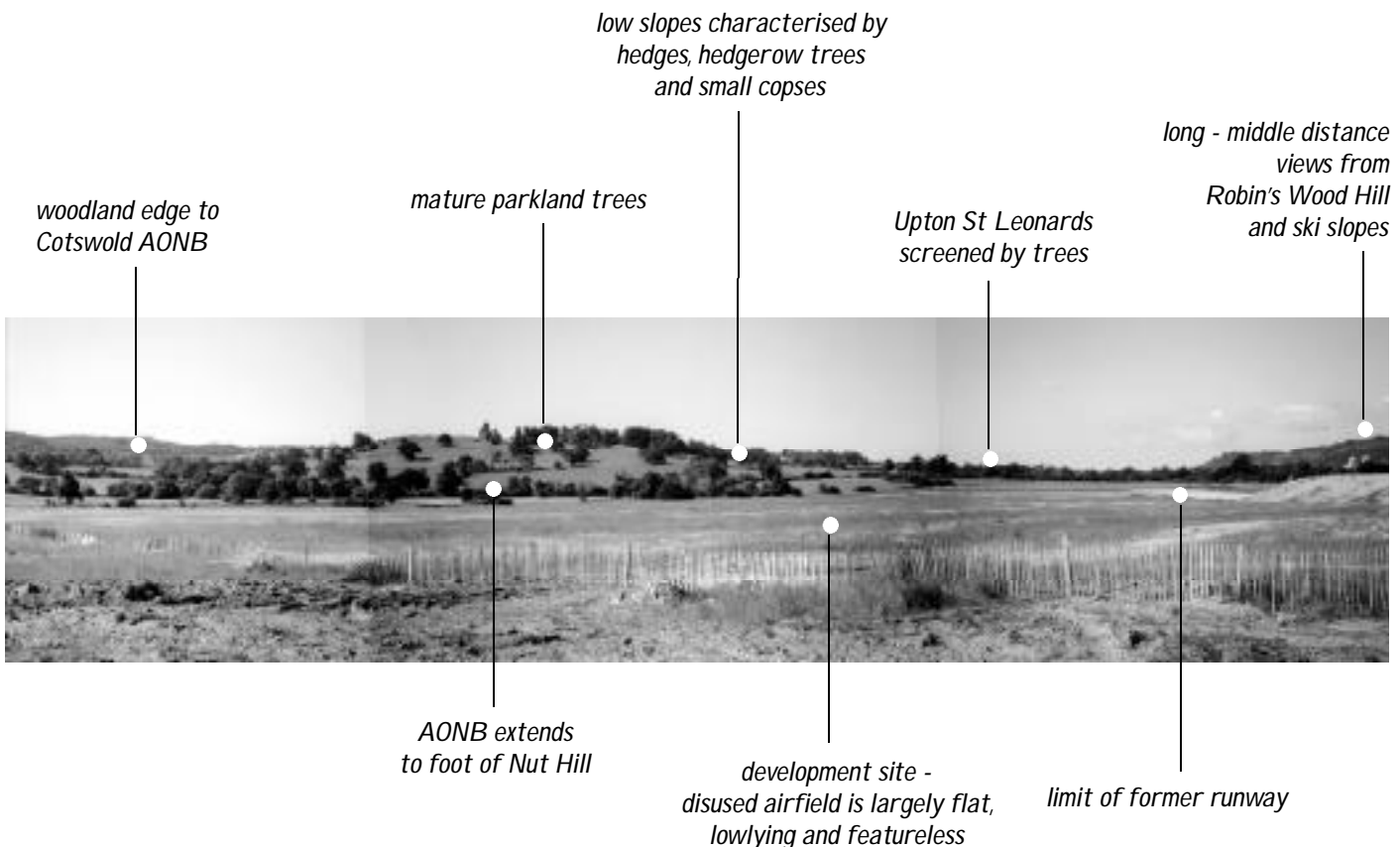


## Site survey and appraisal

A detailed site survey and appraisal is an essential pre-requisite of any new housing development, regardless of its size. Copies of a site survey should form a part of any planning application which seeks to determine the siting of houses (i.e. applications for full planning permission, and outline permissions and approvals of reserved matters where siting is to be determined). Every site has its own specific characteristics, some of which make a positive contribution to the quality of the site, and some of which will detract from that quality.

For a scheme to be successful, it is essential that the design is based upon a thorough understanding of the site, in such a way that it should be obvious that the new development has been designed for this specific site and is not just a standard solution.

A thorough survey takes time but is a short term cost for long term gain in terms of an improved product in the form of more desirable housing.



Each site has its own specific characteristics

### Site constraints

It is essential that site constraints are understood at an early stage so that the design is not compromised further down the line. These may include:

- *Ancient Monument*
- *Scheduled site for nature conservation*  
*eg - Nature Reserve, SSSI*
- *Tree Protection Order*
- *Listed Building*
- *Conservation Area*
- *Protected hedgerow*
- *Protected species such as Badgers or Bats*
- *Protected habitat eg Otter holt*
- *Under - or overground services and Wayleaves*
- *Access rights such as Public footpaths*

Specialist advice is available within the Council or from other statutory bodies (Environment Agency, English Nature, English Heritage), and other bodies, such as the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, to assist the developer to ensure that new development does not conflict with designations of special interest.

