



Longleat Estate  
Festival of Light (Christmas 2026)

Heritage Impact Appraisal

July 2026

# Longleat Estate: Festival of Light (Christmas 2026)

## Heritage Impact Appraisal

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## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Heritage Impact Appraisal (HIA) has been commissioned by the Longleat Estate to support a planning application for the 2026 Festival of Light at Longleat House.

1.2 Planning permission is sought for the following:

- Provision of temporary light installations which will be open to the public from 7th November 2026 - 10th January 2027, with fabrication and set-up starting 1st September 2026.
- Installations are described in detail in the client design document appended to this application. They include internally illuminated themed structures, building projection, a singing Christmas tree, together with temporary food and beverage outlets. The theme of the exhibition this year is Legendary Worlds. It features a wide range of exhibitions from ancient British, Norse, Greek, African and Asian mythology. See Fig. 1
- The installations are to be illuminated between 16:30 and 20:30 each day from 7th November 2026 to- 10th January 2027.
- Provision of temporary parking areas with associated safety lighting. This will remain on for a short period after the main attraction is turned off to enable safe exit from the site for guests.
- Provision of temporary workshops for assembly of installation structures, between 01/09/2026 and 13/01/2027
- Provision of temporary worker accommodation in the service yard behind Stalls Farm, between 01/09/2026 and 31/01/2027.

All installations are to be self weighted and shall not include foundations or fixings to buildings or structures. All installations shall be removed from the site and the site made good no less than 4 weeks after the end of the event.

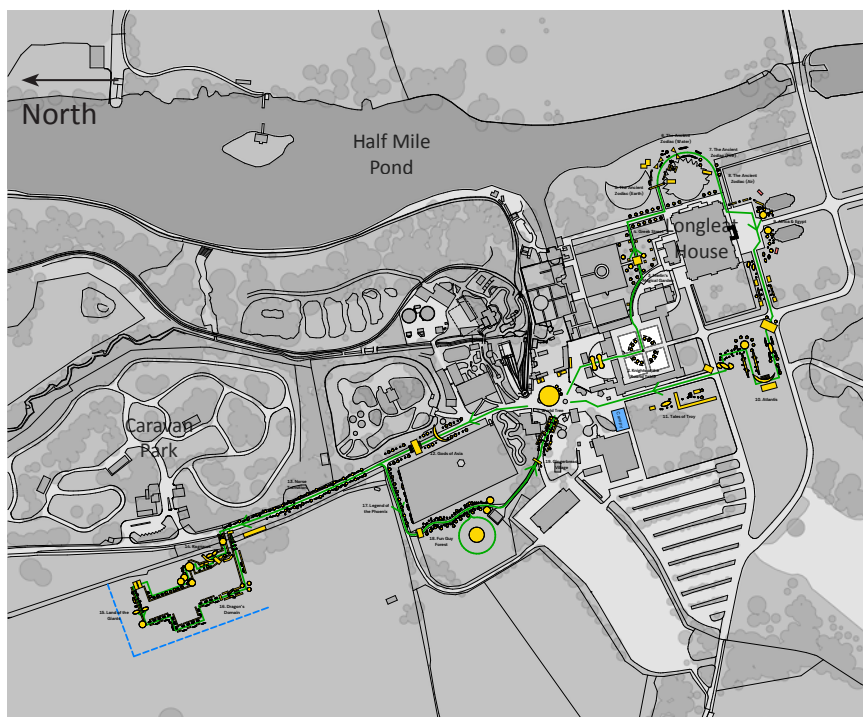
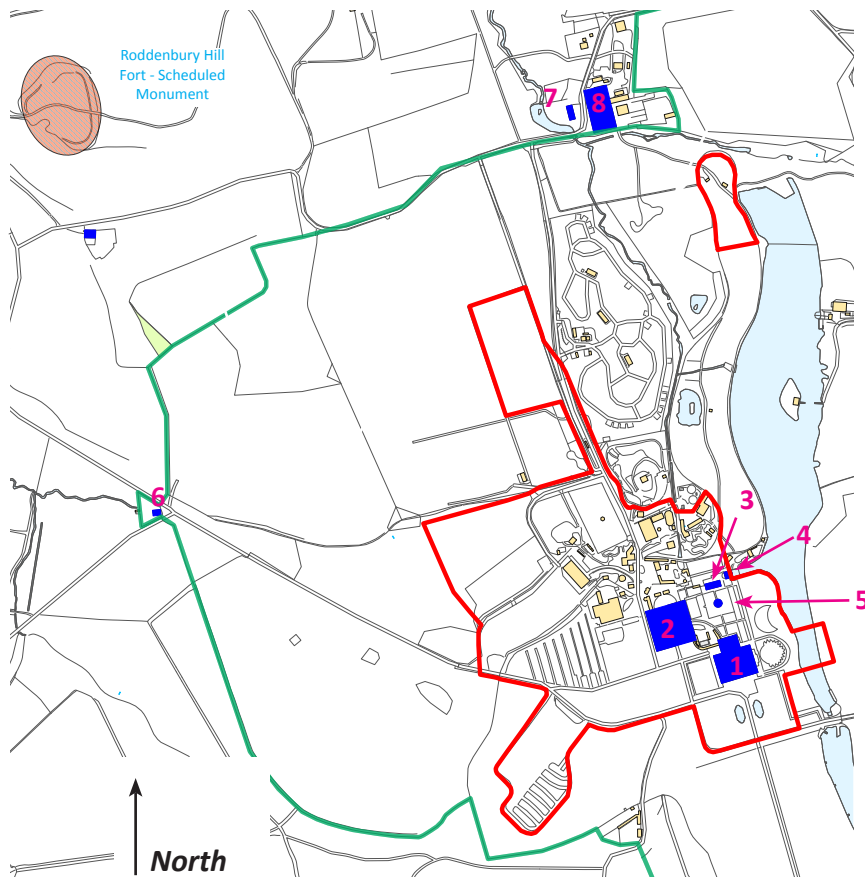


Fig. 1: Proposed layout of temporary lights



#### Listed Buildings

1. Longleat House (Grade I)
2. The Stables (Grade I)
3. Orangery & walled garden (Grade I)
4. Boathouse & Covered Bridge (Grade I)
5. Fountain (Grade II)
6. County Cottage (Grade II)
7. Stalls Farmhouse (Grade II)
8. Model Farm at Stalls Farm (Grade II)

The entire site lies in the Cranborne Chase National Landscape

Fig. 2: Historic England designations

Green = Grade I registered park at Longleat

Blue = Listed buildings & structures

Red outline = Application site

Roddenbury Hill Fort is a Scheduled Monument

The proposed layout is shown on Fig. 1. Small lanterns and fairy lights are also proposed by the entry kiosks on Longcombe Drive. There will be a Santa's Grotto in the usual location to the NW of Half Mile Pond, accessed via the railway line

- 1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2024) states *"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."* (NPPF Paragraph 207)
- 1.4 The application site lies entirely within the Grade I registered historic park at Longleat (outlined in green on Fig. 2) and in the setting of a number of Grade I listed buildings (Longleat House, the Stables, Orangery with Walled Garden, Boathouse and Covered Bridge), also Grade II listed buildings/structures (County Cottage, Stalls Farmhouse, Model Farm buildings at Stalls Farm; Fountain in front of the Orangery). The entire proposal lies within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape. Roddenbury Hill Fort is a scheduled monument and lies 700m to the north west.
- 1.5 The appraisal provides:
  - a review of the application site, brief history, identification of the heritage assets which may be affected, and their significance;
  - a review of the planning policy background and guidance relevant to the historic environment and landscape character;
  - assessment of the potential impacts of the proposals on the heritage assets including the Grade I registered historic landscape at Longleat, Grade I & II listed buildings, the AONB and the local landscape character and visual amenity.
- 1.6 The appraisal takes account of proposed mitigation including design changes and recent planting. Further opportunities for conservation



Fig. 3: The attractions area north of Longleat House and stables (July 2025)

and enhancement of the historic landscape are considered, in line with the guiding principles and proposals set out in the 2012 Conservation Management Plan and the Heritage Management Plan Review (March 2018).

