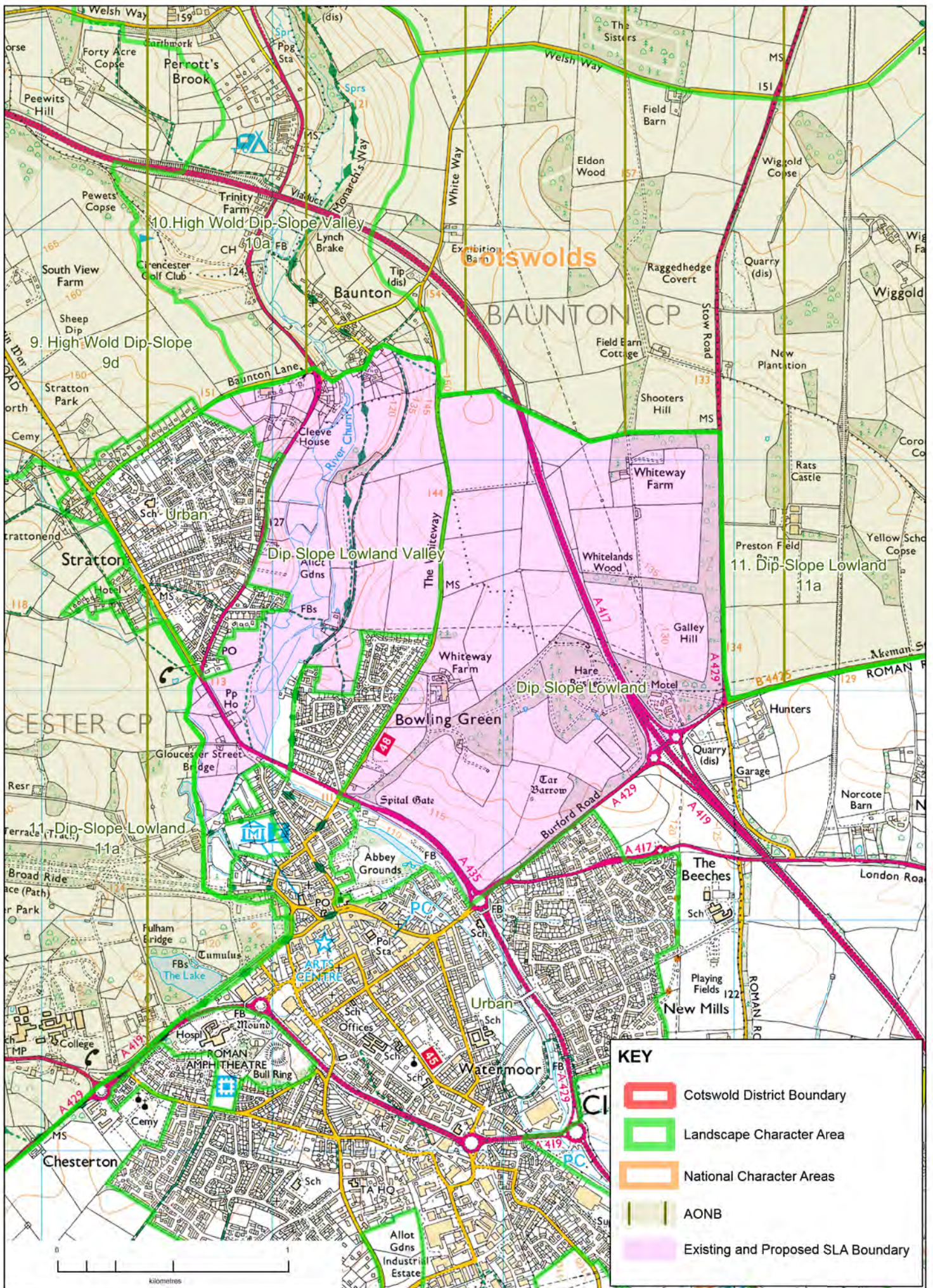
#### Review of change in the SLA since 2001 and effects on boundaries and qualities.

