

South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment

Annex I: Visually Important Hillside

South Gloucestershire Council

Final Draft Report for Adoption Chapter 4

Prepared by LUC

September 2024



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3	Draft Report	E White	E White	K Davies	05.07.2023
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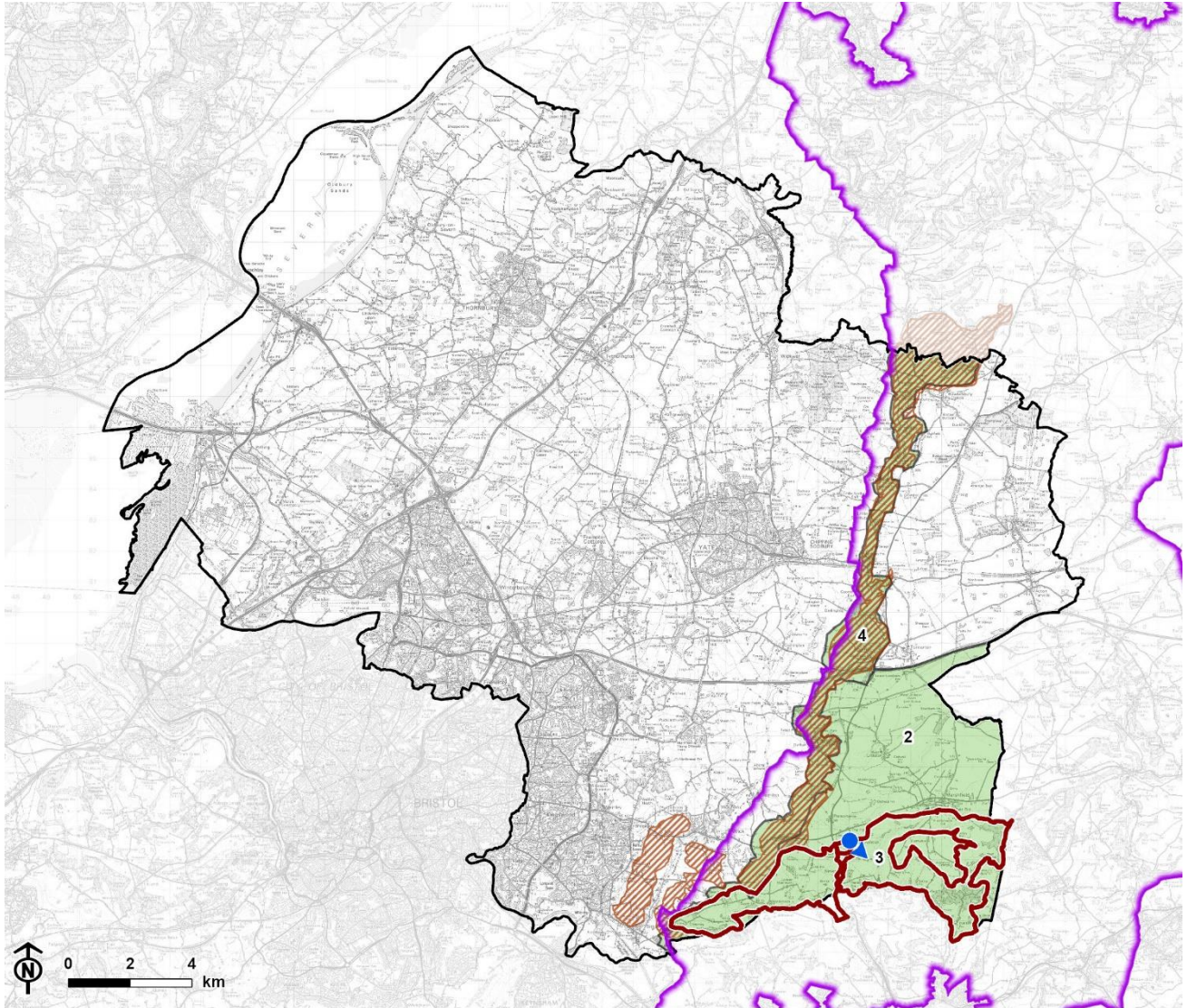
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Chapter 4

Ashwicke Ridges – including Henley Hill, Nimlet Hill, and Hanging Hill






The Ashwicke Ridges VIH comprises a complex area of ridges and valleys. It is located along the southern edge of South Gloucestershire and lies fully within the Ashwicke Ridges landscape character area (LCA 3), defining its boundaries. It forms a southerly extension to the Cotswold Scarp VIH. Its elevation on the scarp edge of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) results in it being visually prominent when viewed from the surrounding landscape which is emphasised by the considerably lower-lying Oldland Ridge and Cotswold Lower Slopes VIH to the west, for example. The steep ridge and valley pattern is distinctive, contrasting with the broader Marshfield plateau to the north-east, and is a key characteristic of the setting to the settlements of Marshfield and Cold Ashton. The Ashwicke Ridges comprise some of the most prominent and dramatic hillsides within South Gloucestershire, as well as forming an integral landscape feature and characteristic of the CNL. The Ashwicke Ridges VIH also forms an intrinsic part of the setting of the Marshfield and Cold Ashton Conservation Areas, and the Ashwicke Hall RPG (Grade II).

