

Land East of Blackmore Farm, Melksham

PL/2025/08778 - EIA – Screening and Scoping request-Land at Blackmore Farm, Melksham
Helen Garside, Principal Conservation Officer.

Scope of comments: The following comments relate to the conservation of the built historic environment. Other issues, such as those relating to the impact on the wider landscape in general and to below ground archaeological deposits will be subject to consideration by other colleagues within the Council whose specific disciplines relate more closely to these issues.

Site: the site comprises an area of level agricultural land to the east of Melksham to the east of the grade II listed Blackmore Farm.

Whilst the construction area is not included within a designated conservation area and contains no major standing heritage, the site forms part of the wider agricultural setting to Blackmore Farm and several other farmsteads. To the east, the land rises in the Sandridge.

Proposals: the enquiry seeks opinion in respect of the development of an additional area of land adjacent to the previously approved site around the farmhouse.

Policy: from the point of view of the historic environment, the primary consideration will be the duty placed on the Council under Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act to have **special regard** to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their settings.

The Council's Core Strategy Policy CP58 'Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment' requires that designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced.

The Council's Core Strategy CP 57: Ensuring high quality design requires a high quality of design in all new developments.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment (Section16).

Assessment: thank you for consultation on the above screening/scoping opinion request.

There are no designated heritage assets located within the proposed development area itself and it does not fall within any particularly sensitive area from the point of view of the built historic environment. Expected impacts relate to the settings of nearby assets and I consider that the level of impact which would result can reasonably be expected to be able to be assessed via the documents which would usually be submitted during the planning application process (including Heritage Assessment required under paragraph 194 of the NPPF). As a result, I agree with the conclusions of the Environmental Impact Scoping Report that impacts on Blackmore Farm are most likely but that these will not result in 'significant' impacts for the purposes of an EIA. As a result, I would not expect built heritage to be included as a chapter within any future Environmental impact Assessment (EIA) and have no objection to it being scoped out as proposed.

In respect of the requirements of the NPPF, I note that a preliminary Archaeological and Heritage Baseline Assessment has been submitted. Whilst I make no comment at this stage on the conclusions reached, its scope appears reasonable but I would suggest that

consideration also be given to any impact on assets to the east on rising land of Sandridge including the Sandridge Park Estate and Sandridge Tower. I note that the Environmental Impact Scoping Report briefly notes the potential for cumulative impact when taken into consideration with the site already approved and I would expect any final Heritage Assessment to discuss this issue in more detail.