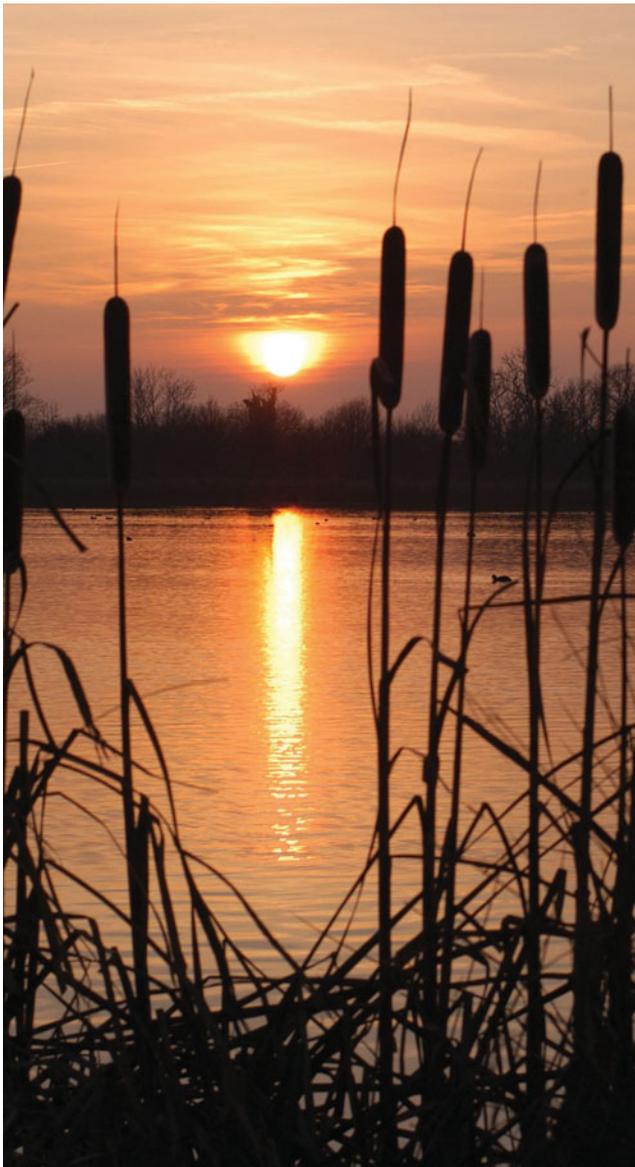


Strategic Review and Implementation Plan for the Cotswold Water Park

Stage II Key Issues and Options Evaluation
July 2008



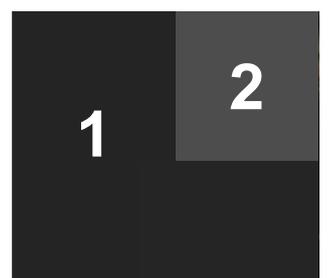


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COTSWOLD WATER PARK

REVISED STAGE II REPORT

KEY ISSUES AND OPTIONS EVALUATION

July 2008

Final

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Cotswold Water Park Joint Committee requires a strategic review and implementation plan to guide the future development of the Cotswold Water Park (CWP) that is founded on a clear, robust and evidenced based framework for delivering an achievable vision.

Overview of Stage I Study Approach

- 1.2 An extensive research and consultation programme has been undertaken by Scott Wilson through Stage I of the work programme, culminating in the production of a series of Technical Reports on the identified key drivers and related issues:

- Technical Report 1: Settlements and Transportation
- Technical Report 2: Biodiversity, Nature and Conservation
- Technical Report 3: Sand and Gravel Extraction
- Technical Report 4a: Leisure, Recreation and Sport
- Technical Report 4b: Tourism
- Technical Report 5: Agriculture
- Technical Report 6: Hydrology
- Technical Report 7: Heritage
- Technical Report 8: Landscape
- Technical Report 9: Planning and Policy

- 1.3 These reports present the technical baseline in relation to the current position of the CWP, and the evidence upon which discussion on future development options can be considered. These documents are supported by a dedicated Geographical Information System (GIS) programme devised by Scott Wilson to capture and record salient data. The GIS system can be accessed via the web-link: http://www.waterpark.org/society/cwp_master_plan.html

Stage II Study Requirements

- 1.4 The following report represents Stage II of a three-stage work programme. This document details the issues that have been identified in the Stage I process. This in turn leads to the formulation of options representing the various interests in the CWP. These options will be evaluated in order to select a preferred option that can be used to guide the preparation of the vision.

Study Approach

- 1.5 During Stage II of the work programme, Scott Wilson has sought to enter into discussions with key stakeholders and potential partners in the CWP to obtain an in depth appreciation of the issues identified during Stage I. The organisations consulted include:
- The Cotswold Water Park Villages Society
 - The Cricklade Country Way Project
 - The Cotswold Canal Partnership
 - British Waterways
 - The Co-operative Group (Co-op Group)
 - Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT)
 - Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT)
 - The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
 - Sport England
 - Natural England
 - Thames Water
 - Environment Agency
 - Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Minerals Planning Authorities
 - Individual minerals operators
- 1.6 The discussions have been supplemented by workshops held with the full CWP Joint Committee and with representatives of local residents and local businesses. The list of attendees is included in Appendix A. The aim of the workshops was to discuss key issues and future aims and aspirations for the CWP from a local stakeholder perspective with the key points used to inform the priorities for consideration in the options.
- 1.7 The consultation and feedback identified priorities, potential benefits and conflicts that have proved invaluable to the overall process.

Report Structure

- 1.8 The following report brings together the Stage I Technical Reports and the consultation programme. The findings of these investigations will be outlined in the following structure:
- Review of the interrelationship between the issues.
 - Identification of the emerging options for development.
 - Presentation of a rationalised basis for a 'preferred option'.
 - Analysis of the governance and management issues.
- 1.9 This information will be used to inform Stage III of the study programme.

- 1.10 This report is accompanied by maps that represent the principal issues graphically and to visually demonstrate the rationale for discussing each of the options. The maps should be considered as visual aids, and as such do not hold all of the technical information available. More detailed mapping can be found on the CWP Geographical Information System (GIS) designed by Scott Wilson. All maps can be found in Appendix B.

2 Exploration of the Key Issues

2.1 The following section provides further examination of the key issues facing the development of the CWP in relation to the key drivers and integrated issues, but also demonstrates the role that each issue could play in relation to the development options for the CWP.

Mineral Extraction

2.2 Mineral extraction has been the biggest single influence on the establishment and character of the CWP, having been the catalyst for the creation of 147 lakes (see Map S2.1). Furthermore, the continuing utilisation of the CWP for mineral extraction is the known constant in relation to development over the next 20 years and could conceivably double the current number of lakes. Therefore, mineral extraction will continue to have a considerable influence on the future of the CWP.

2.3 However, this activity does not represent the option for the CWP that will help define the CWP as a place in which to live, work and visit. Rather, it represents the means from which other opportunities for development can be explored. In addition, the process of mineral extraction should be utilised and manoeuvred to assist in the creation of desired development.

2.4 The Minerals Planning Authorities (MPA) govern the identification and subsequent permission of mineral extraction sites in the CWP. There are many aspects that influence the nature, location and chronology of sites chosen for mineral extraction. These include:

- a desire by aggregate companies to secure a succession of operations and sites that offer the most productive sand and gravel resources;
- the need for MPAs to secure a seven year landbank of sand and gravel to demonstrate how annual apportionment targets are met; and
- the different levels of sand and gravel resources available within the main MPA areas to work with in achieving a seven year landbank.

2.5 A key issue revealed in the Stage I Report is that the past development requirements of the CWP area have not been a core consideration in the identification or the sequential ordering of mineral extraction sites. Furthermore, the previous minerals policies have not been sufficiently effective in guiding restoration strategies or after use identification for specific sites that have a clearly defined development option. Instead, policy has generally been limited to denoting areas where there is a preferred requirement for environmental conservation; archaeological importance; and restoration back to agricultural use for example. This has meant that opportunities to utilise the mineral extraction process to deliver certain targets in other development areas have not materialised.

2.6 Stakeholders with an active interest in the after use of mineral extraction sites feel that clearer and more integrated guidance that encompasses the whole of the CWP is needed. This is to ensure that the mineral extraction process can become an enabling factor in relation to other development activities.

2.7 In particular, the consultation identified that:

- A more co-ordinated approach is needed between the MPAs in relation to the chosen extraction areas and the chronological ordering of extraction. This mainly involves the MPAs of Wiltshire and Gloucestershire at present, but will increasingly require input from the Oxfordshire MPA in the future;
- Clearer guidance for extraction programmes and processes is required to ensure workings are sympathetic to biodiversity;
- A more consistent approach to landscape creation and flora planting is required in relation to the agreed restoration strategies;
- Suitable after uses need to be considered at an early stage to allow potential developers/operators to come forward and engage in the planning process before extraction is completed. This would allow for modifications to the restoration strategy, to make the site more conducive to a specific purpose (e.g. making the shape of the lake more suitable for certain water sports; and introducing certain design elements and planting regimes for better habitat creation); and
- The restoration strategies approved need to include suitable provision for a leisure and recreation network based upon a strategic need.

2.8 The forthcoming Minerals Core Strategies address many of these issues, with the expectation that a more co-ordinated and structured approach between the respective MPAs can be achieved.

2.9 In respect of restoration, it should be noted that the identification of suitable mineral extraction sites is a mandatory planning requirement and thus is already catered for within existing planning systems. This includes restoration to soft uses to an acceptable standard. Such 'soft' uses include agriculture, forestry, sport and recreation (though not for large indoor facilities), public open space, wildlife habitats (including any water environment), and other uses aimed at environmental improvement. Restoration to soft uses is a minimum requirement, and would form part of the minerals planning consent.

2.10 However, the primary issue in terms of restoration is whether the strategies are employed on a case-by-case basis, or whether they have a holistic and strategic context. The general evidence provided by the Landscape Character Assessment for the CWP is that these strategies in turn are impacting upon the character of the landscape (see Landscape Character section).

2.11 After use schemes that involve the re-development of land for 'hard' end uses would require a separate planning permission, and would be encompassed in the local authority planning system. A further observation in relation to past planning systems is that there was a lack of co-ordination and co-operation between the MPAs and LPAs and that this has resulted in missed opportunities for development. As a potentially multi-tiered planning consideration, it is essential that the various planning bodies and authorities adopt a more co-ordinated and co-operative approach based on a series of common principles and policies.

Mineral Extraction

Key Issues:

- *Mineral extraction is the known constant in relation to development over the next 20 years.*
- *Minerals Planning Policy and local authority Planning Policy has not been sufficiently co-ordinated to encourage the extraction process to be more conducive to other development priorities.*

Requirements

- *Greater guidance and understanding is required in relation to how best to use the mineral extraction process to deliver a more sustainable future for the CWP, taking into consideration the other drivers of the CWP including the landscape, sports, leisure, recreation, tourism, and biodiversity. This should be informed through appropriate planning policy.*

Hydrology

- 2.12 The creation of the lakes in the CWP is the most visible evidence of mineral extraction, with the high water table encouraging the natural infilling of the extraction sites as part of the agreed restoration strategy. The high water table and lack of suitable inert material to backfill extraction sites means that it is likely that a high proportion of restoration strategies for future mineral extraction sites will continue to result in lake creation.
- 2.13 The benefit of these water bodies is that they form a distinctive countryside environment that has subsequently prompted provision in water sports, leisure, recreation and tourism sectors. Furthermore, the availability of such a large quantity of open water in an inland area forms part of the rationale for the inclusion of the CWP in the Nature Map of the South West.
- 2.14 However, the investigation process revealed that there are a number of concerns in relation to the increasing mineral extraction process and the implications this has on the hydrology of the area. Observed problems include:
- the interruption to the natural hydrological system during the extraction process which has been seen to affect the water levels in other lakes for example;
 - a noticeable reduction in local river flows during periods of dry weather despite a reduction in abstraction from local bore holes by Thames Water, with one of the principle causes believed to be increased losses of water in lakes through evaporation;
 - the association between the creation of large areas of open water and aerodrome safeguarding;
 - the impact and consequences of mineral restoration on the flood risk and flood containment on the CWP; and
 - the creation of lakes close to settlements which can be a cause of concern to some residents.

- 2.15 The framework guiding the future development of the CWP needs to carefully consider any impacts on the hydrological system. Measures will need to mitigate problems relating to hydrology disruption and low flow in rivers as this could present damage to the environment. This mandate is directly expressed through the European Union's Environmental Liability Directive 2004 and is a specific concern of the UK Water Framework Directive.
- 2.16 The issue of flooding is paramount in the minds of local stakeholders, especially residents in the CWP who experienced severe flooding in July/August 2007 (see Map S2.2 'Hydrology' for Flood Risk area). It needs to be recognised that minerals extraction can have a direct relationship to flood risk if extraction is not appropriately managed and restoration is not suitably designed. For instance, the risk of flooding can increase from backfilling and landfilling of sites with impermeable material; sites can have an affect on the topography of the floodplain which in turn can influence the path routes of flood waters; and development can affect soil structures and natural flood water absorption rates. However, if used appropriately, mineral extraction can actually be used as a mechanism for alleviating flood risk in certain instances.
- 2.17 Increasing flood risk is also an issue in relation to any further 'hard' structures developed around lakes, particularly in the floodplain. The events experienced in the summer of 2007 of heavy downpours over a consistent period of time are forecast to become more prevalent in the future due to climate change. Some commentators suggest that this may see a higher incidence of flood events, a situation that has prompted calls for the government to adopt a 25-year strategy for flood alleviation and flood defence creation.
- 2.18 It has been beyond the scope of this study to test the level to which the change and further development of the CWP could alter the flood risk. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been conducted for mineral and waste activities in Wiltshire, and a similar study is planned for Gloucestershire in 2008. These will be important reference documents that should be consulted to provide more comprehensive guidance on the flood risk associated with mineral extraction in the CWP. In addition to this, a Flood Risk Assessment is required for any development project that would involve hard construction in zones identified as being at high risk from flooding. Overall, it is anticipated that greater consideration will need to be given to flood risk and flood alleviation that not only responds to the existing flood risk, but also the potential risk for more frequent flooding posed by changing weather patterns.

Hydrology

Key Issues

- *The interaction between mineral extraction and the high water table is likely to result in the formation of further lakes within the CWP.*
- *The changes to the natural hydrological system through abstraction and development, and the impact this may have on the environment, are fundamental considerations of the UK Water Framework Directive.*
- *The assessment of risks associated with development, especially on floodplains currently designated as 1 in 100 year risk areas, will increasingly need to take account of changing weather patterns.*

Requirements

- *The continued creation of lakes and other development needs to be assessed against certain issues including low flow of rivers; aerodrome safeguarding; and flood risk.*
- *Certain hydrological influences in site restoration need to be utilised to create environments that are more conducive to other activities such as biodiversity, sports, leisure and recreation.*

Landscape, Community and Settlements

The Landscape Character of CWP

- 2.19 The lakes created within the CWP have changed the landscape character from an area of fairly traditional countryside to one which now contains a high concentration (147) of individual water bodies; a figure that is set to rise noticeably in the future (see Map S2.3).
- 2.20 Although benefits have been derived from the changing landscape in the form of habitat creation and recreational opportunities, a recent Landscape Character Assessment (LDA Design, 2007) stated that the areas incorporating these activities are effectively enclaves that disrupt the form of the traditional landscape character. The study also states that there is a danger of further disintegration of the remaining fabric of the traditional landscape in the future through a greater concentration of mineral extraction sites in the central and eastern areas.
- 2.21 In this context, it is recommended that measures and techniques are adopted to ensure that the overall fabric of the landscape, particularly in relation to the historic fabric, is not further eroded beyond the creation of a lake itself. In this respect, the appropriate treatment of landscape restoration, that takes into account the influences of the wider area concerning flora species and vista creation, is considered paramount.
- 2.22 This process has already begun in the form of the Upper River Thames Heritage Project Landscape Strategy, which is now the subject of a Heritage Lottery Funding application, and the associated Greater Western Community Forest scheme. It may be possible for this process to be extended to include the whole of the CWP area.

Settlements

- 2.23 Each of the main centres has a history and heritage to impart, be it:
- Cricklade, which is widely reputed to be one of the most intact examples of a late Saxon burgh;
 - Lechlade-on-Thames, through its direct association with the River Thames and its distinctive architecture that is reminiscent of that celebrated throughout the Cotswold AONB as being some of the best examples of stone villages and towns in the UK; and
 - Fairford, a market town with a unique 15th Century Church, combining with the River Coln to provide a distinctly 'Cotswold' town setting.

- 2.24 Likewise, both South Cerney (a village equal to the size of Cricklade) and Ashton Keynes, as the principal villages, have a very traditional feel and ambience (see Map S2.4). It is this traditional character that needs to be utilised to provide a real sense of place for the CWP, and thus the protection of these areas from development is considered to be important in the future. This is a view supported by both North Wiltshire and Cotswold District planning policies, with development that would result in damage to residential amenities or the setting of a settlement generally to be avoided. However, the degree to which this approach has been interpreted at a local level has been questioned, with some local residents expressing concern that some lakes are extremely close in proximity to the settlements and that these lakes can detract from the local character.
- 2.25 This has become more of an issue in recent times through the growing propensity of planning applications that seek the conversion of an existing lake into other uses. There is a fear that certain developments, especially those concerning tourism/second home dwellings, are disrupting the overall countryside character of the area, which in turn has an impact on the perceptions of the area as a place to live and work in.
- 2.26 Overall, the need to protect the traditional character of the CWP as countryside, and especially its historic settlements, is considered to be an underlying principal that should be adopted to ensure that the area retains its special characteristics that make the area an enjoyable place in which to live. This needs to be explicitly expressed in relation to both mineral extraction, restoration strategies and proposed after uses in order to avoid any direct adverse impact on local communities.

Community Integration

- 2.27 The presence of settlements provides a crucial part of any countryside character area, giving the area a sense of place and purpose. Yet, the community awareness of the CWP is said to be low, especially in the central and eastern section, where development of lakes and their subsequent after uses is much less pronounced at present than in the western section. However, with future sites for mineral extraction to be increasingly focussed on the east and centre of the CWP, it is likely that this awareness will grow in the future.
- 2.28 The CWP has a total population of 22,000 residents. If the CWP is to be seen as a place in which these people live, then it needs to visibly benefit residents' personal well-being and prosperity. This should be derived through:
- being able to access sports, leisure and recreation facilities and amenities;
 - the aesthetic qualities of the natural environment and their surroundings to bring improved personal well-being; and
 - opportunities for residents to participate in activities that are unique to the CWP to increase their enjoyment of the place in which they live.
- 2.29 However, it is generally felt that the negative associations and impositions that are currently faced by the local community through development currently outweigh the benefits derived from the CWP. In particular, it is a widely held perception that general public access to the countryside and the lakes is becoming more restricted through changes of lake use into other land use developments. Other community concerns include noise intrusions from extraction

activities; traffic congestion in the western section on hot and sunny days through visitors to the area; traffic conflicts presented by large volumes of heavy goods vehicle movements; dust and dirt on the local roads; and certain developments that are seen as modernising and 'sub-urbanising' the traditional character of the area.

- 2.30 Overall, therefore, future development of the CWP needs to directly benefit the welfare of the local community, whilst also addressing issues that adversely affect their community life. This will need to be achieved through measures that generate physical integration and emotional attachments to the CWP as a place in which local residents live.

Landscape, Community and Settlements

Key Issues

- *The lakes have transformed the traditional nature of the countryside, but have created enclaves rather than a continuous landscape.*
- *The preservation and improvement of the character of the CWP countryside, including settlements, is to be a fundamental consideration.*
- *The current benefits of living in the CWP are outweighed by certain negative impacts in relation to noise disruption, traffic problems, and a lack of open access to the countryside and lakes.*

Requirements

- *Future development needs to give clear guidance on the appropriate treatment of landscape restoration concerning flora species planting and vista creation.*
- *Greater integration of the towns and villages into the CWP is a priority to create a distinctive sense of place for the CWP.*
- *Greater community and wider public access benefits need to be derived from the changing nature of the CWP.*

Transport, Infrastructure and Utilities

- 2.31 The growing development of the CWP has implications for transport and infrastructure requirements. These will need to be more explicitly discussed in relation to the future development options for the CWP.

Transportation and Access

Access Roads

- 2.32 The main vehicular access routes into the CWP are via:
- the A419, as the primary trunk road, travelling from the M4 to the M5 via the A417;
 - the A417, which skirts around the northern edge providing a linking route between Lechlade and Fairford before travelling to Cirencester; and
 - the A361, which enters the eastern section on its route from Burford to north Swindon.

- 2.33 The A419 provides the primary access point to the CWP, with the road receiving an average of 35,000 vehicle movements per day along its route between Swindon and Cirencester.

