

This report is public	
Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025 – 2030	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	6 January 2026
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management, Councillor Jean Conway
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	31 October 2025
Report of	Assistant Director Planning, David Peckford

Purpose of report

To consider and endorse the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025 – 2030.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To endorse the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) Management Plan 2025-2030 is presented at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 A National Landscape is legally referred to as an area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB). It is a 'protected landscape' and 'relevant authorities', including this Council, must now 'seek to further' their statutory purposes.
- 2.3 The statutory purposes of National Landscapes are conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty and, because there is a Conservation Board, increasing the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the area of outstanding natural beauty.
- 2.4 Cherwell has a small area of National Landscape within the north-west area of the district (see Appendix 2).
- 2.5 Under section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, there is a statutory requirement for a Management Plan which must be reviewed every five years or sooner.

- 2.6 The Cotswolds National Landscape Board, which includes representation from this Council, has prepared a new Management Plan covering the period 2025 – 2030. It was formally adopted by the Board on 25 February 2025.
- 2.7 The Management Plan covers the geographic area of the National Landscape / AONB, outlines the vision and strategy for conserving and enhancing its natural beauty, including wildlife and cultural heritage, and promotes opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities.
- 2.8 Officers consider that the Management Plan should be formally endorsed.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary			
Finance	There are no direct financial implications. The Council pays a small annual subscription to the Cotswold Conservation Board which assists the Council in fulfilling its statutory obligation to further the purposes of National Landscapes. Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 31 October 2025			
Legal	The report notes that there is a legal requirement to review the plan every 5 years and identifies how this plan interacts with our local plan. The endorsement of a Management Plan would assist the Council in fulfilling its statutory obligation in furthering the purposes of National Landscapes. Denzil – John Turbervill, Head of Legal Services, 6 November 2025			
Risk Management	There are no risks arising from the proposed adoption of the Management Plan. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 6 November 2025			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	X			The Management Plan includes a monitoring indicator framework for national targets set by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). It includes a policy (CC4) for working in partnership which relates to the national target for improving and promoting accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using metrics in the Government’s Access for All programme. A broad aim of the Management Plan is, <i>‘Increasing Understanding and Enjoyment; Ensuring access, learning and wellbeing opportunities are for everyone’</i>

				Outcome 13 – Access and Recreation, is that ‘ <i>The Cotswolds is recognised as a welcoming place, where barriers to access are being removed and everyone feels connected to the landscape</i> ’. Achievement of the Plan’s objectives would have a positive impact.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			As above
Climate & Environmental Impact	X			The Management Plan was informed by a process of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The SEA concludes that the plan would have environmental and sustainability benefits for the Cotswolds National Landscape. The plan includes policies for climate change mitigation (CC1) and adaptation (CC2).
ICT & Digital Impact		X		N/A
Data Impact		X		N/A
Procurement & subsidy		X		N/A
Council Priorities	Vision for Lasting Change 2025-2030 Priority 3 – Environmental Stewardship, specifically according with ‘to Safeguard the environment and promote biodiversity’.			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	Preparation of the Management Plan was assisted by public consultation and stakeholder engagement.			

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 The Management Plan was prepared in consultation with local authority and public sector partners over the summer of 2024 and with the benefit of a wider consultation throughout November and December 2024. Throughout 2023 and 2024 research was commissioned by the Conservation Board to consider how the carbon footprint of the Cotswold National Landscape could be developed into a pathway towards net zero carbon emissions. Preparation was also informed by the

development of six Local Nature Recovery Strategies coincident with the Cotswolds.

- 3.2 Government guidance on how to 'seek to further' the statutory purposes of National Landscapes states that relevant authorities should consider the information contained in a Management Plan, make efforts to understand it and relate their functions to it. Authorities are encouraged to consider how measures, which could further the purposes of National Landscapes, would help to deliver the targets and objectives in the Management Plan.
- 3.3 The Management Plan has cross service application to policy- and decision-making and can be a material consideration in the determination of applications for planning permission.

4. Details

- 4.1 The management has four main components:

- i. Vision
- ii. Key Issues
- iii. Special Qualities
- iv. Outcomes and Policies

i. A Cotswolds vision: a National Landscape for everyone

- 4.2 The vision was adopted by the CNL Board in June 2021 following consultation with stakeholders. The key components of the vision are reproduced below.