### Copyright

- 1.7 The historical illustrations used in this report are intended for research and planning purposes only. If the report is more widely circulated or published in any form, copyright permission for the illustrations will need to be sought from the owners of the copyright.

### Acknowledgements

- 1.8 We would like to thank the archivists at Longleat for providing material used in this report, also Heritage Landscape Management Ltd (HLM) who have kindly shared their previous work. Reference is made to existing reports submitted with previous applications for the Festival of Light at Longleat (HLM, Spurstone Heritage & Askew Nelson).

### Methodology

- 1.9 The assessment follows Historic England's methodology published in *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning. Note 3 : The Setting of Heritage Assets* (HE 2017; GPA3), with reference to *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, 3rd Edition (LI&IEMA 2013; LVIA3). Reference is also made to the following:
1. An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management. (Natural England, 2019);
  2. Landscape Assessment Guidance, Countryside Commission;
  3. Landscape Institute Technical Information Note 08/2015 – Landscape Character Assessment (LI, Feb 2016);
  4. Reviewing Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments and Landscape and Visual Appraisals, Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 1/20.

1.10 Understanding of the history and significance of the heritage assets and the landscape character of Longleat is based on a review of:

- Conservation Management Plan for the park at Longleat (2012, HLM)
- Longleat Heritage Management Plan (HLM, 2018)
- Longleat Tree Planting and Management Strategy (HLM, 2015)
- 2019 Festival of Light Heritage Statement (Spurstone Heritage, 2019)
- Heritage Impact Appraisal for the 2024 Festival of Light application (Askew Nelson, 2024)
- Archives held by the Longleat Estate
- The Historic Environment Record
- 19th and 20th C Ordnance Survey maps
- The National Character Area description by Natural England
- Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership Plan 2019-24
- Wiltshire County Council's Landscape Character Assessment
- Historical aerial photography (HE, Google Earth)

1.11 The assessment of significance involves assessment of each individual assets and, where relevant, the inter-relationship with other associated assets. This assessment of significance is based on the current NPPF's description of significance: *'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting'*.

The setting of a heritage asset is also defined in the Glossary of NPPF: *'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral'*.

1.12 Definitions used here for assessing significance of heritage assets are taken from the Longleat CMP (HLM 2012):

**Exceptional:** meaning that the character and/or historic integrity and/or outstanding interest of the building, landscape or feature would be fundamentally damaged by the modification or loss of this element.

**Considerable:** meaning the character and historic integrity of the building/landscape or feature would be seriously affected by the modification or loss of this element.

1.13 The assessment of heritage and visual impacts are a function of the sensitivity of a receptor, combined with the magnitude of the proposed change. The assessment considers impacts on identified assets at the locations considered; and assessment of ways in which any identified harm may be mitigated. This includes effects on the setting of the assets and the identification of possible negative or positive impacts. Levels of impact are given as follows:

Substantial harm – elements which contribute to the significance of the heritage asset, including its setting, are substantially harmed or lost"

Moderate harm – elements which contribute to the significance of the heritage asset, including its setting, are harmed

Slight harm – there is change to elements which contribute to the significance of the heritage asset or its setting, but that harm is minimal.

Impacts may be 'Beneficial': those elements which contribute to the significance of the heritage asset, including its setting, are enhanced or better revealed. And there may be 'No change' – there is no impact upon any element which contributes to significance of heritage asset including its setting.

## 2.0 Brief History

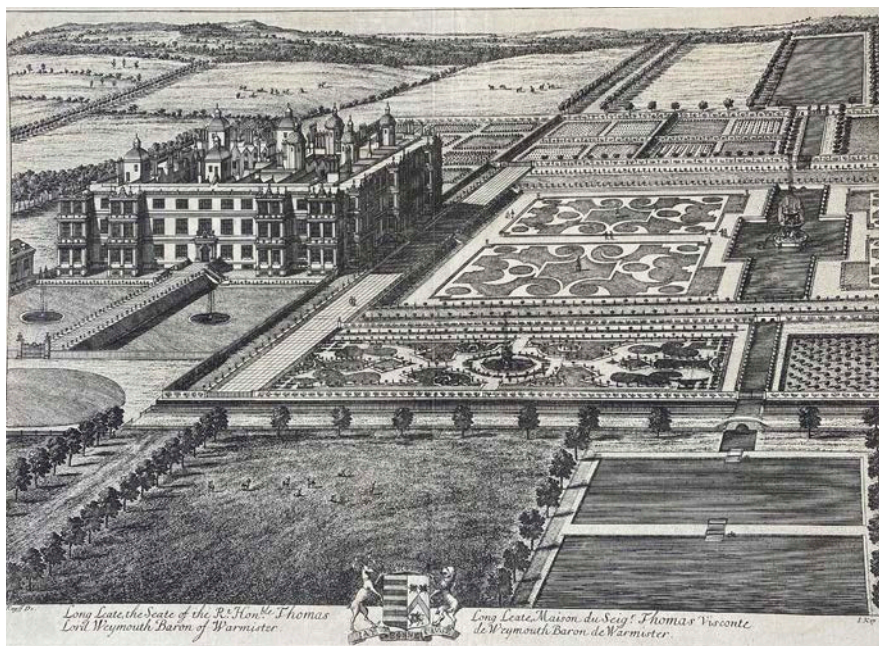


Fig. 4: Knyff and Kipp engraving 1709, looking north with the formal gardens extending largely to the east of the house; Corsely Mead to the north.

- 2.1 The earliest evidence for a building or settlement at Longleat comes in 1235 with a reference to an Augustinian Priory. The priory was a small foundation but the site appears to have had a church, together with the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary which was endowed in 1408. The priory also had a mill which was once powered by a long brook or mill race from which the name Longleat was derived.
- 2.2 By 1529 the priory was reported to have having fallen into decay with reduced numbers and inefficient use of its income. It was subsequently dissolved on 20 June 1529 and transferred to a Carthusian Order at Hinton Charterhouse in Somerset, which in turn was dissolved in 1539. The property was sold to Sir John Thynne in 1540 for £53. It is reported to have come with sixty acres of land, a rabbit warren, orchard and watermill on the nearby stream or 'lete'. Most of the surrounding land was either rough moorland or marsh.
- 2.3 Thynne engaged Robert Smythson in 1568 to build the present house. *"It is a quintessential building of its time incorporating the work of Robert Smythson, the foremost master mason of the C16. It also contains alterations and extensions by Sir Jeffry Wyattville which are of a high quality and reflect the C19 revival of Elizabethan styling."* (Longleat Estate Heritage Management Plan Review, HLM March 2018). There are few records of the earliest gardens but it is thought that they extended to c.14 acres and included an orchard.
- 2.4 Major work in the gardens and park was undertaken by the 1st Viscount Weymouth between 1683 - 1700. Formal gardens were laid out on a vast scale covering c.70 acres, largely to the east of the house, with lawns, terraces, canals and fountains (see Fig. 4). Modifications were introduced by George London of the Brompton Park Nursery in the 1690s, including a new plantation called The Grove. The formal gardens at Longleat were described by John Sales in 1980 as one of the most impressive and elaborate ever made in England.

