

Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) or Local Green Space (LGS) designation for Saltford South

“We define our landscapes as much as they define us”



Northern reach of Longwood as viewed from fields directly west © Phil Harding, June 2015

“An agricultural landscape produces food but it also provides water, requires biodiversity to underpin soil function, pollination and other useful services, and also has value to society in terms of aesthetics and recreation”

Tim Benton, UK Global Food Security programme (2012)

Introduction: AGLV or LGS

An **Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV)** is a locally defined landscape area designated by a Local Planning Authority (LPA), as part of its Local Plan, for a landscape’s high visual quality, value, distinctiveness and contribution to the setting of particular features or settlements. An AGLV can be particularly sensitive to Development.

The AGLV designation was established under the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 and has been used by LPAs to provide protection to locally valued landscapes from development that would be detrimental to those landscapes. The main objective of AGLVs is conservation and enhancement of their landscape quality and individual character, and to safeguard their valued features. These usually sit outside of an AONB but can share a common border.

A proposed new development within or near an AGLV should, for example, be required by the LPA to demonstrate that it does not have a detrimental effect on the area or settlement(s) concerned.

The **Local Green Space (LGS)** designation was first introduced in the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The current 2021 NPPF at paragraph 102 states:-

102. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

- a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

Paragraph 101 of NPPF (2022) includes the following sentence “Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.”

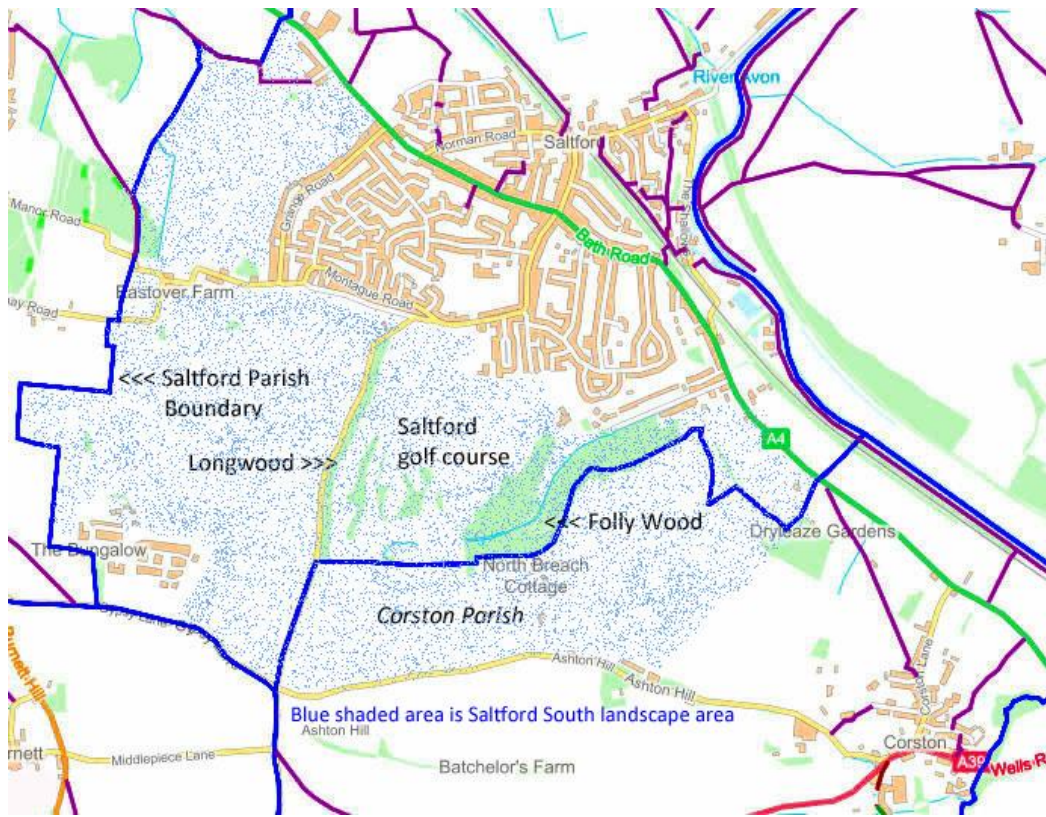
The village and parish of Saltford itself is immediately adjacent to the Cotswold AONB, on the north and west side of Saltford and is thus viewed from the Cotswold AONB, and vice versa.

