

Mitcheldean Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016 - 2026



Appendix IV Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

(To be read
in conjunction
with **Policy E5**
Landscape
Character
Impact Policy)

View 21

Valued and distinctive view of open landscape on the forest fringe.
Castiard Valley with Shapridge in the distance, Statutory Forest to the left.
Farmland and ancient hedgerows. Wildlife habitat for Lesser and Greater horsehoe bats and SSSI Risk Zone



Natural Heritage and Landscape

6.4.11 A Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) for the Forest of Dean was undertaken in 2004. The LCA explains what the landscape of each place is like and what makes one place different from another. It assumes that every place is special and distinctive and sets out to show just how and where these special qualities and distinctive features occur. The character assessment identifies 15 landscape character types across the district and 42 landscape character areas. Mitcheldean falls within landscape character type 10 Ridges and Valleys.

6.4.12 Within the Ridges and Valleys, Mitcheldean Parish includes two character areas: 10c Edge Hill and 10d Breakheart Hill. Key characteristics include:

- Distinctive rounded ridge profiles rising above the neighbouring vale landscapes and bordering the wooded inclines.
- The ridges are orientated north to south which is emphasised by the orientation of hedgerow patterns and small wooded copses clinging to steeper slopes.
- Mosaic of mixed farmland and woodland cloaks the ridges.
- Extensive coniferous plantations are evident on the ridges.
- Distinctive “squatter” settlements on the upper ridge slopes close to existing woodland and the line of the Crease Limestone.
- Extensive views over the surrounding lowlands are possible from exposed ridge top locations
- A number of redundant quarries are

located throughout the landscape.

- Numerous transportation routes follow the valleys created by streams and brooks as they weave through the ridges.
- Range of species-rich grassland habitats, heath and bog, old orchards and ancient semi-natural woodlands.

In addition to the District’s Landscape Character Assessment, the NDP has identified Plump Hill, Jubilee Road and the head of the Castiard Valley as having the same characteristics as 10c Edgehills with heritage landscape value of equal significance.

View 16 View opposite Dene Magna School, showing public footpath across the fields. Views show the distinctive and valued landscape of farmland and ancient hedgerows SSSI risk zone.



View 17 Looking across to plump hill, Jubilee Road junction and Wilderness above from Church Lane, Abenhall. Illustrates field patterns, farmland and squatter settlement and valleys and ridges. Picture shows narrow lanes and well used public footpaths.

6.4.13 Character Assessment Draft. Castiard Vale (comprising Abenhall, Jubilee Road and Plump Hill) and Wigpool

Abenhall lies to the south of Mitcheldean on the road to Flaxley off the A4136. This ancient Parish included Jubilee Road, Plump Hill, the Wilderness and Silver Street until 1936 when it became part of Mitcheldean Parish. Originally a mining and iron-making centre, it lies on the old red sandstone. The land rises from deep valleys to over 200m in the east with the lowest parts being at just under 100m in the south-east and north-east. The southern half of the Parish is drained by tributaries of Westbury Brook and the northern corner is crossed by the wooded valley of Longhope Brook.

To the south-east lies Shapridge, with Jubilee Road and Plump Hill on the western side. From Mitcheldean, the road to Abenhall past Dean Magna School rises steeply, then levels to become a narrow lane bounded by ancient hedges and grass verges with no pavements. The surrounding land has long been agricultural and the outlook is of farmland with a mixture of livestock, arable, and horse pasture, with a public footpath across the fields. Views are of intense greenery, ancient hedgerows, trees, bushes and woodland (View 16).

Dwellings are few and scattered, with some on the roadside and others set back from the road. The majority are built of traditional red sandstone with a few of brick or render, comprising a mixture of two-storey

cottages, substantial farmhouses and some bungalows. Roofs are of slate grey or brown/dark red tiles with chimneys. All dwellings have gardens either to the front and/or to the side and back.

Dene Magna School (Academy Status) is situated at the top of the hill from Mitcheldean. Originally named Abenhall School, it opened in 1936 with new buildings added to the site in 1961 and 1980. In 2017 the original school building was demolished and replaced with a new state-of-the-art maths block. Within the school grounds there is a modern bungalow. On the opposite side of the road is a small, renovated stone barn that is now a Technology Centre, along with a stone house that was formerly a farmhouse and a renovated stone barn. Travelling southward from Dene Magna are two dwellings set well back from the road.

At Church Cottage, the road forks left into Church Lane and narrows further, passing an old building that was once a school (built 1850) and the grade II listed Rectory (built 1846). Views out from Church Lane across the Jubilee Road junction to Plump Hill and the Wilderness above show the characteristic field patterns, farmland, “squatter” settlement, narrow lanes and well-used footpaths of this valley and ridge landscape (View 17).

