

# Landscape and Visual Technical Note

DRAFT

St Modwen – Buckover Garden Village

Green Gap Review Between Buckover Garden Village & Thornbury

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1. Aspect Landscape Planning are in the process of undertaking the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment work associated with the proposed Buckover Garden Village site on behalf of St Modwen and the Tortworth Estate.
- 1.2. Following on from this input on the Buckover Garden Village scheme (BGV), Aspect Landscape Planning have been requested to undertake a high level landscape and visual review of the landscape situated between the BGV site and the western built up edge of Thornbury. The purpose of this review is to identify the particular landscape qualities and views into and out of this area in order for it be considered in policy terms as a potential 'Green Gap'.
- 1.3. The purpose of this Green Gap would be to ensure that the proposed BGV development would be seen as a separate and distinct settlement to Thornbury, whilst also restricting and limiting further sporadic future development on the eastern fringes of Thornbury. The retention of this Green Gap would seek to ensure that over the longer term this part of the countryside is safeguarded from encroachment, unrestricted sprawl and coalescence between Thornbury and BGV.
- 1.4. A desktop assessment and further site visit has been undertaken to assess the landscape visual context associated with the Green Gap landscape and urban edge of Thornbury, and a number of baseline plans have been prepared (refer Enclosure 1).

## 2 The Green Gap Landscape Setting

- 2.1. As noted, the area identified to be studied as part of this high level landscape and visual Green Gap review is situated to the immediate east of Thornbury. The previous urban edge of which was originally broadly defined by Morton Way, however, this now includes some recent and ongoing residential development on the eastern side of Morton Way. The indicative extent of the potential Green Gap area extends approximately 1km from the edge of Thornbury up to the BGV western site boundary. This includes the area around Grovesend to the south and extends to include Milbury Heath to the south east, Hackett Lane, Clay Lane, Whitewall Lane, Crossways Lane and Gloucester Road and Upper Morton to the north. To the south west the Green Gap extends to meet the existing Green Belt boundary which follows the disused railway line to the south west of Grovesend Road and Midland Way south of Thornbury (refer Context Plan ASPGG1).

- 2.2. At a national level the landscape east of Thornbury is identified to be located within the northern extent of the Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges Character Area NCA 118, with the Severn and Avon Vales Character Area NCA 106 located immediately to the north and covers the landscape north of Thornbury.
- 2.3. At a local level the South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment (2014) identifies the area to be situated within the Severn Ridges Character Area (CA18). Settlement makes a major contribution to the character of this area, which extends to include the entirety of Thornbury, Lower Almondsbury, Olveston and Tockington. The key characteristics of CA18 are identified as being:
- *“Distinctive large scale sloping landform rising from the Levels, with sections of steep scarp in the north and south and more gentle slope profiles elsewhere. A large central area of low hills and radiating ridges extends westwards. A narrow linear area of dip slope, lies adjacent to the Bristol urban edge.*
  - *Area is greatly influenced by adjacent Levels and Severn Estuary. All combine to form an area of regionally prominent landform, distinct within and beyond South Gloucestershire.*
  - *Expansive and readily available views extend over the lowland Levels and Severn Estuary to the west.*
  - *Scarp and lower ridges form a prominent backdrop in views from the Levels, South Wales and the Forest of Dean.*
  - *Diverse vegetation cover, with:*
  - *Visually prominent mature wooded scarps including areas of ancient woodland that make a significant contribution to landscape character and provide habitat for notable species including European Protected Species, occasionally with ornamental species within historic landscape parks.*
  - *Numerous areas of calcareous, neutral or marshy grassland across the Severn Ridges that support a diverse range of flora including areas of species rich grassland.*
  - *Areas of bankside vegetation along flowing water at Groves Gully and Roundhouse and Fishponds Woods, and arable farmland that provides nesting opportunities for ground nesting birds and winter stubble that provides foraging opportunities for farmland birds, including Amber and Red listed species.*
  - *A geological SSSI at Cattybrook Brickpit.*
  - *Clipped and overgrown hedgerows and intermittent trees divide small pasture fields and provide wildlife connectivity including between areas of woodland, with larger arable fields on more gentle slopes.*

