

CHAPTER 18 - Strategy Area: Pucklechurch Ridges

This strategy area correlates with the Pucklechurch Ridges landscape zone. It has the lowest woodland cover of all the strategy areas apart from the City, approximately 1.6%.

The Pucklechurch Ridges is an area of open rolling countryside, with hedgerows of variable quality and very little woodland. Views to the steep Cotswold scarp are a prominent feature. In the south, the rolling landscape splits into two distinct river valleys. Adjacent to the edge of Kingswood, the area becomes a fragmented urban fringe landscape.

This area is almost entirely grade 3 agricultural land, with a small band of grade 4 in the north-west. It has the highest incidence of tenanted holdings; most holdings are between 5 and 20 ha and are generally smaller than in the rest of the Forest. Dairying remains the major farm type, although there are more cattle and sheep and mixed farming than in the rest of the Forest. Sheep farming in particular has increased by over 50% in the last 10 years.

The area has few sites of high wildlife value, existing interest tending to focus along the brooks and rivers and the small areas of woodland.

The whole of this area was in the ancient Forest of Kingswood. There are several commons, probably associated with a wood-pasture economy. Close to Kingswood, relics of an early industrial landscape remain.

There is little provision for recreation in the area; what exists is generally associated with the commons as areas of open space. The Railway Path and the Dramway focus activity down to the Avon Valley.

The priorities in this area will be to:

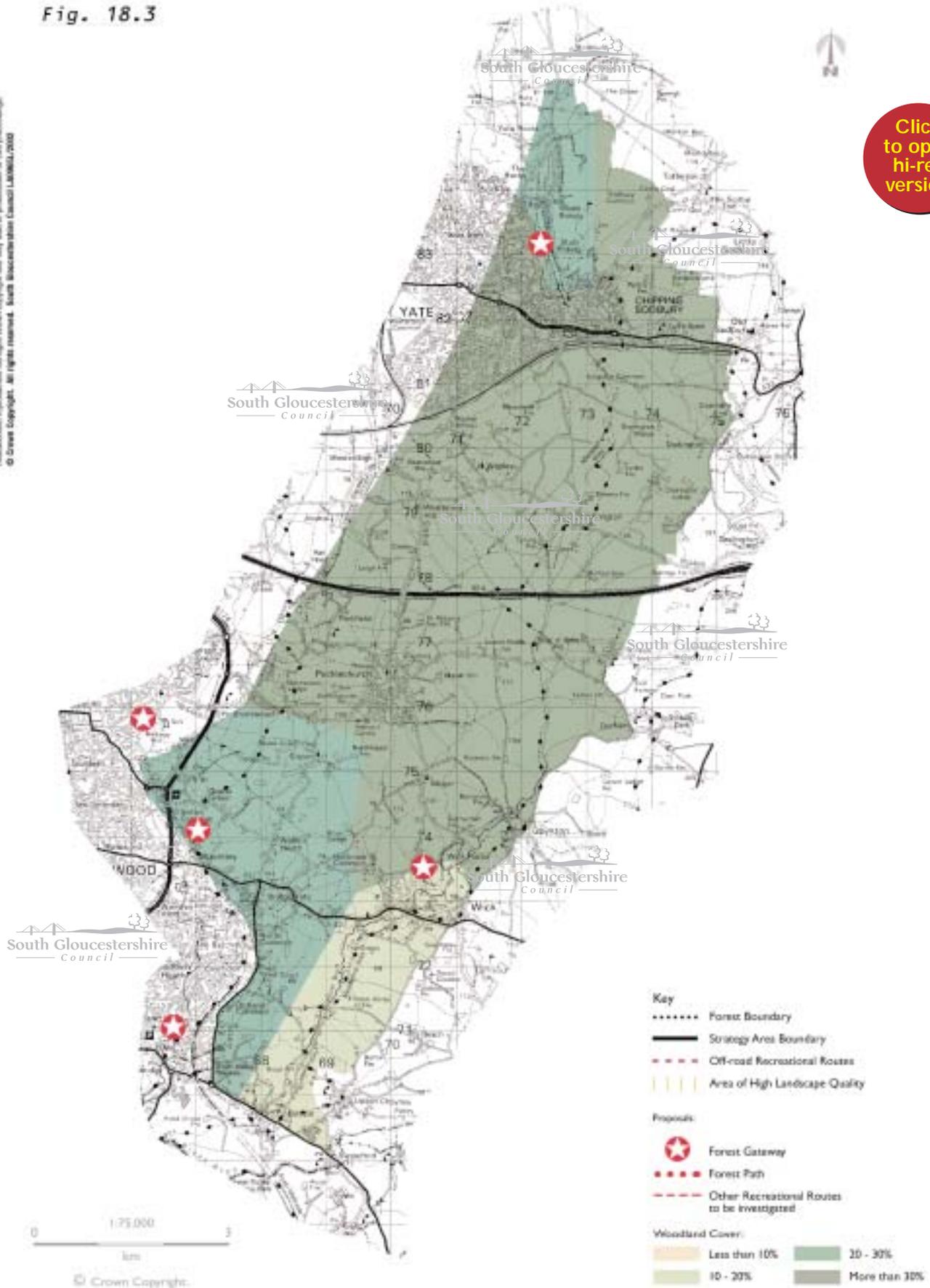
- provide for countryside recreation of all forms, but particularly additional bridleways and footpaths from urban areas into the countryside; a general aim will be to promote recreation to the east, to relieve pressure caused by the current focus towards the Avon Valley;
 - improve the landscape setting of the M4;
 - increase the wildlife value of the area, enhancing existing wildlife corridors;
 - retain and strengthen the character of the commons and historic features of the area's early industrial past.
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- visually improve the transition between the edges of Kingswood, Pucklechurch and Yate and the countryside;
 - improve the landscape structure with new woodland establishment, reflecting local topography and improved hedgerows to create a well-wooded agricultural landscape;
 - create new woodland for recreational use;
 - establish woodland on steep slopes where the area rises up from the Northavon Vale, particularly as a backdrop to the new development at Emerson's Green;