View 5 View from Shapridge Lane across the valley and agricultural fields to Plump Hill. Illustrates the historical/cultural squatter settlement patterns unique to the Forest. (equivalent Landscape Character Assessment to 10d Edgehills) Southerly NDP protection zone and Horseshoe Bat Cores Sustenance Zone /SSSI Risk Zones

St Michael's Church (known as the Freeminers Church) is recorded from 1291. Built of local red sandstone, it was originally a chapel of ease and expanded in the 14th century (View 4). Opposite the church stands Church Farm (built 1858), a sandstone farmhouse with the attached fields having several public footpaths, popular with tourists and locals. The lane dips sharply then rises steeply to level out to a plateau, giving outstanding views across the valley (View 5).

A single-track road leads to Shapridge, with fields on both sides, hedges and some wooden fencing, mature oak trees and a backdrop of woodland. Dwellings consist of a farmhouse and three converted stone buildings that are of red sandstone with slate roof and chimneys, one brick bungalow with brown/dark red tiles and a white rendered house. Views out from Shapridge show Abenhall Road, Edgehill Escarpment, Plump Hill, Jubilee Road, the Wilderness, Welshbury Hill Fort woods and Flaxley woods. Looking toward Edgehill Plantation, the characteristics and ecological value of the distinctive landscape are illustrated by ridges and valleys, farmland and ancient hedgerows with Statutory Forest behind (View 18).



Abenhall Road continues southwards from Church Lane, with fields, ancient hedgerows, grass verges and mature trees. Views look out to Jubilee Road, Plump Hill, Edgehill Escarpment, Welshbury Hill Fort and surrounding woodland. There are two stone and one rendered properties on this road, then the Parish boundary turns into Spout Lane (View 19). This narrow single-track road is bordered by ancient hedgerows with fields rising on both sides. Buildings comprise of a stone barn, horse stables and one stone dwelling, together with a small industrial area where the lane joins Jubilee Road to head back northwards towards Mitcheldean.

View 18 Edgehill Plantation from Shapridge illustrating the valued and distinctive landscape of ecological value. Shows ridges and valleys. Farmland and ancient hedgerow with statutory forest behind.



View 4 Abenhall Rectory and Church taken from the lane and in the southerly Protection Zone.



The narrow single-track road has no pavements and is bordered by fields and ancient hedgerows, with woodland rising on the western side. Jubilee Road is a typical traditional Forest settlement, with scattered "squatter" dwellings in opposing positions dotting the hillside to Plump Hill, small field enclosures/orchards and ancient hedgerows (View 15). Houses are of Forest stone and render, with grey slate and brown/red tiles with chimneys and gardens. The Landscape Character Assessment of this area is equivalent to 10d Edgehills. The area forms part of the southerly Protection Zone as well as being a Horseshoe Bat Cores Sustenance Zone and an SSSI Risk Zone.

View 19 Spout Lane Ancient hedgerows and fields rising each side



View 20 Jubilee Road looking south. Narrow lanes bounded by ancient hedgerows, Boundary statutory forest on the right.

View 8 View into Mitcheldean from the top of Jubilee Road across to Silver Street, showing St Michael and all aAngels.



View 1 View from a public footpath on Breakheart Hill across the valley to Carisbrook Road Estate. Illustrating the rising topography, landscape and statutory forest. Environmentally sensitive Protection Zone in the foreground of the Grade 1 agricultural field and also the environmentally sensitive Statutory Forest of cultural and heritage significance behind.

Oakraven Environmental Centre (formerly Plump Hill School – built in 1878 and closed in 1984) includes Horsepool Bottom, a wildlife reserve with a large pond leased from the Forestry Commission (View 20). At this point the road widens a little, with traditional scattered “squatter” dwellings along the roadside and a working farm of livestock and arable. Where Jubilee Road meets the A4136 at Plump Hill (view 8), south of Mitcheldean, the dwellings include some brick-built bungalows and painted rendered houses.

Plump Hill climbs steeply south-westwards up the A4136 with houses on the roadside and a pavement on one side of the road. The houses are a mixture of stone-built two- and three-storeys, with grey slate/ tiled roofs, chimneys and a green backcloth with views out to Abenhall. At what is locally known as “The Point”, halfway up the hill, there are commanding views towards the south-east of the surrounding countryside and the River Severn. The George Read Memorial Bench sits at the top of Plump Hill. This significant, locally distinctive and valued viewpoint looks out over the Castiard Valley Protection Zone to the River Severn and beyond. The landscape of undulating farmland with narrow lanes bounded by ancient hedgerows and Statutory Forest on the right is also a Core Sustainance Zone for the lesser and great horseshoe bats (View 6, View 7 and VIEW 21).



