



Melksham Phase 2

Archaeological and Heritage Assessment

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On behalf of:
Gleeson Land

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(edp9278_d010a 15 September 2025 JLe/EBr)

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(edp9278_d018a 19 September 2025 DJo/EBr)

Executive Summary

- S1 This report has been prepared by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) on behalf of Gleeson Land and represents an Archaeological and Heritage Assessment of land to the south of Blackmore Farm, known as 'Melksham, Phase 2' (hereafter referred to as 'the site') in support of an application to develop the site for housing.
- S2 The assessment concludes that the site does not contain any designated heritage assets, such as world heritage sites, scheduled monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields or conservation areas, and so there is no potential for 'direct impacts' from the Proposed Development.
- S3 Only one designated asset was deemed to have the potential for its setting to be affected: the Grade II Listed Blackmore House. The assessment concludes that northern and central areas of the site make a low contribution to the asset's significance. It is therefore unlikely that the Proposed Development would cause a level of harm that was greater than the lowest end of less than substantial harm. Instead, with careful masterplanning, development should be able to respect the asset's setting and thus minimise, or avoid harm arising to its significance.
- S4 In terms of non-designated archaeology, the site has a low potential to contain significant archaeological remains from the prehistoric onwards, with the exception of the south-west corner, which has a moderate potential for Roman remains. Such remains are unlikely to be of greater than low, local value, and so there is no reason to believe that the site contains archaeological remains that would be of such significance as to warrant physical preservation in situ. Instead, their conservation (comprising preservation by record) could be appropriately addressed through a phased programme of archaeological investigations, the scope of which would be agreed with the archaeological advisor to the Local Planning Authority (LPA).
- S5 Therefore, in terms of designated and non-designated heritage assets, this report provides the information requested in Paragraph 207 of the NPPF and will inform the subsequent assessment of impact from the planning proposals.

Section 1

Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP), on behalf of Gleeson Land ('the Client') and presents the results of an Archaeological and Heritage Assessment of land to the south of Blackmore Farm, known as 'Melksham, Phase 2' (hereafter referred to as 'the site'). This document has been produced to support an outline application for planning permission for a residential development (hereafter referred to as the 'the Proposed Development').
- 1.2 The first aim of this assessment is to consider the available historical and archaeological resources for the site and to establish its likely potential in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local planning policy.
- 1.3 The second aim of this assessment is to identify and assess the potential for development within the site to cause change to designated heritage assets, either directly or through changes within their setting, and to determine whether, and to what extent, those changes might affect their heritage significance.
- 1.4 In accordance with best practice guidance, utilised desktop sources have been augmented through the completion of a site and study area walkover survey, undertaken in May 2025. The Wiltshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and Archives, as well as the Historic England Archives (HEA), were consulted amongst other sources of information.

SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

- 1.5 The site is located c.475m to the east of the urban edge of the town of Melksham, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 392899, 164036. Its location and layout are shown on **Plan EDP 1**.
- 1.6 The site comprises c.30.94 hectares (ha) of agricultural fields, mostly under pasture, which are separated by hedgerows populated by occasional trees, as well as a small parcel of woodland at the south-east corner of the site.
- 1.7 To the north the site is bounded by a number of residential properties off the A3102, with agricultural land and occasional residential and agricultural development beyond this.
- 1.8 To the east the site is bounded by Sandridge Common and agricultural fields, as well as a large solar development and associated infrastructure, and small parcels of woodland beyond this.
- 1.9 To the south the site is bounded by further agricultural land and occasional small parcels of woodland. A small, unnamed brook runs eastwards from the western edge of the site before turning south, crossing the south-east portion of the site.
- 1.10 To the west, the site is bounded by agricultural fields, which form Phase 1 of the development of Land South of Blackmore Farm, Melksham, which has been granted

permission for mixed development under application PL/2023/11188 (discussed further below). Beyond this lies Eastern Way, and the modern residential development located off this road.

- 1.11 The buildings of Blackmore Farm are located just beyond the northeastern boundary of the site. The site is accessed directly from the farm, which works the land within the site.

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 1.12 The site is situated on land that slopes gently from the north-east to south-west but is - in general - relatively flat. The highest point of the site is located in the north-east corner at c.52m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) and the lowest point is in the far south-west corner at c.41m aOD. The brook running across the south-east edge of the site is situated at c.40m aOD.
- 1.13 The solid geology within the site mostly comprises mudstone of the Oxford Clay Formation, which is a sedimentary bedrock formed from 157 to 166 million years ago in the Jurassic Period. This type of geology was formed in an environment previously dominated by shallow seas.
- 1.14 Although, for most of the site, there are no superficial deposits recorded, the area surrounding the brook does have recorded superficial deposits of alluvium comprising clay, silt, sand and gravel. These deposits were formed up to 2 million years ago in the quaternary period in an environment previously dominated by rivers (www.bgs.ac.uk).

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.15 The proposals will be the subject of an application for outline planning permission, with all matters reserved except for access. The development description is as follows:

“Development of up to 300 dwellings and provision of all associated infrastructure necessary to facilitate development of the site.”

PLANNING BACKGROUND

- 1.16 An application was submitted across the agricultural land to the west of the site, extending towards Eastern Way, and forming Phase 1 of the Land South of Blackmore Farm, Melksham. This was granted outline permission under application PL/2023/11188 on 12 May 2025.

1.17 The application relates to the following description of development:

“Demolition of agricultural buildings and development of up to 500 dwellings; up to 5,000 square metres of employment (class E(g)(i)) & class E(g)(ii)); land for primary school (class F1); land for mixed-use hub (class E / class F); open space; provision of access infrastructure from Sandridge Common (A3102); and provision of all associated infrastructure necessary to facilitate the development of the site”.

1.18 An archaeological and heritage desk-based assessment was produced for the site in December 2023 (EDP, 2023) to support the application, alongside two phases of geophysical survey (Headland, 2022 and SUMO, 2023) and two phases of trial trench investigation (Cotswold Archaeology, 2022 and Cotswold Archaeology, 2024).

1.19 The north-eastern field of the current application site was covered by the previously undertaken geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation (Headland 2022 and Cotswold 2022).

1.20 The Wiltshire Conservation Officer was consulted throughout the application process. An initial comment was provided on the 14 February 2024, noting an objection with regard to the Grade II listed Blackmore House as a result of harm through changes to the asset's setting:

“The proposals would introduce a suburban form of development which is out of character with the existing agricultural landscape, over a very large area, and would result in the loss of a substantial part of the wider rural setting within which the listed farmhouse is experienced and a consequent diminution of its significance. Given that there would be no direct impact on historic fabric, the harm can be taken as “less than substantial harm” for the purposes of interpreting the NPFF.

On this occasion the omission of built form from the area to the east of the farm does constitute an improvement and allows the farm to retain something of its connection with the surrounding agricultural landscape. Similarly, the introduction of additional landscaping to the south of the boundary to the farm provides some further mitigation. It is also acknowledged that there has been some erosion of the immediate setting of the house via the loss of much of the historic farmstead and by the construction of the adjacent bungalow, which is out of character in this historic context. However, the area of land covered remains very large and approaching from the north, the farm would become be viewed against a new backdrop of suburban housing development in place of the current agricultural character of the landscape.

As a result, there will continue to be a level of harm to the setting of the farmhouse which would result from the proposed development, albeit at the medium/lower end of the spectrum of less than substantial harm.

No heritage benefits are argued or will result from the proposals.”

1.21 These comments were addressed through alterations to the proposals, with a Technical Note submitted alongside the updated masterplan (EDP, 2024) detailing how the scheme sought to reduce this level of harm through sensitive masterplan, as well heritage benefits through provision of an information board for the listed building.

1.22 Subsequent comments from the Wiltshire Conservation Officer were received on 23 May 2024:

“The additional comments are noted. However, I would caution that the response received focusses on static views from specific viewpoints which, it is asserted, will remain unchanged, and fails to take into account a viewer’s experience as they travel through the landscape. In this respect the experience of the landscape within which the farmhouse is set will undeniably be altered and become more suburbanised via the proximity of the proposed development, including the estate access road and development from the west around the south. It is agreed that the harm caused will be within the lower half of the spectrum but there remains an impact which will be required to be offset by the public benefits of the development overall.”

1.23 No further comments were received, however the application PL/2023/11188 was granted permission, illustrating that the overall benefits of the scheme were considered to outweigh the less than substantial harm to the listed building.

Section 2

Legislation and Planning Guidance

- 2.1 This section sets out relevant legislation and planning policy governing the conservation and management of the historic environment.

LEGISLATION

- 2.2 In terms of ‘effects on the historic environment’, the following paragraphs summarise those principal legislative instruments and planning policy frameworks of relevance to this application.
- 2.3 Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* set out the duties of Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in respect of the treatment of listed buildings and conservation areas, through the planning process.
- 2.4 Section 66(1) of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* sets out the statutory duty of the decision-maker, where a proposed development would affect a listed building or its setting:
- “In considering whether to grant planning permission [or permission in principle] for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”*
- 2.5 The ‘special regard’ duty of the 1990 Act has been tested in the Courts and confirmed to require that “*considerable importance and weight*” is afforded by the decision-maker to the desirability of preserving a listed building along with its setting.
- 2.6 Paragraph 212 of the NPPF (MHCLG, 2024) transposes s66(1) and s72(1) of the 1990 Act into national planning policy.
- 2.7 The balancing exercise to be performed – between the harm arising from a proposal and the benefits which would accrue from its implementation – is then subsequently presented in paragraphs 214 and 215 of the NPPF.

National Planning Policy

- 2.8 The revised NPPF was published in 2024 (as amended in 2025). Section 16 sets out the government’s approach to the conservation and management of the historic environment through the planning process.
- 2.9 The opening paragraph (202) recognises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

2.10 Paragraph 207 concerns planning applications, stating that:

“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.”

2.11 NPPF paragraph 210 is relevant when it states that:

“In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a. the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b. the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- c. the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.”*

2.12 Paragraph 212 considers the weighting given within the planning decision with regard to impacts on designated heritage assets, stating that:

“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.”

2.13 Paragraph 213 considers the level of harmful effects on designated heritage assets and states that:

“Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a. Grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional; and*

b. *Assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional¹.*

2.14 In relation to non-designated heritage assets, footnote 75 explains the exemption to the 'balanced judgement' exercise outlined in paragraph 216 in cases where:

"Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest, which are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets."

2.15 With regard to the decision making process, paragraphs 214 and 215 of the NPPF are of relevance.

2.16 Paragraph 214 states that:

"Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a. *The nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site;*
- b. *No viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation;*
- c. *Conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
- d. *The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use."*

2.17 Paragraph 215 states that:

"Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use."

2.18 Paragraph 216 refers to non-designated heritage assets identifying that:

"The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly effect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset."

2.19 Paragraph 219 sets out that:

"Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to

¹ Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest, which are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets.

enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.”

Planning Policy Guidance (On Harm)

- 2.20 Planning Policy Guidance at Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 18a-018-20190723 provides further clarification with regards to the identification of harm. This identifies that harm to the significance of heritage assets can arise through physical changes or change within their settings. With regard to the scale of harm, it identifies Substantial Harm to be a “*high test, so it may not arise in many cases*”. It iterates that harm may arise in certain circumstances and that even large changes may be less than substantial or indeed, not harmful at all.

Local Planning Policy

- 2.21 Local planning policy, of relevance to the site, is contained within the Wiltshire Core Strategy, which was adopted on 20 January 2015. The introduction states: “*...the way that Wiltshire looks is a key strength and the rich environments and heritage will be managed to act as a catalyst for the realisation of this strategy and not a barrier to it*”.
- 2.22 Policy within the adopted Core Strategy which relates to heritage matters is contained within Strategic objective 5 and Section 6 Core Policies, these are illustrated below:

Core Policy 58 – Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment

“Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment.

Designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance, including:

- i. Nationally significant archaeological remains;*
- ii. World Heritage Sites within and adjacent to Wiltshire;*
- iii. Buildings and structures of special architectural or historic interest;*
- iv. The special character or appearance of conservation areas;*
- v. Historic parks and gardens; and*
- vi. Important landscapes, including registered battlefields and townscapes.*

Distinctive elements of Wiltshire’s historic environment, including non-designated heritage assets, which contribute to a sense of local character and identity will be conserved, and where possible enhanced. The potential contribution of these heritage assets towards wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits will also be utilised where this can be delivered in a sensitive and appropriate manner in accordance with Core Policy 57 (Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping).

Heritage assets at risk will be monitored and development proposals that improve their condition will be encouraged. The advice of statutory and local consultees will be sought in consideration of such applications.”

