

IDENTIFICATION OF
KEY VIEWS TO AND
FROM THE MALVERN
HILLS AREA OF
OUTSTANDING
NATURAL BEAUTY

A Report prepared by
Cooper Partnership for
the Malvern Hills AONB
Partnership

March 2009

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malvern hills
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
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Section 1 Introduction

Purpose of Study

- 1.1 Cooper Partnership was commissioned in November 2008 by the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership, to identify key views towards and from the spine of the Malvern Hills, and from within the wider AONB. It was agreed that the focus of the study would be the spine of hills, which represents the highest and most visually dominant feature of the AONB.
- 1.2 The aims of the study are to:
 - i grade the identified views in terms of their importance, and how representative they are of the range of typical views;
 - ii establish criteria to describe why views are important;
 - iii evaluate the intervisibility and relationship between the AONB and landscapes surrounding it; and
 - iv establish the hinterland around the AONB that is common, and important, to the views.
- 1.3 The study does not seek to provide a definitive list of views. Instead, it identifies a representative selection of typical views and sets out assessment criteria for determining important views, which can be applied to other viewpoints and sites.
- 1.4 The aim is that this study is used by the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership, and officers within local planning authorities, as an assessment tool to assist in decision making processes such as the evaluation of new planning applications and policy review in terms of:
 - i recognising key views and their associated viewing corridors as a material consideration, and prioritisation of their protection;
 - ii assessing the sensitivity and capacity of the landscape within these views to accommodate development and other land use changes; and
 - iii assessing the appropriateness of various types of development within view corridors.
- 1.5 To address the last two issues, an initial broad assessment of the sensitivity and capacity of key views to accommodate change is set out in Section 6.
- 1.6 Recommendations for further studies are given in Section 7.
- 1.7 The Malvern Hills AONB Views Project has been managed by a steering group (hereafter called the Steering Group), comprising representatives from:
 - i Malvern Hills AONB Unit;
 - ii Herefordshire Council;
 - iii Worcestershire County Council;
 - iv Malvern Hills District Council; and
 - v Natural England.
- 1.8 Input has been also received from the Director of the Malvern Hills Conservators.

Background Information

- 1.9 A review of extant approaches to identifying and recording views was undertaken. References for

assessment guidance and other background documents are given in Appendix 6.

- 1.10 Relevant study reports that have been already undertaken by the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership include:
- i The Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Management Plan 2004-2009;
 - ii The Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2009-2014;
 - iii State of the Malvern Hills AONB Report (2006), which sets out a programme to monitor landscape change;
 - iv Restoring the Views from the Hills Above Malvern (2006), Malvern Hills Conservators; and
 - v The Malvern Hills Conservators Management Plan 2006-2012.

Format of Study Report

- 1.11 The report comprises two documents, namely:
- i this A4 written report, which sets out the methodology for the assessment (Section 2), and describes the findings of the Views Project Study (Sections 3 – 5 inclusive); and
 - ii an accompanying A3 document containing analysis plans, photographs and appendices.

Section 2 Methodology

Introduction

- 2.1 The methodology seeks to be as objective as possible, and is based on current, best practice guidance for visual assessment (see reference, in Appendix 6). The evaluation of the importance of views is also based upon the experience and knowledge of chartered landscape architects.
- 2.2 Any limitations of the study in respect of determining key views towards and from the AONB, and the evaluation of their importance and sensitivity, have been stated in the methodology below and within the assessment of views described in Sections 4 to 6 inclusive.

Study Areas

- 2.3 The spatial scope of the study area was determined by the broad geographical area from where the Malvern Hills AONB can be seen. This is the Visual Envelope, which is shown on Plan L01. The Visual Envelope describes the intervisibility between the spine of the Malvern Hills (its most visible and characteristic part), and the surrounding bowl of high land, which includes the Cotswold and Shropshire AONBs and the Brecon Beacons National Park (Black/Welsh Mountains).
- 2.4 A limit of 50km from the spine of the Malvern Hills was set for an outer survey area. At this distance the peaks of the Malvern Hills are silhouetted on the distant skyline, and are only visible in excellent weather conditions.
- 2.5 A limit of 15km was agreed with the Steering Group for an inner, more detailed survey area. Professional experience and site observation has shown that the naked eye has difficulty in judging the textural components of the landscape in views, or any changes that may arise, beyond this distance.

Assessment Method

- 2.6 The assessment considers visual, landscape, and landscape character matters as separate, but linked, issues. Views to and from the Malvern Hills AONB largely comprise landscape elements typical of the locality such as an undulating landform, agricultural land uses, river floodplains, tree cover, historic field and hedgerow patterns and church spires. Urban elements include larger settlements, transport corridors and overhead power lines.
- 2.7 The assessment has adopted an ordered sequential process, as follows:
 - i a desktop study of published documents (see Appendices 6 and 7);
 - ii collation of background information on issues such as landscape designations, landscape character, and notable landscape and cultural heritage features;
 - iii discussions with the Steering Group, the purpose of which was to identify and agree a representative selection of viewpoints to and from, the Malvern Hills AONB, and the general parameters of the wide and inner study areas;
 - iv identification of representative, key long distance views within the outer 50km study area, carried out by means of site work, the purpose of which study was to identify the main elements of intervisibility between the Malvern Hills and the surrounding AONBs and Welsh Mountains;
 - v identification of more local views, within the inner 15km study area, with the same purpose as iv above;
 - vi reduction of the initial selection of approximately 200 potential viewpoints to an assessment of 50 key viewpoints (see Appendix 7), in order to develop a checklist of defining attributes important to the views to, and from within, the Malvern Hills AONB; from many of the potential viewpoints, the view of the Malvern Hills was considered to be typical rather than significantly

different and important;

vii refinement of the checklist of attributes to form one of the main outputs of the study; and

viii an initial, broad assessment of view sensitivity and their capacity to accommodate change.

- 2.8 Development of the assessment methodology has been an iterative process involving site survey and observation, testing of hypotheses, and application of the experience of chartered landscape architects. This is in part due to the fact that the importance of views is partly attributable to their landscape and townscape context, which is best tested in the field.

Baseline Data

- 2.9 The sources of baseline data are summarised in Table 1 below, and a list of reference documents set out in Appendix 6:

Table 1 - Data Sources	
Baseline Topic	Data Source
Landscape Planning Designations Scheduled Monuments Historic Forts Listed Buildings Registered Historic Parklands Other Historic Parklands and Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cotswold District Local Plan April 2006; • Forest of Dean District Local Plan Review November 2005; • Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan March 2007; • Malvern Hills District Local Plan July 2006; • Tewkesbury Borough Local Plan March 2006; • Wychavon District Local Plan June 2006; • Worcestershire Structure Plan 1996-2011 (Adopted June 2001).
National Landscape Character	Countryside Agency's Character of England's National and Manmade Landscape: Volume 5: West Midlands.
Landscape Character Type	Local Landscape Type: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest of Dean District Council, Forest of Dean Landscape Character Assessment 2002; • Herefordshire Council, Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2004; • Worcestershire County Council, Planning for Landscape in Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment 2008.
Established Viewpoints (for example beacons)	OS Explorer Maps OL14, OL45, 179, 189, 190, 202, 203, 204, 205 and 220
Public Rights of Way (including National Cycle Routes and Regional Long Distance Footpaths)	
Other Visitor Designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destination Worcestershire website; • English Heritage website; • Herefordshire Council website; • National Trust website.
Artistic and Cultural Associations	See Appendix 7

- 2.10 The following plans have been produced in order to provide information for the assessment process:

- i Plan L01, which shows the visual envelope for the wider 50km study area, annotated with the location of long distance viewpoints;
- ii Plan L02, which shows the intervisibility between Malvern Hills and surrounding AONBs, Welsh Mountains and long distance viewpoints;
- iii Plans L03 to L05, which show the existing topography, landscape character, and landscape planning designations respectively;
- iv Plans L06 to L09, which show the location of historic, cultural heritage, movement corridor and

- other visitor destination viewpoints within 15km of the Malvern Hills AONB;
- v Plan L10, which shows the frequency of visual receptors within the inner 15km study area; and
- vi Plans L11A-11C, which show the identified important views towards the Malvern Hills, both from outside and inside the AONB boundary; and
- vii Plan L12B, which shows identified important views looking outwards from the Malvern Hills AONB.

