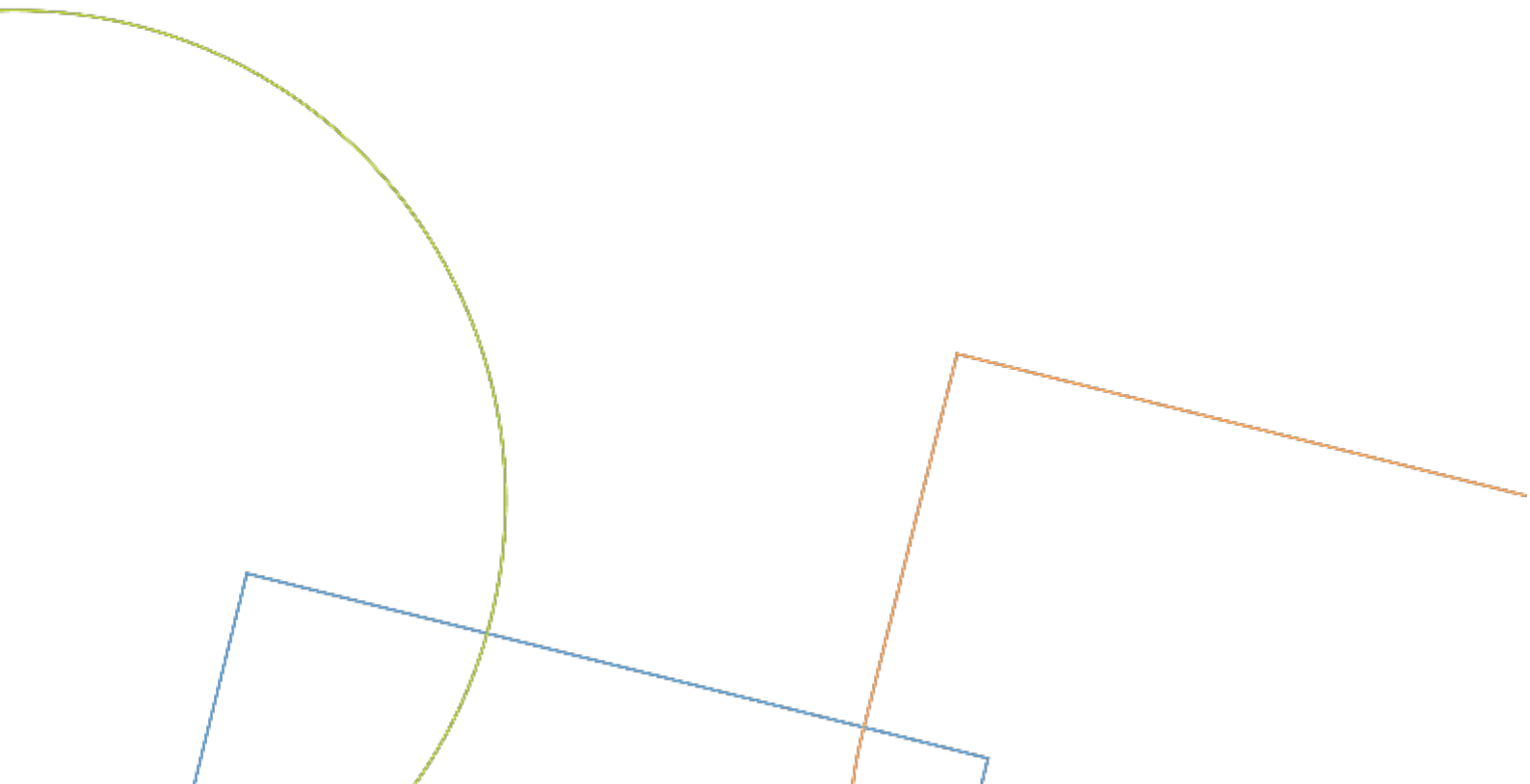




5686, Westfield Energy Conservation Park, Historic Environment Desk-based
Assessment



Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment

Westfield Energy Conservation Park

Lightrock Power

June 2025

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Document Prepared for: Lightrock Power

Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment:

5686 – Westfield Energy Conservation Park

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Revision: V2.0

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Non-Technical Summary

Lanpro Services Limited was commissioned by Lightrock Power to produce an historic environment desk-based assessment (HEDBA) to accompany the planning application for Westfield Energy Conservation Park which incorporates a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), co-located ground mounted solar farm, associated infrastructure, access, biodiversity enhancements and landscaping (the 'Proposed Development') on land south of A507 at Westfield Common (NGR 528965, 230398; Figure 1) ('the study site' or 'the Site'). The Site is located within the administrative boundary of North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC).

The assessment addresses the information requirements set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and provides the proportionate response sought by the NPPF. It draws together the available archaeological, historical, topographic and land-use information in order to clarify the heritage significance and archaeological potential of the study site.

The assessment has established that the Proposed Development would result in less than substantial harm, at the lower end of the scale, to the Site of Cumberlow Manor House Scheduled Monument and to the Cromer Windmill.

There is potential for below-ground archaeological remains from the prehistoric, Roman, medieval, and post-medieval periods to be present within the study site. These include anomalies that are likely to represent settlement evidence, including enclosures, field systems and ring-ditches potentially dating to the Iron Age and/or Roman periods. These features are located in proximity to the conjectured line of the Baldock to Braughing Roman Road, as well as an area where a Late Bronze Age hoard and Roman finds have been recorded, further suggesting an increased likelihood of archaeological survival.

For the medieval period, the highest potential is in the north-west of the Site, where the medieval moated site is located, however, no development is proposed within this area of the Site and the geophysical survey has not found evidence to suggest any such remains are present. In the north-east of the Site, there is potential that remains associated with the Cumberlow Manor House and its associated earthworks, although located outside the Site boundary, may extend into the Site. These areas are likely to contain remains related to manorial occupation, estate management, and agricultural activity. However, post-medieval and modern ploughing activities may have disturbed any such remains. Geophysical survey has not shown evidence of any likely remains associated with the asset and any such remains would likely have been truncated by the construction of the A507.

If prehistoric or Roman remains are present, they could provide valuable insights into prehistoric and Roman activity but are likely to be of no more than local significance. However, if the remains are residual, their significance would be negligible, depending on their nature. Any medieval, post-medieval, or modern agricultural remains would likely be of low or local significance, valued for their evidential contribution to understanding the historic landscape and agricultural character of the study site.

If remains associated with Cumberlow Manor House extend into the north-east of the study site, they could hold local or regional significance, depending on their nature and extent.

The hedgerows and boundary features along the western boundary of the study site are of historical significance, offering insights into past land use and division. Given their designation as 'important' under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 and their evident antiquity, these have been retained and afforded a substantial buffer as part of the Proposed Development.

1 Introduction

- 1..1 This HEDBA has been prepared by Lanpro Services Limited on behalf of Lightrock Power to accompany the planning application for Westfield Energy Conservation Park which incorporates a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), co-located ground mounted solar farm, associated infrastructure, access, biodiversity enhancements and landscaping (the 'Proposed Development') on land south of A507 at Westfield Common (NGR 528965, 230398) ('the study site' or 'the Site').
- 1..2 This document provides an assessment of the potential for the survival of archaeological remains within the study site and assesses the potential impacts that the Proposed Development could have on these and other heritage assets in the vicinity.
- 1..3 The assessment has been undertaken to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework's Section 16: 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' (NPPF 2023) and is in line with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) guidelines Standard and guidance *for historic environment desk-based assessment* (CIfA 2020).

2 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

- 2..1 In considering any planning application for development, the local planning authority will be guided by current legislation, the policy framework set by government planning policy, by current Local Plan policy and by other material considerations.

Current Legislation

- 2..1 The applicable legislative framework for this HEDBA relates to the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (AMAAA) 1979.
- 2..2 The applicable legislative framework is summarised as follows:
- Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (AMAAA) 1979;
 - Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (P(LBCA)) Act 1990.
- 2..3 The AMAAA largely concerns to Scheduled Monuments (SMs) and designated archaeological areas, detailing in particular what can and cannot be undertaken on archaeological grounds.
- 2..4 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the 1990 Act) provides for the protection of listed buildings and Conservation Areas and is largely expressed in the planning process through policies in regional and local planning guidance, as outlined below. This act is the primary legislative instrument addressing the treatment of listed buildings and Conservation Areas through the planning process.
- 2..5 Section 66 of the 1990 Act states that ‘...in considering whether to grant planning permission 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..6 Section 72 then adds that ‘...with respect to any buildings or other land in a Conservation Area, of any powers under any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’.
- 2..7 As far as Section 72 is concerned, it has previously been established by the Courts that development which does not detract from the character or appearance of a Conservation Area is deemed to be in accordance with the legislation. In other words, there is no statutory requirement to actively ‘enhance’.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2..1 Section 16 of the NPPF (December 2024), entitled ‘Conserving and enhancing the historic environment’ provides guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the conservation and investigation of heritage assets.
- 2..2 Overall, the objectives of Section 16 of the NPPF can be summarised as seeking the:
- Delivery of sustainable development
 - Understanding the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits brought by the conservation of the historic environment, and

- Conservation of England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance
- 2..3 Section 16 of the NPPF recognises that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. Paragraph 207 states that planning decisions should be based on the significance of the heritage asset (and any contribution made by its setting), and that 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 upon their significance'*. This is supported by paragraph 208 which states that LPAs should take this into account when considering applications.
- 2..4 Paragraphs 212-215 consider the impact of development proposals upon the significance of designated heritage assets. Paragraph 212 states that where a development is proposed that would affect 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 this weight should be)'*. Paragraph 215 emphasises 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 scheme, bearing in mind the great weight highlighted in Paragraph 212.*
- 2..5 Heritage Assets are defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as: *'a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)'*.
- 2..6 Annex 2 also defines 'Archaeological Interest' as a heritage asset which *'holds or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point'*. Heritage Assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.
- 2..7 A Designated Heritage Asset comprises a *'World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.'*
- 2..8 In short, government policy provides a framework which:
- Protects nationally important designated Heritage Assets (which include World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings, Protected Wreck Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields or Conservation Areas),
 - Protects the settings of such designations,
 - In appropriate circumstances seeks adequate information (from desk-based assessment and field evaluation where necessary) to enable informed decisions,
 - Provides for the excavation and investigation of sites not significant enough to merit in situ preservation.