- *Orchards and limited common land are often associated with older settlements and farms, with a large commercial orchard at Almondsbury.*
- *Extensive distribution of settlements and minor roads, with older villages, hamlets and scattered farms of local stone, with stone boundary walls. All largely nestled within the landform and strong landscape structure. Churches form distinctive landmarks.*
- *To the south, the Bristol urban edge, M4 and M5 are prominent within their local landscape. Sections of the motorways are also prominent within wider views, forming physical and visual barriers.*
- *Powerlines frequently cross parts of the area, particularly to the north and vary in prominence.*
- *Industrial buildings, distribution sheds, Oldbury Power Station, within the adjacent Levels and Estuary, visually influence this character area.*
- *The Severn Bridges provide national land marks within the wider estuary landscape, and feature in views from the Severn Ridges.”*

2.4. The landscape characteristics of this area include gently undulating topography, irregular shaped agricultural fields with mixed species hedgerows and some mature hedgerow trees forming field boundaries. A number of watercourses and ditches exist in the lower lying areas and where these exist, more dense vegetation cover exists. Many of the field hedgerows are maintained relatively low and the mature trees are predominantly Oak species. Some larger pockets of broadleaf woodland exist within the southern part of the study area including Cleeve Wood and the area around Milbury Heath and along the A38. A number of pylons and overhead powerlines also traverse this landscape. The Plan 6390/ASPGG1 within enclosure 1 illustrates the field pattern and vegetation cover of this landscape.

2.5. A network of winding rural lanes lined with hedges and mature treescape traverses the predominantly agricultural landscape and a number of farmsteads and residential development is interspersed through the landscape and along the lanes. Higher ground associated with Buckover and Milbury Heath to the south east as well as to the north of Gloucester Road provides for some longer distance views across the landscape, however for the most part longer distance and middle distance views are restricted within this landscape. The narrow, winding rural lanes which includes some sporadic residential dwellings with large plots and set within an established verdant setting is a key feature of this particular landscape. An extensive network of Public Rights of Way provide access across the landscape and link with the rural lanes, providing links between Thornbury and the wider landscape. The existing urban edge of Thornbury is apparent, and its perceived proximity characterises much of this urban-rural fringe landscape.

- 2.6. At the time of the site visit, extensive construction works associated with residential development on the eastern fringes of Thornbury were ongoing and the related construction operations, noise and traffic was a notable component.
- 2.7. A number of photographs have also been taken from publicly accessible viewpoints, to illustrate the visual environment of the rural-urban fringe landscape to the east of Thornbury. The Photographic Record is included within Enclosure 2.

### **3 Thornbury Eastern Built Up Edge**

- 3.1. The existing built up edge of Thornbury is largely defined by Morton Way which acts as a ring road around Thornbury. The main town centre and core of Thornbury is situated further west, with residential development from 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s making up a large part of the eastern built up area of Thornbury.
- 3.2. More recent residential development includes some more sporadic parcels of development to the north and east of Morton Way, some of which has been recently completed and some of which is currently under construction. The consented residential development is identified on Plan 6390/ASPGG1. Much of the new development responds to its edge of settlement location and includes landscaped edges to the eastern boundaries that given time will mature to assist in integrating the built edge. PROW's and existing field hedgerows have been retained and integrated where possible. The new and committed developments also includes extensive areas of public open space which helps to integrate the built up development parcels and allows for the green infrastructure network to permeate from the more rural countryside to the eastern fringes of Thornbury.
- 3.3. It is noted the Bovis Homes Appeal for 370 dwellings on Land South of Gloucester Road (Appeal Ref: APP/P0119/W/17/3189592) has recently been dismissed. This proposed to extend the built up edge further north east of Thornbury and that of the recent development at Thornbury Fields.

### **4 Potential for Inclusion within a Green Gap**

- 4.1. As part of this assessment Aspect has reviewed the potential for this landscape to be included as a local Green Gap. Given the recent sporadic residential development and number of planning applications on land to the east of Thornbury, it is clear that some form of landscape related designation or policy would ensure that further development into the rural landscape is restricted, and that this would provide further protection for encroachment on the rural winding lanes and landscape which exists.
- 4.2. A number of criteria should be used to identify where land could be used for Green or Strategic Gaps:
  - a) The land to be included within the gap is open and provides a sense of separation between settlements.