Description of Views

- 2.11 Photographs, showing the identified views, were taken using an Olympus digital camera E-300 Basic Manual, with Zuiko Digital 14-45mm f-3.5-5.6 lens. The focal length of the digital camera was set to the equivalent of a 50mm focal length, the closest focal length to natural eyesight, as advised by the Landscape Institute (see Reference 9). Photographs were printed at 300dpi.
- 2.12 Site photographs are contained in Appendix 3, and have been annotated to identify where the Malvern Hills may be seen in the view, together with other skyline or landmark features to help orientate the viewer.
- 2.13 Where low winter light levels have reduced the clarity of photographs, the silhouette of the Malvern Hills has been highlighted by a red outline on the photograph to illustrate what the naked eye actually sees on site.
- 2.14 A description of each view is provided in Appendix Tables L1 and L2, including where appropriate, night-time views. Identified viewpoint locations for long distance views are given on Plan L02, and within the inner (15km) study area and AONB boundary on Plans L11a-L11C and L12.
- 2.15 Views are described in these tables in terms of their location, landscape character, landscape planning designation, type of viewpoint, type and number of viewers, where Malvern Hills are seen in the view, key components of the view, the perception of the viewer, and the resultant importance of the view, as described below.

Location

- 2.16 External viewpoints (those looking towards the AONB) are described in the tables in terms of their geographical location and OS coordinates. Approximate distances from the spine of the Malvern Hills and boundary of the AONB (9km at its widest point) are described in the following terms:
 - i long distance views: a minimum of 15km from the spine of hills;
 - ii distant views: 7-15km from the spine of hills, more than 3km beyond the AONB boundary;
 - iii medium views: 5 – 7km from the spine of hills, 1- 3 km beyond the AONB boundary; and
 - iv local views: within 1km of the AONB boundary and including selected views within the AONB.
- 2.17 Internal viewpoints within the AONB are described with reference to their geographical location and OS coordinates.

Landscape Planning Designations

- 2.18 The importance of viewpoints has been informed by, but does not rely on, whether the viewpoint lies within a designated landscape area such as AONB, Area of Great Landscape Value, Special Landscape Area or Conservation Area.

Type of Viewpoint

- 2.19 Viewpoints have been described in terms of:

- i The national landscape character area in which they lie (see Plan L04); please note that local landscape character types have not been considered in this study, due to their very great number within the inner (15km) study area;
- ii their historic importance such as scheduled hill forts (see Plan L06);
- iii their cultural heritage importance such as registered historic parklands and conservation areas (see Plan L07);
- iv whether they comprise movement corridors such as motorways, local roads, railways, national cycle routes and public footpaths (see Plan L08); and
- v whether the viewpoint is an established viewpoint or visitor destination such as viewing beacon, toposcope, National Trust property, or lies within a country park (see Plan L09).

Number and Type of Viewers

- 2.20 The number of viewers is described as few, moderate or many. Where viewers have a proprietary interest in the view, this is recorded in the table
- 2.21 The type of viewer is described as vehicular, railway passenger, pedestrian, cyclist or equestrian.

General Description of View

- 2.22 Each view is described in terms of whether:
- i it is panoramic, elevated, glimpsed, open, oblique, framed (contained);
 - ii there are dominant elements in the fore, mid-ground or on the distant skyline;
 - iii it is an essentially rural or urban view;
 - iv there is a flattened perspective from an elevated viewpoint;
 - v whether the view is framed by built development, landform or trees; and
 - vi whether seasonal change is likely to change the view.

The Malvern Hills

The Malvern Hills are described where they are seen in external views, in terms of whether:

- i they dominate the skyline, or seen in context of other hills;
- ii just the spine of hills and/or wider part of AONB are visible;
- iii the hills represent a small or wide part of the view;
- iv the full north-south length/axis is visible in view, or just end group of hills; and
- v the hills seen as silhouette on distant skyline or behind other hills, or form a strong skyline feature.

Key Components of the View

- 2.23 As well as a general description of the view, key components are separately identified where these positively contribute to, or negatively detract from, the importance, distinctiveness, and attractiveness of the view. For 180° and 360° views, these have been separately described for the core and peripheral viewing corridor area (the field of vision).
- 2.24 One of the special features of the Malvern Hills AONB is its unspoilt semi-natural environment.

For example, features that positively contribute to views include contrasting fore or mid-ground landscapes (within or outside the AONB boundary) and dramatic skylines, exceptional features such as historic towers, sense of containment; or predominantly rural setting.

- 2.25 Detractors in views include busy transport corridors, overhead power lines, large-scale or extensive development where these are intrusive.

Perception of the View

- 2.26 The assessment describes how views are perceived, noting that they will vary with the type of observer, their interaction with natural and cultural components of that view, their expectations, and the resultant psychological experience triggered by the view. Typical experiences could include a sense of tranquillity or distant prospect, the 'wow factor', or other associations such as where the Malvern Hills represent a route marker or landmark. These have been recorded for views where they were noticeably experienced by the chartered landscape architects undertaking the survey. This is an aspect of the assessment that could be complimented by further study (see Section 7).

Night-time Views

- 2.27 The presence of existing light sources within, and surrounding, the AONB have been recorded, including areas of visible sky glow. Similarly, areas that are intrinsically dark have been recorded.

Importance of Views Towards the Malvern Hills

- 2.28 The importance of views towards the Malvern Hills, from both outside and within the AONB boundary, has been determined firstly by the degree to which the silhouette and character of the Malvern Hills is crucial to the composition and enjoyment of that view, and secondly by the importance of the viewpoint itself. These views have been categorised in descending order of importance as exceptional, special and representative, as described in Table 2 below.

Table 2 –Importance of Views Towards the Malvern Hills (including views within the AONB boundary)			
View/Viewpoint Criteria	Exceptional	Special	Representative
Characteristics of View	Malvern Hills form a dominant part of view and their whole silhouette is clearly visible and may be seen in context of wider AONB area; Malvern Hills are essential to the enjoyment of the view and make an impression upon the viewer.	Malvern Hills are prominent on skyline and important to the enjoyment of the view; but view is not enhanced by its contextual setting (for example the presence of visual detractors such as pylons); or view is partly screened by intervening landform or vegetation cover.	Malvern Hills do not form main focus of view and are incidental to its enjoyment, or form part of distant skyline and are seen together with other hills; or are only glimpsed; or view noticeably degraded by visual detractors (for example urban and highway structures).
Established Viewpoints	Dedicated viewing area with interpretation signage, recorded on OS maps and in publications as having panoramic views; opportunity to take prolonged view (for example viewing beacons or toposcope); viewpoint of national importance.	Popular viewpoint with dedicated viewing area, where viewers may stop to take the view (for example seating area within town park or common land); viewpoint of regional importance.	Other viewpoints of the locality.
Historic Viewpoints	Scheduled, historic site of national importance, where original site selection was partly attributable to it having a view of the Malvern Hills and prospect of surrounding landscape (for example certain hill forts, or publicly accessible scheduled monuments).	Scheduled, historic site of regional importance that is publicly accessible.	Other, unscheduled historic sites of local importance.

View/Viewpoint Criteria	Exceptional	Special	Representative
Cultural Heritage Viewpoints	Cultural heritage site of national importance; for example, publicly accessible Grade I Registered Historic Parkland or Garden with designed view towards Malvern Hills (for example tree lined avenue or dedicated seating/viewing area); or birthplace/ home of nationally famous artist, author or poet whose work has been inspired by Malvern Hills.	Cultural heritage site of regional importance; for example, Conservation Area where street pattern affords vista towards Malvern Hills; or place associated with locally famous poet, author or artist whose work has been inspired by Malvern Hills	Other cultural heritage site of local importance (for example un-registered historic park or garden); or sites not open to the public.
Movement Corridor Viewpoints	Where viewer has a unique and prolonged/unfolding view of the Malvern Hills from a main transport corridor, scenic holiday route or national cycle route; hills represent a way finding landmark; view is free from visual detractors (for example highway structures).	Where viewer has the opportunity to appreciate the view; for example, approach road leading towards AONB, regional long distance footpath, or well used bridleway with tranquil and rural setting.	Other views from movement corridors, which are typical of the locality; or have fleeting view of Malvern Hills; are degraded by presence or urban/highway structures.
Other Visitor Designation Viewpoints	Visitor designations of national importance (for example a National Trust site).	Visitor designations of regional importance.	Other visitor designations within the locality.
Designated Landscape Area or Character Type Viewpoints	Designated and protected area of national importance (for example AONB, National Park); or highly valued and unique area of intact landscape character, quintessential to the identity of the area.	Designated and protected area of regional/district importance (for example SLA, AGLV); or valued area of intact landscape character that contributes to the enjoyment and identity of the area.	Other local designated areas (for example protected by countryside and open spaces policies); or area of typical landscape character, that may have suffered some degradation.