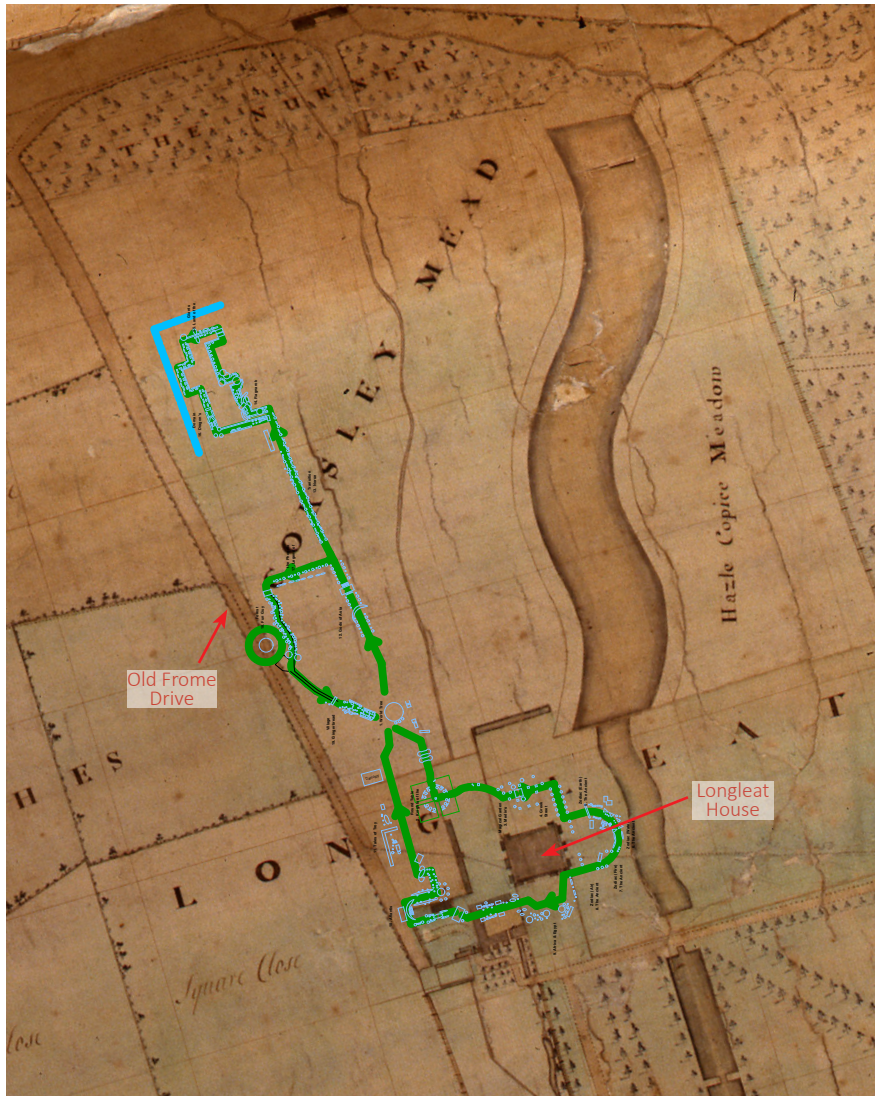


Fig. 5: Ladd's survey of 1747 with the proposed installations and circulation route overlaid in green and blue. [Longleat Archives Wiltshire Map 68 (detail), © Reproduced by permission of the Marquess of Bath]

- 2.5 Ladd's estate survey of 1747 (Fig. 5) shows the formal gardens partly swept away, with serpentine (but still formalised) water bodies, precursors to today's more natural lakes, and a more informal open landscape. Ladd shows a pastoral landscape to the west and north west of Longleat House divided into rectilinear closes, including The White Marshes, Upper & Lower Black Coppice, Picked Close and Square Close. Corsley Mead extends either side of Redford Water with the lake to the east and old Frome Drive to the west. Boundaries included thorn hedge, post & rail and ditches.
- 2.6 Fig 5 opposite shows the proposed route of the 2026 Festival of Light overlaid onto the Ladd survey. The north part lies within the former Corsley Mead; the southern part around Longleat House. To the south west and west of the house the route runs over the site of the former stables, outbuildings, and partly over the old Frome Drive.



Fig. 6: Davis' Survey of 1804 with the proposed scheme overlaid. [Longleat Archives Wiltshire Map 94 (detail), © Reproduced by permission of the Marquess of Bath]

- 2.7 'Capability' Brown's advice in the 1750s-60s led to the further removal of the axial geometry, avenues and the rectilinear field patterns, and the development of a more informal parkland landscape with sinuous drives, water and woodland. This evolving landscape is represented on Davis' estate plan of 1804 (Fig. 6- with the Festival of Light route overlaid). North of the house the old Frome Drive was removed c.1762-3 and a new drive created north through Corsley Mead towards Stalls Farm. This drive survives and runs along the west side of the Caravan Park.
- 2.8 A curving plantation was planted to the north of the house leading in a south westerly direction to High Wood (1758) with the extant ha-ha on the south side (1762-63). This served as a wooded backdrop to the house and provided physical and visual separation between the house and park to the south east and the White Marshes and Black Coppice Meadow to the north west. Davis' survey shows both the old stables south west of the house and the new stables which were built in their current location 1802-05 to the design of Wyatville, with Humphry Repton advising on their location. Davis shows the removal of field boundaries to the west and north of the house (carried out in the 3rd quarter of the 18th century along with the ha-ha construction), indicating that the White Marshes and Black Coppice Meadow were 'brought into' the park at this time. Half Mile Pond is shown in transition to its current shape.
- 2.9 Repton was commissioned in August 1803 and his Red Book is dated February 1804. His proposals included the modification of the drives, the opening up of the sinuous plantation between the stables and High Wood to create better views of the house from the new drive (i.e. the existing Frome Drive, built 1801-02 just prior to Repton's involvement, with Wyatville's County Cottage built 1803) and the White Marshes, and to connect this area visually with the park to the south. See Figs. 7 & 8 overleaf.

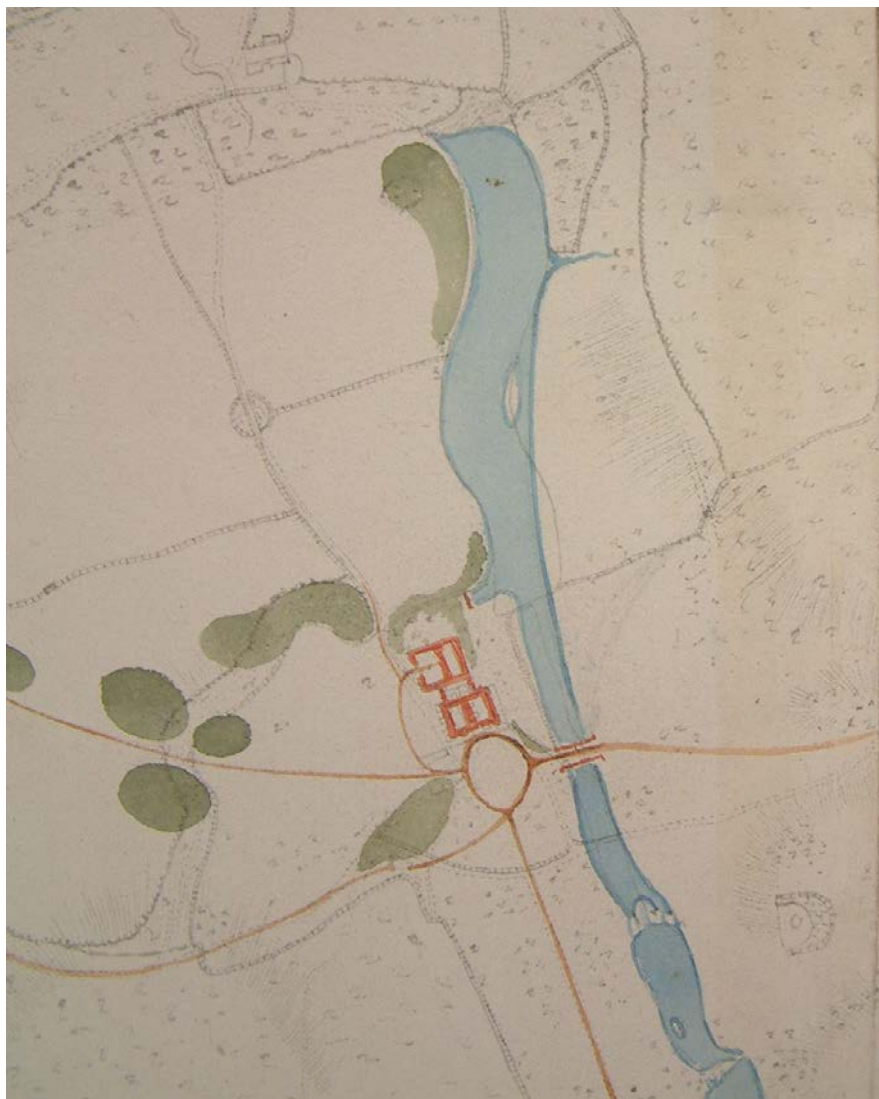


Fig. 7: Extract of Repton's plan for park from his Red Book, 1804



Fig. 8: View from Repton's Red Book showing the proposed view from a tower he proposed near today's Pheasantry, with parkland landscape and Half Mile Pond. [Longleat Archives, © Reproduced by permission of the Marquess of Bath]

- 2.10 The Ordnance Survey of 1886 (Figs. 9 & 10 overleaf) shows the 'new' Frome Drive leading to County Cottage and the thinned tree planting in the sinuous plantation north and west of Longleat House; also parkland tree planting, clumps and individual trees within the White Marshes and Black Coppice Meadow, and Half Mile Pond on its current footprint. These indicate that this area was very much part of the designed parkland. Repton's plan for a more open west side to Half Mile Pond was clearly not followed as the 1886 OS shows the fully planted Sandwalk Plantation along the west side of the lake.



