

Chapter 3 – Visual Setting

Methodology

The visual setting of the World Heritage Site (WHS) is closely connected with the landscape setting but relates directly to specific viewpoints from which the landscape / townscape is experienced rather than the intrinsic qualities of the landscape / townscape itself. With reference to the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) given in Appendix 1, the visual setting primarily relates to the Georgian city, including Georgian buildings and the harmonious relationship of buildings and landscape as well as the appreciation of the picturesque qualities of the landscape within and around Bath which were integral to the experience of visitors and residents to Bath during the Georgian period. Research has been carried out into how the city was experienced and perceived by residents and visitors during the Georgian period (see Appendix 3). In relation to Roman remains these are largely below ground and while the setting would have been fundamental to their original siting (for example villas with commanding views and cemeteries accessible from roads) the largely hidden nature of the remains puts the setting of Roman remains outside the scope of this work with the major exception of the Roman Baths which have an ongoing physical presence and the enduring grain of the city dictated by the Roman roads and the town walls. For the purposes of this work the Roman influence is considered within the context of the Georgian city.

Unsurprisingly roads were the principal means of reaching Georgian Bath. A study was carried out of the principal historic routes into and out of Bath (see Appendix 2). Access was also available by boat from Bristol via the Avon navigation from 1727 onwards and from London via the Kennet & Avon Canal which opened in 1810. Bath was not reached by railway from London until 1840. In most cases the roads both provided visitors their first glimpse of the city and also were used as a means for enjoying the surrounding area. The Turnpike Act in 1707 was instrumental in facilitating widening, surfacing and drainage and the construction of diversions and new roads enabling Bath to develop some of the best roads in the country at that time. Prior to the Turnpikes access to Bath was difficult and at times dangerous on account of the hills. A selection of the key roads is described in Appendix 9. Nearly all the routes are still in use today although short sections may survive only as minor roads or lanes following subsequent improvements. The roads, their environs and views available from them to the city and from the city to the countryside are an important aspect of the setting of the Georgian city.

Work carried out to assess the visual setting has included identifying a selection of significant views from roads and other viewpoints. Views have been assessed and described. A representative sample of significant views has been studied to identify what can be seen from them to provide an indication of the visual setting of the WHS. These have been shown as a series of maps showing areas visible from specific viewpoints (see Maps 5a-m at the end of this chapter) and a combined map (Map 5n) has also been produced to provide an indication of the overall visual setting of the WHS. To provide a definitive visual setting all significant views would need to be identified and assessed but for the reasons given in the section entitled 'Work Undertaken' in chapter 1 a definitive setting boundary has not been identified.

Description of Visual Setting

Outside the WHS the roads are now mainly class 'A' and 'B' roads. With very few exceptions, from a distance of 2km. outside the city to the city boundary there is very little evidence at all that an urban area is about to be entered. Key buildings such as Kelston Manor and Bailbrook House and structures such as the bridge at Newbridge provided a sense of the approaching Georgian town. On the old A4 through Batheaston the visitor is travelling in a built up environment anyway before entering the city but only a limited amount of city development can be viewed before entering the city itself. On the Lansdown Road, there is a rare sense of urban

fringe as one drives from the Lansdown Racecourse to the city boundary, with playing fields and associated buildings, lighting, signage and the Lansdown Park and Ride. There are, however no views of the city itself until well within the city boundary where the road drops sharply down off the plateau top and into the Avon valley. From the A36 through Bathampton, again the visitor is driving from the built up area of the village more or less straight into the city suburbs. From the A367 the old Fullers Earth Works 0.75km from the city boundary with the adjacent Park and Ride site does give a brief sense of urban fringe. From some of the other surveyed routes there are occasional glimpses of small parts of the city development in the distance but for all routes other than those described above there is quite a sharp change from high quality rural to suburban / urban character with almost no intermediate urban fringe and almost no views of the city ahead until one has actually entered it.

The assessment of roads within the WHS describes the sense of anticipation and then the feeling of arrival experienced by travellers into Bath. For example travellers from the south would experience the climb up the steep Brassknocker Hill and the level section of the plateau at Claverton Down Road before the steep descent into the city which would gradually reveal itself as the traveller descended Bathwick or Widcombe Hills. A sequence of views along some of the routes is shown in Appendix 9.

Visitors to Bath would often take excursions on horseback, in carriages or on foot into the surrounding countryside. During the Georgian period from the beginning of the 18th century and into the mid 19th Century development in Bath was relatively sparse within tracts of open and mainly grazed countryside. Some of the known key routes are shown on Map 9 in Appendix 2. These include walks taking in Primrose Hill, Beacon Hill to Charlcombe, Widcombe to the Combe Down stone mines, Alexandra Park and Wells Road on to Oldfield Park. Of particular note is Ralph Allen's carriage drive around the edge of Bathampton Down and westwards to Foxhill. Another popular walk, often in conjunction with these walks and with ferry crossings, was alongside the river to places such as Newbridge to the west or Camden Crescent. A description of the river walk is given in Appendix 10. The significance of the walks, promenades and rides to the OUV is important in understanding how Georgian development was so fully integrated with appreciation and integration with the landscape. Valued views included to and from specific buildings, landmarks and other places of interest as well as an appreciation of the rural landscape within easy access of the town. For the purposes of this study views have been categorised into those facing out from the Georgian city and those facing into and/or across the city.

The views out from the city show the importance of the green upper slopes and skyline all the way around the built city and also illustrate the contained nature of the city within its landscape hollow. There are no views which show a consistently urban skyline. The majority of the skyline is well treed with occasional areas such as above parts of Weston and to the west of Twerton where agricultural fields form the upper slopes and hedges run along the skyline. Even where housing reaches the skyline for example at Fox Hill, Combe Down and Twerton and continues over onto the plateau, the tree cover is generally such that the housing is at least partially screened and the overall skyline effect is of trees. Looking from within and across the city, one sees a succession of hills and ridges, starting with the slopes of the hollow itself (some of which lie within the WHS boundary), and then rippling out in all directions, forming a layered visual backdrop to the cityscape of green countryside. Some of these hills and ridges can be seen from key locations within the WHS, such as the Royal Crescent and Georgian Upper Town area, and others are the backdrop for when viewing panoramic views of the city from the outer areas such as Twerton and Weston.

The views into the city fall into those from the open countryside and those now within the urban area. There are very few publicly accessible views of the city from the countryside and these

are all from the edge of the Cotswold plateau. To the south, east and west the city is tucked down within its hollow and largely hidden from view, blocked by ridge lines and plateau edges. The main viewpoints are the Prospect Stile and nearby Kelston Round Hill, along the Cotswold Way at Penn Hill / Dean Hill above Weston, Little Solsbury Hill and Brown's Folly. These views all, to different degrees illustrate the compact nature of the city laid out in its landscape hollow with either open fields on upper slopes or woodland and well treed residential areas running up to well treed skylines. The wide vista from the aptly named Prospect Stile gives a particularly impressive view of almost the whole southern side of the city. A selection of these views is shown and described in Appendix 11.

The visual setting of the Georgian city can best be understood as a series of layers from individual buildings and places of interest which may be viewed at close quarters through to longer views, with the occasional landmark, which form a valued outlook and a backdrop to people's lives. Typically key views into the city will incorporate both views to Georgian development, and to open spaces and undeveloped land. These two elements reflect some of the character of the city that would have been experienced during the Georgian period.

There is a third component of views which consists of later development from Victorian times through to the present day. This third component though not directly part of the original Georgian town none-the-less largely respects the character of neighbouring areas for example in the use of Bath stone, the hierarchy and scale of buildings and in the provision of trees and open space and in the way they are contained within the hollow. These areas form an important part of the view seen from the Georgian city and seen from higher ground where the context of the Georgian city can be seen fully. There are, however, examples of buildings, which by virtue of their mass, deep plan, lack of roof articulation, poor proportions, inappropriate height, use of unsympathetic materials, lack of reference to the site context or poor relationship to the public realm have compromised the harmonious composition of the city and therefore do not support or enhance the OUV.