Importance of Views Looking Out from the Malvern Hills AONB

2.29 The importance of views looking out from the AONB has been defined in Table 3 using similar criteria:

View/Viewpoint Criteria	Exceptional	Special	Representative
Characteristics of View	Highly valued, unique, panoramic view or long distance view across intact and quintessential landscapes of Herefordshire, Worcestershire and/or Gloucestershire; allows for appreciation and understanding of wider surroundings of the AONB; does not replicate another view; allows the enjoyment of well known landmarks.	Panoramic or long distance view including dramatic scenery and skyline; allows appreciation of the more intimate setting of the AONB and the relationship of its landscape character types; may be comparable to other views.	Typical view, which may be replicated elsewhere; presence of visual detractors may degrade quality of view; narrow or glimpsed view.

Table 3 –Importance of Views Looking Out from Malvern Hills AONB			
View/Viewpoint Criteria	Exceptional	Special	Representative
Established Viewpoints	Dedicated viewing area with interpretation signage, recorded on OS maps and in publications as having panoramic views; opportunity to take prolonged view (for example viewing beacons or toposcope); a viewpoint of national importance.	Popular viewpoint with dedicated viewing area, where viewers may stop to take the view (for example seating within area of Common land); viewpoint of regional importance.	Other viewpoints of the locality.
Historic Viewpoints	Scheduled, historic site of national importance, where original site selection was partly attributable to it having a view of the surrounding landscape (for example certain hill forts, or publicly accessible scheduled monuments).	Scheduled, historic site of regional importance that is publicly accessible.	Other, unscheduled historic sites of local importance.
Cultural Heritage Viewpoints	Cultural heritage site of national importance; for example, publicly accessible Grade I Registered Historic Parkland or Garden with designed view towards the surrounding landscape (for example tree lined avenue or dedicated seating/viewing area); or birthplace/ home of nationally famous artist, author or poet whose work has been inspired by the surrounding landscape.	Cultural heritage site of regional importance; for example, Conservation Area where street pattern affords vista towards surrounding landscape; or place associated with locally famous poet, author or artist whose work has been inspired by the surrounding landscape.	Other cultural heritage site of local importance (for example un-registered historic park or garden); or sites not open to the public.
Movement Corridor Viewpoints	Where viewer has a unique and prolonged/unfolding view of the surrounding landscape; view is free from visual detractors (for example highway structures).	Where viewer has the opportunity to appreciate the view; for example, regional long distance footpath or well used bridleway with tranquil and rural setting.	Other views from movement corridors, which are typical of the locality; or have fleeting view of the surrounding landscape; are degraded by presence or urban/highway structures.
Other Visitor Designation Viewpoints	Visitor designations of national importance (for example a National Trust site).	Visitor designations of regional importance (for example the Three County Showground).	Other visitor designations within the locality.
Designated Landscape Area or Character Type Viewpoints	Highly valued and unique area of intact landscape character, quintessential to the identity of the area.	Valued area of intact landscape character that contributes to the enjoyment and identity of the area.	Area of typical landscape character, which may have suffered some degradation.

Overall Grading of Importance

- 2.30 The scale in Table 4 below has been adopted to assess the overall importance of a view. For example, for a view to be categorised as exceptional, it must meet the exceptional criteria for *both* the view *and* the viewpoint.

Viewpoint or View	Exceptional Viewpoint	Special Viewpoint	Representative Viewpoint
Exceptional View	Exceptional	Special	Special
Special View	Special	Special	Representative
Representative View	Special	Representative	Representative

- 2.31 An identified viewpoint may be important because it meets the criteria for more than one of the categories; for example, it may be an established viewpoint within a designated landscape area, with cultural heritage associations.

Identification of View Corridors

- 2.32 For external views towards the AONB, the width of each view corridor (the field of vision) has been determined by the visibility of the spine of the Malvern Hills, so as to ensure a clear definition of the silhouette of the hills. The geometry of the view corridor has been defined by the context of any objects in the foreground and midground of the views that may frame the view (for example landform, built form or trees).
- 2.33 The width of view corridors within the AONB, towards the spine of hills, has been similarly determined.
- 2.34 The width of view corridors looking out from the AONB is likely to be more variable, as it will include both single direction views and elevated 180° to 360° panoramic views. The width of single direction viewpoints, and any sub-division of panoramic viewpoints, has been calculated so as to ensure a clear definition of identified landmarks that are important to the view (for example Eastnor Castle and May Hill).
- 2.35 Only exceptional and special view corridors (the two most important categories) have been mapped for the inner 15km study area. These are shown on Plans L11 and L12. Representative view corridors have not been mapped as this may attribute undue importance to them, over and above other representative views not identified within this study.
- 2.36 The full field of vision within 180° to 360° view corridors may not share the same level of importance as the viewpoint at its point of origin, if it fails to meet all the criteria stipulated for overall grading of view importance. In this case the core and peripheral fields of vision have been graded separately in accordance with the criteria described in Tables 2 and 3 above. For example in views from the south-west, the northern end of the Malvern Hills (including the Worcestershire Beacon), may form an essential and dominant part of the view, and therefore, constitutes an exceptional view, whereas the lower lying southern peaks are often less visually significant.

Sensitivity of Views

- 2.37 An initial, broad assessment of the sensitivity of identified key viewpoints and their associated view corridors is given in Section 5.
- 2.38 The determination of sensitivity is a matter of professional judgement. The guidelines (Reference 1, Paragraph 2.15, Appendix 6) recommend that the assessment of sensitivity should have regard to many factors such as:

- i the location and context of a viewpoint;
- ii the nature of a particular view;
- iii the rareness of any landscape features;
- iv the expectations and activity of the viewer and the number of people affected;
- v the popularity of the viewpoint, its appearance in guidebooks, on tourist maps, in the facilities provided for its enjoyment, references in literature or art; and
- vi the capacity to accommodate change, with regard to factors such as landform, land use, the pattern and scale of the landscape.

2.39 With reference to current best practice, the assessment of the sensitivity is set out below by reference to the nature of the viewer and the ownership of the view:

Table 5 – Sensitivity of Viewpoint	
Sensitivity	Viewpoint
High	Viewers with proprietary/particular interest in their visual environment, high levels of familiarity and expectation, prolonged viewing opportunities, or their attention is focussed on the landscape (for example landmark viewing beacons).
Medium	Viewers with moderate interest in their visual environment; for example users of local parks, open space facilities, walkers on footpaths or streets, or motorists with direct views towards Malvern Hills.
Low	Viewers with passing or momentary interest in their everyday surroundings; for example motorists or people at their place of work and/or infrequent views, whose attention is focussed on other activities and are therefore less susceptible to change.

2.40 The graded sensitivity of identified key views is given in the schedule contained in Appendix 7.

Capacity of Views to Accommodate Change

2.41 Changes in the composition of a view may be either positive or negative. The capacity of an identified view to accept any change depends on:

- i the sensitivity of the view or viewpoint;
- ii whether the proposed development or land use change will materially effect the overall composition and enjoyment of the view; and
- iii whether the view is changed to such an extent that its importance is either reduced or upgraded.

Negative Change

2.42 It is not appropriate to protect every aspect of an existing view. The test to be applied is whether the overall composition and focus of the view is changed to such an extent that the importance of the view becomes downgraded. For example, for a view to remain exceptional, all the criteria for the exceptional category must be met and preserved (see Tables 2 and 3, in Section 4).

2.43 Criteria for assessing change to the composition and focus of the view include:

- i whether the scale of the proposed development, or land use change, is in keeping with the character and scale of the landscape and key components of the view;
- ii whether the Malvern Hills, or landmarks in external views, remain visible and can be appreciated as the focus of the view; change should not detract from the setting, recognition or

- appreciation of these landmarks;
- iii whether the composition of the background, midground, foreground, or juxtaposition of associated elements is irrevocably altered;
 - iv whether the view is blocked, or unacceptably imposed upon;
 - v whether change creates an intrusive element in the foreground or midground of the view;
 - vi whether the contextual background or 'sky space' is noticeably altered; and
 - vii whether the proposed development or land use change, as seen from above or obliquely in the front or middle ground in elevated or panoramic views, fits within the prevailing landscape pattern and does not detract from the panorama as a whole.

Positive Change

- 2.44 Land use change may not always result in an adverse impact on a view. For example, selective clearance of vegetation cover as part of a view management plan (see Section 7) could enhance the way in which the Malvern Hills are seen or framed in a view. In this case it could represent a benefit. It is worth drawing attention to the way vegetation changes with time, for example, with the life cycle of trees and hedgerows, management practices, the natural cycle of seasons and climatic events. Particularly relevant is the significant woodland planting following World War 1, when the Forestry Act (1919) came into force.
- 2.45 In accordance with development principles set out in PPS7, new development should be sited and designed to protect identified important views. For example, its scale and form should fit into the surrounding landscape character and settlement pattern, and not introduce any alien features. Where appropriate, new development should take the opportunity to retain and reinforce existing views, or include new designed views towards the Malvern Hills (for example, tree lined vistas echoing historic sight lines, or the creation of new avenues or prospects appropriate to the landscape character) to create an exceptional feature in the landscape, whether that feature be restored or new.

