

Landscape and Heritage Assessment of Saltford South of the Bath Road (A4)

Prepared by the Planning Policy Working Group of Saltford Parish Council, 25 June 2024

This sensitivity assessment of Saltford South of the Bath Road (A4) looks at the

- landform,
- openness and enclosure,
- 'natural' character,
- landscape pattern and time depth,
- historic features,
- settlement form and edge,
- recreational value,
- perceptual character,
- visual character, and
- the setting of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

CRITERIA	SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT (Lower, Moderate or Higher)
<p>Landform</p> <p>This considers the shape of the landscape. Smooth, gently undulating or flat landforms are likely to be less sensitive to development. Dramatic landform changes or distinct landform features (e.g. incised valley with prominent slopes, hills) are likely to increase sensitivity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lower Sensitivity: Absence of strong topographical variety. Featureless, smooth, very gently undulating or flat landform. ■ Moderate Sensitivity: Undulating landform or some distinct landform features. ■ Higher Sensitivity: Presence of strong topographical variety or distinctive landform features. 	<p>HIGHER</p> <p>Historically much of the area was enclosed in the late medieval period.</p> <p>The open and undulating character of the landscape gives rise to many extensive views often framed through field openings. From some elevated areas there are long views to the Cotswold Hills, and to Bristol over the Chew Valley, as well as to the Forest of Dean including May Hill, and the Brecon Beacons (aka Bannau Brycheiniog).</p> <p>The varied topography gives rise to interesting light and shading effects emphasising the characteristic landform.</p> <p>The area retains a largely rural character (due to the relative lack of modern development and small settlements) and experiences relatively dark night skies. Away from settlements there is a strong sense of tranquillity and a sense of continuity with the southern slopes of the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB).</p> <p>Overall, under this criterion, the landscape is of very high sensitivity to all potential development types.</p>
<p>Openness and Enclosure</p> <p>This considers how open or enclosed the landscape is. Landscapes with a strong sense of enclosure (e.g. provided by field boundaries, tree/woodland cover, landform or buildings) are likely to be less sensitive to development than an open and unenclosed landscape because these features will be able to provide screening.</p>	<p>HIGHER</p> <p>- See previous section 'Landform'.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lower Sensitivity: A very well enclosed landscape – e.g. with fields bounded by high hedges and dense tree/woodland cover or contained by landform or buildings. ■ Moderate Sensitivity: Some areas lacking screening by field boundaries, tree/woodland cover, landform or buildings, whilst others might have a greater sense of enclosure owing to a denser occurrence of these features. ■ Higher Sensitivity: Exposed, visible landscapes with no field boundaries, tree/woodland cover, landform or buildings to provide screening. 	
<p>‘Natural’ Character</p> <p>This considers the ‘naturalistic’ qualities of the landscape in terms of the coverage of semi-natural habitats and valued natural features (e.g. trees and hedgerows) which contribute to landscape character and could be vulnerable to loss from development. Landscapes with frequent natural features (including large areas of designated habitats) result in increased sensitivity to development, while landscape with limited natural features will be less sensitive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lower Sensitivity: Lack of semi-natural habitat coverage or valued natural features e.g. intensively farmed or brownfield sites. ■ Moderate Sensitivity: Some occurrence of valued semi-natural habitats and features (e.g. tree, hedgerows, woodland). ■ Higher Sensitivity: Frequent occurrence of valued natural features (tree, hedgerows, woodland) and presence of larger areas of semi-natural habitats. 	<p>HIGHER</p> <p>The fields have been farmed and therefore remained undeveloped for centuries, with archaeological evidence of Roman and Bronze Age farming activity. The arrival of the golf course in 1905 and its managed parkland containing many established trees largely complement the landscape by connecting the two woodlands.</p> <p>This wooded and open farmland area provides the rural setting for the south side of Saltford, largely masking the housing settlement of the village itself when viewing the wider landscape from south to north and northeast that includes the Cotswold AONB incorporating Kelston Tump (aka Kelston Roundhill) and the Cotswold ridge. When viewed from the higher levels of the Cotswold AONB (e.g. Kelston Tump and the Cotswold ridge), the landscape provides a countryside vista of high visual quality whilst adding to the setting of the wooded area itself and of the locally distinctive Kelston Tump.</p> <p>The two long-standing woodlands, namely Folly Wood, to the east of Saltford golf course and designated by Natural England as an Ancient Woodland and classified as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), Saltford golf course itself, and Longwood, the long-established woodland to the west of the golf course alongside Longwood Lane. Folly Wood and Longwood are the only mature woodlands in Saltford and thus greatly valued by the local community.</p>
<p>Landscape Pattern and Time Depth</p> <p>This considers the field pattern and historic time depth of the landscape. Landscapes with more irregular and smaller field patterns, particularly those of historic origin, are likely to be more sensitive to the introduction of development than landscapes with regular, larger-scale and more modern field patterns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lower Sensitivity: Simple, large scale, regular or uniform field patterns (mainly of modern origin). ■ Moderate Sensitivity: Mixture of simple and complex landscape field patterns and time depth. ■ Higher Sensitivity: Dominated by more complex, smaller-scale irregular and varied field patterns 	<p>HIGHER</p> <p>- See previous section ‘Natural’ Character’.</p>