Significant Components of Visual Setting

Viewpoints which are significant in defining and understanding the setting of the WHS will generally include one or more of the following characteristics.

- Views from key Georgian buildings and landmarks
- Views to Georgian buildings and landmarks
- Views from walks, rides and places of interest which were significant in the Georgian period known from literature and illustrations
- Public viewpoints which provide a good vantage point for viewing the Georgian town and key buildings in their own right
- Public viewpoints which provide a good vantage point for viewing the Georgian town and key buildings in their landscape setting

They will include both views which are designed specifically to be seen and incidental views

A selection of key views is shown in Appendix 11 on a series of information sheets which include a summary of the significance of the viewpoint and a description of the main components of the view. These are not intended to be a comprehensive record of significant views or to show the most significant views.

Summary

These are the key characteristics of importance to the visual setting of Bath as a WHS:

- The visual setting is defined in relation to the Georgian city and the Roman remains particularly those associated with the Baths complex and evidence of Roman life and the founding of the Roman town which have influenced the current layout or which responded to key landscape features. It comprises three key components; the approach to the city, views out from the city and views in to the city. Key views have been identified which reflect the intention for certain buildings to have views across the landscape and to be seen in the landscape, which reflect the way people in the Georgian period perceived and experienced the landscape and to give a representative sample of views to reflect different parts of the city including public viewpoints that are valued today.
- There is a distinctive layered backdrop to the city of green hillsides and skylines. These are shown on Map 6 at the end of this chapter and take in all the hillsides and skylines which can be seen clearly in good weather with good visibility from higher level viewpoints throughout the city and are also informed by the panoramic views over the city taken from the Cotswold plateau.
- The city is very self-contained, indeed largely hidden from much of the wider countryside due to strong landform features forming visual blocks. This is illustrated by Map 1 which shows the principal landform features, plateau edges and ridge lines, which block views to the city.
- Key views into and across the city typically incorporate elements of the Georgian city and green open space and undeveloped land which together reflect the character of views experienced in the Georgian period. A third component is subsequent development from the Victorian period through to the present day. These three components and the way they complement each other are key to the integrity and harmonious appearance of the city.

The visual setting of the WHS consists of:

- The open landscape adjoining the built up areas as experienced by visitors approaching the city using the road system which was largely in place during the Georgian period.
- The city within the hollow as seen from key viewpoints incorporating the three main components of Georgian townscape, green open spaces and undeveloped tracts of land and later Victorian development through to the present day.
- The open landscape adjoining the built up areas as seen from key viewpoints or known walks and rides.

The key views in relation to assessing proposed development, changes and management relevant to the OUV include:

- Views into the city, or out from the city, from historic routes which still exist today
- Views from Georgian buildings
- Views from Georgian landmarks
- Views to Georgian buildings
- Views to Georgian landmarks
- Views from walks, rides and places of interest which were significant in the Georgian period known from literature and illustrations
- Public viewpoints which provide a good vantage point for viewing the Georgian town and key buildings in their own right
- Public viewpoints which provide a good vantage point for viewing the Georgian town and key buildings in their landscape setting
- Other viewpoints which take in the historical asset itself and the wider area where development or other changes are proposed

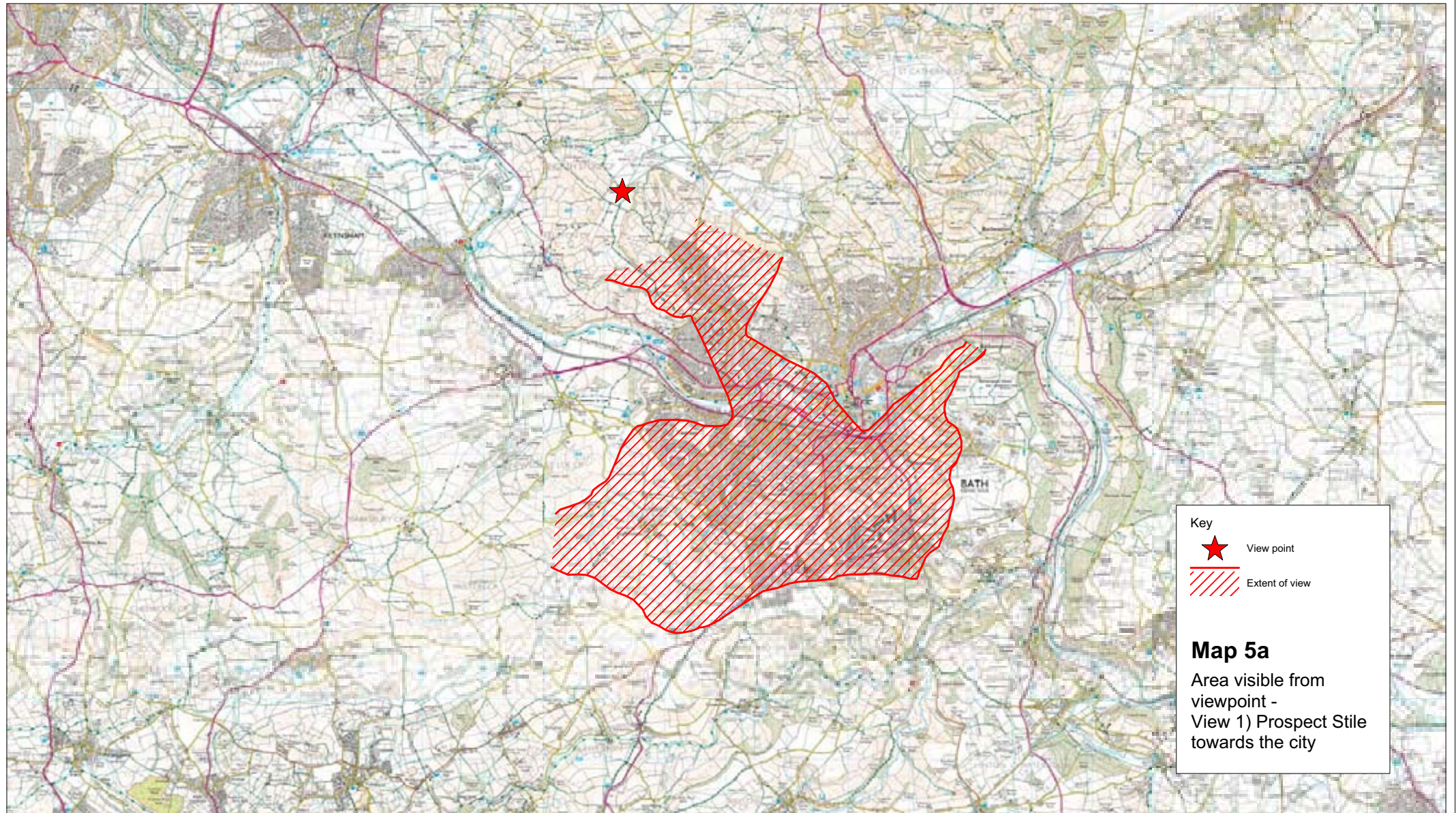
Map 5a

Area visible from viewpoint - View 1) Prospect Stile towards the city

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Scale 1:60000

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Trim Street
Bath BA1 2DP
Tel 01225 477000