Change due to planning policy

- 2.46 Change within an identified view corridor may be effected by proposals for growth within planning policies. These include the SW Regional Spatial Strategy, Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan, Gloucestershire Structure Plan, Worcestershire Structure Plan, the South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy and emerging LDFs.

Section 3 Malvern Hills AONB and its Surroundings

Malvern Hills AONB

- 3.1 The Malvern Hills were designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1959. The primary purposes of the AONB designation are to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape, and to provide public access.
- 3.2 The Malvern Hills AONB is eighth smallest in the area, comprising 105 sq km, extending 20km in length along its north-south axis, and 9km at its widest east-west point (see Plan L01).
- 3.3 The AONB straddles the counties of Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, as shown on Plan L05.
- 3.4 The Malvern Hills Conservators are the public body charged with looking after the Malvern Hills and Commons. The extent of land in their ownership, both within and outside the AONB, is shown in green on Plan L05. No built development is permitted on their land.

Special Features

- 3.5 The Malvern Hills AONB has many special qualities. Those that are particularly relevant to this study are:
 - i its high diversity and inter-relationship of landscape characters types, which are described in Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan (see Appendix 5);
 - ii the enjoyment of panoramic views across these landscape areas towards the countryside beyond from the Malvern Hills themselves, and other high ground within the AONB;
 - iii the visual prominence of the hills themselves which present an unique skyline feature; and
 - iv its unspoilt semi-natural environment.

Landscape Context

Topography

- 3.6 The topography of the outer (50km) study area is shown on Plan L03. This shows the spine of the Malvern Hills averaging between 122 and 305m AOD. The Worcestershire Beacon, which lies at the northern end of the AONB, represents the highest hill at 425m AOD, and Chase End the lowest at 191m AOD, at its southern end (see L01).
- 3.7 The Malvern Hills comprise 22 peaks. Principal among those include North Hill, Worcestershire Beacon, Herefordshire Beacon, Swinyard Hill, Midsummer Hill, Raggedstone Hill and Chase End Hill.
- 3.8 The Malvern Hills AONB is encircled by a bowl of higher land comprising:
 - i Cotswold AONB to the south-east, with notable hills along its north-west edge rising to between 200 and 300m AOD;
 - ii Much Marcle ridge to the west, at over 300m AOD;
 - iii Welsh Mountains lying further west, and rising to over 500m AOD;
 - iv Bromyard Plateau and Shropshire AONB, to the north-west; and
 - v edge of Birmingham conurbation, to the north-east.

Landscape Character

- 3.9 The boundary of the Malvern Hills AONB largely corresponds to National Landscape Character Area 103: Malvern Hills, as identified by the Countryside Agency (now part of Natural England) in the character of England's Natural and Manmade Landscape Volume 5: West Midlands (Reference 8). This document provides an overarching and broad, non-statutory classification of landscape character.
- 3.10 The key landscape features of the AONB include:
- i the prominent, steeply sloping principal ridge, which contrasts with the flat land of the Severn Plain, to the east, and more ancient countryside of rolling hills and valleys to the west and north;
 - ii extensive areas of acid grassland and heath on the hill tops with rough grazing;
 - iii more extensive woodland cover, often of ancient origin, on the lower hills and valleys in the north and west;
 - iv formalised, enclosed commons in the east with regular hedgerow boundaries;
 - v unenclosed commons to the south east with a strong sense of wildness;
 - vi arable fields to the south with regular hedged boundaries; and
 - vii scattered settlements and small wayside cottages, particularly by the commons.
- 3.11 A summary of the key characteristics of the National Landscape Character Areas surrounding the AONB is given in Appendix 4.

Designated Landscape Areas

- 3.12 Landscape related planning designations within the inner (15km) study area are shown on Plan L05. These comprise:
- i Cotswold AONB to the south-east of the Malvern Hills AONB;
 - ii Wye Valley AONB to the south-west;
 - iii an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) overlapping with northern part of the Cotswold AONB;
 - iv two further AGLV overlapping with northern and southern ends of the Malvern Hills AONB; and
 - v a Special Landscape Area (SLA), interlinking with the northern half of the Cotswold AONB.
- 3.13 AGLV is a Local Plan landscape designation, which is no longer used within the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan, as a landscape character approach to appropriate development has been adopted instead. Consequently, the AGLV designation overlapping with the Malvern Hills AONB is truncated at the Worcestershire-Herefordshire boundary.

Historic Features

- 3.14 Historic features such as hill forts, scheduled monuments and battlefield sites are shown on Plan L06. Five scheduled forts lie within the southern part of the Malvern Hills AONB, including Iron Age hill forts at Midsummer Hill and British Camp.

Cultural Heritage

- 3.15 Cultural Heritage areas and features are shown on Plan L07.
- 3.16 The central part of the Malvern Hills AONB has a notable concentration of cultural heritage viewpoints. Within the wider AONB area there are:
- i two Registered Historic Gardens at Eastnor Castle and Hope End, together with a number of non-registered historic gardens;
 - ii four conservation areas at Malvern Wells, Eastnor, Colwall and part of Cradley Victorian Villas in Malvern; and
 - iii the Jubilee Drive, which was constructed as a pleasure drive by Ballard and opened to mark Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.
- 3.17 Artistic associations include the poets Elizabeth Barratt Browning (born at Hope End Estate, Colwall), W H Auden and William Langland (Piers Plowman); the composer Edward Elgar; and the architect Voysey (who designed Perrycroft, at Colwall).

Movement Corridors

- 3.18 The M5 motorway lies approximately 9km to the east of the Malvern Hills, where it runs across the River Severn flood plain, as shown on Plan L08. The M50 motorway abuts the southern end of the AONB.
- 3.19 Several main roads cut through or skirt the Malvern Hills AONB including the A438 and A449, together with a significant network of rural lanes and cycle routes.
- 3.20 The Worcestershire Way crosses the northern part of the AONB. The circular Elgar Route runs along the eastern margin of the AONB, between the A4103 and B4209.
- 3.21 Other regional routes within the study area include the Cotswold Way, Severn Way, Sabrina Way and Three Choirs Way.
- 3.22 The Hereford – Worcester – Birmingham railway line runs beneath the central part of the AONB, in tunnel.

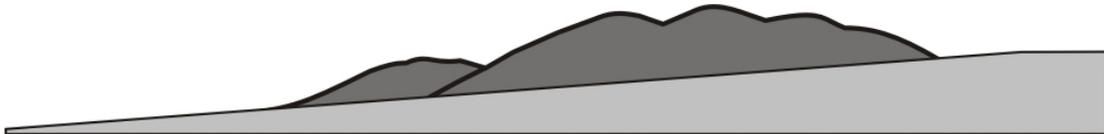
Other Visitor Destinations

- 3.23 In addition to visitor destinations such as historic parklands and hill forts, as described above, other destinations include National Trust sites, local nature reserves (for example Broadmoor Common), and the Three Counties Showground as shown on Plan L09.
- 3.24 The city of Worcester lies some 10km to the north-east of the AONB. The Victorian Spa town of Great Malvern, and market town of Ledbury, abut the eastern and western edges of the AONB respectively. These, together with many of the local towns and villages, are visitor destinations in their own right.

Section 4 **Assessment of Key Views Towards the Malvern Hills AONB**

- 4.1 A description of each identified view towards the Malvern Hills AONB, from outside its boundary, is given in Appendix Table L1. Descriptions of other, typical views not included in the final selection of the 50 key views are given at the end of Table L1. Viewpoint locations are shown on Plan L11A, and are illustrated by photographs in Appendix 3.
- 4.2 The silhouette of the 22 Malvern Hills create a unique and highly characteristic profile, which varies with the viewing direction as explained below.

Views from the North



- 4.3 A relatively narrow, end on profile where the three northern peaks (End Hill, Table Hill and North Hill) combine to create one solid profile, which is seen rising steeply from a relatively flat landscape. Worcestershire Beacon is often seen within and behind this grouping, and contributes to the mass of the silhouette (which is shown in dark grey, above light grey representing the surrounding lower lying land).

Exceptional Views

- 4.4 No exceptional views from the north were recorded in this study.

