

South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment

Annex I: Visually Important Hillside

South Gloucestershire Council

Final Draft Report for Adoption Chapter 17

Prepared by LUC

September 2024



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1	Draft Method and Pilot	E White	K Davies	K Davies	24.02.2023
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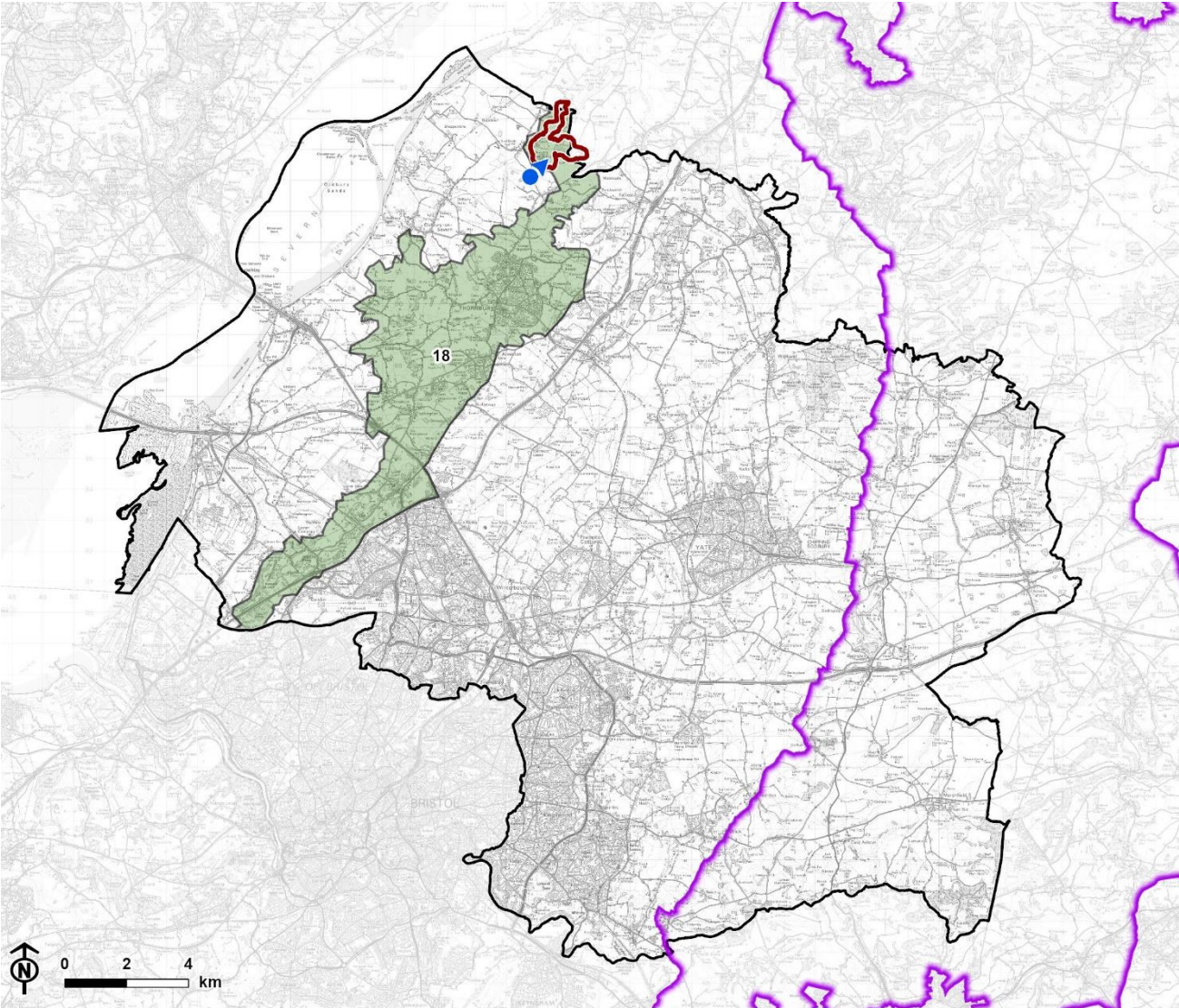
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Chapter 17