Local Roads

- 2.34 The local road network is predominantly made up of minor roads, reflecting the rural nature of the CWP area. Although a fairly comprehensive road network covers the CWP, the only 'B' Roads are the Western Spine Road (B4696), which travels through Ashton Keynes before heading south; and the B4040 and the B4553, which enter the CWP from the south but finish at Cricklade. The remaining roads are of minor road status.
- 2.35 The nature of the local road network is reflected in the traffic volume for the CWP. Although only limited traffic count data is available from 2006 for the area, this denotes the highest average volume of traffic being up to 600 traffic movements per hour (recorded on B4040 at B4040 at Calcutt Street and Marston Meysey). Elsewhere the average is between 60 to 150 traffic movements per hour (Ballard's Ash on the B4696; the North of Leigh Crossroads on the B4696; the East of Leigh Crossroads on the B4040; and the B4553 at Purton). The biggest issue is in relation to the composition of the traffic, with heavy goods vehicles (HGV) contributing between 10% and 15% of the traffic volume.
- 2.36 The stretch of the B4696 between the Spine Road Junction and the crossroads north of Ashton Keynes Close has been widened and improved to resolve growing problems and concerns over the adequacy of the local road network to cope with pressure from HGV traffic. However, the Western Spine Road now receives mixed reviews at a local level. The road improvement has reduced the potential for conflict between local and HGV, though not completely. Conversely, the road is believed to have contributed to other developments (i.e. by allowing easier heavy goods traffic movements); and as a relatively straight and wide road is not in keeping with the overall rural area characterised elsewhere by narrow, winding roads flanked by hedgerows.
- 2.37 This issue is relevant to pressures that are likely to increase on other roads in the future, especially those that service the eastern and central sections. An eastern equivalent of the Western Spine Road has been proposed in the past, with the plans being to improve the road between the A419 near Latton to the A417 at Fairford, the A417 between Fairford and Lechlade, and the A361 through Lechlade. The project was the subject of a Major Scheme proposal submitted to the DETR in 2000 that was subsequently rejected, but the debate over the need for an Eastern Spine Road continues. This may become more pertinent in the future as mineral extraction activity increases in the central and eastern sections of the CWP, with an access and exit road reflecting the increased heavy goods vehicles traffic likely to be seen as a requirement.
- 2.38 Despite a potential need, the development of the Eastern Spine Road requires a longer-term perspective. Mineral extraction will cease at some stage in the future; and therefore considerations for heavy goods movements and potential traffic conflicts should become much reduced. In the case of the Western Spine Road, although very functional at present, this level of functionality will become obsolete after this point. As a result, there is a danger that the road will stand out as a potential blemish from both a local and visitor perspective, unless investment is committed to further improvement to return it back to something that is more in-keeping with the rural character.

- 2.39 This factor should be used as a lesson for future road improvements. Whole-scale upgrading and widening of the road should be avoided in preference to junction improvements and moderate widening schemes where potential areas of conflict and danger are most likely to arise. It is understood that gradually improving the eastern road is the primary concern of some of the section 106 agreements being reached with aggregate companies. It is certainly felt that this should be continued as a managed and progressive approach to road improvements to the Eastern Spine Road, but one that will ultimately retain a character that is appropriate to the CWP in the long term. However, it is also noted that measures should be in place to minimise the impact of the use of heavy goods vehicles, in particular along country roads; and to ensure that resources are allocated to rectifying any damage that does take place.

Leisure Routes

- 2.40 Regional and national leisure routes provide another means of access to and movement around the CWP.
- 2.41 Sustrans Route 45 provides the main cycling access to the CWP, travelling from Swindon to Cricklade before continuing on to South Cerney and beyond the CWP towards Cirencester. This is actually a multi-user route and therefore acts as a bridleway, footpath and cycleway, with much of the route being off-road. The Thames Path could also be considered another potential access route into the CWP as it spans the full length of the River Thames. The benefit of both of these routes is that, respectively, they form an axis that people can use to travel from east to west and north to south, albeit in a distinctly linear form.
- 2.42 Within the CWP itself, there are a number of other leisure routes which can be used as more formalised movement corridors. The Western Spine Road in the western section has recently been the subject of a three-phased programme to create a cycle path. Phase I (between South Cerney Outdoor Education to the County boundary) and Phase II (a route extension west to the North End cross roads) have been completed. The third and final phase will link the North End cross roads westwards through Keynes Country Park to Mill Lane.
- 2.43 Overall, however, these routes are considered to have more of a leisure orientation.

Transport Access

- 2.44 The level of public access transport is not substantial in the CWP. However, there is some representation of both routes across the area (see Map S2.5) from Swindon and Cirencester, and community support buses around the area (service Fairford-Kempsford and Fairford-Down Ampney circular routes) though the latter routes only operate on certain days.
- 2.45 The nearest railway station access point is at Kemble and thus provides another public transport access point to the CWP, but this is very much on the western edge of the CWP and away from its activity hubs. Likewise, Swindon Railway Station also represents a potential transport connection route to the CWP when linked to the bus routes from Swindon-Cricklade-Cirencester and Swindon-Lechlade.
- 2.46 Certain proposed developments may provide greater public access to the CWP via more sustainable means. In particular, the value of the proposed Cricklade Country Way Project

(CCW) to restore the full Cricklade-Swindon Railway line is that it could also establish a potential 'Green' route into the CWP from Swindon. Likewise, the proposed restoration of the canals (North Wilts Canal and Thames & Severn Canal) could be utilised to transport people to and around the CWP through a boat ride with connected stops, or through a regular water taxi system, for example.

- 2.47 When combined with the leisure and recreation networks, which are likely to become a more significant aspect of the CWP, there begins to be a more integrated 'green' infrastructure network that will support more sustainable movement of people to and around the CWP.
- 2.48 Kemble Airfield represents another potential for access, as it has a CAA Ordinary Licence that allows flights for the public transport of passengers. However, this is not considered to be a core access point at present. There may be modest scope for this position to change in the medium to long term, with a 2004 report prepared by Gloucestershire First suggesting that a policy of organic growth of passenger traffic should be pursued at Kemble Airport, including further development in the general aviation field and the encouragement of potential operators of regular passenger services, whether scheduled or charter.

Utilities Infrastructure

- 2.49 As identified through the Stage I process, the CWP has been the subject of considerable development pressures in recent times, with the observed emergence of holiday home complexes and the Four Pillars hotel representing large-scale developments that require utilities support.
- 2.50 Such developments place pressure on the capacity of existing infrastructure, particularly in relation to utilities such as energy supply, water supply, and waste disposal. These pressures need to be understood and recognised at a local level in relation to further development, even where visitors form the key focus of this development. This is because, although their impact is temporary on an individual basis, the continued presence of visitors can have a collective impact on resource utilisation, a factor that is often overlooked. Therefore, developments that will seek to expand the holding capacity of the CWP in relation to visitors, residents and workforce will need to give due consideration to the implications that further development, especially tourism, could have on utilities.

Utilities and Sustainability

- 2.51 It is recognised that the Gateway Centre developed by the Cotswold Water Park Society (CWPS) has taken a lead role in becoming an exemplar in both sustainable construction and utilities resources. It has one of the largest solar roofs in the South West to allow the centre to generate a proportion of its own electricity needs, whilst heat pumps recycle rainwater and create energy for the visitor centre using the energy embodied within the lake itself. Waste and water management are also key operating considerations.
- 2.52 In the interests of increasing sustainability within developments, and to fit within a wider environmental ethos that could sit well with the CWP, it is recommended that such features included in the design of the Gateway Centre become a symbol of 'normal' practice in relation to future capital structures.

Transport, Access and Utilities

Key Issues

- *The A419 is the main access route, though there is some A-road access in the east (A361) and north (A417).*
- *The Western Spine Road has been widened and improved for heavy goods traffic, but receives mixed comments.*
- *An Eastern Spine Road widening and improvement programme has been suggested in the past.*
- *There is some public transport access at present via Swindon and Cirencester, though other development proposals may assist in providing other public access routes.*
- *Additional development in the CWP is placing further pressure on the local utilities infrastructure.*

Requirements

- *Road infrastructure improvements need to have a long-term perspective (i.e. beyond mineral extraction).*
- *An outline of a 'Green Transport Infrastructure' already exists through the leisure network and local bus and train system, but this could be greatly enhanced by the proposed developments in relation to the local canals network and the Cricklade-Swindon Steam Railway.*
- *New developments, especially tourism development, need to consider local utilities infrastructure.*
- *The Gateway Centre provides an exemplar of sustainable development that should become the 'norm' for the design of new structures in the CWP.*

Biodiversity

- 2.53 Increasing the contribution of the CWP towards local, regional and national biodiversity targets represents a significant development option. This sentiment is shared by conservation agencies involved in the delivery of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) being prepared to cover the period between 2007 and 2016. It is also an option that is more readily endorsed by the local community.
- 2.54 It is not the purpose of this study to replicate or supersede the BAP, but rather to demonstrate the importance of nature conservation as a key driver in the CWP and how this can be integrated into other elements of the area to present a more productive and inclusive approach for extending biodiversity concerns (see Map S2.6).
- 2.55 The importance of the CWP in relation to biodiversity is reflected in its inclusion in the South West Nature Map that accompanies the Regional Spatial Strategy. The main habitat types included in the CWP are neutral grassland, open water and floodplain grazing.
- 2.56 The CWP's most important sites are North Meadow and Clattinger Farm, both of which are lowland hay meadows with Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designation and are individually identified as National Nature Reserves (NNR) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). A further seven SSSI sites are present in the CWP consisting of predominantly meadow habitats; whilst five local nature reserves demonstrate the importance of open water

habitats, with Shorncote Redbud being the first quarry in the CWP to be restored solely for the purpose of wildlife habitat creation.

2.57 Biodiversity and habitat management currently forms an important function of the Cotswold Water Park Society, whilst both the Wiltshire and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trusts have reserves in the CWP area. Along with Natural England, these organisations are the key custodians of the CWP BAP and are charged with its delivery. The principle aspiration of the CWP BAP is to position the area as a premier site for nature conservation by 2050. The main species and habitat targets include:

- Species: barberry carpet moth, bats, bittern, breeding waterbirds, dragonfly, glow worm, great crested newt, nightingale, otter, reed bunting, stoneworts, and water vole.
- Habitats: canals, farmed land, fen marsh and reedswamp, lowland neutral grassland, rivers and streams, sand and gravel quarries, standing open water, and woodland.

A Holistic Approach

2.58 The BAP denotes that the CWP has the capacity to take a more holistic approach to biodiversity. In essence, this approach would translate into developing linkages between the sites already identified as being important wildlife habitats and others that could be developed in the future, rather than just being a series of stand-alone reserves rich in species.

2.59 This will be achieved through the utilisation of natural connecting corridors to allow species to disperse more freely across the wider area. This is the fundamental premise behind the 'living landscape' approach as proposed by the Wildlife Trusts.

2.60 The CWP area is particularly suited to this due to the significant mass of lakes, its rural character, the clustering of sites that already exist, and the natural linear corridors available in the form of the River Thames and its tributaries. These assets already provide important sites of natural habitat promotion, with the natural river systems already promoting movement between areas. However, it is believed that more could be done to connect the keys sites together and to encourage movement of species, whilst also perhaps discouraging certain types of movement in inappropriate areas in relation to aerodrome safeguarding.

2.61 This more holistic approach is already being initiated by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust between its Lower Moor Farm, Clattinger Farm, Oaksey Moor Farm Meadow and Swillbrook Lakes reserves. However, the BAP is seeking to develop this concept on a much larger scale that can encompass the full breadth of the CWP area.

2.62 The main axis for this concept will be the natural corridor presented by the River Thames, roughly travelling from the WWT reserves of Lower Moor Farm and Clattinger Farm in the west through to Lechlade in the east; and its tributaries of the River Coln and the River Churn that traverse the river valley from north to south. Furthermore, the proposed Thames & Severn Canal could also become a wildlife corridor promoting species movement, with canals often featuring as a means for promoting biodiversity. The lakes, neutral grassland, floodplain grazing meadows, and the hedgerows would provide the main habitat areas.

Biodiversity and Development Considerations

- 2.63 There is often an apprehension that development and biodiversity are not mutually compatible. However, if development can be designed and managed to take account of biodiversity interests, it can often be the case that developed land can engender greater conservation benefits than if it were left in its traditional form. Moreover, the developments themselves can incorporate mechanisms for achieving continuing benefits for biodiversity targets, including securing an income to support biodiversity activities. This latter aspect is certainly pertinent in the current climate of high levels of competition for funding.
- 2.64 Therefore, the relationship between biodiversity and development should be one that seeks mutual benefit; whereby biodiversity can have a sustained and long-term function in the land management of the CWP through appropriately designed development; and whereby the function of the development becomes a more attractive proposition through the attractive and interesting landscape initiated by the biodiversity measures.
- 2.65 In this respect, it is widely recognised that regionally and nationally important nature reserves promote nature-based or wildlife tourism, and that these visitors can provide a direct mechanism for securing income that supports continuing biodiversity programmes. In addition, these visitors will also spend money in other sectors such as food and drink, leisure and entertainment, transport, and potentially accommodation. Thus, the relationship between biodiversity and tourism can provide a significant source of economic support for the wider economy.
- 2.66 There is also scope for increased innovation for incorporating biodiversity into other economic sectors. This could feasibly include the following:
- Aggregate companies could be encouraged to incorporate biodiversity and innovative sustainability measures into the operational processes of mineral extraction sites, which in turn can be used as a mechanism for demonstrating environmental credentials and becoming industry leading exemplars in this field.
 - Small-scale business and office space development that follow the lead of the Gateway Centre in terms of sustainable design can be targeted towards appropriate businesses that place a premium on attractive spaces (e.g. design, technology, creative industries).
 - Accommodation developments can directly incorporate nature conservation as a principle feature of the accommodation itself. This type of approach is exemplified by the David Bellamy Award for camping and caravan sites, where sites can gain an award in recognition of their good environmental practices that seek to help birds, animals and plant life to flourish. Visitors themselves are actively encouraged to join in on this approach. In addition, South West Tourism has recently adopted the Green Tourism Business Scheme as a mark for rewarding the 'greening' of serviced accommodation, self-catering accommodation, and attractions.
 - Leisure and recreation developments, particularly recreational routes, can be intertwined with biodiversity to be packaged and promoted as offering 'wildlife discovery'. In return, income generated from sales can be directly fed back into biodiversity measures.
 - Agricultural production can be encouraged to adopt biodiversity techniques, which is a fundamental part of any Higher Level Stewardship grant award. This in turn could be used

to support the production of high quality, locally distinctive products for sale in local (and potentially national) retail outlets.

- 2.67 The need to incorporate such measures into business operations is becoming an important consideration in relation to all types of businesses as industry seeks to respond to governmental and market pressures for demonstrating their environmental credentials and off-setting any negative impact they create.

Biodiversity and Communities

- 2.68 Biodiversity also has recognised benefits for the health and wellbeing of communities which need to be encapsulated in policy terms. This requirement is identified in Defra's 'Introductory Guide to Valuing Ecosystem Services', whereby ecosystems are identified as providing outputs and outcomes that directly and indirectly affect human wellbeing. In addition, the document outlines how these outputs and outcomes can be measured in terms of their economic value.

- 2.69 The document highlights that ecosystem services contribute to economic welfare in two ways – through the direct contribution to generating income and welfare; and through the prevention of damages that inflict costs on society. These services can consist of, on the one hand, food, fibre, fuel and cultural provision in relation to income generating activities; and on the other hand climate, purification of air and water, flood protection, soil formation and nutrient cycling, that if not managed effectively can generate costs.

- 2.70 The purpose of the ecosystem services evaluation is to ensure that impacts of potential changes to ecosystems are fully evaluated in terms of costs and benefits as part of the wider assessment of environmental impacts caused by development. The general premise of valuing the ecosystem services of the CWP, therefore, is certainly an appropriate concept, particularly given the prospect of future developments in the sectors of minerals, leisure, tourism and sports. In this context, development should be encouraged where its contribution to the economic health and wellbeing of the CWP area is demonstrably high.

Biodiversity

Key Issues

- *The CWP is already recognised within the South West Nature Map as being an area of high importance for neutral grassland, open water and floodplain grazing habitats.*
- *The Wiltshire Wildlife Trust is initiating a holistic approach (a living landscape) at its Lower Moor Farm/Clattinger Farm Sites.*
- *The holistic approach to incorporate natural water bodies (River Thames, River Coln, and other tributaries) and potential canal regeneration projects to promote species movement.*
- *Not all development counters biodiversity needs, with examples of visitor-orientated nature reserves contributing to biodiversity actions through visitor income generation.*

Requirements

- *The CWP BAP denotes aspirations for the area to become an exemplar in conservation management on a whole landscape scale, as it seeks to position the area as a premier site for nature conservation by 2050.*
- *The initiation of new nature-based assets along the stretch of the corridor could have positive implications for other drivers.*
- *Ensuring that biodiversity is incorporated into other forms of development and activity should be encouraged.*

Leisure and Recreation

2.71 Leisure and recreation already form a key part of the overall proposition of the CWP. However, the Stage I audit highlighted that the existing assets are spatially isolated and lack connectivity (see Map S2.7).

2.72 This has been highlighted as a significant barrier to realising more definable enjoyment of the CWP for local residents and a coherent experience that encompasses the whole area for visitors. To address this issue, it is recognised that the CWP needs a more strategic approach to leisure and recreation development to ensure that new resources are complementary and well connected to the assets that already exist.

Developing an Integrated Leisure Network

2.73 The Stage I investigations highlighted that there are a number of leisure and recreation routes within the CWP area. There are two significant and existing axis routes within the CWP that could feasibly provide the spine for two principal types of users – the River Thames National Path for walkers; and National Cycle Network Route 45 for cyclists, with the section through the CWP also being a bridlepath. Furthermore, should the Thames & Severn Canal and its towpath become reinstated as proposed, there will be a further axis, but this time for multiple users, travelling from east to west. Each of these routes is off-road, and thus perceived as safe, and connects the main points of the CWP together i.e. east to west and north to south.

2.74 In addition to this, there are smaller routes across the full breadth of the CWP, some of which are multi-user. However, there are a number of issues concerning this lower level provision, namely:

- some of the routes appear to come to an abrupt end;
- some of the circular routes incorporate significant lengths of on-road sections which are not necessarily conducive to a positive experience, especially for walkers and horse riders;
- some routes have sections that include multiple users and other sections only allow certain users, a situation which can be a cause of confusion and frustration; and
- the Thames Path represents the main route between the east and western sections of the CWP, but it only provides a legal right for walkers along its full length.

2.75 In addition to this, the Western Spine Road's cycle path, despite separating cycle traffic from vehicular traffic, is at odds with some leisure users due to the close proximity of heavy goods

vehicles and the dust and dirt that spills over from the roads. This is particularly pertinent to family users, for whom safety will be a priority.

- 2.76 The consultation process has highlighted that the fundamental aim should now be to create a network of leisure and recreation routes that are largely off-road in nature. These should utilise the existing axis routes, and develop further axis routes across the width and breadth of the CWP that are interconnected via shorter spur routes. This should seek to incorporate other assets, features of interest and even accommodation provision.
- 2.77 The Cricklade Country Way (CCW) and the Thames & Severn Canal both incorporate leisure and recreation routes as principal components of their respective development plan. Therefore, these could be utilised to form part of the axis route structure. In between these axis routes, new circuits will need to be secured to present the interconnected network desired. It should be recognised that a single route multi-use network, however well designed, is not appropriate and the specific requirements of users must be taken into account in planning routes and circuits.

Securing New Off-Road Routes

- 2.78 On the basis that the landscape of the CWP is changing due to mineral extraction, there is believed to be an opportunity to instigate a process of acquiring new leisure and recreation linkages through the minerals planning stage. This requirement will need to be reflected in policy terms to ensure that both the extraction activities and restoration strategy can be geared to deliver suitably designed leisure and recreation routes at strategically beneficial locations.
- 2.79 For complete routes to become secure, it is also recognised that sections will need to cross over land that may not be subject to development, either through mineral extraction or another type of development. In the main, this is likely to be agricultural land. Therefore, other mechanisms will need to be employed to engage with landowners to assist in securing these sections of the route. Agreeing Permissive Rights with landowners is generally the preferred option, and can be given incentive as part of the Higher Level Stewardship grant or through the payment of a toll for usage, such as the Toll Rides Off-road Trust (TROT). The latter is a charity-based scheme that pays the landowner between £200 and £500 a mile per year in return for horse riders to be given access to land. TROT recoups funds through membership subscriptions, and through the offering of day-licenses to visitors for a one-off payment.
- 2.80 A further possibility for securing greater leisure and recreation route provision in the CWP is through the designation of additional 'quiet lanes' to supplement the two routes that already exists in the Western section. Championed by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and initiated by the Department of Transport, this initiative allows local authorities to designate 'quiet lanes' in rural areas. According to the CPRE, 'quiet lanes' are generally minor rural roads that can be designed to pay special attention to the needs of walkers, cyclists, horse riders and the mobility-impaired in relation to movement around rural areas. Ensuring greater safety and encouraging car drivers to respect more vulnerable road users are the primary objectives. This is achieved through a mix of signage (appropriate to its rural character); traffic speed restrictions; creating aesthetically designed measures to deter through traffic and enforce road care (e.g. false cattle grids and narrow lane entrance); and sensitively managing the landscape to be more conducive to other user groups (e.g. hedges, verges, walls and

wayside trees can improve the landscape, retain local character and make travel easier for cyclists, walkers and horse riders).