Special Views

- 4.5 *View 35* is from the B4220 near Stanford Bishop (9km), a local approach road that crosses an undulating landform with an intact hedgerow pattern. Views of the Malvern Hills unfold as the traveller moves southwards. From this elevated viewpoint, the hills are quite impressive as they rise above the rural farmland. Telegraph poles in the foreground detract from the view, which is graded as special in terms of both the view and viewpoint.
- 4.6 *View 44* is from Bringsty Common (10km). The view is also graded special both in terms of the view and viewpoint. In this attractive rural view, where the Malvern Hills are prominent on the skyline above the undulating landform of the Bromyard plateau. This view is at the top end of the special category.
- 4.7 *View 32* is from Collins' Green Viewpoint on the B4197 (11km), in an AGLV. From this exceptional viewpoint, the Malvern Hills are seen projecting into the skyline above an intact and attractive part of the Worcestershire landscape, but form only a small part of the panoramic view. The overall the view is graded as special.
- 4.8 *View 31* is taken from a well used bridleway near Broadheath (9km), the birthplace of the composer Elgar. The viewpoint is special because of its rural and tranquil setting. The view of the Malvern Hills is exceptional as it shows the classic, narrow profile of the northern peaks within their wider landscape setting. At night, there are glimpses of lit housing on the foot slopes.
- 4.9 *View 30* is from Ketch Viewpoint at the junction of the A38 and A440, at the southern edge of Worcester (10km). The viewpoint is categorised as special, rather than exceptional, as traffic and highway structures detract from its setting. The Severn Way follows the river corridor below this elevated viewpoint, which has been built to overlook the historic Battle of Worcester site, which lies to the north of the view to the Malvern Hills. The profile of the hills is more elongated than the silhouette shown in the above diagram. The overall view is graded as special. At night, traffic headlights are intrusive in the foreground.

- 4.10 *View 29* is from Ronkswood Hill Meadows (14km), in Worcester, and comprises a panoramic view from the highest point of this public park. Although the Malvern Hills create a strong skyline feature behind Worcester, they are partly obscured by landform and buildings. Both the view and viewpoint are graded as special. At night, the lit area of Worcester is prominent in the mid ground.
- 4.11 *View 1* is from the A4103 near Leigh Sinton (2.5km), an approach road with direct and unfolding views towards the Malvern Hills. The overall view is graded as special as it shows the classic, narrow end on profile of the northern peaks, although roadside structures and traffic detract from both the quality of the view and viewpoint. At night, traffic headlights intrude into the view and glimpses are available of light sources within the housing on the foot slopes.

Representative Views

- 4.12 *View 2* is from the A449, within the Malvern Link Conservation Area (1.2km), is heavily contained by buildings to either side of the road. Only North Hill is visible, therefore the view is considered to be only representative.

Views from the East



- 4.13 Perhaps the most classic and well known silhouette of the Malvern Hills, which some compare to the Ngong Hills in Kenya. In uninterrupted views, all 22 peaks are visible in a linear formation, and are seen rising above the Severn Floodplain.

Exceptional

- 4.14 *View 46* is from Croome Court (11.5km), a Grade 2 Registered Historic Parkland designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, and owned by the National Trust. In this designed view of borrowed landscape, the silhouette of the Malvern Hills provides both a dramatic backdrop and focus.
- 4.15 *View 4* is from a public footpath on Bredon Hill (15km), near an unscheduled fort. The Malvern Hills are seen rising dramatically above the Severn Floodplain, and an attractive rural part of the Worcestershire landscape. At night, scattered light sources are visible in the view, including from development on the foot slopes of the Malvern Hills.

Special

- 4.16 *View 3* is from the B4211 near Rhydd (4.5km), and *View 6* is from the A4104 near Holly Green (8.5km), both are special in terms of the importance of the viewpoint and view. Much of the linear silhouette of the Malvern Hills is prominent on the skyline, which unfold further as the observer travels along these approach roads to the AONB. At night, traffic headlights are visible on the roads, with glimpses of light sources in and around Malvern.
- 4.17 *View 12* is from the Cotswold Way adjacent to the well known viewing beacon on Cleeve Hill (25km), a viewpoint of exceptional quality. In this representative view, the Malvern Hills are seen on the distant skyline as a silhouette, in clear visibility conditions. The viewpoint lies within land owned by the Cleeve Common Conservators. At night, the lit urban areas of Bishops Cleeve and other settlements are visible in the midground.
- 4.18 *View 21* is from a public footpath at Birtsmorten (2km), a special viewpoint by merit of its rural character and tranquillity. This local view of the Malvern Hills is exceptional as full length of their dramatic silhouette can be readily appreciated.

Representative

- 4.19 *View 28a* is from the M5 over bridge at Green Lane (10km). Although the view is special in terms of the prominence of the Malvern Hills skyline, the viewpoint is representative as its setting is

degraded by the intrusive presence of traffic and highway structures.

- 4.20 *View 28b* is taken from a bridleway near Junction 7 of the M5 to illustrate, by comparison, the special view available from the adjacent section of motorway, in which the full length of the eastern silhouette of the Malvern Hills may be appreciated. At night, motorway lights and vehicular headlights are visible in the foreground.
- 4.21 *View 17* is from a representative viewpoint on a local road, at Upper Strensham (13km). The view is special because the silhouette of the Malvern Hills is prominent on the skyline, with attractive farmland lying in the foreground.
- 4.22 *View 18* is from the A438 at Mythe Bridge, at the north edge of Tewkesbury (14km). The Malvern Hills are seen on the distant skyline, part screened by the intervening landform. Both the view and viewpoint is representative.
- 4.23 From the area around Stratford-upon-Avon, potential views of the Malvern Hills are often restricted by the intervening landform. Where available, there are views of the occasional peak or group of hills.

Views from the South



- 4.24 A narrow, end on profile where the two highest peaks (Worcestershire Beacon and Herefordshire Beacon) align to form a steeply rising twin-peaked silhouette on the skyline, which is distinctive. In some southern views, other lower lying peaks may be also visible.

Exceptional

- 4.25 No exceptional views from the south were recorded in this study.

Special

- 4.26 *View 42* is from Over Old Road, off the A417, near Woolridge (11km), and is special in terms of both the view and viewpoint. The Malvern Hills are seen directly ahead, down the line of the road, rising above an attractive and intact part of the Gloucestershire landscape. At night, vehicular headlights are visible, together with glimpses of light sources from the scattered settlement areas.
- 4.27 *View 43* is from the B4208 near Pendock (5km) and shows a similar, but closer view to that of *View 42*. The Malvern Hills are prominent on the skyline, to the right of rising landform in the midground of the view, which is special in terms of both the view and viewpoint.
- 4.28 *View 20* is from the A417, north of Redmarley D'Abitot (3.5km). The narrow, southern end on profile of the Malvern Hills is seen in this view, framed by the intervening landform and vegetation pattern. The obelisk at Eastnor (see Plan L07) punctuates the skyline to the left of the hills. The view is special in terms of both the viewpoint and view.
- 4.29 *View 19* is also from the A417 near Donnington (3.5km), where the road bounds the south-west boundary of the Malvern Hills AONB. The northern and central peaks of the Malvern Hills are prominent on the skyline and form a backdrop to the rural and undulating landscape of the AONB. This view is at top end of special importance. At night, vehicular headlights are visible on the local road network.

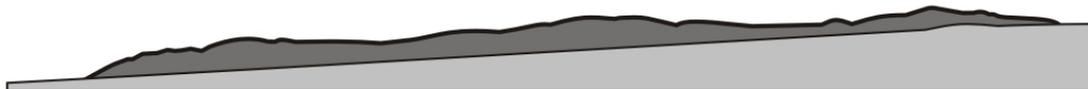
Representative

- 4.30 *View 13* is from Gloucestershire Way on May Hill (15km), which lies within National Trust land, and constitutes a special viewpoint. From the top of May Hill, views towards the Malvern Hills are

heavily filtered by surrounding tree planting. This lower elevation view is representative, as the Malvern Hills are seen on the distant skyline in the context of other hills.

- 4.31 Other views from the south include those from the elevated section of the A40 at Junction 11 of the M5 motorway, near Cheltenham; and also from The Air Balloon on the A417(T), near Cirencester.

Views from the West



- 4.32 Views from the west show a linear silhouette of all 22 peaks which, from elevated viewpoints, can appear slightly flattened. Gentle undulations in the intervening landform often interrupt, and partly screen the linear silhouette of the Malvern Hills.

Exceptional

- 4.33 *View 27* is from the Herefordshire Trail where it follows a road across the Much Marcle Ridge (13.5km). In this view the Malvern Hills form a dominant skyline above Ledbury, and act as an intrinsic backdrop to an attractive and intact part of the Hereford countryside. The polytunnels to the north of Ledbury form a discordant element. At night, there are glimpses of scattered light sources around Ledbury.

