

3. Site Context

Introduction

- 3.1 This Chapter provides a description of the Site and identifies the sensitive receptors considered in the EIA.
- 3.2 The detailed baseline characteristics of the Site and the surrounding area in relation to the technical topics scoped into the EIA are considered within the relevant Chapter (**Technical Chapters 6 – 7**). A summary of the sensitive receptors included in **Technical Chapters 6 – 7** is included in **Table 3.1**.
- 3.3 The relevant detailed baseline characteristics of the Site and the surrounding area in relation to the technical topics scoped out of the ES are contained within the EIA Scoping Report (**Appendix 2.1**).

Location and Setting

- 3.4 The Site, approximately 27.41 hectares (ha) in area, is located on land to the east of Blackmore Farm, approximately 670m east of the town of Melksham. The Site, on land south of the A3102 Sandridge Common, comprises agricultural fields, hedgerows, trees, and several interconnected ditches which run along field boundaries and into a watercourse within the southern part of the Site.
- 3.5 A 132 kilovolt (kV) overhead powerline (OHL) crosses the northern part of the Site from the bridleway (MELW40, known as Prater's Lane) to the east of the Site to the A3102 Sandridge Common to the north. A water main crosses the central part of the Site. Public Right of Way (PRoW) MELW26 runs through the south west of the Site from north to south. A tributary of the Clackers Brook runs from the southwestern boundary through the southern end of the EIA Study Area where it exits at the southeastern boundary.
- 3.6 The topography falls generally from east to southwest - ground levels in the east are approximately 55m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) and fall to approximately 38.90m AOD in the southwest.
- 3.7 The Site is bound by:
- A deciduous woodland to the south east of the Site (Eight Acre Plantation);
 - Residential properties and the A3102 Sandridge Common to the north, beyond which lies a small business park;
 - A lane / bridleway (MELW40, known as Prater's Lane) to the east;
 - Agricultural land and woodlands to the south; and

- Agricultural land to the west; which has approved outline planning consent^a (Cumulative Project 1 – see **Chapter 8**).

- 3.8 The wider area surrounding the Site is predominantly made up of agricultural land. Approximately 500m to the west is the settlement of Melksham. To the southwest lies Snarlton Farm, which also contains a small retail park. To the north is Manor Farm Estate, while to the northwest are agricultural buildings associated with Blackmore House and Farm. Clacker's Brook is located in the wider area at the south of the Site amongst agricultural land, approximately 280m at its closest point. To the east of Prater's Lane is a solar electricity generating installation (Sandridge Solar Farm) and the partially constructed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS).
- 3.9 The Site is well connected by a local network of PROWs. Notably, PROW MELW26 runs to the west of the Site and through the south west of the Site from north to south, linking Sandridge Common Road to Bridleway MELW41. Bridleway MELW41 then continues to the southwest of the Site, providing a connection to Eastern Way. Additionally, a public bridleway (MELW40) (Prater's Lane) runs adjacent to the eastern boundary, also from north to south, and links to several other footpaths and local routes.

Historic Land Uses

- 3.10 The earliest map depicting the Site is the 1814 Enclosure Award for Melksham Parish¹, followed by the 1837 Tithe Map for the Parish of Melksham² and successive Ordnance Survey (OS) maps dated 1886³, 1924⁴, 1972⁵ and 1980-1988.⁶ The maps indicate that the land was historically part of the former Blackmore Forest, with evidence of early enclosure patterns. The layout of the field boundaries within the Site has remained largely consistent since 1837, and the land has been in continuous agricultural use.
- 3.11 The OS maps indicate that land immediately to the northwest, surrounding Blackmore Farm, was historically occupied by an orchard. To the north of the Site, Blackmore Farm and Manor Farm were established farmsteads, both of which are still present today. Additionally, Eight Acre Plantation, a woodland area located in the southeastern corner of the Site, appears on historic maps and has remained in place to the present day.
- 3.12 The most recent notable change in land use within the wider area is the solar farm to the east of the Site and the replacement in 2024 of a former school with residential use adjacent to the north of the Site.

Identification of Sensitive Receptors

- 3.13 **Table 3.1** lists the sensitive receptors at which likely significant effects may occur and their relationship to the aspects of the environment outlined in Schedule 4. These are assessed within **Technical Chapters 6 – 7**.

^a Planning application reference PL/2023/11188 for 500 dwellings, employment space, land for a primary school, land for a mixed use hub, open space, access and landscaping.

Table 3.1: Sensitive Receptors Identified for Assessment in this ES

Chapter	Sensitive Receptors Identified for Assessment in this ES	Schedule 4 'factor'
Chapter 6: Landscape and Views	Landscape receptors: • Site landscape character; • Host LCA C1: Melksham Open Clay Vale; • Host Area 3: Open Clay Vale; • Non-Host LCA F2: Sandridge Park Greensand Hills; and • NonHost Area 4: Wooded Greensand Hills.	Landscape
	Visual receptors: • Bridleway Reference MELW40/ Prater's Lane (along the eastern boundary of the Site); • Footpath Reference MELW26 (within the Site); • Bridleway Reference MELW41/ Brown's Lane (along the southern boundary of the Site); • Footpath Reference MELW27 (150m to the west of the Site); • Footpath Reference MELW22 (280m to the south); • Users of the following roads: A3102/ Sandridge Common Road (both within the Special Landscape Area (SLA)/ outside the SLA); • Residential Group 1: 288, 289, 289A, 290, 290A, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295 Sandridge Common; • Residential Group 2: Blackmore House and Farm (House only); • Residential Group 3: 1-12 Lopes Close; • Residential Group 4: 254 and 256 Sandridge Common; • Residential Group 5: Little Snarlton Farm/ Snarlton Farm; and • Manor Farm, Sandridge Common.	Population and human health
Chapter 7: Biodiversity	Habitats on Site and adjacent to the Site: • Trees/woodland; • Hedgerows; • Watercourses; • Other habitats; and • Plants. Species: • Invertebrates; • Amphibians;	Biodiversity

Chapter	Sensitive Receptors Identified for Assessment in this ES	Schedule 4 'factor'
	• Reptiles; • Birds; • Hazel dormouse; • Badgers; • Otter; • Bats; and • Other mammals.	
	• Local Wildlife Sites within 2km of the Site.	

References

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- ¹ <https://wshc.org.uk/our-services/archives>: 1814 Enclosure Award for Melksham Parish Ref:1368/128
- ² <https://www.thegenealogist.co.uk>: 1837 Tithe Map for the Parish of Melksham
- ³ <https://www.envirocheck.co.uk>: 1886 edition Ordnance Survey Map
- ⁴ <https://www.envirocheck.co.uk>: 1924 edition Ordnance Survey Map
- ⁵ <https://www.envirocheck.co.uk>: 1972 edition Ordnance Survey Map
- ⁶ <https://www.envirocheck.co.uk>: 1980-1988 edition Ordnance Survey Map