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Fig. 18.3

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1. Upper Frome & Boyd Rivers



2. Kingswood Edge



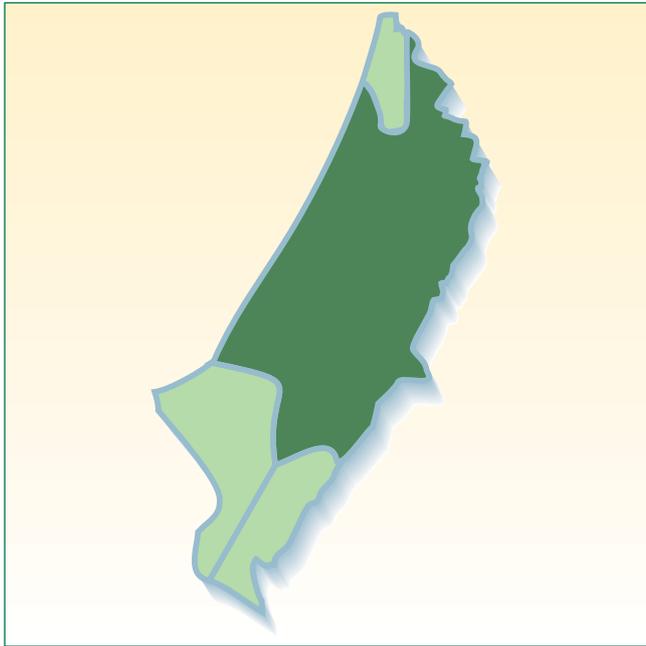
3. Golden Valley



4. The Ridings

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Upper Frome and Boyd Rivers



Description

Open rolling farmland at the foot of the Cotswold escarpment, this is a large-scale landscape of mixed agriculture with large fields, poor hedgerows and few trees. The area has a strong rural character that is disrupted by the M4, and pylon lines. Pucklechurch and Yate are both prominent in the landscape. Commons are a notable feature of the area, especially close to Yate and Hinton. Several kilometres of hedgerows have been removed. The crematorium is visually intrusive.