<p>(including historic field patterns e.g. piecemeal enclosure with irregular boundaries).</p>	
<p>Historic Features</p> <p>This considers the presence of historic features that contribute to landscape character (i.e. visible features that may be designated as Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments or listed buildings, or other archaeological features). Landscapes with a high density of visible historic features important to the character of the area are likely to be more sensitive to the introduction of modern development than landscapes where such development already exists.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lower Sensitivity: A landscape with an absence of or relatively few visible historic features. ■ Moderate Sensitivity: Presence of some visible historic features that contribute to landscape character, or adjacent to historic features. ■ Higher Sensitivity: A landscape with a high density of visible historic features that contribute to landscape character. 	<p>MEDIUM/HIGHER</p> <p>Almost all the field hedges are several centuries old, composed entirely of native species. This is the only part of Saltford with ancient agricultural dry-stone walls. The high wildlife value of those dry-stone walls for invertebrates is noteworthy.</p> <p>The ancient field hedges and dry-stone walls contribute to the character of this open landscape of farmed fields, a landscape that has remained almost unchanged in shape and appearance for centuries. They form an essential part of Saltford’s heritage.</p>
<p>Settlement Form and Edge</p> <p>The extent to which development of the landscape would relate to the existing adjacent settlement, with reference to the form and pattern of the settlement and character of the settlement edge and presence of boundary features e.g. a major road/river. A settlement edge that is well integrated with the surrounding rural fringe through strong landscape features (e.g. woodland or river) will be more sensitive than an exposed settlement edge (with no landscape features to integrate it with the rural fringe).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lower Sensitivity: Development would have a good relationship with the existing settlement form/pattern. Development may offer opportunities to enhance an exposed settlement edge and integrate it with the rural fringe. ■ Moderate Sensitivity: Development may be slightly at odds with the existing settlement form/pattern. Development may adversely affect the existing settlement edge to some extent. It would be perceived as settlement advancement into the countryside but would not cross a distinctive boundary feature. ■ Higher Sensitivity: Development would have a poor relationship with the existing settlement form/pattern. Development may adversely affect an existing settlement edge which is well integrated with the landscape e.g. by a wooded edge. It would cross a boundary feature and/or would extend development into an area with a distinctly different landscape – e.g. the extension of settlement beyond a ridge crest or into a valley. 	<p>HIGHER</p> <p>This is an attractive and subtle landscape backdrop of increasingly steeply sloping arable fields and includes the popular Saltford golf course. There is also a distinctive tree belt on the west side of the golf course, and which also follows the north-south side of Longwood Lane.</p> <p>Dry stone walls, ditches, earth banks and hedgerows (sometimes a combination of the aforementioned) with several dew ponds provide a wildlife corridor connecting Folly Wood, Longwood and Manor Road Community Woodland (which itself contains a significant area of long-established woodland). This linear habitat provides an overall and attractive setting of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees and vegetation of differing heights, shades of green, and shapes.</p>
<p>Recreational Value</p> <p>This considers the presence of features and facilities which enable enjoyment of the landscape, and the importance of these. This may include public rights of way, open access land, country parks and outdoor tourist/ visitor attractions with facilities where enjoyment of the landscape is important to the experience. Importance of features may be indicated by their promotion as long distance footpaths or</p>	<p>HIGHER</p> <p>Longwood Lane and Manor Road on the south side of Saltford are part of the B&NES Strategic National Cycling Network and also of the circular route around Bristol, the 85-mile Avon Cycle Way route 410, that leads down to the Bristol and Bath Railway Path on the northeast side of Saltford. The Saltford south part of this regularly used cycling route</p>