Strategic Objective 5 – Protecting and Enhancing the Natural, Historic and Built Environment

“Wiltshire contains some outstanding built heritage which is an important asset to be safeguarded and which should be reflected in new development. Well-designed developments help to provide a sense of place, add to local distinctiveness and promote community cohesiveness and social well-being. New development will need to respect and enhance Wiltshire’s distinctive characteristics. Wiltshire also has a rich historic environment, including the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site and numerous sites of archaeological importance. These sites will be protected from inappropriate development and, in the case of the World Heritage Site, controlled in a way which sustains its outstanding universal value.

Key outcomes:

- Features and areas of historical and cultural value will have been conserved and where possible enhanced, including the sensitive re-use of historical buildings where appropriate;*
- Wiltshire’s distinctive built heritage will have been used as the inspiration for new developments; and*
- Archaeological sites and features will have been adequately protected.”*

2.23 It should be noted that the Core Strategy will be replaced by the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan. The Draft Wiltshire Local Plan (2020-2038) was submitted for examination in November 2024 with the application site forming part of a larger area of land which is identified as suitable for residential-led development via a draft allocation detailed in Policy 18 ‘Land East of Melksham’. This document was taken into consideration and, where relevant, is referenced throughout this Archaeological and Heritage Baseline Assessment.

2.24 The plans and policies identified above have been considered in the preparation of this assessment.

Section 3 Methodology

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 This report has been produced in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment* issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA, 2020). These guidelines provide a national standard for the completion of desk-based assessments.
- 3.2 This report has also given due regard to the potential for effects on designated heritage assets, in terms of their setting, in line with the five-step process outlined in Historic England's national guidance, which is set out in '*Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets*' (Historic England, 2017) and other relevant documents related to the historic environment (Historic England, 2015).

Archaeological Methodology

- 3.3 The assessment principally involved consultation of readily available archaeological and historical information from documentary and cartographic sources. The major repositories of relevant information comprised:
- The National Heritage List for England (NHLE) curated by Historic England;
 - Information held by the Wiltshire Historic Environment Record (HER) on known archaeological sites, monuments, events and findspots within the vicinity of the site;
 - Maps and documents held by the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, and online at The Genealogist², Know Your Place³ and Envirocheck⁴;
 - Aerial photographs held by the Historic England Archives (HEA) as well as available online sources, such as the Britain from Above⁵, APex⁶ and the National Collection of Aerial Photography (NCAP)⁷ websites;
 - Analysis of LiDAR information held by the Environment Agency⁸; and
 - Previous assessments of the locality undertaken by EDP, if available.
- 3.4 The assessment provides a synthesis of relevant archaeological information for the site and Study Area, to allow for additional contextual information regarding its archaeological interest and/or potential to be gathered. A Study Area of 1km in diameter from the site

² <https://www.thegenealogist.co.uk/> (accessed 05.08.25)

³ <https://maps.bristol.gov.uk/kyp/?edition=wilts> (accessed 05.08.25)

⁴ <https://app.envirocheck.co.uk/> (accessed 05.08.25)

⁵ <https://britainfromabove.org.uk/> (accessed 05.08.25)

⁶ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/> (accessed 05.08.25)

⁷ <https://www.ncap.org/> (accessed 05.08.25)

⁸ <https://environment.data.gov.uk/survey> (accessed 05.08.25)

boundary was considered proportionate and appropriate for the determination of the site's archaeological potential.

- 3.5 The information gathered from the repositories and sources identified above was checked and augmented through the completion of a walkover of the site and surrounding area, undertaken in May 2025. This walkover considered the nature and significance of known and/or potential archaeological assets within the site, identified visible historic features and assessed possible factors that may affect the survival or condition of known or potential archaeological assets.
- 3.6 The report thereafter concludes with an assessment of the site's likely archaeological potential, made with regard to current best practice guidelines.

LiDAR Methodology

- 3.7 Existing Environment Agency LiDAR data was analysed with the specific aim of clarifying the extent of any potential archaeological remains. Airborne LiDAR data (light detection and ranging) was utilised as a source of primary data for the current assessment. LiDAR scanning records height data and has applications in the recording of archaeological earthworks.
- 3.8 Environment Agency LiDAR Digital Terrain Model (DTM) tiles were obtained from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Data Services Platform, under the Open Government Licence v3.0. The data was available at 1m resolution, surveyed in 2022, for most of the study area.
- 3.9 The tiles were downloaded in ASCII (.asc) format, with each .asc file covering an area measuring 100x100m-square. The Environment Agency state that their specifications for LiDAR data requires absolute height error to be less than $\pm 15\text{cm}$, and relative error to be less than $\pm 5\text{cm}$ (EA, 2016). The planar accuracy of the data is guaranteed to $\pm 40\text{cm}$ (absolute), while relative planar accuracy depends on the altitude of the survey aircraft but can generally be said to be $\pm 20\text{cm}$ (*ibid*).
- 3.10 The LiDAR .asc files contain British National Grid as the 'native' coordinate reference system.
- 3.11 Where necessary, the tiles were combined into a mosaic raster dataset using QGIS 3.40 and exported as a TIFF.
- 3.12 The DTM was processed using the Relief Visualisation Toolbox (RVT; version 1.3 ZRC SAZU, 2016) plugin for QGIS to create a number of visualisations including a multi-direction hillshade and local relief model following Historic England guidelines (HE 2010), Guidance in Airbourne Laser Scanning Raster Visualisation: A guide to good practice (Kokalj and Hesse 2017) and the Guidelines for the use of Airborne Laser Scanning (LiDAR) in Archaeology (EAC GUIDELINES 10). The parameters were set to those appropriate for the topography of the area. The output images from the RVT software were then imported into the QGIS 3.40 where further settings manipulation was undertaken to enhance the visualisation for archaeological feature detection.

- 3.13 This software allows for a range of visualisation techniques to be applied to the data. Different techniques have varying degrees of successful application, depending on the nature of the environment where the data was collected. As such, the whole suite of visualisations was produced and then the individual images appraised as to their usefulness in the current context. This appraisal identified that of the visualisation techniques, multiple direction hill-shades produced the best quality and most useful imagery for the archaeology assessment, but for comparison purposes open negative and positive models are also reproduced.

Setting Assessment Methodology

- 3.14 In addition, this report also considers the nature and significance of any indirect effects on the significance of heritage assets located within the wider surroundings of the site. In this regard, the site walkover included visits to heritage assets beyond the site boundaries and considered, where appropriate, their significance, any contribution derived from their wider setting and any existing contribution made by the land at the site in that respect.
- 3.15 The setting assessment process employed current Historic England guidance, which is set out in *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets* (HE, 2017). This provides best practice guidance for the identification and assessment of potential setting issues in the historic environment.
- 3.16 When assessing the ‘indirect’ impact of proposals on heritage assets, it is not a question of whether there would be a physical impact on that asset, but instead whether change within its ‘setting’ would lead to a loss of ‘significance’.
- 3.17 In simple terms, setting is defined as “*the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced*” (MHCLG, 2024). It must be recognized from the outset that ‘setting’ is not a heritage asset and cannot itself be harmed. Its importance relates to the contribution it makes to the significance of the heritage asset.
- 3.18 Historic England (HE) guidance identifies that: “*change to heritage assets is inevitable, but it is only harmful when significance is damaged*” (HE, 2015).
- 3.19 In that regard, ‘significance’ is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as: “*the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic.*”
- 3.20 As such, when assessing the indirect impact of proposals on heritage assets such as listed buildings and conservation areas, it is not a question of whether their setting would be impacted, but rather a question of whether changes within an asset’s ‘setting’ would lead to a loss of ‘significance’ based on the above ‘heritage interest’ as defined in the NPPF.
- 3.21 Set within this context, it is necessary to first define the significance of the asset in question, and the contribution made to that significance by its ‘setting’, in order to establish whether there would be a loss and therefore harm. The guidance identifies that change within a heritage asset’s setting need not necessarily cause harm to that asset and that it can be positive, negative or neutral.

- 3.22 In light of the above, the assessment of potential setting effects, arising from the proposed scheme, has followed the guidance set out in *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets*, published by Historic England in 2017. This guidance (HE, 2017) observes that: “*The NPPF makes it clear that the extent of the setting of a heritage asset is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve.*”
- 3.23 The guidance also observes that: “*elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate the significance or may be neutral.*”
- 3.24 The guidance states that the importance of setting: “*lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or to the ability to appreciate that significance.*”
- 3.25 It goes on to note that:
- “*...all heritage assets have significance, some of which have particular significance and are designated. The contribution made by their setting to their significance also varies. Although many settings may be enhanced by development, not all settings have the same capacity to accommodate change without harm to the significance of the heritage asset or the ability to appreciate it.*”
- 3.26 Whilst identifying that elements of an asset's setting can make an important contribution to its significance, the guidance states that “*setting is not itself a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, although land comprising a setting may itself be designated*”. It continues by adding that “*conserving or enhancing heritage assets by taking their settings into account need not prevent change; indeed change may be positive...*”.
- 3.27 On a practical level, the HE guidance (2017) identifies an approach to assessing setting, which is based on a five-step procedure; i.e:
- Step 1:** Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected;
- Step 2:** Assess the degree to which these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s), or allow significance to be appreciated;
- Step 3:** Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance or the ability to appreciate it;
- Step 4:** Explore ways of maximising enhancement and avoid or minimise harm; and
- Step 5:** Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.
- 3.28 As far as Step 2 is concerned, the guidance makes the following observations:
- “*The second stage of any analysis is to assess whether the setting of a heritage asset makes a contribution to its significance and the extent and/or nature of that contribution...this assessment should first address the key attributes of the heritage asset itself and then consider:*

- *The physical surroundings of the asset, including its relationship with other heritage assets;*
- *The asset's intangible associations with its surroundings, and patterns of use;*
- *The contribution made by noises, smells, etc. to significance; and*
- *The way views allow the significance of the asset to be appreciated."*

3.29 Thereafter, the guidance notes that: *"This assessment of the contribution to significance made by setting will provide the baseline for establishing the effects of a proposed development on significance, as set out in 'Step 3' below."*

3.30 Having established the baseline, the following guidance is provided in respect of an assessment of the effect upon 'setting', i.e.:

"In general, the assessment should address the attributes of the proposed development in terms of its:

- *Location and siting;*
- *Form and appearance;*
- *Wider effects; and*
- *Permanence."*

3.31 As far as identifying the heritage assets potentially affected by the proposed scheme is concerned, due consideration has been given to the following factors which are considered to influence the potential for the setting of heritage assets to be materially affected:

1. The proximity to the existing built environment of Melksham to the west of the site;
2. The current site and study area conditions;
3. Consideration was given to the approved development which will be implemented immediately to the west of the site under PL/2023/11188;
4. The influence of the local topography, built form and tree cover; and
5. Consideration of the character and distribution of surrounding heritage assets.

3.32 On this basis, it was determined that the development of the site is unlikely to affect any heritage assets beyond 1km distance from its boundaries and hence this determined the spatial limits of the exercise.

3.33 In light of the above, this report has been prepared in a robust manner, employing current best practice professional guidance.

Section 4

Historic Environment Resource

INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 This section details and contextualises the known designated and non-designated heritage assets within and around the site.
- 4.2 The site does not contain any designated heritage assets, such as world heritage sites, scheduled monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens or registered battlefields; nor does it fall within a conservation area. There are three listed buildings located within the study area, each of these are Grade II designated. No other designated heritage assets are located within the study area, and are thus not considered within the remit of this report. The locations of these assets are shown on **Plan EDP 1**.
- 4.3 The Wiltshire HER contains five records within the site. These comprise a Roman ditch and pit identified during private groundworks for service pipes, a former 19th Century outfarm building that is no longer extant, and evidence of extensive ridge and furrow evidenced seen on aerial photography, likely of post-medieval date. The HER also records a number of archaeological sites/features within the wider study area. The locations of these records and previous archaeological works are displayed on **Plans EDP 2 and 3**.
- 4.4 Extracts of historic cartographic sources and LiDAR Data, where relevant to the aims and objectives of this report, are included as **Plans EDP 4 - 9**.

DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

- 4.5 There are no designated heritage assets within the boundary of the site, where there would be a presumption in favour of physical preservation *in situ*.
- 4.6 Step One of the settings assessment process considered whether designated heritage assets in the wider locality might be subject to change to their settings from the development of the site. This was completed, in the first instance, through an initial map analysis, then subsequently augmented and confirmed during the field visit. Step One considered assets within a 1km radius of the site boundary.
- 4.7 Given that an asset's setting is defined as the "*surroundings in which an asset is experienced*" and that the extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations (Historic England, 2017), when the site's topographic situation is considered, this 1km radius was deemed appropriate.
- 4.8 As the site is on relatively level ground, with the extent of the town of Melksham to the west, screening views in this direction and with rising ground to the east, which has a similar effect, views to, or from, the east and west are restricted in their extent. The landscape is populated by field boundaries and trees, which further restrict more distant views to the north and south. As such, it was considered unlikely that intervisibility would exist with any of the more distant heritage assets, such that the site would not form a part of their setting

that contributes to their significance. These observations were confirmed during the site visit.