- 2.81 As a further benefit, 'quiet lanes' may also be a mechanism by which inappropriate use of minor roads by heavy goods vehicles within the CWP could be considerably discouraged, thus helping to address a primary source of tension of leisure route users and local communities concerning heavy goods vehicles.

A Green Gym

- 2.82 When combined with the natural environment of the CWP, the benefit of a leisure and recreation network is that it begins to present opportunities for establishing a 'Green Gym' within the CWP. Pioneered by the Conservation charity BTCV (formerly known as British Trust for Conservation Volunteers), 'Green Gyms' are established by local community groups in order to combine outdoor exercise with environmental conservation. Therefore, this type of initiative would appear to have a good synergy with other aspects of the CWP.

Leisure and Recreation Facilities

- 2.83 The Keynes Country Park (KCP) represents the main leisure and recreation facility in the CWP at present, and can attract upwards of 200,000 visits through its mix of beach and informal pursuits. The KCP also supports other leisure activities, including Head-4-Heights, Go-by-Cycle, and Waterland Outdoor Pursuits.

- 2.84 The KCP is supported by the Neigh Bridge Country Park, whilst a long held aspiration to create a further country park in the east of the CWP is to be realised as part of the Claydon Pike development programme.

- 2.85 However, given the scale of the CWP, and particularly the number of lakes, there is an acknowledgement that further leisure and recreation facilities could be developed within the CWP. Furthermore, if provision is developed, it could seek to address specific issues including:

- a need to attract a more sustained level of users evenly distributed across the CWP and across the year, with existing provision highly seasonal and weather dependent;
- increasing the capacity threshold to address the issue of high pressure on the main existing site, the KCP, and the local road network; and linked to this
- to be located closer to the main access point of the A419, and also to existing and proposed routes of sustainable transport.

- 2.86 There is also scope for the CWP to contain a much broader set of leisure and recreation facilities. The Cricklade Country Way (CCW) and the Thames & Severn Canal restoration programme will certainly assist in this regard, with canals in particular known to be features that can attract a variety of leisure and recreation pursuits both on water and on land, especially in the countryside. Likewise, the completion of the Cricklade-Swindon Steam Railway will provide a significant leisure-based attraction that has a wider strategic fit in terms of sustainable transport between Swindon and Cricklade.

2.87 In addition to this, developments of a similar nature to the KCP but located in the central and eastern sections, could well present viable propositions that could be supported by the local and wider catchment. It is estimated that this catchment could well be upwards of 20 million in a 2-hour drivetime as it encompasses much of the M4 corridor, extending as far as London in the east, and Bristol and Cardiff in the west; the M5 stretches the potential catchment beyond Birmingham in the north. If a suitable leisure proposition, or series of propositions, can be developed, this catchment represents a considerable audience with more than enough scope for the creation of a flagship attraction.

Flagship Projects - Size and Scale Considerations -

2.88 Understanding the nature and scale of leisure attractions that will be suitable for the CWP is an important consideration. Discussion of 'flagship' can often bring connotations of attractions such as the Eden Project in Cornwall or the proposed NIRAH Project in Bedfordshire, both of which provide examples of large-scale visitor attractions developed in quarry sites.

2.89 The NIRAH project is a flagship attraction proposal that has the most appropriate synergy to the CWP in that the proposition will utilise a disused quarry which will be flooded. It is this factor that has presented an opportunity for the NIRAH to become a flagship attraction that aims to promote understanding of the connection between freshwater and life, and presents a myriad of different experiences including freshwater visitor experience; water adventure park; cinema; plant and aquatic centre; all at a cost of £400 million.

2.90 However, the consultation process revealed that, although further development in leisure and recreation provision is generally supported, development of attractions of this nature would not be of a scale that is complementary to the overall CWP character. Although some stakeholders suggested the need for a bold approach, the main emphasis was placed on content, design and style rather than scale. Instead, the preferred approach would be for a leisure and recreation facility or series of facilities to be reflective of the wider countryside area and should seek to draw the different assets together to form a destination rather than to create one single, large-scale attraction.

Leisure and Recreation

Key Issues

- *The existing leisure and recreation provision is fragmented and disjointed, both in terms of the facilities available and the leisure routes network.*
- *The different zones of the CWP are not connected via multiple user routes, with Thames Path being predominantly a public footpath.*
- *Existing leisure route provision relies upon roads to complete routes which can cause conflict between leisure users and certain types of traffic, especially heavy goods vehicles.*
- *The KCP is the main existing leisure and recreation facility, though Neigh Bridge also promotes less formalised leisure and recreation access.*
- *There is scope to explore other leisure and recreation facility development, with propositions for the CCW and the Thames & Severn Canal restoration programme likely to present some opportunity in this regard.*

Requirements

- *Additional leisure and recreation routes need to be secured, ideally through off-road routes but where this is not possible the routes should be supported by further designations of 'quiet lanes'.*
- *Additional leisure and recreation provision needs to address key limitations of KCP in terms of accessibility, weather dependency, seasonal dependency and location.*
- *There is some suggestion that development should be bold, but this is considered to be in relation to content, design and style rather than scale.*

Sport

- 2.91 Sport already forms a key part of the overall proposition of the CWP, with many lakes already having a designated sporting use (see Map S2.7). Sailing and angling are the predominant sports uses of the lakes at present, with some limited provision for more adventurous water sports such as water skiing.
- 2.92 However, the Stage I investigations identified several key issues in relation to these existing sports facilities in that:
- many operate on a membership only basis, with limited pay-and-play options;
 - there is a disproportionately high prevalence towards one type of activity, angling, with an estimated 70 lakes utilised for this purpose; and
 - there is no major facility, or series of facilities, that maximises the potential of the significant lake creation opportunities for regionally or nationally specific sports provision.
- 2.93 The audit revealed that there is certainly capacity to expand the sporting provision of the CWP, with a primary requisite to include public access. This premise has been supported by subsequent consultation with key stakeholders such as Sport England.

Maximising Existing Capacity

- 2.94 The main sporting provision in the CWP that include general public access are:
- South Cerney Sailing Club and Waterland Outdoor Pursuits (both as RYA registered training facilities);
 - Craig Cohoon Ski School; and
 - Ashton Keynes Angling Club, Whelford Pools Fisheries, Lechlade and Bushy Leaze Trout Fishery, and Watermark Fisheries (in relation to angling).
- 2.95 Outside these facilities, it is estimated that a further seven angling facilities also provide day tickets or 'day membership'.
- 2.96 It is certainly recommended that opportunities to maximise the potential of these existing facilities should be explored with the proprietors to allow for some organic growth in capacity. Delivering equity of access, especially in relation to the socially disadvantaged groups and

people with disabilities, is a key recommendation in the CWP Sports and Recreation Strategy (2001), with associated recommendations for action including:

- to promote the CWP's equal opportunities policy amongst existing providers;
- to introduce 'sports development' initiatives which provide socially and economically deprived groups with access to water sports through taster sessions; and
- to assist volunteer clubs to open their doors to the wider public, including assistance in overcoming legal concerns and developing a more commercial focus.

2.97 Many of the actions included in this Strategy still remain pertinent.

Developing Capacity

2.98 The facilities defined above represent only a fraction of the lakes that could be utilised for sporting purposes that are accessible to the general public. Therefore, the main vehicle for reaching the sporting capacity potential offered by the CWP is through additional facility development. Furthermore, there is a need to broaden the types of sports that can be played within the CWP. This potential is explored in the following commentary.

Water sports

2.99 Given the existing level of lakes (147) and the fact that the number is forecast to grow in forthcoming years, there is considered to be potential to develop new water sports facilities.

2.100 Some of this development potential is already in the pipeline, with a centre for rowing, canoeing, triathlon and dragon boat racing on Cleveland Lakes proposed to be a locally, regionally and potentially, nationally important facility. The outline plan of the facility is for it to act as an athlete training venue, competition venue, and local events facility for community-based programmes.

2.101 Likewise, during the consultation process the potential for a significant angling-based facility in the CWP has been suggested as a development concept in order to strengthen the existing capacity base in angling through a more dedicated site. Perhaps following the lead of the rowing course, this angling facility could be developed to offer another regionally/nationally significant competition venue for the sport.

2.102 Sailing, windsurfing and the growing evidence of kayaking/canoeing are likely to remain prevalent water sports in the CWP, with provision already catered for, though wider public access and equity of access (2001 Sports and Recreation Strategy) is still very much an aspiration despite some improvements in this regard.

2.103 The level of powered and motorised water sports in the CWP is not considered to be high when compared to the number of lakes available. The nature of most of the lakes would generally exclude any significant power-boating activities due to their size. Power Boating requires coastal water or large inland areas, usually a minimum 15 hectares, to be viable. 16 lakes in the CWP would match this criterion at present. However, there is still a keen interest in jet skiing and water skiing as activities that require less extensive water bodies. Furthermore, there are innovative water sports entering the market such as wake boarding and

wake/inland surfing, with both requiring motorboat generated wake. Such activities could help bolster the business prospects for lakes used for motorised water sports.

- 2.104 However, the topic of developments in motorised sports generates apprehension amongst local residents, with a key criticism being noise intrusions. As such, the location of powered and motorised water sports in the CWP will need to be carefully considered if capacity is to be expanded. Ideally, this type of activity should be located away from settlements, away from any biodiversity interests, and close to other noise creating features to help mask some of the intrusions that could occur. By applying this loose criterion to the CWP, this would translate into the corridor of the A419 as this area already experiences noise from the road. A less noisy alternative that is already evident in the CWP is through cable-tow water skiing (as part of the Watermark's Summer Lake complex). However, the visual impact of such a facility is generally greater, and therefore further developments of this type may begin to detract from the rural setting if located close to the local road network.
- 2.105 In addition to these more contemporary sports, there is scope to be more innovative in relation to the water sports that the CWP could cater for. As an example, there are a number of inland scuba-diving sites in the UK that utilise quarry sites. Depths of up to 6 metres are good for visibility, which would potentially fit with the depths of the gravel pits created. Therefore, lakes in the CWP could be utilised for safe diving for beginners, and as part of a schools orientated package, for example. There is potential to tie this into local diving clubs such as the Cirencester Dolphins, the Swindon Dive Club and the Seahorse Dive Club, all of which are British Sub-Aqua Club registered.
- 2.106 When this potential is viewed collectively, the CWP begins to represent a water sports asset base that could rival the current National Water Sports Centre of Holme Pierrepont in Nottingham.

Land-based Sports

- 2.107 Although the reputation of the CWP is likely to be driven by its obvious links to water sports, there is also the potential to incorporate the lakeland character into land-based sports.
- 2.108 A notable example of this potential is provided by golf, one of the UK's most popular outdoor land-based sports. Two golf courses already exist within the CWP, and both offer a pay-and-play golf package. Therefore, they have the capacity to have an important supporting role for other visitor amenities in the CWP, especially in relation to visitor accommodation. However, neither is of a profile that drives visits into the CWP from beyond the local catchment area.
- 2.109 The continuing development of the lakes in the CWP may actually present an opportunity for either one of the existing courses, or a new course, to be developed to present a real challenge and potential icon to the golfing fraternity in the UK, namely an 'island green' surrounded by water hazards. Such holes are defined as 'signature holes' on courses where they already exist, which includes the TPC Sawgrass Golf Course in USA which hosts high level golfing events; Seve Ballesteros' recently completed 9-hole 'Masters Challenge' course at the Shires Golf Course in London; and the 'Nick Faldo' course in Mission Hills, China.
- 2.110 Developing the golfing asset base in this manner has a more strategic context in that it could be used to attract overnight visitors to the CWP whose character has a distinct synergy with

the developing accommodation provision at the high-end of the market (i.e. the self-catering provision and Four Pillars Hotel).

Sport

Key Issues

- *There is some sporting provision already, but there is a key issue concerning public access, equity of access and the diversity of sports available.*
- *New sports developments are already being considered – Cleveland Lakes water sports centre and angling centre – with potential to become regionally significant developments.*

Requirements

- *There is a need to encourage organic growth in existing sports facilities, particularly encouraging the conversion of private clubs into public access amenities. [The 2001 Sports & Recreation Strategy outlines a framework for exploring sports development issues, and overcoming barriers (e.g. legal and commercial) which is still relevant.]*
- *Any further scope for motorised water sports needs to be carefully considered in terms of location.*
- *Water sports need to be channelled towards different and new types of usage, e.g. wake boarding, wake surfing, and scuba diving.*
- *Innovation is required to encourage the integration of lake development into other sports to create signature features, e.g. a signature golf hole of an 'island green'; diving exploration lakes.*

Tourism

2.111 The CWP is already able to attract day visitors to its sports, leisure and recreation facilities, but at present the area as a whole tends to draw upon its association with the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Cotswolds AONB) in order to attract overnight visitors. This is especially being demonstrated by recent developments in tourism accommodation with Four Pillars Hotel described as being 'a contemporary luxury Cotswolds hotel'.

2.112 However, Scott Wilson believes the CWP has the potential to become a much stronger visitor destination in its own right and could be better positioned to attract overnight visits. The primary driver behind this premise are the lakes and their relationship with sport, recreation and leisure; and the growing wildlife context which itself can be an attractor of visits. Furthermore, there is a sense that the CWP could become a tourism destination of regional significance if the development is strategically guided. The future challenge will be to ensure that the development in relation to sport, leisure, recreation and biodiversity is complementary to, and exploits the potential benefits of, tourism for mutual benefit.

An Increasing Assets Base

2.113 Several projects and proposals have been identified within the CWP area that have the potential to significantly influence the tourism sector. These include:

- the Cricklade Country Way, with the restoration of the North Wilts Canal and Swindon-Cricklade Steam Railway being significant assets from a tourism perspective. For example, the North Yorkshire Moors Railway attracted 300,000 and the North Norfolk Railway

120,000 visits in 2005. This compares with 14,000 visits for the Swindon and Cricklade Railway;

- the Thames & Severn Canal restoration, with this canal benefiting from having a direct link into the River Thames and Lechlade, with the aim being to encourage boat tourers from the River Thames;
- the RSPB proposal for a significant visitor-based nature reserve at Eysey Manor Farm, with the organisation's Minsmere Nature Reserve and Titchwell Marsh Nature (North Norfolk) regularly attracting upwards of 80,000 visits per annum; and
- the proposed water sports centre at Cleveland lakes to include rowing, canoeing, triathlon, and dragon boat racing, which will have the potential to become a regionally significant sports events and training venue for the South West.

2.114 In addition to this, it is understood that the Co-op Group, as major landowners in the CWP, are currently assessing the potential after uses for their holdings once mineral extraction is completed. The various options being investigated include provision for a significant leisure-orientated attraction.

2.115 Similarly other projects in relation to biodiversity, sports, and outdoor leisure and recreation sectors may also need to develop a visitor orientation in order to be sustainable in the long-term.

Market Potential

2.116 On the basis of the existing product base and following the lead presented by the potential developments that could occur, it is apparent that the CWP as a destination could be designed to appeal to a number of different visitor markets, including:

- General Markets:
 - General interest and sightseeing, largely linked to the outdoor leisure pursuits and wildlife aspects of the CWP. This would also incorporate the growing attractions base and the heritage, retail and catering components of the market towns.
 - The family market, based upon a family-fun assets base (albeit requiring further development in beach-fronted lakes, and all-weather attractions); a safe environment for passive outdoor recreation (e.g. off-road walking and cycling network); the availability of public access water sports provision; and the availability of nature-based assets geared towards environmental learning.
- Niche Markets/Experience themes:
 - Wildlife tourism, spurred by the biodiversity achievements and visitor-focussed nature reserves. This could be reinforced through the leisure network with the creation of wildlife-discovery routes that appeal to a wide market base, especially families.
 - Niche interests in sports, with the predominant activities in water sports including jet skiing, water skiing, kayaking, sailing, windsurfing, wake boarding, wake surfing and angling. Furthermore, if a signature hole, or series of holes could be created, it is conceivable that the golfing market could be motivated to visit the area. Likewise,

diving could become a more integral component of the CWP offer through innovation in lake design.

- Sports skills development, a highly specialised market that could utilise certain facilities within the CWP for developing elite athletes in water sports. This is likely to be a function of the Cleveland Lakes water sports centre, but this could be extended to include other water sports in the area. It may also be possible to attract land-based athletes in disciplines that require cross-training.
- Events-based tourism. The Royal International Air Tattoo already represents a significant annual event for the CWP, but a more diverse range of events could be held geared towards different water sports and sporting disciplines, e.g. regional rowing, angling and water ski competitions for example, and triathlon events.

2.117 When these elements are combined, the CWP begins to translate into an area that has real potential to sustain a diverse but relatively compatible tourism offer for this rural context that could actually present a significant destination for short breaks. A wealth of other business opportunities become possible on the back of this market potential, with all visitors requiring supplementary provision in accommodation, catering, and retail to form a complete visitor experience.

2.118 The CWP in this context also represents a destination of sufficient difference to the neighbouring Swindon, Cirencester and the Cotswold AONB to broaden the range of potential appeal of Wiltshire and Gloucestershire as a whole.

The Business Tourism Market

2.119 The business tourism potential of the CWP has received a significant boost in the form of the Four Pillars Hotel. Previous to this, the business tourism components of the CWP had concentrated upon the formal outdoor activity and team building centres, with Friday Island, WM Active, Head-4-Heights and Waterland Outdoor Pursuits being the principal facilities in this regard.

2.120 However, the overall promise that these facilities have in relation to business tourism was not being maximised due to the limited opportunity to provide residential packages. The erection of the Four Pillars has significantly altered this position. Through its dedicated conferencing and events components, the hotel can accommodate up to 800 people for business meetings, conferences, and events. In addition, Four Pillars is actively promoting team building and outdoor activities in the CWP, having formed links with the other facilities to deliver team building and activities programmes and services. This could no doubt be expanded to include other facilities that may arise.

2.121 An interesting detail in relation to the business tourism market is that it is estimated that 40% of business visitors return with their families on a leisure trip. Therefore, business tourism could raise awareness of the CWP to the wider leisure market.

The Education Market

2.122 The education market is an existing niche sector for the CWP through the local authority sponsored South Cerney Outdoor Education Centre and the commercial outdoor activity

centres Head-4-Heights and Waterland Outdoor Pursuits. The CWPS also runs an education programme in conjunction with the WWT at Lower Moor Farm Nature Reserve.

- 2.123 There is certainly scope to expand this sector within the CWP. In this respect, furthering the biodiversity and conservation aspirations, incorporating local heritage features, and even showcasing mineral extraction as an industrial activity in the countryside could complement the outdoor activities base to provide a more comprehensive package for schools to exploit for learning purposes. In this respect, further development of education facilities should be considered as a development prospect for the CWP, especially in terms of establishing residential capacity to support longer stays. This has been a long held aspiration of the CWPS, though deficiencies in resources have, in the past, been the principal constraints to realising this ambition. This situation should be rectified in the future as a priority, initially by establishing a dedicated classroom and education officer for the CWP, ultimately building the reputation of the area to begin to attract demand for residential services.

Increasing Accommodation Capacity

- 2.124 The growth in accommodation stock for tourism has been the biggest influence on the direction of development of the CWP in recent times, resulting in greater interest in the CWP as an overnight destination. Prior to this, the overnight market was supported by Hoburne Holiday Park as the largest single site establishment (280 static caravan units, 41 chalets, and 189 touring pitches), a small number (24) of serviced accommodation establishments and a moderate number of self-catering units (44) independent of the 'second home' complexes.
- 2.125 The advent of second home developments has changed this position considerably, with over 116 homes also available as self-catering units able to attract more upmarket audiences from the A, B and C1 socio-economic groups. This is being supplemented by other recent developments such as the Four Pillars Hotel which will include 31 self-catering, buy-to-let apartments for sale; Waters Edge (40 lodges, of which it is envisaged up to 15 could be used as self-catering units); and the development at Claydon Pike, with 48 holiday homes recently being granted development permission out of a proposed 160 units that could be developed overall.
- 2.126 These accommodation developments are promoting the CWP to new markets, largely geared towards the high-end and business tourism sector. However, the Four Pillars Hotel will probably target spare capacity to leisure visits and special functions (i.e. celebrations and weddings).
- 2.127 Despite this growth and the market prospects these new accommodation enterprises have brought, there is the need for a more considered approach to the assessment of future accommodation proposals.
- 2.128 In relation to serviced accommodation, any development that would increase the business tourism capacity of the CWP needs to be matched against a viable market demand that is not already catered for through existing provision. This is because there is a danger that additional development towards the business sector could confuse the core messages for the CWP as a largely rural destination with an outdoor leisure, recreation and nature based offer.
- 2.129 Similarly, any increased provision of self-catering accommodation needs to be clearly justified based upon visitor demand, environmental measures, and impact on the local community.