- 7.9. The apparent changes within the area since 2001 are as follows:
- Establishment of the services at the junction of A417/A419 bypass and A429. These are set within trees and screened from all directions but the south, and increase movement east of the bypass.
  - Tree growth in natural regeneration/plantations along the A417 especially adjacent to the laybys which assist in filtering views to parked vehicles.
  - Growth in young broadleaf tree belt plantation adjacent to the A429.
  - Growth of tree mitigation planting around paddocks south and east of The Paddocks development in Baunton which help integrate the housing.
- 7.10. Overall, the services are a negative influence but they have only a highly localised effect on the landscape character and do not merit a change of boundary. The other changes are slight but positive, enhancing the SLA, and do not influence the boundary or merit any alterations to the boundaries.
- 7.11. The qualities of the area as defined in the SLA report are still relevant. In addition the following apply:
- The distinctive sinuous braided channels of the River Churn with the network of drains and small low-key bridges.
  - The simple, relatively unenclosed valley bottom which, with the valley sides, create a clear and unspoilt rural green corridor between Cirencester and Stratton.

- The Monarch's Way long distance footpath and other public rights of way along the valley floor and lower valley sides.

**Overall conclusions on SLA status**

- 7.12. It is concluded that this SLA remains valid as a locally designated area and its boundaries should remain the same.



KEY	
	Cotswold District Boundary
	Landscape Character Area
	National Character Areas
	AONB
	Existing and Proposed SLA Boundary

Figure 7 - North Cirencester Special Landscape Area

## 8. Norton Hall

### Relationship of SLA to the National Character Area profile and boundaries.

- 8.1. 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.
- 8.2. The opportunities relevant to this area include:
- 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.
  - Protecting species rich grassland.

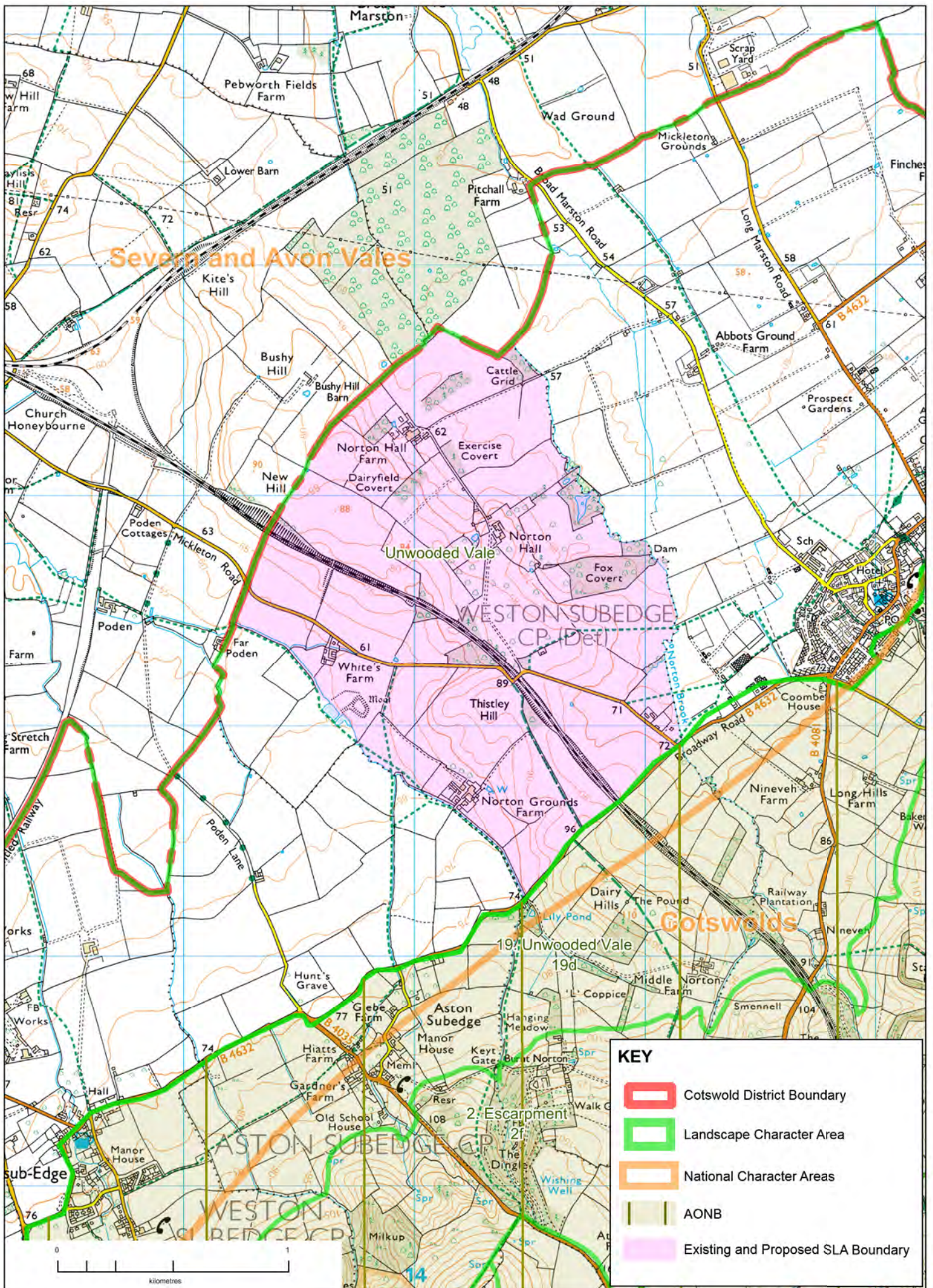
### Relationship of SLA to 2006 County LCA descriptions and boundaries