View 21 Castiard Valley with Shapridge in the distance, Statutory Forest to the left. Farmland and ancient hedgerows. Wildlife habitat for Lesser and Greater horseshoe bats and SSSI Risk Zone.



View 6 Significant, locally distinctive and valued viewpoint from the George Read Memorial Bench at the top of Plump Hill. Views over the Castiard Valley Protection Zone to the River Severn and beyond and Core Sustainance Zone for the Lesser and Great Horseshoe Bats. Undulating farmland with ancient hedgerows



View 10 View across Vantage Point from Wigpool illustrating the steepness and the village nestled in the valley



View 7 George Read Memorial Bench

The A4136 is a busy main artery road heavily used by lorries with sharp bends and a steep drop on the south-east side, at the bottom of which, and creeping up the hillside, are scattered dwellings known as "The Rocks". On the A4136 about one mile from Mitcheldean is a 4.5 hectare Dolomite Quarry nature reserve. This key wildlife site (KWS) is managed by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, held under agreement with the Forestry commission since 1982. There are several other wildlife-rich sites nearby – Edgehills Quarry (SSSI), Westbury Brook pond, Fairplay iron mine and Fairplay ponds.



Leading to The Rocks and Hazel Hill

The Wilderness

From the A4136 a single-track road climbs the hillside, with a few scattered dwellings of brick/render and a mixture of two-storey dwellings and bungalows surrounded by grassland and with open views out flanked on one side by conifer woodland. This road leads to the Wilderness Centre, an imposing manor house which sits in 30 acres of woodland, meadow and pasture land set high above Mitcheldean, with surrounding views of the Parish, May Hill SSSI and the Malvern Hills (View 22).

In 1824, ownership was with the Colchester-Wemyss family; over the years there have been several changes of use including a sanatorium and care home. While in the ownership of Gloucestershire County Council, it became a residential environmental field study centre with school children from across the country visiting. It is now in private ownership and continues to offer residential environmental learning.

View 22 Views out from the Wilderness Centre across farmland towards Mayhill SSSI



View 23 Narrow lane with within statutory forest and showing



Wigpool

Wigpool lies to the west of Mitcheldean at a right-hand turn off the Stenders road and is situated on a high plateau. Many of its few scattered dwellings, a mixture of traditional sandstone, brick and render with slate roofs and chimneys, are accessed by dirt tracks. Wigpool is surrounded by and sits within woodland of conifer and broadleaf, interspersed with traditional small hedged enclosures.

At the turn-off from the Stenders the road is tarmac (View 23) and on the left-hand side, screened from view, is the Mitcheldean water treatment plant, supplying 70,000 customers across Gloucestershire. The hard road runs for around a mile and is narrow single track with no pavements, taking a left-hand turn towards Drybrook with some roadside dwellings of stone or render and some bungalows. The outlook is of farmland with hedges and trees. At the turning, the road continuing straight ahead is a woodland track. A 7.5 hectare nature reserve, which now includes two pools, is situated near the track within a large conifer plantation. The site is managed jointly by the Forestry Commission and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust by agreement with the Forestry Commission, along with an area to the right of the track that is being restored to heathland. Hobbs Quarry to the east and Wigpool Ironstone mine on the eastern boundary are both Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).



Lane at Wigpool



View 15 Views towards Plump hill and the squatter settlement patterns from the Gloucestershire Way, a national trail well used by tourists and locals alike.

The track straight ahead rises gently with woodland on both sides. At the top of the hill is a chicken farm comprising of several large wooden huts (View 14), with a farmhouse to the left set well back from the road. The track continues, meandering downwards through woodland on both sides. Offshoot tracks lead to single or small groups of isolated dwellings, some of which have views out towards Mitcheldean, the Lea, May Hill and the Malvern Hills. There are public footpaths leading to Mitcheldean and the area is popular with walkers.



View 14



View 12 Listed Lagger's Barn on Breakheart Hill. (FODDC Landscape Assessment 10d). Taken from public footpath in the woods opposite.

Bradley Court/Breakheart Hill

The landscape is one of larger hedged agricultural fields set in an elevated position. The fields slope down towards the settlement of Mitcheldean. Within this landscape is the listed barn, Lagger's Barn, which is clearly visible and a prominent feature within the landscape (View 12).

The Forest of Dean Landscape Character Document defines this landscape's character:

"Area 10d Breakheart Hill. Characteristics of this area include ridges orientated north to south emphasised in the orientation of hedgerow patterns and mosaic of mixed farmland and woodland cloaks ridges. The ridge is predominantly agricultural, with a strong pattern of hedged fields dividing the landscape into a neat patchwork of pasture and arable fields."