Special Commentary on Second Homes

- 2.130 The proliferation of second homes in the CWP has been highlighted as a major concern during the consultation process.
- 2.131 There are currently upwards of 500 units used to varying degrees as holiday lodges/second homes in the CWP, with a further 700 having been granted planning permission. There is no doubt that the market for this type of accommodation has been fairly buoyant in recent times. However, a fundamental consideration is whether the CWP has a threshold for these types of development, and at what point this threshold may be reached.
- 2.132 According to the consultation, understanding such a threshold will prove problematic, as these types of development tend to polarise opinion. Some residents suggest that the existing level of second homes already represents the maximum threshold and even this has led to what they consider a 'sub-urbanisation' of the rural community, especially in relation to their design. In contrast, the continuing receipt of planning applications that include holiday lodges suggests that market forces still demand this type of facility.
- 2.133 A key issue to address is in relation to whether the term 'holiday home' is in fact an accurate depiction of this market – i.e. do the owners represent a component of tourism (i.e. a repeat visitor), or are the owners simply expanding their place of residency to cover more than one area. Resolving this issue will lead to a greater understanding of users, their behaviours and interactions, and whether the threshold has been reached for certain types of development. For instance, those who use their property for private use only but do so on a regular basis will have different behaviours when compared to less regular visitors, and in fact may start to adopt behaviours and attitudes that mirror those of permanent residents. Therefore, they will start to feel, and be perceived by others, to have residential rather than tourist status. In contrast, those who tend to let their properties for holiday use as self-catering units on a regular basis have a direct relationship to tourism.
- 2.134 Understanding the differences between the two types of holiday home purchaser could be fundamental in deciding suitable threshold levels of units and whether a distinction should be made between actual 'second homes' (i.e. only used by the owners) and 'self-catering units' (i.e. those available as holiday lets to others through a business transaction) in a planning context. In this respect, the wider value of self-catering properties will be easier to define.
- 2.135 From the research conducted, the main mechanism for controlling the use of previously approved 'second homes' has been through the application of a condition to require their vacation for one month of the year, and with no specific requirement that they be used for holiday purposes only. In reality this means that many of the units may be occupied by one household for the large proportion of the year, and are effectively tantamount to full-time and permanent dwellings.
- 2.136 Many authorities, including neighbouring LPAs such as West Oxfordshire, attach conditions to holiday letting accommodation in the open countryside (most of which are conversions rather than new build) which require that they are only occupied for a maximum of 8 weeks for each holiday let. This is reasonable, precise, enforceable and precludes occupation for the majority of the year by a single household. Where there is an opportunity to develop a market for tourism accommodation, and given that the creation of new dwellings in the open countryside

would normally be contrary to the aims of PPS7, the use of such a condition could and should be considered.

- 2.137 Even when a clear 'tourism' market rationale can be proven, the local context and the development setting must still be taken into account. Large scale self-catering holiday complexes still represent significant developments that could detract from the countryside character if inappropriately designed and positioned. Should further self-catering development be deemed suitable for the CWP, then sustainability, access, positioning and screening will be important to ensure that the design blends the developments into the landscape. Retaining a sense of rural escapism will be a key motivational factor in attracting visitors. From this perspective, farm-based self-catering units that utilise traditional out-buildings and redundant barns that are worthy of retention and re-use are more appropriate in the context of National Planning Policy guidance.

Broadening the Accommodation Base

- 2.138 The current provision of accommodation (see Map 2.8) in the functional boundary of the CWP consists of:

- 910 bedspaces in serviced enterprises (of which the Four Pillars Hotel accounts for roughly half);
- approximately 909 bedspaces in self-catering accommodation; and
- 267 touring pitches, 355 static units and 41 chalets, principally located in Hoburne Holiday Park.

- 2.139 On the basis of the potential markets that could be attracted to the CWP, there are opportunities to further expand the accommodation base. The emphasis needs to be on matching new provision to market potential as opposed to letting the accommodation drive the market that the CWP receives. This should lead to a broader accommodation mix. In particular:

- appropriate low budget accommodation could be used to service the outdoor market;
- an eco-accommodation complex could be developed in association with the wildlife-tourism offer in the CWP to offer something very different to wildlife enthusiasts in the UK;
- some small scale farm-based accommodation, comprising both serviced (B&B/Guest House) and self-catering establishments, would fit in with the nature of the CWP as a countryside destination; and
- some further small serviced accommodation (B&B/Guest House) provision in the towns and villages may be appropriate as means of tourism providing direct support to certain services in these settlements.

- 2.140 The market context also suggests that provision of touring camping and caravanning could be expanded, especially in the eastern section of the CWP. The camping and caravan market is believed to be fairly buoyant at present, with the market trends suggesting that this could continue as a low cost form of tourism in the face of increasing consumer costs. Furthermore, camping and caravanning can be positioned as a low impact form of tourism that addresses

concerns over carbon footprint; the changing landscape through hard-based developments; and can be easily manoeuvred to present a more eco-friendly offer. Therefore, it is a type of development that would have a strategic fit in relation to the countryside nature of the CWP, at ease with lakeland settings in particular.

2.141 Overall, any future tourism accommodation development should seek to:

- reinvigorate the tourism sector year-on-year by attracting new visits that will provide additional support to local businesses;
- be of sufficient quality to establish the CWP as a destination of high quality through inclusion in official accommodation quality assurance scheme; and
- be sustainable, with operators encouraged to become holders of a recognised green tourism award scheme (e.g. the Green Tourism Business Scheme; The David Bellamy Conservation Award) to complement the sustainable ethos of the CWP as a whole.

The CWP as a Sustainable Tourism Destination

2.142 The motivation behind a tourism visit may be founded upon the promise of specific experiences, but the quality and satisfaction of visitors is based upon their interaction with all of its components. This includes all information, accommodation, assets, facilities and amenities that are utilised by visitors before, during and after their visit.

2.143 In this respect, the CWP needs to consider all of the components that will make up the visitor experience. In terms of physical features, the mains towns and villages will have an important role to play. Settlements represent important assets from a visitor perspective, offering places to stay, being sources of information, offering opportunities for sightseeing, and by encouraging economic exchange through retail and catering enterprises. Furthermore, if supported by a suitable leisure and recreation network, visitors can be encouraged to access settlements via more sustainable modes of transport, plus they can be encouraged to explore the wider area more sustainably. Therefore, if tourism is to be a core development priority, it will be important to ensure that the towns and villages have a visitor focus as this could help provide a much richer and more rewarding experience for visitors. At a basic level and in settlements with low-level accommodation provision this should be in the form of moderate information and amenity provision. At the upper end of the scale and in settlements with higher levels of accommodation provision, this will need to include catering and retail as the two main visitor spend categories, aimed at both day visitors and overnight visitors. In this respect, such settlements could be presented as hubs of activity for visitors.

2.144 As the level of tourism-specific businesses increase, other business opportunities will no doubt come to the fore in relation to accommodation, retail and catering for example. Essential to any destination is ensuring that the tourism sector supports but does not overwhelm the destination, particularly in relation to the community and the environment. In this respect, the sustainability of the tourism sector will need to be monitored to ensure that the overall character of the area is not compromised by either the level or types of development being proposed.

Tourism

Key Issues

- *The CWP is able to attract day visitors in its own right through leisure and recreation facilities, but relies more heavily on the Cotswolds AONB to attract overnight visits.*
- *Developments in biodiversity, sports, leisure and recreation already proposed will increase the tourism asset base, which in turn will generate additional market potential – family, general sightseeing, niche interest, business, education.*
- *Developments in self-catering (through second home complexes) and serviced accommodation have increased staying tourism capacity, but the development is leading the market rather than responding to strategic gaps in provision.*
- *There is a danger that the offer of CWP could present confused messages if further development in second homes and the business sector continues.*

Requirements

- *Future tourism development needs to respond to strategic market opportunities that match the developing assets base that is occurring through sports, leisure, recreation and biodiversity projects.*
- *Tourism development must be considered in relation to the wider CWP development context.*
- *Both existing and future provision should seek to reinvigorate the tourism sector year-on-year; should be quality marked; and should incorporate sustainability and biodiversity principles.*

Agriculture

- 2.145 The prominence of the agriculture sector has visibly declined in the CWP (see Map S2.9), partly due to market forces and changes in state support that have impacted upon viability; and partly due to the loss of agricultural land available due to a preference toward the restoration of extraction sites to lakes rather than returning it to its previous (generally agricultural) use.
- 2.146 However, there is still a potential role for agriculture in the future of the CWP, particularly in relation to crop and non-crop diversification that could be utilised to assist other aspects of the CWP. In this respect, the options appraisal needs to integrate the farming community into the aspirations of the CWP, demonstrating the role it could play, and outlining the positive impact that it could have in relation to the future of development of the CWP.

Agriculture and Leisure, Recreation and Tourism

- 2.147 The relationship between agriculture and tourism is well established in relation to non-crop diversification. Farm-based accommodation and the capacity to expand provision in the CWP has already been discussed. Farm-based attractions provide another potential prospect.
- 2.148 There is already one farm-based attraction in the CWP, Butts Farm Rare Breeds Centre. However, its current visitor levels are relatively modest.

- 2.149 Farm-based attractions have the potential to become high profile visitor attractions. For instance, Willows Farm in St Albans, Hertfordshire received in excess of 270,000 visits and the Big Sheep in north Devon over 100,000 visits in 2005.
- 2.150 From a wider perspective, there is some localised competition with Robinswood Country Park and Rare Breeds Centre close to Gloucester offering the most comparable example, whilst Cotswold Wildlife Park and Gardens near Burford could be seen as a competitor for the family market. However, the composition of the latter attraction, which is more of a zoological park, is considered to be sufficiently different to suggest that it could be complementary rather than a direct competitor to any more significant wildlife-based attraction in the CWP.
- 2.151 Although further investigation would be needed to validate this premise further, it is certainly felt that a proposition for a more significant farm-based attraction in the CWP could be a viable option as a single site development.
- 2.152 As highlighted in the leisure and recreation section, farms also play an integral role in delivering leisure and recreation routes, especially in relation to Permissive Access routes. Agri-environment schemes provide financial incentives for farmers to adopt environmentally beneficial land management practices, of which the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) and the English Woodland Grant Scheme grants include provision for encouraging permissive access. Providing areas of open access or creating new footpaths, cycle and/or bridleways to allow people to enjoy more of the countryside is an option consideration for the HLS grant, with this process overseen by Natural England.

Agriculture and Biodiversity

- 2.153 The agricultural sector has a leading role to play in the biodiversity ambitions of the CWP.
- 2.154 The main mechanism for encouraging landowners to adopt more environmentally sound farming practices and principles is through the Environmental Stewardship schemes, with the HLS scheme aiming to deliver a higher level of environmental benefits through more complex management techniques. The primary biodiversity objectives for the scheme are: wildlife conservation; protection of the historic environment; maintenance and enhancement of landscape quality and character; and resource protection.
- 2.155 The Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT) is currently progressing an example of an agri-environment scheme at Blakehill Farm in the south of the CWP. The Trust is rearing rare cattle breeds at Blakehill Farm, with a present herd of around 200 cattle. This is to be an exemplar of best practice in relation to integrating wildlife conservation into farming. The Trust is seeking to expand this type of activity across a wider area, including the CWP, through agreement with landowners by demonstrating the mutual benefits that can be achieved. It should be recognised that this is a long-term aspiration.
- 2.156 Similarly, the RSPB has intimated that it too could envisage incorporating animal grazing into its nature reserve as a natural land management process. Therefore, these two organisations could be used as a catalyst from which other agriculture enterprises could be encouraged to engender this type of approach.

Crop Diversification

- 2.157 Crop diversification is a possible option for agricultural enterprise in the CWP. An obvious example of this resulting from lake creation is fish farming. According to Defra, there are 1,000 fish and shellfish farming businesses in the UK. The most popular fish species being farmed are Salmon and Rainbow Trout, but other species include carp and brown trout, turbot, halibut, cod and Arctic char.
- 2.158 The creation of more open water presents an opportunity for this type of crop diversification, and yet it is an opportunity that hasn't been explored to any great degree in the CWP to date - according to the investigations, the closest fish farm to the CWP is in Bidbury. The close proximity of certain lakes to natural watercourses may preclude this as an activity in some instances, particularly in the floodplains, due to concerns of alien fish species spilling over into the rivers. However, as development evolves and traditional practices diminish, it could become a realistic enterprise option.
- 2.159 An added benefit to the use of livestock as a land management technique for encouraging biodiversity is its meat produce, as this can be sold as rare breed and organic produce, a buoyant market at present. Although highly conceptual, it is certainly conceivable that this production of meat, coupled with locally produced fish, could be combined with a CWP-brand to present place-distinctive quality produce that over time could become a synonymous feature of the CWP. This could be sold through local businesses, particularly catering establishments and serviced accommodation establishments.
- 2.160 In addition, the production of high quality, ethically sourced, and environmentally sound products has at least a theoretic synergy with the Co-op Group as a producer and purchaser of ethically sourced produce. Similarly, Butts Farm Rare Breeds Farm Shop already has a facility to sell direct to the public, as does Fosse Farm. Therefore, there is a conceivable scenario whereby, through existing sales channels, a CWP branded food business could be established whose products are sold at a local and national level, along similar lines to the 'Duchy' brand. It is also possible that, if all parties agreed, some of the return levied from the sales could be used to fund the aims of the CWP BAP.

Agriculture and Sustainability

- 2.161 The issue of bio-crop development is one that is likely to be given much more significance in forthcoming years. Bio-fuels are becoming a realistic option for contributing to energy production due to the growing consciousness of individual carbon footprints and the impact that this is having on climate change. This is combined with increasing costs in relation to fossil fuels, especially oil, and technological advances in producing more cost effective and energy efficient bio-fuels. This is already being observed by the fact that Virgin Trains now run on fuel that includes a 20 per cent bio-diesel content from seasonally adjusted blends of rape, soy and palm-based bio-diesels. Furthermore, in the US, the demand for bio-fuels is such that 27% of corn production will be used to deliver 9.3 billion gallons of ethanol.
- 2.162 This new demand for crops could have a significant affect on arable farming, and is a move that could change the face of crop production in the UK and internationally. However, even though there are benefits to bio-fuels in neutralising carbon emissions, there are still concerns that some carbon creation exists in respect of transportation of bio-crops, and that mass

production of bio-crops could involve the use of fertilisers and loss of wildlife habitats. As such, advice on bio-crop production is evolving, with the latest suggestions being that bio-crops should be produced on smaller plots where it is easier to manage fertiliser use; and where the impacts of changing the use of land can be taken into account, so there is not a huge loss of biodiversity.

- 2.163 Given the increasing political dimension in relation to fuel consumption and climate change, it is certainly conceivable that pockets of land in the CWP could be utilised for servicing a more localised market in bio-fuels, perhaps even to the point whereby the CWP can start to supply local communities/business/transport with locally sourced energy to deliver a significantly reduced carbon footprint for existing and proposed developments.

Agriculture

Key Issues

- *The prominence of agriculture in the CWP has visibly declined. However, it still has the capacity to play a significant role in the future of the CWP, particularly in relation to crop and non-crop diversification into non-crop activities.*

Requirements

- *Tourism-based diversification could include farm attractions and farm accommodation, based on a wider strategic fit in relation to the visitor sector.*
- *Agri-environment schemes can be used to promote public access to the countryside and biodiversity conservation and management through agriculture, with the WWT already integrating wildlife conservation into agriculture practices within the CWP (Blakehill Farm).*
- *Bio-fuel production could be used at a local level to reduce non-renewable energy consumption, though this should be conducted on smaller plots where it is easier to manage adverse impacts on biodiversity.*
- *Crop diversification into fish and livestock could be utilised to present a CWP-branded distinctive food offer that could be sold locally and potentially nationally.*

Heritage

- 2.164 The Stage I process outlined a range of built, historic and cultural heritage assets and features within the CWP, with the area having a history that dates back over 6,000 years of human occupation and settlement. As identified in the Stage I review, the archaeological heritage includes the following:

- causeway camps, cursus monuments and henges;
- distinctive Beaker pottery relating to burial rites and new technologies in Britain around 2000-1600BC;
- evidence of settlements from the Bronze Age has been widely found across the CWP;
- a hill fort dating back to the Iron Age has been identified at a location to the south-east of Ampney St Peter, whilst the remains of round houses have been excavated at Claydon Pike and Thornhill Farm; and

- Roman villas at Claydon Pike, Latton, Rough Ground Farm and Hannington Wick, demonstrating the wider area beyond Cirencester in which the Romans settled.

2.165 This archaeological heritage context is reflected in the 38 Scheduled Ancient Monuments that are located in the CWP, ranging from a Saxon cemetery at Fairford and the Roman villas, to a water meadow associated with Clattinger Farm. All of the scheduled sites are protected against damage, destruction and unauthorised change. Moreover, the local planning authorities have all highlighted the need to enhance through appropriate management the interpretation and public access arrangements for these sites.

2.166 Although heritage was identified as the driver for investigation in the brief, the investigation process has identified that it is the broader historic environment that is of key importance. The historic environment comprises much more than simply archaeological remains, but rather includes settlements (from farmsteads to towns), their buildings, and other structures and changes that man has made to the landscape of the area. In the case of the CWP, the most visible of these include:

- the towns and villages, with Cricklade widely reputed to be one of the most intact examples of a late Saxon town in Britain, and the settlements of Lechlade and Fairford also both heavily influenced by the Cotswold AONB in terms of style;
- the River Thames as a natural feature, but much altered over time by man, which has had a significant influence on the physical and human geography of the area;
- the Thames & Severn Canal and the North Wilts Canal, as significant heritage features that are both subject to plans for full restoration;
- the Cricklade-Swindon Railway, again which has plans for full restoration; and
- the lakes themselves, though any heritage appreciation is likely to become more applicable in the future, perhaps even after extraction has ceased.

2.167 It is important to note that not all heritage assets are protected or scheduled in any way and it is vital to ensure that they are not lost to development, extraction or other detrimental impacts. A policy framework is required that not only protects the most important heritage assets, but also the “unlisted”, as has happened in the past.

2.168 In addition, it is also recognised that the CWP has scope to present a valuable resource in relation to future heritage discovery.

Archaeology and Mineral Extraction

2.169 The mineral extraction process has unearthed a range of artefacts in the CWP in relation to the geology and historic wildlife of the area, including a 50,000 year old mammoth skull found in Ashton Keynes. These are currently on display in the Gateway Centre.

2.170 However, the minerals process has in the past been a destructive force in relation to conservation of the historic environment and heritage features, with the wholesale removal of potentially significant remains and landscape features within the extraction areas. Once destroyed, these sites and the artefacts they contained can never be recovered.

2.171 The regional and local policy framework all state that permission for development affecting nationally important archaeological remains or the setting of nationally important remains, whether statutorily protected or not, will not be granted. Archaeological remains of lesser importance must be fully evaluated, characterised and ideally preserved in situ, or where this is not possible then they should be preserved by record.

2.172 Any new development within the CWP will be subject to these planning conditions. The evidence of known archaeological sites suggests that unknown archaeological remains are likely to exist in other areas. Therefore, this will be an important consideration in relation to future treatment of development applications through the planning process.

Integrating the Historic Environment and the CWP

2.173 The remainder of the study will focus on the historic environment to ensure a more encompassing approach to utilising all of the historic fabric available within the CWP landscape to help characterise and define the CWP as a geographical area and its sense of place. As such, both the existing and future built and cultural heritage aspects of the CWP need to be integrated into the CWP to create a richer sense of history. This could be completed through the following measures:

- encouraging access to heritage features in the CWP;
- ensuring there is sufficient interpretation of these heritage features, at a level which can satisfy a number of interest groups (i.e. casual, middling and high interest in heritage and history);
- continuing to showcase certain local heritage items within other facilities, with the Gateway Centre including displays of interesting finds from archaeological digs;
- the introduction of purpose built heritage amenities (e.g. a dedicated heritage visitor centre/museum) should the critical mass and nature of heritage and historical items collected warrant such a development; and
- the use of archaeological digs and discovery as a specialised visitor theme for the CWP.

2.174 The integration of the historic environment as an integral component of the fabric of the CWP should seek to benefit both the visitor and the local residents.

