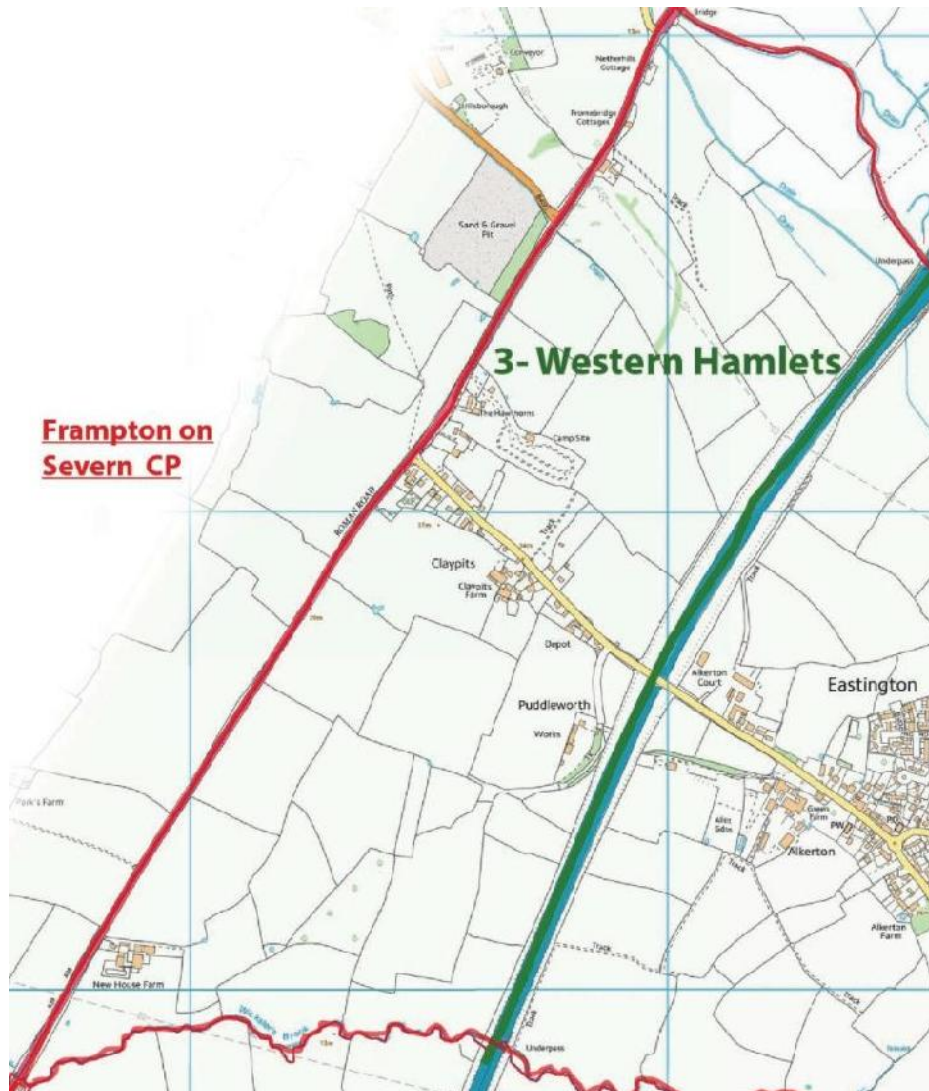


## Character Area 3: The Western Hamlets



Western Hamlets Map 1

### General Overview

The general layout of the area is one of a central hamlet on a high ridge from which a flanking area of agricultural land slopes both northwards towards the river Frome and southwards towards Wickster's Brook (parish boundaries). The area is bounded to NW and SE by A38 (a Roman Road) and M5 motorway respectively.

Current Land Uses: principally agricultural with at least two farms.