Existing woodland cover: 1.3%.

Local strategy

Landscape improvements towards a well-wooded agricultural landscape through extensive new planting relating to local topography and reinstating degenerated enclosure and field patterns. Large areas of new woodland are appropriate adjacent to the edges of Yate and Pucklechurch, around the crematorium and beside the M4. New woodland establishment at the top of the slopes near Wapley will reduce the impact of the substation from the east. Views to the Cotswold edge will be maintained.

An aim will be to create a better setting for the M4 in the landscape.

Proposed woodland cover: over 30%.

Woodlands

- Encourage management of all existing woodland.

- Extensive new areas of new woodland to create a working matrix of medium-sized and small woods and strong hedgerows.
- New woodland establishment on steep slopes adjacent to Wapley Bushes.

Wildlife

- Wapley Bushes Local Nature Reserve is a valuable habitat and a popular community resource; there is an opportunity to link new planting along the scarp slope to it, for both wildlife and recreational benefits.
- Promote the development of a rich network of woodlands and hedgerows connecting existing sites of wildlife interest.
- Encourage appropriate management of land adjacent to recognised river and wetland sites and a reduction in the intensity of management adjacent to all watercourses.

Heritage

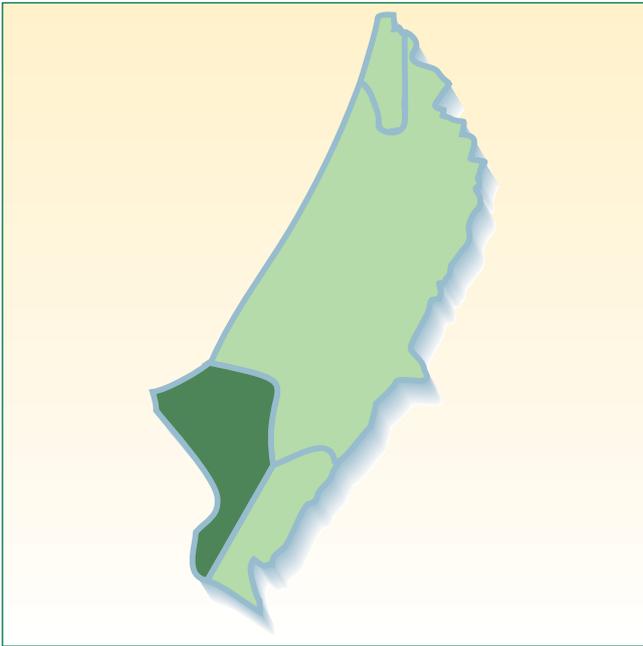
- Commons are a notable feature of the area but the extensive use of Sodbury Common as a golf course is changing its character. A management plan is required to ascertain the intrinsic character of the common, show what makes it a landscape feature worth preserving and what future management is appropriate to landscape, heritage, wildlife interests and the traditional common land rights.
- Ancient maps of the Forest of Kingswood suggest that there were once large areas of woodland.
- Parts of Chipping Sodbury, Doynton and Pucklechurch are conservation areas.

Recreation

- The routes of the Round Avon Ride and the Avon Cycleway will be enhanced.
- Pedestrian links from Chipping Sodbury to the Cotswold Way, using the Frome Valley Walkway and the Jubilee Way will be promoted.
- The rail network to Yate can be promoted for recreational access to and from the area. As the Yate urban cycle network extends and improves it will increase and improve recreational and commuter use.
- Green lanes such as Burbarrow have the potential to be developed as major recreational routes.
- Wapley Bushes is a great recreational, community and educational resource and is a gateway, linking to a network of woodlands and open space with public access.
- A major aim of new woodlands in this area will be to create additional recreational facilities.

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Kingswood Edge



Description

This is the urban fringe of Kingswood, confined by its land-form. The degrading elements include industrial development, 'horsiculture', pylon lines, scrappy fencing and ribbon development of suburban housing along many of the roads. Elm death has increased the feel of a degraded landscape. The prominent views are over Kingswood or out to the Cotswold edge. Large areas of common land adjacent to the urban edge are important local features, particularly for recreation, but without the woodland backdrop of those at Hawkesbury; in the midst of heavy traffic, they have lost much of their charm. The area around Siston is a high quality landscape.