Figure 4.1: Location of the Ashwicke Ridges 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
-  Ashwicke Ridges Visually Important Hillside
-  Adjoining Visually Important Hillside
-  Photograph location

- Plateau and Scarp LCT**
-  2. Marshfield Plateau
 -  3. Ashwicke Ridges
 -  4. Cotswold Scarp

Figure 4.2: Detailed map of the Ashwicke Ridges Visually Important Hillside

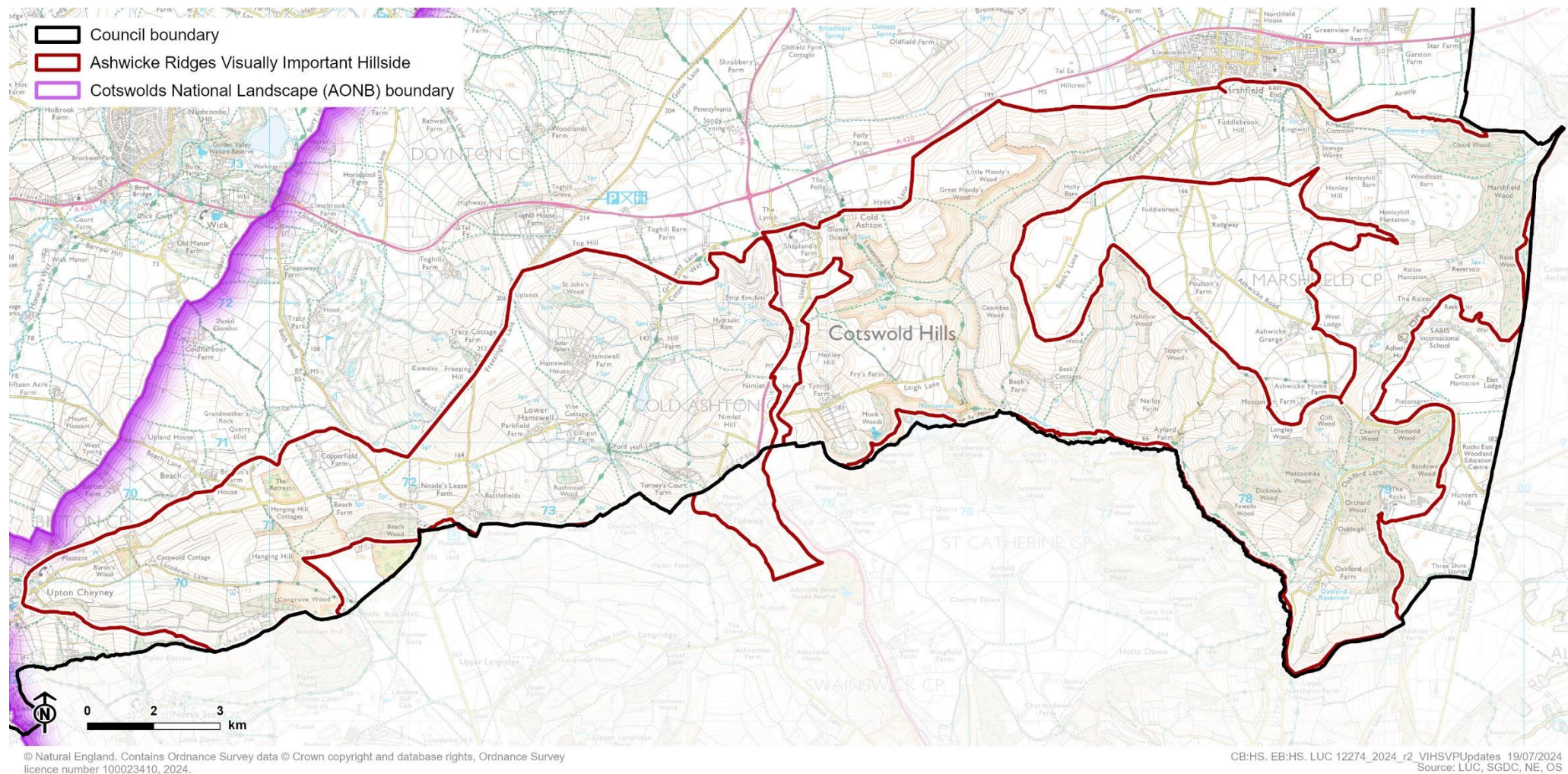


Figure 4.3: View of the Ashwicke Ridges from Cold Ashton



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- The Ashwicke Ridges VIH is readily identifiable as a natural landform feature on OS mapping comprising a series of steep ridges and valleys identified with close contour lines, including those forming the slopes of the Lam Brook valley (from Freezing Hill, Tog Hill and Nimlet Hill); the 'v'-shaped Piple Bottom valley and Golden Valley (from Hanging Hill); the St. Catherine's Brook valley (from Henley Hill and Fuddlebrook Hill); and the Doncombe Brook valley (from a second Henley Hill).
- A triangulation pillar marks the top of Hanging Hill and is marked on OS mapping.
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity as noted in the following publications:
 - The description of LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges in the South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment SPD notes that *"a plateau area rises to Henley Hill in the east near Marshfield. It is separated from the adjacent Marshfield Plateau character area (LCA 2) by the steep sided, easterly draining Doncombe Brook valley and the upper tributary valley of St Catherine's Brook"*; and *"the open ridgelines above the upper Hamswell Valley and Piple Bottom Valley to the west are large-scale landforms"*.
 - The Marshfield Conservation Area appraisal [\[See reference 1\]](#) states that *"the sloping valleys to the south contributes strongly to the character."*
 - The Cold Ashton Conservation Area document [\[See reference 2\]](#) states that *"the village street commands magnificent views over the...steep St Catherine's Valley to the South"*.

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- The hills and their incised valley sides are distinctive in separating the valleys from one another, e.g., Henley Hill separates St Catherine’s Brook from the Hamswell Valley to the west.
- Part of the area around The Rocks/ Oakford Farm has been identified as forming part of the wider setting of the Bath World Heritage site (noted as an ‘Important green hillside’ in The City of Bath World Heritage Site Setting SPD [[See reference 3](#)]).

Visual prominence

- As noted under LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges, the VIH includes *“a saddle landform dividing the valley to the east marks the change to the more undulating form of the Ashwicke Ridges (LCA 3) and the more gently sloping land to the west, towards the Golden Valley (LCA 11)”*. LCA 3 also notes that *“open views of rolling upland agricultural hills, with ground falling steeply from pronounced edges of high ground, into adjacent textured valleys”* are afforded from Marshfield, the A420, Cold Ashton and the A46 when looking southwards, and that there are views of *“dramatic landform, deep valleys with richly textured, mixed woodlands covering the hillsides”* from country lanes just south of Ashwicke Hall looking south towards Oakford in the St Catherine’s Brook valley.