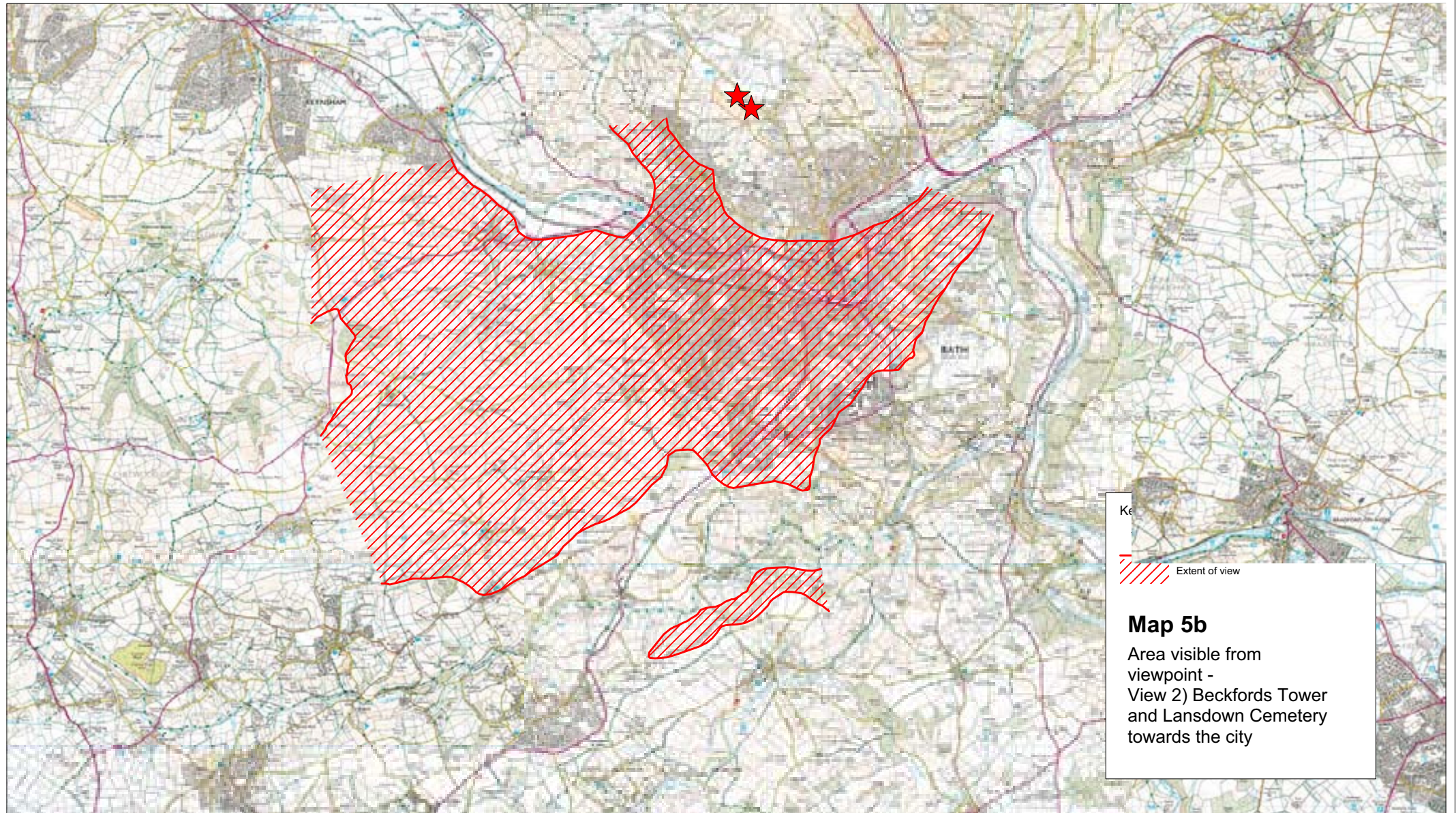
Map 5b

Area visible from viewpoint - View 2) Beckfords Tower and Lansdown Cemetery towards the city

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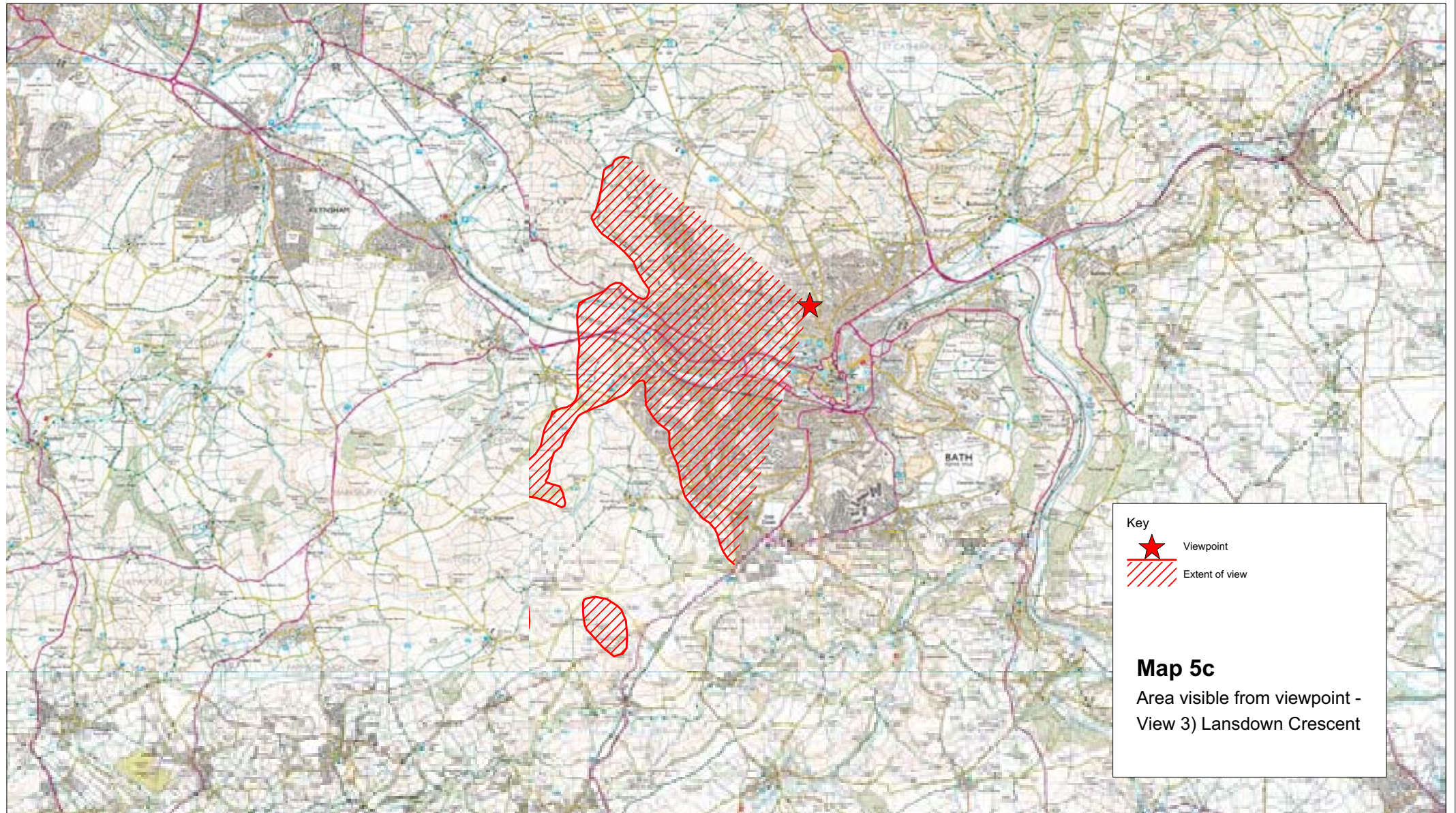
Map 5c