Planning Practice Guidance

- 2..1 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG 2019) is a web-based resource which is to be used in conjunction with the NPPF. It is aimed at planning professionals and prescribes best practice within the planning sector. The relevant section is entitled 'Conserving and enhancing the

historic environment’. The guidance given in this section sets out the best practice to applying government policy in the NPPF. It provides an interpretation for each of the interests assigned to heritage assets in understanding significance: archaeological, architectural and artistic, and historic (Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 18a-006-20190723).

Local Planning Policy

2..1 The relevant Local Plan framework is provided by North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031, adopted in November 2022. The following objectives and policies are relevant to the historic environment:

Policy SP13: Historic environment

The Council will balance the need for growth with the proper protection and enhancement of the historic environment. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight will be given to the asset’s conservation and the management of its setting. We will pursue a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment through:

- Maintaining a strong presumption in favour of the retention, preservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their setting according to their significance; b
- Identifying sites on the national register of Heritage at Risk or on the Council’s ‘At Risk’ register;
- Periodic reviews of Conservation Areas and other locally designated assets; and
- Publication of detailed guidance.

Policy HE1: Designated heritage assets

Planning applications relating to Designated heritage Assets or their setting shall be accompanied by a Heritage Assessment/Justification Statement that:

- Assesses the significance of heritage assets, including their setting;
- Justifies and details the impacts of any proposal upon the significance of the designated heritage asset(s); and
- Informs any necessary measures to minimise or mitigate against any identified harms.
- Planning permission for development proposals affecting Designated Heritage Assets or their setting will be granted where they (as applicable):
 - a. Enable the heritage asset to be used in a manner that secures its conservation and preserves its significance;
 - b. Incorporate a palette of materials that make a positive contribution to local character or distinctiveness, where it is appropriate and justified; and
 - c. Will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, and this harm is outweighed by the public benefits of the development, including securing the asset’s optimum viable use.

Where substantial harm to, or loss of significance, of a designated heritage asset is proposed the Council shall refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is necessary to deliver considerable public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss.

Policy HE2: Heritage at risk

Planning permission will be granted for proposals that seek to conserve or provide new uses for designated heritage assets identified on the national register, or the Council's 'At Risk' register maintained by the Council, that are justified and appropriate to the significance of the asset to return a heritage asset to beneficial use.

Proposals that harm the significance of heritage assets included on national and local registers will be resisted unless the need for, and the benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh that harm, taking account of the asset's significance and importance, and all feasible solutions to avoid and mitigate that harm have been fully assessed.

Policy HE3: Non-designated heritage assets

Permission for a proposal that would result in harm to, or the loss of, a non-designated heritage asset will only be granted provided that a balanced judgement has been made that assesses the scale of harm to, or loss of significance of the non-designated asset and, where the proposal results in the loss of a non-designated heritage asset:

- a) The replacement building contributes to preserving the local character and distinctiveness of the area; and
- b) Where the asset is located in a conservation area a continuous contract for the demolition and redevelopment of the site has been secured, unless there are justifiable grounds for not developing the site.

Policy HE4: Archaeology

Permission for development proposals affecting heritage assets with archaeological interest will be granted provided that:

- a) Developers submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where justified, an archaeological field evaluation.
- b) It is demonstrated how archaeological remains will be preserved and incorporated into the layout of that development, if in situ preservation of important archaeological remains is considered preferable; and
- c) Where the loss of the whole or a material part of important archaeological remains is justified, appropriate conditions are applied to ensure that the archaeological recording, reporting, publication and archiving of the results of such archaeological work is undertaken before it is damaged or lost.

Where archaeological sites have been assessed to meet the criteria for inclusion on adopted registers or maps of locally important heritage assets these shall be treated in the same way as archaeology areas and areas of archaeological significance.

Areas of as yet, unknown archaeology may be identified during research, or through the planning or plan making process. These sites or areas should be treated in the same way as archaeology areas and areas of archaeological significance.

Professional Guidance

- 2..1 The ClfA Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment (2020) provides guidelines and recommendations for best practice in undertaking archaeological desk-based research and assessment.
- 2..2 Guidance on the implementation and interpretation of historic environment policy has been provided by the Historic England publications Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment (GPA2; Historic England 2015) and the Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition): The Setting of Heritage Assets (GPA3; Historic England 2017).
- 2..3 Historic England's GPA2 outlines a seven-stage process for the assembly and analysis of relevant information relating to heritage assets potentially affected by a proposed development:
- Understand the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits brought by the conservation of the historic environment,
 - Understand the significance of the affected assets,
 - Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance,
 - Avoid, minimise and mitigate impact in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF,
 - Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance,
 - Justify any harmful impacts in terms of the sustainable development objective of conserving significance and the need for change, and
 - Offset negative impacts on aspects of significance by enhancing others through recording, disseminating and archiving archaeological and historical interest of the important elements of the heritage assets affected.
- 2..4 In order to understand the nature, extent and level of significance GPA2 advocates considering the four types of heritage value an asset may hold, as identified in *Conservation Principles* (English Heritage 2008): *aesthetic*, *communal*, *historic* and *evidential*. However, NPPF (December 2024) has since provided a definition of significance dependant on the following four interests: archaeological, architectural and artistic, or historic. The following assessment of significance results from a combination of any, some or all of these values and interests.
- 2..5 Historic England's GPA3 recognises that whilst setting is not a heritage asset, 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' (para. 4). Setting is described as being distinct to curtilage, character and context. This guidance also notes that the contribution of setting to the significance of a heritage asset is often expressed by reference to views, although the importance of setting lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset, and this can be influenced by a number of other factors.

- 2..6 The Historic England advice note, Statement of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets. Historic England Advice Note 12 (HEAN 12; Historic England 2019), brings together all of the above guidance in an analysis of an appropriate approach for applicants for heritage and other consents in providing an understanding of the significance of heritage assets in line with NPPF. It emphasises the level of detail required in support of both planning and listed building consent applications, which should be no more than is necessary, i.e. proportionate to the significance of the heritage asset affected, to reach an informed decision.

3 Methodology

Information Sources

- 3..1 A gazetteer of all records held on the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and the Historic England National Heritage List for England (NHLE) for within a 1km search area is provided in Appendix 1 and their locations illustrated on Figure 1. A 1km buffer from the site was established as a baseline because it was considered to be proportionate in scale for the assessment of effects on surrounding heritage assets and archaeology.
- 3..2 The holdings of the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies together with on-line repositories for historical maps, plans and relevant documentary sources were consulted in accordance with guidelines laid down by the ClfA (2020).
- 3..3 A range of published and unpublished material has been consulted, including the East of England Regional Research Framework (EERRF, 2024).

Pre-application engagement

- 3..1 In response to the local planning authority's pre-application advice, engagement with Historic England (HE) was undertaken by Lanpro, ahead of submission, to provide a project update and establish initial contact.
- 3..2 An email was sent to HE on the 30th June, in the week prior to submission, outlining the nature of the proposals, anticipated submission timescales, and including a red line boundary plan. The engagement allows for early awareness of the project and will help minimise the impact on the setting of the assets in the vicinity of the site by facilitating informed responses during the statutory consultation period.
- 3..3 Correspondence with HE will be ongoing, should they wish to comment further during the statutory consultation period.

Site Visit

- 3..1 A site visit was undertaken on 4th December 2024, in clear and dry conditions, to provide an assessment of the character of the study site and appraise the potential impact of the Proposed Development on any archaeological or heritage assets (Plates 1-29).

Assessment Criteria

Significance

- 3..1 NPPF defines significance as:
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.
- 3..2 Historic England's Conservation Principles (previously English Heritage, 2008) identified four high level values: evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal. NPPF (December 2024) defines significance in the planning context as resulting from the heritage interest of an asset determined by the following:

- **Archaeological Interest:** the potential of an asset to yield evidence of past human activity that could be revealed through future investigation. Archaeological interest includes above-ground structures, as well as earthworks and buried or submerged remains.
- **Architectural and Artistic Interest:** derives from a contemporary appreciation of an asset's aesthetics. Architectural interest is an interest in design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures. Artistic interest can include the use, representation or influence of historic places or buildings in artwork. It can also include the skill and emotional impact of works of art that are part of heritage assets or assets in their own right.
- **Historic Interest:** the way in which an asset can illustrate the story of past events, people and aspects of life (illustrative value, or interest). It can be said to hold communal value when associated with the identity of a community.