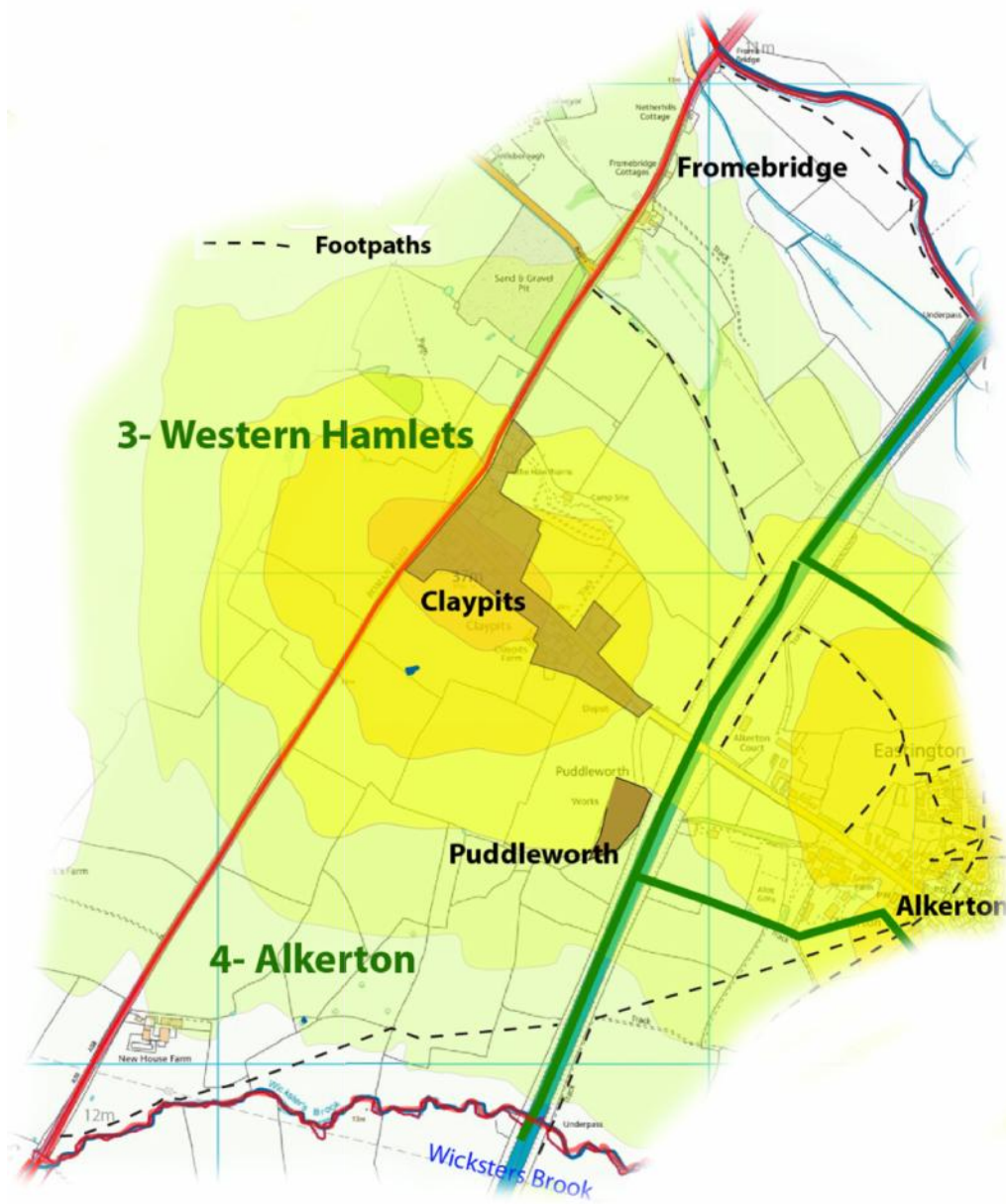
Several small businesses: KB coaches, John Stayte, Apple Tree Park Caravan & Camp Site, and two garages on the A38 - Hilltop Garage and Fromebridge Garage

Historical Land uses: To the NE, the area includes a disused gravel pit and a further area of disturbed ground that have yielded pre-historic flint tools (items in Stroud museum) and Roman remains. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/glos/vol10/pp123-127#highlight-first>

### Layout

The area is defined by two roads - the A38 runs north-south along the western edge of the area and is connected at a junction to Claypits Road which runs east towards Alkerton. The rest of the area lies either north or south of this in two strips of land.

## Topography



Western Hamlets Map 2

This Claypits hamlet, with its setting, forms the western margin of the parish and provides its rural backdrop. The hamlet sits on top of the end of a high ridge that runs down from Frocester Hill and overlooks the Severn Vale on all sides. It is visually very prominent and any new developments should be visually hidden to avoid being overly prominent. The old farms and houses stand out in the landscape and would be sensitive to any significant developments. As such the area immediately surrounding the hamlet is seen as having very high visual landscape sensitivity.

The other key landscape feature is the River Frome floodplain. This forms a very marked low-lying feature in the north of the area and is popular with local walkers and nature enthusiasts. The meadows regularly flood and provide an important water sink to prevent flooding in downstream areas. The floodplain is currently 100% agricultural and it is seen as vital that this situation remains.

