

# South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment

## Annex I: Visually Important Hillside

### South Gloucestershire Council

Final Draft Report for Adoption Chapter 7

Prepared by LUC

September 2024



Version	Status	Prepared	Checked	Approved	Date
1	Draft Method and Pilot	E White	K Davies	K Davies	24.02.2023
2	Draft Report	J Ashton Davies E White	E White	K Davies	28.04.2023
3	Draft Report	E White	E White	K Davies	05.07.2023
4	Final Draft	E White	E White	K Davies	01.11.2023
5	Final Draft (updated following New Local Plan Phase 3 consultation)	E White	E White	K Davies	20.06.2024
6	Final Draft Report for Adoption	E White	E White	K Davies	11.09.2024



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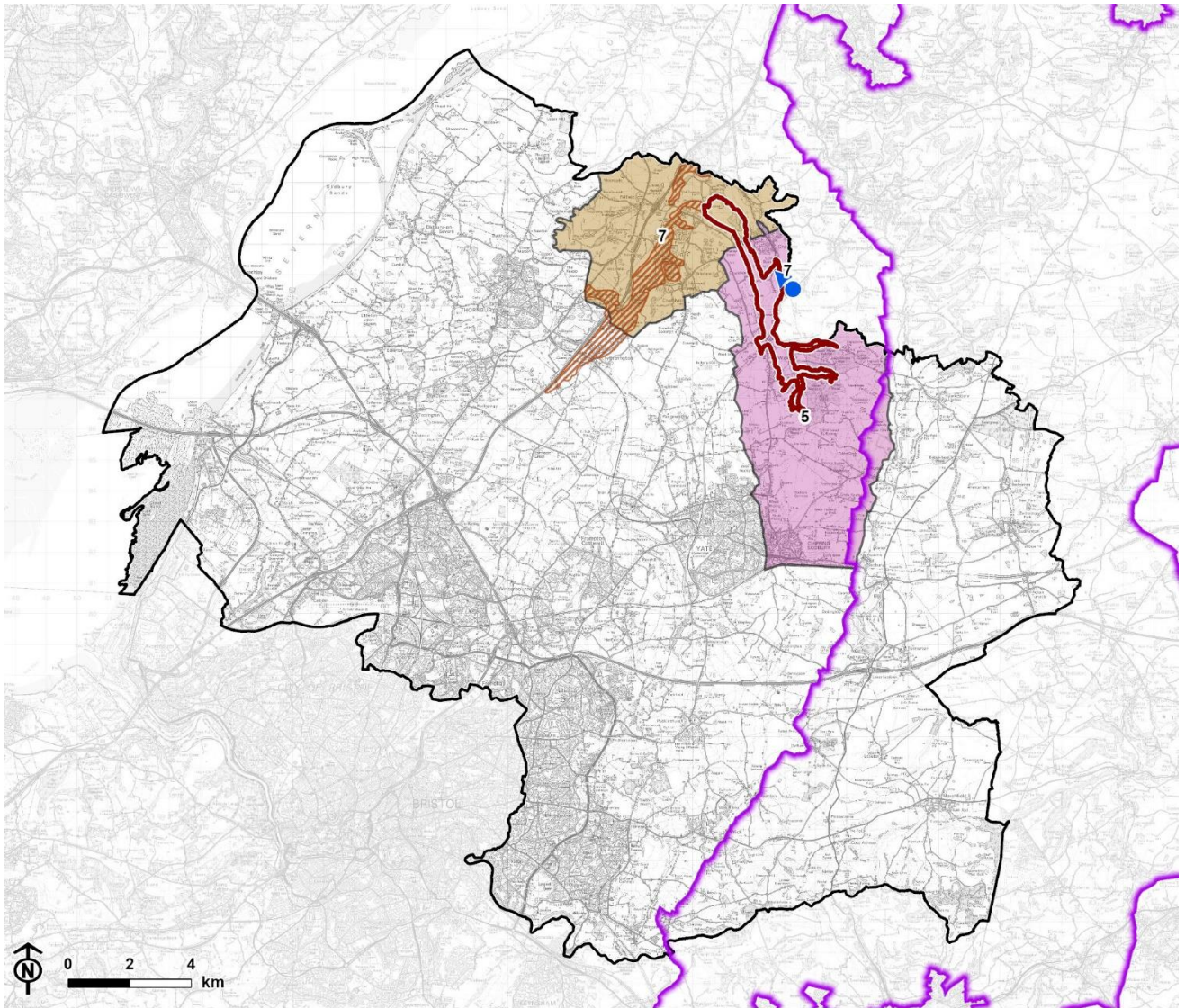
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## Chapter 7