Historic Environment

Key Issues

- *The Upper Thames Valley, within which the CWP sits, has evolved over 6,000 years of human habitation, which means that the value of the area's historic environment is potentially considerable.*
- *The mineral extraction process can be both an enabler and a destructive force in relation to heritage and heritage conservation.*
- *The CWP incorporates a number of heritage assets and features, some of which are already the subject of development proposals.*
- *Further historical finds are possible in the future through archaeological excavation prior to mineral extraction.*

Requirements

- *The historic environment should be more strategically incorporated into the wider development considerations of the CWP, particularly in relation to protecting and enhancing existing assets, preserving in situ appropriate artefacts, and identifying opportunities for interpreting the features of interest.*
- *The main opportunities for integrating the historic environment into the wider CWP area is through the leisure and recreation specifically associated with significant schemes (i.e. canal restoration programmes; the Cricklade to Swindon Railway) and through softer approaches to interpretation. This will assist in strengthening identity, encouraging access and showcasing historical items in existing facilities of the CWP.*
- *There may be scope to explore a specific heritage-based attraction in the future depending upon critical mass and nature of archaeological finds.*

The Arts

- 2.175 Liminal, a consultancy specialising in the arts, has prepared a topic paper that explores possible methods for embracing arts within the CWP.
- 2.176 The report identifies the disconnection between the general public and the process of gravel extraction and presents opportunities for various innovations from the arts sector that could be utilised to address this. The paper is presented as an annex to this report.
- 2.177 The inclusion of the arts at a destination level is exemplified by a number of projects elsewhere in the UK:
- In 1997, an art installation consisting of 100 solid cast iron bodyforms was erected on Crosby Beach, Liverpool. Designed by Anthony Gormley, the figures span a 2.5 kilometre stretch of the coast.
 - Newbiggin Bay in Northumberland has established a 12.5 metre high bronze artwork, 'Couple', which is reputedly Britain's first off-shore sculpture.
 - The Angel of the North, also designed by Antony Gormley, has now become an iconic statue in Gateshead overlooking the A1.
 - A series of structures known as 'Panopticons' represent landmark works of art at viewpoints across East Lancashire, designed to present features of interest.
- 2.178 The value of these sculptures is that they help bring countryside areas to life, and assist in bringing a greater sense of place to an area, particularly areas identified for regeneration, for the benefit of local residents and visitors. They can also act as mechanisms for encouraging use of the countryside, and help interpret features of the countryside through different techniques. This approach would work well in the CWP.
- 2.179 Among the ideas suggested, those which appear to have a distinct synergy with other drivers identified in the CWP include:

- Engaging visitors and the local community alike in a 'gravel pit picnic', with the public invited to gravel pits with speakers highlighting the geology of the area and the anatomy of the CWP.
- Quarry naming, with individuals and groups, including school groups, able to name pits and encouraged to return over time to see the changes that occur.
- The creation of a sound observatory, 'The Auditory', as an acoustic mirror that could heighten experience of listening within the CWP. This would in particular target sounds such as birdsong to become clear audible features, strengthening the sense of place in relation to biodiversity.
- The creation of 'Song Poles', a series of recycled telegraph poles planted into the ground next to a lake. The poles would be hollowed out at different heights to provide nesting sites, with a small video camera and microphone installed which are linked to a speaker and video screen at the pole's base.
- Related to the continuing gravel extraction in the CWP, utilise opportunities of lake restoration to establish, for example, landscaped lakebeds to resemble an 'Atlantis'. This could then be explored by divers and for snorkelling.

Arts

Key Issues

- *There is increasing evidence of areas of regeneration using the arts as a means of heightening a greater sense of place and awareness.*

Requirements

- *To incorporate the arts into the future development of the CWP to increase people's understanding and enjoyment of the area.*

Planning

Existing Projects

2.180 The investigation process has identified the following projects which are currently in the planning process:

- Under construction:
 - Claydon Pike - outline planning permission was granted in 2006 for the erection of 160 holiday cabins, a country park facility, a 120-bed hotel and the associated use of, and works to, lakes for leisure purposes for land at Claydon Pike. Construction began in Autumn 2007 with the initial phase concerning 48 holiday homes and associated utilities and infrastructure.
 - Lake 11 - 50 holiday lodges are currently in the process of being constructed.
 - Lake 10 - 40 semi-detached holiday homes is currently under construction
- Decision pending:

- Lake 14 - there is an existing application for four holiday homes pending decision.
- Lake 7 - a decision on 66-bed motel with car park is pending.
- Lake 17 - a full application is currently awaiting a decision for the construction of 104 holiday lodges.
- Decision to go to enquiry:
 - Lakes 103, 103a, 104 - outline planning permission was refused for tourism and recreational development comprising the erection of hotel/leisure complex (including 38 suites), 57 apartments and 143 pavilions early in 2007. An appeal was lodged to the Secretary of State but this appeal has subsequently been registered.

The Planning Context

- 2.181 As identified in Stage I of the investigations, planning is considered to be of critical importance to the implementation of any future vision.
- 2.182 The CWP straddles the administrative borders of North Wiltshire and Cotswold District Council, a small section of Swindon Borough Council, and Wiltshire and Gloucestershire County Council. Furthermore, in the future it is possible that the eastern section of the CWP could be extended into the Vale of White Horse District and Oxfordshire County administrative area.
- 2.183 However, despite a shared level of interest in the CWP as a countryside resource, there has been variation in the approaches that these authorities have taken in relation to development. The review of planning policy has defined that:
- The Cotswold DC area of the CWP has received by far the predominant share of development proposals when compared to North Wiltshire. This is exemplified by the fact that all projects currently in the planning process are within Cotswold District.
 - Development has largely been focussed on second homes and holiday homes, with the Watermark being the original and subsequent catalyst for this type of development. A further 700 properties that have been granted planning permission have yet to be built.
 - A significant volume of serviced accommodation proposals have been forthcoming in recent times, again in the Cotswold DC area (Lake 11; Lake 103, 103a, 104; and the rejected proposal in North Wiltshire). This is on the back of the opening of the Four Pillars Hotel in August 2007.
 - North Wiltshire has adopted more stringent planning policies in relation to the CWP, particularly in terms of 'hard' development of the lakes. This stance has resulted in a low level of proposals being received, and a tendency towards refusal for any that are submitted. This is exemplified by the fact that the most significant planning application received by North Wiltshire District Council (for a hotel) in the past two years was refused because it was not directly related to the use of the site for outdoor water based activities and the enjoyment of the countryside.
- 2.184 The current situation of controlling and/or developing the CWP is not deemed appropriate for the continuing development of the CWP. With differing opinions and policies among the

county councils and local authorities, there is no consensus from which the development of the CWP can take place. Therefore, as a fundamental enabler of any future development, there needs to be a mechanism whereby all authorities explicitly adopt shared principles and policies to suitably control development.

- 2.185 There are other 'models' for managing a homogenous area, with an Area Action Plan (AAP) providing the most complete model in relation to planning frameworks for areas where significant change or conservation may be needed. The application of an AAP would conceivably be applicable to the CWP. PPS12 identifies that specific controls over development would be prudent in defined areas of conservation. In this context, the CWP features on the South West Nature Map as an area of significant habitats and environments, which in turn the South West Regional Spatial Strategy identifies as requiring protection and enhancement. Furthermore, AAPs have also been used as a tool for guiding development within large areas where there are various conflicting interests. Ideally, this should be encapsulated within the Local Development Framework process currently being undertaken by authorities, who are able to set criteria in their 'core strategy' for identifying locations and priorities for the preparation of area action plans.

Planning

Key Issues

- *There is a lack of consistency in the treatment of planning applications in the CWP between North Wiltshire District Council and Cotswold District Council. This situation could become exacerbated further in the future as development expands eastward into West Oxfordshire District.*

Requirements

- *The planning authorities of the respective council stakeholders need to adopt shared principles and policies within the emerging Local Development Frameworks that will benefit the CWP as a tangible place.*
- *In accordance with both national and regional policy, a specific Area Action Plan for the CWP needs to be explored.*

Aerodrome Safeguarding

- 2.186 A significant factor in relation to the environmental conservation of the CWP concerns aerodrome safeguarding, with the whole of the CWP area covered by the aerodrome safeguarding measures in place for RAF Fairford and Kemble Airport.
- 2.187 The aerodrome safeguarding measures generally seek an exclusion of certain types of habitat creation that may attract bird species or large-scale (in terms of height) developments that could interfere with flights in and out of airports. The primary purpose of this is to discourage development that would present a significant risk to the aviation sector that use the airport.
- 2.188 In the case of the CWP, the biggest risk factor is in the creation of open water that can provide habitats for certain types of large birds and flocking birds, as these wildlife types present the greatest hazard for aviation.

- 2.189 It is noted that the CWP does attract species that are considered high risk species for bird strike in respect of geese, gulls, and waders; but the BAP is also seeking to target other species (i.e. Bittern, Great Crested, Grebe, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Coot) that pose less of a threat. Therefore, there are areas of the biodiversity that cause less of a concern, whilst mitigation measures can be introduced in relation to habitat creation that would target growth in relation to low risk species as opposed to high risk. In this respect, open and deep water should be discouraged in favour of lowland wet grassland and reedbeds; whilst pastoral and arable farmland should be encouraged to include land management techniques that favour appropriate forms of wildlife conservation. The RSPB could be a significant stakeholder in this regard, having experience of negotiating with the Defence Estates Unit of the Ministry and Defence (MoD) over similar issues in the past. Solutions between the two parties have been found to ensure that environmental conservation in relation to water habitats does not pose any further adverse risk to flights.
- 2.190 It is understood that the MoD's Defence Estates Unit is constantly reviewing their policy on the basis of new evidence presented.

Aerodrome Safeguarding

Key Issues

- *Aerodrome safeguarding measures cover the full expanse of the CWP.*
- *Future development will need to be carefully considered against aerodrome safeguarding requirements. This is particularly pertinent to biodiversity and lake creation, but also could have an impact on leisure and tourism activities.*

Requirements

- *For development to ensure that it does not lead to an increased risk of birdstrike within the CWP area.*

Summary and Driver Prioritisation

- 2.191 To summarise, the CWP has changed due to a sustained 40-year period of mineral extraction. However, opportunities for the community, businesses, visitors and the environment to benefit from these changes have not materialised to the extent that could have been achieved through a more structured and strategically focussed development framework.
- 2.192 It is forecast that mineral extraction can only continue at current levels for another 20 years, and this represents the extent of the window of opportunity from which greater benefits from this change need to be derived. Overall, the investigations suggest that these benefits should be structured to:
- strengthen the sense of place of the CWP through improving the countryside character, creating links between settlements and the countryside, and encouraging greater use by the local community;
 - deliver the aspirations in biodiversity, reflected in the inclusion of the CWP in the South West Nature Map and the Biodiversity Action Plans aspiration for the CWP to become a premier site for nature conservation by 2050;

- achieve the long held objective for the CWP to become a premier location for sports, leisure, and recreation; and
 - establish the CWP as a tourism destination, ideally associated with the key market opportunities.
- 2.193 As such, these four broad areas are considered to be the **core priorities** for development, as they represent the core interests as identified through the consultation process that could directly benefit from the changes created by mineral extraction.
- 2.194 The drivers concerning agriculture and heritage, although very much integral to the future composition of the CWP, are considered to have more of a subsidiary role that can be utilised to support the core drivers. To reflect this role, heritage and agriculture are defined as **supporting drivers**. The arts is also included as a supporting driver in this respect, as it also has the potential to deliver benefits in relation to some of the core priorities, particularly leisure and recreation.
- 2.195 The success and deliverability of the benefits for both the core priorities and the supporting drivers will be highly dependent upon a number of factors, namely:
- the forward planning and sequential ordering of the mineral (sand and gravel) extraction process between the Mineral Planning Authorities;
 - greater understanding of the influence of development upon the local hydrology system, and likewise how the hydrology system can be manoeuvred to present greater benefits;
 - understanding the potential impacts and implications of climate change on the CWP;
 - establishing a more integrated planning system based upon a shared set of principles and policies that guides the treatment of development applications; and
 - establishing an integrated approach to understanding the implications of development on transport, infrastructure and utilities.
- 2.196 In this respect, these are considered to be the **enabling drivers**.
- 2.197 A further consideration which has been identified as a **potential constraint** to achieving certain aspirations of the CWP if not suitably considered in the planning and development process, is:
- Aerodrome safeguarding
- 2.198 Last, but by no means least, strengthened governance and management can champion the vision and aspirations of the CWP. The role of governance and management is dealt with in section 5 of this report.
- 2.199 It is the structure of the core priorities, supporting drivers, enabling drivers and the potential constraint of aerodrome safeguarding that will be used to assess the development options and a suitable vision and development framework for the CWP.

3 Options Appraisal

3.1 The following section outlines the options that have been considered in relation to the future development of the CWP.

3.2 The purpose of the options appraisal is to provide a more considered approach to the development of the CWP. In this context, Scott Wilson has analysed the effect that each of the **core priorities**, when it constitutes the lead development priority, could have on the future of the CWP and the other drivers identified.

3.3 Five different options have been identified that could feasibly become the lead development constituent for the development of the CWP. Each of the options is defined as:

- The **status quo option**, whereby the development of the CWP maintains its current progression.
- A **countryside character, local community and settlement option**, whereby the approach to development is dictated by the need to deliver benefits in relation to the character and sense of place for the benefit of the community.
- A **biodiversity led option**, whereby the development of the CWP is driven purely by the need to deliver biodiversity targets.
- A **sports, leisure and recreation led option**, whereby the development of the CWP is driven purely by the need to maximise the rural and lakeland nature of the CWP for the purpose of pursuing a range of different sports, leisure and recreation activities.
- A **tourism led option**, whereby the development of the CWP is driven purely by the need to maximise the tourism potential of the CWP and its location benefits in relation to the Cotswold AONB.

3.4 It is recognised that these options present the extremity to which each development of the CWP could be taken for each case. However, the value of doing this is to highlight areas of compatible benefit (pros) and areas of potential discord (cons) in relation to the wider context, measured in relation to the other core priorities and the supporting drivers.

3.5 This benefit value or potential conflict is represented in the analysis as follows:

✓✓✓	<i>High level of compatible benefits</i>
✓✓	<i>Moderate level of compatible benefits, but with some discord</i>
✓	<i>Low level of compatible benefits and/or high level of discord</i>
◆	<i>Neutral impact in terms of benefits/conflicts</i>

3.6 As a means of summarising the value of each option, a further measure is also given in relation to sustainability principles, namely the visitor, the industry, the community and the environment (VICE). Sustainability is about developing and delivering a visitor sector that is of appropriate scale and form from the perspective of the visitor, the industry, the community and the environment. Although the VICE principles are generally referred to in the context of

destination management, they are equally pertinent to other aspects as a broad test towards sustainability.

- 3.7 The following tables provide a breakdown of this analysis, including commentary on the rationale for the assessment. The Stage II consultation process has largely informed these opinions.

Maintaining The Status Quo	
<p>Scope: The development recently experienced in the CWP continues in the same vein in the future.</p> <p>Rationale: Development has been experienced in the CWP which has delivered against most of the core priority drivers identified (e.g. Sport, Leisure and Recreation, Tourism and Biodiversity). This development has provided benefits for each of the respective priorities.</p>	
<p>Fit with Core Priorities</p>	
Countryside Character, Community and Settlements	<p>Pros: The volume of lakes has created a very different landscape area.</p> <p>Cons: The lakes themselves represent enclaves that do not present a continuous and coherent landscape through an inconsistent approach to species planting and vista creation. This would be likely to continue. Likewise, the current disassociation between the lakes and the communities and settlements would continue, with the perception that residents themselves do not benefit from CWP development likely to be re-emphasised.</p>
Biodiversity	<p>Pros: Biodiversity has benefited from developments in the past, and could do so again in the future.</p> <p>Cons: There has not been a considered approach towards biodiversity emanating from development. Rather, development has created ad hoc opportunities and benefits. This may continue in the future.</p>
Sport, leisure and recreation	<p>Pros: Sport, leisure and recreation provision is already evident in the CWP – Keynes Country Park, Neigh Bridge Country Park, angling, sailing, and other soft water sports. Other developments are planned.</p> <p>Cons: There is a lack of equity in relation to the sports facilities available, with a high level of facilities run on a voluntary basis and few facilities available for 'pay and play'. The existing leisure and recreation provision is disjointed, with issues concerning accessibility remaining. This would be likely to continue.</p>
Tourism	<p>Pros: Tourism has been a significant beneficiary of the current development approach, particularly in relation to high-level developments in self-catering (associated with second/holiday homes) and serviced accommodation (Four Pillars Hotel).</p> <p>Cons: A lack of strategic oversight to development has meant that certain market opportunities (education, wildlife tourism, eco-tourism, and significant levels of sports tourism) have not been exploited to their full potential.</p>

Fit with Supporting Drivers	
Historic Environment	<p>✓</p> <p>Pros: Archaeology has in places benefited through archaeological digs that have preceded mineral extraction development, which has discovered unique artefacts from this important historic area. Other development could provide similar prospects.</p> <p>Cons: Parts of the historic environment and heritage assets have been lost in relation to the development, whilst the opportunity to exploit heritage associations with certain priorities (tourism, retaining the local character) have not materialised to any great degree. This situation would be likely continue.</p> <p>Pros: Minerals extraction on agricultural holdings has provided a means of securing additional income (either through sale or royalty payments) for landowners in times of uncertainty within the farming community.</p> <p>Cons: Agricultural enterprises have been lost through mineral extraction process and a preference for lake restoration. On the whole, this would continue in the future in the western section, though in the eastern and central sections, greater consideration over the bird strike risk could mean different approaches to restoration, including restoring the mineral extraction site back to its original use.</p> <p>Pros: -</p> <p>Cons: The potential for encouraging the arts and cultural sectors to heighten both residential and visitor appreciation of the CWP, its heritage and its unique attributes would continue to be disregarded.</p>
Sustainability	
Visitor	<p>✓</p> <p>Pros: Tourism benefits will continue to be delivered.</p> <p>Cons: These benefits may not be based on a strategic market fit, and will be limited to certain opportunities.</p>
Industry	<p>✓✓</p> <p>Pros: Some industry enterprises will continue to benefit, generally at the larger level.</p> <p>Cons: Opportunities for small and medium sized enterprises and business diversification into new areas are unlikely to materialise.</p>
Community	<p>✓</p> <p>Pros: Certain leisure and recreation benefits will continue to emerge, along with some small-scale business opportunities.</p> <p>Cons: Existing community conflicts could escalate further in relation to all types of development, meaning that certain sections of the community will feel detached from the CWP as a place in which they live.</p>
Environment	<p>✓</p> <p>Pros: Further biodiversity benefits are likely to materialise.</p> <p>Cons: The opportunity to maximise the benefits of the CWP will be lost, especially in terms of environmental conservation, whilst the character of the CWP will continue to be disjointed; the lakes will continue to be isolated from other aspects of the area; and the existing fabric of the environmental (historic, natural and manmade) aspects of the CWP will continue to be degraded.</p>

Countryside Character, Local Community and Settlements

Scope: The future development of the CWP to be entrenched within the need to conserve and improve the local character of the CWP as a countryside environment with lakes to ensure that the area is an attractive place in which to live and work.

Rationale: The CWP population base is estimated at 20,000 spanning both market towns and attractive villages. The countryside and lakes combined with market towns and villages are the primary character assets that define the CWP as a place in which to live and work. This position needs to be maintained and nurtured for the whole of the CWP area.

