

South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment

Annex I: Visually Important Hillsides

South Gloucestershire Council

Final Draft Report for Adoption Chapter 13
Prepared by LUC
September 2024



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Land Use Consultants Limited

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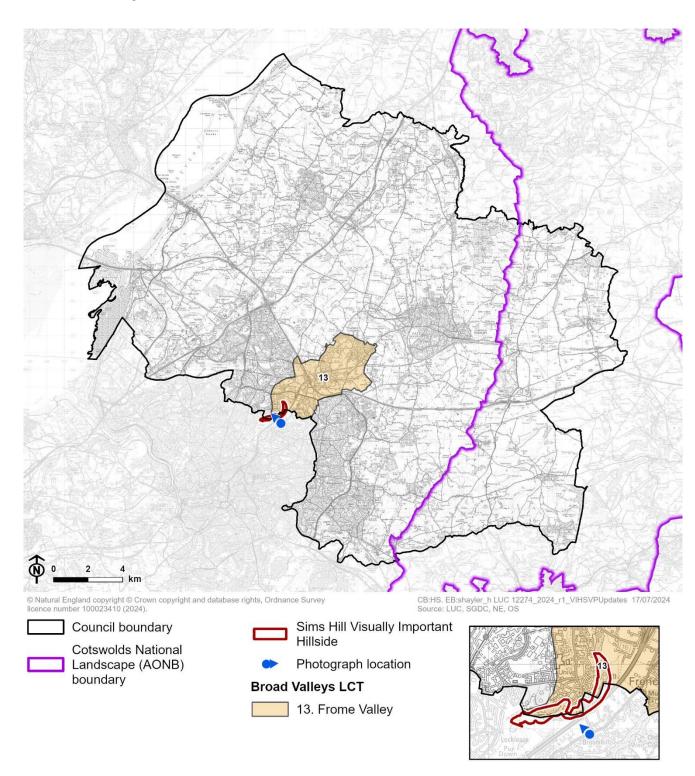
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Chapter 13

Sims' Hill

The Sims' Hill VIH comprises a short, narrow, steep scarp slope. It is located along the southern edge of South Gloucestershire near Frenchay, and lies fully within the Frome Valley (LCA 13) landscape character area. The boundaries of the VIH are defined in part by the modern developments of the M32 to the south- east, and a housing development on the edge of Stoke Gifford to the north-west. It forms part of a distinctive wooded ridge and its southern part encompasses the steep embankments of the listed historic stately house, Dower House (Grade II*), and Stoke Park RPG (Grade II), which acts as a landmark and gateway feature for those travelling along the M32 motorway into and out from Bristol.

Figure 13.1: Location of the Sims' Hill Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context



Hillside Council boundary Sims Hill Visually Important Hillside allscourt Farm Acad Barn Wood 0.5 © Natural England. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database rights, Ordnance Survey licence number 100023410, 2024. CB:HS. EB:HS. LUC 12274_2024_r2_VIHSVPUpdates 18/07/2024 Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS

Figure 13.2: Detailed map of the Sims' Hill Visually Important

Chapter 13 Sims' Hill

Figure 13.3: View of Sims' Hill from Broomhill (Bristol)



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- The Sims' Hill VIH is a readily identifiable landform feature on OS mapping with close contour lines indicating a steep hillside with an easterly aspect (descending from around 80m to 45m). This is clear when seen in context to the adjacent larger vale landscape to the east and west (where contours are at larger intervals).
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity as noted in the description for LCA 13: Frome Valley within the South Gloucestershire Assessment SPD, which acknowledges the pronounced elevation of the VIH stating that the "topography generally varies between 30 metres in the valleys to 60 70 metres AOD on the ridges, reaching 75 metres AOD at Sims' Hill". Additionally, it identifies the VIH as forming "a scarp slope within Stoke Park and Sims' Hill, continuing southwards beyond this character area."

Visual prominence

- The Sims' Hill VIH comprises a prominent scarp slope as mentioned in LCA 13: Frome Valley which notes that "Sims' Hill woodland, which forms part of the Stoke Park Registered Park and Garden located along the southern boundary of the LCA, is a distinctive and prominent landscape feature in views from the LCA and wider Bristol area".
- The historic Dower House located on the VIH in the south-west, the steep parkland slopes and wooded ridges of Stoke Park contributes towards the conspicuousness of the VIH.
- The VIH is visible from several public vantage points and forms a key feature in views, including from extensive areas of Bristol to the south and the M32. The south-western part of the VIH (including Dower House) forms a key feature in views from the strategic viewpoint at Stoke Park (SVP 24).

Character and value

- A key characteristic of LCA 13: Frome Valley is the woodland associated with Stoke Park and Sims' Hill which together form the VIH.
- The landform of the VIH contributes to the character of the Stoke Park RPG (Grade II), which occupies the scarped and indented eastern flank of Purdown with commanding wide views over Kingswood, Bristol and the valley of the River Frome.
- The character and appearance of the VIH is unspoilt by visual detractors, as the southern end forms part of the Grade II listed parkland of Stoke Park, and the northern section is undeveloped. However, modern development is located close to the VIH in the form of the M32 which intersects the parkland of Stoke Park to the south and east, and built development on the edge of Stoke Gifford to the north and west (although contained by woodland of the VIH and screened in views from the east).
- Landcover across the VIH comprises predominantly of woodland, scrub and unimproved grassland.
- The VIH provides the opportunity for views across the landscape of South Gloucestershire and Bristol, including from the strategic viewpoint at Stoke Park (SVP 24).
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by forming a prominent wooded backdrop to the surrounding lower-lying landscape to the south and east.

Summary

Sims' Hill is categorised as a VIH as it significantly meets all of the criteria. It is readily identifiable as a natural landform feature on OS mapping; a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity; prominent in views across the landscape; visible from several public vantage points; has high visual/sensory/perceptual value; contributes to the character of a RPG; its character and appearance are largely unspoilt by visual detractors; it provides the opportunity for views across the landscape; and has a role in the landscape by forming a visual backdrop.

Report produced by LUC

Bristol

12th Floor, Beacon Tower, Colston Street, Bristol BS1 4XE 0117 929 1997 bristol@landuse.co.uk

Cardiff

16A, 15th Floor, Brunel House, 2 Fitzalan Rd, Cardiff CF24 0EB 0292 032 9006 cardiff@landuse.co.uk

Edinburgh

Atholl Exchange, 6 Canning Street, Edinburgh EH3 8EG 0131 202 1616 edinburgh@landuse.co.uk

Glasgow

37 Otago Street, Glasgow G12 8JJ 0141 334 9595 glasgow@landuse.co.uk

London

250 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8RD 020 7383 5784 london@landuse.co.uk

Manchester

6th Floor, 55 King Street, Manchester M2 4LQ 0161 537 5960 manchester@landuse.co.uk

Sheffield

32 Eyre Street, Sheffield, S1 4QZ 0114 392 2366 sheffield@landuse.co.uk

landuse.co.uk

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