Area visible from viewpoint - View 3) Lansdown Crescent

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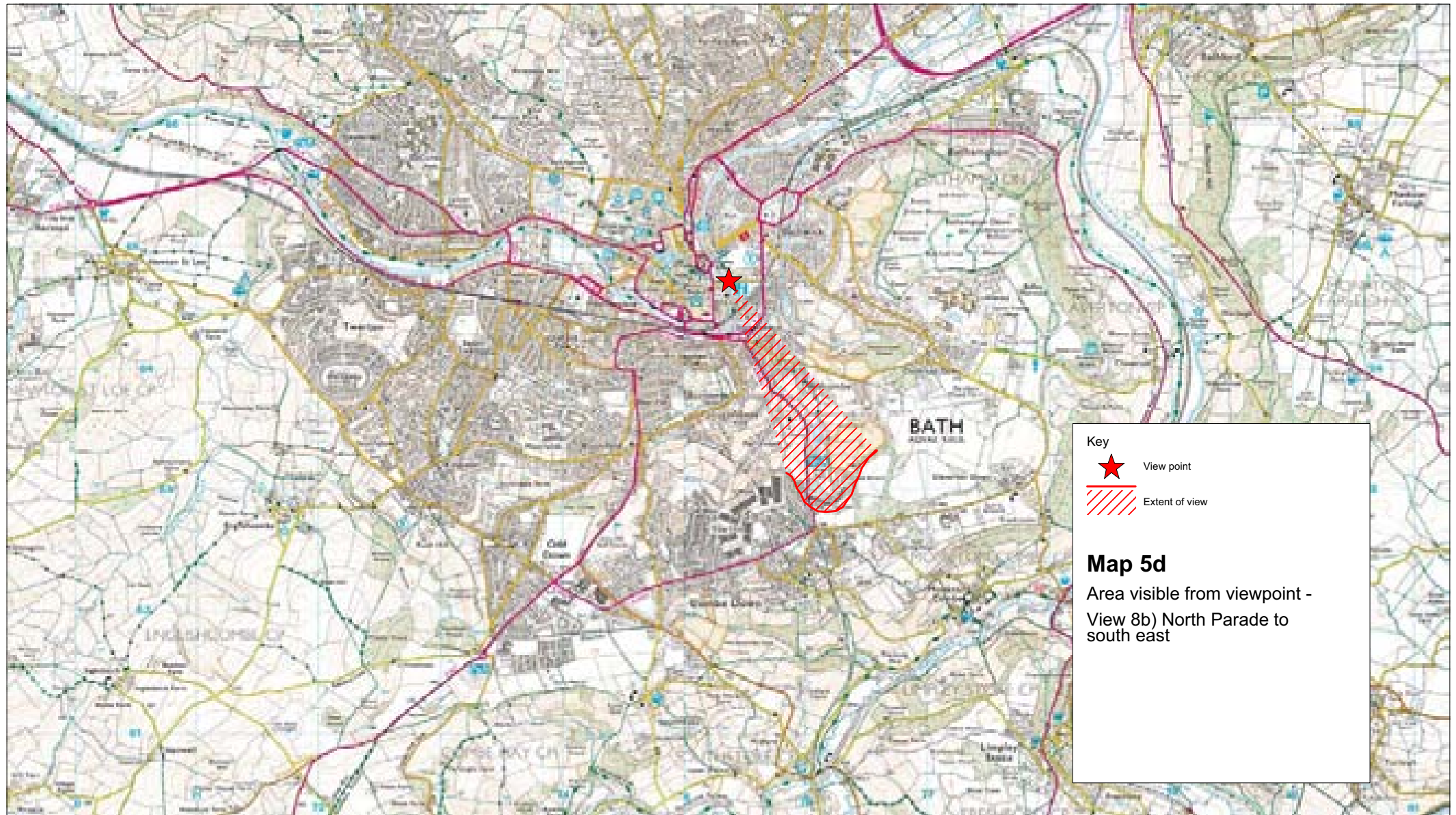
Map 5d

Area visible from viewpoint - View 8b) North Parade to south east

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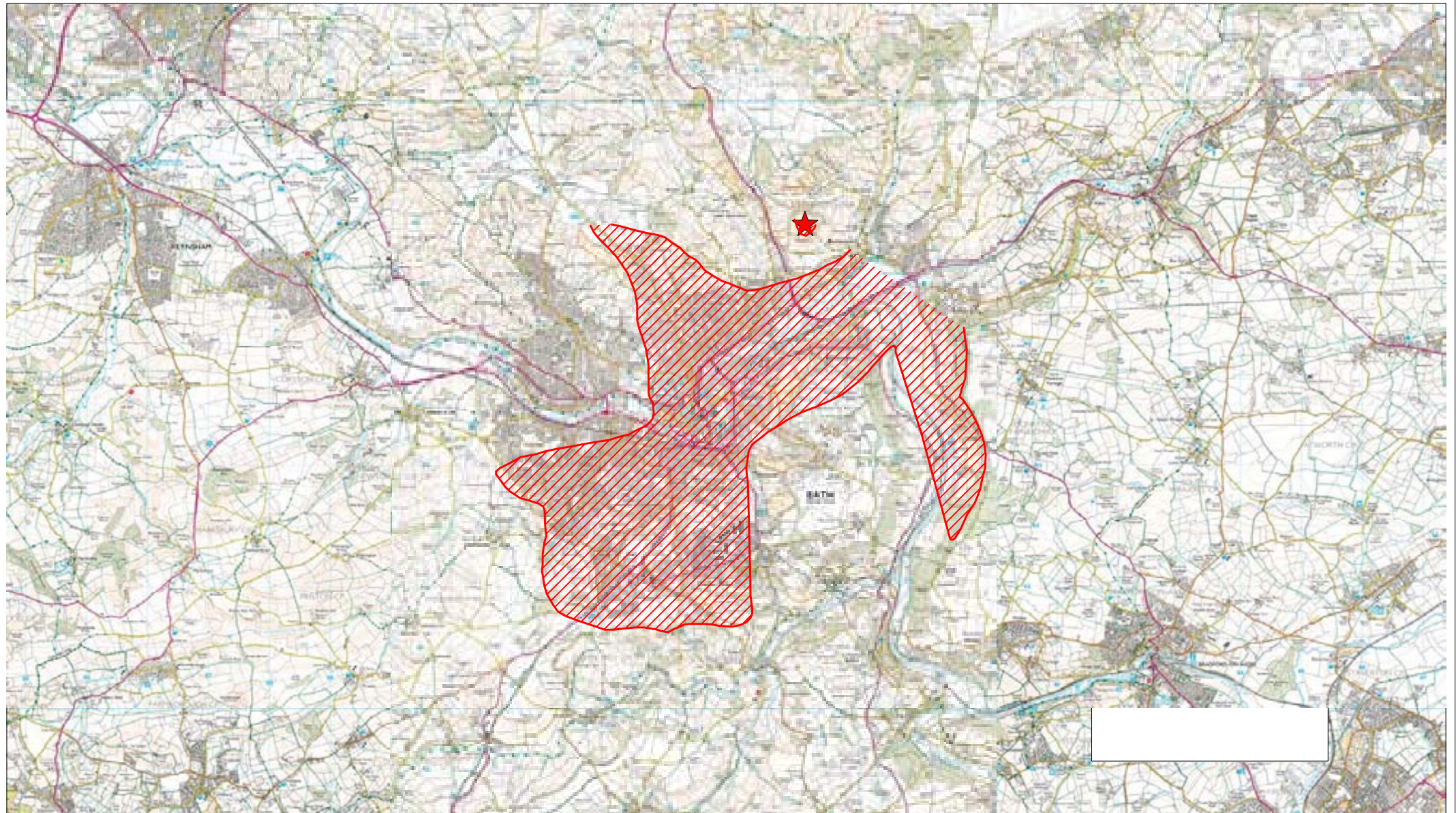
Map 5e