Challenges Lie Ahead - climate change; threats to wildlife and habitat; changes to the farming landscape and agriculture; finding ways to deliver opportunities for younger people and provide for an ageing population; and achieving access to, and involvement in, the countryside for everyone – in ways which help benefit the countryside and encourage a diverse range of people to appreciate and care for the Cotswolds.

What can we do, and how should we do it? - embrace new ways of thinking in order to find win-win solutions which both conserve and enhance natural beauty, and serve the people who are here....work hard, and in partnership – to find outcomes which offer the most positive benefits and the least negative impact....demonstrate collaboration and leadership....be energetic and proactive....bold, brave, and confident...work with other organisations and individuals to achieve results which benefit all...and nature.

The future should be bright - there is no 'one size fits all' for the future ...a greater opportunity than ever before to pull together as communities across the Cotswolds...to work with each other to harness...dedication and expertise...the Cotswolds National Landscape...for everyone, from all walks of life...to create a place that is vibrant, unique, welcoming, and truly special – for people and for nature...work towards ensuring that the Cotswolds stays a working landscape, where agriculture thrives and supply chains are secure....connected and diverse communities, but self-sustaining....visitors should feel welcome...confident about

access, and motivated to give something back to help look after the landscape...a place where the landscape, nature, and people work in harmony with each other.

The Cotswolds will be a place that will inspire generations of people to look after it – now and in the years ahead.

ii. Key Issues

4.3 Three key issues have informed the plan's vision and policies:

Key Issue 1 - climate emergency: mitigating and adapting to climate change whilst conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

Key Issue 2 - nature's decline and the ecological crisis: enabling wildlife to recover, flourish and adapt to climate change through a robust nature recovery network which additionally provides us with clean air and water, and healthy soils.

Key Issue 3 - health and societal changes: ensuring that livelihoods are maintained and that everyone within and around the National Landscape can realise the health and wellbeing benefits of accessing its natural beauty.

iii. Special Qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape

4.4 The special qualities of the National Landscape are defined as:

- the unifying character of the limestone geology – its visible presence in the landscape and use as a building material;
- the Cotswold escarpment, including views from and to the National Landscape;
- the high wolds – a large open, elevated predominately farmed landscape with commons, 'big' skies and long-distance views;
- river valleys, the majority forming the headwaters of the Thames; and an important water resource;
- distinctive dry stone walls;
- flower-rich grasslands including floodplain meadows and neutral grasslands and particularly limestone grasslands;
- ancient broadleaved woodland particularly along the crest of the escarpment;
- variations in the colour of the stone from one part of the National Landscape to another which add a vital element of local distinctiveness;
- the tranquillity of the area, away from major sources of inappropriate noise, development, visual clutter and pollution;
- extensive dark sky areas;
- distinctive settlements, developed in the Cotswold vernacular with high architectural quality and integrity;
- an accessible landscape for quiet recreation for both rural and urban users, with numerous walking and riding routes, including the Cotswold Way National Trail;
- significant archaeological, prehistoric and historic associations dating back 6,000 years, including Neolithic stone monuments, ancient drove roads, Iron Age forts, Roman villas, ridge and furrow fields, medieval wool churches and country estates and parks;
- a vibrant heritage of cultural associations, including the Arts and Crafts Movement of the 19th and 20th centuries, famous composers, and authors and

traditional events such as the 'Cotswolds Olympics', Levellers Day and Woolsack Races.

iv. Outcomes and Policies

- 4.5 The plan sets out a broad range of outcomes and policies, arranged under three main headings:
1. Cross-cutting themes – tackling 21st century issues through progressive partnerships
 2. Conserving and enhancing – influencing and delivering for landscape, nature and climate
 3. Increasing understanding and enjoyment – ensuring access, learning and well-being opportunities for everyone.

Outcomes

- 4.6 There are fourteen outcomes which seek to express the desired state of the National Landscape:

Outcome 1 – Climate action: By 2050 (or sooner), the Cotswolds National Landscape will have reached net zero (or better) through the collective efforts of stakeholders following a clearly defined pathway, while also building resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Outcome 2 – Working together: Through collaborative partnerships and a shared understanding, the purposes of the Cotswolds National Landscape and its Board are applied consistently across the whole area.

Outcome 3 – Landscape: The evolving landscape and much-loved character of the Cotswolds is better understood, and at the heart of all we do and the decisions we make.

Outcome 4 – Local distinctiveness: In a world of constant and rapid change, the local distinctiveness of the National Landscape is valued, conserved and enhanced.

Outcome 5 – Tranquillity: Noise pollution and visual disturbance are minimised to maintain tranquillity across the National Landscape.