- 3..3 These values or interests encompass the criteria that Historic England are obliged to consider when statutorily designating heritage assets.
- 3..4 There are no single defining criteria that dictates the overall asset significance; each asset has to be evaluated against the range of criteria listed above on a case-by-case basis. These values are not intended to be restrictive but are identified in order to help establish a method for thinking systematically and consistently about the heritage values that can be ascribed to a place and contribute to a heritage asset's significance.
- 3..5 Assessment of significance has been undertaken in accordance with the Historic England's Statement of Heritage Significance. Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets (2019).
- 3..6 The relative contribution of the heritage values to the significance of the heritage asset(s) are graded as either high, medium, low, neutral/negligible (informed by ICOMOS (2011) and Historic England guidance) and illustrated in Table 2, below.

Table 1: Significance of a heritage asset

Heritage significance	Description
Very High	World Heritage Sites (WHS)
High	Scheduled Monuments (SM), Grade I and II* Listed Buildings, Grade I and II* Registered Historic Parks and Gardens
Medium	Grade II Listed Buildings Grade II Registered Historic Parks and Gardens Conservation Areas
Low	Locally Listed Buildings Non-designated heritage assets

Negligible/nil	Heritage assets with very little or no surviving research value
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Setting

3..7 The NPPF defines the setting of a heritage asset as:

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..8 Historic England's GPA3, *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2017), was used to inform the methodology for this assessment. The guidance recommends that a systematic and staged '5-step process' to assessment should be adopted, to which this HEDBA has adopted steps i) to iv):

- i. *identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected,*
- ii. *assess the degree to which these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated,*
- iii. *assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance or on the ability to appreciate it,*
- iv. *explore the way to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm,*
- v. *make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.*

3..9 The production of this assessment has taken into account the physical and sensory surroundings of the asset, in order to understand the contribution 'setting' makes to the heritage significance of the asset(s). This has included topography and intervening development and vegetation. It also considers how the asset is currently experienced and understood through its setting, in particular views to and from the asset and the site, along with key views, and the extent to which setting may have already been compromised.

Definition of Harm

3..10 Current guidance by Historic England is that 'change' does not equate to 'harm'. The NPPF and its accompanying PPG effectively distinguish between two degrees of harm to heritage assets – substantial and less than substantial (paragraphs 201 and 202).

3..11 In determining the effects of the proposed scheme this assessment is cognisant of case law. In particular, that for Flag Station, Mansel Lacy, Herefordshire [22/09/2015] Case Number EWHC 2688, wherein it emphasised the primacy of the 1990 Planning Act and the fact that it is up to the decision makers in the planning system to 'have special regard to the desirability of preserving the [listed] building or its setting'. HH Judge David Cooke stated, in regards to an impact on the setting of a listed building, (Court of Appeal (PALMER and HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL & ANR) in 2016 (Case No: C1/2015/3383) para.34):

It is still plainly the case that it is for the decision taker to assess the nature and degree of harm caused, and in the case of harm to setting rather than directly to a listed building itself, the degree to which the impact on the setting affects the reasons why it is listed.

3..12 The judgment was agreed by Lord Justice Lewison at the Court of Appeal, who stated that:

It is also clear as a matter both of law and planning policy that harm (if it exists) is to be measured against both the scale of the harm and the significance of the heritage asset. Although the statutory duty requires special regard to be paid to the desirability of not harming the setting of a listed building, that cannot mean that any harm, however minor, would necessarily require planning permission to be refused.

4 Site Description

- 4..1 The study site is to the immediate south of the A507 Clothall Road, to the west of Cumberlow Green and north of Cromer (centred at NGR 528965, 230398; Figure 1). The study site totals c.188ha in area and comprises 14 agricultural fields (Plates 1-29).
- 4..2 The study site is bounded by the A507 Clothall Road to the north, Cromer Heath Road to the east, and agricultural fields to the south and west. A brook runs through the centre of the Site, flowing from the north-western corner to the southern extent. The topography of the Site is varied, with elevations ranging from 138m OD in the west to 123m OD in the east, and a pronounced dip to 106m OD at the central brook. Additionally, there is a gradual descent from 128m OD in the north to 104m OD in the south.
- 4..3 The bedrock geology of the study site is recorded as comprising chalk of various formations; Chalk Rock Member, Holywell nodular chalk formation and new pit chalk formation (undifferentiated) and Lewes nodular chalk formation and seafood chalk formation (undifferentiated) (BGS 2025).
- 4..4 Overlying this are layers of superficial deposits, including various formations of sand and gravel: glaciofluvial deposits, mid Pleistocene - sand and gravel, clay-with-flints formation - clay, silt, sand and gravel, and Lowestoft formation – diamicton. Within the area of the brook, there are superficial deposits of head - clay, silt, sand and gravel.

5 Archaeological and Historical Background

Introduction

- 5..1 This section reviews existing archaeological evidence for the study site and the archaeological and historical background of the surrounding area, based on a consideration of evidence in the Hertfordshire HER and the NHLE. It is not the purpose of this document to create a detailed archaeological or historical narrative of the area, but to provide an assessment of the study site's historical development and archaeological potential in accordance with the NPPF.

Designated Heritage Assets

- 5..1 There are no designated heritage assets within the study site. However, the Site of Cumberlow Manor House Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1003551) lies adjacent to the north-eastern boundary of the study site, beyond the A507.
- 5..2 Two additional Scheduled Monuments are located within the 1km study area:
- The Lammas Field Roman Villa (NHLE 1015489), 610m to the north-west.
 - The Enclosure and Earthworks southeast of Clothallbury House (NHLE 1003540), 745m to the north.
- 5..3 Within the 1km study area, there are two Grade II* listed buildings and 25 Grade II listed buildings. The Grade II* listed Cromer Windmill (NHLE 1101453), located 1km to the south of the study site, is considered sensitive to the proposals and will be further assessed.
- 5..4 The Grade II listed Hooks Green Cottage (NHLE 1102700) lies 940m to the north-west of the study site. To the south, the closest asset is the Grade II listed Pryors (NHLE 1347347), located 610m away. Additionally, four more Grade II listed buildings are situated beyond 750m to the south of the Site:
- North Stable at Manor Farm (NHLE 1174331)
 - South Stable at Manor Farm (NHLE 1347929)
 - Barn at Church Farm (NHLE 1102703)
 - Church Farmhouse (NHLE 1308151)
- 5..5 The Grade II listed Birck Barn at Lodge Farm (NHLE 1101291) lies 850m to the south-east. Views of the study site are shielded by intervening vegetation (Plate 16 and 17), and the setting of the asset has been altered by the presence of Cottered Airfield, which lies between the listed building and the study site.
- 5..6 The Grade II* listed Church of St Mary (NHLE 1101295) is situated 1.6km south-east of the study site, outside the immediate search area. While the church is located on a high point within Cottered and can be seen from certain points within the study site (Plate 16 and 17), the distance, combined with intervening topography, modern development, and vegetation, ensures that the Proposed Development will have no impact on its significance. Additionally, there are no known direct historical associations between the church and the study site.

- 5..7 Further details of these designated heritage assets can be found in the gazetteer in Appendix 1 and are illustrated on Figure 1.

Non-designated Heritage Assets

- 5..1 There are four HER records located within the study site, comprising three findspots; a late Bronze Age hoard (MHT581) within the east, a 1st century brooch (MHT28077) and a Roman coin (MHT28083) within the centre of the study site. The line of the Roman Road from north of Baldock to Braughing (MHT4190) runs through the study site from north-west to south-east. The medieval moated site (MHT4377) is located within woodland at the north-western extent of the area but lies outside the Site boundary.
- 5..2 The HER records 48 'monument' records within the wider 1km search area. The HER data included 372 Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) records within the 1km search area, of which two were located within the study site: the 1st century brooch (MHT28077) and a Roman coin (MHT28083). Details of all HER records are provided in Appendix 1, with the locations of these depicted on Figure 2 and 3.

Previous Archaeological Investigations

- 5..1 There are 37 HER 'event' records located within the 1km search area, five relate to intrusive archaeological investigations (e.g., excavation, evaluation and watching brief), two relate to non-intrusive surveys (e.g., building recording and geophysical survey) and the remaining 30 records relate to aerial photographs of enclosures and cropmarks.
- 5..2 Details of these archaeological events can be found in the gazetteer in Appendix 1 and its location is illustrated on Figure 4.

Historic Landscape Characterisation

- 5..1 The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) for Hertfordshire was completed in 2000 as part of a national initiative by Historic England (formerly English Heritage) to evaluate and classify the landscape character of the county, providing guidance for future development and conservation efforts. There are 106 individual HLC units mapped within the 1km search area, representing 9 of the 11 broad character types identified across Hertfordshire (*Woodland; Field Patterns (Enclosed Fields); Parks and Gardens; Settlement; Industrial; Recreational; Water Features; Transport; Military; and Unenclosed Land*).
- 5..2 There are 13 individual HLC units within, or partially within, the study site, which fall within the *Woodland, Enclosed Fields (Field Patterns)*, and *Parks and Gardens* broad HLC types. Of the *Woodland* broad HLC type, four units are classified as *Ancient Woodland* and one as an *18th-20th Century Woodland Plantation*. Of the *Enclosed Fields (Field Patterns)* broad type, three units are *20th Century Enclosure*, three units are *Irregular Enclosure*, and one is *Piecemeal Enclosure by Agreement*. Of the *Parks and Gardens* broad type, there is one unit classified as *Leisure/Recreation*.

LiDAR

- 5..1 The Environment Agency's National LiDAR Programme data at 1m resolution was downloaded from the Defra Survey Data Download webpage and processed using GIS software (Figure 12). Earthworks and compressions adjacent to the north eastern boundary of the study site

correspond with the HER data and site of Cumberlow Manor House (MHT2359; NHLE 1003551) and further earthworks possibly associated with the manor (MHT6342).

