

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

Prepared by the Planning Policy Working Group of Saltford Parish Council, 18 July 2024

This sensitivity assessment of Saltford North of the Bath Road (A4) is a sister document to the sensitivity assessment of Saltford South of the Bath Road (A4) dated 25 June 2024 and, as with that paper, 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>As this landscape is within the Avon Valley, the open and gently sloping topography of the landscape that leads down to the River Avon provides many extensive views from public right of way (PROW) footpaths including the Avon Trail, with the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) incorporating Kelston Tump (aka Kelston Roundhill) and the Cotswolds ridge providing a distinctive raised backdrop and a sense of peaceful rural permanence. The autumn, winter and spring mists that rise over this landscape from the River Avon, together with the light of dawn or dusk collectively provide an atmospheric and timeless character for this ancient landscape, revealing differing shapes and forms that contribute to the landscape's outstanding beauty.</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. Its distance from settlements provides a strong sense of tranquillity and of continuity with the southern slopes of the contiguous Cotswolds National Landscape.</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</p>	<p>HIGHER</p> <p>- See also the previous section 'Landform'.</p> <p>The fields of varying shapes and sizes are largely contained within irregular hedgerow boundaries in a similar layout to the fields situated due east in the Cotswold National Park (AONB).</p>

<p>unenclosed landscape because these features will be able to provide screening.</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>From most viewing points, the Wessex Water Sewage Treatment Works within the eastern side of this landscape is well screened from view by established trees and hedgerows. As it becomes established, the new wetland scrape created by Wessex Water on this site in 2023 will contribute to the value and variety of wildlife habitat of this landscape.</p>
<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 remained undeveloped for centuries, with archaeological evidence of Roman and Anglo-Saxon farming activity.</p> <p>This open farmland area provides the rural setting for the north side of Saltford including Saltford’s Conservation Area. Established hedgerows, trees and the older buildings of the Conservation Area, largely screen the more modern housing within the settlement of the village from this landscape when viewing the wider landscape from north to south and from the east including from the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) and the Cotswolds ridge.</p> <p>When viewed from the higher levels of the Cotswolds National Landscape, for example from Kelston Tump and the Cotswolds ridge, the landscape provides a countryside vista of high visual quality whilst contributing to the rural setting of the Cotswolds National Landscape itself.</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 (including historic field patterns e.g. piecemeal enclosure with irregular boundaries). 	<p>HIGHER</p> <p>- See previous section ‘Natural’ Character’.</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>HIGHER</p> <p>Almost all the field hedges are several centuries old, composed entirely of native species.</p> <p>Saltford has a fascinating geological history with Lower Jurassic limestones and shales seen across ploughed fields and in old quarries, most of which have been filled in. The Liassic limestones were used in many of the older houses in the Conservation Area and they contain abundant fossils.</p> <p>Well preserved fossil remains of ancient marine reptiles, Ichthyosaurs and Plesiosaurs, from the Lower Jurassic Period (190 to 200 million years ago) have been found in Saltford. Other fossil remains from this period found in Saltford include Ammonites, Brachiopod, Nautiloid, and Bivalves.</p> <p>Some limestone exposures in this area of Saltford's landscape are extremely important in our understanding of local and regional geology and have been protected as Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS).</p> <p>Gravel deposits of a much younger age occur in and adjacent to the Avon Valley and accumulated here during the last ice age that ended 11-12,000 years ago in the Pleistocene Period. One gravel deposit in Saltford, near Avon Farm, is protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).</p> <p>The archaeologically important Anglo Saxon Burial Ground is situated north of Avon Farm</p> <p>The fields and meadows in north Saltford are of particular importance for providing the landscape setting for Saltford's Conservation Area. Three medieval fishponds linked by a stream (the top pond is known locally as Watercress Pond or Park Pond) are located to the northeast of Saltford Manor and St Mary's Church. Saltford Manor, built in the 12th Century, is reputed to be the oldest continuously occupied private house in England; the ponds are thought to have been originally part of the Manor House estate for providing mainly coarse fish as a food source.</p> <p>St Mary's Church, immediately adjacent to the Manor House, was first constructed in early Norman times. However, the base of the tower is thought to be from the late Anglo-Saxon period and constructed with recycled cut stone from Roman buildings in the locality.</p> <p>The Brass Mill on The Shallows at the southern end of the Conservation Area is a Scheduled Monument. It was referenced as a mill in the 1086 Domesday Book entry for Saltford and worked brass from 1721 to 1925.</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</p>	<p>HIGHER</p> <p>The River Avon, itself a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), provides the northern and eastern boundary to this area of Saltford's landscape, yet forms part of the overall continuous relationship between the steeper landscape of the</p>