Special

- 4.34 *View 45* is from a track on Durlow Common (12km). It is a representative viewpoint. The view is exceptional because the full, western silhouette of the Malvern Hills is visible above the wider AONB and adjoining rural countryside of Herefordshire. Polytunnels are intrusive in the view where their large footprints and colour do not fit the landscape character. At night, there are glimpses of scattered light sources around Ledbury. Overall the view is graded as special.
- 4.35 *View 16* is from the A4103 near Stoney Cross (4km). Both the viewpoint and view are graded as special, as the Malvern Hills are seen in the context of their immediate landscape setting from a rural approach road, which offers an unfolding view of the AONB.

Representative

- 4.36 *View 15* is from a local road on Hegdon Hill near Leominster (19km), a representative viewpoint. The view is graded as special as the Malvern Hills are seen in the context of their wider landscape setting.
- 4.37 *View 39* is from the A438 at Bartestree, on the western edge of Hereford (19km), and is representative in terms of both the quality of the view and viewpoint.
- 4.38 *View 7* is from the B4214 at Stanley Hill (10km). It is a representative viewpoint, where the Malvern Hills form a prominent feature on the skyline, above an agricultural landscape.

Long Distance Views towards the Malvern Hills

- 4.39 Beyond 15km distance from the spine of the Malvern Hills, the naked eye has difficulty in seeing the textural components of the hills and their surrounding landscape setting. As the viewing distance increases, the hills are more often seen as a silhouette on the distant skyline.
- 4.40 Typical long distance viewpoints are shown on Plan L02, and described in Appendix Table L1. At distances of between 20km and 50km, views towards the Malvern Hills are largely limited to viewpoints on high ground. Intervisibility between the Malvern Hills, Cotswold and Shropshire AONBs and the Brecon Beacons National Park (Welsh Mountains), is similarly limited to

viewpoints on high ground. From these viewpoints, the observer may not necessarily see all the intervening land because the view corridor is interrupted by an undulating landform.

Views from the North

- 4.41 *View 14* is from a footpath on Clee Hill (to the south of Titterstone Clee Hill) within the Shropshire AONB, and *View 10* from Clent Hills, a Country Park part owned by the National Trust; both lie approximately 35km distance from the Malvern Hills. The overall grade of these views is special because although their established viewpoints may be classified as exceptional, the views of the Malvern Hills are only representative, and the hills seen as part of the wider, distant skyline.
- 4.42 *View 11* is from the B4202 near Clows Top (25km). The view is representative both in terms of the importance of the view and viewpoint.

Views from the South

- 4.43 *View 8* is from the B4066 near Stinchcombe Hill (34km), and *View 9* from Haresfield Beacon (26km), a well known viewing beacon on the Cotswold Way. Both viewpoints lie within the Cotswold AONB and have been graded exceptional, although the view of the Malvern Hills is only representative as they are seen as a silhouette on the distant skyline together with other hills.

Views from the East

- 4.44 *View 5* is from a public footpath on Balis's Hill, near Honeybourne (35km). This view is representative in terms of both the importance of the view and viewpoint.

Views from the West

- 4.45 *View 38* is from a local road in Cockyard (33km), and *View 41* from Westhope Hill (28km). The overall importance of both views is representative in terms of both the quality of the view and viewpoint.

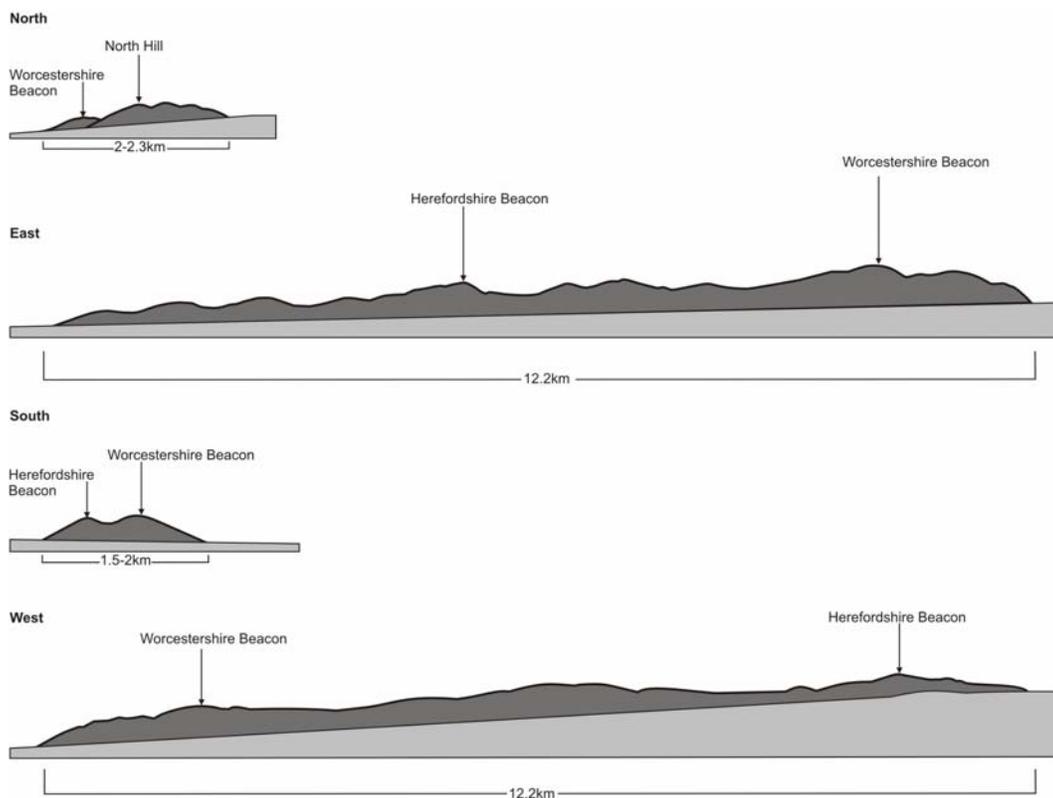
Conclusions

- 4.46 This analysis leads to the following conclusions:
- i the Malvern Hills have a unique and readily identifiable profile, more so than any other group of hills or high land in the vicinity;
 - ii they are also unique in that they represent an island of higher land, which may be appreciated differently from all compass directions;
 - iii their height, and the extent to which they dominate the skyline varies with the distance and elevation of the viewpoint, and the scale and undulation of the intervening topography;
 - iv they are visible from a very wide area, over 30km in good visibility conditions;
 - v thirty six key external viewpoints (outside the AONB boundary) have been selected for the purposes of this study, but there will be other important views from other locations;
 - vi within the inner 15km study area, three exceptional views have been identified; these are *View 27* Much Marcle Ridge to the west, and *View 46* Croome Court and *View 4* Bredon Hill to the east; a number of identified special view corridors overlap with this east-west axis of exceptional views;
 - vii seven special views have been identified from the north; urban features and highway infrastructure detract from the potential quality and importance of the more easterly of these views, which reflects the more built up character of the area lying between Malvern and Worcester;
 - viii views of the Malvern Hills are more limited from the south-west due to the undulating landform

and dense vegetation pattern between Ledbury and Newent, albeit a cluster of special views have been identified along the A417 road corridor, which lies further east;

- ix a number of cultural heritage and historic sites (for example chain of hill forts in Herefordshire) were not historically sited or designed to take advantage of views towards the Malvern Hills;
- x views of the Malvern Hills often elicit a notable psychological response in the observer or leave them with a lasting impression (for example wayfaring landmark to, or from, home or work);
- xi the Malvern Hills are often seen in conjunction with the wider AONB, which often lacks a readily identifiable boundary on the ground;
- xii often the AONB shares the same attractive characteristics as the surrounding landscape, especially along its western boundary, suggesting perhaps that this should be considered at the time of the next AONB boundary review;
- xiii the overall importance of many external views is downgraded because of the setting of the viewpoint, due to presence of visual detractors or obstructions, rather than the quality of the available view towards the Malvern Hills (see Table 2, in Section 4); and
- xiv in night time views, there is a noticeable contrast between the dark landscape of Herefordshire to the west of the AONB, and the well lit urban areas of Malvern and Worcester, and network of transport corridors, to the north-east.

4.47 For comparative purposes, profiles at the same scale are provided below, drawn from photographs. The horizontal scale has been made consistent, but the apparent vertical scale of the hills will vary with the viewpoint.