- 5..2 Within the study site, earthwork depressions resulting from past agricultural activity are visible. The earthwork remains of the medieval moated site at Rydals Wood (MHT4377) are also visible; however, these remains lie within woodland located outside the Site boundary.

Geophysical Survey

- 5..1 An archaeological geophysical (magnetometry) survey was undertaken across the study site in December 2024 and March 2025. The geophysical survey detected magnetic anomalies of agricultural origin across the study site, likely to be associated with historic agriculture activity. Modern agricultural trends, including ploughing and field drains, were also present.
- 5..2 Anomalies of geological origin were recorded across the study site with strong responses within the eastern parcel associated with geological changes in the substrata. It is possible that the anomalies may also correspond to quarrying/extraction pits, as historic mapping depicted old gravel and chalk pits within the study site and surrounding area.
- 5..3 In the south of Field 10, anomalies of likely archaeological origin were detected, including a distinct rectangular enclosure extending beyond the site boundary and two sub-rectangular or slightly D-shaped enclosures near additional linear and curvilinear features. A linear anomaly extends eastwards into Field 6, where further rectilinear and sub-rectangular anomalies of possible enclosures were identified.
- 5..4 An anomaly, likely representing a ring ditch, has been identified in Field 9. This corresponds with a later Bronze Age hoard recorded on the HER (MHT581). Two further possible ring ditches have been identified in Fields 14 and 15. The example in Field 14 appears as a faint anomaly, while the ring ditch in Field 15 is more pronounced and lies to the west of an irregularly shaped enclosure and field system (ASWYAS, 2025).
- 5..5 Anomalies of uncertain origin within Fields 7 and 9 may be of some archaeological interest as they appear to form small enclosures and responses located near the route of the Roman road in Field 9 may suggest parts of enclosures or field systems. Within Field 12, a number of linear anomalies have been recorded as well as a circular response, which could be a ring ditch.

Prehistoric and Roman Periods (c. 9500 BC – c. AD 410)

- 5..1 There are four HER records located within the study site dating to the prehistoric and Roman periods. These comprise three findspots: a Late Bronze Age hoard (MHT581) within Field 9, a 1st-century brooch (MHT28077) and a Roman coin (MHT28083) within Field 10, as well as the line of the Roman Road from north of Baldock to Braughing (MHT4190) which travels from north-west to south-east through the study site. The geophysical survey identified anomalies, such as ring ditches and possible enclosures or field systems, near these findspots, suggesting potential prehistoric or Roman origins (AWAYAS, 2025).
- 5..2 Of the 372 PAS records in the HER within the 1km search area, seven are dated to the prehistoric period and 282 to the Roman period. The prehistoric finds were all located between 150-250m to the south-west of the south-eastern extent of the study site. These include prehistoric flint

flakes (MHT26042), an Iron Age brooch (MHT27659), two Neolithic flints (MHT20593, MHT26043), and three Iron Age coins (MHT23625, MHT19496, MHT19394).

- 5..3 Of the 282 Roman remains, all but three are located to the south of the study site. These remains include 246 Roman coins, 22 brooches, four bracelets, two copper nail cleaners, two copper locks, two iron and lead steel weights, one glass bottle fragment, one copper buckle, one box flue tile, and one copper needle.
- 5..4 There are four 'monument' records held by the HER relating to prehistoric activity within the 1km search area. These records assigned a 'Neolithic to Bronze Age' date, include a cropmark of a ring ditch visible on aerial photography 375m to the north of the study site (MHT6345; EHT2591), the ploughed-out remains of a round barrow 400m to the west (MHT17040), and a soilmark of a ring ditch 470m to the east (MHT17687). The final record pertains to a 'Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age' occupation and burial site (MHT9778), discovered during the evaluation of Kingswoodbury Golf Course (EHT4324), 200m to the north of the study site.
- 5..5 There are seven 'monument' records relating to Roman activity within the 1km search area. These include four find spots: Roman building materials (MHT1588), 660m to the north-west; Romano-British pottery (MHT1799), 670m to the south-west; a Roman coin (MHT4378), 800m to the west; and Roman coins (MHT1490), 330m to the east. A Roman-British cremation and occupation site (MHT7361) is located 360m to the north, and a Late Iron Age to Roman settlement (MHT7360) is located 200m to the north.
- 5..6 In addition, there are 14 records which have been assigned an unknown date, some of which may have a prehistoric or Roman origin as they relate to ditches and enclosures, features typical of these periods.
- 5..7 Based on the results of the geophysical survey and the wider archaeological context, there is considered to be a high potential for identifying prehistoric and Roman archaeological deposits within the study site. A Late Bronze Age hoard (MHT581), found in Field 9, corresponds with a circular anomaly identified in the geophysical survey, indicating potential prehistoric activity. In Field 10, a 1st-century brooch (MHT28077) and a Roman coin (MHT28083) were discovered near the route of the Roman road from Baldock to Braughing (MHT4190) and in close proximity to geophysical anomalies interpreted as possible enclosures or field systems. These findings suggest that the central part of the site, particularly in the vicinity of the Roman road, may have been an area of Roman activity, possibly associated with trade, settlement, or other forms of occupation.
- 5..8 The remains within the study site may indicate areas of prehistoric or Roman settlement activity. Given the site's proximity to the Roman road, there is also potential for associated features such as roadside settlements, villas, or infrastructure related to movement and trade, which may survive as buried remains.
- 5..9 The Site has been primarily used for agriculture since at least the post-medieval period, which may have led to the disturbance or degradation of earlier remains. However, there is still a possibility that prehistoric or Roman deposits, particularly those in more undisturbed areas or within deeper stratigraphic layers, could have survived. This suggests that there is higher

archaeological potential within both the eastern and central parts of the study site, where prehistoric and Roman finds have been identified.

Medieval Period (c. AD 410– c. 1540)

- 5..1 There is one 'monument' record dating to the medieval period adjacent to Fields 11 and 12, a moated site at Rydals Wood (MHT4377), which is also identified in the LiDAR data (Figure 12). Adjacent to the western boundary of the study site there is also a trackway and parish boundary (MHT4687). The trackway likely predates the establishment of the parish boundary (in the 12th century), which appears to have followed its course. The HER notes that the hedges and boundary banks along the trackway are evidently ancient.
- 5..2 There are 54 PAS records dated to the medieval period within the 1km search area. These remains include 17 silver pennies, 16 metal buckles, four copper alloy brooches, two keys, a seal, a vessel, three harness pendants, a lead weight, a scabbard chape, two purse frames, a spoon, a thimble, a button and a lead pin.
- 5..3 There are two 'monument' records dating to the early medieval period within the study site which relate to place names. Swamstey Common (MHT11822) derives from the Old English 'cwealm' (death, slaughter, pestilence) and 'stow', place; 'cwealmstow' is a place of execution. The place name Cumberlow (MHT11191) is a rare and probably early place name combining a Celtic element, 'Cumbre' meaning 'Welsh or British', and the Old English 'low' from 'hlaw', meaning a burial mound or hill. The place name can therefore be translated as 'burial mound of the Welsh' and was probably coined by Anglo-Saxon settlers in the 6th to 8th centuries.
- 5..4 Adjacent to the east boundary of the study site lies the site of Cumberlow Manor House (MHT2359; NHLE 1003551) and earthworks possible part of the manorial site of Cumberlow Green (MHT6342). The earthworks and cropmarks were seen on aerial photographs (EHT1645, EHT1646, EHT2098, EHT2099) and LiDAR data also highlighted the earthworks (Figure 12).
- 5..5 The descent of the manor of Cumberlow Green is intertwined with the manor of Broadfield (VCH, Rushden, 265–270). Initially held by Walter de Mauny in 1346 and later known as Maunseys, it passed through various owners, until it was separated from the manor of Broadfield in 1486. William Goodman's son John held the manor by 1601, after which it descended with the manor of Rushden (VCH, Rushden, 265–270). Located in the southwest of the parish, Cumberlow Green extended into Clothall, which was a settlement in Domesday Book, in the hundred of Odsey and had a recorded population of 27 households in 1086, putting it in the largest 40% of settlements (Williams and Martin, 2003).
- 5..6 There are a further six 'monument' records within the 1km search area. A medieval deer park (MHT17467) lies 880m to the west of the study site and documentary evidence of a shrunken medieval village at Luffenhall (MHT1811) lies 900m to the south. The site of the hospital of Mary Magdalene (MHT4064), a 13th century leper hospital, lies 315m to the west of the study site and the approximate site of St Pauls Chapel (MHT13118) lies 440m to the south.
- 5..7 Three of the records relate to medieval moated manorial sites within the search area. A moated site at Kingswoodbury (MHT1053) lies 490m to the north, manorial earthworks and fishponds were seen on aerial photos (MHT1891, EHT1662), 815m to the north-west and a medieval moat,

possibly the site of a 16th century inn called the Tabard (MHT1958) lies 320m to the north-west of the study site.