- 4.9 Although intervisibility is a key consideration, an understanding of the historic relationship between places is also a consideration when understanding the settings of historic assets. Consisting of farmland, it is considered that the site is most likely to be historically associated with local farms or estates that would have worked the land, rather than with any more distant heritage assets. As such, the 1km radius was considered appropriate in this regard.
- 4.10 There are no scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields or conservation areas within 1km of the site. The only designated heritage assets in this radius comprise three Grade II listed buildings (**Plan EDP 1**).

Listed Buildings

Grade II Listed Blackmore House

Significance of the Listed Building

- 4.11 The Grade II Listed Blackmore House (NHLE ref. **1364118: Image EDP A1.1**) is the closest listed building to the site, located c.30m north-west of the site boundary.
- 4.12 The Historic England listing citation describes it thus:
- “Farmhouse, now house. Late C18. Rendered brick and rubblestone, concrete tiled half hipped roof, brick stacks. 2 storeys, 4 windows. Ground floor windows are 12-pane, two 16-pane, 12-pane paired sashes in plain cases with central mullion; first floor are four 12-pane paired sashes in plain cases with central mullion. Entrance door is to rear and has chamfered door-case and flat stone hood on brackets, windows are same as front. Interior has two staircases of C19. House said to-have been used for weaving.”*
- 4.13 Whilst the building has multi-pane sash windows and some detailing around the main entrance, which reflect its late 18th century character, none of the building's elevations are distinctive or overtly decorative, the building being plain and functional, rather than embellished with architectural detailing. The listing citation notes that the structure has previously been used for weaving, presumably as a specific industrial function that superseded its use as a house.
- 4.14 The building has evidently been subject to recent modifications, with a modern conservatory on the southern elevation, and modern skylight windows added to the roof to the rear (south facing), suggesting a loft conversion.
- 4.15 With reference to the definition of significance given in the NPPF, Blackmore House's significance is mainly derived from its historic and – to a lesser extent, given its relatively simple form - architectural interest.
- 4.16 Its historic interest in particular, reflects its illustration of the post-medieval agricultural history of the hinterland of Melksham, and its connections with the local and historic weaving industry.

- 4.17 In terms of its architectural interest, Blackmore House is a relatively plain, functional building of the post-medieval Wiltshire vernacular, with its window configuration (multi-pane sash windows) and style, typical of the Georgian period in which it was built. The house also has some limited archaeological interest inherent in its fabric, as a palimpsest of evolving use. The house has very limited artistic quality; it was clearly designed as a functional building, with few decorative features, nor does it have a key 'polite' elevation designed to be seen on approach, as all its elevations are similar in their simple treatment; with the same window configuration on its north and south long elevations.

Current Setting and its Contribution of the Building's Significance

- 4.18 The setting of the house is also considered to contribute to its significance, but to a lesser degree than its physical fabric which contains the majority of its significance. The sum of the contribution from its current setting, is discussed below.
- 4.19 Blackmore house is set within a garden, which is adjacent to the north, east and west. To the west lies a group of working farm buildings associated with a newly constructed farmhouse residence to the west of Blackmore House. These immediate aspects of its setting have a strong historical and functional association with the house, with the gardens in particular reflecting a space from which the house can be experienced intimately. The farm buildings are mostly modern with few historic elements surviving. There is a modern working association between the farm buildings, the surrounding farmland and the new farmhouse, whilst Blackmore House itself is no longer the residence associated with the farm and the surrounding land.
- 4.20 However, the agricultural outbuildings and modern farmhouse do represent a part of the setting of the house which contributes to its significance, insomuch that they continue to reflect the listed building's original setting within a working farm and allow a continued understanding of its former usage as a farmhouse, such that it is set adjacent to the buildings of a working farm.
- 4.21 Evidence suggests that the wider farmland, to the south-east and north-east (including parts of the site), was probably historically associated with the house. The *Victoria County History*⁹ and a documentary reference from 1710 (Wiltshire History centre: 1958/1/1) both reference the existence of a 'Manor of Blackmore' equating to the 'Forest of Blackmore', which was located to the east of Melksham and is recorded as having been de-forested in 1622. Although Blackmore House is not referenced it can be extrapolated, due to the persistence of the name, that the house was created within this landholding, probably to farm part of the forest as its was enclosed.
- 4.22 An Enclosure Award, of 1814 (**Plan EDP 4**), for the Parish of Melksham indicates that part of the Forest of Blackmore was subject to formal parliamentary enclosure at that time, with Blackmore House set on the southern edge of these enclosures. The site is not shown on this map, suggesting that it may have already been enclosed through earlier private enclosure. The Apportionment accompanying the 1837 Tithe Map of the Parish of Melksham (**Plan EDP 5**) illustrates that Blackmore House and much of the surrounding land

⁹ H F Chettle, W R Powell, P A Spalding, P M Tillott, 'Parishes: Melksham', in *A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 7*, ed. R B Pugh, Elizabeth Crittall (London, 1953), British History Online <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/wilts/vol7/pp91-121> [accessed 14 July 2025].

(including land within the site), was owned by the Peak-Garland family at this time, who were presumably a local landowner, but was farmed by a variety of different tenant farmers. Blackmore House is named as occupied by a James Thomas, and the associated farmland at this time was restricted to the field to the immediate south, south-east and south-west of the farm.

- 4.23 As such, the evidence suggests that Blackmore House was historically associated with much of the surrounding farmland (as a part of Blackmore Manor), with a specific functional association with nearby fields, such as those to the east and south-east of the house (located in the northern part of the site), and those to the south of the house (located to the west of the site boundary). This functional association is no longer ongoing, but it is clear that the farmland has a former historical, functional connection with this former farmhouse.
- 4.24 Blackmore House can be experienced from parts of this historically associated land, such that this former functional connection can be appreciated from these areas. These areas which retain a visual experience of the house are: 1) The land located to the south of the listed building (outside of the site); and 2) The land to the east and south-east of the listed building, which forms the northern/central parts of the site (i.e. in **Image EDP A1.2**).
- 4.25 It should be noted that relatively unimpeded views of the house, from the east and south-east (within the site), are a relatively recent phenomena, as the Melksham Tithe Map of 1837 and historic Ordnance Survey maps, from the late 19th - mid-20th centuries (see **Plans EDP 5 - 7**), indicate that the small enclosures either side of Blackmore House were populated by orchards, which are likely to have partially restricted any views to it.
- 4.26 As such, the farmland in the vicinity of the house does contribute positively to its significance, particularly land to the south, east and south-east, where the house can be seen across and in conjunction with historically associated farmland, which contributes to its significance to a minor degree. The area from which the house can be experienced in this way is broadly illustrated on **Plan EDP 1**. This contribution is discussed in greater detail below in relation to the site.

Contribution of the Site to the Building's Significance

- 4.27 It is evident that there is an historic, functional connection between Blackmore House and the surrounding farmland, including the site. However, these associations are most evident where the farmland provides the surroundings in which the listed building is experienced (i.e. its setting). From within the site, a filtered view of Blackmore House set adjacent to modern farm buildings, across a landscape of agricultural fields is achieved from the field at the north of the site (**Image EDP A1.2**), albeit the view of the house is partially filtered by the vegetation and modern shed to the east of it (**Image EDP A1.3-4**). A view is also possible from the two fields located south-east of Blackmore House, at the central part of the site (**Image EDP A1.5**), albeit these views are distant, and partly obscured by the intervening vegetation. Blackmore House cannot be experienced in views from the southern portion of the site, as these views are impeded by intervening hedgerows and the drop in ground level around the stream, nor is it visible from the south-west edge of the site due to screening from intervening modern farm buildings (**Image EDP A1.6 and A1.7**).

- 4.28 Considering the above, the three fields which form the northern/central parts of the site comprise a part of the setting of Blackmore House that contributes in a positive way to the buildings' significance (as illustrated on **Plan EDP 1**), such that it can be experienced as a former farmhouse set within an agricultural landscape.
- 4.29 It is also noted that a Public Right of Way (PROW) is situated parallel to the site's eastern boundary, and thus provides an accessible location for members of the public to experience the house across these northern/central fields which form the site. These views provide an experience of the house within grassed fields, separated by hedgerows, and with a number of mature trees, which contribute to the rural setting of the asset. However, it is noted that the views from the Public Right of Way (PROW) also include the ribbon of development along the A3102, as well as modern pylons and cables, and so are already in the context of modern built form (**Image EDP A1.8**).
- 4.30 Several factors reduce the degree to which these fields and views across them are of relevance to the significance of the heritage asset: (1) The fact that such views would probably have been filtered by the presence of orchards from at least 1837 until the mid-20th century, (2) The building does not have any pronounced aesthetic features or qualities to its southern visible elevation, that would suggest that it was designed so as to be seen and be noticeable in views across the landscape (i.e. it was more functional than decorative), and, (3) The building's configuration of relatively small windows on its rear elevation suggests that views out to the south and south-east, across farmland, from Blackmore House were never intended as part of its design. Windows, by their transparent nature, allow for a view through them, but their primary function is to let light into a building and to provide ventilation. Indeed, the *Oxford Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture* states the primary definition of a window as: "(1) Aperture in a wall to allow light and air to enter a building."
- 4.31 The windows on the southern elevation at Blackmore House, being not especially large or of elevated height in the building, suggest they were designed to function primarily as apertures to let in light and air rather than locations from where views out across the countryside were intended to be obtained.
- 4.32 In addition to these points, it is noted that the implementation of PL/2023/11188 will alter the current setting of the Grade II listed building, as such, this resulting setting is discussed in a separate sub-section below.

Setting Following PL/2023/11188 and its Contribution of the Building's Significance

- 4.33 As noted above, planning application PL/2023/11188 has been granted permission and so the current setting of the listed building will change as a result of this development.
- 4.34 PL/2023/11188 would alter the setting of the asset from historically associated agricultural land, to residential development in the south, south-west and west. However, it is noted that PL/2023/11188 preserves the farmland setting of Blackmore House to the immediate south and south-east by retaining a buffer of open space immediately to the south of the plot that contains the house, along with additional tree planting along the boundary immediately south of the modern agricultural buildings and the field adjacent to

the house. To the south of this is a further open green space crossed by a pedestrian/cycle route.

- 4.35 This retained open space means that the farmhouse will continue to be experienced in views northwards across pasture, with boundary planting separating it from development and filtering views of it from the farmhouse.
- 4.36 Further to the south, the employment use buildings of B1 type will be of no more than two storeys in height and, sited behind hedgerows and trees and separated from the farmhouse by two areas of open space, will not compete with the house for visual prominence or distract from it in views towards it. Whilst development will also be present further to the south, and to the west of Blackmore House, these areas have no visual relationship with the listed building, and are thus not part of the experience of the House.
- 4.37 PL/2023/11188 also includes a small wedge of land to the immediate east of Blackmore House, to provide an emergency access point. This area also forms part of the northern portion of the current application site. The proposals for PL/2023/11188 include a small area of orchard planting within this eastern parcel, along with a pedestrian and cycle route which will also function as an emergency access route, and a buffer of open space around this. This planting will act to reinstate a level of historic integrity to the setting of the house, given that orchards are shown in this location on historic mapping,
- 4.38 This use of landscape planting and open space will facilitate an experience of the listed Blackmore House across green open space with orchards and farm buildings on either side, thus allowing its historic function as an agricultural building to be understood and appreciated within the context of the development.
- 4.39 Following the PL/2023/11188 development, the house will still be experienced as a farm set within an agricultural landscape in views from the east and south, with these retained areas of open-space, and re-instated orchard planting, making a positive contribution to the significance of the listed building.
- 4.40 Beyond this, the setting will include modern development further to the south and west. However, as established above, these areas are not part of the current experience of the house given the lack of visual relationship.

Conclusions

- 4.41 It is established above that Blackmore House has a former historic and functional association with the farmland which forms the site. However, this former relationship is largely intangible and can only be appreciated from the three fields which form the northern/central parts of the site, where it can be experienced as a former farmhouse set within an agricultural landscape. As such, these three fields form part of the setting of Blackmore House which make a positive contribution to the setting of the listed building.
- 4.42 However, it is noted that this setting will change as a result of PL/2023/11188, such that this experience of the house from the site, as detailed above, will also include a backdrop of modern development.