- The VIH is visible from several public vantage points including *“from many points along the upper ridges”* as noted in LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges. It forms a key feature in views from the strategic viewpoints at Marshfield (SVP 25) and Cold Ashton (SVP 26).

Character and value

- A key characteristic of LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges is the *“harmonious relationship between landform, vegetation and settlement, with a strong sense of place”*.
- The VIH contributes to the setting of the Marshfield and Cold Ashton Conservation Areas, which are located on the edge of the VIH and are afforded with views looking across it.

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- The VIH also contributes to the character of the Ashwicke Hall RPG (Grade II), with the parkland sloping down into the wooded valley of the Doncombe Brook.
- The character and appearance of the VIH is largely unspoilt by visual detractors as the hillsides are mostly undeveloped, with modern development limited to the hamlet of Lower Hamswell, a small number of ground mounted solar panels at Hamswell Farm and a small garden nursery along Greenway Lane; a telecoms mast on Hanging Hill; and overhead electrical cables mounted on wooden poles, scattered farmsteads and dwellings.
- Landcover across the VIH comprises predominantly of mixed agricultural fields and woodland, including extensive areas of woodland on the hill and valley slopes around Henley Hill and the valley slopes of the Doncombe Brook valley.
- The VIH provides the opportunity for views across the landscape of South Gloucestershire, including from the strategic viewpoints at Hanging Hill (SVP 12), View from Freezing Hill (SVP 18), East End (Marshfield) (SVP 25) and Cold Ashton (SVP 26).
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by defining LCA 3: Ashwicke Ridges and forming a prominent backdrop to the surrounding lower-lying landscape.

Summary

The Ashwicke Ridges 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 setting of Conservation Areas and the character of a RPG; its character and appearance are largely unspoilt by visual detractors; it provides the

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opportunity for views across the landscape; and has a role in the landscape by defining a character area and forming a visual backdrop.

References

- 1 Marshfield Conservation Area Advice Note (2004). Available at:
<https://beta-edit.southglos.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/pte040002.pdf>
- 2 Cold Ashton Conservation Area Appraisal. Available at:
<https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/static/6fe38be9998b41c0c8a7716f6194a6f8/Cold-Ashton-1.pdf>
- 3 City of Bath World heritage Site Setting SPD (2013). Available at:
https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Environment/Landscape/WHS/whs_spd_low_res.pdf

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