- 5..8 The study site is likely to have formed part of the agricultural hinterland during the medieval period, supporting nearby settlements such as Cumberlow Green and Clothall. However, the site of a moated manor adjacent to the study site and two place names, suggest medieval activity of potential significance. Additionally, the proximity of Cumberlow Manor House and associated earthworks suggests the study site may have been influenced by manorial activity.
- 5..9 The highest potential for surviving medieval remains is concentrated around the area of the moated manor site within the north-west, although this lies outside the study site and no development is proposed in its vicinity. In the north-east of the study site, although Cumberlow Manor House is also located adjacent to the Site boundary, the results of the geophysical survey do not indicate that associated remains extend into the Site. These locations are particularly significant because they are likely to reflect the core of medieval activity, possibly related to the manorial or agricultural use of the land. While the broader landscape is characterised by agricultural use, the potential for remains associated with these features in these specific areas is considered moderate to high.
- 5..10 Any remains would likely provide valuable insights into the medieval landscape, particularly in relation to manorial or agricultural activity. However, the significance of remains outside these areas is expected to be of limited, unless directly associated with the known manorial or settlement features.
- 5..11 Also of note is the parish boundary adjacent to the western boundary of the study site. The HER notes that the hedges and boundary banks along the boundary are evidently ancient, and as such, may be considered important under hedgerow regulations. The active preservation of these boundary features as part of the Proposed Development offers potential for understanding the evolution of land division and historical use of the landscape.

Post-Medieval and Modern Periods (c. 1540-present)

- 5..1 There are no HER records within the study site dated to the post-medieval or modern periods.
- 5..2 Within the surrounding 1km search area, there are 24 PAS and 7 HER records for the post-medieval and modern periods. These are characterised by heritage assets relating to metal findspots or buildings of a well-defined extent that do not contribute to the understanding of the study site's archaeological potential. The understanding of settlement, land-use and the utilisation of the landscape is enhanced by cartographic and documentary sources which can give additional detail to data contained within the HER and, notably, to the study site.
- 5..3 The earliest map included in the assessment is the Tithe map of Clothall (Figure 5), which shows the study site as being formed by 51 fields and 8 parcels of woodland, to the south of Clothall Road and to the west of Cromer Heath Road. The accompanying apportionment indicates that one parcel is in use as pasture and the remaining 50 parcels are in use as arable fields.
- 5..4 The 1883 Ordnance Survey (OS) map (Figure 6) illustrates modifications to the field boundaries within the study site, which is now divided into 30 parcels, including two woodland areas

identified as Coldash Wood and Rydals Wood. Additionally, a small circle depicted within a northern parcel of the study site marks the location of an extraction pit or quarry.

- 5..5 The 1896 OS map (Figure 7) shows minimal changes within the study site, with further boundary loss reducing the site to 29 parcels. An old chalk pit is labelled within one of the northern parcels. The 1922 OS map (Figure 8) shows additional field division in the western part of the study site, to the south of the woodland and the study site is now formed of 32 parcels.
- 5..6 The 1951 OS map (Figure 9) shows no changes to the study site or surrounding area. The 1981 OS map (Figure 10) shows minimal changes, though further boundary loss has occurred, reducing the study site to 23 parcels.
- 5..7 The 1994 OS map (not reproduced) shows no changes to the study site. The aerial view of the study site (Figure 11) depicts its modern composition, now consisting of 14 agricultural fields and two areas of woodland.
- 5..8 Historic mapping indicates that the study site mainly continued to be in agricultural use during these periods but was also subject to quarrying within one of the northern parcels. Therefore, the potential for significant archaeological, non-agricultural, remains of post-medieval to modern date is considered to be low and any remains within in areas that have been quarried will have been removed.

6 Assessment of Significance

- 6..1 Paragraph 207 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should be based on the significance of the archaeological asset, and that the level of detail supplied by an applicant should be proportionate to the importance of the asset and should be no more than sufficient to review the potential impact of the proposal upon the significance of that asset.
- 6..2 It is recognised that not all parts of an archaeological asset will necessarily be of equal significance. In some cases, certain elements could accommodate change without affecting the significance of the asset. Change is only considered harmful if it erodes an asset's significance. Understanding the significance of any heritage assets affected and any contribution made by their setting (paragraph 207, NPPF 2024) is therefore fundamental to understanding the scope for and acceptability of change.

Designated Heritage Assets

- 6..1 The study site does not contain any designated heritage assets. Within the wider search area there are two designated heritage assets considered potentially sensitive to the proposals: the Grade II* Cromer Windmill (NHLE 1101453), located 1km to the south of the study site and the Site of Cumberlow Manor House Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1003551), adjacent to the north-eastern boundary of the study site. These have been taken forward for assessment due to their proximity, intervisibility and historical relationship with the study site. The other designated heritage assets that have been identified within the wider search area have been scoped out of further consideration as they are screened from the study site by intervening topography and vegetation. Their significance will remain unaffected by the Proposed Development.

Cromer Windmill

- 6..2 The listing states that the windmill is eighteenth century origin (potentially c1720), however the Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust state that a dendrochronological survey conducted in 1998 dates it from 1681. It was rebuilt in 1860 and functioned until 1923, had its body repaired in 1937/8 and the sails and fantail were restored in 1967-9. It was listed Grade II* on the 22nd February 1967 and is located 1km to the south of the study site.
- 6..3 The windmill has a wooden frame covered with horizontal white weatherboarding, including its ogee shaped cap. It is supported above an octagonal red brick roundhouse with felted roof. At the rear, there is an elaborately geared fantail with decorative blades, attached to a wide ladder-like structure that helps it turn to face the wind. The asset is located on the southern side of the B1037, with wooden railings on the property line.



Plate 1. View looking south of Cromer Windmill

Architectural and Historic Interest

- 6..4 Cromer Windmill derives much of its significance from its architectural interest as an intact windmill. It has been extended over multiple phases of construction and modification since c.1681 with subsequent alterations in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. While these have undermined aspects of its originality, the various additions present a fortuitous palimpsest, and the asset derives significance from the various architectural elements present within its form. These are best experienced from within the immediate setting of the asset and include the wooden frame covered with horizontal white weatherboarding, its octagonal red brick roundhouse and decorative blades. This architectural significance is enhanced by the aesthetic prominence of the asset across the rural landscape with the characteristic shape of the windmill visible in select long views southwards from the study site.
- 6..5 The asset also derives clear historic interest by forming an important part of Hertfordshire's agricultural history. It is Hertfordshire's only remaining post-mill. The windmill is illustrative of the area's industrial growth during the 17th century, driven by the expansion of agriculture.
- 6..6 Taken overall, the Grade II* listed asset is of high significance.

Contribution Made by Setting

- 6..7 Cromer Windmill sits between the small settlements of Cromer and Hare Street, to the immediate south of the B1037 and a small lane to the east. The windmill is set within an agricultural and residential landscape, and its immediate setting comprises an artificial mound that lies on the site acquired for the manorial windmill in 1222. The windmill is confined and enclosed by a wooden fence to north and by trees to south and west (Plate 1).
- 6..8 The wider setting of the Cromer Windmill, includes a series of visible electric pylons that run east-west across the open scenery, including across the study site (Plate 2). The windmill derives significance from the wider rural landscape it once served, and this setting contributes to its historical interest. However, the B1037 immediately to its north, although an historic route, negatively impacts its significance through noise and visual impacts from vehicle traffic. These noise and visual impacts are prominent within the setting of the asset and undermine the rural character of the asset and the way in which it is appreciated. While the electrical pylons are noticeable within the wider landscape, the asset otherwise maintains much of its rural setting. The asset derives significance from this rural setting.



Plate 2. View looking north-west from Cromer Windmill out towards the study site

Contribution Made by Site to Significance

- 6..9 There is no direct historical relationship between the study site and the asset. However, as an open agricultural area, the study site indirectly contributes towards the rural character of the Cromer Windmill and the fields may have produced grain which may have been processed at the mill. Therefore, the study site area indirectly contributes towards the asset as agricultural fields in a broad sense. Yet the study site is located a significant distance from the asset and there are large open agricultural fields between the asset and the study site on the other side of River Beane. Therefore, the conversion of these fields from agricultural use 1km from the asset does not significantly undermine the rural character of the asset. This remains intact where not already obscured by noise and visual impacts from vehicle traffic.

- 6..10 The study site shares some limited visual relationship with the asset. The study site covers a large area, and the windmill is only appreciable from specific viewpoints looking southwards (Plate 3 and 4). It is most prominent from the south and eastern extents of the study site, where the open landscape and the windmill's position on higher ground allow visibility, and particularly from the northern parts of the site which are up to 2km from the asset. However, from the northern extent, there is no clear way to appreciate the asset from along the A507 roadway where views to the asset are glancing between gaps in the hedgerow. Therefore, it is assessed that the study site makes a limited contribution to the overall significance of Cromer Windmill through its visual relationship and its contribution as agricultural green space. While the asset is partly visible in views south from the study site, these views do not contribute towards the significance of the asset in any meaningful way as the rural character of the asset is maintained by agricultural fields between the study site and the asset. Importantly, it does not erode the appreciation or principal significances of the asset as a windmill.



Plate 3. View looking south-east from the southern extent of the study site towards Cromer Windmill



Plate 4. View looking south-east from the eastern extent of the study site towards Cromer Windmill

Site of Cumberlow Manor House

- 6..11 The Site of Cumberlow Manor House Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1003551) lies adjacent to the north-eastern boundary of the study site (Plate 5), beyond the A507. The Scheduled Monument incorporates the low earthworks of a Medieval manor site, believed demolished in 1725, that comprises a rectangular enclosure 55m x 49m with bank c.0.6m high and ridge and furrow to the south and west.



Plate 5. View looking west of the Site of Cumberlow Manor House Scheduled Monument

Historic and Archaeological Interest

6..12 The Site of Cumberlow Manor House Scheduled Monument is of significant historic and archaeological interest, primarily as a surviving earthwork of a medieval manorial estate. Its archaeological value lies in the physical remains of the monument and the potential artefactual evidence it may yield, shedding light on the date, duration, and nature of the monument's use. Although undermined by the demolition of the manor house, the asset derives historical interest through its role as a former manorial centre, contributing to the social and political organisation of this area of Hertfordshire during the Medieval period.