Area visible from viewpoint - View 10) Little Solsbury Hill

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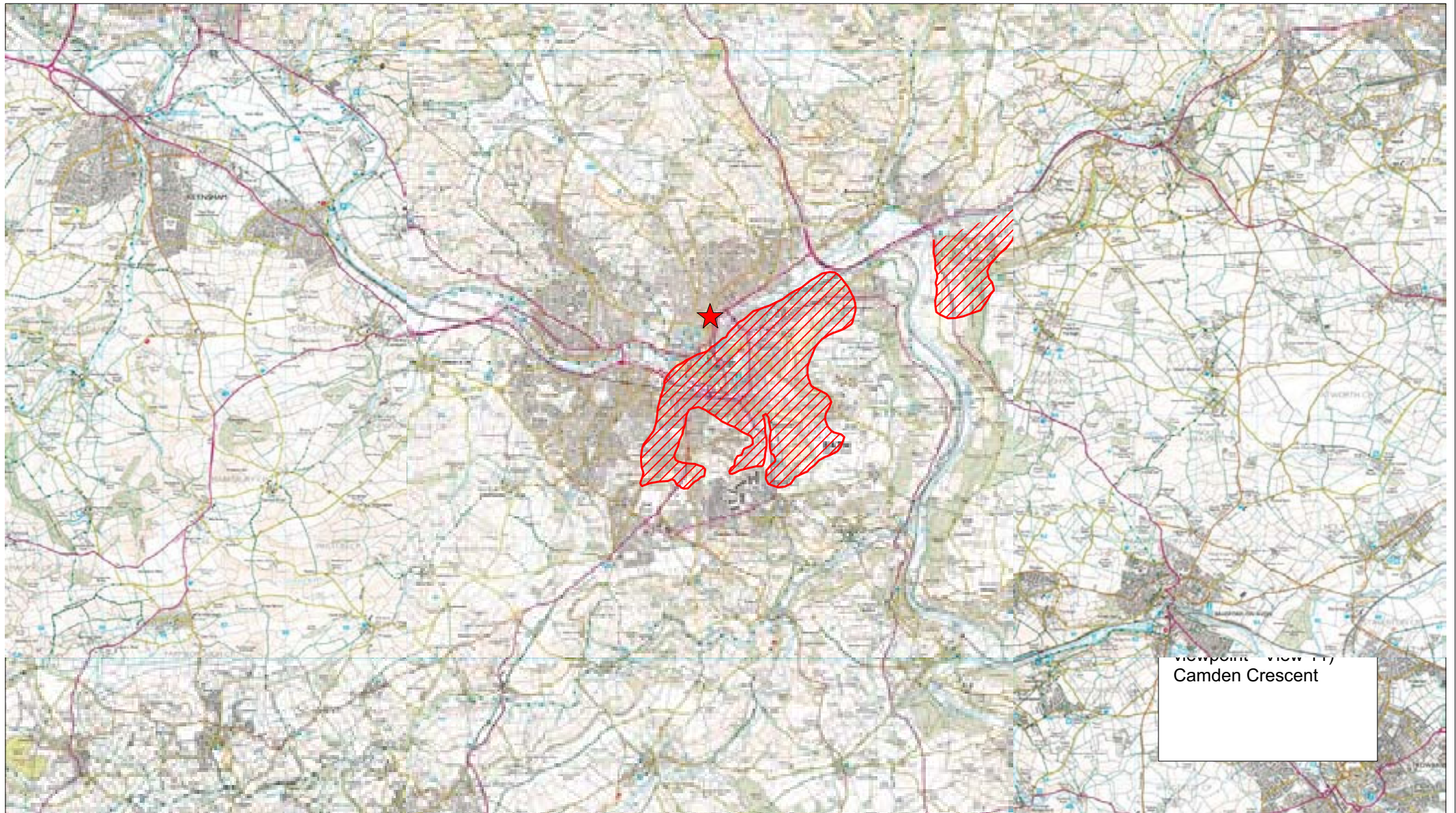
Map 5f

Area visible from viewpoint - View 11) Camden Crescent

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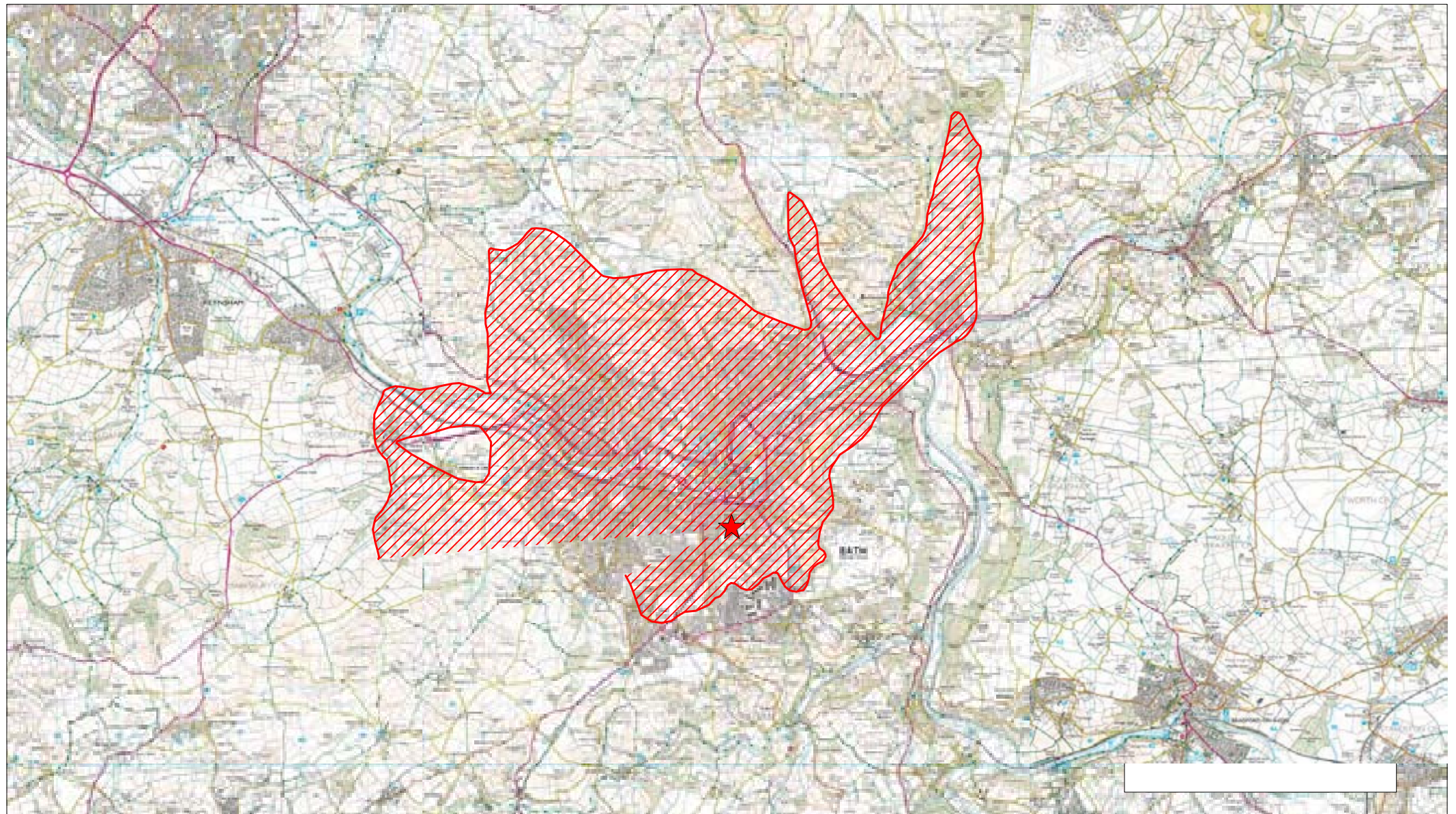
Map 5g