# Churchend Ridge – including Charfield Hill

The Churchend Ridge VIH comprises a north-south linear steep ridge spanning from the south of Wickwar to the north of Charfield and forming the western valley sides to the Little Avon River. The VIH is located along the northern boundary of South Gloucestershire and lies mostly within the Wickwar Ridge and Vale landscape character area (LCA 5), with a small part in the north extending into the Falfield Vale landscape character area (LCA 7), where it adjoins the Wick's/Butcher's Hill and Baden Hill VIH at Tortworth in the north-west. It is visible from the surrounding area due to its exposed setting, and is emphasised by the considerably lower-lying vale landscape to the west. The western valley side of the Little Avon Valley has a particularly attractive and rural character. The Churchend Ridge VIH forms part of the eastern, rural setting of the Wickwar Conservation Area which sits above the Little Avon River.

**Figure 7.1: Location of the Churchend Ridge Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context**



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CB:HS, EB:shayler\_h LUC 12274\_2024\_r1\_VIHSVUpdates 17/07/2024  
Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS


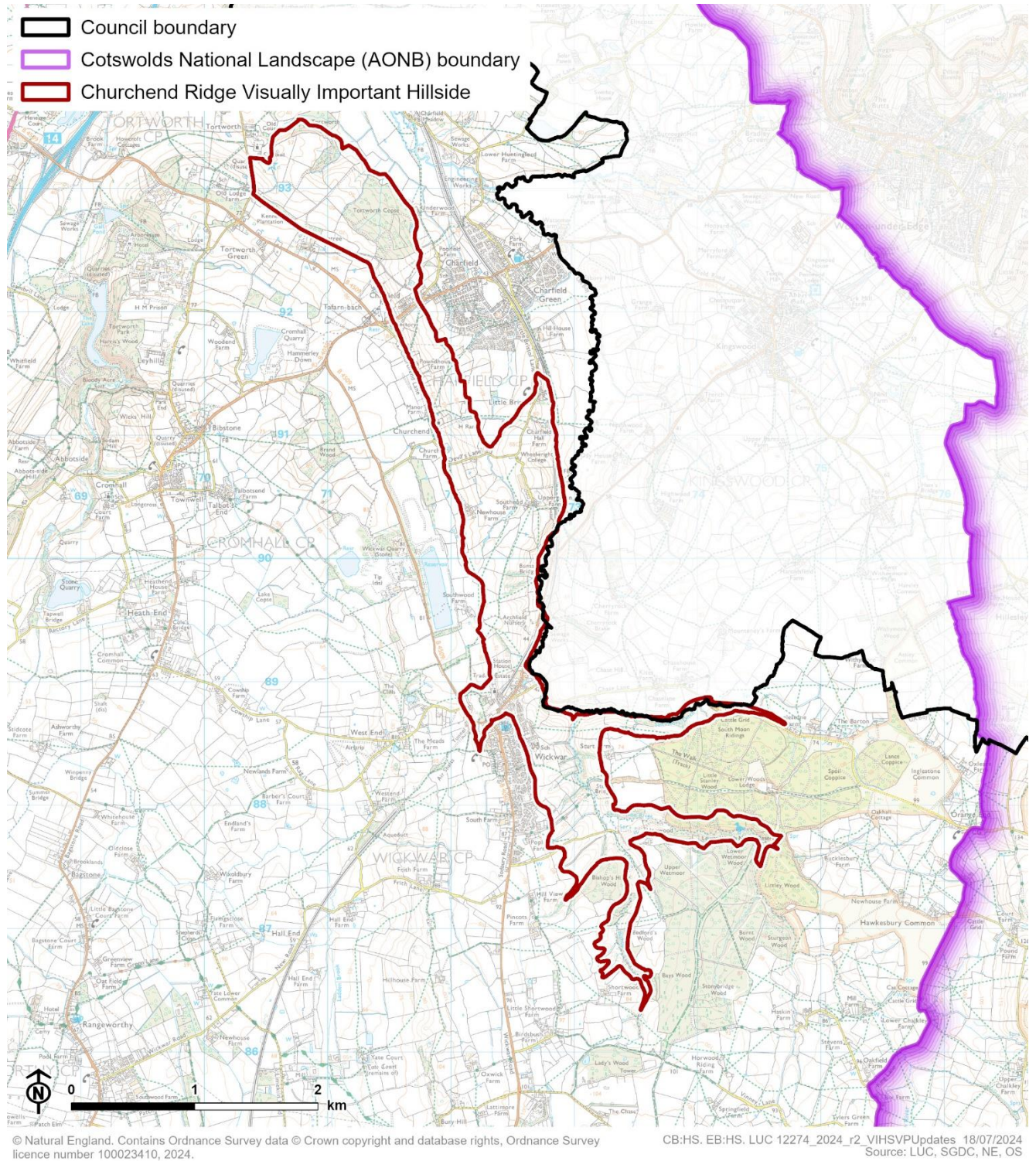
- |   |  |                          |   |                           |
|---|--|--------------------------|---|---------------------------|
|  | Council boundary                             | <b>Shallow Ridge LCT</b> |  | 5. Wickwar Ridge and Vale |
|  | Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) boundary | <b>Parkland Vale LCT</b> |  | 7. Falfield Vale          |
|  | Churchend Ridge Visually Important Hillside  |                          |   |                           |
|  | Adjoining Visually Important Hillside        |                          |   |                           |
|  | Photograph location                          |                          |   |                           |