- 4.43 PL/2023/11188 preserves open space to the immediate south of the listed building, and includes orchard planting to the immediate east, such that the experience of the building from the northern and central part of the site will continue to be of a house across green fields, with views filtered by orchard planting, as they would have historically been. However, the periphery of these views will include modern built form to the west, and which has no historic or functional association with the house.
- 4.44 As such, the contribution of the three fields at the northern/central parts of the site is based entirely on an experience of the functional relationship between the historic farmhouse and its historically associated farmland setting, which will also be experienced alongside modern built form following the implementation of PL/2023/11188. As such, this part of the site and its visual experience of the house, only contributes to its significance to only a minor degree.
- 4.45 The remaining parts of the site also have a historical, functional relationship with Blackmore House, although, with no visual appreciation of the house this is intangible, and the contribution made to the asset's significance by this land is very minor at most.
- 4.46 Whilst any impacts on the designated building through changes to its setting as a result of the Proposed Development would therefore need to be weighed within the planning balance, as per paragraphs 212 to 215 of the NNPF, given the very minor contribution of the site to the asset's overall significance, it is unlikely that this impact would amount to more than less than substantial harm.
- 4.47 The potential for harm, arising from change to the experience of the house in views from the site, could be greatly reduced through careful masterplanning. This might entail measures such as a replanting of orchards to form a screen around the house, as has been proposed within application PL/2023/11188, the preservation of the more immediate field-scape around the asset, such that exists in the northern part of the site, or for the layout to reflect the existing layout of fields, and thus reference the site's history.

Remaining Listed Buildings

- 4.48 The other two listed buildings are both located over 600m from the site boundary. These include Tanhouse Farmhouse (**1194746**) c.650m to the south of the site and the Old Coach House (**1194747**) c.660m to the north-east of the site.
- 4.49 As with Blackmore House, the elements of these buildings' settings, that contribute to their significance, are their immediate, historically and functionally related agricultural setting and their historic and visual links with any outbuildings or contemporary structures.
- 4.50 During the site visit it was confirmed that from the south-easternmost field within the site, the Grade II listed Tanhouse Farmhouse (**1194746**), can be perceived (**Image EDP A1.9**). However, the experience is of a distant silhouette of a building, which is obscured by intervening vegetation, and a clear appreciation of the house, as an historic building, is not possible. Considering that the site is a marked distance from the farmhouse and the land has no known historic or functional links with it, it is considered that the land at the site, and views from it, are a highly peripheral part of its experience. For this reason, the site is

not considered to comprise an element of the farmhouses' setting that contributes to its significance.

- 4.51 In consideration of the Old Coach House, there is no intervisibility between it and the land at the site, nor is there any known historic association between the two. As such, the site is not considered to form a part of the setting of any of these assets and makes no contribution to their significance. It is highly unlikely that development of the site would result in any effect on the significance of any of these listed buildings.
- 4.52 Analysis of the designated assets within the 1km radius study area has therefore identified one designated asset that has the potential to be affected by the site's development, the Grade II Listed Blackmore House. Although the presence of this listed building could influence the design layout of parts of the site, the nature of this constraint is not such that it would influence the overall capacity or deliverability of the site.

NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

- 4.53 This section summarises works undertaken to date within the site and the immediate vicinity. It concludes with the archaeological potential and significance of the site, and the potential for the survival of archaeological remains.
- 4.54 There are numerous non-designated heritage assets in the study area, as identified by the HER. These do not have any statutory framework underpinning their protection but do represent recognised heritage assets of local significance or value.
- 4.55 Data from the HER identifies archaeological sites and artefact findspots within a 1km radius of the site. These sites and artefact findspots are described below in chronological order and illustrated on **Plan EDP 2**. The locations of previous archaeological works are displayed on **Plan EDP 3**.
- 4.56 Wiltshire Council does not hold a list of locally listed buildings, and as such none are recorded within the site or study area.

Previous Archaeological Investigations Within Site Boundary

- 4.57 The following paragraphs provide a summary of the archaeological investigations undertaken within the site boundary in support of the previous application PL/2023/11188, as well as wider regional research projects.
- 4.58 A geophysical (detailed magnetometry) survey of the previous application site (PL/2023/11188), excluding the most south-eastern field, was undertaken in May 2022 by Headland Archaeology (Headland Archaeology, 2022) (**EWI10040**). This survey included the most northern field of the current application site. The remainder of the site will be surveyed in September 2025 to support the forthcoming application.
- 4.59 The survey identified a range of magnetic anomalies which were interpreted as being of non-archaeological origin.

- 4.60 Within the site, these included 'agricultural anomalies', comprising linear trends running north–south and east-west, interpreted as modern cultivation, as well as a linear anomaly aligned broadly north-south, and interpreted as a field drain. Anomalies interpreted as 'ferrous and modern anomalies' were also identified within the site, with large areas of magnetic disturbance recorded at the northern boundary, due to its proximity to the main road.
- 4.61 Beyond the site boundary, similar 'agricultural anomalies' were recorded, with evidence of ridge and furrow cultivation spanning across the survey areas, as well as a single linear on the field immediately south-west of the site, which corresponds to a field boundary identified on historic mapping. 'Ferrous and modern anomalies' were also identified in the wider survey area, notably adjacent to the Blackmore farm buildings, as well as linear trends indicating water pipes for the farm. Adjacent to the brook which runs across the south-east corner of the site, 'geological anomalies' are recorded, aligning with the superficial deposits identified by the BGS.
- 4.62 Four anomalies of 'uncertain origin' are recorded within the wider survey area, including two linear anomalies at the south of the survey area, and interpreted to most likely comprise modern drains, as well as two discrete anomalies to the south of Blackmore House. Due to the lack of context to suggest an archaeological origin, these were interpreted to be the result of modern, geological or pedological activity.
- 4.63 Following this, a programme of archaeological trial trenching was undertaken across the same survey area in 2022 by Cotswold Archaeology (CA) (**EW10199**).
- 4.64 No features of archaeological origin were identified within the site, with only a modern service drain identified.
- 4.65 Beyond the site boundary, the evaluation identified one distinct area of archaeology, focused at the south-east corner of the survey area, immediately north of the current site's western edge. The remaining areas were largely devoid of archaeological remains, although a small pit containing post-medieval pottery was encountered at the centre of the site, with further post-medieval pottery retrieved from a naturally occurring depression.
- 4.66 The features found in the south-east part of the survey area were all Roman in date, comprising a single large pit, as well as two pairs of ditches. The pit contained a large assemblage of Roman pottery along with a copper alloy brooch, potentially an Aucissa-type brooch of the 1st Century AD; whilst there was no evidence for habitation on the site, the presence of the brooch suggests Roman settlement in close proximity to the site with the pit perhaps representing waste disposal on the periphery of a settlement. The two pairs of ditches further suggest this, with the ditches likely forming part of an enclosure or field system in the agricultural hinterland of a small settlement. The ditches also contained pottery dating from the mid-1st to 2nd century AD.
- 4.67 No evidence of a former field boundary identified by the geophysical survey was seen during the trenching, nor was any evidence of ridge and furrow cultivation. It is therefore most likely that the field boundary was modern and shallow so as to not be distinguishable within the topsoil overburden, and any ridge and furrow cultivation was so shallow as to have been ploughed away.

- 4.68 The results of these two phases of archaeological investigation have been considered where relevant in the period specific sections below.
- 4.69 Aside from the works associated with application PL/2023/11188, a large broad area polygon (**EWI7896**) records the extent of the National Archaeological Identification Survey (NAIS): Aerial Investigation and Mapping Across West Wiltshire, an aerial survey project carried out by Historic England in 2014. No features of interest were identified by this project within the site. Any features identified within the study area are discussed in the period specific sections below.

Previous Archaeological Investigations Within Study Area

- 4.70 The following paragraphs provide a summary of the previous archaeological investigations undertaken immediately adjacent to the site.
- 4.71 With regard to investigations within the wider study area, where relevant to the archaeological potential of the Site, these are discussed in the period-specific sections below.
- 4.72 In association with application PL/2023/11188, as discussed above, a second geophysical survey was conducted in November 2023 by SUMO services, following the addition of a parcel of land into the application boundary, this being the field immediately west and north-east of the current site boundary (**EWI10439**).
- 4.73 The survey recorded a few magnetic responses that have tentatively been interpreted as being of possible archaeological interest. These responses comprised two parallel, segmented ditch-like anomalies interpreted as being possibly associated with the Roman remains recorded during the evaluation trenching in the field immediately west of the survey area (Cotswold, 2022).
- 4.74 Numerous uncertain anomalies were also detected by the survey, including a curving linear anomaly. This feature appeared to correspond with a depression which is visible on the LiDAR data plot and as a cropmark on aerial photographs and was thought to mark the location of a former watercourse and be natural in origin.
- 4.75 Agricultural anomalies were visible through the route of a former field boundary running east to west, which correlates with 19th century mapping and ridge and furrow and modern cultivation is visible throughout the data. A number of other linear trends and pit-like anomalies were also detected but were considered to be due to a combination of underlying geological responses and modern debris.
- 4.76 Trial trenching was then undertaken within this field by Cotswold Archaeology in 2024 (**EWI10611**). A single undated ditch was identified, correlating to the historic field boundary identified by the geophysical survey and historic mapping. An area of modern disturbance was also noted in the south-east corner of the site. No other archaeological features were identified.
- 4.77 Within the wider study area, a watching brief (**EWI3540**) along the route of the Beanacre to St Edith's Marsh pipeline (running parallel to the site's eastern boundary at its closest point) identified two periods of archaeology, comprising Roman findspots and a former Medieval

settlement, within the area of Woodrow c.1,070m to the north-west of the site. Being that this is outside of the study area, these archaeological remains are well removed from the site and cannot be said to have an association with it.

- 4.78 Also, immediately east and south-east of the site, a geophysical survey was undertaken in 2013 in conjunction with solar development (**EWI7954**). The surveys detected areas of modern disturbance resulting from modern services, as well as former field boundaries, correlating with historic mapping and extensive ridge and furrow. Anomalies identified as possible drainage ditches were also identified.
- 4.79 To the immediate south-west of the site, a geophysical survey was undertaken in 2023 (**EWI10351**). Anomalies of a possible archaeological origin were detected, including enclosures, field systems and a potential ring ditch. Magnetic disturbance within a section of the site corresponds to the location of the medieval or later settlement of Snarlton. Medieval or post-medieval ridge and furrow cultivation has also been detected along with former field boundaries and modern ploughing and services. These features have not been tested through intrusive investigation, and so their form and date remains speculative.
- 4.80 Other archaeological investigations within the wider study area, resulting in archaeological records, are discussed where relevant within the period specific sections below.

Palaeolithic to Iron Age (c.500,000 BC-AD 43)

- 4.81 There are no previously known prehistoric remains recorded by the Wiltshire HER within the site. There are three records within the study area dating from the prehistoric periods. These are described below.
- 4.82 A pit (**MWI74524**) was identified during excavations (**EWI7050**) c.925m to the west of the site in 2010. This pit contained red deer bones and a Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age arrowhead.
- 4.83 The find spot of a Bronze Age socketed axehead and a fragment of a bronze sword recovered in 1973 and now held by Devizes museum (**MWI4751**). The find spot was recorded c.470m north-east of the site.
- 4.84 A large enclosure of possible later prehistoric and/or Roman date is also recorded by the HER, c.2km south-west of the site (**MWI73963**). This feature is visible as a shallow earthwork on LiDAR imagery, however, it remains untested by archaeological investigation, as such its date is speculative.
- 4.85 Aside from these records, there is no further evidence within the study area for prehistoric activity, nor have the previous archaeological investigations within parts of the site and its immediate surroundings, nor a review of LiDAR data and Aerial Photographs (discussed in full below) identified any finds or features of this date. However, a potential trackway of unknown date was identified during a review of LiDAR data and aerial photography (discussed in full below) and is thought to relate to a field system which pre-dates the existing post-medieval fieldscape.
- 4.86 Given the very low level of recorded remains, despite relatively widespread archaeological investigations within the study area, the potential for the site to contain archaeology from

this era is considered to be **very low**. Moreover, the LiDAR data suggests that the site has been subject to agricultural cultivation, likely from the post-medieval period onwards, such that should any remains of this date be present within the site, they would likely be heavily truncated, or even destroyed, by this later activity.