Upper Hill

The Upper Hill VIH comprises a series of steep scarp slopes which descend from a plateau at the top of the hill. It is located near the north-western edge of South Gloucestershire and lies fully within the Seven Ridges (LCA 18) landscape character area, with the VIH defining the northern extent of the landscape character area. Its elevation and steep sided slopes emphasise the prominence of the VIH when viewed from the low-lying levels landscape to the west and the vale landscape to the east. The VIH has a pronounced rural character and forms a continuation of the ridgeline within Stroud District Council, which takes in the historic landscape of Whitcliff Deer Park, located within the Berkeley Castle RPG (Grade II*).

Figure 17.1: Location of the Upper Hill Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context



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CB:HS. EB:shayler_h LUC 12274_2024_r1_VIHSVPUpdates 17/07/2024
Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS






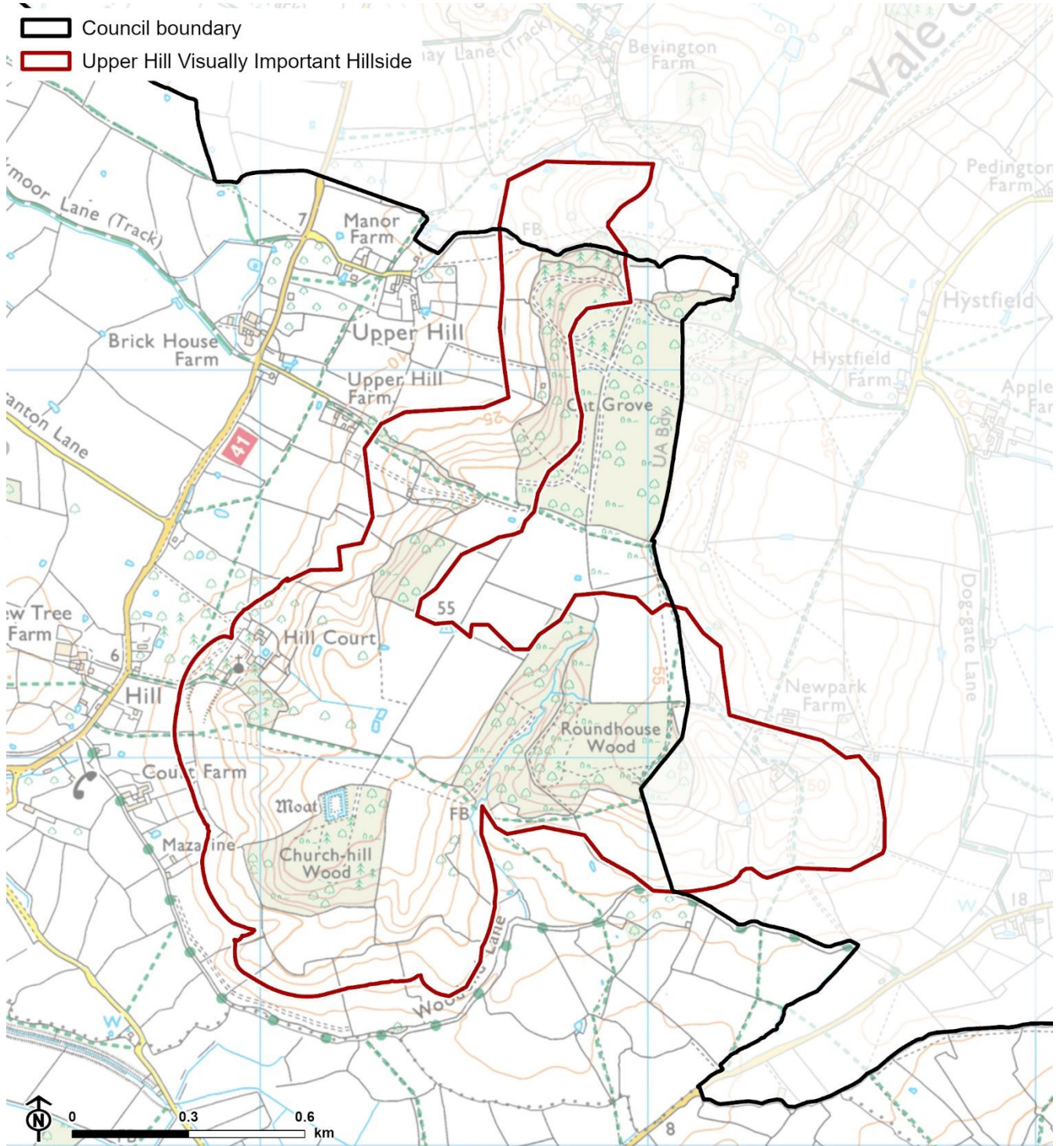
-  Council boundary
-  Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary
-  Upper Hill Visually Important Hillside
-  Photograph location
- Undulating Ridge LCT**
-  18. Severn Ridges