- b) The land to be included within the gap performs an important role in defining the settlement character of the area and separating settlements at risk of coalescence.
- c) In defining the extent of a gap, no more land than is necessary to prevent the coalescence of settlements should be included, having regard to maintaining their physical and visual separation.
- 4.3. Given the forthcoming BGV development, it is considered that the land between Thornbury and BGV meets with the above criteria.
- 4.4. It is noted that Green or Strategic Gaps are not necessarily qualitative landscape designations, however, landscape character analysis can inform how settlement patterns develop, the nature of individual character and setting, the pattern of separation between settlements and how the landscape functions to maintain that separation. As such, given the proposed BGV site is in relatively close proximity to Thornbury, the purpose of this type of policy could enhance both BGV and Thornbury.
- 4.5. This would act in a similar manner to that of the Green Belt to the south of Thornbury and there is potential for the Green Gap extents to link with the existing Green Belt designation. The Green Gap would seek to ensure that over the longer term this part of the countryside is safeguarded from further encroachment and unrestricted sprawl and from review of the localised landscape setting this area would benefit from this. The extent of the potential Green Gap is illustrated on Plan 6390/ASPGG2.

## 5 Potential Green Gap Policy Wording

- 5.1. Aspect has also undertaken a review of potential policy wording for the Green Gap. This has involved an evaluation of similar planning policy in place for local landscape or settlement gap designations which cover urban-rural fringe landscape and intend to achieve the similar level of restriction on development. It is noted that many of these designations and policies are not specifically intended to protect or maintain the intrinsic landscape qualities but moreover intend to limit or restrict development for strategic or planning reasons to protect or maintain individual character, identity or sense of place.
- 5.2. Examples of potential policy wording include;
- a) Tendring District Council Local Plan 2007 – Local Green Gap Policy;

*“During the Plan period, land within Local Green Gaps, as defined on the Proposals Map, will be kept open, and essentially free of development. This is to prevent the coalescence of settlements, and to protect their rural settings. Minor development proposals may be permitted if they do no harm, individually or collectively, to the purposes of a Local Green Gap or to its open character. These may include the improvement of existing leisure and recreational facilities, and development for agricultural purposes. In Local Green Gaps, where resources and opportunities permit the Council will encourage the improvement of public rights of way.”*

b) Test Valley Borough Council Local Plan 2011-2029 – Local Gap Policy;

*“The principle of local gaps is well established and has been supported by local communities for a number of years. Their designation aims to ensure that a sense of place is maintained for both those individual communities and for those travelling through the defined gaps.*

*Development within Local Gaps will be permitted provided that:*

*a) it would not diminish the physical separation and/or visual separation; and*

*b) it would not individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development compromise the integrity of the gap.”*

c) Winchester District Local Plan Part 1 JCS Core Strategy (2013) – Settlement Gap Policy;

*“Within these areas only development that does not physically or visually diminish the gap will be allowed.*

*To protect the individual character and identity of those settlements adjoining ... Development which would threaten the open and undeveloped character of this area will be resisted and the land should be managed to secure the long-term retention of its rural character.”*

## 6 Buckover Garden Village Design Response to Potential Green Gap

- 6.1. In light of the forthcoming BGV development, it is acknowledged that it is an important consideration for the proposed development to respect and respond to the Green Gap landscape.
- 6.2. The draft framework masterplan is currently being developed with this in mind to ensure the western portions of the site have responded to this landscape and will include a number of factors to allow for an offset from the boundary and incorporation of landscape features to allow for a transitional landscape whilst also respecting the more rural character and winding rural lanes which exist.
- 6.3. The key elements being incorporated include;
  - Retention of the key existing landscape features along the boundary and within the western portion of the site including the field hedgerow network and mature Oak trees;
  - A substantial and appropriate development setback away from the western boundary;
  - Inclusion of lower density built development within the western extents;
  - The inclusion of primarily landscape led land uses including public open space, sports pitches, allotments and agriculture within close proximity to the boundary;