<p>recreation routes, national cycle routes, country parks and outdoor tourist attractions often marked on Ordinance Survey maps.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lower Sensitivity: Publicly inaccessible or limited provision of recreational facilities or recreational value limited to community sports facilities (where enjoyment of the landscape is not integral to the activity). ■ Moderate Sensitivity: Landscapes with green spaces or recreation areas valued in the local context. Some Public Rights of Way and footpaths. ■ Higher Sensitivity: Landscapes important for access and enjoyment of the landscape e.g. open access land, country parks or outdoor tourist attractions with visitor facilities. High density of well-connected Public Rights of Way/promoted routes. 	<p>provides extensive views across Saltford's open landscape with the Kelston Tump and the Cotswolds ridge providing a familiar backdrop enjoyed by cyclists and walkers alike.</p> <p>The south side of Saltford's landscape setting contains PROW footpaths and several permissive footpaths/bridleways that have been in use for many decades; some are shown on the 1883/4 OS map of Saltford.</p> <p>The matrix of PROW footpaths is in regular use by residents and visitors for their health and well-being, including many dog walkers too. Photographers, ornithologists and other observers of wildlife and the landscape frequent Saltford's footpaths and lanes.</p>
<p>Perceptual Character</p> <p>This considers qualities such as rurality (traditional land uses with few modern, human influences), sense of remoteness and/or tranquillity. High scenic value, freedom from human activity/disturbance and 'dark skies' would add to sensitivity in this criterion because development will introduce new features which may detract from a sense of tranquillity and or remoteness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lower Sensitivity: A landscape strongly influenced by visible or audible signs of human activity and modern development. ■ Moderate Sensitivity: Some sense of rural character and scenic qualities, but with some signs of human activity and modern development. ■ Higher Sensitivity: A highly scenic, rural landscape, remote from visible or audible signs of human activity and modern development. 	<p>HIGHER</p> <p>The open and undulating character of the landscape gives rise to many extensive views often framed through field openings. From some elevated areas there are long views to the Cotswold Hills, and to Bristol over the Chew Valley, as well as to the Forest of Dean including May Hill, and the Brecon Beacons (aka Bannau Brycheiniog).</p> <p>The varied topography gives rise to interesting light and shading effects emphasising the characteristic landform.</p> <p>Due to the relative lack of modern development and small settlements, the area retains a largely rural character and includes the last remaining pasture land in Saltford, which would have been surrounded by pasture prior to the decline in sheep and dairy farming. The fields to the south of Manor Road, for example, are used as mixed pasture (horses, sheep and goats) and have amenity as well as historic value.</p> <p>The landscape experiences relatively dark night skies and away from settlements there is a strong sense of tranquillity.</p>
<p>Visual Character</p> <p>This considers the visual prominence of the landscape, and extent to which potential development would be visible from surrounding areas. It also considers the visual relationship with the Cotswolds National Landscape, City of Bath World Heritage Site, and local landmark features (e.g. Kelston Park).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lower Sensitivity: Visually enclosed landscape with limited views of potential development from surrounding areas. The landscape has limited intervisibility with the Cotswolds National Landscape, City of Bath World Heritage Site, and/or landmark features. ■ Moderate Sensitivity: Semi-enclosed landscape with some views of potential development from surrounding 	<p>HIGHER</p> <p>The following description of Saltford's landscape setting is from B&NES Council's 2015 Evidence Base for Policy NE2A (Landscape Setting of Settlements) prepared for the 2017 Placemaking Plan. It includes reference to the area of Saltford South: -</p> <p>"The low hillside backdrop of the southern slopes of the Avon valley lies to the south of the village. This is an attractive and subtle landscape backdrop of increasingly steeply sloping pasture fields* and includes the well teed Saltford Golf Course and adjacent steep sided, wooded tributary valley¹. There</p>