Saltford is classified as a “Rural Area RA1 village” in the B&NES Placemaking Plan 2017, i.e., development will be acceptable within and adjoining the housing development boundary on land outside the Green Belt.

However, the RA1 designation does not in itself place a specific value on Saltford’s longstanding and outstandingly attractive landscape setting that makes Saltford such a unique rural village in the Avon Valley and between the cities of Bath and Bristol thus contributing to the wider landscape setting of those cities.

An AGLV (the preferred choice of Saltford Parish Council) or LGS designation would create a greater awareness to planners and developers of this landscape’s high quality and value to the community at large and provide reassurance to the community of Saltford and neighbouring parishes that the Local Planning Authority, i.e. B&NES Council, values this landscape as much as the community it seeks to represent and will protect it from development that would otherwise reduce or destroy the openness, unspoilt rural character and wildlife habitat and ecological assets provided by Saltford South as described in the following section of this paper.

Salford South area for AGLV or LGS designation



In addition to the Cotswold AONB located to the north and north east of Salford, the principal area outside the housing boundary that contributes to the historic value of the landscape setting of Salford comprises the two long-standing woodland areas of woodland, namely Folly Wood, to the east of Salford golf course and designated by Natural England as an Ancient Woodland and classified as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), Salford 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 Salford and thus greatly valued by the local community.

The mixed tree, drystone wall and hedge line along the southern edge of the golf course that connects the two woodlands and acts as a wildlife corridor provides an overall and attractive setting of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees and vegetation of differing heights, shades of green, and shapes.

The following description of Salford'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 Salford South: -

“Natural Factors: 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 Salford Golf Course and adjacent steep sided, wooded tributary valley¹. There is also a distinctive tree belt² on the west side of the golf course which follows the north-south side of a lane³.

* Correction: These are and have been arable fields

¹Folly Wood ²Longwood ³Longwood Lane

The open arable farmland of fields sloping south to north bounded by stonewalls of Lower Jurassic Blue Lias limestone rocks, low fencing and hedging populated with trees, provide a palpable sense of a tranquil environment that is in harmony with nature, whilst providing open countryside views of this wooded area with the Cotswold AONB forming a backdrop to the north and east of the area.

The wooded areas and fields are viewed from the local lanes and roads including Manor Road, Montague Road, Longwood Lane, Ashton Hill, Gypsy Lane and the Bath Road (A4) when approaching Saltford from Bath and Keynsham/Bristol, and from regularly utilised local permissive footpaths and public rights of way footpaths (PROWs).

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.

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.

The woodland, surrounding fields and hedgerows provide habitat for a fascinating variety of **wildlife*** that is essential for maintaining nature's balance *(confirmed by Saltford Environment Group's Wildlife Surveyor and Wildlife Conservation Adviser).

As an indicator of the area's wildlife value, species of birdlife supported by this habitat and hence regularly observed, several of which are of conservation concern, include Green Woodpecker, Tawny Owl, Barn Owl, Little Owl, Raven, Golden Plover, Woodcock, Mistle Thrush, Bullfinch, Fieldfare, Redwing, Spotted Flycatcher, Yellowhammer, Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Red Kite, Peregrine, Hobby, Merlin, Stonechat, Corn Bunting, Wheatear, Whinchat, Yellow Wagtail, Skylark, Linnets, Reed Bunting, Brambling, Snipe, as well as many common woodland/garden species (e.g. Blackbird, Robin, Chiffchaff, Greenfinch, Chaffinch, Song Thrush, Wren, etc.).