Fit with Core Priorities

Biodiversity	✓✓	<p>Pros: <i>The requirement to conserve and improve the countryside character should lead to greater opportunities for biodiversity, and securing the most sensitive sites from other types of development.</i></p> <p>Cons: <i>This option could restrict the establishment of certain landforms that would assist in biodiversity creation, with an assumed right of access in favour of local community. This could lead to potential damage of certain sensitive sites, or at least restricting the habitat creation and protection in other sites.</i></p>
Sport, leisure and recreation	✓✓	<p>Pros: <i>Existing facilities would continue to be present, with greater scope for communities to benefit from access to sports provision.</i></p> <p>Cons: <i>Other developments unlikely to be realised, particularly in relation to motorised water sports which would be deemed incompatible with the countryside character and local community needs.</i></p>
Tourism	✓	<p>Pros: <i>Retaining and enhancing the character of the countryside of the CWP will be of direct benefit to existing visitors.</i></p> <p>Cons: <i>Likely to preclude the development of other tourism assets, therefore the potential of the CWP to become a destination in its own right would be limited.</i></p>

Fit with Supporting Drivers

Historic Environment	✓✓	<p>Pros: <i>There is greater potential to capture and conserve the historic environment and local heritage features, which in turn will help to define the CWP as a place.</i></p> <p>Cons: <i>The ability to maximise the wider interest in important heritage assets, and help secure their long-term viability, may not be realised if designed purely for a local audience.</i></p>
Agriculture	✓✓✓	<p>Pros: <i>Retention of agriculture as one of the main character assets in the CWP.</i></p> <p>Cons: <i>-</i></p>

Cotswold Water Park
Key Issues and Options Evaluation

Arts	✓✓	<p>Pros: Arts and cultural initiatives could be used to strengthen psychological links between the CWP and the residents that live within its boundaries.</p> <p>Cons: Some arts projects may not be viable if designed purely for local interest.</p>
Sustainability		
Visitor	✓	<p>Pros: Retaining the character of the area will be of benefit for existing visitors.</p> <p>Cons: Certain visitor-orientated developments are unlikely to be considered under this option, as further visitors and visitor development could detract from countryside character.</p>
Industry	✓	<p>Pros: -</p> <p>Cons: It is unlikely that any additional economic benefits will be derived for the CWP under this option.</p>
Community	✓✓	<p>Pros: Conservation and improvement of the existing character of the CWP and its settlements as attractive places to live and work is achieved.</p> <p>Cons: The full scope of additional benefits that could be derived for the benefit of the community is unlikely to be realised (e.g. sports access; improved leisure and recreation network; supporting local services and amenities)</p>
Environment	✓✓	<p>Pros: This option has a good synergy with biodiversity aspirations and the agricultural sector.</p> <p>Cons: Opportunities for maximising benefits for both biodiversity and agriculture would not be realised, as certain changes in landscape form (e.g. wetland habitats, reedbeds) may not be deemed as being compatible with its traditional character.</p>

Maximising the Biodiversity Potential	
Scope:	The development of the CWP will be orientated towards maximising the benefits for meeting and exceeding biodiversity targets, making the CWP an exemplar for habitat creation, intervention and management.
Rationale:	The BAP for the CWP provides a framework for considerable habitat creation on the basis that the CWP is a developing environmental landscape with high levels of biodiversity potential due to the standing water bodies of the lakes and the overall rural character.
Fit with Core Priorities	
Countryside Character, Community and Settlements	<p>Pros: It is assumed that habitats will form an important part of the rural character of the CWP, with landscape designed to influence habitat creation and the need to create certain habitats influencing landscape design. It is an aspiration that can be easily supported by local residents as it is predominately a soft form of development.</p> <p>Cons: There will need to be changes to the landform that may not necessarily be in keeping with its traditional form, such as wetlands and reedbeds, for example.</p>
Sport, leisure and recreation	<p>Pros: Biodiversity related facilities can be created to present a form of leisure and recreation (e.g. the Gateway Centre).</p> <p>Cons: Concerns over the high risk to wildlife and habitat damage may limit opportunities to exploit other sports, leisure and recreation development in the CWP, especially water sports involving motorised vehicles.</p>
Tourism	<p>Pros: Wildlife tourism is a potential niche market for the CWP, with scope for delivering small-scale, high quality developments in accommodation (i.e. eco-lodges). Tourism could also be used as a mechanism for delivering some funding for environmental conservation management. Education-based visits could also be an important tourism market based on wildlife and conservation practices.</p> <p>Cons: Wildlife tourism represents only one of the potential tourism markets that the CWP could cater for. There would need to be restrictions placed on visitor movements around the CWP, and a presumption against other tourism development.</p>
Fit with Supporting Drivers	
Historic Environment	<p>Pros: Conservation of certain historic environmental features is likely to be included within biodiversity proposals - e.g. natural environment, canals, River Thames, etc.</p> <p>Cons: Access and interpretation of these heritage assets will need to be carefully considered against biodiversity requirements – e.g. restricted use of canals due to priority for habitat creation.</p>
Agriculture	<p>Pros: Agri-environment presents an opportunity to demonstrate best practice in relation to environmental conservation and agriculture practices – e.g. WWT, RSPB, GWT.</p> <p>Cons: Only compatible with Higher Level Stewardship support for other farmers and landowners.</p>

Cotswold Water Park
Key Issues and Options Evaluation

Arts	✓✓	<p>Pros: Arts and cultural initiatives could be used to accentuate biodiversity appreciation.</p> <p>Cons: However, this would only be viable if linked with visitor aspirations.</p>
Sustainability		
Visitor	✓✓	<p>Pros: Distinctive niche market for the CWP to exploit for tourism. The market has patterns of behaviour that are different to the norm (i.e. it attracts out of season visits).</p> <p>Cons: This represents just one market opportunity, and would require certain restrictions for movement.</p>
Industry	✓✓	<p>Pros: Some business opportunities to be gained from wildlife tourism – nature conservation groups – and this could be fed back into environmental conservation programmes.</p> <p>Cons: This is a niche and specialised market which may not support other enterprises in the CWP (e.g. sports).</p>
Community	✓✓	<p>Pros: Will help retain rural character and sense of place.</p> <p>Cons: Will involve certain management responsibilities to be shared by local community members, some of which may not be easily palatable (e.g. dogs being kept on a lead at all times; restricted access at certain times).</p>
Environment	✓✓	<p>Pros: Environmental sustainability secured as an exemplar of biodiversity management through development.</p> <p>Cons: Certain landscape characters will need to be created that don't necessarily conform to the traditional environmental fabric of the CWP, e.g. reedbeds and wetland habitats.</p>

Maximising the Potential for Sports, Leisure and Recreation	
Scope:	The CWP to be developed into a considerable sports, leisure and recreation destination, consisting of a high level of facility provision.
Rationale:	The availability and continued creation of a high level of lakes provides an opportunity to deliver high-ranking sports, leisure and recreation facility provision within the CWP. This could feasibly include several 'flagship' developments.
Fit with Core Priorities	
Countryside Character, Community and Settlements	<p>Pros: Sport, leisure and recreation would utilise the developing landscape character (i.e. providing a viable use for the lakes) and would be available to the local community.</p> <p>Cons: The conservation and improvement of landscape would be unlikely to be a core priority, with some developments likely to alter the landscape (e.g. golf). Developments may not be locally focussed in terms of style, content or scale. There is scope for some developments to become a nuisance in relation to the local community.</p>
Biodiversity	<p>Pros: There is potential for the development of mutually compatible benefits with biodiversity targets when sport, leisure and recreation are the key priority considerations.</p> <p>Cons: Not all development sports and leisure development would be compatible with biodiversity aspirations, with potential for new habitat creation/support likely to be more limited.</p>
Tourism	<p>Pros: Sports, leisure and recreation development will be drivers for attracting visitors to the area.</p> <p>Cons: -</p>
Fit with Supporting Drivers	
Historic Environment	<p>Pros: Leisure and recreation can be a mechanism for supporting the restoration and protection of certain heritage features – e.g. canals and steam railways.</p> <p>Cons: Elements of the historic environment may be degraded through the creation of other types of sports and leisure amenities.</p>
Agriculture	<p>Pros: Leisure and recreation in particular can be an important element of farm diversification, with grants available for providing countryside access.</p> <p>Cons: There is potential for conflict between users and landowners over rights of access.</p>
Arts	<p>Pros: Arts can be utilised to encourage use of leisure and recreation, whilst cultural and sporting events are often intertwined</p> <p>Cons: -</p>

Sustainability	
Visitor	<p>Pros: Sports, leisure and recreation provision can be a significant attractor of visitors and can provide a critical mass 'things to do and see' that encourages overnight stays.</p> <p>Cons: -</p>
Industry	<p>Pros: Development will provide a significant economic opportunity that could be used as a means to support other sectors of the economy.</p> <p>Cons: -</p>
Community	<p>Pros: Development will provide local access to provision, which itself could engender a sense of place and community spirit.</p> <p>Cons: Facilities would not necessarily be orientated towards the local community, and therefore may not satisfy certain local demands. Potential disbenefits through noise and disturbance from certain activities (motorised sports), and inappropriate style, content and scale.</p>
Environment	<p>Pros: Development would utilise the existing and developing environmental features, i.e. the lakes and canals.</p> <p>Cons: Some other types of development may be inappropriate in style, content and scale in relation to retaining and improving the aesthetic character of the countryside environment of the CWP.</p>

Maximising the Tourism Potential	
Scope: The development of the CWP will be orientated towards maximising the benefits for tourism, with the CWP to become a considerable destination for the South West.	
Rationale: The creation of the lakes in the rural setting of the CWP provides an attractive proposition for developing a significant, or series of significant tourism assets and attractors.	
Fit with Core Priorities	
Countryside Character, Community, Settlements	<p>✓✓</p> <p>Pros: Tourism can be a mechanism for securing local distinctiveness and conserving assets of special value. It can also be a means of encouraging local entrepreneurs to establish businesses in the area, strengthening local supply chains and supporting rural services.</p> <p>Cons: High volumes of visits, and a gearing towards certain types of markets, could detract from the overall character of the area.</p>
Biodiversity	<p>✓✓</p> <p>Pros: Wildlife tourism is a potential niche market for the CWP, with scope for delivering high quality developments in accommodation (i.e. eco-lodges). Tourism could also be used as a mechanism for delivering some funding for environmental conservation management. Education-based visits could also be an important tourism market based on wildlife and conservation practices.</p> <p>Cons: Would potentially seek to attract other markets that may not be as compatible with biodiversity aspirations.</p>
Sport, leisure and recreation	<p>✓✓✓</p> <p>Pros: Sports, leisure and recreation development requires visitors as a means of securing long term viability. Development can be a driver for certain visitor markets that would broaden the 'things to do and see', and thus helping to position the CWP as a destination in its own right. Wider benefits include delivering equity of access to provision.</p> <p>Cons: -</p>
Fit with Supporting Drivers	
Historic Environment	<p>✓✓✓</p> <p>Pros: There is a strong association between heritage and tourism, with tourism often used a mechanism for securing the long term viability of heritage assets, either directly (heritage attractions such as the Steam Railway), or through supporting a wider context (e.g. visitor spend on local amenities in relation to canal restoration programme). Conversely, heritage helps to define a greater sense of place for destinations. Heritage also presents market opportunities, such as archaeology tourism, and links to education market.</p> <p>Cons: -</p>

Cotswold Water Park
Key Issues and Options Evaluation

Agriculture	✓✓	<p>Pros: Scope for non-crop diversification through agriculture enterprises, with attractions (farm centres, particularly targeting the family market; outdoor education centres) and accommodation (small scale B&B and self-catering) both viable options, especially for out-building conversions.</p> <p>Cons: <i>Recognised potential for conflict between visitors and landowners over access.</i></p>
Arts	✓✓✓	<p>Pros: Similar to heritage, there is a strong association between arts and culture, and attracting tourism markets. Arts, crafts and cultural events in particular have the ability to attract visitors and help to improve visitor experiences.</p> <p>Cons: -</p>
Sustainability		
Visitor	✓✓✓	<p>Pros: Securing a positive and varied visitor experience that will support a range of markets.</p> <p>Cons: <i>Too many visitors, and developments in incompatible markets, could detract from the sense of place and the experiences being sought in this countryside environment.</i></p>
Industry	✓✓	<p>Pros: Tourism will provide a significant boost to the rural economy that could be a catalyst for entrepreneurial enterprise and farm diversification.</p> <p>Cons: <i>There is a danger that the economy could become too geared towards tourism that may result in inappropriate developments that have no real strategic fit in relation to the wider context and a high density of development.</i></p>
Community	✓✓	<p>Pros: Can be a mechanism for securing sense of place and identity, both of which are needed in relation to the CWP. Can also engender a sense of community spirit and pride.</p> <p>Cons: <i>If developed inappropriately, the opposite is also true with tourism detracting from the sense of place and creating conflicts from a local community perspective.</i></p>
Environment	✓✓	<p>Pros: Can be a mechanism for supporting biodiversity development and conservation of the historic environment, particularly through spend which directly supports environmental management.</p> <p>Cons: <i>Can also become a nuisance factor in relation to management and conservation of the natural and built environment if capacity thresholds are exceeded through inappropriate development that leads to increased traffic, increased noise, and littering for example; and also if the design of the development is not in keeping with the character of the surrounding area.</i></p>

4 The Preferred Option

- 4.1 This section of the report takes the option process forward to present the preferred option for development that will be used to inform the vision and assist in establishing a coherent development framework for the future of the CWP.

The Key Findings from the Options Appraisal

- 4.2 It is generally accepted that the developments that have taken place within the CWP have progressed the CWP as an entity, with the tourism sector in particular being a beneficiary. However, the composition of some of the developments has taken the CWP in a direction that is not necessarily where the long-term future aspirations for the CWP lie for many of the stakeholders consulted.
- 4.3 Allowing further development to continue, particularly in relation to second homes and hotel developments, without taking into account their impact on the wider CWP area, could contravene many of the objectives being sought by the other priorities, including:
- causing further damage to the fabric of the community and sense of place of the CWP, a position that would be difficult to reverse at a later stage;
 - causing obstructions to the biodiversity objective of a large-scale living landscape, which will require a high level of strategic input and management to lay the foundations in the near future if whole-scale benefits are to be achieved in the long-term;
 - overlooking some potentially key markets for both the sports and tourism sectors; and
 - restricting the development and availability of public access to the assets that motivate visits, and deliver a quality experience to visitors once at the destination.
- 4.4 As such, maintaining a status quo approach as a guiding principle for the development of the CWP is not considered a viable option, despite the influence that the developments have had to date.
- 4.5 However, the tables in section three denote that none of the core priorities alone provide a definitive approach that would satisfy all of the benefits that could be derived from future changes. For instance:
- Retaining and improving the character of the countryside and settlements of the CWP is a response of high-level conservation for the CWP that would conceivably constrain the development of the other priorities. This may even include biodiversity on the basis that nature conservation would be a by-product of this approach rather than the main priority for landscape design. Moreover, it would certainly prevent sports development and certain tourism developments.
 - Delivering an option purely based on biodiversity will achieve benefits for the character of the CWP; would fit well with the leisure and recreation network; and would have some benefits for tourism from a niche perspective (wildlife tourism, education). However, the ability of the biodiversity option for encouraging sports and its associated tourism benefits will be

constrained. Furthermore, the capacity to generate funding for environmental conservation practises would not be as forthcoming due to potential restrictions on visitor volume in preference to high level habitat conservation for all sites.

- The sports potential of the CWP is undoubted, especially in relation to water sports. However, if this option were to be a key driver leading to significant development it could detract from the other priorities of the CWP, principally the biodiversity aspirations and retaining the character of the CWP. It would also preclude exploring the tourism potential of other sectors.
- Focussing more on tourism development could certainly bring considerable economic benefit, with capacity to attract a variety of different visitor types including business tourism, sports tourism, wildlife tourism, activity enthusiasts, family groups, educational and youth groups, and even specialist niche groups such as amateur archaeologists. However, an unconsidered approach to tourism expansion could seriously damage the nature of the CWP that visitors would find most appealing, namely the attractive countryside-lakeland setting in which they have chosen to undertake their activity. Furthermore, high visitor levels in inappropriate locations could potentially contravene certain biodiversity aspirations.

The Preferred Option

- 4.6 The above analysis demonstrates the complexities facing the CWP, with each priority providing benefits and discord in relatively equal measure when placed in a wider context.
- 4.7 In effect, there is no single option that can be considered to present the solution for the CWP's future development. Rather, the preferred approach is to identify the elements from each priority that have the capacity not only to deliver significant benefit for the CWP in its own purpose, but that can also be manoeuvred to derive mutual benefit for the other priorities. It should be noted that this sentiment has been echoed throughout the consultation process.
- 4.8 As such, the option that will be used as the guiding context from which the vision and development framework for the whole of the CWP will be derived will be in relation to obtaining greatest mutual benefit between each of the core priorities. This vision and framework will be presented in the Stage III report.

5 Management and Governance

- 5.1 One of the consistent issues that emerged during the consultation process was that the previous CWP strategies had given too little consideration to the effective implementation of their proposals, and this related to the status of the plans themselves and of the organisations set up to deliver them.
- 5.2 The related issues therefore cover:
- the status of any proposals within the Local Development Framework;
 - the status of any CWP administrative organisation;
 - links to other regional or local development or management plans; and
 - re-adjustment of the current CWP boundaries to complement the emerging strategy.

Status of the proposals within the LDF

- 5.3 The brief for the preparation of this strategic review and implementation plan identified its potential designation as an Area Action Plan in order to give it the necessary authority within the relevant Local Authority Planning framework programmes.
- 5.4 The role of Area Action Plans (AAPs) is set out in Planning Policy Statement 12: - Local Development Frameworks and the Companion Guide. AAPs cover areas of significant development, or urban expansion, or regeneration opportunities, or “sensitive areas”, or areas which are the focus of various area based initiatives (ABIs).
- 5.5 AAPs should focus on implementation, and will not only deal with urban areas of significant change or development, but also areas of conservation and landscape management (both high quality and degraded landscapes).
- 5.6 The Companion Guide to PPS 12 (p.102) sets out some specific activities associated with producing an AAP:
- Undertake an overview of issues, natural resources, needs and constraints facing the AAP area, and how these relate to the wider spatial strategy for the local planning authority area as a whole.
 - Develop a spatial vision and spatial objectives for the area.
 - Consider linkages with policies in the regional spatial strategy.
 - Consider linkages with policies in other Development Plan documents, establishing the change of conformity with these.
 - Consider linkages and fit with other local strategies and initiatives including the community strategy, strategies for regeneration areas and the local transport plan.
 - Set out the details of the locations, type, allocations, and quantum of proposed development.

- Summarise the proposed strategy, including options for development which may include:
 - quantum and locations of development including site;
 - proposed improvements to community infrastructure (education, health, leisure etc) to meet additional needs resulting from development;
 - outline details of planning gain that will be sought and any other criteria for development (e.g. accessibility standards); and
 - outline strategy for maximising positive impacts (e.g. training initiatives) and mitigating negative impacts.
 - Set out details of the implementation document.
 - Set out details of the monitoring framework, including relevant targets and indicators.
 - Explain consultation arrangements.
- 5.7 The CWP meets the criteria for an AAP preparation, and the stakeholder commitment to the strategy set out in this report will ease the preparation of an LDF document that will cross local authority boundaries.
- 5.8 The Companion Guide specifically addresses the issue of cross-boundary AAPs, all of which have been covered in the development of these CWP proposals:

“**Joint approach** – area action plans may be produced jointly between authorities as some major areas of opportunity or zones of change may straddle authority boundaries. In these cases, authorities should liaise at an early stage so that, if appropriate, the location for the area action plan and relevant policies can be set out in their respective core strategies.

Where joint area action plans are produced, they will need to be carefully managed, which in practice is likely to require joint project teams and management arrangements. Key milestones will need to be agreed at the outset to enable them to be included in local development schemes and also to inform co-ordination in relation to main decision-making processes.”

CWP Administration

- 5.9 It is 40 years since the creation of the Cotswold Water Park and its Joint Committee, comprising the constituent County and District Councils, with additional representation from national agencies and local organisations. It has achieved a balance between the needs of local residents, gravel extraction, conservation and leisure activities and facilities. Particular achievements include the development of public access at Neigh Bridge and Keynes Park, the provision of the Western Spine Road and the buffer zones around the villages.
- 5.10 The Cotswold Water Park Society was established by the Joint Committee in 1996 to take on a management role for some of the emerging facilities and services, but struggled for ten years to be commercially viable. However, recent changes to the structure of the Society address this issue by making a clear distinction between trading and conservation activities, establishing separate trading enterprises for a range of services; entering into distinct Joint Ventures on major development schemes; and making more effective use of the various land holdings that they had secured over the years.

Issues

- 5.11 With these two organisations responsible for the strategic direction and day-to-day management of public facilities within the CWP, there are a number of issues still outstanding. These include:
- The widely recognised problem of the low profile of the CWP, whether locally, regionally or nationally, for its recreational, tourism or biodiversity significance.
 - The inconsistent application of strategic policy between the local authority partners.
 - The lack of executive powers and resources for the Joint Committee to enforce strategic policy and implement strategic proposals.
 - The lack of resources for day-to-day management of the CWP.

CWP Status

- 5.12 There are regular suggestions that the CWP should seek a formal status such as a National Park in order to secure national standing and a possible increase in resources. However, it is important to set out the criteria by which any potential change of status should be judged. These should include:
- Does it increase the capacity of the CWP to raise money from the public sector?
 - Does it increase the capacity of the CWP to raise money from the private sector?
 - Does it strengthen the ability to implement a new development framework?
 - Does political control over the future of the CWP remain at the local level?
 - Is the time taken to bring any such change acceptable?
 - Does it bring greater status and profile?
- 5.13 The options open to the CWP would appear to be:
1. National Park status, as has been sought by the Norfolk Broads.
 2. National Recreational Area status, similar to the National Forest.
 3. Statutory Park status, similar to the Lea Valley Regional Park.

National Park Status

- 5.14 National Park status would certainly achieve national status and enable any CWP Authority to be responsible for its own Development Planning and Control services. However, it would not by itself release greater financial resources and would lead to a greater loss of local control, since it would require the CWP Authority to follow the 'Sandford Principle' by supporting the case for conservation rather than recreation should the choice ever need to be made. This is because the National Park designation is to preserve a landscape rather than assist in the creation of a new one. This has been reflected in the recent case of the Norfolk Broads that

was not granted full status despite being on the original list of potential sites since the 1940s and having spent many years campaigning for a change of status.