Area visible from viewpoint - View 12) Alexandra Park

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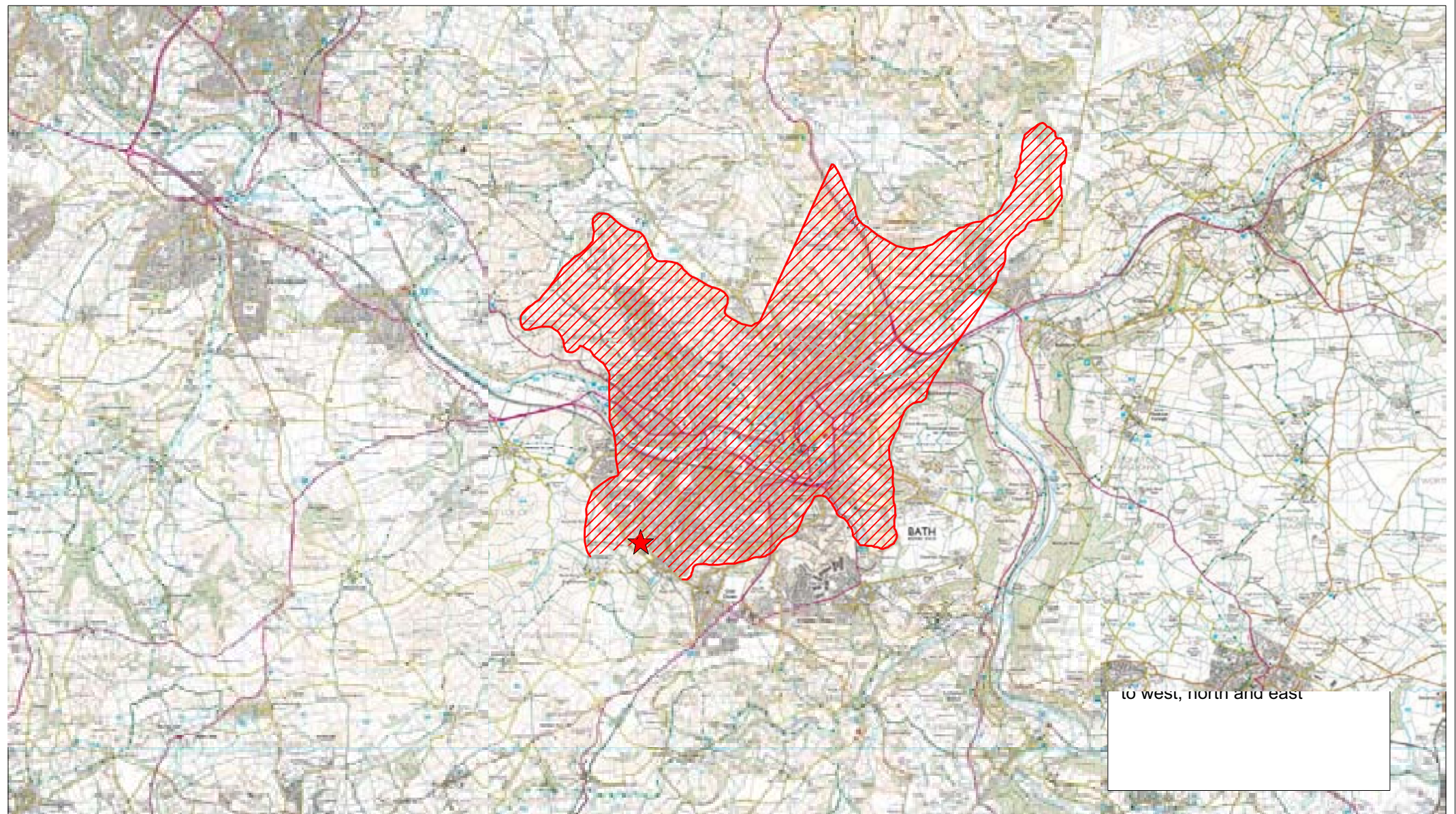
Map 5h

Area visible from viewpoint - View 13) Twerton Roundhill to west, north and east

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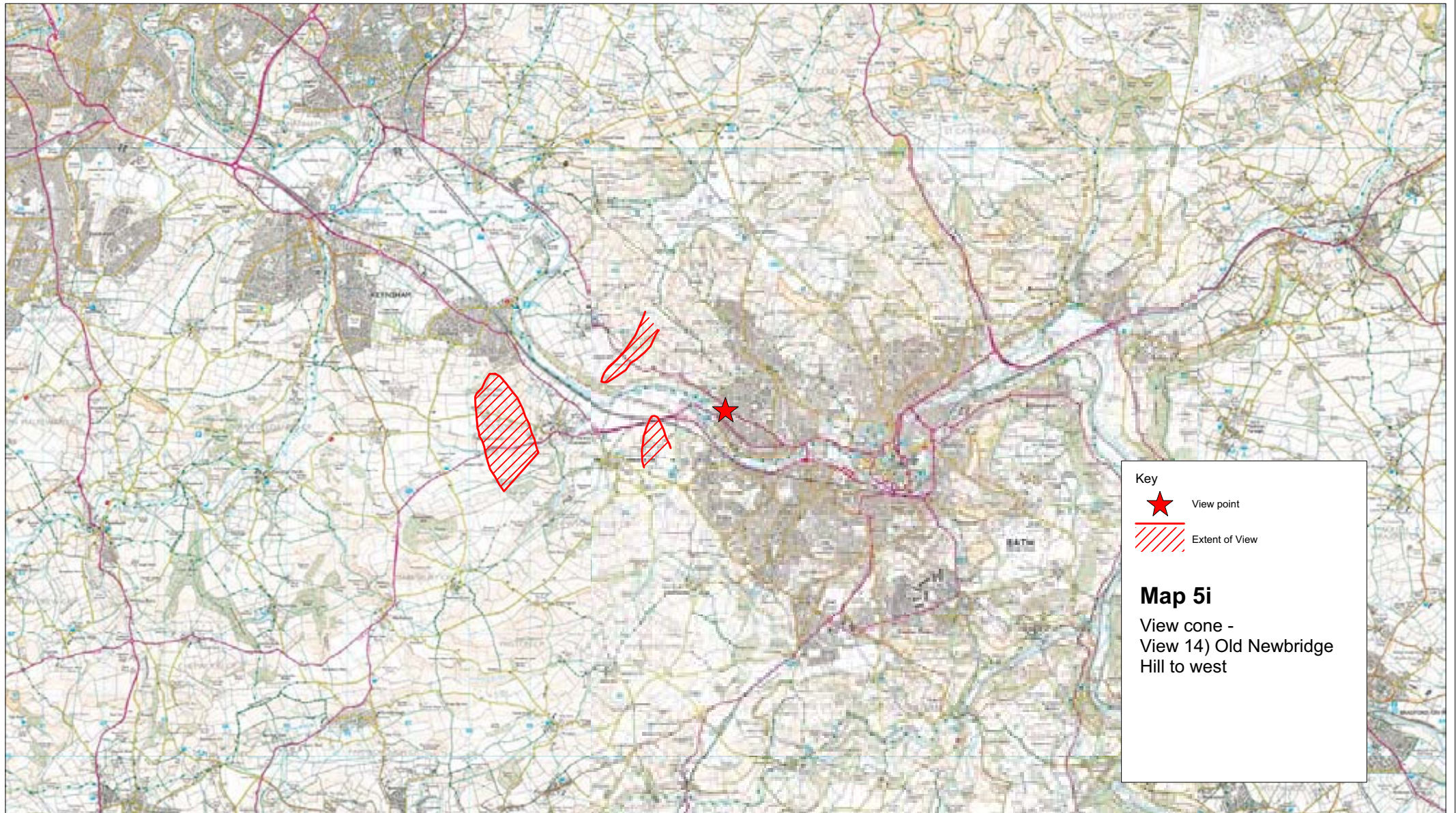
Map 5i