Section 5 Assessment of Key Views from Within the AONB

Views within the AONB towards the Malvern Hills

- 5.1 A description of each identified view towards the Malvern Hills, from within the AONB, is given in Appendix Table L2. Viewpoint locations are shown on Plan L11B, and illustrated by the photographs in Appendix 3. All viewpoints are graded as being exceptional, mainly by merit of lying within the AONB. Therefore, it is the varying quality and composition of the view itself that determines the overall grade of view importance (see Table 2, in Section 4). A summary of these views is given below.

Views from the North

- 5.2 *View 33* is from the B4219 at Storridge, within the northern part of the AONB. Although the overall view is graded as special, there is only a representative, narrow view of northern silhouette of the Malvern Hills, strongly contained on either side by roadside planting. No long distance views northwards are available from this viewpoint, as they are restricted by the interlocking landform and vegetation pattern, which is typical of the northern part of the AONB and adjoining countryside.

Views from the East

- 5.3 *View 36* is from the B4209 adjacent to the Three Counties Showground, a popular visitor destination (see Plan L09). In this special view most of the linear north-south profile of the hills can be seen, although partly filtered by intervening vegetation. Existing development rising up the side of the hills (particularly between Worcestershire Beacon and Perseverance Hill), and structures within the showground visually detract from this otherwise rural view. At night, the lit development area of the AONB is noticeable.
- 5.4 *View 37* is from the A4104, a second approach road from the east. In this exceptional view the profile of the Malvern Hills is a dominant and dramatic feature on the skyline. The varying landscape character of the hills and wider AONB may be appreciated, which in this view appears intact without any visual or urban detractors. Little Malvern Priory, a scheduled ancient monument, forms a notable landmark in the midground (see Plan L06). This is a relatively rare and open view, as many local views towards the Malvern Hills are often partly screened by intervening landform or vegetation cover.

Views from the South

- 5.5 Local views of the Malvern Hills from the south are less readily available. This is because of the rolling landform, accentuated by a reasonably extensive tree and hedgerow cover. There is a representative view from the local road running along the edge of the AONB, near Kings Green, in which Chase End Hill, Raggedstone Hill, and Midsummer Hill are prominent on the skyline (see *View 145* at the end of Appendix Table L2). There are longer views from outside the AONB, adjacent to the A417 corridor (for example *Views 42 and 43*), as described in Section 4 and shown on Plan L11A.

Views from the West

- 5.6 *View 22* is from the A438, north-east of the village of Eastnor. Further east, the road crosses the southern part of the Malvern Hills between Hollybush and Raggedstone Hill. In this special view the linear profile of the Malvern Hills is intermittently seen on the skyline, behind the undulating landform and wooded copses of the rural Herefordshire landscape in the midground. The obelisk within the registered historic parkland at Eastnor Castle (see Plan L07) is seen in the middle of the view, projecting into the skyline. Houses on North Hill are just visible. In common with a number of views from the west, the silhouette of the Malvern Hills appears flattened.
- 5.7 *View 23* is from slightly further north, on the A449. In this special view the long silhouette of the Malvern Hills may be appreciated in more detail, with the individual peaks being more distinct and earthworks associated with British Camp on the Herefordshire Beacon visible.

- 5.8 *View 34* is from the public footpath crossing Oyster Hill. There is a similar, but narrower view from high land within Hope End Estate, the birthplace of the poet Elizabeth Barratt Browning (see Plan L07). In this exceptional winter view, the silhouette of the Malvern Hills dominates the skyline, above the attractive and lower lying landscape of the western margin of the AONB. The whole undulating profile of the Malvern Hills may be appreciated as the observer moves along the footpath, and the adjacent vegetation pattern changes. Selective thinning of vegetation adjacent to the viewpoint would enhance its year round importance, as in summer, the views will be more filtered.

Views looking out from the AONB

- 5.9 A description of the identified views looking out from the AONB is given in Appendix Table L2. Viewpoint locations are shown on Plan L12.

Views from the Peaks

- 5.10 Typical views from four of seven principal hills are included in this study; namely North Hill, Worcestershire Beacon, Herefordshire Beacon (British Camp) and Chase End Hill. All four views are considered to be exceptional in terms of the importance of the view and viewpoint.
- 5.11 *View 47* is from North Hill at 397m AOD (identified as Peak B on the plans). In this panoramic view from the northern end of the Malvern Hills, a large part of Worcestershire may be seen to the east and north; and a large part of the Herefordshire landscape to the west (see Plan L05). In clear weather conditions, the scarp at the edge of the Cotswold AONB can be seen on the distant horizon, stretching from Bredon Hill to behind the Worcestershire Beacon. There is a marked contrast in the character of the surrounding landscape. The Herefordshire landscape appears more rural and intact with an attractive, contrasting landform and vegetation patterns. By way of comparison, the area around Malvern is flatter and degraded by existing large scale inappropriate development around the older core of the town, which does not fit into the surrounding landscape character. Accordingly, the north-east quadrant of the 360° view corridor is considered to be special rather than exceptional, because of the detracting elements in the view. The Worcestershire Beacon largely screens the southern peaks with its mass. At night, the lit footprint of the urban area of Malvern is particularly noticeable in the view, together with vehicular headlights on the M5, and main approach roads.
- 5.12 *View 48* is from the Worcestershire Beacon, of national reputation, at 425m AOD. This is the highest peak (Peak D) in the Malvern Hills, and overlooks the adjoining peaks. From this viewpoint there is a dramatic, panoramic 360° view extending to the Brecon Beacons National Park (Welsh Mountains) in the west, Shropshire AONB to the north-west, Clent Hills and edge of Birmingham to the north-east, Cotswold AONB to the east, and Wye Valley AONB to the south-west (see Plan L01). Again, large scale inappropriate modern development around Malvern detracts from the quality of the north-east quadrant of the view corridor, which accordingly has been downgraded from exceptional to special. At night, the lit urban footprint of Malvern is prominent in the foreground of the view, with light sources in other towns visible.
- 5.13 *View 49* is from the Herefordshire Beacon (Peak K) at 338m AOD, by British Camp, a scheduled Iron Age hill fort (see Plan L06). This 360° panoramic shows the more intact rural landscape setting of the central and southern end of the AONB. The dispersed settlement pattern of villages and farmsteads within Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire are an intrinsic part of the predominantly agricultural landscape. The only discordant feature is the view of polytunnels near Ledbury, to the south-west. Also, this viewpoint allows the relationship between the Malvern Hills peaks to be understood, perhaps more so than the view from Worcestershire Beacon. At night, light sources within the surrounding villages are glimpsed.
- 5.14 *View 50* is from Chase End Hill (the southern most peak) at 191m AOD. From this lower elevation, the textural variation of vegetation cover within the different landscape character types of the AONB can be appreciated. Eastnor Castle and its historic obelisk (see Plan L07) form prominent landmarks in the view corridor, to the west. Again, polytunnels are a notable detractor in views from the AONB as their white colour and large scale footprint does not fit into the character of the surrounding landscape.

Lower Elevation Views to the East

- 5.15 *View 25* is from the B4232 at Upper Wyche, and shows a typical view looking out to the east from the AONB. Many potential views are screened by built development along the internal roads or vegetation cover on the lower slopes of the hills. The view has been graded as special rather than exceptional, because the existing urban area of Malvern appears to sprawl into the surrounding countryside, and the view contains other urban areas such as Worcester. At night, these lit urban areas are clearly visible, in contrast to other surrounding mostly dark landscapes.

Lower Elevation Views to the West

- 5.16 *View 26* is also taken from the B4232 at Upper Wyche, but looks westwards. Although the overall view has been graded special, the composition of this view is categorised as representative as it is much more contained and interrupted by roadside development and vegetation.
- 5.17 *View 24* is from the Jubilee Drive, which was laid out for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee (see Plan L07). The Much Marcle Ridge is prominent in the midground of the view, which extends out towards the Welsh Mountains. The view is graded as special rather than exceptional, as built development and roadside vegetation partly enclose the foreground of the view. Views from Jubilee Drive are protected by an Act of Parliament, which seeks to restrict tree planting along its western edge.