- Proposed tree, hedge and shrub planting which includes locally native species and that reflect that of the localised landscape character;
  - Retention and enhancement of PROW and pedestrian / cycle links.
  - Overall creation of a transitional landscape.
- 6.4. It is considered that these elements can be incorporated within the BGV scheme which would ensure the scheme responds to the Green Gap and allows the intervening landscape character between BGV and Thornbury to be retained. This would act as a buffer landscape between Thornbury and BGV and allow for the two distinct separate settlements. The intervening landscape would ensure coalescence of the two settlements would not occur and that a sense of place between each settlement is allowed for.

## 7 Summary and Conclusions

- 7.1. Aspect Landscape Planning have undertaken a review of the landscape east of Thornbury and west of BGV in order to appraise the particular landscape qualities and assess the potential for inclusion as a 'Green Gap' to protect the two distinct settlements.
- 7.2. It is considered that this landscape would benefit from a local planning and landscape related designation that would ensure the proposed BGV would be seen as a separate and distinct settlement to Thornbury, whilst also placing policy restrictions for future development on the eastern fringes of Thornbury to limit any further sporadic development. The Green Gap would link with the existing Green Belt to the south of Thornbury and would seek to ensure that over the longer term this part of the countryside is safeguarded from encroachment, unrestricted sprawl and coalescence between Thornbury and BGV.
- 7.3. It is considered that the forthcoming application and draft framework masterplan for BGV should give consideration to the potential Green Gap and the western portions of the layout should also respond with a landscape buffer. Appropriate development setbacks from the western boundary, lower density housing and the inclusion of landscape led land uses including public open space, sports pitches, allotments and agriculture within close proximity to the boundary will ensure the proposed BGV development results in creating a transitional landscape in response to the wider landscape to the west acting as a buffer between Thornbury and BGV.
- 7.4. It is noted that as with many of these designations and policies, they are not necessarily intended to protect or maintain the intrinsic landscape qualities of the area but intend to limit or restrict development for strategic or planning reasons to protect or maintain individual character, identity or sense of place. It is considered the Green Gap landscape does contain landscape features worthy of protection. landscape led designation. The Green Gap would therefore be more of a strategic planning policy tool.
- 7.5. With the forthcoming application for BGV, it is considered that a Green Gap policy would assist in maintaining a degree of separation and therefore the individual character and

identity ensuring BGV is seen as a separate settlement to Thornbury. This would also allow for BGV to achieve its own distinct sense of place.

7.6. The extent of the potential Green Gap is illustrated on Plan 6390/ASPGG2.

Aspect Landscape Planning  
June 2019

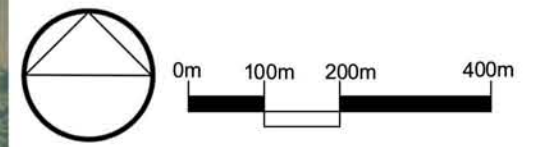


Enclosure 1 – Aspect Green Gap Baseline Plans





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- Key:
- Buckover Garden Village Site Boundary
  - Public Right of Way
  - Green Belt
  - Consented Development Constructed / Under Construction
  - Development Awaiting Decision

- 1 Application for 350 dwellings at Clive Park, Approved at Appeal. (Ref: APP/P0119/W/17/3182296)
- 2 300 dwellings at Thornbury Fields, currently partially built and part under construction.
- 3 150 dwellings at Land at Crossways, awaiting decision. (Ref:PT18/3756/O)
- 4 130 dwellings at Land west Of Gloucester Road, consented at outline (Ref:PT16/4774/O)
- 5 125 dwellings at Post Farm, currently partially built and part under construction. Additional application for 39 dwellings awaiting decision. (Ref: PT18/0913/O and PT18/0902/F)

REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D
REVISIONS				

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TITLE  
**Green Gap Review, Buckover Garden Village: Context Plan**

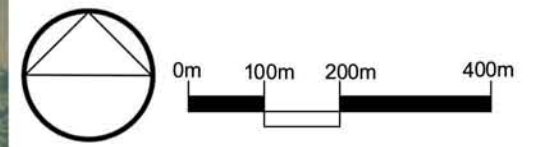
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**St Modwen**

