

South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment

Annex I: Visually Important Hillside

South Gloucestershire Council

Final Draft Report for Adoption Appendix A

Prepared by LUC

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Appendix A

Visually Important Hillsides: Guidance Notes for New Development

Policy Context

A.1 The identified Visually Important Hillsides (VIHs), represent characteristic landform elements of the 21 different landscape character areas within South Gloucestershire, as described in the South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment SPD, and discussed within the main body of this report.

A.2 SGC Policy CS9: Managing the Environment and Heritage, supporting paragraph 8.6 states that:

‘...In order to conserve the character, distinctiveness, quality and amenity of the landscape, new development should identify and retain those site attributes and features which contribute to the character of the landscape....’

A.3 The protection and enhancement of distinctive or characteristic topography and landform features is further endorsed by SGC Policy PSP2: Landscape.

A.4 SGC Policy CS2: Green Infrastructure seeks to protect visually important hillsides in terms of their relationship to, and appearance in, the landscape and townscape, and the green skylines and backdrops they form in views.

Checklist of Issues to be Considered by New Development

A.5 The following guidance notes provide a checklist of issues that new development proposals will need to take into consideration to ensure that the prominence and distinctive appearance of VIHs, and their relationship to the surrounding landscape and townscape, is protected.

Development Scale and Pattern

A.6 Development proposals must demonstrate, as part of a planning application, how landscape character and prominent features such as VIHs have influenced their siting, scale and design.

A.7 New development needs to reflect the prevailing settlement pattern, scale, and building form within a given locality and not significantly alter the distinctive appearance and appreciation of the VIH in the landscape.

A.8 Where a VIH lies close to a built settlement edge, significant 'developmental creep' is to be avoided on its physical footprint where this will have a significant landscape and visual impact.

Landform

A.9 It is important to site and design new development so that it appears visually balanced in relation to the underlying and surrounding landform.

A.10 New development should avoid the creation of 'construction platforms' that will irreparably alter the slope profile of a VIH and its appearance in the

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landscape; and may also result in the loss of its characteristic tree/hedgerow/vegetation cover.

Landscape Character and Pattern

A.11 The landscape character and pattern of a given area is created through the presence and arrangement of key landscape elements and features. In some locations within South Gloucestershire, VIHs help delineate the transition between different landscape character areas or types,

A.12 New development should not undermine characteristic pattern of a particular landscape or reduce the distinction between areas of different landscape character.

Relationship to Strategic GI Network and LNRS

A.13 There is a strong correlation between the identified VIHs and South Gloucestershire's Local Nature Recovery Network (LNRN) as their landform, aspect, and historic land use and management has helped shaped the current mosaic and distribution of wildlife habitats. The LNRN forms part of the overarching strategic green infrastructure (GI) network.

A.14 New development should avoid significant impact on the LNRN, and instead, act as the stimulus for the restoration and/or improvement of land use within or around the site, as well as being designed to positively contribute to the LNRN.

Views Towards and From Visually Important Hillsides

A.15 The scenic beauty of the Cotswold National Landscape, including views towards and from its western scarp and other associated VIH areas, is particularly sensitive to change.

A.16 New development should be designed to avoid significantly altering the role that a VIH performs in views across the landscape such as a focal or skyline feature, a positive green backdrop in views, or facilitating elevated views across the landscape.

A.17 The distinctive skyline and profile of VIHs should be preserved; for example, open grassland, wooded or tree lined, or a characteristic mix of built and green elements.

A.18 Development comprising tall vertical elements (e.g. wind turbines, highway and infrastructure structures, or multi-storey units) should be designed to respect and integrate with the scale of the receiving landscape and VIH rather than overwhelm the underlying landform character, and to minimise the impact on key views.

Dark Landscapes

A.19 The tranquillity and dark skies of the rural areas is to be maintained, and where appropriate enhanced by controlling light pollution. Careful consideration is to be given to the design of new light sources.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)

A.20 A LVIA will be required to support major new development proposals where the scale and location of these may have a noticeable physical or visual impact upon the appearance of the VIH and its relationship to the surrounding landscape and/or townscape

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