Roman (AD43-410)

- 4.87 There are two records for previously identified Roman period archaeology within the site, according to the Wiltshire HER, there are three further records located in the study area and one just beyond the extent of the 1km radius study area.
- 4.88 The two records within the site are located at the south-west corner of the site and were recorded during an excavation in 1986 undertaken by Chippenham College Archaeological Group for research purposes during the laying of a pipe (**EWI7670**). The location of this pipe was identified within the geophysical survey immediately to the north of these records during Phase 1 (SUMO, 2023). These records are stated as originating from personal communication with AC Powell (the excavator) and there are no known reports detailing the feature and finds that were identified.
- 4.89 The first record comprises a pottery scatter of Romano-British ware, including bead rim associated ware as well as two burnt areas and a pit containing refuse including coarse ware sherds, animal bone, charcoal and iron fragments (**MWI4933**). The second record comprises a ditch identified running broadly north-west to south-east, containing coarse ware pottery and animal bone (**MWI4935**).
- 4.90 To the south-west of these records, immediately outside of the site boundary, an additional scatter of Roman pottery, including 1st-2nd century sherds were identified during the 1986 pipe trench excavation (**MWI4934**). A scatter of finds including Romano-British pottery fragments, iron fragments and nails were also identified during this excavation to the north of this location, just outside of the site boundary (**MWI4932**).
- 4.91 Within the 1km radius study area, geophysical survey followed by archaeological evaluation and excavation at Melksham Town Football Club recorded the buried remains of a Roman period farmstead, located c.800m south-west of the site (**MWI64722**). The remains comprised ditches, curved gullies, pits, postholes and ovens, indicating a small agricultural, domestic settlement. A group of six Romano-British ovens, possibly for drying corn was also found in this location (**MWI76809**).
- 4.92 Approximately 1km to the north of the Site A scatter of Roman pottery was recovered during a watching brief in (**MWI4766/EWI3540**).
- 4.93 Just outside of the 1km study area, c.1,300m to the south-west of the site, an evaluation (**EWI7633**) in 2014 revealed a Roman settlement comprising two phases of ditched enclosures, an entrance track and possible building plots along with numerous pottery sherds, glass, bone and a coin (MWI74427). The settlement was dated to c.260-296 AD and does not appear to have been occupied beyond c.300 AD. The settlement was located on a low rise, c.400m south of Clackers Brook. In this respect it has some topographic similarity to the land at the site and is on the same type of geology. Evidently, the locality

was settled in the Roman period, and thus there is some potential for similar remains to be present within the site, as evidenced by the completed trial trenching.

- 4.94 As discussed above, the archaeological trial trench evaluation in 2022 (**EWI10199**) across Phase 1 of the development, immediately west of the site, identified a cluster of Romano-British features. These included a pit (**MWI78364**), and a pair of double-ditch enclosure ditches (**MWI78365**). These features were determined to not extend further west during the subsequent evaluation in 2024 (**EWI10611**), nor did this evaluation identify any features at the location of the find scatter (**MWI4932**).
- 4.95 Although these records are located at the very south-west corner of the site, as well as beyond the site boundary, and are of low density, comprising four in situ features and a small collection of unstratified artefacts that appear to represent general agricultural activity and manuring, it is, however, apparent that the HER records are clustered in the south-west portion of the site, adjacent to the stream that runs across this area. As such, it may be that the watercourse represented a focus for past activity. These features likely reflect agricultural land management on the periphery of settlement and may relate to a potential settlement just south of the site near the watercourse. The absence of any similar features identified by evaluation (**EWI10611**) suggests that this activity does not extend to the east. It is therefore considered that this south-western part of the site has the greatest potential for Roman period archaeology.
- 4.96 As such, based on HER evidence and the results of the previously undertaken trial trenching immediately west of the site, the site contains archaeological remains, dated to the Roman period located at its south-west corner, with a **moderate** potential for additional similar remains. Such remains would most likely comprise features of low significance relating to land management on the fringes of a settlement.
- 4.97 The remainder of the site has an absence of any features identified by the HER or through a review of aerial photography and LiDAR data (discussed in full below) which indicate further Roman activity. However, a potential trackway of unknown date was identified in the centre of the site during a review of LiDAR data and aerial photography (discussed in full below) and is thought to relate to a field system which pre-dates the existing post-medieval fieldscape.
- 4.98 Based on the evidence above, the potential for such features elsewhere within the site, beyond the areas of known or suspected Roman archaeology is considered to be **low**. Moreover, the LiDAR data suggests that the site has been subject to agricultural cultivation, likely from the post-medieval period onwards, which would likely have heavily truncated, or even destroyed, any remains of Roman date.

Early Medieval (AD 410-1066)

- 4.99 There are no previously known records relating to the early medieval period within the site or, within the study area.
- 4.100 Considering this, and the absence of any such features identified during the archaeological investigations immediately adjacent to the site, nor any features identified through a review of aerial photography or LiDAR data, there is considered to be a **very low** potential for any early medieval archaeology to exist within the site.

Medieval (AD 1066-1485)

- 4.101 There is one record relating to possible medieval activity within the site, recorded by the HER. Several records are noted within the 1km study area.
- 4.102 The record within the site, located at the far south-west corner, refers to possible ridge and furrow (**MWI73994**), recorded as earthworks seen on aerial photographs to the north-east of Snarlton Farm, which has been ascribed a possible medieval date. Other possible ridge and furrow has been recorded from aerial photographs within the site (**MWI73970**), however, this is described as 'narrow' and is therefore ascribed a post-medieval date; narrow furrows being characteristic of 19th century cultivation techniques, such as steam ploughing (Wilson, 2000).
- 4.103 The HER record within the site (**MWI73994**) is derived from an aerial photograph of 1998 (OS/98437 5230 17 SEP 1998). This photograph was viewed as part of the research carried out for the current assessment. Whilst linear, negative cropmarks are apparent in the location of the record, it is not clear that these represent earthworks, and the marks are narrow and fairly straight, a form more typical of post-medieval cultivation marks rather than medieval, which tend to be broad with a distinctive S-shape, reflecting the action of the medieval plough. Furthermore, during the site visit, no earthworks were identified in this location. Similarly, the LiDAR data does not indicate any such features in this location, and instead only low relief earthworks indicative of modern ploughing are visible, suggesting that any such ridge and furrow has been truncated by later agricultural activity. It is likely therefore, that the marks reflect the probable existence of buried infilled furrows, which certainly relate to past cultivation, but are 1) Considered more likely to be a remnant of post-medieval, rather than medieval practice, due to their lack of typically medieval characteristics, when seen in plan; and 2) Likely heavily truncated or even destroyed by later ploughing.
- 4.104 No other indications of medieval ridge and furrow have been identified within this assessment through the review of aerial photographs, LiDAR data, and the geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation undertaken in the northern corner of the Site. However, these sources indicate that post-medieval to modern ploughing is present across the Site (discussed further below). Further examples of possible medieval ridge and furrow are recorded by the HER within the study area (**MWI73981**, **MWI73982**, **MWI73962**, **MWI73978**, **MWI64723**). The majority of this ridge and furrow has since been levelled by modern development to the west of the site, and it is not clear from the HER whether the records refer to genuine extant medieval ridge and furrow earthworks, to cropmarks, reflecting only buried remains or even to much later cultivation features.
- 4.105 The closest medieval HER record to the site comprises the Blackmore Farm complex (**MWI3630**) to the immediate north-west of the site boundary. The record describes the farm simply as a 'farmstead with Medieval origins'. Whilst it is evident that the present Blackmore House dates from the late 18th century, it may be that it replaced an older building in this location. The greatest likelihood is that any older dwelling would have been located close to the location of the present farmhouse, and thus what remains of it is located outside of the site boundary and probably has been heavily disturbed by later development.

- 4.106 Three HER records are located in the vicinity of Snarlton Farm, to the immediate south-west of the site. Here, the earthwork remains of a medieval settlement at Snarlton (**MWI3621**) were recorded from historic aerial photography. Although many of the earthworks appear to no longer be extant on the more recent photography. A geophysical survey (**EWI7048**) and evaluation (**EWI7050**) here in 2004 and further excavation (**EWI7047**) in 2010 revealed the remains of a medieval farmstead (**MWI74525**) located c.450m west of site, including: boundary ditches, a stone wall and a cobbled surface, and medieval industrial activity, including the remains of a medieval iron working site (**MWI74526**) irregular pits, a gully containing slag, tap slag, vitrified clay, charcoal and pottery, a limestone platform and working floors and smithing hearth bottoms.
- 4.107 A group of records dated to the medieval period are located west of Redstocks c.450m south of the site (**MWI3625**). The records comprise a series of earthworks identified from aerial photography and LiDAR, and a field visit by Historic England in 2016, that represent the archaeological remains of a dispersed settlement.
- 4.108 One further medieval record in the study area comprises the remains of a boundary bank (**MWI73984**) to the north of the A3102 and c.450m to the west of the site. This feature is interpreted by the HER as a boundary bank which originated within the medieval period and continued in use through the post-medieval period.
- 4.109 As described previously, the *Victoria County History* describes how the Manor of Blackmore was formed following the disforestation of Blackmore Forest in 1622 (also known as Melksham Forest), a royal hunting forest with medieval origins. As such, it is possible that during the medieval period the site was part of the forest.
- 4.110 Evidently there was nearby medieval settlement at Snarlton, west of Redstocks and possibly at the location of the later Blackmore Farm, and it may be that the site (or part thereof) was within the agricultural hinterland of these settlements and may have been farmed as an open field. Nevertheless, it is not considered that there is any evidence within the site for medieval cultivation, given that the ridge and furrow recorded by the HER (**MWI73994**) is considered to be most likely of post-medieval date, and it may be that, given its association with Blackmore Forest, the site was actually part of unenclosed moorland or woodland used for hunting, prior to its enclosure and cultivation in the post-medieval period.
- 4.111 The evidence suggests therefore that there is only a **low** potential for medieval archaeological remains within the site. The greatest likelihood is considered to be for remains related to former farming practices, such as buried, infilled furrows or drainage ditches. No earthwork remains of ridge and furrow cultivation which are indicative of medieval ploughing, are located within the site through a review of aerial photography, LiDAR data and a site visit. However, the aerial photographs and LiDAR did illustrate the presence of linear cultivation features which were more characteristic of post-medieval to modern ridge and furrow (discussed further below). Nor were any features of medieval date identified during the previous archaeological investigation with parts of the site and immediately surrounding it during the Phase one works. However, a potential trackway was identified during a review of LiDAR data and aerial photography (discussed in full below) which is thought to relate to a field system which pre-dates the existing post-medieval fieldscape.

- 4.112 Buried remains related to medieval agriculture, such as infilled furrows or a potential trackway, would be considered of low significance and would be very unlikely to warrant preservation *in situ* and therefore their presence would not constrain the site's development.

Post Medieval to Modern (AD 1485-Present)

- 4.113 There are two previously known records related to the post-medieval period recorded within the site by the HER, and several related to the post-medieval to modern periods recorded within the 1km study area.
- 4.114 The two HER records within the site comprise the example of ridge and furrow previously mentioned (**MWI73970**) recorded from aerial photography spanning the majority of the site, and an outfarm located at the site's southern boundary (**MWI68876**).
- 4.115 As described previously, the ridge and furrow (**MWI73970**) is recorded as 'narrow' reflecting post-medieval farming practices. These marks were also seen on aerial photographs and LiDAR data viewed as part of the research for the assessment, and it was confirmed that the marks are very narrow and straight, and probably reflecting buried, infilled furrows derived from 19th century steam ploughing. Possible ridge and furrow was also identified by the geophysical survey undertaken across the northern field within the site in May 2022, as well as the wider survey area to the west as part of Phase 1 (Headland, 2022). However, no evidence of ridge and furrow was seen during the evaluation trenching across the northern field within the site in November 2022, nor the wider survey area for Phase 1 (Cotswold Archaeology, 2022), possibly indicating a more modern date for these agricultural features.
- 4.116 During the site visit it was confirmed that none of the records relate to extant earthworks. Buried remains of these features would possess little archaeological interest, being of a relatively recent date, and common form, found elsewhere in the landscape.
- 4.117 The outfarm (**MWI68876**) comprised a small farmhouse probably intended to farm the immediate land set around them, as satellites of a larger farm. It is described by the HER as a "*demolished 19th century outfarm of loose courtyard plan. One side of the loose courtyard is formed by working agricultural buildings*". During the site visit it was confirmed that this outbuilding was no longer extant within the site. However, infield ditches, or buried foundations, may still be present. Such remains are likely to be highly fragmentary and as post-medieval agricultural remains, would be of a common, widespread type, and thus would only be considered of minimal archaeological interest.
- 4.118 A geophysical survey (**EWI7954**) immediately to the east of the site at Sandridge Solar Farm identified former field boundaries (**MWI74485**) and evidence of ridge and furrow believed to have originated in the medieval or post-medieval periods. Further ridge and furrow is also recorded immediately south of the site (**MWI73994**), and c.250m north of the site (**MWI73983**).
- 4.119 There are nine further extant post-medieval outbuildings or farmsteads within the 1km study area, not including those listed buildings discussed above. Included within these records are the extant post-medieval buildings at Blackmore Farm (**MWI68796**), to the north-west

of the site, buildings at Manor Farm (**MWI62966, MWI68795**) c.65m to the north of the site and buildings at Snarlton Farm (**MWI68800, MWI68799**) c.320m south-west of the site boundary, and Home Farm, c.725m east of the site (**MWI68895**). Extant farmsteads are recorded c.475m north-west of the site (**MWI68854**), as well as 300m east (**MWI68897**) and 400m east (**MWI68896**), with Tanhouse Farm (**MWI68898**) and its listed farmhouse (**MWI44475**) also recorded c.650m south of the Site.