Outcome 6 – Dark skies: Fewer areas of the Cotswolds National Landscape are affected by artificial light at night.

Outcome 7 – Historic environment and cultural heritage: The historic environment and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds National Landscape is better understood, conserved and enhanced.

Outcome 8 – Biodiversity and nature recovery: There is concerted unified action for a widespread recovery of nature – conserving, restoring and enhancing a connected mosaic of characteristically Cotswolds habitats and species.

Outcome 9 – The water environment. Watercourses and bodies of water within the Cotswolds National Landscape have good ecological and chemical status supported by sufficient quantities of water.

Outcome 10 – Farming and land management conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape in ways which balance the needs of recovering nature, climate action, food production, supporting livelihoods and public access.

Outcome 11 – Development and infrastructure: Development and infrastructure schemes positively contribute to the purpose of national landscape designation and also play a key role in facilitating the economic and social wellbeing of local communities.

Outcome 12 – Health and wellbeing: The Cotswolds National Landscape plays a full part in improving the nation's health, benefitting the mental, physical and emotional wellbeing of the wide range of people who experience it.

Outcome 13 – Access and recreation: The Cotswolds is recognised as a welcoming place, where barriers to access are being removed and everyone feels connected to the landscape.

Outcome 14 – Sustainable tourism: Businesses and visitors have a shared commitment to contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

Policies

4.7 The Management Plan's policies seeks to achieve the above outcomes. They are principles for how the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) should be managed in order to:

- a. conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the CNL;
- b. increase the understanding and enjoyment of the CNL's special qualities;
- c. foster the social and economic wellbeing of local communities;
- d. address issues that are having an adverse effect on the CNL;
- e. achieve the vision and outcomes of the Management Plan.

4.8. A summary of the policies is provided in the table below:

Policy CC1: Climate change – mitigation	Seeks sustainable land management, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and supporting renewable energy. Increasing tree and hedgerow cover, improving soil carbon storage, and encouraging low-carbon construction and energy-efficient building practices. Promotes sustainable transport options, including active travel, public transport, and electric vehicle infrastructure. Encourages the reduction of emissions from food production.
Policy CC2: Climate change – adaptation	Reducing the risks of climate change through adaptive measures in development, infrastructure and land management. Promotes incorporating climate resilience into new projects, supporting sustainable land management and using research to better understand and respond to climate impacts.

Policy CC3: Compliance with section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act	Actively consider and support the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape.
Policy CC4: Working in partnership	Encourages stakeholders, communities, and businesses to collaborate in conserving and enhancing the Cotswolds National Landscape, promoting its special qualities, and supporting local economic and social wellbeing.
Policy CE1: Landscape	Conserving and enhancing landscape character and scenic quality. Avoiding the loss of key features. Supports incorporating landscape conservation into land management practices and promoting traditional rural skills.
Policy CE2: Geology and Geomorphology	Focuses on conserving and enhancing geological and geomorphological features.
Policy CE3: Natural and cultural capital	Emphasises the importance of recognising, assessing and valuing natural and cultural capital.
Policy CE4: Local distinctiveness	Promotes the conservation and enhancement of the Cotswolds' local distinctiveness by ensuring new developments respect the area's landscape character, settlement patterns, and traditional building styles using appropriate materials such as Cotswold limestone. Supports innovative, locally informed designs and encourages the creation of evidence-based design guidance.
Policy CE5: Tranquillity	Conserve and enhance the tranquillity of the landscape by minimising noise and visual disturbances.
Policy CE6: Dark skies	Conserving and enhancing the dark skies of the Cotswolds National Landscape by minimising light pollution.
Policy CE7: Historic environment and cultural heritage	Conserving and enhancing the historic environment and cultural heritage. Respecting the historical elements of the landscape.
Policy CE8: Nature recovery and biodiversity	Conserving and enhancing biodiversity by establishing a nature recovery network, aligning with local nature recovery plans and strategies, and prioritising species and habitats listed in relevant documents. Supporting conservation efforts.
Policy CE9: Water	Management and conservation of water resources. Improving water quality, ensuring adequate water supply, flood management, sustainable drainage, water efficiency and minimising pollution and re-naturalising water features / creating buffer zones.
Policy CE10: Farming and land management.	Ensuring that farming and land management contribute to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and special qualities.
Policy CE11: Problem species, pests and diseases	Managing problem species, pests, and diseases.
Policy CE12: Soils	Prevent and reverse degradation and prioritising soil health.
Policy CE13: Development and infrastructure	Prioritising the conservation and enhancement of the area's natural beauty and special qualities.