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6390 / ASPGG1			





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- Key:
- Buckover Garden Village Site Boundary
  - Public Right of Way
  - Green Belt
  - Consented Development Constructed / Under Construction
  - Development Awaiting Decision
  - Approximate Extent of Potential Green Gap

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**aspect landscape planning**

TITLE  
**Green Gap Review, Buckover Garden Village: Extent of Potential Green Gap**

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**St Modwen**

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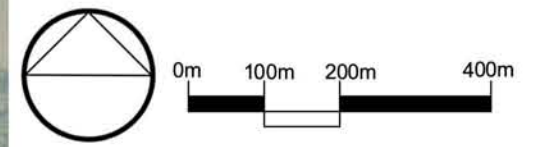


Enclosure 2 – Green Gap Photographic Record





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- Key:
- Buckover Garden Village Site Boundary
  - Viewpoint Locations
  - Public Right of Way
  - Green Belt
  - Consented Development Constructed / Under Construction
  - Development Awaiting Decision

REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D
REVISIONS				

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TITLE  
**Green Gap Review, Buckover Garden Village: Context Plan**

CLIENT  
**St Modwen**

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Rising ground and established woodland blocks characterising the higher ground to the north.

Morton Farm to the north side of Gloucester Road.

Electricity powerlines and pylons forming a notable detracting component within the landscape.

**Viewpoint GG1A**



Electricity powerlines and pylons forming a notable detracting component within the landscape.

Small field parcels with maintained hedgerows.

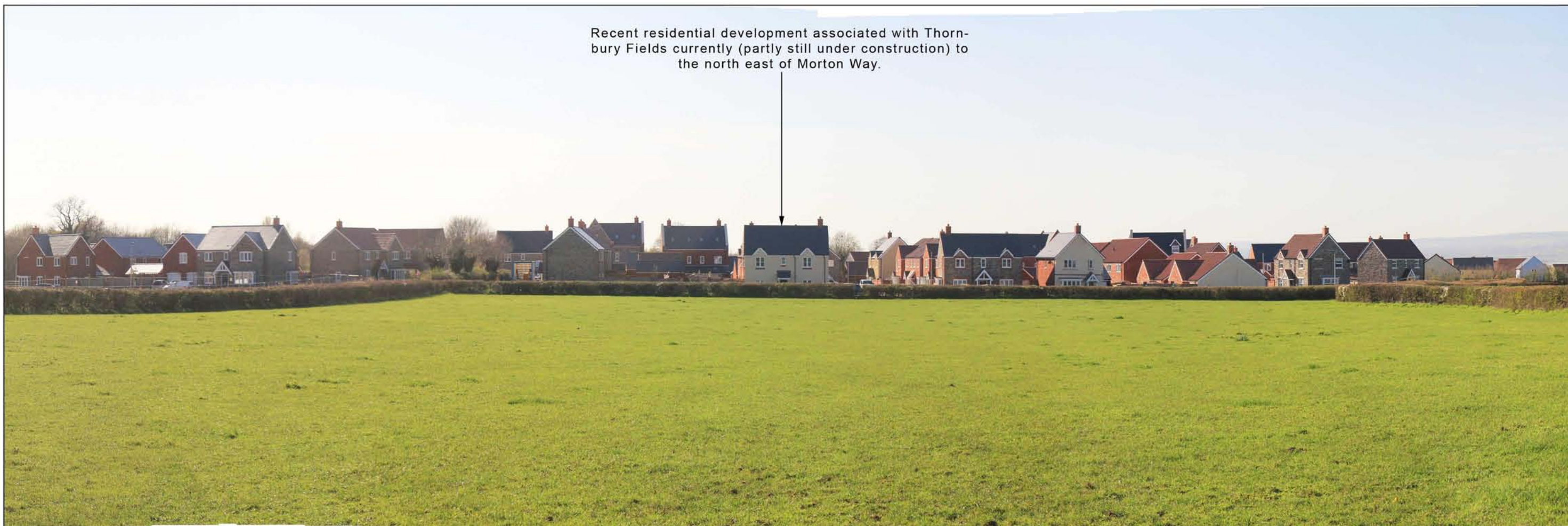
Sports fields and POS area associated with Thornbury Fields development currently under construction.