- 8.3. The SLA lies within the Unwooded Vale LCT which is associated with the Severn Vale LCTs. It lies the north west of the Cotswold scarp slope. Key characteristics applicable to the SLA include:
- An irregularly undulating landscape
  - Medium to large scale hedged arable and pastoral fields of both a regular and irregular pattern.
  - Woodland cover of copses.
  - Escarpment forms the backcloth to the area
  - Relatively sparsely settled agrarian landscape.
  - Quiet lanes
  - Drained by network of small streams.
- 8.4. The SLA lies within the Mickleton Vale Fringe (VE 1C) 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.
- 8.5. Semi-improved and improved pastures are noted around Thistley Hill.
- ### Review of change in the SLA since 2001 and effects on boundaries and qualities.
- 8.6. The apparent changes within the area since 2001 are as follows:

- New steel agricultural shed at Norton Grounds Farm set into the lower hillside.
  - Growth of some young tree plantations/coverts especially north of Norton Hall.
- 8.7. The changes above do not merit any alterations to the boundaries.
- 8.8. It is noted that the south western boundary south of White's Farm follows the line of a watercourse rather than including ponds to the south which were recommended in the previous SLA report. Whilst a minor issue, consideration should be given to including the ponds within the area.
- 8.9. The only change in the area around the SLA is the expansion of Mickleton around 400m to the east. This does not affect the qualities of the area.
- 8.10. The qualities of the area as defined in the SLA report are still relevant. In addition the following apply:
- The parkland at Norton Hall has mature trees including oaks, woodland and estate fencing.
  - The railway line is discreet and its well treed embankments are important contributing enclosure to the landscape and forming the skyline in parts.
  - There are glimpsed wide views over the vale from the ridge.
  - The area forms a positive unspoilt rural backcloth to the surrounding vale, complementing the nearby scarp from which it extends.

#### **Overall conclusions on SLA status**

- 8.11. It is concluded that this SLA remains valid as a locally designated area and its boundaries should remain the same.



**Figure 8 - Norton Hall  
 Special Landscape Area**