Policy CE14: Major development	Major development should be refused unless it meets exceptional circumstances and can be demonstrated as being in the public interest, as outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
Policy CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Prioritises affordable housing in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL), particularly for social rented housing and encourages local planning authorities to set policies ensuring at least 50% affordable housing in market developments. Seeks strong evidence of local need for 'windfall' housing sites and new housing used as a primary residence.
Policy CE16: Waste management and the circular economy	Emphasises the importance of following the waste hierarchy, prioritising waste prevention, reuse, and recycling. Discourages the establishment of new landfill sites or large-scale waste facilities in the National Landscape.
Policy UE1: Health and wellbeing	Enhancing health and wellbeing especially for communities facing health and social inequalities.
Policy UE2: Access and recreation	Improving access and recreational opportunities while preserving natural beauty. Reaching those who are less engaged, particularly from urban or deprived areas.
Policy UE3: Sustainable tourism	Promotes sustainable tourism while conserving its natural beauty. Supports sustainable transport initiatives and aims to spread tourism activity more evenly across the area.

Relationship to the Cherwell Local Plan

- 4.9 Policy ESD 12 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 states that high priority will be given to protection and enhancement of the AONB and that the Council will seek to protect it and its setting from potentially damaging and inappropriate development. It highlights that the AONB's Management Plan will be used as supplementary guidance in decision making relevant to the AONB. The policy states that development proposals within the AONB will only be permitted if they are small-scale, sustainably located and designed, and would not conflict with the aim of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area.
- 4.10 Policy COM 10 of the Submission Draft of the Cherwell Local Plan 2042 is for *Protection and Enhancement of the Landscape* has the same purpose, stating that great weight will be given to conserving and enhancing the AONB's scenic beauty and landscape qualities, including its wildlife and heritage. It also references the use of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan as supplementary guidance in relevant decision making and states that development proposals within the National Landscape will only be permitted if they are small-scale, sustainably located and designed, and would not conflict with the aim of conserving and enhancing the scenic beauty of the area.
- 4.11 With regard to the Management Plan's encouragement of 50% affordable housing within the National Landscape in Policy CE15, such potential level of affordable housing was more broadly tested in preparing the Submission Local Plan. As Cherwell has only a small area of National Landscape in which only small-scale development is supported in principle, it is not considered that the lower affordable

housing proposals of the draft Local Plan would undermine the Management Plan's objectives in this regard.

- 4.12 There will be some aspects of the Management Plan that may not fully accord with local or national policies upon detailed application. The policies of the Development Plan is the primary consideration in development management decision-making and the Management Plan would, as guidance, be a material consideration where relevant. The Management Plan states, '*...policies are aspirational and as such, they might go further than current policies in individual development plans. It is intended that these aspirational policies will aid in helping to develop and evidence new local plan policies*'.
- 4.13 As the Management Plan would not comprise formal planning policy, this is not a significant concern and officers consider that it should be endorsed.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Not to endorse the Management Plan.

This is not recommended as the Management Plan will assist in meeting the statutory purpose of the National Landscape; it has been prepared with the benefit of the Council's representation; and it will be helpful guidance to the Council.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030 is a key mechanism for achieving the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the CNL's special qualities. It is a legal requirement for a National Landscape to have a management plan under Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and Conservation Boards are required to review their Management Plan before the end of a period of no more than five years. Officers consider that it will assist in conserving and enhancing that small part of the National Landscape within the district and recommend its endorsement.

Decision Information

Key Decision	No
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	Cropley, Sibfords and Wroxton ward

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030
Appendix 2	Plan showing area of Cherwell District within the Cotswolds National Landscape
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	<p>1. Guidance – Management Plans for Protected Landscapes in England https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/management-plans-for-protected-landscapes-in-england/management-plans-for-protected-landscapes-in-england</p> <p>2. Guidance for relevant authorities on seeking to further the purposes of protected landscapes https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-protected-landscapes-duty/guidance-for-relevant-authorities-on-seeking-to-further-the-purposes-of-protected-landscapes</p> <p>3. DEFRA Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework</p> <p>4. Strategic Environmental Assessment Report for the 2025/30 National Landscape Management Plan https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/SEA-Environmental-Report-FINAL-25-01-20.pdf</p>
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Executive Director Approval (unless Executive Director or Statutory Officer report)	Ian Boll, Executive Director – Place and Regeneration 2 December 2025