<p>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> <p>■ 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.</p> <p>■ 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.</p> <p>■ 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>	<p>southern slopes of the Cotswolds National Park (AONB) leading down to the river and Saltford North’s fields, meadows and field margins of established hedges and trees. These two landscapes depend on each other to provide a stunning vista that is enjoyed from many viewing points on both sides of the river.</p> <p>Under this criterion, the landscape is of very high sensitivity to all potential development types with negative consequences beyond Saltford North itself.</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 recreation routes, national cycle routes, country parks and outdoor tourist attractions often marked on Ordnance Survey maps.</p> <p>■ 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).</p> <p>■ Moderate Sensitivity: Landscapes with green spaces or recreation areas valued in the local context. Some Public Rights of Way and footpaths.</p> <p>■ Higher Sensitivity: Landscapes important for access and enjoyment of the landscape e.g. open access land, country parks or outdoor tourist attractions with visitor</p>	<p>HIGHER</p> <p>Saltford’s open rural landscape and the River Avon together with the Kelston Tump and the Cotswolds ridge combine to provide a familiar backdrop and North Somerset character for which this specific area has become highly valued and appreciated by the local community and visitors. The resulting views and changing light patterns provide high scenic value enjoyed by photographers, ornithologists and other observers of wildlife, artists, walkers, dog walkers, cyclists, horse riders, river users in various craft, swimmers, and anglers alike. These are accessed by a matrix of PROW footpaths and narrow lanes which provide access and the means for residents and visitors to support and enhance their health and well-being.</p> <p>The route of the widely used Bristol and Bath Railway Path passes through and across the centre of Saltford North. It is a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) and its partial screening by vegetation that includes a large number of trees provides intermittent views of Saltford North’s landscape without detracting from the landscape itself due to the path’s natural screening.</p> <p>The sports ground used principally for football and cricket by Saltford Hall on the north side of Saltford is an important recreational asset. Its tranquil and beautiful setting makes</p>

<p>facilities. High density of well-connected Public Rights of Way/promoted routes.</p>	<p>Saltford a popular location to compete in sports for visiting football and cricket teams and their supporters. Likewise, the Bristol Avon Sailing Club in Mead Lane, and Avon Rowing Club to the east of the village that was the first venue for the Bath Regatta in 1849, owe much of their success and long-term popularity to their rural countryside settings.</p> <p>The Civil Aviation Authority’s licensed Saltford Airfield in Avon Lane, that is set in and amongst agricultural fields, is protected by “Airfield Safeguarding” requirements and for reasons of safety is highly sensitive to development within its vicinity.</p> <p>Saltford’s riverside public houses in Saltford North benefit from their largely unspoilt rural setting including their proximity to the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB), making them popular with residents and visitors alike.</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>Saltford North’s fascinating geological history combined with its ancient buildings (see ‘Historic features’) and historic landscape provide a countryside vista of high visual quality from many viewing points whilst contributing considerably to the rural setting of the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB).</p> <p>As described in ‘Landform’, the open and gently sloping topography of this area of the Avon Valley that leads down to the River Avon with the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) incorporating Kelston Tump (aka Kelston Roundhill) and the Cotswolds ridge that provide a distinctive raised backdrop, bestow an overwhelming sense of peaceful rural permanence for Saltford North with its atmospheric and timeless character. For those reasons, this iconic and ancient landscape is greatly valued by residents and visitors.</p> <p>Due to the relative lack of modern development and small settlements, the area retains a largely rural character, largely unchanged in use for centuries.</p> <p>The sense of tranquillity and remoteness that this landscape provides is further enhanced at night due to relatively dark night skies that are away from settlements and associated light pollution and noise from human activity.</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. 	<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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The River Avon is culturally significant due to the economic and recreational life of Saltford, past and present. The 18th century Saltford Brassmill, situated by the weir and Kelston Lock, is an important historical building - now a museum. Further downstream is another lock and weir. Today, the river is still important for the local economy and boasts a marina and boat yard, rowing club, and several popular riverside pubs. The River Avon Trail passes through this area and there is a link onto the Bristol and Bath Railway path.

<p>■ Moderate Sensitivity: Semi-enclosed landscape with some views of potential development from surrounding 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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bristol and Bath Railway Path runs parallel to the river on a largely wooded embankment forming a strong landscape feature as well as important recreational and commuting route. • The Saltford Village Conservation Area lies on the north side of the village between the modern rail line, the old railway line and the river. It includes the historical St. Mary's Parish Church and Saltford Manor, both of which are attractive features for the village in their landscape setting of low lying pasture fields crossed by a well-used footpath." <p>As referred to in the section 'Landform', the open and gently sloping topography of the landscape that leads down to the River Avon provides many extensive views from public right of way (PROW) footpaths including the Avon Trail, with the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) incorporating Kelston Tump (aka Kelston Roundhill) and the Cotswolds ridge providing a distinctive raised backdrop and a sense of peaceful rural permanence. The autumn, winter and spring mists that rise over this landscape from the River Avon, together with the light of dawn or dusk collectively provide an atmospheric and timeless character for this ancient landscape, revealing differing shapes and forms that contribute to the landscape's iconic presence.</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>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</p>	<p>HIGHER</p> <p>When viewed from the higher levels of the Cotswolds National Landscape, (in particular the Cotswolds Way, Kelston Tump and the Cotswolds ridge), the landscape surrounding Saltford provides a countryside vista of high visual quality whilst adding to the rural setting of the patchwork of wooded areas, agricultural fields, and the locally distinctive Kelston Tump.</p> <p>The landscape surrounding Saltford therefore makes a significant contribution to the scenic beauty of the wider area. 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 southern reaches of the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB).</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</p>

<p>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>the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) as viewed from the west of Bath and Kelston Tump.</p>
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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 paper '*The Saltford Area of Great Landscape Value - Planning Policy and Character Appraisal by SPC (Mar 2024)*' produced by Saltford Parish Council and that includes a map of Saltford's Green Belt on both sides of the Bath Road (A4) that should be read in conjunction with this assessment paper. '*The Landscape and Heritage Assessment of Saltford North of the Bath Road (A4)*' from SPC's Planning Policy Working Group dated 25 June 2024 is a sister document and should be read in conjunction with this paper when considering the whole landscape surrounding Saltford's housing settlement.

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

Geological information sourced from local geologists and published at:
<https://www.saltfordenvironmentgroup.org.uk/geology.html>.

**Prepared by Saltford Parish Council's Planning Policy Working Group
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