

South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment

Annex I: Visually Important Hillside

South Gloucestershire Council

Final Draft Report for Adoption Chapter 8

Prepared by LUC

September 2024



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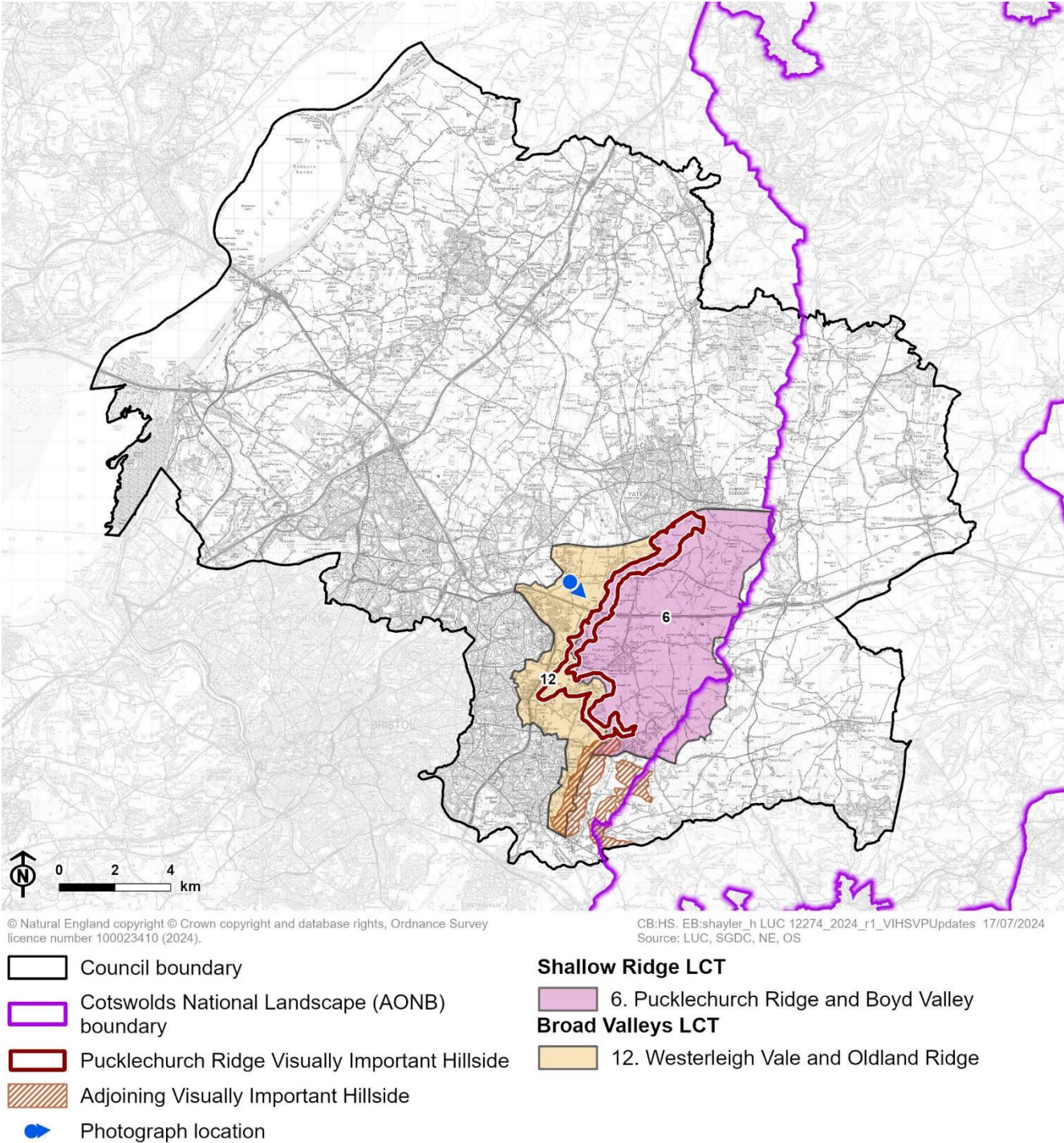
Chapter 8

Pucklechurch Ridge – including Shortwood Hill, Siston Hill, Claypit Hill, Westerleigh Hill, Coxgrove Hill and Holbrook Common

The Pucklechurch Ridge VIH is a distinctive scarp that runs north-south along the eastern fringes of the Bristol conurbation, extending north eastwards across the M4 motorway to the southern edge of Yate, and south eastwards towards Wick. The VIH encompasses a folded landform of hills and occasional, small-scale valley incisions that are fed by springs and tributaries of the Folly Brook. The VIH is located within the centre of South Gloucestershire, where it defines part of the western and eastern boundaries of the Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley (LCA 6) and Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge (LCA 12) landscape character areas respectively. It adjoins the Oldland Ridge and Cotswold Lower Slopes VIH in the south at Wick. The Pucklechurch Ridge is a prominent rising landform and skyline feature in comparison to the lower-lying adjacent areas of Westerleigh Vale and Kingswood character areas. Its textured landcover also contributes towards its distinctiveness. The southern part of the Pucklechurch Ridge VIH forms an intrinsic part of the setting to the Siston and Pucklechurch Conservation Areas.