Fig. 7: First edition OS 1885 25".

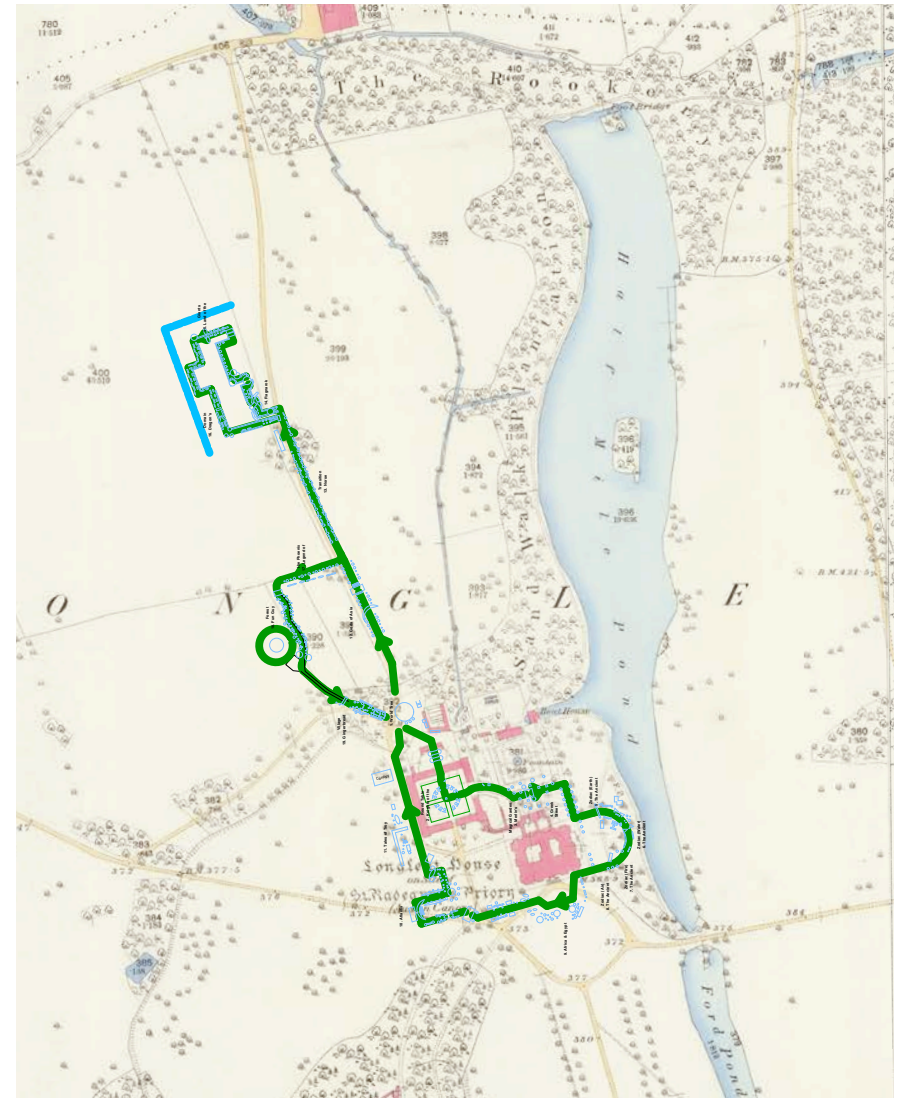


Fig. 7: First edition OS 1885 25" with the proposed scheme overlaid.



Fig. 11: Current aerial view of Longleat House from the south, above Horningsham Drive. This view shows how the visitor attractions and safari park infrastructure are largely concealed in views from the two main approaches to Longleat (Warminster and Horningsham Drives).

- 2.11 From the early 19th C until the mid 20th C the landscape around the house remained largely unchanged. Additions to the gardens and park landscape were added by Russell Page from the 1930s- 1950s including tree planting along Horningsham Drive and the fountains to the south of the house. Following the introduction of the Safari Park in the early 1960s, the landscape to the north and west of the house evolved with the introduction of a car park (Lime Trees), the attractions area, model railway and the Caravan Park in Corsley Mead. Further parking extends to the north of Lime Trees and temporary parking to the south west (Green Tubs). The safari park is largely concealed from the house and gardens by woodland to the east of Half Mile Pond. The gorilla house and recently constructed hippo house on the east bank of Half Mile Pond are visible from some places in the house and garden but increasingly concealed by trees.
  
- 2.12 In accordance with the 2018 Longleat Heritage Management Plan much of Black Coppice Meadow is now in permanent pasture, the exception being the eastern part - the part to be used for the Festival of Light.
  
- 2.13 The aerial view in Fig. 11 shows the attractions and parking are largely concealed behind the house and tree cover. One can just make out the former drive alignment in the grass in front of the house.
  
- 2.14 The Estate has run winter events at Longleat for over 25 years now. These provide essential revenue which goes towards the conservation of the heritage assets on the Estate.

### 3.0 Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

- 3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, Dec 2024) states that *“Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. ... The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.”* (Paragraph 182)
- 3.2 The NPPF seeks *“a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:*
- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
  - b) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring*
  - c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and*
  - d) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.”* (Paragraph 196)
- 3.3 Setting is referenced in the Paragraph 200: *“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.”*
- 3.4 Setting is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF: *“The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as*

*the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.”*

- 3.5 Para 201 of the NPPF states: *“Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.”*
- 3.6 Paragraphs 205-208 highlight the required balance between assets of particular significance and public benefit when determining planning applications. This also applies to non-designated heritage assets, which are a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. *“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.”* (Para. 208)
- Wiltshire Council Core Strategy (Adopted 2015)
- 3.7 Core Policy 51- Landscape: This policy requires that *“Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character, while any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures. Proposals should be informed by and sympathetic to the distinctive character areas identified in the relevant Landscape Character Assessment(s) and any other relevant assessments and studies.”*

- 3.8 The policy makes particular reference to the need to take account of locally distinctive landscape patterns and character; important views and sensitive skylines: landscape features of cultural, historic and heritage value; tranquillity, light pollution; and the special qualities of the AONB in which Longleat lies. Regarding the AONB [now the National Landscape] *“Proposals for development within or affecting the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) ... shall demonstrate that they have taken account of the objectives, policies and actions set out in the relevant Management Plans for these areas.”*
- 3.9 Core Policy 57 requires that “Applications for new development must be accompanied by appropriate information to demonstrate how the proposal will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire through: i) enhancing local distinctiveness by responding to the value of the natural and historic environment, relating positively to its landscape setting..... iv) being sympathetic to and conserving historic buildings and historic landscapes.”
- 3.10 Core Policy 58- Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment: The policy seeks that *“Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment. Designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate 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.”*
- Historic England’s ‘The Setting of Heritage Assets’ (2nd edition December 2017, GPA3)
- 3.11 This document sets out Historic England’s (HE) guidance on managing change within the settings of heritage assets, including archaeological remains and historic buildings, sites, areas, and landscapes. Section 9 considers the significance of setting: *“Its importance lies in what it*

*contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or to the ability to appreciate that significance....”*

Change over Time: *“Settings of heritage assets change overtime. Understanding this history of change will help to determine how further development within the asset’s setting is likely to affect the contribution made by setting to the significance of the heritage asset. Settings of heritage assets which closely resemble the setting at the time the asset was constructed or formed are likely to contribute particularly strongly to significance but settings which have changed may also themselves enhance significance, for instance where townscape character has been shaped by cycles of change over the long term. Settings may also have suffered negative impact from inappropriate past developments and may be enhanced by the removal of the inappropriate structure(s).”* (Section 9, first bullet)

Cumulative change: *“Where the significance of a heritage asset has been compromised in the past by unsympathetic development affecting its setting, to accord with NPPF policies consideration still needs to be given to whether additional change will further detract from, or can enhance, the significance of the asset.”* (Section 9, 2nd bullet)

Designed settings: *“Many heritage assets have settings that have been designed to enhance their presence and visual interest or to create experiences of drama or surprise. In these special circumstances, these designed settings may be regarded as heritage assets in their own right, for instance the designed landscape around a country house.”* (Section 9)

The Cranborne Chase National Landscape (former AONB)

- 3.12 The entire site lies within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape. In 2019 the National Landscape became the first to be designated an International Dark Sky Reserve. Under the Dark Skies Charter the National Landscape is committed to preserving and enhancing the dark skies and reducing light pollution within the designated area.

## 4.0 Designations and Significance

- 3.13 The proposal site lies within Area 7B of the AONB Management Plan ‘Penselwood to Longleat Hills’ (Cranborne Chase Partnership Plan 2019-2024). The management plan sets out objectives for the conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment. Key issues and challenges for Character Area 7B include “Heritage conservation especially in parklands with visitor pressures; Infrastructure clutter (e.g. telephone and electricity poles, signs); Viability of commercial forestry; Livestock grazing; Limited access due to narrow lanes; Traffic and development leading to loss of tranquillity; Enlarged replacement dwellings.”
- 3.14 In the West Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment, (LCA) the application site lies within area F5 Longleat Greensand Hills. The LCA notes the following distinctive characteristics relevant to the application site: historic landscapes, woodland, coniferous plantations, irregular field patterns, hedgerows, hedgerow trees, historic parks, peaceful and small scale landscape, steeply undulating, picturesque villages, stone walls, contrast between enclosed landscapes and open panoramas, significant nature conservation interest. The overall condition of the landscape is good with a “*high degree of intactness*”. It notes the loss of woodland, pressure of visitors and tourism.

- 4.1 The application site lies within the landscape registered Grade I on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England (list entry 1407).
- 4.2 **Grade I** listed buildings nearby whose settings could potentially be affected include **Longleat House, the Stables, Orangery with Walled Garden, Boathouse and Covered Bridge.**
- 4.3 **Grade II** listed buildings potentially affected include Stalls Farmhouse and model farm buildings (300m north east of the application area), County Cottage (425m west of the application site).
- 4.4 Roddenbury Hill Fort is a **scheduled monument** 700m to the north west.
- 4.5 The site lies within the **Cranborne Chase National Landscape.**
- 4.6 The application site is not visible from any designated public rights of way although National Cycle Network Route 24 runs along Warminster Drive to Longleat House and on to Frome; Route 25 runs from Longleat House to Horningsham.

### Significance

- 4.7 As a whole the Grade I registered historic landscape at Longleat has exceptional significance. *“Its essential importance lies in the continuity of the designed landscape and its subtle, but continuous evolution and development over the centuries in response to the changing attitudes, fortunes and approaches to management of successive owners. The designed landscape provides evidential value and demonstrates aesthetic qualities which reflect changing social tastes over time, with the park being particularly important for its English Landscape Style. As a whole it demonstrates exceptional historical value in a national and international context, through its association with the Thynne family, George London, Lancelot Brown, Jeffry Wyatville, Humphry Repton*

*and Russell Page, as well as its royal visitors and picturesque tourists.”* (HLM 2012). Its significance is underlined by the National Landscape designation which recognises the exceptional significance of the historic landscape at Longleat.

- 4.8 Since the introduction of the safari park, the landscape setting to the south and east of Longleat House has largely retained its early 18th C character with the open lawns and strong visual relationship with the park, as can clearly be seen on approach along the Warminster and Horningsham Drives. The east side of the house and its relationship with the lake and park has recently been greatly enhanced by the removal of the Sun and Moon mazes and the restoration of open lawns down to Half Mile Pond.
- 4.9 The landscape to the west and north of the stables has been compromised by the attractions area and parking but is generally concealed in views from the park to the east and south of Longleat House (see Fig. 11 above). Surprisingly little of the attractions and associated infrastructure are visible from the west (Frome) drive from County Cottage (see View 6 below). The private garden on the west side of the house was added c.1960 and is currently being redesigned. The high hedges provide privacy for the family but are not so high to prevent visibility of the upper parts of the house from the west.
- 4.10 The 2012 CMP for Longleat House seeks the conservation of the existing mature trees to the west and north of the house and the replanting of trees on the historical footprint where possible. For Black Coppice Meadow the CMP seeks the conservation and enhancement of the permanent pasture and parkland character, with the replanting of trees as shown on the 19th C OS maps. For the White Marshes, including the Frome Drive, the CMP seeks the conservation of the existing parkland character, with consideration given to reducing the visual impact of the attractions and overflow car parking from the Frome Drive.

- 4.11 The historic landscape setting of the house has considerable archaeological significance with the likely below-ground remains of the 17th and early 18th C formal gardens to the east and south of the house, and the former old Frome Drive to the north of the house (ref. Ladd’s survey of 1747). Little is known about the former abbey on the site but there is most likely archaeological evidence below ground.
- 4.12 The landscape to the east and south of the house retains the character created in the latter part of the 18th C and first part of the 19th C. The intervention of the safari park attractions is largely concealed to the north and north east of the house within existing mature tree cover. The late 18th C openness by the west elevation of the house has been partially lost to the private garden.
- 4.13 Longleat House is of exceptional significance due to its historic and architectural importance. It is architecturally original for its time in England being externally symmetrical on both axes and having an outward looking design. The House is monumental in scale and one of the great prodigy houses of the 16th century that influenced the future development of English architecture. It has been described by the noted architectural historian John Summerson as, ‘.the first great monument of Elizabethan architecture and perhaps, indeed the greatest’. [text from HLM’s CMP, 2012]
- 4.14 The Stables (listed grade I) themselves, located to the north-west of the House are architecturally and historically important. Created as part of a grand scheme of improvements under the patronage of the 2nd Marquess, their neo-Elizabethan appearance echoed the architecture of Longleat House and facilitated the visual improvement of the park by replacing earlier buildings near the south-west corner of the House. The design of the Stables manages to be both subservient to Longleat House and contribute to the mass and scale of the property at the core of the park. The main façades remain essentially unaltered from the original design so there is historic continuity and although there have been changes to the interior many sections retain their historic plan form. The

Stables are assessed as being of exceptional significance for their evidential, historic and aesthetic contribution to the park. [text from HLM's CMP, 2012]

- 4.15 The Orangery (listed grade I) and Boathouse (listed grade I) are both by Wyattville and are architecturally important buildings which are key elements within the setting of Longleat House. In addition to their architectural and historic value both buildings are used to articulate the landscape and orientate views either towards the House, in relation to the Orangery, or across Half Mile Pond and the park, as is the case with the Boathouse. Both the Orangery and the Boathouse are considered to be of exceptional significance for their historic, evidential and aesthetic value. [text from HLM's CMP, 2012]
- 4.16 County Cottage- Grade II listed: 1803 by Jeffry Wyattville for 2nd Marquess of Bath. Situated along the west (Frome) drive to Longleat House, added under Repton's advice. The building has considerable significance both architecturally and by virtue of its contribution to the historic landscape during a period of significant change. The landscape which evolved at this time is the predominant surviving character.
- 4.17 The Fountain in front of the Orangery- Grade II listed: Early 1800s. Limestone. Circular pond with moulded stone verge to shallow bowl lined with cobbles and tiles, fountain in scalloped bowl on pedestal surrounded by three cupids. Considerable significance.
- 4.18 Stalls Farmhouse- Grade II listed: Farmhouse to model farm. 1859 by W. Wilkinson for the 4th Marquess of Bath. Dressed limestone, tiled gabled roof, brick stacks with ashlar cappings. Considerable significance architecturally and as part of the design phase which included the model farm.