National Recreation Area Status & Statutory Park Status

- 5.15 There are two examples of areas where considerable landscape change is being undertaken and specific 'status' has been obtained for the implementing organisation. The first is the Lea Valley Regional Park which is run by an independent statutory public authority established by Act of Parliament in 1966, which gave it powers to acquire land related to its fundamental purposes to support the provision of recreational facilities along the 10,000 acre linear park. Members are nominated by the constituent local authorities and any additional resources are raised from a precept on local council taxes.
- 5.16 The second is the National Forest, which is a new designation under the sponsorship of DEFRA, aiming for the afforestation of 200 square miles of central England. The National Forest Company has been established since 1996 to oversee grants for landowners towards tree planting and the provision of recreational and tourist facilities. This is a clearer example of managing a changing landscape, but one where it was decided that there was the need for the control by an agency such as Defra, in order to oversee a major grant scheme and give it some degree of national status.
- 5.17 It is clear that none of these options fully meet the criteria set out above. In particular they all involve a loss of local control or replace it with a local cost burden. Although they do provide some degree of national status this does not automatically insure access to increased resources or provide a higher profile in key markets for potential visitors. To the contrary, they make the areas susceptible to budget cuts in the sponsoring agency that would be beyond their control. In addition any such moves for national recognition would take many years to achieve and divert attention away from the immediate tasks and priorities.

Requirements

- 5.18 It is recommended that that the Cotswold Water Park should build up a regional status, while seeking recognition of its national significance. Based on the current structure of a Joint Committee providing local political guidance and representation with strategic direction, and a renewed CWP Society, the effort should be on linking the various aspirations of the CWP into regional or national plans and programmes. These would include:
- Recognition of the CWP within the Regional Spatial Strategy.
 - Assisting South West Tourism in supporting the emergence of a new tourism destination.
 - Assisting Sport England South West in reaching their very specific targets for increasing participation rates in recreational activity in the locality.
 - Working with Natural England in establishing an exemplary Green Infrastructure Network.
 - Working with Wildlife Trusts towards the ambitions of 'Living Landscapes'.
- 5.19 In addition, there needs to be a strengthening of the officer support by all the local authorities for the achievement of these objectives. It is clear that the CWP cannot secure a higher national profile before it achieves greater regional recognition (and that in turn requires greater

recognition among the partner local authorities) of the resources required to achieve any such improvement.

Tourism Destination Management Plans

- 5.20 The organisation of tourism within England was devolved to the Regional Development Agencies in April 2003. Following a period of preparing regional strategies and the clarification of roles between the South West RDA and South West Tourism, a system of sub regional organisations, Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), has been established. Although such a new approach was recommended because it was recognised that tourists did not often choose holiday destinations by local authority boundaries and local authorities themselves were increasingly reluctant or unable to fund support for tourism activities that are not on the list of their statutory responsibilities, it has been based on the nine local authority areas of Bath, Bournemouth and Poole, Bristol, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire (Cotswold and Forest of Dean).
- 5.21 However, the new system is based on a partnership between the local authorities and the private sector, aiming to streamline the provision of services by co-ordinating and pooling expertise and resources. Each DMO will be preparing delivery plans for tourism, generally known as Destination Management Plans (DMPs).

Relevance to the CWP

- 5.22 The newly established Wiltshire DMO is recruiting a new Chief Executive during November 2007 and one of the tasks identified during the first year is the preparation of a Destination Management Plan for Wiltshire.
- 5.23 The DMO for the Cotswolds and Forest of Dean has grown out of the former Gloucestershire Tourism structure and has already commissioned the production of a DMP (Draft Final DMP for Cotswolds and the Forest of Dean, April 2007). However it recognises that at present it is largely focused on marketing and support services activities. There is only a brief reference to the Cotswold Water Park as a new provider of accommodation and activities.
- 5.24 This plan currently excludes major product development investment e.g. Gloucester's city regeneration plans. It is suggested that major tourism and tourism-related projects should be included to deliver a more complete picture and that criteria should be agreed for what will be included; and a list of projects should be provided and inserted into the final version of the Plan.
- 5.25 The Cotswold Water Park is an example of 'major product development investment' that needs to be considered within the emerging DMPs for Wiltshire and Gloucestershire (Cotswolds and Forest of Dean). There needs to be close liaison with these two DMOs to ensure appropriate coverage of the development that will be taking place over the next few years and the tourism marketing and organisational implications that will follow.
- 5.26 Over time, it is anticipated that a greater critical mass of assets, attractions, accommodation businesses, and other facilities that can attract and support visits to the CWP will be available. This will allow the area to stand alone as a destination in its own right. At this point, a specific Destination Management Plan for the CWP should be considered.

CWP Boundary adjustments

- 5.27 The delineation of effective boundaries for the Cotswold Water Park is necessary for a number of reasons. The three key issues are political, planning and visitor related:
- Politically there is a need for consultation with and representation of those residents affected by the development that is taking place in the area.
 - Planning policies required to control such development need to address all such localities affected.
 - Visitors need to know the location and extent of the destination they are visiting, if the profile of the CWP is to be raised, locally and nationally.
- 5.28 The three main problems with the current boundaries are that:
- The original determination of the boundary allowed major anomalies to arise. For example, the omission of the central Parish of Marston Meysey that almost cuts the CWP in two, and the use of the upper River Thames as a boundary rather than an integral part of the landscape and its use as a recreational opportunity.
 - The subsequent growth of mineral extraction or related conservation or recreational activities beyond the current boundaries. Examples of this include the lakes north of Lechlade.
 - They do not allow for future growth. This will naturally be determined by approvals for future mineral extraction, and hence the likely direction of growth is east into Gloucestershire.
- 5.29 These boundary issues will be considered in relation to Stage III of the study, with a suitable recommendation presented for adjusting the extent of the area.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

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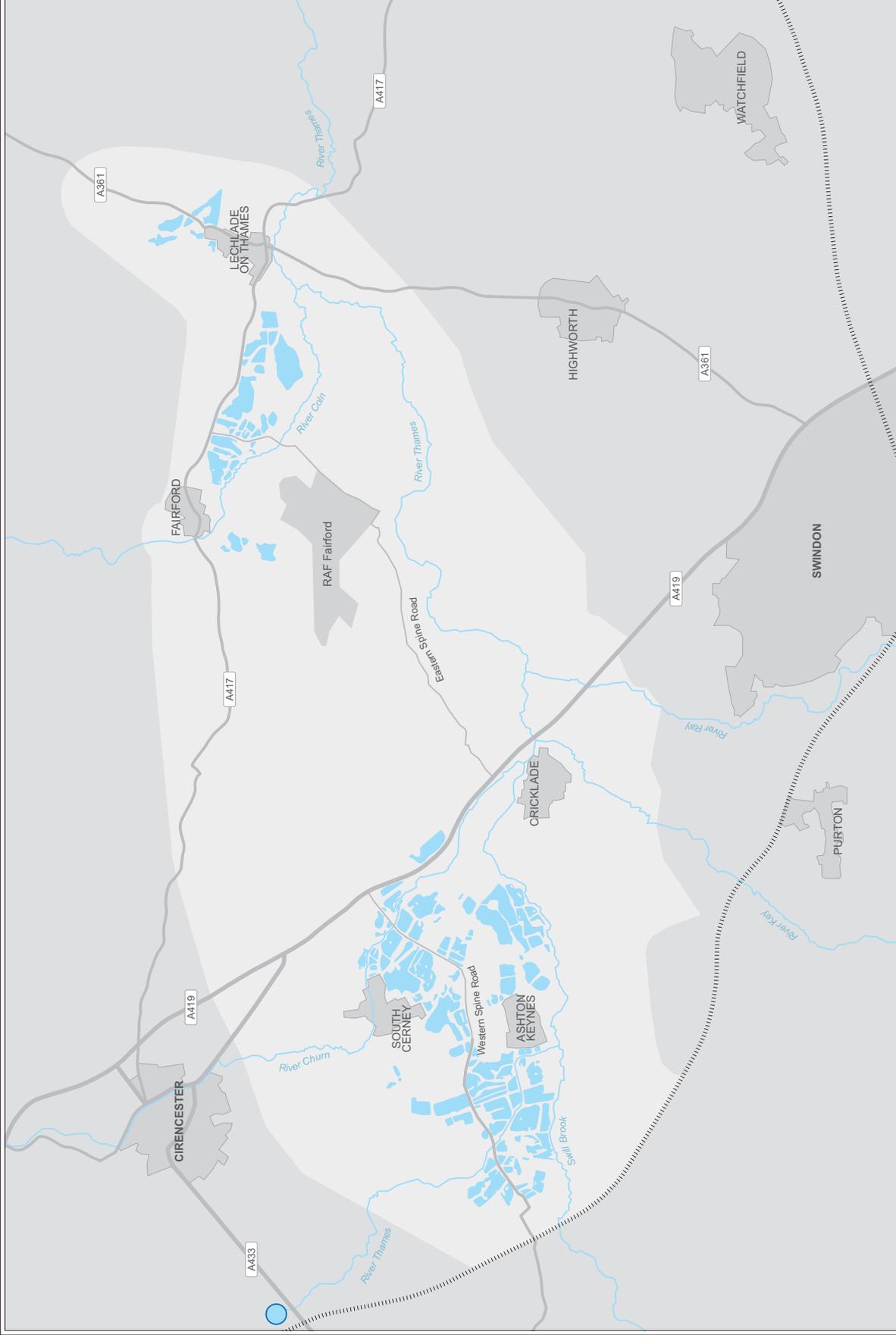
Cotswold Water Park Master Plan workshop Wed 26 Sept 7-8.30PM**GATEWAY CENTRE - Attendance list**

Organisation	Representative
Ashton Keynes Parish Council	Ms Diana Wain
Ashton Keynes Parish Council	Mr Russell Dabson
Butts Farm Rare Breeds and Shop	Ms Judy Hancox
Cotswold Sailing Club	Ms Anne Higgins
Cricklade Parish Council	Mr Rod Case
Go-by-Cycle	Miss Nina Chambers
Head 4 Heights	Ms Annika Cowley
Keuka Waterski Club	Mr David Bowen-Jones
Lechlade Trout Farm	Mr Charlie Keyser
Netherwood Lakes	Mr Tim Marks
Poole Keynes Parish Meeting	Mrs Jenny Cunningham
Somerford Keynes Parish Council	Ms Sarah Powell
Somerford Keynes Parish Council	Cllr Roger Sleaman
South Cerney Parish Council	Mr Philip Nicholas
South Cerney Parish Council	Mr James Harris
Thamesmead Ski	Mr Nick Freeth
The Firs High Road	Ms Karen Shaw
Waterland Outdoor Pursuits	Peter Pendlebury
Waterland Outdoor Pursuits	Jo Pendlebury
Whitefriars SC	Mr Whelan
Four Pillars Hotel	Kathy Wilson

APPENDIX B: MAPS



Key



Current Status

- The CWP has experienced over 40 years of mineral activity.
- The interplay between mineral extraction and hydrology has led to lake creation.
- 147 lakes created.

Overriding Development Considerations

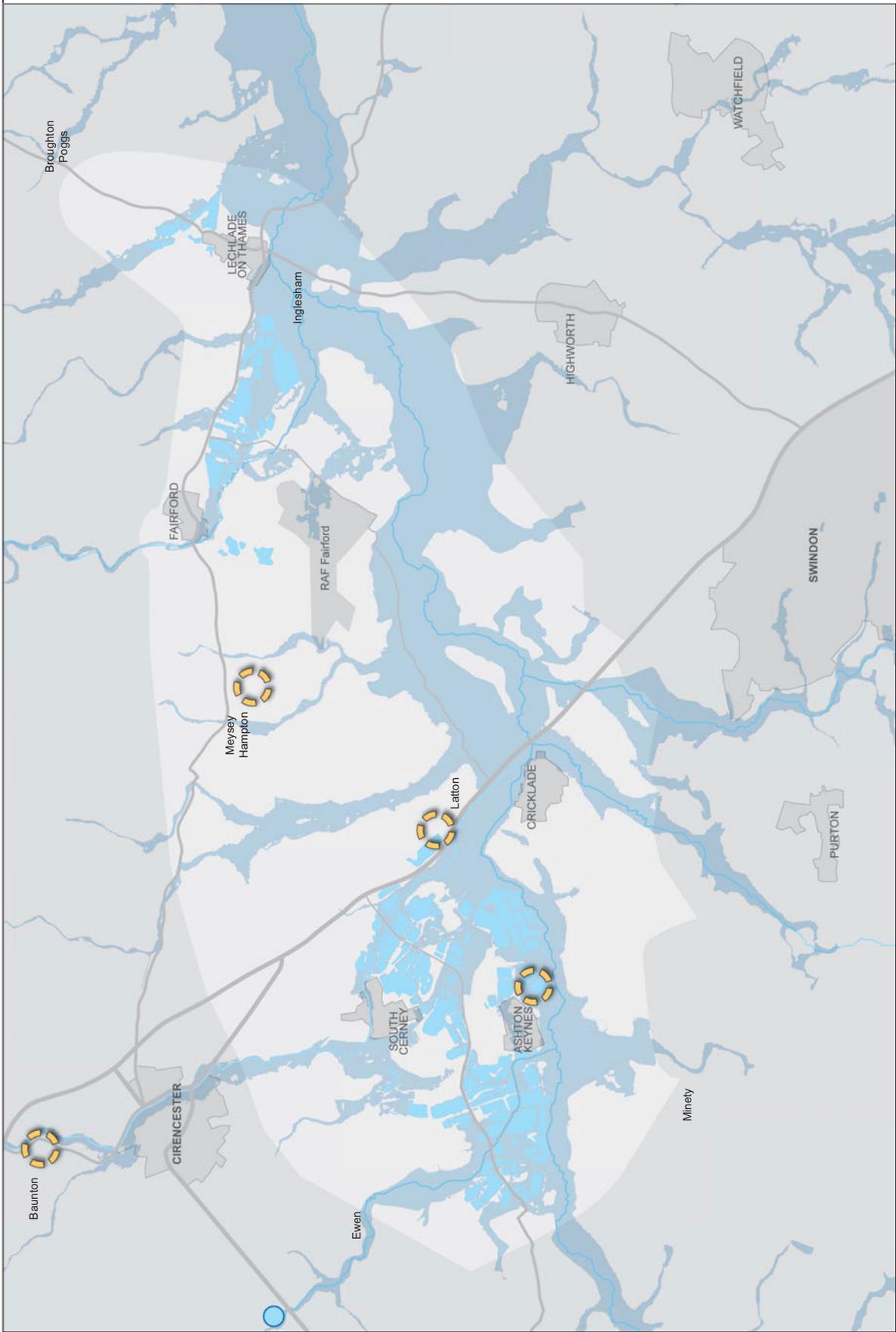
- Mineral extraction is set to continue for a minimum of 20 years.
- There is potential to create further water bodies.

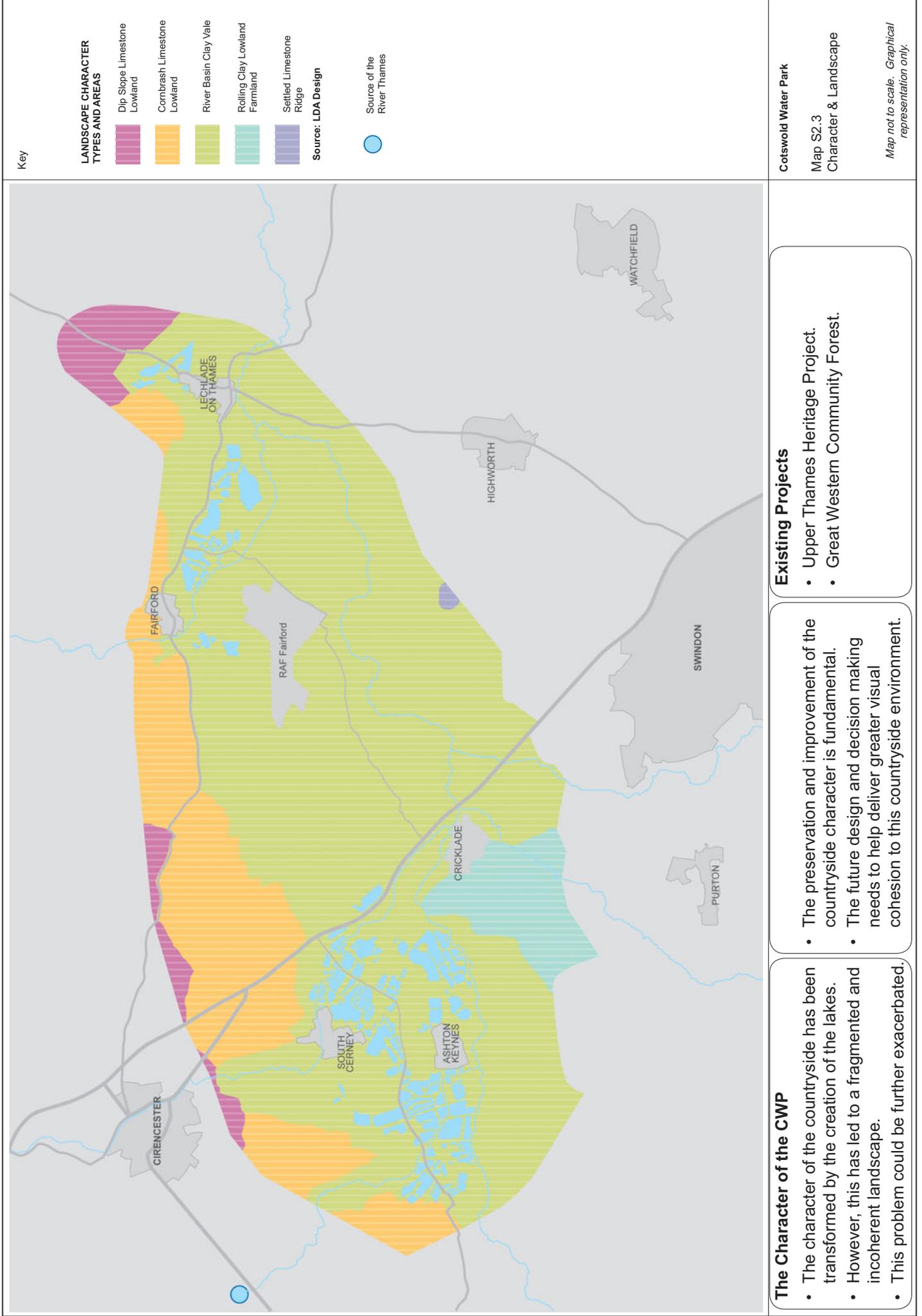
Opportunity

- There is scope within the CWP to deliver greater benefit for locals and visitors from the existing and future minerals activity.

Cotswold Water Park
Map S2.1
Base Map

Map not to scale. Graphical representation only.

<p>Key</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Thames Water abstraction sites  Floodzone  Source of the River Thames 	
<p>Cotswold Water Park</p> <p>Map S2.2 Hydrology</p> <p><i>Map not to scale. Graphical representation only.</i></p>	<p>Hydrology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hydrology has a key influence on the restoration strategies adopted for extraction sites. • Hydrology also has a direct links to other activities and drivers (sports, tourism, biodiversity). <p>• Future development needs to be assessed against hydrology issues - e.g. abstraction; low flow of rivers; aerodrome safeguarding; flood risk; impact on settlements; and retaining/improving the countryside character.</p>



Key

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES AND AREAS

- Dip Slope Limestone Lowland
- Combrash Limestone Lowland
- River Basin Clay Vale
- Rolling Clay Lowland Farmland
- Settled Limestone Ridge

Source: LDA Design

Source of the River Thames

The Character of the CWP

- The character of the countryside has been transformed by the creation of the lakes.
- However, this has led to a fragmented and incoherent landscape.
- This problem could be further exacerbated.

Existing Projects

- Upper Thames Heritage Project.
- Great Western Community Forest.