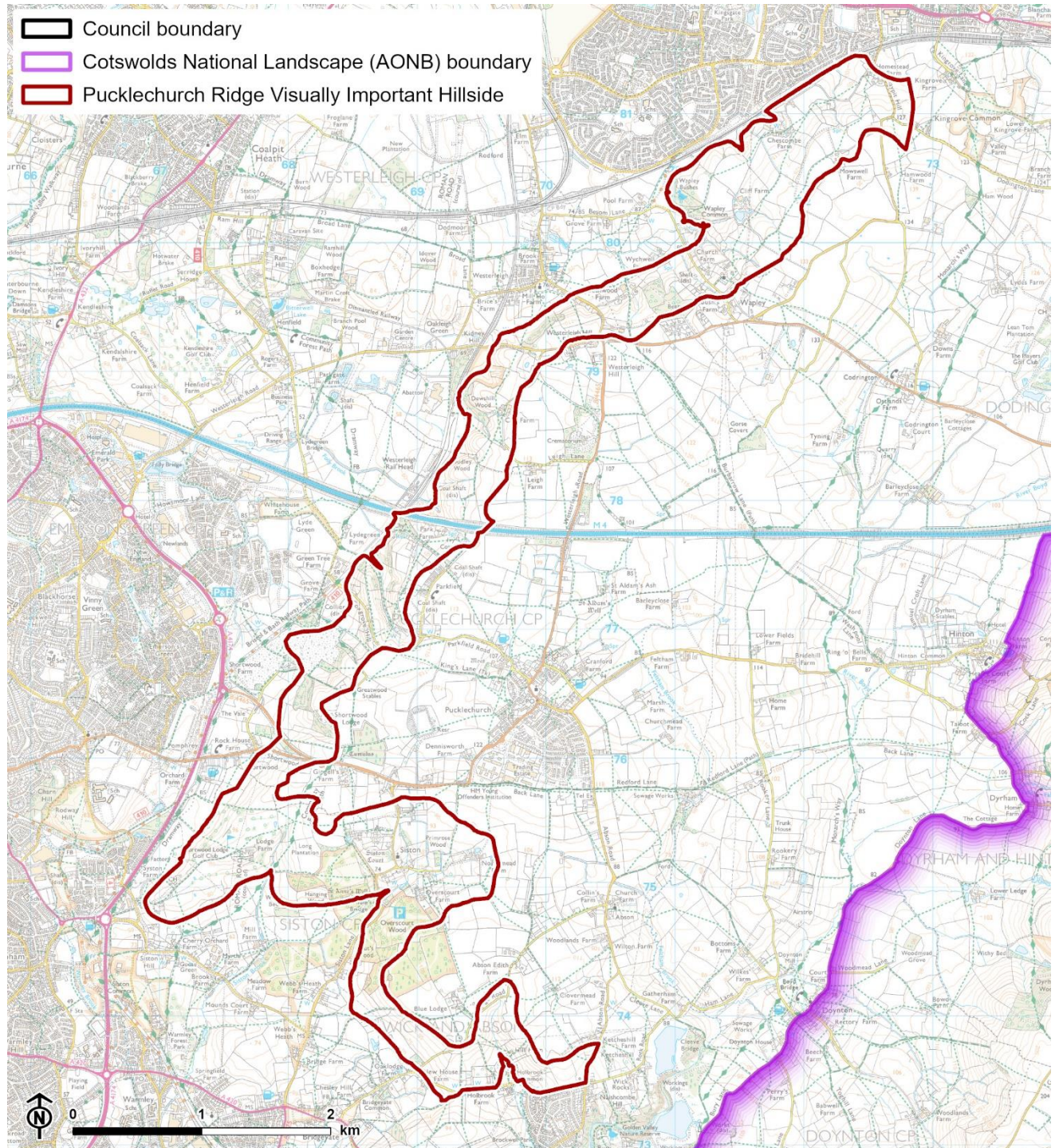
Chapter 8 Pucklechurch Ridge – including Shortwood Hill, Siston Hill, Claypit Hill, Westerleigh Hill, Coxgrove Hill and Holbrook Common

Figure 8.1: Location of the Pucklechurch Ridge Visually Important Hillside and landscape character context



Chapter 8 Pucklechurch Ridge – including Shortwood Hill, Siston Hill, Claypit Hill, Westerleigh Hill, Coxgrove Hill and Holbrook Common

Figure 8.2: Detailed map of the Pucklechurch Ridge Visually Important Hillside



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CB:HS, EB:HS, LUC 12274_2024_r2_VIHSVUpdates 18/07/2024
Source: LUC, SGDC, NE, OS