- 4.19 Model farm buildings at Stalls Farm- Grade II listed: 1859 by W. Wilkinson for the 4th Marquess of Bath. Five parallel ranges of covered yards and stock sheds, attached by covered way to barns, offices and sawing sheds on north side. Fine example of Victorian estate model farm, with considerable significance.
- 4.20 The scheduled monument at Roddenbury Hill includes a univallate hill fort on the western tip of Roddenbury Hill. The fort is curvilinear in shape, forming a round-cornered triangle, with one side facing the hill to the east and the other sides running around the natural contour behind this, enclosing 0.84ha. Exceptional significance as a well preserved fort from this period, now covered in woodland.

## 5.0 The Proposed Scheme & Impact on the Heritage Assets

- 5.1 The proposals are described in section 1.1 above. Winter events have been held at Longleat for over 25 years now. The current application follows previous planning permissions for similar winter illuminations (19/09173/FUL, PL/2023/04201, PL/2024/06518 & PL/2025/07613 (2025)). This application is for one year only.
- 5.2 The current application has a similar footprint to the 2023- 2025 festivals. The scale and extent of the installations around the house are smaller than pre-2023 years. Lighting towers in front of the house are reduced in number, size and impact. The theme of the lights this year is legends from ancient mythology. A full description of the installations is found in the Design Statement. Additional temporary parking is proposed in White Marshes, an area currently known as 'Suretrack', where track matting will be placed over the grass (see Fig. 12 overleaf). Fabrication and assembly will be undertaken on Suretrack on temporary surface matting. The service yard at Stalls Farm will be used for worker accommodation.
- 5.3 Refer to the impact assessment table and photographic views which can be found after Section 6 (Conclusions).

### Physical Impacts

- 5.4 None of the proposals has physical contact with the listed buildings and structures at Longleat. Therefore there will be no physical impact on the built historic fabric. Public access to the buildings will be controlled and closely monitored, as is currently the case.
- 5.5 The installations will sit over known archaeology, and possibly unknown archaeology. This includes the late 17th C formal gardens around the house (see Fig. 4 above), possible remains of the former abbey and other archaeology including the old Frome Drive shown on the Ladd Survey of 1747 (Fig. 5) running NNW from the house.

- 5.6 To avoid any harm to the below ground archaeology, the installations will be weighted down rather than secured into the ground, thereby avoiding physical damage to archaeology and the landscape fabric. Areas of lawn, both for pedestrians and the temporary parking, will be protected by suitable ground protection matting. Inevitably when this is removed at the end the festival there will be some discolouration and potential for superficial damage to the grass but this will revert to normal fairly quickly, certainly by the time the weather warms and the grass starts growing. Impact on the landscape fabric and below ground archaeology is therefore negligible, with any minor surface damage reversible once the grass grows.

### Impact on the Setting of the Heritage Assets

- 5.7 The installations, by day, will cause slight or moderate temporary harm to the settings of the listed buildings, and to views of the house and other listed buildings from certain parts of parkland landscape. The cabins last used in 2024 on the lawns to the south of the house to house projectors have now been replaced by 4m high towers with an open truss structure painted matt black to minimise impact on views of the house and its setting (see Fig. 12 overleaf). The harm is temporary and fully reversible.
- 5.8 By night the installations will cause slight or moderate harm to the heritage assets in the immediate and wider landscape surrounding Longleat House, insofar as their character and appearance will be changed by the introduction of incongruous structures and lighting. That said, the illuminations will draw attention to the historic buildings and landscape, inviting the visitors to experience and enjoy the designated heritage assets in a different way.



Fig. 12: Illustration of the proposed lighting towers on the south front of Longleat House

- 5.9 The harm is slight or moderate, but temporary and fully reversible. The harm is partly mitigated by bringing large numbers of visitors to enjoy the historic buildings and landscape at night in a different way to the normal day-time experience.
- 5.10 Views 1-3 and 5-7 provide an indication of light levels at night around the house at Longleat. The house is currently lit by night, as shown in Views 1, 2, 3, and 5. Views 6 (from the west on Frome Drive) and View 7 from the north on Stalls Lane show some illumination currently at night but this is not widespread. It should be noted these photos were taken in the summer (July) so do not present the worst-case visibility, i.e. winter views with no deciduous foliage.
- 5.11 The use of Black Coppice Meadow for the festival was a new feature in 2023-24. It introduced structures and illumination to a grassed area north of the main attractions area. The landscape here is distinctly parkland in character, with only limited visibility of attractions and other modern infrastructure. The aspiration in the Longleat Heritage Management Plan is to conserve and enhance the parkland character by restoring the land to permanent pasture (now done), replanting trees in their 19th C positions and removing 20th C fencing and hedges. By night the landscape here is relatively dark (see Views 6, 7 & 8) but not completely as lights from the adjacent caravan park and attractions area are visible (View 7). The festival will introduce additional light and uncharacteristic elements here for a temporary period, with significantly higher light levels during the hours of operation (16:30- 20:30).
- 5.12 To mitigate the harm to dark skies and the wider dark landscape the Estate confirms that the illuminations in this area will be enclosed in 2m high skim netting, thereby reducing horizontal light spill. In addition the fabricators will add screens on top of the installations to reduce the vertical light spill. All lights will be turned off by 20:30 each evening during the festival period.
- 5.13 There is likely to be moderate (temporary) harm caused by the attractions in Black Coppice Meadow and the associated illumination in this part of the parkland landscape. There are no public rights of way from which this part of the landscape can be easily seen so the harmful effect on the wider nocturnal landscape character will be slight. By day the harm will be negligible from public rights of way, given the lack of visibility.
- 5.14 The physical landscape will be protected as described above so no physical or residual harm to the heritage assets or landscape character is anticipated. Trees will be protected where necessary in accordance with BS5837:2012, including the placing of protective matting over their rooting areas. Very minor harm to grassland will soon recover.
- 5.15 Moderate or slight harm is likely to the settings of the nearby listed buildings (Stalls Farmhouse, County Cottage and Longleat House & Stables) but this will be temporary.
- 5.16 The Estate is committed to fulfilling the planting proposed in the 2015 Longleat Tree Planting and Management Strategy along the north edge of Black Coppice Meadow. This is part of the Estate's commitment to restoring the permanent pasture and parkland character in this part of the Grade I registered landscape.
- 5.17 Refer to the Views and Impact Assessment table which follows the Conclusions in Section 6.