Figure 17.2: Detailed map of the Upper Hill Visually Important Hillside



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CB:HS. EB:HS. LUC 12274_2024_r2_VIHSVPUupdates 18/07/2024
Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS

Figure 17.3: View of Upper Hill from Rockhampton Rhine



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- The Upper Hill VIH is readily identifiable as a natural landform feature on OS mapping as close contours indicate steeply sloping hillsides with a southerly and westerly aspect (descending from around 55m to 15m). This is clear when seen in context of the adjacent levels landscape to the west and vale landscape to the east (where contours are at much larger intervals). A small stream valley insertion is evident in the centre of the VIH, west of Roundhouse Wood, indicated on OS mapping by steep elongated contours with a stream marked along the lowest point of elevation.
- A triangulation pillar marks the top of Upper Hill and is marked on OS mapping.
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity as noted in the publication for LCA 18: Severn Ridges which notes that *“the northern scarp at Upper Hill and Rockhampton forms a visually prominent, gently scalloped ridgeline, with simple bold vegetation structure of frequent areas of mature woodland, interspersed with regular shaped fields of pasture (more irregular at Rockhampton), defined by clipped hedges and intermittent trees.”*

Visual prominence

- The prominence of the Upper Hill VIH is acknowledged in LCA 18: Severn Ridges description within the SGC Landscape Character Assessment SPD, which states that *“the scarp edge of the Severn Ridges is most prominent in the area of Hill and Rockhampton”* which is where the VIH is located.
- The frequent areas of mature woodland on and around Upper Hill (including Church-hill Wood, Roundhouse Wood and Cat Grove) create a

notable wooded landform feature that can be seen from several public vantage points and forms a key feature in views.

Character and value

- The character and appearance of the VIH is unspoilt by visual detractors, as the hillsides are undeveloped. Landcover across the VIH comprises mature woodland interspersed with pasture.
- Hill Court (a locally registered historic park) is located upon the slopes of the VIH in the west, where ridge and furrow field patterns are evident on the sloping hillsides along with remnants of an ornamental and designed landscape, a medieval parkland and cleared and ancient woodland, which contribute towards the character and value of the area.
- The VIH provides the opportunity for views across the landscape of South Gloucestershire and the Severn estuary including from the strategic viewpoint at Hill Court (SVP 6).
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by providing containment to the north-eastern edge of LCA 19: Oldbury Levels, and forms a prominent backdrop to the surrounding lower-lying landscape.

Summary

The Upper Hill is categorised as a VIH as it meets all of the criteria to some extent. 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; its character and appearance is unspoilt by visual detractors; it provides the opportunity for views across the landscape; and has a role in the landscape by containing a character area, and forming a visual backdrop.

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