Wooded elevated ground around Milbury Heath to the south west.

**Viewpoint GG1B**



Recent residential development associated with Thornbury Fields currently (partly still under construction) to the north east of Morton Way.



**Viewpoint GG2**

Residential properties off Crossways Lane.

Rudge Wood on higher ground within southern part of BGV site.

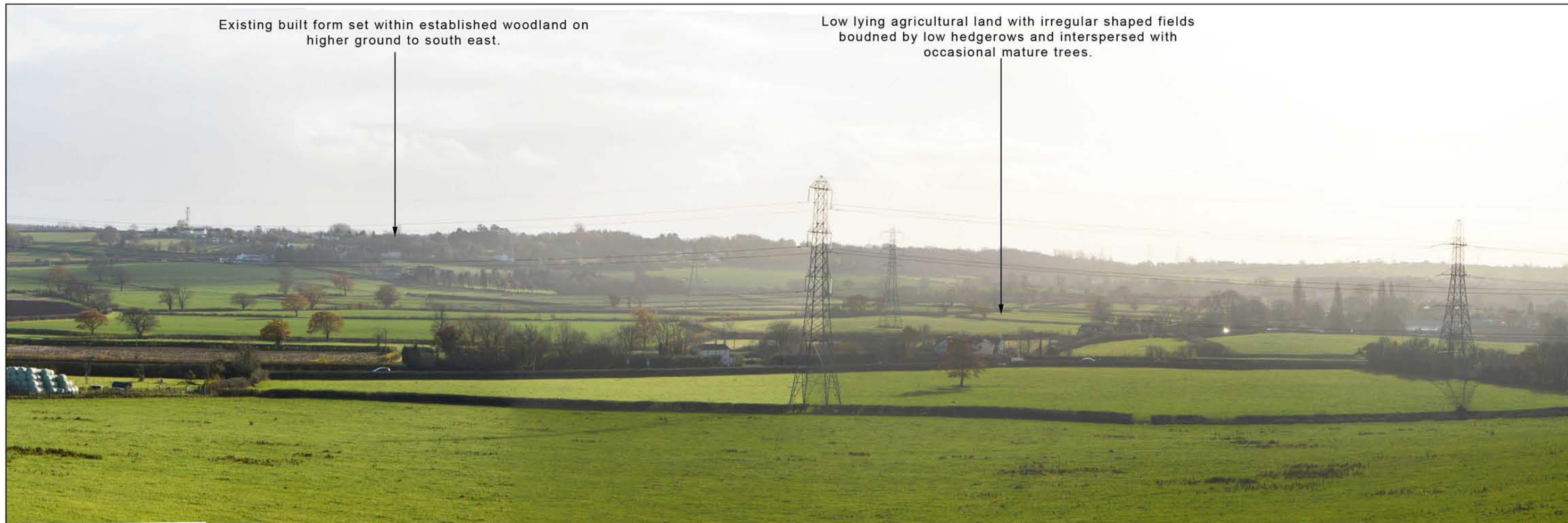
Milbury Heath

Residential property off Crossways Lane meandering through the landscape



**Viewpoint GG3**





Existing built form set within established woodland on higher ground to south east.

Low lying agricultural land with irregular shaped fields bounded by low hedgerows and interspersed with occasional mature trees.