6..13 Taken overall, the scheduled monument is of high significance.

Contribution Made by Setting

6..14 The scheduled monument is positioned on the northern side of the A507 Clothall Road, within Cumberlow Green. As the site of a former manor house, the asset derives significance from the surrounding rural landscape, which may have historical connections through land ownership. However, its setting has been undermined by the development and use of Cumberlow Farm and noise and visual impacts from Clothall Road. The asset is positioned on a raised plateau with expansive views south-west over the study site, where not obscured by vegetation, and the asset derives significance from this position (Plate 6).

6..15 The demolition of the asset has significantly reduced its ability to derive significance from its setting, which is further limited by the current condition of the remains, now surviving primarily as low earthworks. Consequently, the remains lack presence in the broader landscape. The Public Right of Way to the south of the site creates something of a physical barrier to the site, which together with scattered trees and vegetation, partly enclosing the setting of the asset. This creates something of an enclosed setting, albeit with glancing views inwards from Clothall Road. Modern developments, such as the Cumberlow Farm complex to the east and the pylons to the south, further reduce the setting's contribution to the asset's significance.



Plate 6. View looking south-west from the Scheduled Monument towards the study site

Contribution Made by Site to Significance

- 6..16 The Monument derives significance from its historical association with the study site and the rural land that was connected to the manorial estate. However, the majority of the scheduled monument is obscured by mature vegetation, offering only partial views from the north-eastern boundary of the study site (Plate 7). As mentioned above, the asset therefore has a relatively enclosed setting and it is assessed that the study site makes a limited contribution to the overall significance of the scheduled monument, reflecting its relationship with the historic rural landscape.



Plate 7. View looking north-east of the Site of Cumberlow Manor House Scheduled Monument

Potential Sub-surface Archaeological Remains

- 6..1 There is considered to be potential for archaeological deposits associated with the prehistoric and Roman periods within the study site. While some remains may represent residual findspots, the identification of features such as ring ditches in Fields 9, 14, and 15, and possible enclosures in Fields 6 and 10, indicates a stronger possibility of settlement activity. The potential for Roman occupation is particularly high along the projected route of the Baldock to Braughing Roman Road, which commonly attracted roadside settlements, small farmsteads, and related infrastructure. Archaeological remains in this area could contribute valuable insights into the function of the road in facilitating movement, trade, and habitation. The significance of such remains may range from local to regional, depending on their character, preservation, and extent.
- 6..2 There is considered to be some potential for archaeological deposits associated with the medieval period to be present within the study site, particularly relating to manorial or agricultural activity given the proximity of Cumberlow Manor House to the north-east and the moated site adjacent to the Site in the north-west. However, the results of the geophysical survey did not identify any anomalies indicative of such remains within the study site.

Furthermore, the field adjacent to the moated site is designated for skylark mitigation and will remain undeveloped, consistent with its current use. Any medieval remains that might be present are likely to be limited in significance unless directly associated with known manorial or settlement features.

- 6..3 The agricultural nature of the study site continued into the post-medieval and modern periods. Any remains outside the footprint of the quarrying relating to post-medieval or modern former agricultural activity, would be considered to be of negligible significance.

7 Impact Assessment

Proposed Development

- 7..1 The Proposed Development is for a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), co-located ground mounted solar farm, associated infrastructure, access, biodiversity enhancements and landscaping.

Previous Impacts

- 7..1 There has been no known previous development within the study site. Historic mapping shows the study site has been in agricultural use since the medieval period, which is likely to have had some below ground impacts.

Designated Heritage Assets

Cromer Windmill

- 7..1 The Cromer Windmill derives much of its significance from its architectural interest as a fine example of a post-medieval windmill. The asset presents a number of features which contribute towards its overall significance such as the white timber frame and weatherboard construction, and the decorative blades. The Proposed Development, located 1km north of the asset, will largely follow the natural shape of the land and will not change the layout or structure of the surrounding agricultural fields. Due to the dense vegetation around the windmill, the development will not be visible from important viewpoints and will not affect the architectural significance of the asset. The asset otherwise retains its architectural interest, both within the immediate setting of the asset itself where this is best observed and in distant views across the landscape where the characteristic windmill outline and blades can be seen.
- 7..2 The asset does not share any particular historic relationship with the Site other than as agricultural fields more generally. Therefore, the proposals do not affect the principal historic interest of the asset as a windmill or its importance in the development of Hertfordshire's agricultural history. While the Site comprises agricultural fields that make a limited contribution to the rural character of the wider landscape, an aspect from which the asset derives some significance, the Proposed Development will be located over 1km away. This intervening landscape will remain largely open and agricultural in character. The proposed solar panels would over sail the existing fieldscape, thereby retaining its open and legible qualities. Consequently, it is not considered that the development would diminish understanding of the windmill's historic agricultural association or its former functional context. Moreover, the key elements that contribute to the asset's significance, its architectural interest, physical fabric, and surviving features, will remain entirely unaffected. Therefore, the proposals do not undermine the significance which the asset derives from this rural character.
- 7..3 Furthermore, the screening proposed as part of the development to filter certain views from the asset will help to maintain this setting. Moreover, there is no particular appreciation of the asset from the north of the site along the A507, where only fleeting, distant views are possible through gaps in the hedgerow, typically experienced from moving vehicles. While there may be some very distant views of the asset from the public right of way within the Site, these are limited and do not provide a clear appreciation of the asset (Plate 17 and Plate 19).

7..4 Therefore, this assessment acknowledges some limited impact to the asset as a result of the Proposed Development through changes to the rural character of the asset in the broad sense. However, the proposals do not impede the understanding or appreciation of the asset within this rural landscape. Importantly, the asset otherwise maintains its principal architectural and historic significances. In addition, the B1037 located immediately to the north, although an historic route, now detracts from the windmill's significance due to noise and visual impacts from vehicle traffic. These undermine the rural character of the asset and the way in which it is appreciated. Despite this and the presence of pylons within the setting of the asset, the asset otherwise maintains much of its rural character by the agricultural fields located between the asset and the River Beane. These preserve the appreciation of the asset as a windmill within an agricultural setting. In summary, the proposals do not undermine the appreciation of the asset of its rural character in any meaningful way. A balanced judgement is required in accordance with Paragraph 216 of the NPPF (2024).

7..5 Taken overall, the Proposed Development results in less than substantial harm to the asset, and at the lower end of the scale.

Site of Cumberlow Manor House Scheduled Monument

7..6 The Site of Cumberlow Manor House Scheduled Monument is of significant historic and archaeological interest, primarily as a surviving earthwork of a medieval manorial estate. Positioned on the northern side of the A507 Clothall Road, and within Cumberlow Green, the asset has a relatively enclosed setting lined by scattered trees and vegetation. Despite this, there is an appreciation of the asset in glancing views inward from Clothall Road. It derives archaeological value in the physical remains of the monument and the potential artefactual evidence it may yield, shedding light on the date, duration, and nature of the monument's use. The Proposed Development would introduce a new built form within the immediate setting of the asset but results in no direct physical harm and the archaeological value of the asset remains unchanged. However, there are potential indirect impacts to the setting of the asset.

7..7 As the site of a former manor house, the asset derives much of its significance from the surrounding rural landscape, which may have historical connections through land ownership. However, this setting has been undermined by modern developments such as the residential housing, the pylons and Cumberlow Green Farm and by the demolition of the former manor house. The A507 to the south of the asset also creates something of a physical barrier to the Site, along with an enclosed setting, albeit with possible glancing views inwards from Clothall Road. While the study site was historically connected to the manorial estate, modern intrusions have diminished its visual and functional association with the monument. Consequently, the asset derives only limited significance from the study site, and the Proposed Development would have an impact primarily on the broader rural character rather than on the asset itself. Given the setback of the development on the opposite side of the road and the physical barrier the road provides, the understanding of the asset's association with the wider landscape is unlikely to be diminished.

7..8 In summary, the assets principal historic significance remains intact to the north of the A507 Clothall Road and within a predominantly enclosed setting. The visual relationship between the

study site and the asset is limited, and due to modern developments, the study site no longer retains a strong visual or functional connection to the monument. As such, any harm resulting from the Proposed Development is considered less than substantial and at the lower end of the scale, particularly since the solar development would prevent a potentially more harmful development near the asset. A balanced judgement is required in accordance with Paragraph 216 of the NPPF (2024).

- 7..9 Taken overall, the Proposed Development results in less than substantial harm, and at the lower end of the scale.