The fields to the south of the area adjoin Wickster's Brook and also contain a popular footpath that links the parish with the A38. This is a popular rural area and passes some historic orchards and would be severely devalued by any unsympathetic development. This area is also seen as highly sensitive.



Western Hamlets Plan1: Area NE of the Claypits Hamlet

## Spaces

There is no public land within the Western Hamlets apart from that indicated in the next section. As such any other spaces are merely those in-between the houses within the hamlet.

## Roads, Streets and Routes

There are popular footpaths along the Frome and Wickster's book (see landscape sensitivity map). The area is also surrounded by the A38, A419 and M5.



Western Hamlets Plan 2: Area SW of main area of settlement

## Green and Natural Features

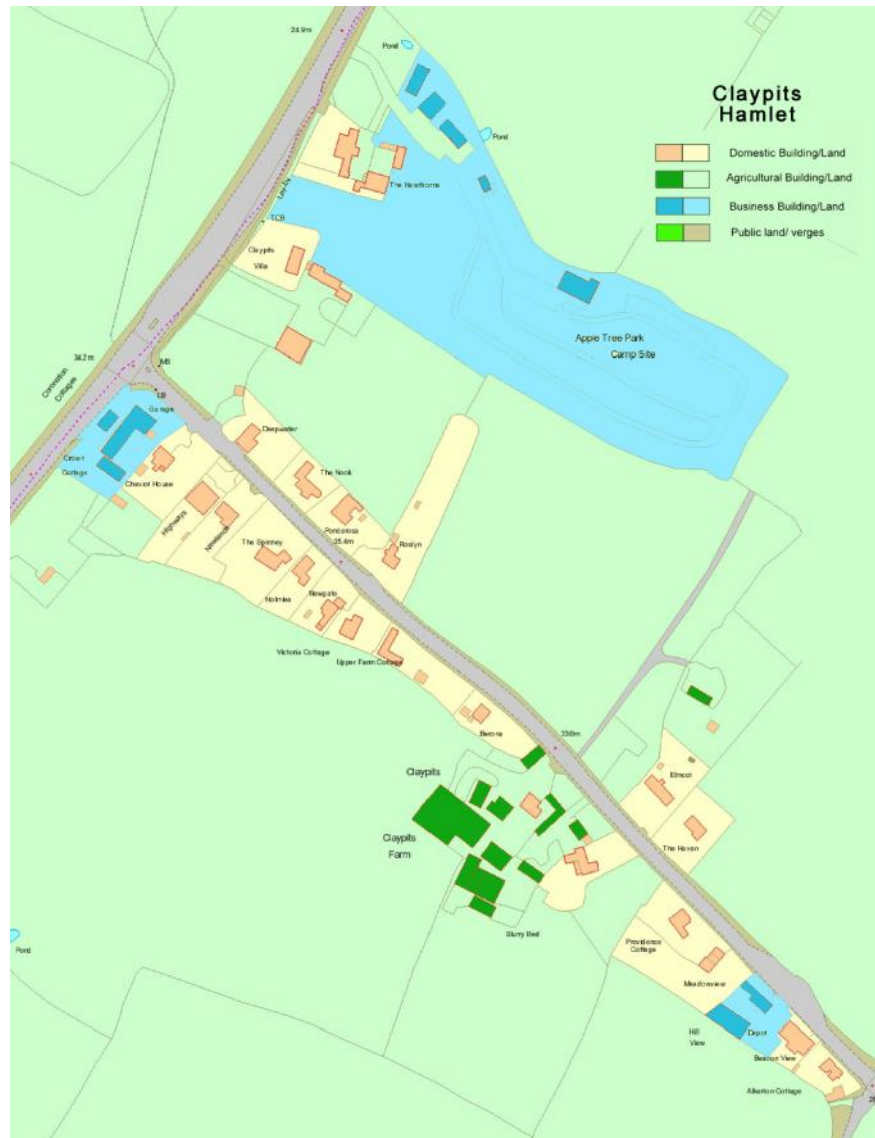
The area is predominantly open agricultural farmland. However there are important hedgerows and scrub vegetation adjacent to Wickster's Brook and also an ancient orchard near New House Farm. To the north of the area the Frome Floodplain is a regionally important wetland habitat and part of the river Frome corridor which links many wildlife habitats. The area is important for Riparian mammals and some wetland birds.

There are also historically important old gravel beds behind the garage at Fromebridge and the sites of old claypits from Georgian times around the hamlet of Claypits.