## 6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The proposed festival of light will cause no direct physical or lasting impact on the designated heritage assets at Longleat. This includes the historic buildings, structures and landscape, including the below ground archaeology. Ground protection will be in place over the grassed areas of the trail and parking. No ground fixings are required and installations will be weighted down where necessary. No impacts are therefore likely on below-ground archaeology.
- 6.2 The proposed layout for the Christmas 2026 festival will be similar to that of the 2024 & 2025 festivals. The scale and extent, magnitude of the impacts on the heritage assets and resulting effects will be similar to that experienced in the previous two years. The proposed lighting towers in front of Longleat House replace the unsightly portacabins used for projectors in 2024 and have much less impact on the setting and views of the house. The towers this year are smaller than last year's and reduced in number from six to four. The illuminations and all associated infrastructure, including temporary parking, will cause moderate or slight harm to the setting of the heritage assets but this is temporary and fully reversible. Lights will all be turned out at 20:30 each day, and at the end of the festival on 13/01/2027 all structures and associated infrastructure will be removed and the site returned to its current state.
- 6.3 The festival includes installations in Black Coppice Meadow, to the north of the main attractions area. This part of the landscape is parkland in character. The light installations and associated infrastructure here are likely to cause moderate harm to the parkland character. The harm is temporary however, limited to the duration of the festival, the hours of operation and the time to set up and remove the festival. As mitigation the Estate is committed to enhancing this character by retaining the permanent pasture and the ongoing replanting of trees in their historical positions, and removing 20th C fencing and hedges in accordance with the Heritage Management Plan.
- 6.4 The income generated by the festival will make a significant contribution to the Estate's ability to conserve and enhance the heritage assets for future generations to enjoy.
- 6.5 The slight or moderate temporary harm to the setting of the heritage assets, including Grade I listed buildings and the Grade I historic landscape, is considered to be less than substantial, and at the lower end of this category.
- 6.6 NPPF Para. 215 states *"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."* The identified harm needs to be seen in context of a number of heritage benefits associated with this application. The festival allows large number of people to experience and enjoy Longleat by night, a time when there is normally no public access to the estate, and to appreciate the historic buildings, structures and landscape from different viewpoints and angles, in very different circumstances to the daytime experience.

| Heritage Asset                                                                        | Significance                                                                | Impact on Significance, including mitigation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Historic designed park at Longleat (Grade I registered landscape)                     | Exceptional                                                                 | <p>No direct physical impact. Potential for slight harm caused by protective matting and modest ground pressure to grass lawns and pasture. Use of proprietary matting will avoid physical harm and grass will quickly recover. No residual impact anticipated. No ground anchors required.</p> <p>Light installations and associated infrastructure cause moderate localised adverse impact on the character of the landscape around the House, Stables, gardens and lake; also by the kiosks on Longcombe Drive. This is partly mitigated by the increased access to visitors, allowing them to appreciate the historic buildings and landscape. Slight or moderate harm taking account of mitigation, but temporary.</p> <p>Moderate harm within Black Coppice Meadow as attractions are introduced into the parkland landscape to the north of the attractions area. Attractions and illumination are temporary; mitigation screening provided.</p> <p>Negligible impact on the wider parkland setting, and the wider National Landscape.</p> |
| Historic designed park at Longleat<br>View 1 from Horningsham Drive                   | Exceptional- designed drive & view of house                                 | Moderate adverse impact on this view of the house, although installations this year will be smaller than pre-2023 years, with larger installations relocated to the north of the house. The four light-weight truss lighting towers have less impact on the south front of Longleat House than projector portacabins previously used in 2024. Overall moderate harm but temporary, limited to the duration of the festival and lights only illuminated between 16:30 and 20:30.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Historic designed park at Longleat<br>View 2 from Warminster Drive (on higher ground) | Exceptional- 18th C designed drive & view of house and wider park landscape | Slight harm to daytime views from this location because of the distance. By night the harm will be slight due to the increased illumination, although the lights will allow the house to be seen better and appreciated more from a distance. Temporary.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Historic designed park at Longleat<br>View 3 from Warminster Drive (on lower ground)  | Exceptional- 18th C designed drive & view of house and wider park landscape | Moderate localised adverse impact on this view of the house, although installations this year will be smaller than previous years, with larger installations relocated to the north of the house. Moderate harm but temporary, limited to the duration of the festival and lights only illuminated between 16:30 and 20:30.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Historic designed park at Longleat<br>View 4 to Longleat House from North East        | Exceptional- close view of the house and gardens                            | Moderate adverse impact caused by the installations in this view - both day and night. Installations this year will be similar to 2025 and smaller in extent to previous years, with larger installations relocated to the north of the house. Harm partly mitigated by the increased access to visitors, allowing them to appreciate the historic buildings and landscape. The sun and moon mazes have recently been removed, allowing the simple unadorned lawns to return (as per late 18th/19th C) between the house and Half Mile Pond. Overall slight or moderate adverse effect but temporary.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

|                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Historic designed park at Longleat<br>View 5: Longleat House from west                                        | Exceptional- close view of the house in its landscape setting                                                     | Moderate adverse impact caused by the installation in this view on the open lawn in front of the house - effect both day and night. Installations this year will be smaller than previous years, with larger installations relocated to the north of the house. Harm partly mitigated by the increased access to visitors, allowing them to appreciate the historic buildings and landscape. Moderate adverse effect but temporary.                                                                                                              |
| Historic designed park at Longleat<br>View 6: View from Frome Drive                                           | Considerable- early 19th C approach to the house via County Cottage                                               | Moderate adverse impact caused chiefly by the parking on White Marshes ('Suretrack') which will be clearly visible in this view from Frome Drive. By day the ground protection matting will cause moderate harm; the taller light installations likely to be visible in this view. By night the light installations- notably taller structures- and cars will likely cause moderate harm in this relatively dark landscape. Moderate adverse impact but temporary (lights limited to 4 hours each evening and for the duration of the festival). |
| Historic designed park at Longleat<br>View 7: Longleat House from north                                       | Considerable - parkland setting north of house as developed at the turn of the 19th C, with design by Repton      | Moderate adverse impact caused by visibility of the installations by day and night within Black Coppice Meadow, also parking on White Marshes. Light spill will cause moderate adverse harm in this largely dark landscape. Some mitigation provided by the barrier fence and screening of vertical light spill. Moderate harm but temporary: lights limited to 4 hours each evening and for the duration of the festival.                                                                                                                       |
| Historic designed park at Longleat<br>View 8: View over White Marshes from south towards Black Coppice Meadow | Considerable - parkland setting north west of house as developed at the turn of the 19th C, with design by Repton | Moderate adverse impact with the parking on White Marshes ('Suretrack') clearly visible in this view. By day the ground protection matting will cause moderate harm; the taller light installations likely to be visible in this view also- to the right. By night the light installations and cars will likely cause moderate harm in this relatively dark landscape. Moderate adverse impact but temporary (lights limited to 4 hours each evening and for the duration of the festival).                                                      |
| Historic designed park at Longleat<br>View 9: View to Longleat House & Stables from the attractions area      | Considerable- views of the Grade I listed buildings but setting compromised by the attractions.                   | Slight adverse impact due to the additional of the light installations within this area already compromised by the attractions, hard standings etc. Slight adverse impact but temporary (lights limited to 4 hours each evening and for the duration of the festival).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Cranborne Chase National Landscape                                                                            | Exceptional (designated area and its setting)                                                                     | Moderate harm to the designated landscape and dark skies resulting from incongruous illuminated installations, but the harm is localised and temporary. Some benefit is gained from bringing large numbers of people outdoors in midwinter nights to experience the National Landscape.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

|                                              |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Longleat House (Grade I)                     | Exceptional  | <p>No direct physical impact</p> <p>Moderate harmful impact on setting but illumination temporary, limited to 4 hours each evening and for the duration of the festival.</p> <p>Larger installations located to the north of the house. Harm similar to the previous two years. Impact mitigated partly by increased public access to - and enjoyment of - the heritage asset. Overall impact slight or moderate adverse but temporary.</p> |
| Stables (Grade I)                            | Exceptional  | <p>No direct physical impact</p> <p>Moderate harmful impact on setting but illumination temporary, limited to 4 hours each evening and for the duration of the festival.</p> <p>Overall impact slight or moderate adverse but temporary.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Orangery and Walled Garden (Grade I)         | Exceptional  | <p>No direct physical impact</p> <p>Moderate harmful impact on setting but illumination temporary, limited to 4 hours each evening and for the duration of the festival.</p> <p>Overall impact slight adverse but temporary.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Boathouse and Covered Bridge (Grade I)       | Exceptional  | <p>No direct physical impact</p> <p>Moderate harmful impact on setting but illumination temporary, limited to 4 hours each evening and for the duration of the festival.</p> <p>Overall impact slight adverse but temporary.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Fountain in front of the Orangery (Grade II) | Considerable | <p>No direct physical impact</p> <p>Moderate harmful impact on setting but illumination temporary, limited to 4 hours each evening and for the duration of the festival.</p> <p>Overall impact slight adverse but temporary.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

|                                                |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| County Cottage (Grade II)                      | Considerable | No direct physical impact<br><br>Negligible impact on setting due to location within woodland. Some light may be visible from the car park and lights but limited by intervening woodland. Temporary                           |
| Stalls Farmhouse (Grade II)                    | Considerable | No direct physical impact<br><br>Negligible impact on setting due to intervening woodland. Some light may be visible through trees but very limited. Temporary                                                                 |
| Model farm buildings at Stalls Farm (Grade II) | Considerable | No direct physical impact<br><br>Negligible impact on setting due to intervening woodland. Some light may be visible through trees but very limited. Temporary.                                                                |
| Roddenbury Hill Fort (Schedule Monument)       | Exceptional  | No direct physical impact. No public right of way on Roddenbury Hill.<br><br>Negligible impact on setting due to intervening woodland. Some light may be visible through trees on Roddenbury Hill but very limited. Temporary. |