Figure 8.3: View of the Pucklechurch Ridge from Westerleigh Road



Characteristics

Distinctiveness and identity

- The Pucklechurch Ridge VIH is readily identifiable as a natural landform feature on OS mapping as close contours indicate steeply sloping hillsides with a westerly aspect (descending from around 130m to 80m in the north and around 100m to 65m in the south). This is clear when seen in context of the adjacent vale landscape to the west and plateau landscape to the east (where contours are at much larger intervals). Several small-scale valley insertions are evident throughout the VIH, represented on OS mapping by steep contours that are either rounded or 'v' shaped, indicating both concave and convex intricate valley slopes.
- The VIH is a distinctive feature with a strong sense of identity as noted in the following publications:
 - South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment SPD description for LCA 6: Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley states that *“the Pucklechurch Ridge with its distinctive landform and textured land cover, forms a prominent backdrop and skyline to adjacent westerly character areas (LCA 12: Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge and LCA 14: Kingswood).”*
 - The Siston Conservation Area appraisal [\[See reference 1\]](#) states that *“the topography of the landscape contributes significantly to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area”*.
 - The Pucklechurch Conservation Area appraisal [\[See reference 2\]](#) states that *“to the west, the gently rising ground falls away steeply to create the distinctive scarp of the Pucklechurch Ridge that runs north-south along the eastern fringes of the Bristol conurbation”*.

Visual prominence

- The Pucklechurch Ridge VIH is a visually prominent and pronounced feature in the landscape as recognised in LCA 6: Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley which states that “*the Pucklechurch Ridge with its distinctive landform and textured land cover, forms a prominent backdrop and skyline to adjacent westerly character areas (LCA 12: Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge and LCA 14: Kingswood).*”
- The VIH is visible from several public vantage points and forms a key feature in views, including from the Folly Brook valley and the urban edge.
- Two chimneys (which are historic remains of the coal industry) and wooded spoil mounds exist along the scarp’s toe which add texture and form local landmarks, contributing towards the conspicuousness of the VIH.

Character and value

- The VIH contributes to the rural setting of the Siston Conservation Area (located on the VIH within the Siston Brook Valley), also providing a landform buffer between this area and the urban fringe of Bristol to its west. The Siston Conservation Area appraisal [See reference 3] notes that “*the sense of enclosure achieved by a combination of landform and planting contributes significantly to the perception of remoteness and tranquillity, which along with the rural and undeveloped landscape is a defining characteristic of the Siston Conservation Area*”. It also notes that the dips and hollows in the landform contribute to the rich variety in the landscape. The VIH also contributes to the setting of the Pucklechurch Conservation Area as the scarp is a notable landscape feature seen in views from this area.
- The character and appearance of the VIH is partly unspoilt by visual detractors. However, the suburb of Emerson’s Green extends along the toe of the Pucklechurch Ridge, along with claypits and coal industry relics. The linear expansion of the village of Westerleigh to the east, comprising modern detached houses, has extended on to the lower slopes of the Pucklechurch Ridge. LCA 6: Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley notes that “*the terraced properties at Parkfield Rank form a distinctive and isolated landmark feature*

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which intrudes upon the scarp face of the Pucklechurch Ridge, which otherwise has very few built features". In addition, the M4 cuts through the VIH.

- Landcover across the VIH contributes towards its distinctiveness, as the scarp's textured cover of intermittent woodland (ancient and copses), rough grassland and scrub, coupled with historic industrial relics and scattered farms, is particularly visible and influences the character of the area. It also comprises a patchwork of arable and pastoral fields. Clipped and overgrown hedgerows, with some intermittent hedgerow trees, run along the contours and down the slope, emphasising the profile of the scarp.
- The VIH provides the opportunity for views across the landscape of South Gloucestershire, the Bristol conurbation and towards South Wales, including from the strategic viewpoint along the Community Forest Path near Siston Court (SVP 10), from Westerleigh Hill (SVP 11), and from the edge of Pucklechurch (SVP 27).
- The VIH has a role in the landscape by providing containment to the eastern edge of LCA 12: Westerleigh Vale and Oldland Ridge, and the western edge of LCA 6: Pucklechurch Ridge and Boyd Valley. It also forms a prominent backdrop to the surrounding lower-lying landscape.

Summary

The Pucklechurch Ridge 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; contributes to the setting of Conservation Areas; 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 containing character areas and the visual

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influence of the eastern urban fringe of Bristol, as well as forming a visual backdrop.

References

- 1 Siston Conservation Area SPD (2010). Available at:
<https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/static/cc9d59acec17679228e866fabled45714/Siston-Conservation-Area.pdf>
- 2 Pucklechurch Conservation Area SPD (2010). Available at:
<https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/static/24ee861011191b6252a715a7e63a2e9e/Pucklechurch-Conservation-Area.pdf>
- 3 Siston Conservation Area SPD (2010). Available at:
<https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/static/cc9d59acec17679228e866fabled45714/Siston-Conservation-Area.pdf>

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