<p>areas. The landscape has some intervisibility with the Cotswolds National Landscape, City of Bath World Heritage Site, and/or landmark features.</p> <p>■ Higher Sensitivity: Visually prominent landscape with extensive visibility of potential development from surrounding area. The landscape has strong intervisibility with the Cotswolds National Landscape, City of Bath World Heritage Site, and/or landmark features.</p>	<p>is also a distinctive tree belt² on the west side of the golf course which follows the north-south side of a lane³.</p> <p>* Correction: These are and have also been arable fields ¹Folly Wood ²Longwood ³Longwood Lane</p> <p>Overall, under this criterion, the landscape is of very high sensitivity to all potential development types.</p>
<p>Setting of the Cotswolds National Landscape</p> <p>This considers the extent to which the landscape of the assessment unit forms part of the 'setting' of the Cotswolds National Landscape and the extent to which development could have an adverse impact on that setting. The setting of the Cotswolds National Landscape is described as the area outside the designated landscape "within which development and land management proposals, by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting materials or design can be considered to have an impact, positive or negative on the landscape, scenic beauty and special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB".</p> <p>■ Lower Sensitivity: The landscape has limited intervisibility with the Cotswolds National Landscape and development would have limited adverse impact on the landscape, scenic beauty and special qualities of the designated landscape.</p> <p>■ Moderate Sensitivity: The landscape has some intervisibility with the Cotswolds National Landscape and development would have some adverse impact on the landscape, scenic beauty and special qualities of the designated landscape.</p> <p>■ Higher Sensitivity: The landscape has strong intervisibility with the Cotswolds National Landscape, and development would have an adverse impact on the landscape, scenic beauty and special qualities of the designated landscape.</p>	<p>HIGHER</p> <p>When viewed from the higher levels of the Cotswold National Landscape, (in particular the Cotswold Way, Kelston Tump and the Cotswold ridge), the landscape surrounding Saltford including Saltford south of the Bath Road (A4) provides a countryside vista of high visual quality whilst adding to the setting of the wooded area itself and of the locally distinctive Kelston Tump and the scenic beauty of the wider area.</p> <p>It helps to keep the settlements of Saltford and Keynsham apart and provides a rural countryside setting that contributes to the positive experience and continuity associated with visiting the Cotswold National Landscape.</p> <p>Since 2017 the loss of parcels of open landscape to new or forthcoming developments between Keynsham and Saltford, for example the Hygge Park, Withies Green, and Pixash Lane Recycling Centre expansion developments, means that the remaining green open landscape and in particular the Green Belt surrounding Saltford has become of even greater value to not just the local community and to wildlife, but to the setting of the Cotswolds National Landscape as viewed from the west of Bath and Kelston Tump.</p>

Note: This assessment is based on the assessment criteria used in LUC's report to BaNES Council on West of Bath Landscape, January 2024* and in the following planning policy papers that include **relevant maps** produced by Saltford Parish Council that should be read in conjunction with this assessment paper:

- *Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) or Local Green Space (LGS) designation for Saltford South (Jan 2023)*
- *Landscape designation for Saltford South: Reaffirmation of application with outcome options (Jan 2024)*
- *The Saltford Area of Great Landscape Value - Planning Policy and Character Appraisal by SPC (Mar 2024)*

*(<https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/WoB%20LA%20-%20Area%204.pdf>)

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