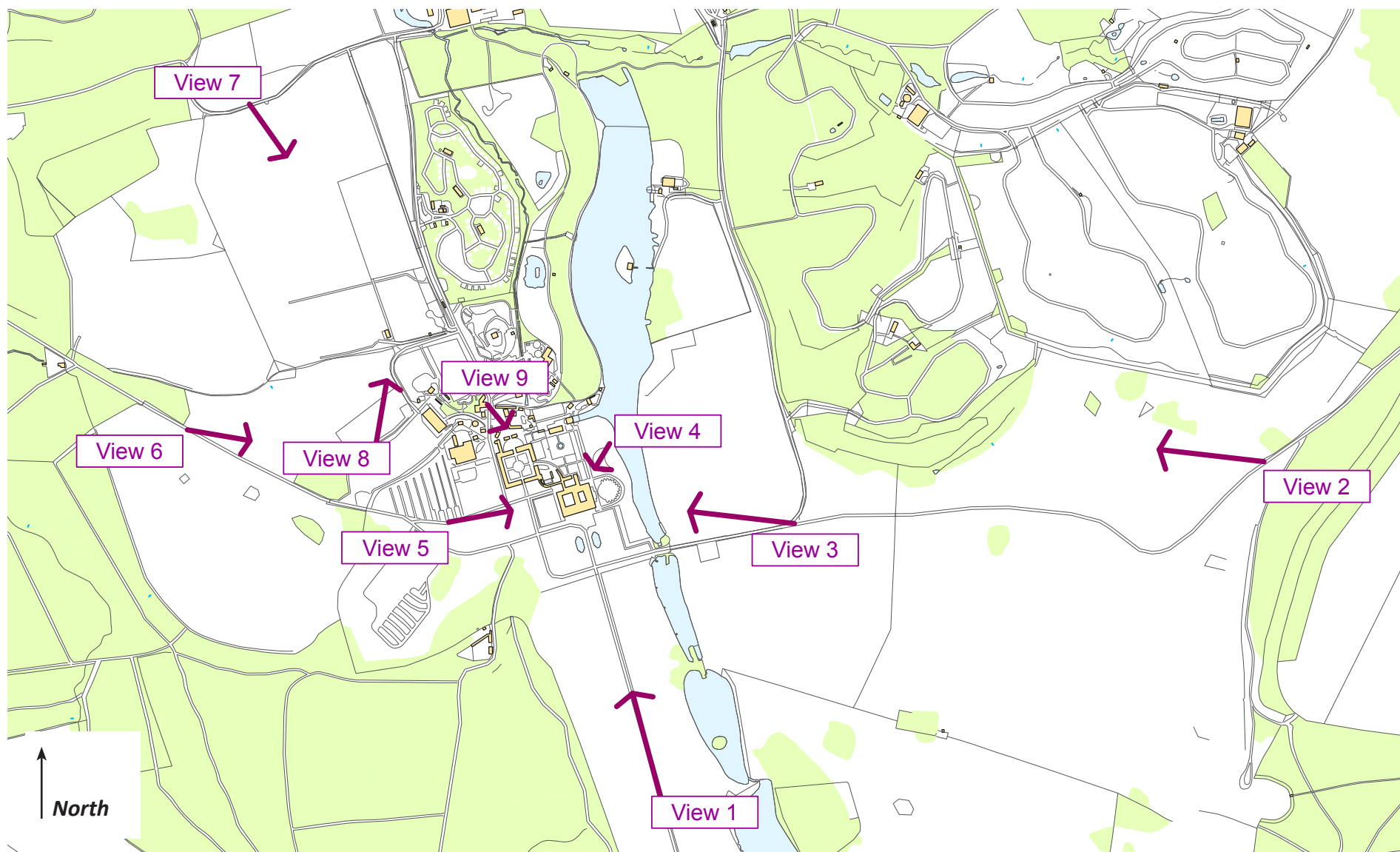


Fig. 14: Viewpoint locations



View 1: View from Horningsham Drive by day



View 1: View from Horningsham Drive, early evening



View 2: View from Warminster Drive by day



View 2: View from Warminster Drive by night



View 3: View from Warminster Drive (day)



View 3: View from Warminster Drive (evening)



View 4: View of Longleat House from the North East.  
The former Sun and Moon mazes have been removed and lawns now restored between Longleat House & Half Mile Pond.



View 5: View to Longleat House from the West (day)



View 5: View to Longleat House from the West (evening)



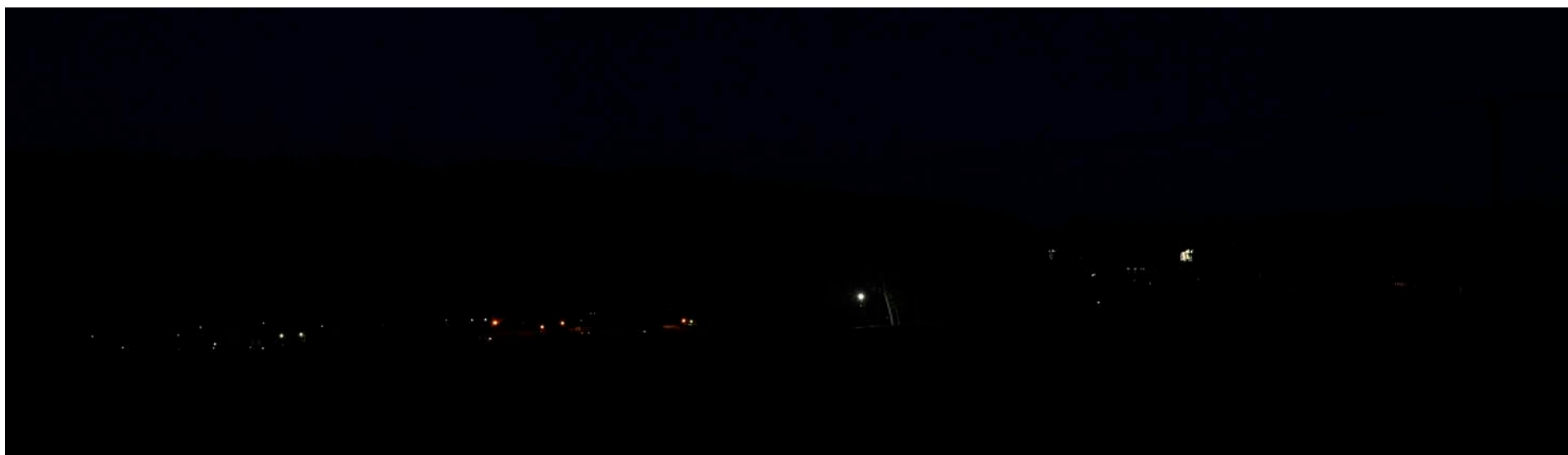
View 6: View from the West on Frome Drive (day)



View 6: View from the West on Frome Drive (evening)



View 7: View from the north (day)



View 7: View from the north (evening)



View 8: View over White Marshes ('Suretrack') to Black Coppice Meadow and Roddenbury Hill (left of photo)



View 9: View from the attractions area towards Longleat House and Stables