Potential Sub-surface Archaeological Remains

- 7..1 The assessment has identified potential for the survival of buried archaeological remains dating to the prehistoric and Roman periods within the study site, which could be impacted by the Proposed Development. The greatest potential for significant remains is concentrated along the projected route of the Baldock to Braughing Roman Road, where roadside activity, settlement, or associated features may be present. This is supported by the results of the geophysical survey, which identified anomalies consistent with enclosures in Fields 6 and 10, and ring ditches in Fields 9, 14, and 15—features indicative of possible settlement or burial activity. Additionally, the area where a Late Bronze Age hoard and Roman artefacts have been recorded corresponds with some of these anomalies, increasing the likelihood of archaeological survival. While any remains encountered could provide valuable insights into prehistoric and Roman activity, they are currently assessed as being of no more than local significance.
- 7..2 There is potential for the survival of sub-surface remains relating to medieval, post-medieval and modern agricultural activity within the study site, which could be impacted by the Proposed Development. These remains would be considered to be of negligible significance.
- 7..3 The medieval moated site located adjacent to the Site boundary in the north-west represents a feature of greater archaeological interest. There is potential for associated structural remains, waterlogged deposits, or evidence of manorial activity to survive in the surrounding fields. However, the geophysical survey did not identify any clear indications of such remains, and no development is proposed within Fields 2 and 11, located to the north and east of the feature. If any remains do survive within Field 12 to the south, they could provide valuable insights into medieval land use, domestic occupation, and estate management. The significance of such remains would be higher than that of general agricultural features and could range from local to regional importance, depending on their extent and state of preservation. There is a potential for sub-surface remains related to the Site of Cumberlow Manor House Scheduled Monument to extend into the north-western part of the study site; however, any such remains are likely to have been truncated by the construction of the A507. Additionally, the geophysical survey did not identify any evidence to suggest the presence of associated remains within this area. Any such remains associated with the manorial estate could hold local or regional significance, depending on their nature and extent.
- 7..4 Also of note are the hedgerows lining the parish boundary adjacent to the western edge of the study site. According to the HER, the hedges and boundary banks along this boundary are evidently ancient. Under the Hedgerow Regulations Act 1997, hedgerows along parish

boundaries are classified as ‘important.’ The preservation of these boundary features provides valuable insight into the historical division and use of the landscape. Therefore, these hedgerows have been preserved and retained within the Proposed Development layout.

- 7..5 The Proposed Development has been designed to minimise its archaeological impact. The solar infrastructure will occupy only a very small proportion of the land within the Site, resulting in a limited overall development footprint. While the BESS will involve more concentrated groundworks, the wider solar array itself is considered to be a relatively non-intrusive form of development. Furthermore, areas identified as having archaeological interest can be avoided or sensitively designed around, allowing for preservation in situ where appropriate. This includes the use of design measures such as concrete footings rather than deep foundations, which reduce the extent of below-ground impact.

Potential Cumulative Impacts

- 7..1 This section briefly considers cumulative impacts in light of the submitted Beane Valley Solar (planning reference 3/24/2245/FUL). This is located to the south of the Site with the red line boundary of 3/24/2245/FUL directly passing the Grade II* listed Cromer Windmill. The Heritage Statement submitted with the application, prepared by RPS, considered there would be a degree of harm, at the higher end of less than substantial to Cromer Windmill, by means of a change to its setting. Cromer Windmill is the only heritage asset for which a cumulative impact requires assessment, as no other designated or non-designated assets are anticipated to be affected cumulatively by the Proposed Development.
- 7..2 As stated above, the Proposed Development is located 1km to the north of the Beane Valley Solar Scheme.
- 7..3 The largest cumulative change is therefore the change in character of the wider agricultural surroundings. This will cause harm to the significance of the asset but even with both the 3/24/2245/FUL scheme and the Proposed Development in place, the ability to appreciate the primary elements which contribute to the significance of the Windmill, that is the architectural and historic interest formed by the fabric of the asset, will not experience change. In addition, the ability to experience the asset in rural and agricultural surroundings will be retained.
- 7..4 The Proposed Development, as an addition to this submitted future baseline, is therefore not considered to have an additional cumulative effect on the Cromer Windmill. It is considered that the cumulative effect of the Proposed Development in combination with 3/24/2245/FUL would remain at the lower end of less than substantial harm. The distance of the scheme, its comparable scale to 3/24/2245/FUL, as well as the overall lack of direct intervisibility between the Proposed Development and the Cromer Windmill inform this conclusion.

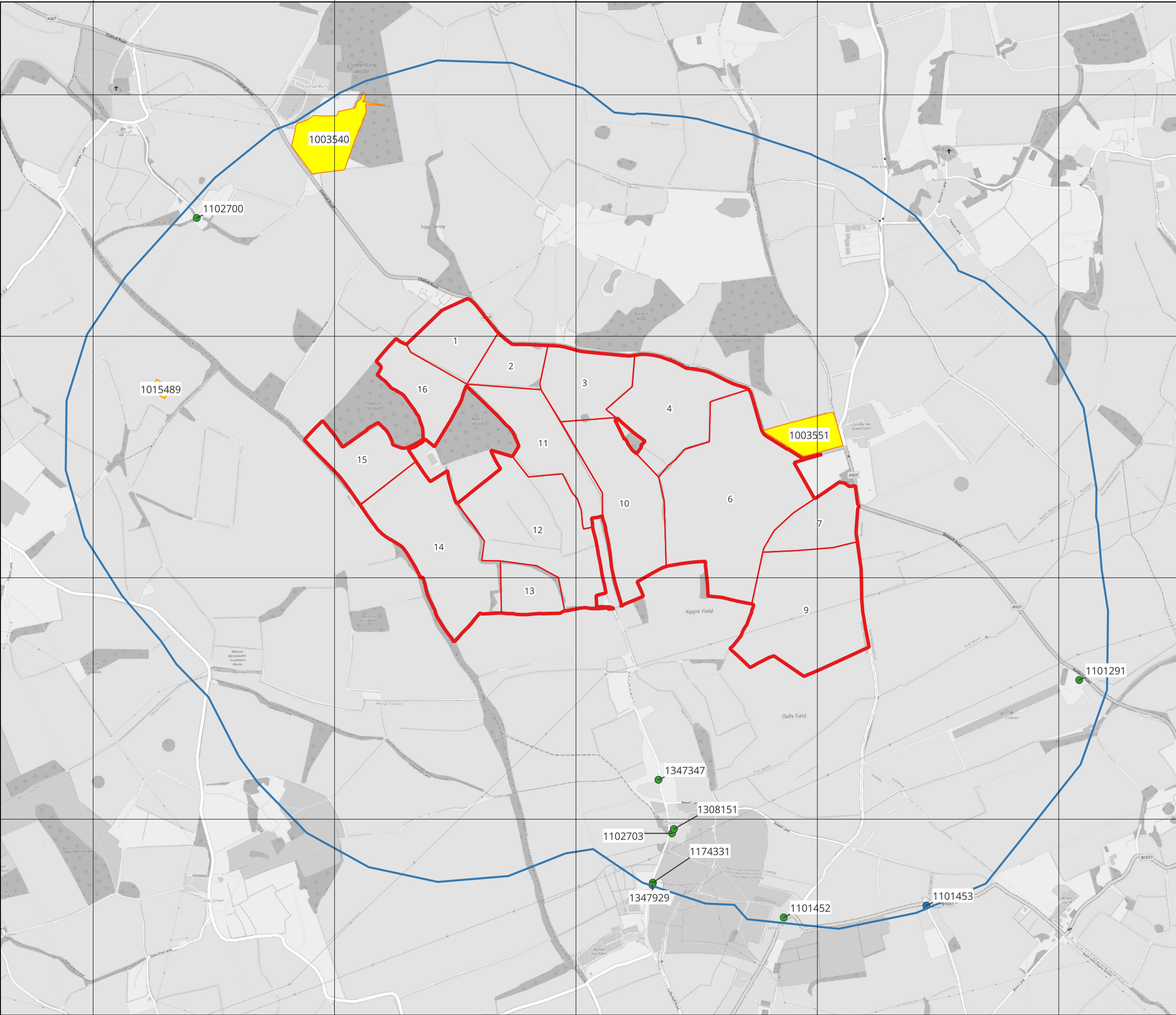
8 Conclusions

- 8..1 This historic environment desk-based assessment draws together the available archaeological, historical, topographic and land-use information in order to clarify the significance, archaeological and heritage potential for Westfield Energy Conservation Park. This assessment addresses the information requirements set out in the NPPF and provides the proportionate response sought by the NPPF.
- 8..2 The assessment has established that the Proposed Development would result in less than substantial harm, at the lower end of the scale, to the Site of Cumberlow Manor House Scheduled Monument and Grade II* Cromer Windmill.
- 8..3 The available archaeological records and survey data indicate that there is potential for below-ground archaeological remains associated with the prehistoric, Roman, medieval, and post-medieval periods to be present within the study site. These include anomalies that are likely to represent settlement evidence, including enclosures, field systems and ring-ditches potentially dating to the Iron Age and/or Roman periods. These features are located in proximity to the conjectured line of the Baldock to Braughing Roman Road, as well as an area where a Late Bronze Age hoard and Roman finds have been recorded, further suggesting an increased likelihood of archaeological survival.
- 8..4 For the medieval period, the highest potential is in the north-west of the Site, where the medieval moated site is located, however, no development is proposed within this area of the Site and the geophysical survey has not found evidence to suggest any such remains are present. In the north-east of the Site, there is potential that remains associated with the Cumberlow Manor House and its associated earthworks, although located outside the Site boundary, may extend into the Site. These areas are likely to contain remains related to manorial occupation, estate management, and agricultural activity. However, post-medieval and modern ploughing activities may have disturbed any such remains. Geophysical survey has not shown evidence of any likely remains associated with the asset and any such remains would likely have been truncated by the construction of the A507.
- 8..5 If prehistoric or Roman remains are present, they could provide valuable insights into prehistoric and Roman activity but are likely to be of no more than local significance. However, if the remains are residual, their significance would be negligible, depending on their nature. Any medieval, post-medieval, or modern agricultural remains would likely be of low or local significance, valued for their evidential contribution to understanding the historic landscape and agricultural character of the study site.
- 8..6 If remains associated with Cumberlow Manor House extend into the north-east of the study site, they could hold local or regional significance, depending on their nature and extent.
- 8..7 The hedgerows and boundary features along the western boundary of the study site are of historical significance, offering insights into past land use and division. Given their designation as 'important' under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 and their evident antiquity, these have been retained and afforded a substantial buffer as part of the Proposed Development.