The bat fauna is believed to be rich although species-specific information is not available. Most of the butterflies of the wider countryside of southern England (as categorised by Butterfly Conservation) occur in the proposed AGLV/LGS area, including White-letter and Purple Hairstreaks. The localised Rufous Grasshopper occurs within this area too. Smaller insects are not well known but are likely to include other species with only patchy distributions in southern England.

The attractive and nationally scarce Bath Asparagus (*Ornithogalum pyrenaicum*) occurs naturally in two locations of Longwood Lane, almost all of the field hedges are several centuries old, composed entirely of native species, and 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.

B&NES Council's 2017 Placemaking Plan Policy NE2A ("Landscape Setting of Settlements") states that "Any development should seek to conserve and enhance the landscape setting of settlements and their landscape character, views and features. Development that would result in adverse impact to the landscape setting of settlements that cannot be adequately mitigated will not be permitted."

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021, paragraph 174) provides protection and enhancement for landscapes such as Saltford South:

174. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland; and
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

In view of its area-wide importance in landscape terms for this area of Bath and North East Somerset and the Avon Valley, the River Avon itself is an SNCI, as described in this document, there is a need to afford long term protection in planning terms of this area. This is to safeguard its distinctive character and exceptional attractiveness together with its tranquillity, ecological and amenity value that is so necessary for the quality of life and the “quality of place” for residents of Saltford, neighbouring parishes and the cities of Bath and Bristol between which this landscape exists and attracts many residents of those cities who visit or pass through.

Bristol and Bath are surrounded by attractive and tranquil landscapes like Saltford’s and the Cotswold AONB; these landscapes contribute to the sense of place of those cities and make city-life more attractive and amenable when rural, tranquil landscapes are within easy reach.

NOTE: References to the Saltford North and Saltford South areas in the Bath & North East Somerset Landscape Character Assessment 2021 prepared for the B&NES Local Plan Partial Update (LPPU) by Land Use Consultants Ltd.

The 2021 landscape assessment report described the protection afforded to **Saltford North** (mainly the area north of the Bath Road A4) and located in the Avon Valley. Those protections are the Conservation Area, Stidham Farm geological SSSI (west of Avon Farm), the RIGS Lias Limestone exposure in Mead Lane, and SNCIs (the course of the River Avon, some minor watercourses and the route of the Bristol and Bath Railway Path) as well as listed buildings including the Grade II listed Saltford Manor and the Old Brassmill. The Saltford North area outside Saltford’s housing boundary is in the Green Belt (as is Saltford South) and most of the area is immediately adjacent to the Cotswold AONB located on the Kelston side of the River Avon.

Other planning restriction considerations for the Saltford North area include the need to protect the River Avon’s floodplain from inappropriate development due to future increased fluvial flooding resulting from increased rainfall events associated with climate change as predicted by the Environment Agency⁴, the need to safeguard the Civil Aviation Authority’s licensed Saltford Airfield under the “Airfield Safeguarding” requirements as set out by the General Aviation Awareness Council for the CAA, and the archaeologically important Anglo Saxon Burial Ground situated north of Avon Farm.

⁴ “Managing Flood Risk” - Bristol Avon Catchment Flood Management Plan, Environment Agency, June 2012

The 2021 assessment report did not look at Saltford South itself in detail. Most of Saltford South was identified as being in the Northeast portion of the area assessed and described as

“Farmborough Plateau and Brook Valleys”, the assessment of which includes these statements that relate also to Saltford South: -

- Historically much of the area was enclosed in the late medieval period.
- 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.
- The varied topography gives rise to interesting light and shading effects emphasising the characteristic landform.
- Despite its proximity to Bath, 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.

*“The British countryside is threatened by people
and interests who really do not care for it”*

Simon Jenkins, Chair, National Trust (January 2013)

Enquiries concerning this document to: -

Cllr Phil Harding MBE, Chair of Planning, Saltford Parish Council
Email: phil.harding@saltfordparishcouncil.gov.uk

© Saltford Parish Council, 3rd January 2023

See also **ANNEX** (separate document) “Photo tour of Saltford South’s landscape setting”