- 4.120 Sites of former outbuildings are recorded across the study area (**MWI68797, MWI68798, MWI68801, MWI68762, MWI68875, MWI68877**).
- 4.121 Other post-medieval buildings in the area include the former Mission Chapel of St Andrews (**MWI51158**) c.60m to the north of the site, Boxwood Cottage (**MWI60878**) c.800m to the west of the site and 320 Snarlton Lane (**MWI55197**) c.900m to the west of the site. The historic post-medieval Sandridge House (**MWI58327**) and Sandridge Park (**MWI49202**) and its grounds (**MWI4969**), including its associated Stables and Coach house (**MWI44477**), Granary (**MWI72762**) and Cottage (**MWI72757**), are also located c.700m to the east of the site.
- 4.122 Modern features recorded on the HER include Sahara sandpit, (**MWI77222**) a quarry located c.900m to the east of the site and a grand 20th century house at Greystone, c.950m north of the site (**MWI48631**).
- 4.123 As noted previously, it is likely that the land at the site was enclosed to form agricultural fields in the post-medieval period, most likely after the establishment of Blackmore Manor in 1622. This is reinforced by HER records, as well as evidence from aerial photographs and LiDAR data, for buried remains of narrow, post-medieval ridge and furrow and post-medieval out-farms within the site, indicating its general, post-medieval agricultural use. The origins of the current field-scape is discussed in more detail in the cartographic and landscape characterisation sections below.
- 4.124 Whilst the geophysical survey (Headland, 2022) in the northern field of the site identified ridge and furrow cultivation, no evidence of this was identified during the subsequent trial trenching (Cotswold, 2022)
- 4.125 Regardless, based on of the HER data and previous investigations within the north of the Site, as well as a review of aerial photography, LiDAR data, and historic mapping which illustrates the site's agricultural nature from the 19th Century onwards, it is considered highly likely that the site contains buried remains related to post-medieval and modern agricultural practice. These features would likely comprise infilled former boundary or drainage ditches, infilled furrows and, in the locations of the two outfarms, remains related to these buildings. These types of remains are common within the wider landscape and would be considered of little archaeological interest, representing heritage assets of very low significance.

Undated

- 4.126 The Wiltshire HER contains nine records for undated assets within the study area.
- 4.127 The first record relates to ditches (**MWI78674**) identified immediately west of the site, during the geophysical survey (SUMO, 2023) for Phase 1 (**EWI10439**). These features were

tentatively dated as Roman by the geophysical survey, however, as discussed above, no such features were identified during the subsequent trial trenching and so they remain undated and uncharacterised (Cotswold, 2024) (**EWI10611**).

- 4.128 The next record comprises pits and ditches identified by geophysical survey (**EWI7954**) prior to the construction of the Sandridge Solar farm, c.50m east from the site boundary at closest (**MWI74485**, **MWI74486** and **MWI74487**). These features have not been tested by intrusive archaeological investigation, and so their nature and date remain unknown.
- 4.129 One record comprises undated cropmarks recorded from aerial photographs located c.600m south of the site (**MWI4974**). The cropmarks are noted in the HER as possibly representing a group of buried enclosures.
- 4.130 Further within the study area are banks of an unknown date (**MWI74757**) that were identified during a geophysical survey (**EWI8020**) c.950m west of the site and subsequently excavated during an evaluation (**EWI8022**) at the land north of Sandridge Common in 2016.
- 4.131 The remaining records (**MWI74439**, **MWI74440** and **MWI64721**) comprise possible pits, ditches and former field boundaries of an unknown date recorded by a geophysical survey and subsequent evaluation for Melksham Town Football Club, c.900m to the south-west of the site (**EWI7533**, **EWI7633**).
- 4.132 Whilst these records add to the general conclusion that buried archaeological remains are present across the study area, given that their nature and date remain untested, they do not contribute to an understanding of the archaeological potential of the Site.

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE

- 4.133 The Wiltshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) (2016) records the majority of the site as planned enclosure.
- 4.134 In terms of time depth attributed to this character type, the HLC study notes that: *“These regular fields were set out according to plan and show on the 1 ed 6” OS map. They have changed little since and were likely created in the later post medieval period. The character prior to enclosure is not clear from the available sources.”*
- 4.135 The HLC records the two small fields to the south-west of the site as piecemeal enclosure: *“These vaguely irregular fields seem not to have changed since the 1 ed 6” OS map. They probably represent an episode of piecemeal enclosure during the post medieval period, and no prior character is obvious on the available sources.”*
- 4.136 The far south-east corner of the site is recorded as plantation, named ‘eight acre plantation’, and remains as such today. The HLC describes this plantation as follows:
- “This later post medieval woodland has been deliberately created - as alluded to by its form and name. As the 1 ed 1” OS map does not show the woodland it has been inferred that planned fields once existed here, but this prior character is not legible.”*

- 4.137 The HLC accords with the interpretation of the site's history as discussed previously, that it comprises planned regular and irregular fields, created though private enclosure probably in the post-medieval period, with a small parcel of later post-medieval woodland, which remains extant today. Although historic maps illustrate loss of a few of these boundaries, the field layout is evidently very similar to how it was in at least the early 19th century.
- 4.138 This type of enclosure is commonly preserved in the landscape, and many of the site's post-medieval features, such as outfarms and post-medieval ridge and furrow, have been removed, and reduced to no more than potential buried remains. As such, the historic landscape at the site is considered of very low value, the land simply reflecting a 19th century field layout, and change to its form would not constrain the site's development.

CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES

- 4.139 The site is located within the parish of Melksham, Wiltshire. The earliest cartographic source consulted for the assessment was the Map accompanying the 1814 Enclosure Award for Melksham Parish (**Plan EDP 4**). The 1837 Tithe Map for the Parish of Melksham (**Plan EDP 5**) was also consulted, as were Ordnance Survey maps from 1886, 1924, 1972 and 1980-1988 (**Plans EDP 6 – 8**).
- 4.140 The Enclosure Award Map illustrates remaining parts of Blackmore Forest, enclosed for farmland by Act of Parliament in 1814 (**Plan EDP 4**). This comprises tracts of land to the north of Blackmore Farm. Blackmore House is shown on this map, along with the very northern edge of the Site, shown as a small narrow plot adjacent to the house. The remainder of the Site is not shown within this map, suggesting that it was probably already enclosed as farmland by this date.
- 4.141 The Tithe Map (**Plan EDP 5**) shows the site divided into regular, mostly rectangular agricultural fields, with the outfarm (referenced in the HER as **MWI68876**) shown as extant. The layout of fields is similar to the present-day layout, although a greater number of smaller fields is shown in the northern portion of the site, indicating that a process of amalgamation, with boundaries removed so that small fields are combined into larger fields, has taken place since the mid-19th century, probably in response to the industrialisation of farming and the need for fields to accommodate large modern machinery. These former boundaries remain indicated by the presence of mature trees which appear to have been retained from the earlier hedgerow boundary, with low relief depressions indicated by the LiDAR imagery in these locations, as well as faint crop marks on aerial photographs. It is therefore likely that, corresponding with the Tithe Map, the site will contain the buried infilled remains of field boundary ditches dating from the post-medieval period. Such remains are considered to possess limited archaeological interest and would represent heritage assets of only very low significance.
- 4.142 Field names given on the Tithe Map Apportionments sometimes give information as to the provenance of fields, their historic use or whether they might contain archaeological remains. The field names, where recorded for the fields within the site, generally refer to the size and location of the plots, such as 'Two Acres' (1597) and 'Long Eight Acres (1585), as well as personal names such as 'Great Hatters' (1598). Plot 1595 is named 'Ploughed Champions', indicating a continued agricultural use, likely from the

post-medieval period onwards, as indicated by the ridge and furrow cultivation identified by the LiDAR imagery. The fields are generally mixed in use, being recorded as either arable or pasture.

- 4.143 It is notable that the plot numbers to the immediate east and west of Blackmore House, but outside of the site boundary (1603 and 1601) are recorded as having been orchards at this time, with 1601 also extending into the site as a small parcel in the north-west corner. Adjacent to this, Plot 1600 is recorded as 'The Patch' a garden and pasture, indicating it was formally associated with Blackmore House.
- 4.144 The First Edition Ordnance Survey (OS) Map of 1886 (**Plan EDP 6**) depicts the site with almost the same boundaries as on the Tithe Map, aside from one having been removed to form larger fields at the north-east of the site. This former boundary is still extant today. A field in the south-west corner of the site is shown as having changed use from arable to a plantation, and one field along the centre of the southern field boundary also now comprises a wooded area. Blackmore Farm to the north of the site is shown as having expanded with further outbuildings evident (all outside of the site boundary), and the land surrounding the farm is shown occupied by an orchard. No further changes are evident within the site.
- 4.145 From the 1886 OS map, the depiction of the site remains entirely the same until the present day and there are no apparent changes to field boundaries or land use. In terms of the land surrounding the site, the 1924 map is the first to show change from 1886. This depicts additional outbuildings at Blackmore Farm, clearly shows the orchards set around the farm (**Plan EDP 7**) and the expansion of the town of Melksham to the west of the site.
- 4.146 The expansion of Melksham continues through the mid to late-20th century although the greatest change is shown on the OS map of 1972 (**Plan EDP 8**) where extensive residential expansion to the east of Melksham is shown. This map also shows Blackmore Farm expanded further with large, modern agricultural barns depicted, which are still extant to the west of the historic farmhouse. The OS map of 1980-1988 also depicts additional buildings at Blackmore Farm, although, aside from that, no further change is evident within or surrounding the site. The outfarm at the south of the site continues to be depicted on the later maps of the 20th century, suggesting that its eventual removal was a relatively recent event.
- 4.147 The historic maps demonstrate that from the early 19th century at least, the site comprised agricultural land, with a process of field boundary loss apparent during the late 19th century. They also depict the continued expansion of Blackmore Farm and the outskirts of Melksham throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries. Several large outbuildings were constructed at Blackmore Farm by 1972, all of which are still extant. The maps illustrate that orchards were once adjacent to the farm from the mid-19th century until at least the mid-20th century.

LIDAR

- 4.148 The LiDAR data reflects the extant field boundaries visible on-site today, it also shows low relief depressions in the northern end of the site which correlate to the former field boundaries depicted on the Tithe Map.

- 4.149 A number of low relief earthworks are seen as linear patterns, running parallel to with the field boundaries. These linear features are generally straight, regular and narrowly spaced, indicative of modern ploughing methods, although a grouping of wider spaced, but still straight and regular, earthworks are evident in the central and south-east fields of the site. These earthworks suggest an earlier phase of ridge and furrow cultivation, most likely in the post-medieval period.
- 4.150 Despite this indicated evidence of earlier ridge and furrow, no such evidence was identified during the site visit, and so it is likely that this later modern ploughing has truncated any surface earthworks so that they are no longer visible to the naked eye. In the centre of the site, two parallel earthworks are visible running north-east to south-west. The form of these earthworks is suggestive of a trackway, and are discussed in further detail with relation to the aerial photographs below.
- 4.151 The route of the small brook is evident at the south-west of the site, along with a number of curvilinear features illustrating small outflows from the brook.
- 4.152 No evidence of the former outfarm identified by the HER at the south-west corner of the site (**MWI68876**) is visible.
- 4.153 No other previously unknown archaeological features were identified through a review of the LiDAR data.

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

- 4.154 A total of 48 vertical aerial photographs, covering the site and its immediate environs, were identified within the collection maintained by the Historic England Archive in Swindon. None of the photographs are reproduced here due to copyright restrictions.
- 4.155 The available images span the period from June 1945 to August 2003 and confirm the land use and development sequence shown on those historic maps available online. It is apparent that the agricultural land at the site has been in a mixed regime during the mid-late 20th century, as fields are shown both as arable and pasture. The photographs show no other extant features, which are not also depicted on the historic Ordnance Survey maps discussed above.
- 4.156 Aside from the marks related to the buried remains of narrow ridge and furrow, which have been discussed previously, and marks reflecting the positions of former post-medieval field boundaries, depicted on historic maps, only a single additional cropmark was noted within the centre of the site. This cropmark might indicate the possible presence of previously unrecorded, buried archaeological remains, and was identified during the review of LiDAR data (above) as a potential trackway.
- 4.157 This comprises a double linear mark (its location is shown on **Plan EDP 2**) which is shown on several aerial photographs (e.g. CPE/UK 1821 4 NOV 1946) and is on 2006 imagery on Google Earth. The mark does not correspond to any feature known from historic maps and runs diagonally across the present field, and so appears to be on a different alignment to the field system. This suggest that it may represent an archaeological feature pre-dating the

post-medieval landscape. The double ditched form reflects the appearance of a road or trackway, with the ditches possibly comprising roadside drainage ditches, however it is not shown clearly anywhere else within the site. There is no suggestion that the cropmarks reflect the presence of significant archaeological remains. For example, there is no indication of an internal agger (metalled road surface) as might be expected for the remains of a well-preserved Roman road. As such, it is highly unlikely that, if present, the remains reflect the presence of archaeology of greater than low, local interest.