There are public rights of way within this landscape including The Wysis Way.



View 9 View from The Wilderness towards Dene Magna School and across to the River Severn and beyond

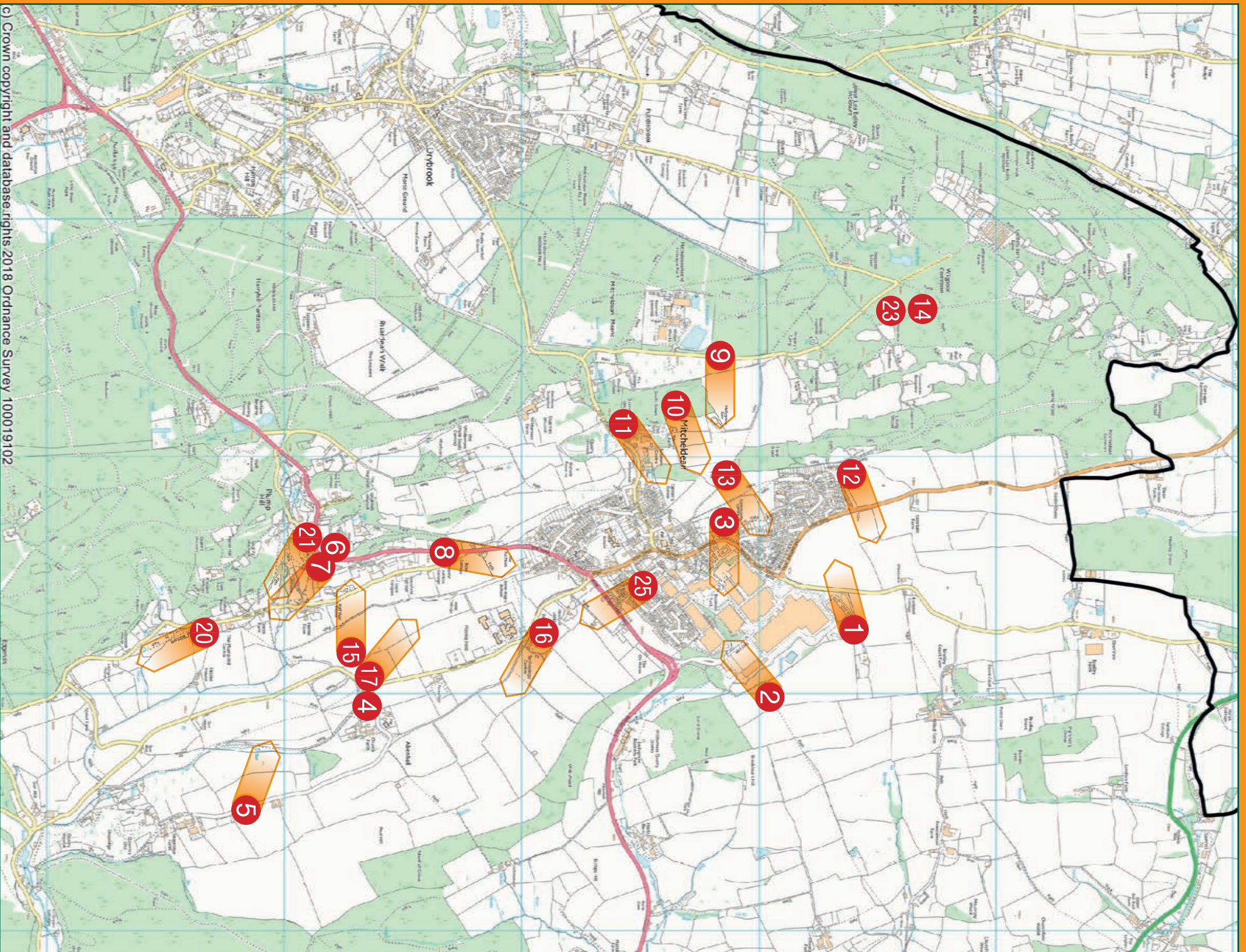


View 11 View of May Hill from The Wilderness showing Bradley Court.



View 2
View from Breakheart Hill to Vantage point and the Wilderness centre behind, seen nestling in the valley.

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View 25
View from Dean Meadows. Registered high Grade Agricultural fields rising up outside the settlement boundary, part of the character setting of Mitcheldean being in a bowl.

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View 13 *Uninterrupted views from the Sheep Field over the recreation field (designated Green Space) across to Breakhart Hill, the listed Lagers Barn and the Malverns beyond. Views shows the character setting of Mitcheldean nestled in a bowl and the Grade 1 agricultural field rising up outside the settlement boundary opposite Carisbrook Road.*



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