Existing woodland cover: 0.9%.

Local strategy

Significant landscape change whilst ensuring that the local distinctiveness of the area is conserved. New woodland establishment should concentrate on extending the well-wooded farmland character around Siston throughout the farmland on the eastern edge of this zone. The commons deserve more detailed study; recent planting of non-native ornamental species is changing their character towards that of an urban park. Any new planting might be more appropriate as native species in copses rather than lines of exotic standards. Improve hedges and replace dead elms. The new ring road will have a great impact on the area; new planting should be designed to assimilate it into the landscape.

Proposed woodland cover: 20-30%.

Woodlands

- Extension of farm woodlands from the Siston area towards the urban edge with more extensive planting adjacent to the ring road.
- There is a great opportunity in this area for community woodland development.

Wildlife

- There are several areas of wildlife value, and the railway path and stream lines are identified as wildlife corridors.
- All proposals in the area will aim to enhance the wildlife interest and compensate for the fragmenting effect of the ring road.

Heritage

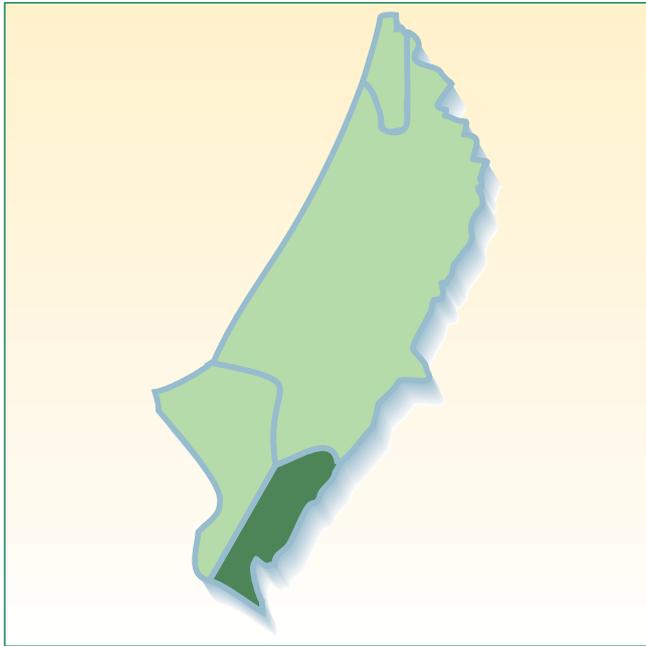
- The commons in this area were probably formerly adjacent to large areas of woodland and seem to be part of a wood-pasture economy.
- The area was originally in the ancient Forest of Kingswood; mining transformed it into an early industrial landscape which is now a rich mixture of different clues to the area's past; these will be given full consideration in any schemes for the area.
- Siston is a conservation area.

Recreation

- The commons are the major recreational resource.
- There is a fairly dense network of footpaths but few bridleways. There is clearly a need to enhance the bridleway network in the area.
- The new ring road will create an extra barrier to movement, although new provisions for cycling and riding have been built into the scheme.
- The Community Forest Path follows the Dramway on the eastern side of the area.
- Warmley Forest Park presents a great opportunity to create a gateway site on the eastern side of Bristol, which could provide a route through to the Cotswold Way.
- The Bristol-Bath Railway Path is very popular with pedestrians and cyclists; there is great potential to expand circular walks off this and the Dramway.

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Golden Valley



Description

A small valley of mixed farming at the foot of the Cotswold scarp slope. It has a peaceful agricultural character, disrupted in places by the A420, quarrying and the influences of 'horsiculture'. The hedgerows and tree cover are stronger in the south, opening up to larger arable fields with a poor hedgerow structure in the north. Elm deaths has reduced the impact of hedges.

Existing woodland cover: 2.1%.