- 4.158 No other features of archaeological interest were identified by the review of aerial photographs from the Historic England Archive, or the Britain from Above, Apex or NCAP online collections.

SITE WALKOVER

- 4.159 The site was visited in May 2025 to assess the current ground conditions and topography, as well as to confirm the continuing survival of any known archaeological remains and to identify any hitherto unknown remains.
- 4.160 A possible archaeological earthwork was noted during a previous visit in 2019; this was a slight bank seemingly defining a level area noted in a small field to the east of the small copse at the southern end of the site (see **Plan EDP 2**). This levelled, roughly rectangular terrace, was defined by a slight earthwork to the west and south. This feature was barely discernible as a low-relief earthwork during the visit in 2025 (**Image EDP A1.10**). It is possible that this represents the location of a former structure, since removed, although no evidence for a structure in this location is known from historic maps, aerial photographs and LiDAR and, no other evidence such as scattered building material, was noted in the vicinity. As much, as the space may represent the location of a former building, it is equally possible that it could be a result of some recent farming practice, resulting in the levelling of an area of ground.
- 4.161 As previously noted, no earthworks or building material was visible at the location of the former outfarm. No other features of archaeological interest, such as earthworks, were noted within the site, including any earthworks related to ridge and furrow cultivation.

Section 5

Conclusions

- 5.1 This archaeological and heritage assessment concludes that the site does not contain any designated heritage assets, such as world heritage sites, scheduled monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields or conservation areas that would represent a constraint to development.
- 5.2 The site's contribution to the settings of designated heritage assets has been considered in accordance with Historic England guidance: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (HE, 2017 - Second Edition). All designated heritage assets located within a 1km radius of the site boundary were assessed in order to understand whether their settings have the potential to be affected by change within the site.
- 5.3 Only one designated asset was deemed to have the potential for its setting to be affected: the Grade II Listed Blackmore House.
- 5.4 The site comprises agricultural land which has a historical, functional association with Blackmore House. The house is experienced from the land to the north and centre of site, across the fields located immediately east and south-east of the listed building. These views are already within the context of modern built form at the periphery, along the A302 to the north, with further modern form following the implementation of the future development of PL/2023/11188 to the west.
- 5.5 As such, these areas are considered to make a low contribution to the asset's significance. Whilst any impacts upon this asset would need to be considered within the forthcoming application, it is unlikely that these would be greater than the low end of less than substantial harm, given the low contribution the site makes to the overall significance of the listed building. Indeed, with careful masterplanning, development should be able respect the asset's setting and thus minimise or avoid harm arising to its significance.
- 5.6 In terms of non-designated archaeology, the site is identified as generally having a low potential to contain significant archaeological remains from the prehistoric and Roman periods, with the exception of the south-west corner, which has a moderate potential for Roman remains, based on the features identified by previous trial trenching to the immediate west of the site. Such remains would most likely comprise evidence of localised land management and would be of no greater than low, local value.
- 5.7 There is also assessed to be a very low potential for the site to contain significant archaeological remains from the medieval to modern periods, beyond features related to agricultural practices during this period, such as buried plough soils and potential buried remains relating to a former fieldbarn, which would be of no greater than very low value.
- 5.8 It is therefore concluded that there is no reason to believe that the site contains archaeological remains that would be of such significance as to warrant physical preservation in situ. Instead, their conservation (comprising preservation by record) could

be appropriately addressed through a phased programme of archaeological investigations, the scope of which would be agreed with the archaeological advisor to the LPA.

- 5.9 In conclusion, in terms of designated assets, whilst part of the site contributes to the significance of the Grade II listed Blackmore House, this contribution is considered to be low, and the effect of change to the asset's setting could be managed through careful masterplanning. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe or expect that the site contains archaeological remains of such significance as to warrant preservation *in situ*, and thus constrain the site's development.
- 5.10 Therefore, in terms of designated and non-designated heritage assets, this report provides the information requested in Paragraph 207 of the NPPF and will inform the subsequent assessment of impact from the planning proposals.
- 5.11 Furthermore, on the basis of this current evidence, it is concluded that the development of the site would potentially have only a limited impact upon the historic environment, with a scope for the reduction of any impact through careful masterplanning, that is considerate of heritage assets and their settings.

Section 6

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LIST OF CONSULTED MAPS

1814 Enclosure Map of Melksham

Tithe Map of Melksham Parish 1837

1886 First Edition Ordnance Survey Map

1924 Edition Ordnance Survey Map

1972 Edition Ordnance Survey Map

1980-1988 Edition Ordnance Survey Map

Appendix EDP 1 Images



Image EDP A1.1: View of the south facing elevation of the Grade II listed Blackmore House, taken from the field immediately south of the house (outside of the site boundary).



Image EDP A1.2: View from the northern part of the site looking east towards Blackmore House illustrating its setting within farmland, albeit obscured by the intervening vegetation and topography, and in the context of modern pylons and farm buildings.



Image EDP A1.3: View from the northern part of the site looking east towards Blackmore House illustrating the screening effect of the intervening vegetation.



Image EDP A1.4: View of the south facing elevation of the Grade II listed Blackmore House, illustrating the screening effect of the modern shed, taken from the field immediately south of the house (outside of the site).



Image EDP A1.5: View from the central part of the site looking north-west towards Blackmore House illustrating its setting within farmland, albeit relatively distant and obscured by intervening vegetation.



Image EDP A1.6: View north towards Blackmore House from the southern end of the site, illustrating the screening effect of the rising topography in this direction, as well as the intervening hedgerows.



Image EDP A1.7: View towards Blackmore House from the south-west edge of the site, illustrating the screening effect of intervening modern outbuildings, as well as intervening vegetation and topography.



Image EDP A1.8: View north-west across the northern/central part of the site from PRow along the site's eastern boundary, illustrating views of Blackmore House across fields, with mature hedgerows and trees, as well as modern built form along the A302 and pylons.



Image EDP A1.9: View south from the southern edge of the site, illustrating that distant views of Tanhouse Farmhouse (**1194746**), albeit so distant and obscured by intervening vegetation that a clear appreciation of the building is not possible.



Image EDP A1.10: View south of the faint earthwork noted in the south-west field of the site.

Plans

Plan EDP 1: Designated Heritage Assets

(edp9278_d010a 15 September 2025 JLe/EBr)

Plan EDP 2: HER Monument Records and Observations Made During Assessment

(edp9278_d011a 19 September 2025 JLe/EBr)

Plan EDP 3: HER Event Records

(edp9278_d012a 19 September 2025 JLe/EBr)

Plan EDP 4: Extract from 1814 Enclosure Map of Melksham

(edp9278_d013a 19 September 2025 JLe/EBr)

Plan EDP 5: Extract from 1837 Tithe Map of Melksham

(edp9278_d014a 19 September 2025 JLe/EBr)

Plan EDP 6: Extract from 1886 Ordnance Survey Map

(edp9278_d015a 19 September 2025 JLe/EBr)

Plan EDP 7: Extract from 1924 Ordnance Survey Map

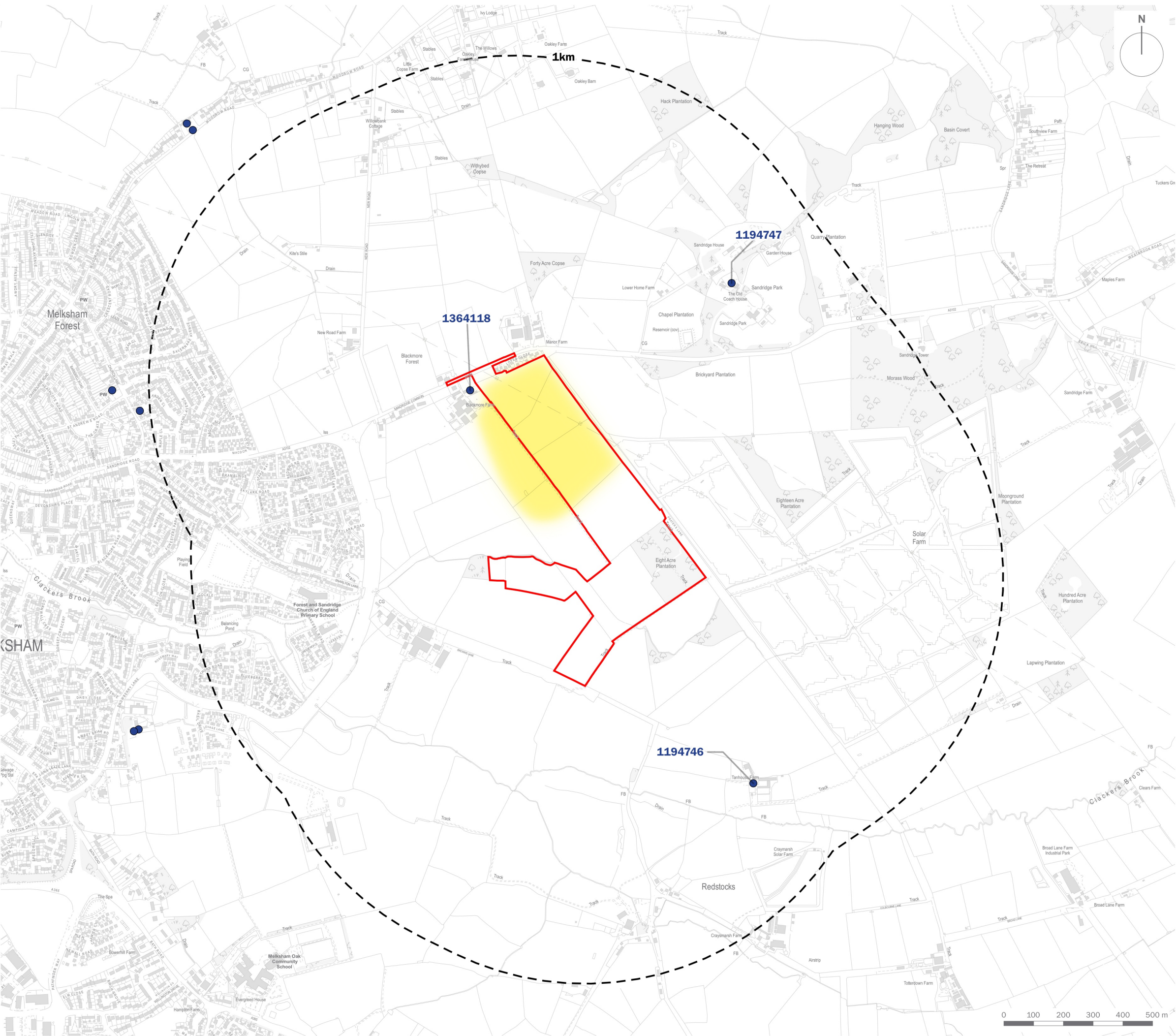
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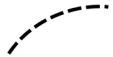
Plan EDP 8: Extract from 1972 Ordnance Survey Map

(edp9278_d017a 19 September 2025 JLe/EBr)

Plan EDP 9: LiDAR Data

(edp9278_d018a 19 September 2025 DJo/EBr)