Figure 7.2: Detailed map of the Churchend Ridge Visually Important Hillside



**Figure 7.3: View of the Churchend Ridge from Wickwar Road**



## Characteristics

### Distinctiveness and identity

- The Churchend Ridge VIH is readily identifiable as a natural landform feature on OS mapping as close contours indicate sloping hillsides with an easterly aspect to the Little Avon River (descending from around 80m to 50m). This is clear when seen in context to the adjacent vale landscape to the west (where contours are at much larger intervals). Contours are particularly narrow in the south of the VIH, where it is incised by the Little Avon River, Bishop's Hill Brook and Saltmoors Ditch, indicating steep intricate valley slopes.
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity, as noted in the LCA 5: Wickwar Ridge and Vale description within South Gloucestershire Landscape Character assessment SPD, which identifies the distinct topography surrounding the Little Avon River, stating that *“the valley is small-scale and steep-sided with concave lower slopes and convex upper slopes, becoming more open and broader to the north.”*

### Visual prominence

- The Churchend Ridge VIH comprises a relatively prominent, western valley side to the Little Avon River. The area around Lower Woods is noted in LCA 5: Wickwar Ridges and Vale as *“a series of steep, ‘V’-shaped, narrow tributary valleys of the Little Avon”* which become broader near Charfield and are visible from local vantages and upper slopes.
- Built development located on the VIH contributes towards its conspicuousness, as LCA 5: Wickwar Ridges and Vale notes that *“Wickwar is prominent on the upper slopes of the Little Avon River valley, where both building facades and rooflines are clearly visible against the skyline in local views. This is due to the exposed setting, clipped low hedges and very limited tree cover”*. It describes the settlement of Wickwar as stark and intrusive. The Wickwar Conservation Area document [See reference 1] states that *“the*



*Brewery building, a significant landmark on Station Road is also highly prominent to the immediate northeast”.*

## Character and value

- The minor tributary valleys of the Little Avon River, which form part of the VIH in the south-east, are flanked by the distinctive Lower Woods which contributes towards the character of the VIH in this area.
- The VIH contributes to the eastern, rural setting of the Wickwar Conservation Area (located on the edge of the VIH), with land falling away from the village to the Little Avon River before rising up again steeply on the other side.
- The character and appearance of the VIH is partly unspoilt by visible detractors as stretches of the hillsides are undeveloped. However, modern development is located upon the VIH including the villages of Wickwar in the south, as well as the villages of Churchend and a small part of Charfield Hill in the north, scattered farmsteads and dwellings. The Cross-Country train line intersects the central area of the VIH.
- Landcover across the VIH is predominantly arable and pasture farmland, punctuated with copses of woodland to the north and the large ‘Lower Woods’ to the south.
- The VIH provides the opportunity for views across the landscape of South Gloucestershire, including from the strategic viewpoint at Churchend (SVP 2), providing a panoramic view north-eastward towards Wotton-under-Edge and the Cotswold Scarp.
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by forming a prominent backdrop to the surrounding lower-lying landscape.

## Summary

The Churchend Ridge is categorised as a VIH as it meets most 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; has some prominence in views across the landscape; contributes to the setting of a Conservation Area; its character and appearance is partly unspoilt by visual detractors (although influenced by existing settlement); it provides the opportunity for views across the landscape; and has a role in the landscape by forming a visual backdrop.

## References

- 1 Wickwar Conservation Area Advice Note (1998). Available at:  
<https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/static/a0f7165f8fc002b0a18453780ffca675/pte050060.pdf>

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