**Viewpoint GG4**

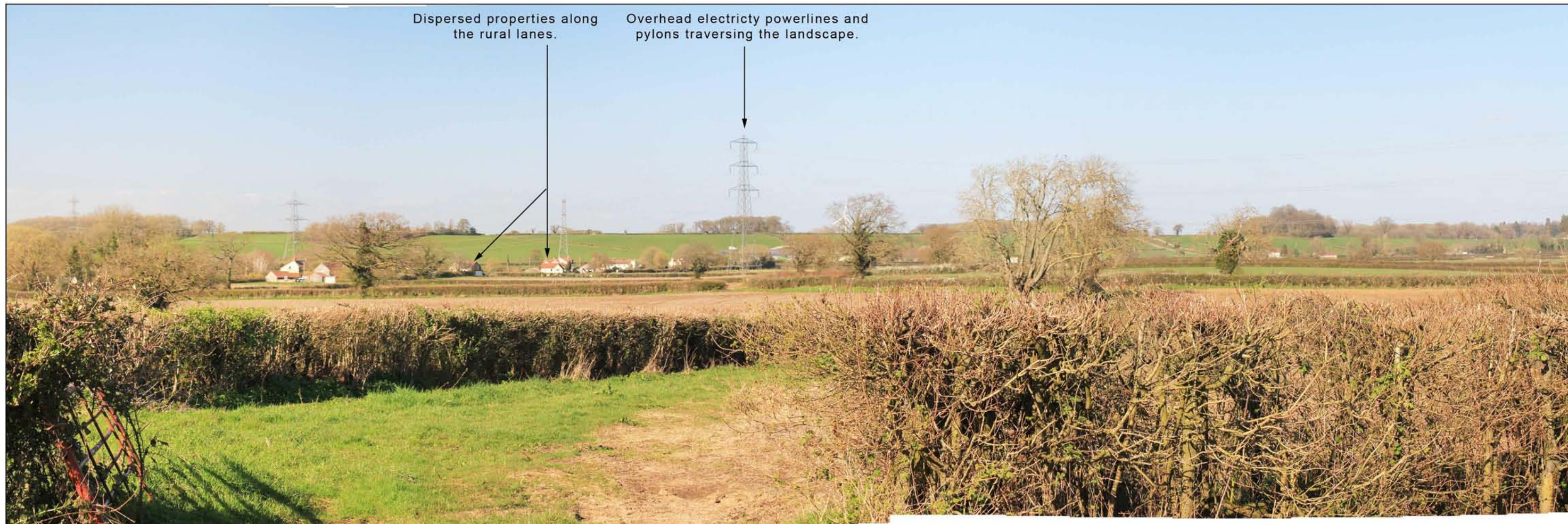


Recent development associated with Thornbury Fields Phase 3 currently under construction to the east of Morton Way.

Recent residential development associated with Thornbury Fields currently to the north east of Morton Way.