View cone - View 14) Old Newbridge Hill to west

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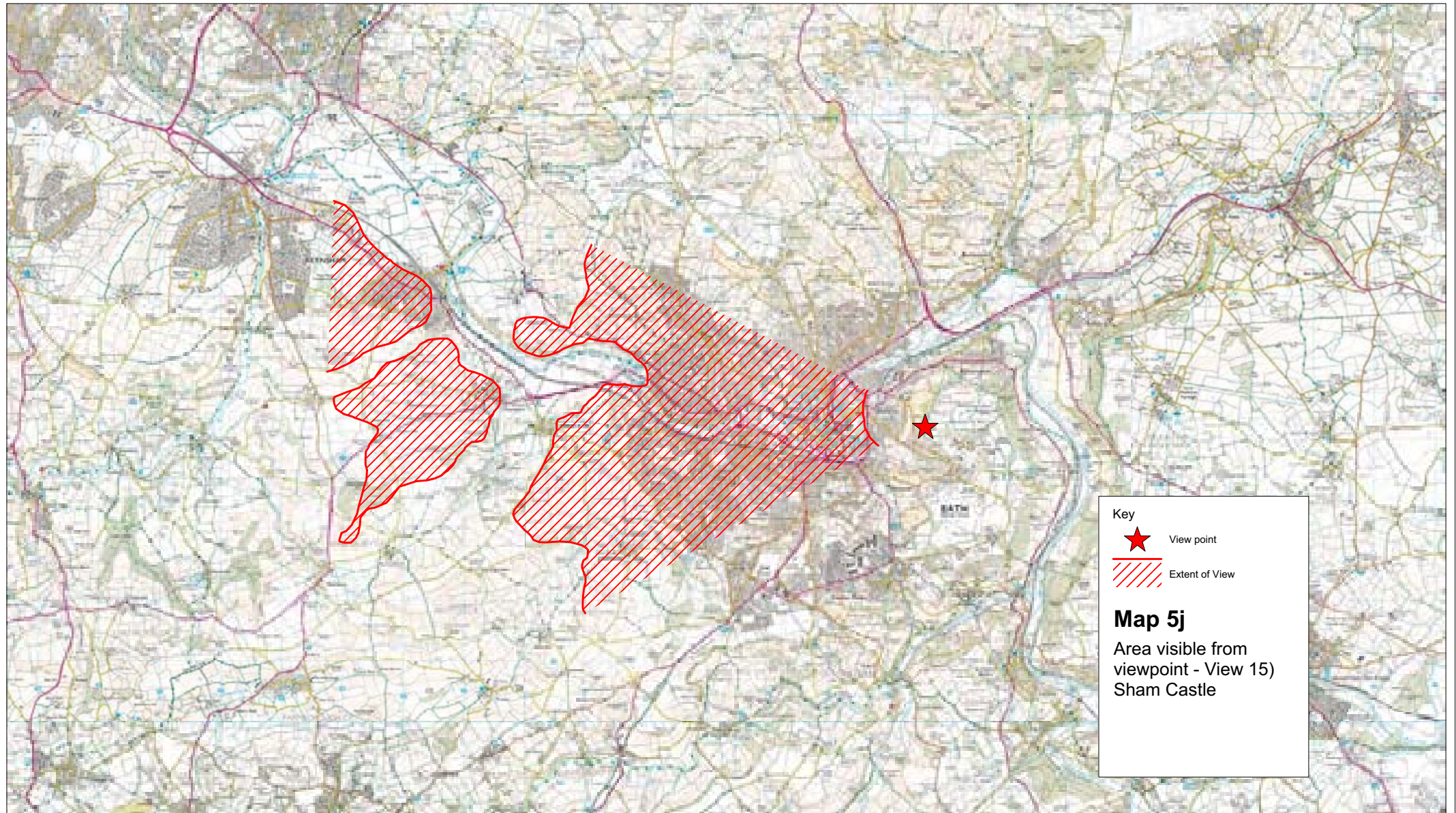
Map 5j

Area visible from viewpoint - View 15) Sham Castle

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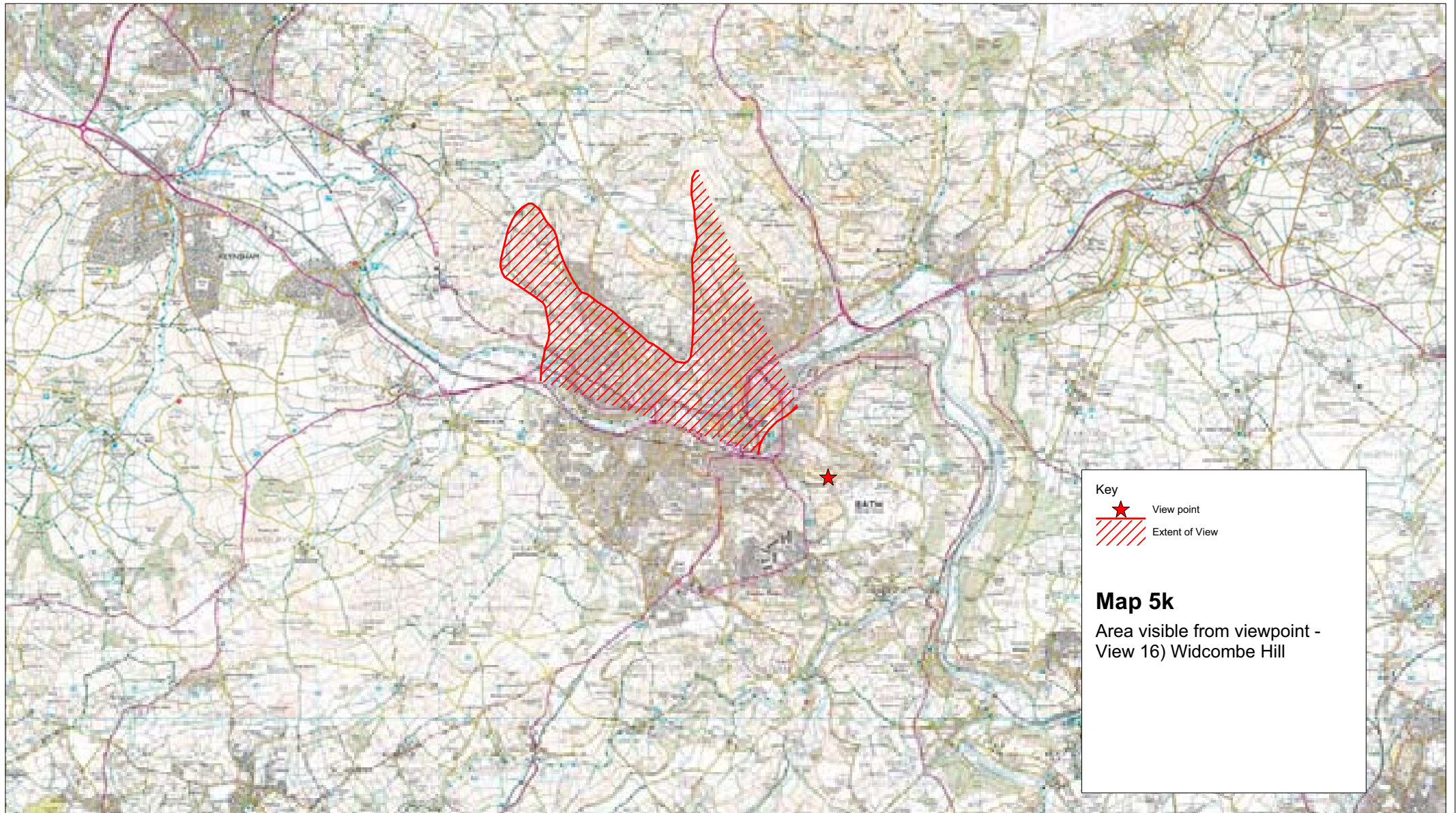
Map 5k