Local strategy

Landscape improvements to create a wooded agricultural landscape, with the strong hedgerow structure (including elm replacement) which remains in the south extended to cover the whole area. New woodland establishment is needed on the steeper slopes and to soften the impact of the A420 and developments around Wick. Small-scale planting and landscape improvements are needed in areas where 'horsiculture' is a dominant element in the landscape.

Proposed woodland cover: 10-20%.

Woodlands

- Management of existing woodland around Wick.
- Planting generally concentrated on the steeper ground around Wick and the quarries.
- Scope for local community involvement, with new woodland creation adjacent to Wick and Bitton.

Wildlife

- Protection and enhancement of existing sites of wildlife interest along the River Boyd, particularly by new habitat creation to improve the southern section.
- Promotion of less intensive agriculture next to the river.

Heritage

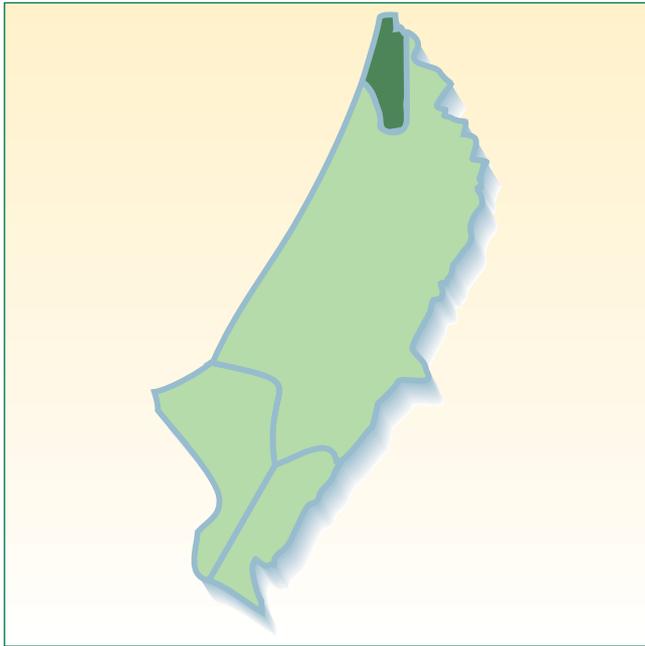
- Bitton is a conservation area.

Recreation

- An attractive area of countryside adjacent to the edge of Bristol, which is presently of low recreational use. Much of the area is peaceful and well away from major roads and not easily accessible by vehicles. There is a great potential to increase the low-key informal recreational use of this area.
- The course of the River Boyd could be investigated as a pedestrian route from the Avon through to Wick, with additional links up to the Cotswold Way.
- At Wick there is existing local recreational use of the incised river valley. This use may be extended as the existing quarry area is closed. A potential gateway exists at Wick Rocks.
- There is a need to enhance the bridleway network throughout the area.

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The Ridings



Description

This area is the end of a small ridge running north from Yate to join the Severn Ridge at Falfield. Much of the ridge is being quarried. Woodland skirts the quarries, and their position on high ground means they are not of great visual impact. The remaining ground is of open pasture with poor hedgerows, pylon lines and the busy B4060. Parts of the western side of the ridge remain secluded, particularly the hamlet of Yate Rocks.

Existing woodland cover: 5.2%.

Local strategy

Landscape improvements using more extensive woodland planting around the periphery of the quarries and establishing woodland as an after use. Woodland establishment within the agricultural areas should respond to the land-form and develop a stronger landscape pattern. The secluded character of Yate Rocks should be extended and enhanced.

Proposed woodland cover: 20-30%.

Woodlands

- New woodland establishment around the quarries to enhance the landscape, involving the local community in their creation.
- Smaller woodlands within the agricultural landscape aiming to strengthen the field pattern.
- Opportunities for community woodland to be investigated.

Wildlife

- Aim to establish a strong wildlife corridor along the ridge from Yate north to the Wetmoor Woods, connecting to the existing wildlife interest at Yate Rocks.
- Investigate opportunities to maintain and enhance water flow and quality of local streams.

Recreation

- The small woodlands on the edge of Yate are of existing recreational use; there is an opportunity to extend access north to the Jubilee Way, the Frome Walkway and the Cotswold Way.