Other constraints may not have the force of law but may make development less profitable, eg steeply sloping land (too many outline plans fail to take the effect of topography into account), bedrock close to the surface, contaminated land, high or fluctuating water table. Attention also needs to be paid to how the site is to be accessed. A site survey should highlight any detrimental views or other adjacent land uses which create noise, smell, pollution or other undesirable activity.

Retention of established vegetation can lend maturity to a site and help to anchor it into the existing landscape.

### Site capital

Site capital may include:

- *Good views onto or from the site*
- *Mature trees, hedgerows and other vegetation*
- *Watercourses*
- *Walls, high quality traditional buildings*
- *Good orientation*
- *Good drainage and soils*
- *Shelter from prevailing winds*

Where possible, aspects of site capital should be retained and enhanced. Developers must ensure a high standard of protection to vegetation during construction works.



Particular features, if retained, may serve as landmarks in the development and reinforce a sense of place. This may be a specimen tree, a stream, an existing building or wall, or a hedgerow.



There may be historical associations which give another, cultural layer of meaning to the environment and which should be carefully integrated into the new design, possibly even providing a concept around which to develop the design.

Often aspects which may at first appear to be constraints can, if skilfully handled, turn out to be assets. For example, a sloping site can produce dramatic effects and create distinctive character, good views, and may also help to ensure privacy or screen parking areas and roads.

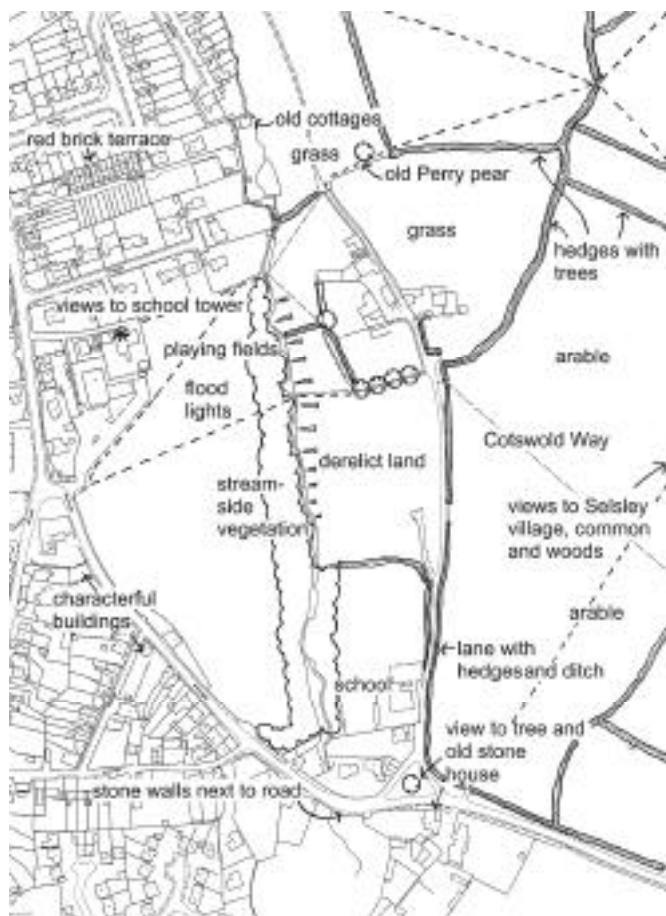


## Links to adjacent land and development

The development site cannot be considered in isolation. It has to belong in the broader environment in order to function successfully. This is not to rule out innovation, but any change to the existing context should be carefully considered and not appear to be arbitrary or careless. New buildings should tie in to the colours and massing of surrounding buildings. Landscape patterns should, as far as possible, be extended into the development by means of green corridors with trees, hedgerows or watercourses,

and where there are distinctive traditional boundary treatments such as dry stone walls or hedges with hedgerow trees, this pattern should be incorporated. Roads should link in with existing networks and connect to places of public interest, schools, shops etc.

Where habitat is preserved or created for nature conservation, this will be much more valuable if it is linked to other similar features in the wider environment.



The following are examples of aspects which maybe relevant to analysis of the site context:

- **Settlements:** pattern/size
- **Roads and footpaths:** network/character
- **Buildings:** style/material
- **Land use:** agricultural/recreational/industrial etc
- **Enclosures:** type/pattern/scale
- **Vegetation:** species/patterns/scale
- **Water:** streams, ponds, wetlands etc
- **Views:** in/out of site, screening existing/required
- **Landmarks:** built/natural (inc trees)

### Other guidance

The developer should be aware of and have regard to the recommendations of Stroud District Council's Landscape Assessment. Where additional specific guidance exists, in the form of published Village Design Statements, Village Landscape Statements or similar, the developer should have regard to these from an early stage.