The Character of the CWP

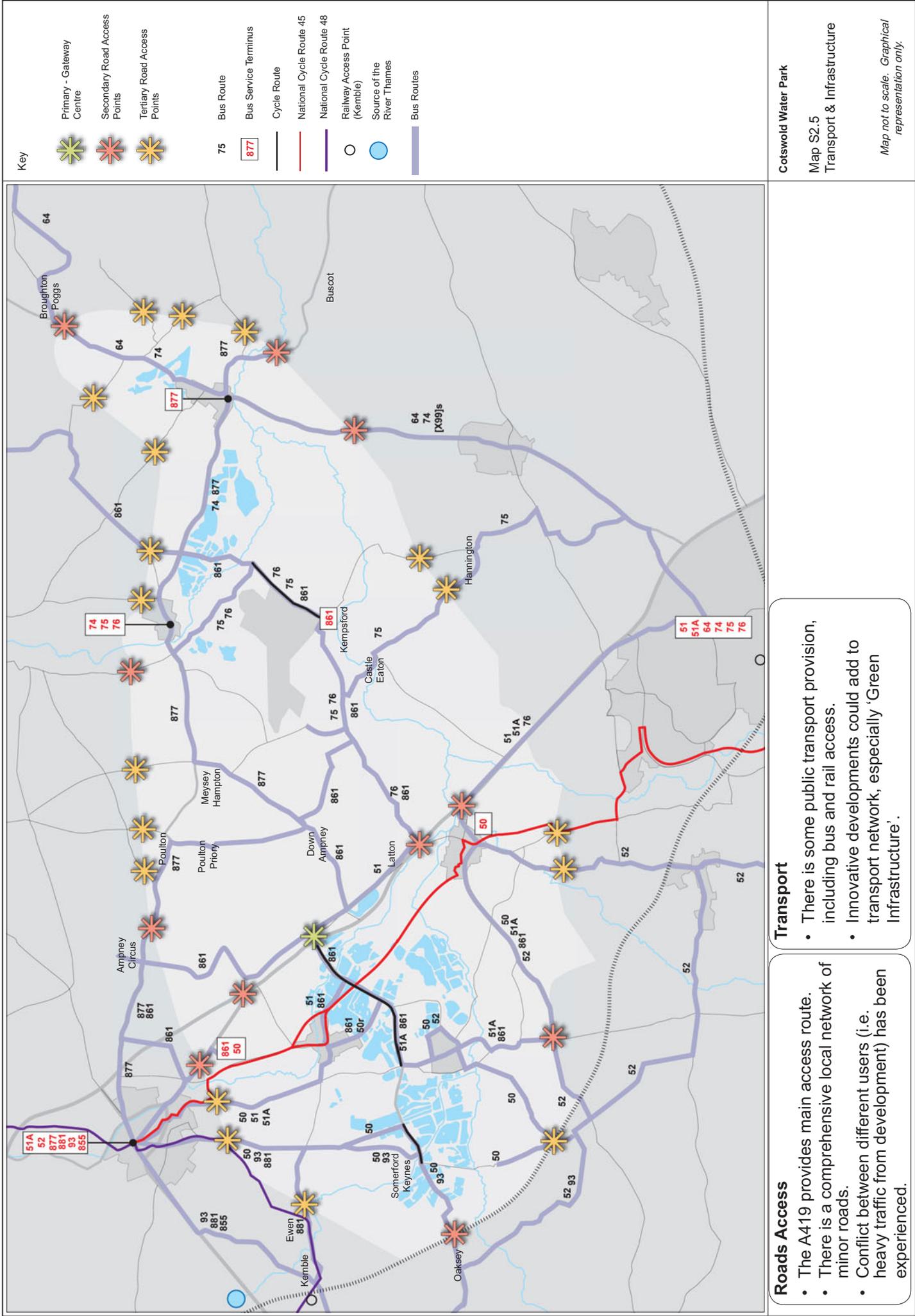
- The preservation and improvement of the countryside character is fundamental.
- The future design and decision making needs to help deliver greater visual cohesion to this countryside environment.

Cotswold Water Park

Map S2.3
Character & Landscape

Map not to scale. Graphical representation only.

<p>Key</p> <p>SETTLEMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary Settlements Secondary Settlements Tertiary Settlements <p>Source of the River Thames</p>	<p>The map displays the Cotswold Water Park area with various settlements. Settlements are color-coded: Primary (purple), Secondary (orange), and Tertiary (yellow). The River Thames is shown in blue, with its source marked by a blue circle. Major settlements include Cirencester (Primary), Swindon (Primary), and Lechlade-on-Thames (Secondary). Other labeled settlements include Broughton Poggs, Langford, Kelmscott, Buscot, Highworth, Watchfield, Purton, Cricklade, Ashton Keynes, South Cerney, Somerford Keynes, Cerney Wick, Latton, Down Ampney, Marston Meysey, Dunfield, RAF Fairford, Kempford, Castle Eaton, Meyse Hampton, Poulton, Poulton Priory, Ampney St Mary, Ampney St Peter, Ampney Circus, Poulton, Siddington, Ewen, Kemble, Oaksey, Upper Minety, and Minety.</p>
<p>Cotswold Water Park Map S2.4 Settlements</p> <p><i>Map not to scale. Graphical representation only.</i></p>	<p>Integration of the Towns & Villages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Settlements and communities form an integral part of the CWP. However, there is a lack of awareness of the CWP at a local level. <p>• There is a need to strengthen the sense of place for the CWP for the benefit of local residents and visitors alike.</p>



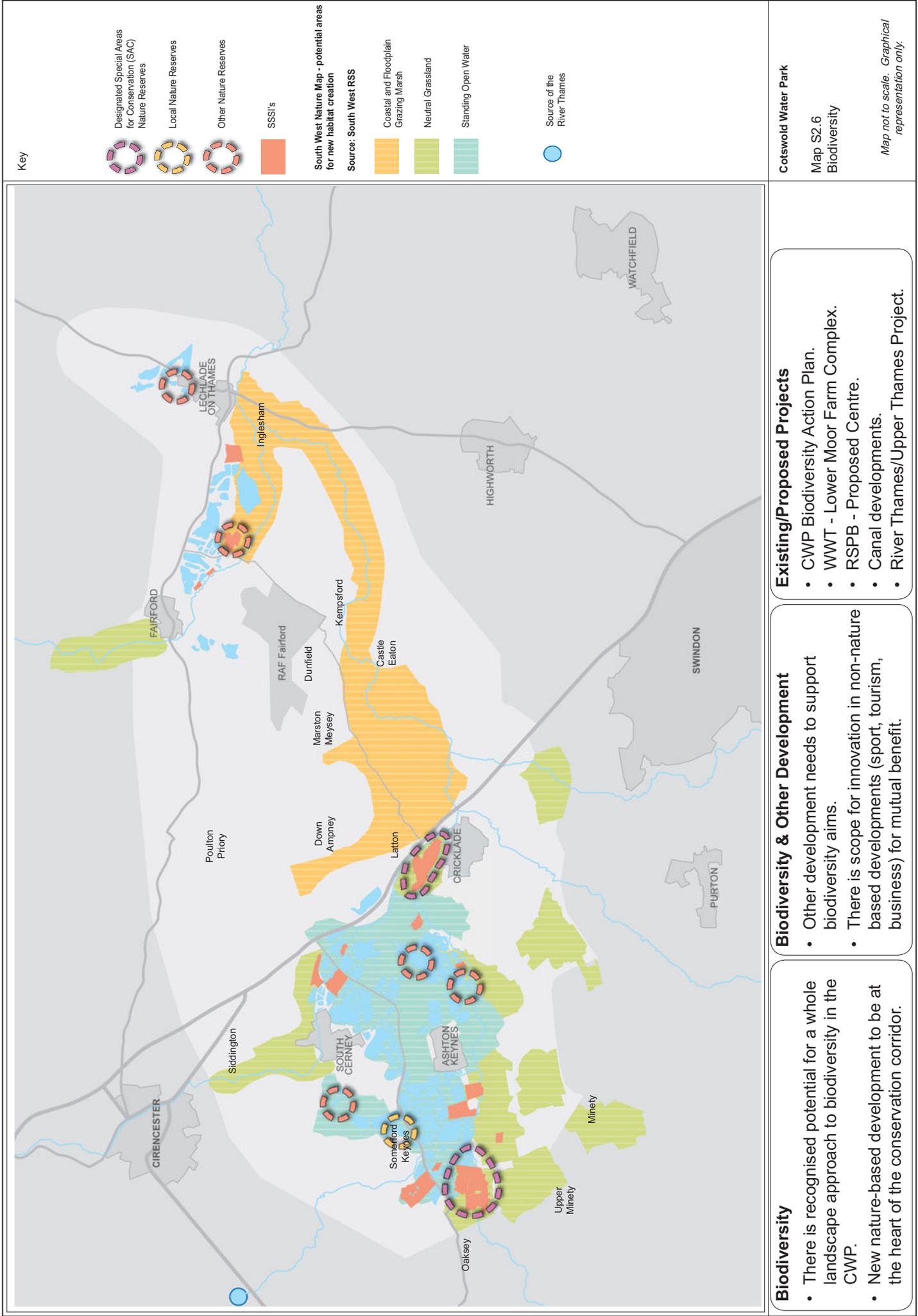
Roads Access

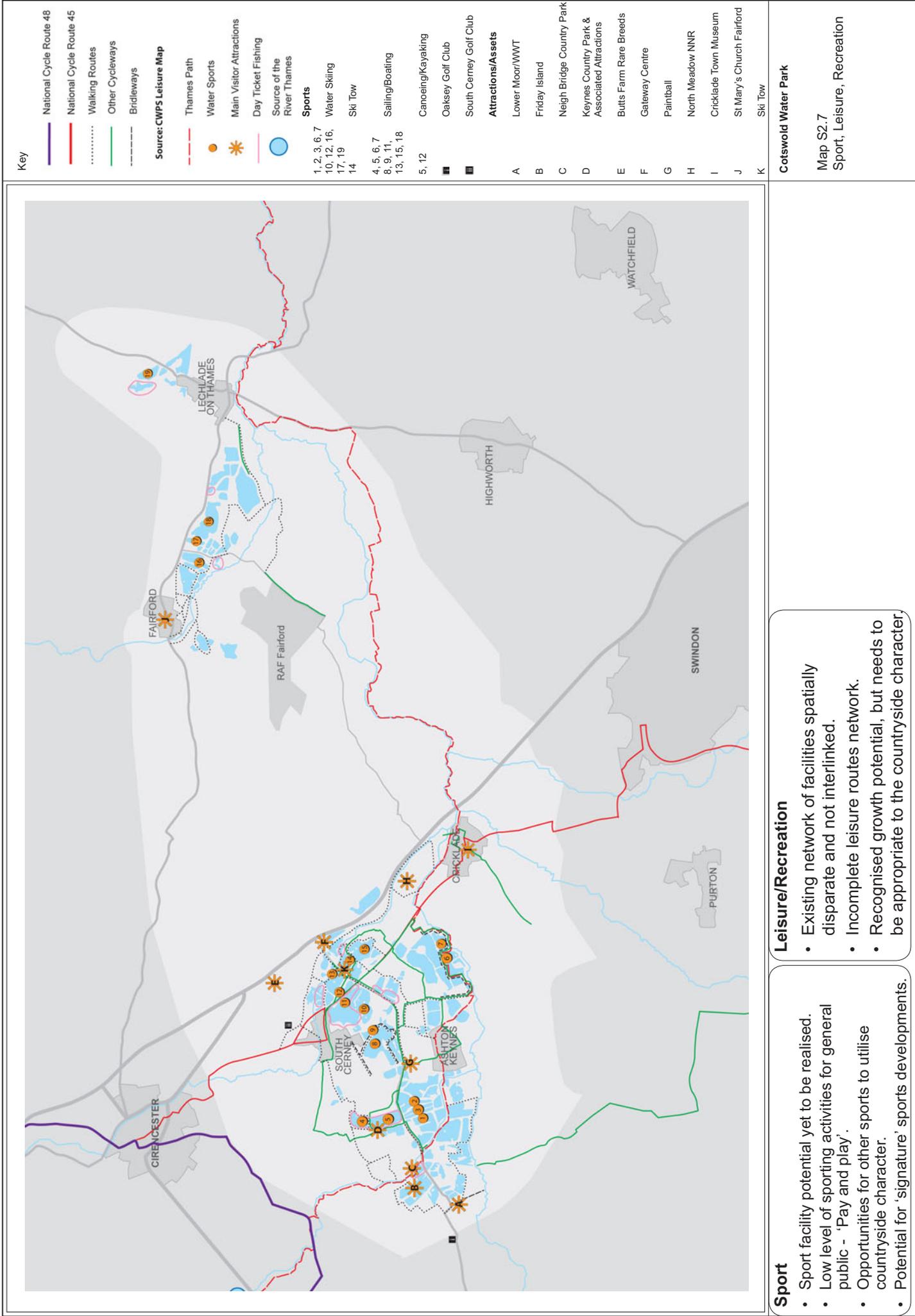
- The A419 provides main access route.
- There is a comprehensive local network of minor roads.
- Conflict between different users (i.e. heavy traffic from development) has been experienced.

Transport

- There is some public transport provision, including bus and rail access.
- Innovative developments could add to transport network, especially 'Green Infrastructure'.

Cotswold Water Park
 Map S2.5
 Transport & Infrastructure
Map not to scale. Graphical representation only.



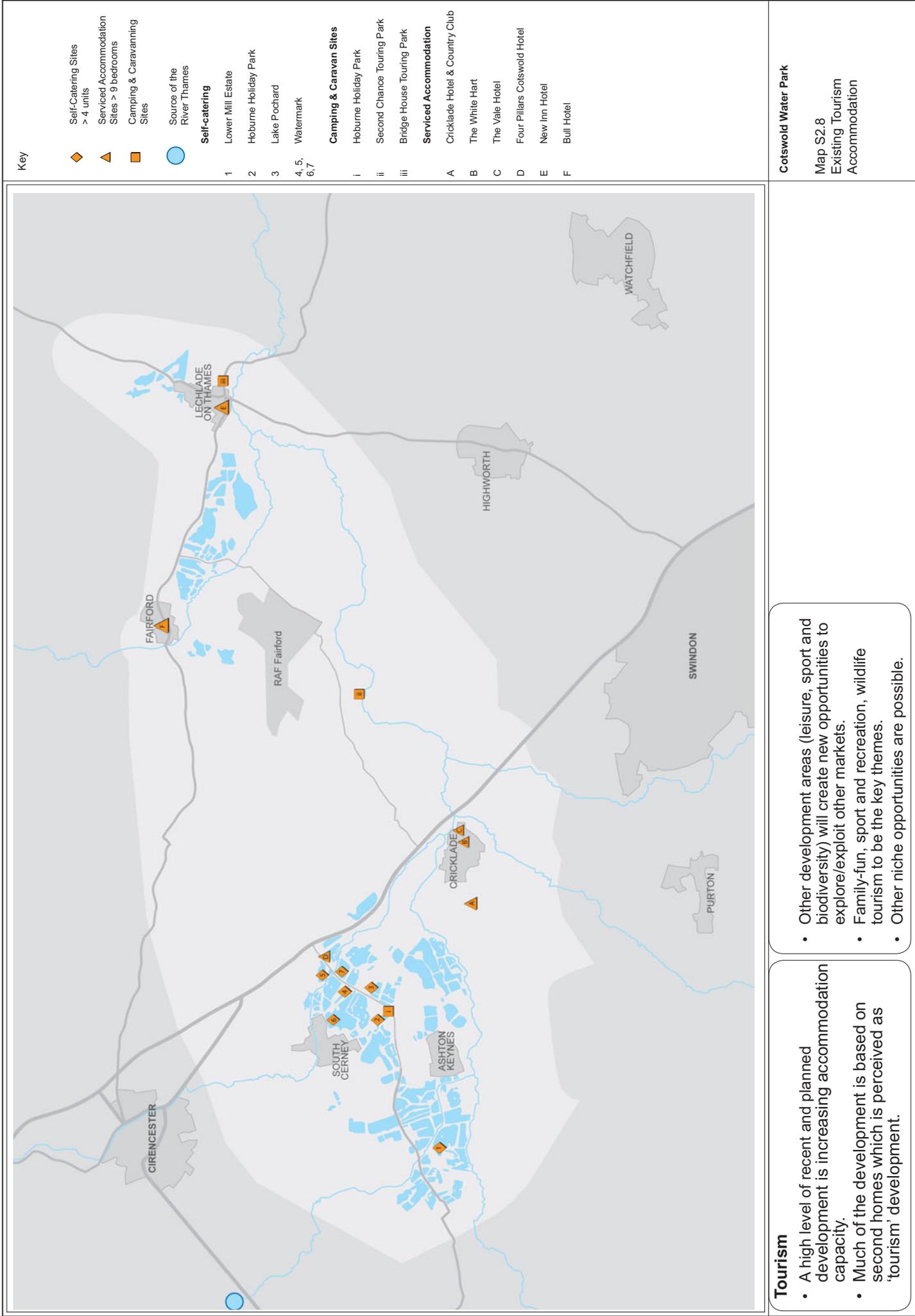


Leisure/Recreation

- Existing network of facilities spatially disparate and not interlinked.
- Incomplete leisure routes network.
- Recognised growth potential, but needs to be appropriate to the countryside character.

Sport

- Sport facility potential yet to be realised.
- Low level of sporting activities for general public - 'Pay and play'.
- Opportunities for other sports to utilise countryside character.
- Potential for 'signature' sports developments.

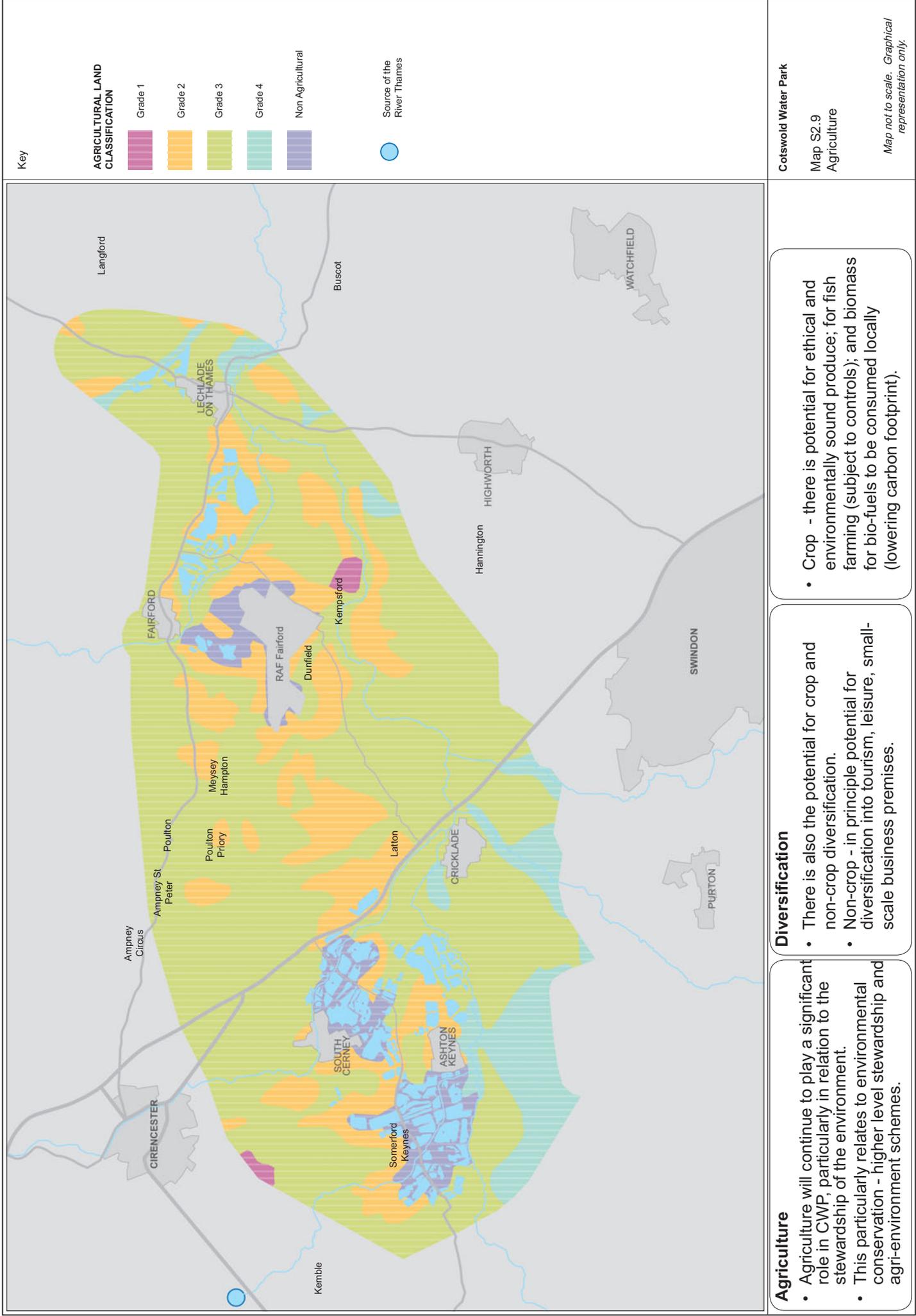


Tourism

- A high level of recent and planned development is increasing accommodation capacity.
- Much of the development is based on second homes which is perceived as 'tourism' development.

- Other development areas (leisure, sport and biodiversity) will create new opportunities to explore/exploit other markets.
- Family-fun, sport and recreation, wildlife tourism to be the key themes.
- Other niche opportunities are possible.

Cotswold Water Park
 Map S2.8
 Existing Tourism Accommodation



Cotswold Water Park

Map S2.9
Agriculture

Map not to scale. Graphical representation only.

Agriculture

- Agriculture will continue to play a significant role in CWP, particularly in relation to the stewardship of the environment.
- This particularly relates to environmental conservation - higher level stewardship and agri-environment schemes.

Diversification

- There is also the potential for crop and non-crop diversification.
- Non-crop - in principle potential for diversification into tourism, leisure, small-scale business premises.

- Crop - there is potential for ethical and environmentally sound produce; for fish farming (subject to controls); and biomass for bio-fuels to be consumed locally (lowering carbon footprint).

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