Conclusions

- 5.18 This analysis leads to the following conclusions:
- i the selected viewpoints are exceptional not simply because they lie in the AONB, but because of the intactness of the landscape and the quality and composition of the view that is available;
 - ii there are 360° panoramic views from most of the peaks; the viewing corridors of these views are largely graded exceptional, except where it is downgraded to special due to the presence of inappropriate large scale urban or agricultural development which is at odds with the surrounding landscape character;
 - iii not all development should be seen as being adverse; some views can benefit from a well designed development, as long as that development conforms to the landscape and townscape character of the area, where it might frame or give context to the view.
 - iv some 360° views from the peaks are interrupted by the landform of higher peaks, an example of which is Worcestershire Beacon;
 - v outward looking views from lower elevations are more frequently contained by built development or vegetation cover on the slopes of the hills, or obstructed by the landform of the Malverns;
 - vi many potential views towards the Malvern Hills, are also partly screened by landform, built structures or vegetation cover;
 - vii there is a higher frequency of viewpoints outside the AONB boundary from where the whole of the silhouette of the Malvern Hills may be appreciated (see Section 4); this is because potential viewing obstructions diminish with perspective in longer distance views;
 - viii views from the Worcestershire and Herefordshire Beacons represent the best of the exceptional views;
 - ix in night-time views, much of Herefordshire is seen as a dark landscape; in contrast the area extending between Malvern, Worcester and the M5 corridor contains a concentration of urban and highway light sources; elsewhere light sources are associated with dispersed settlement and vehicular headlights on local roads; and

Section 6 Initial Assessment of Sensitivity and Capacity of Key Views to Accommodate Change

- 6.1 A preliminary assessment has been undertaken of the sensitivity of identified important views, and their capacity to accommodate change.

Sensitivity of Views

- 6.2 Tables 2, 3 and 5 in Section 2 show that there is a strong correlation between the overall importance of a view and its sensitivity. This is a relatively obvious point because exceptional and well known viewpoints usually provide views of an intact and valued landscape character, where the viewer has the prolonged opportunity to appreciate the view, or seeks out the viewpoint expressly to enjoy the view.

Sensitivity of Views Towards The Malvern Hills AONB

- 6.3 Plan L11c shows the geographical overlap of identified exceptional and special view corridors towards the Malvern Hills, both from outside and within the AONB boundary. Exceptional view corridors are shown layered in red, special view corridors in blue.
- 6.4 The plan shows that there is a strong east - west axis comprising views of exceptional importance and high sensitivity, extending between Bredon Hill (*View 4*) and Croome Court (*View 46*) to the east of the Malvern Hills AONB, and Wellington Heath (*View 34*) and Much Marcle Ridge (*View 27*), to the west.
- 6.5 There is a notable convergence of special view corridors of medium sensitivity towards the Malvern Hills from the north-east and north-west (for example *Views 28 to 32, 35 and 44*).
- 6.6 From the south-east, *View 12* from Cleeve Hill is of special importance, but high sensitivity. Further south, adjacent to the A417 corridor, there are views of special importance and medium sensitivity (for example *Views 20, 42 and 43*).

Potential Intensification of Sensitivity

- 6.7 There is an intensification of overlapping view corridors between 10km and 5km from the spine of hills. To the north and south, this overlapping begins slightly closer, about 8km distant. To the west, the increase in sensitivity is more closely associated with the boundary of the AONB, here at its furthest point from the spine.
- 6.8 These are general observations which arise from the intensity of colours being shown on the Plan 11c. They would benefit from further testing, for example a more detailed study of views within the inner 15km study area (see also Section 7).
- 6.9 A comparison between Plan L11c and Plan L02 shows a good degree of geographical overlap between the closer and longer distance view corridors of identified importance.

Frequency of Potential Visual Receptors

- 6.10 Plan L10 shows the frequency of potential viewpoints in and around the inner 15km study area. An initial comparison between Plan L10 and Plan L11C, shows that there is a noticeable concentration of visual receptors associated with designated and protected sites in the special view corridors extending from Worcester (*Views 28b to 31*) and exceptional view corridors from Much Marcle Ridge (*View 27*) and Bredon Hill (*View 4*). This tends to lend further significance to these view corridors. However it should be noted that, a number of visited historic hill forts, registered historic gardens and conservation areas do not have any significant views towards the Malvern Hills. This hypothesis requires further more detailed testing.

Sensitivity of Views looking out from the Malvern Hills AONB

- 6.11 Exceptional views from the peaks and special views from lower elevation viewpoints within the AONB have been found to have high sensitivity.
- 6.12 There is intensification in the overlapping of view corridors across the more intact and rural landscape of Herefordshire, to the west; when compared to the area extending between Malvern and Worcestershire, where urban and highway infrastructure often detracts from the quality and rarity of the view.

Capacity to Accommodate Change

- 6.13 As described in Section 2, changes in the composition of a view may be either positive or negative.

Positive Change

- 6.14 There are viewpoints where selective clearance of existing tree cover would open up views towards the Malvern Hills, and promote positive change (for example *View 34 Oyster Hill*, *View 13 May Hill*). Similarly, there may be locations within the AONB where the sensitive thinning of vegetation would enhance key views. However, the tantalising glimpses of a view along a footpath, that promises to be spectacular when the observer reaches the summit of a peak, are part of a progressive experience that should not be lost.
- 6.15 Some views can benefit from change caused by development, for example where a tall element, such as a new church tower or landmark building, provides focus and context for the modern day. Similarly, linear change can be beneficial, for example where groups of new buildings or trees can create a new vista or avenue, which may not exist at present. The key to testing this is to return to the definitions in the methodology, thereby to examine whether development would cause beneficial change in the terms expressed (see also 6.16 below).

Negative Change

- 6.16 The preservation or enhancement of identified exceptional and special views should be prioritised over representative views.
- 6.17 The potential impact of new development (or land uses) should be tested against whether that development will:
- i be seen in the view, and if so, how many viewers of different types will be affected;
 - ii be sited in visually conspicuous locations such as open, flat ground or open, high or rising ground;
 - iii be in keeping with the character and scale of the surrounding landscape, including its aesthetic landform, land cover, enclosure and settlement pattern elements;
 - iv have a material impact on the composition, essential components and focus of the view, and will they irreversibly degrade its importance;
 - v introduce incongruous elements into the view (for example manmade vertical features in the 'sky space' around the Malvern Hills) or unacceptably impose upon their setting;
 - vi be capable of mitigation; and
 - vii offer the opportunity to reinforce or enhance the existing views towards the Malvern Hills, and or, create a feature of exceptional quality in accordance with PPS7.
- 6.18 Within views of exceptional importance, the highest possible test must be applied to new large scale urban, highway infrastructure, agricultural (for example polytunnels or biomass crops) or wind energy proposals; as in normal circumstances, such development will not be appropriate.

Section 7 Recommendations for Further Studies

- 7.1 The project is inevitably limited by its scope and the amount of detail that can be provided. Further work could be help to test or expand the conclusions reached, and to provide guidance to planning authorities in their consideration of future development proposals. There are many interesting and relevant for further work, some of which are described below.

Measurement of Sensitivity and Capacity to Accommodate Change

- 7.2 The initial assessment of view sensitivity and capacity to accommodate change (Section 6) could be expanded in terms of:
- i the assessment methodology and its applications, for example a cumulative assessment to combines landscape character sensitivity based on landscape character types with visual sensitivity, thereby identifying the overall capacity of view corridors to accommodate change;
 - ii refinement of view corridors for each identified key view, for example, more detailed mapping at a field boundary scale, in terms of:
 - components of the view;
 - identification of the parts of the viewing corridors most or least sensitive to change; and
 - iii guidance on appropriate forms or types of development within each identified view corridor, addressing such issues as verticality, massing, scale and reflectivity of material.

Visibility of Individual Landscape Character Types within AONB

- 7.3 It was agreed at the outset that the focus of the project was the visibility of the exceptional spine of the Malvern Hills, which comprises the High Hills and Slopes Landscape Character Type. However, Important views towards, and across, the other nine landscape character types could be established, with the assessment methodology adapted to seek whether:
- i these landscape character types are lower lying, or more interlocking in nature; and
 - ii their visibility is limited to a more local scale.

Public Perception of Identified Key Views

- 7.4 Public consultation could be undertaken to:
- i provide feedback on the public's perception of the most important views, and their associated reasoning for those opinions; and
 - ii gain an understanding of cognitive awareness and preferences of observers that determine their appreciation of views.

View Management Plans

- 7.5 A view management plan could be produced to promote as SPG, to guide the planning process in matters such as:
- i recognition and appreciation of identified, important views;
 - ii preservation and enhancement of important views;
 - iii associated recommendations for the retention or selective clearance of vegetation cover;
 - iv specific guidance on appropriate development scale, mass and form within each view corridor; and

v a procedure for cross statutory consultation between local authorities.

- 7.6 A view management plan would assist both the Malvern Hills Conservators in their statutory duty to protect views from the Malvern Hills; and also, would provide guidance to the surrounding local authorities for the protection and enhancement of views towards the Malvern Hills AONB as part of a Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Development Strategy for Malvern

- 7.7 An overarching development strategy for the future expansion of Malvern could be based on a landscape capacity assessment using the methodology set out in this study. This would include an assessment of existing settlement boundaries, their relationship to adjoining land uses, and the landscape character and visual sensitivity of the surrounding countryside. In this way the study could be developed as a positive, decision making tool.