### Landmarks buildings and details

Lay-out: the main settlement is laid out along a minor road trending NW/SE – ribbon development along the top of the plateau/ridge (altitude 37m), with fields coming right up to the back fences of the domestic properties. There is one farm in the extreme SW of area (on A38), a couple of properties on A38 to NE. There are extensive views from main settlement area of rural countryside, over agricultural land sloping away.

The dominant visual feature remains the collection of houses at Claypits junction and the open nature of the fields that surround them.



Western Hamlets Map 3: Claypits

### Streetscape

The streetscape is one of an open plan arrangement of domestic dwellings of different sizes spread almost randomly along a country lane. There is also a listed stone milestone at the T junction. The old hamlet of Puddleworth has now become defunct having been cut in half by the M5 development. It now comprises a small industrial site only.

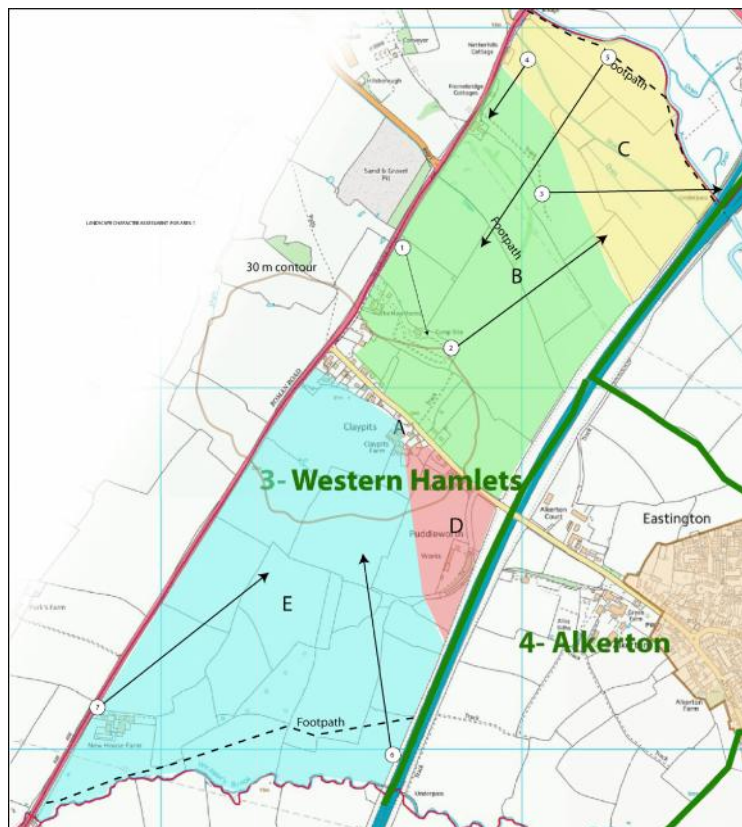
## Land Use

The land is almost 100% used as agricultural by the three tenanted farms. There is also a small holiday campsite and two or three small business sites.

## Views

The Area for some 100m surrounding the hamlet of Claypits is very visible from many parts of the parish and even more so from the adjacent parishes of Frampton and Whitminster. It is very prominent and as such any development must take into account the nearby and medium distant visual impact it will have on the skyline and overall rural impression of the district.

Likewise the views outward from Claypits and the roadways through it afford very fine views across the Severn vale and the parish. The land falls away in all directions and the area below the 30m contour will be significantly less visible than the land above it. This factor is further evidence for the high grade visual sensitivity around the Claypits hamlet.



Western Hamlets Map 4: Photos taken in Western Hamlets area.

### Area A

This comprises the hamlet of Claypits and the domestic buildings and farms within it. The area is on top of a hill and highly visible from all angles. Any development in this area should be very sensitive to the Historic hamlet and its surrounds and blend in with the setting and architectural style in order to preserve the rural hamlet setting. The views to the rest of the parish and the adjacent countryside, Severn Vale and Cotswold scarp are of prime importance and should be preserved. Any development should lie below the 30m contours that surround the hamlet.

### Area B (photos 1, 2 & 3)

This is a large block of permanent pastureland that lies on a north-facing slope facing the River Frome floodplain. The land forms a framework to the hamlet and is very visible where it adjoins the A38 and built up areas. The lower slopes near the M5 are less visible and any development would be largely hidden from view.