**Viewpoint GG5**

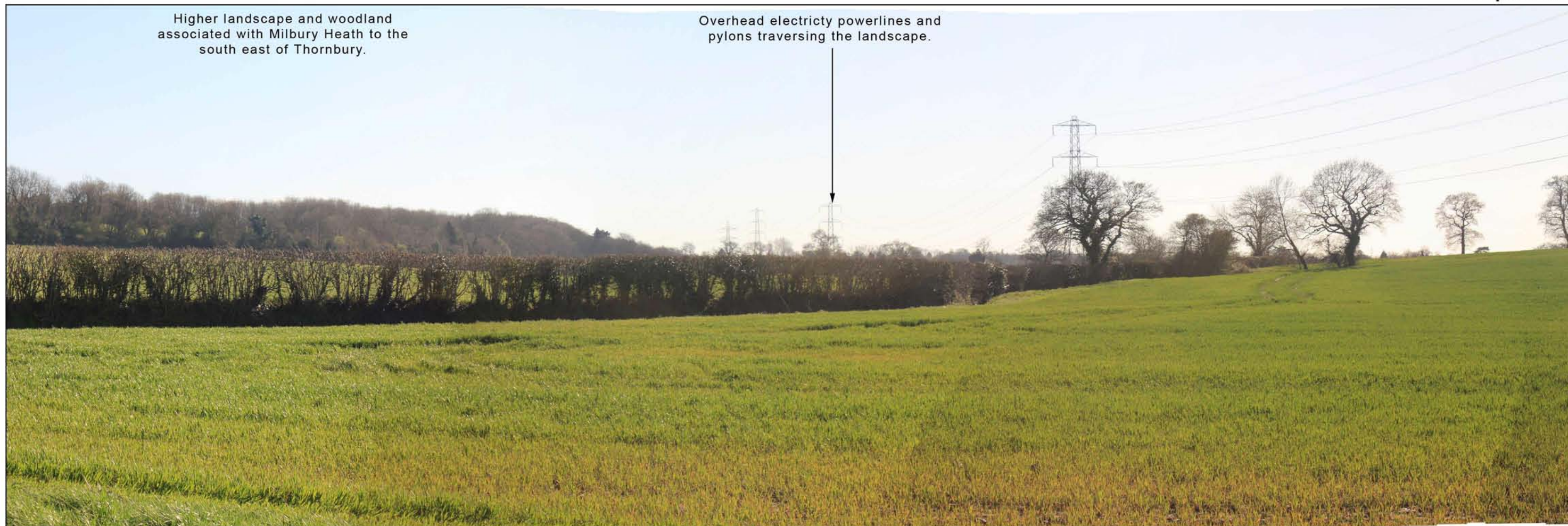




Dispersed properties along the rural lanes.

Overhead electricity powerlines and pylons traversing the landscape.

**Viewpoint GG6**



Higher landscape and woodland associated with Milbury Heath to the south east of Thornbury.

Overhead electricity powerlines and pylons traversing the landscape.

**Viewpoint GG7**



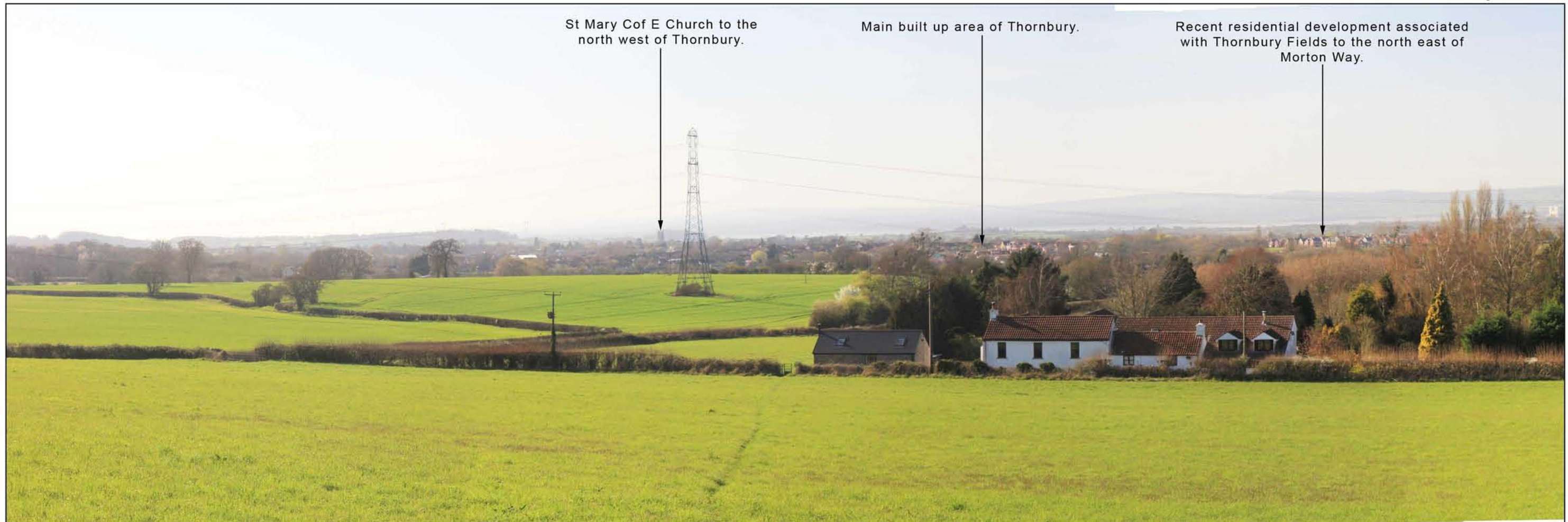


Higher landscape and woodland blocks to the north of Gloucester Road.

Established vegetation structure.

Whitewall Lane

**Viewpoint GG8**



St Mary Cof E Church to the north west of Thornbury.

Main built up area of Thornbury.

Recent residential development associated with Thornbury Fields to the north east of Morton Way.

**Viewpoint GG9**