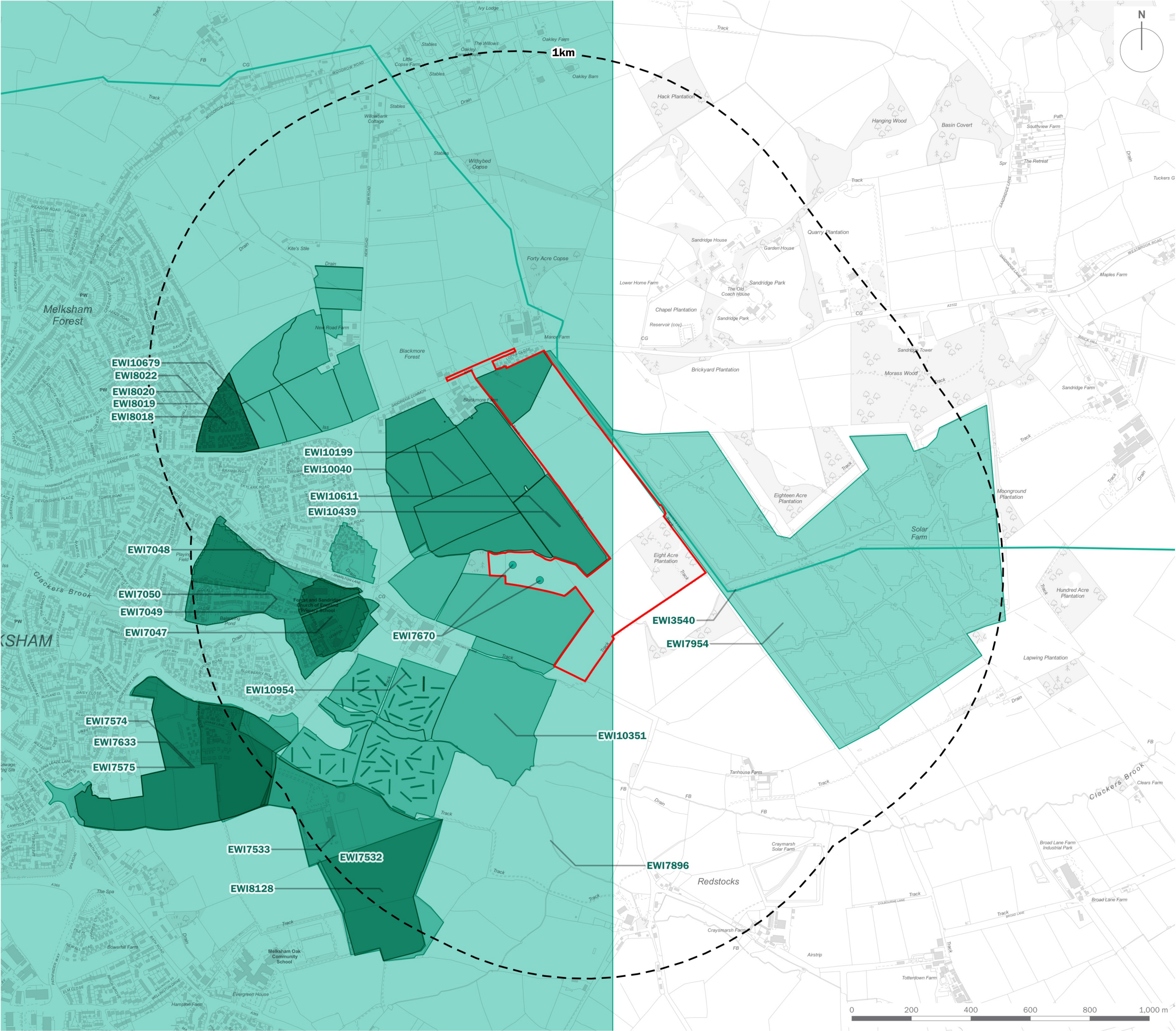
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-  1km Study Area
-  Blackmore House Setting
-  Grade II Listed Building

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project title	Melksham Phase 2		
drawing title	Designated Heritage Assets		
date	19 SEPTEMBER 2025	drawn by	JLe
drawing number	edp9278_d010a	checked	EBr
scale	1:12,500 @ A3	QA	JFr



- Site Boundary
- 1km Study Area
- Slight Earthwork Defining Lower Area
- HER Monumnet
- Cropmarks of Linear Ditches

client	Gleeson Land		
project title	Melksham Phase 2		
drawing title	HER Monument Records and Observations Made During Assessment		
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drawing number	edp9278_d011a	checked	EBr
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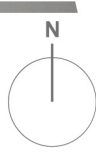


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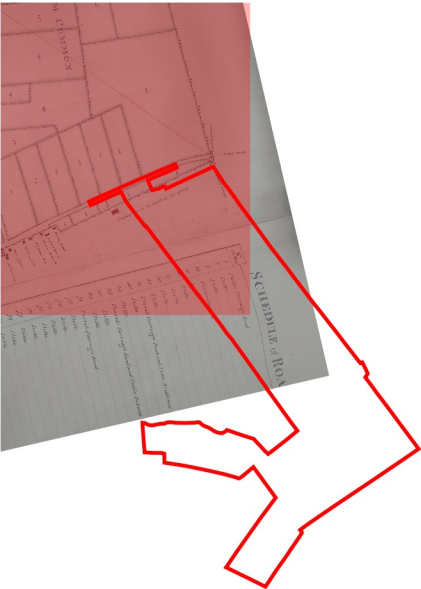
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drawing title	HER Event Records		
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drawing number	edp9278_d012a	checked	EBR
scale	1:12,500 @ A3	QA	JFr



Approximate Site Boundary



client

Gleeson Land

project title

Melksham Phase 2

drawing title

Extract from 1814 Enclosure Map of Melksham

date	19 SEPTEMBER 2025	drawn by	JLe
drawing number	edp9278_d013a	checked	EBr
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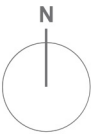
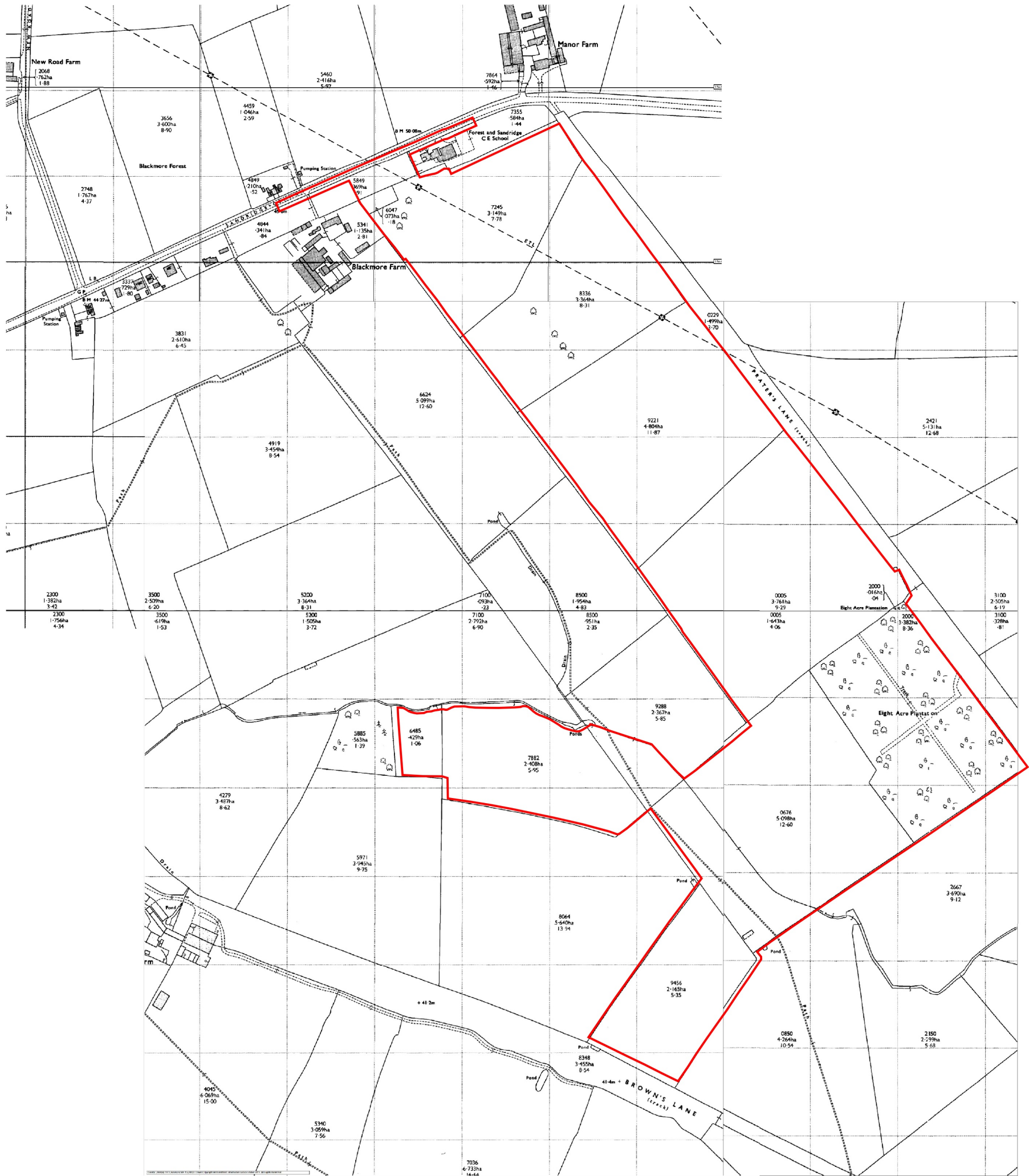


 Approximate Site Boundary

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drawn by			
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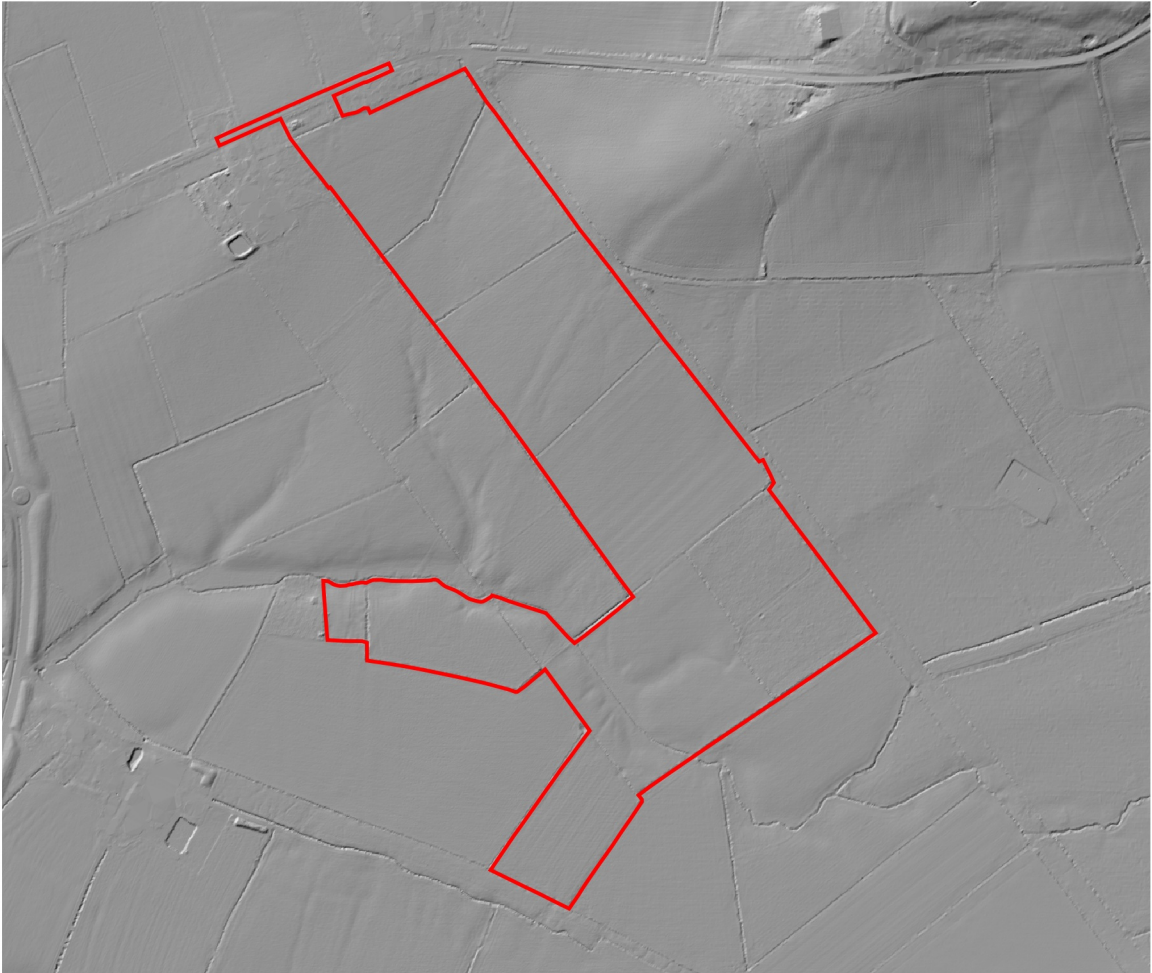
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date	19 SEPTEMBER 2025	drawn by	JLe
drawing number	edp9278_d017a	checked	EBr
scale	1:5,000 @ A3	QA	JFr





Multi Hillshade model at 1m resolution (2022)



Simple Hillshade model at 1m resolution (2022)



Open Positive model at 1m resolution (2022)



Open Negative model at 1m resolution (2022)



Site Boundary



client

Gleeson Land

project title

Melksham Phase 2

drawing title

LIDAR Data

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drawing number	edp9278_d018a	checked	EBR
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