Area visible from viewpoint - View 16) Widcombe Hill

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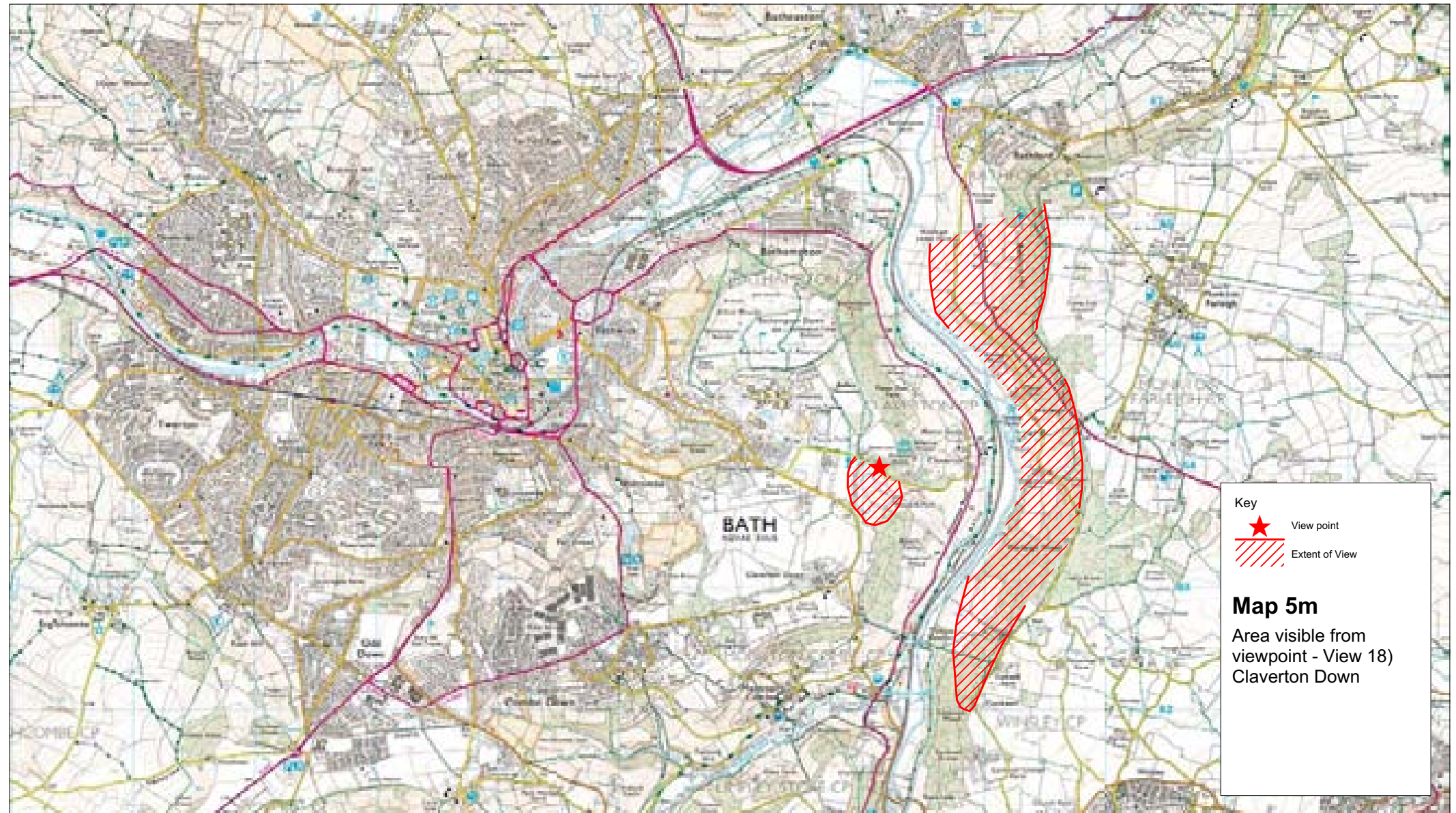
Map 5m

Area visible from viewpoint - View 18) Claverton Down



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Key

-  View point
-  Extent of View

Map 5m
Area visible from
viewpoint - View 18)
Claverton Down

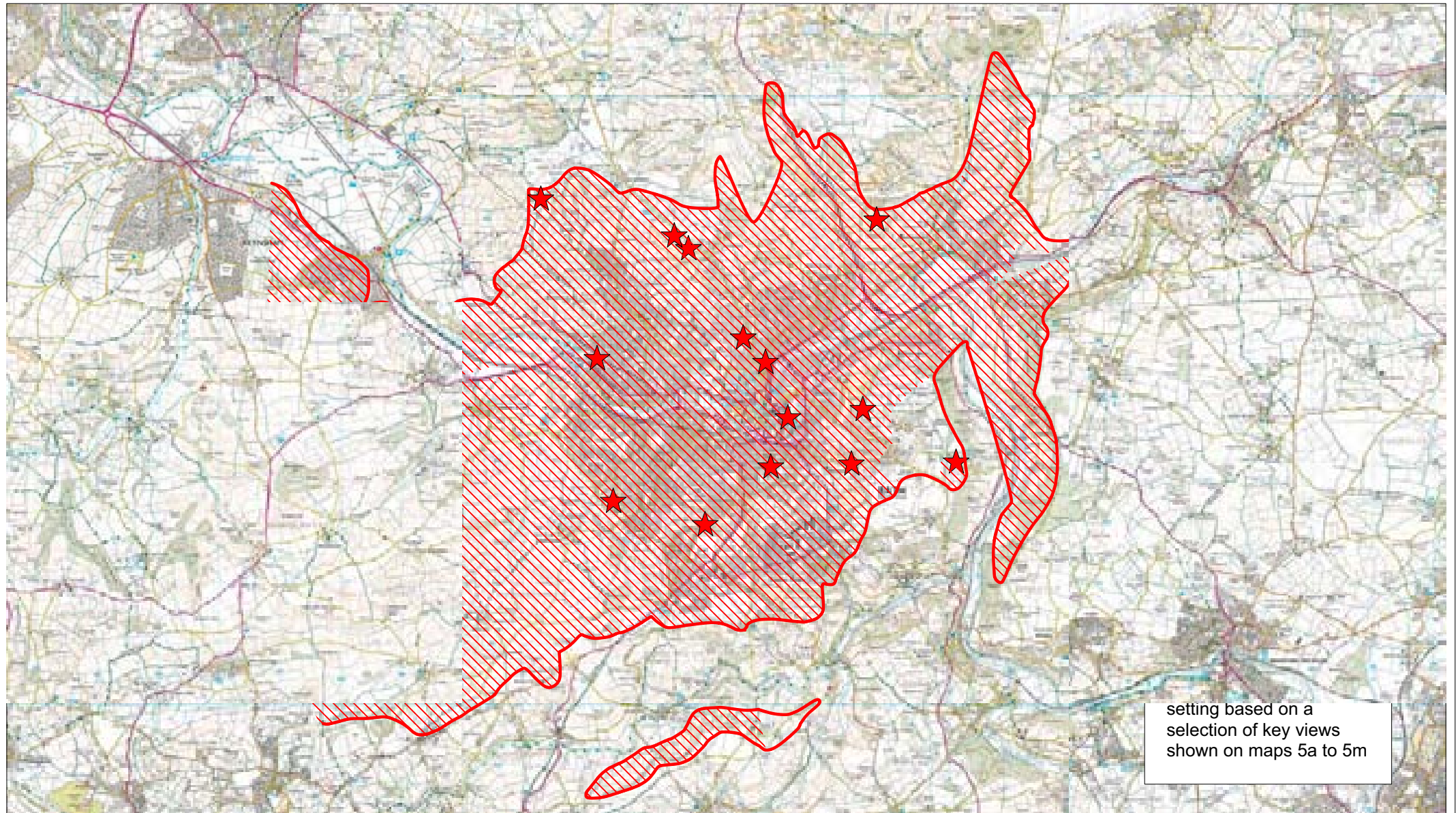
Map 5n

View points combined

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Map 6

Important Green Hillside & Skyline

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