Western Hamlets Photo 1: Apple Tree Caravan Park with houses on road beyond



Western Hamlets Photo 2: Looking north-east down the hill



Western Hamlets Photo 3: Panorama with disturbed area in foreground and Haresfield Beacon in distance

**Area C** (photos 4 & 5)

This area comprises the River Frome floodplain. It is highly likely to flood during any prolonged rainfall and provides a valuable water sink to floodwaters. It is also a key environmental corridor and wildlife habitat. It is very visible from the A38, A419 and the footpaths that cut past it. For the following reasons it is highly unsuitable for any development that would impact on these criteria.



Western Hamlets Photo 4: Looking south towards the petrol station over the Frome floodplain.



Western Hamlets Photo 5: Looking up the slope south towards Claypits and the caravan park

#### **Area D**

This area forms a small section of land between the Claypits Road and the M5. It is low lying and cut into by the small industrial site. The area has limited visibility from within and without the area and limited landscape attributes.

#### **Area E** (photos 6 & 7)

This is a large parcel of permanent pastureland that lies south of the hamlet and runs down to Wickster's Brook. The land contains some historic orchards and a popular footpath in the south. The land slopes consistently southwards at an even gradient. The A38 and margins and those against the Claypits hamlet and Wickster's Brook are very visible and have a high sensitivity to change. However the central portions and those adjacent to the M5 have far less visual impact and would be less affected by any developmental changes.



Western Hamlets Photo 6: Looking north over the fields towards Claypits

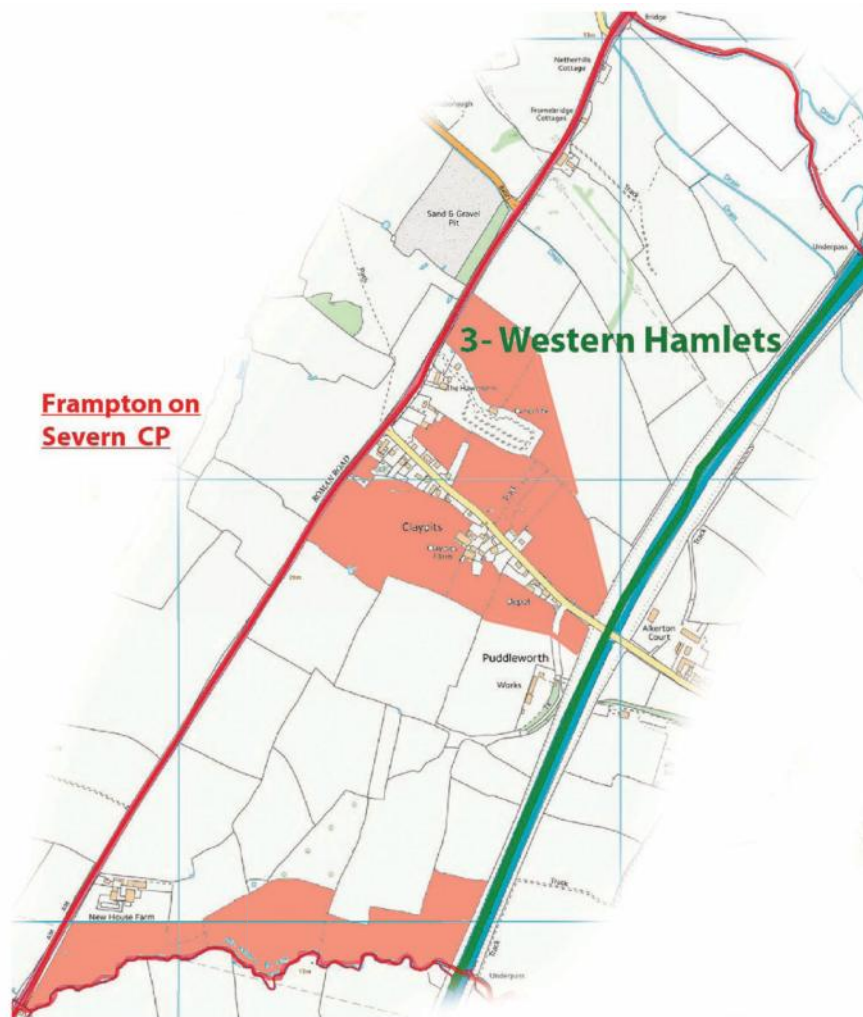


Western Hamlets Photo 7: Looking north past New House Farm

### Sensitivity to Change for Character Area 3

- Claypits is a very small settlement and the land immediately around it would be sensitive to change, particularly on the comparatively higher land and where it helps segregate it from the neighbouring hamlet of Alkerton

The following map (Map 5) illustrates the aforementioned areas that are regarded as sensitive to change



Western Hamlets Map 5: red areas sensitive to change in Character Area 3