9 References

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Figures



Westfield Energy Conservation Park

Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment

Title:
Figure 1. The study site and 1km search area with the location of NHLE records

Legend:

Study site

Search Area 1km

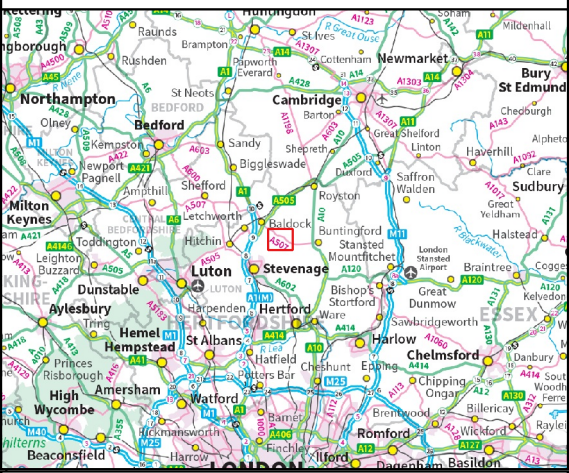
Scheduled Monument

Listed Buildings

II

II*

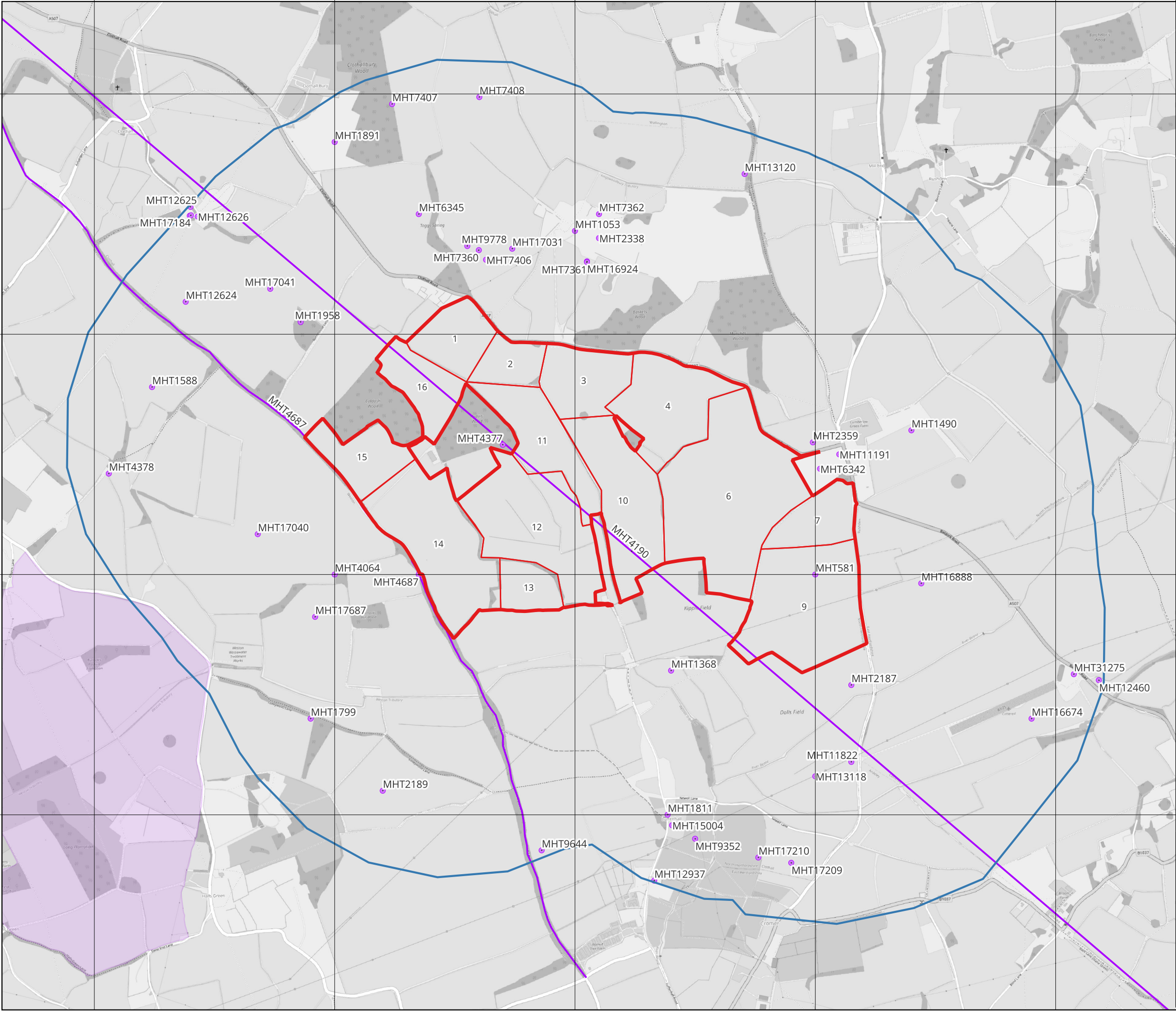
Data: © Lanpro 2025; Historic England 2025 Base Maps: © Crown copyright and database rights 2024. Ordnance Survey AC0000862729



Co-ordinate system: OSGB36 / British National Grid

Scale: 1:15000 @ A3

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Westfield Energy Conservation Park

Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment

Title:
Figure 2. The study site and 1km search area with the location of HER 'monument' records

Legend:

Study site

Search Area 1km

HER 'monument' point

HER 'monument' polyline

HER 'monument' polygon

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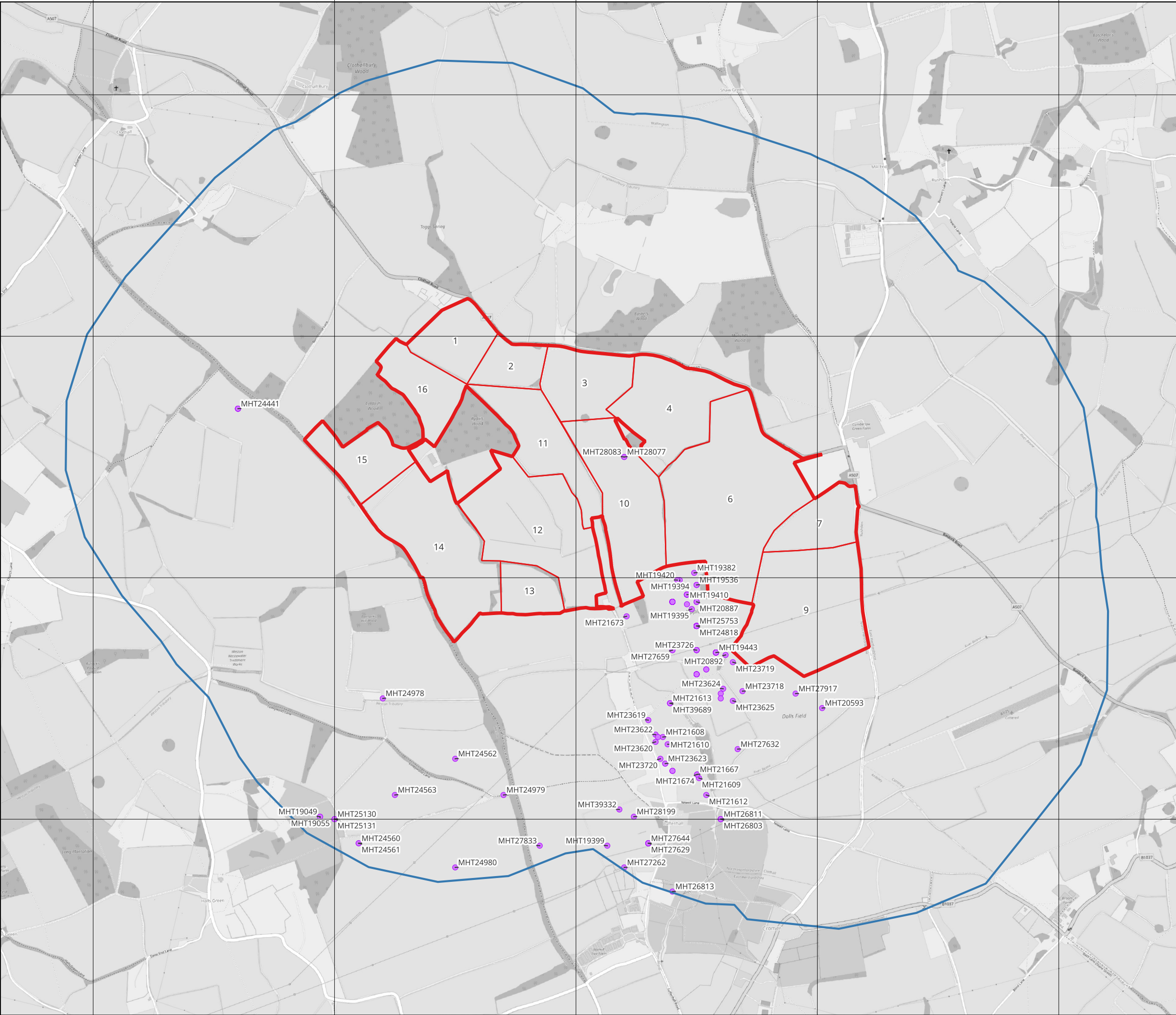
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Westfield Energy Conservation Park

Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment

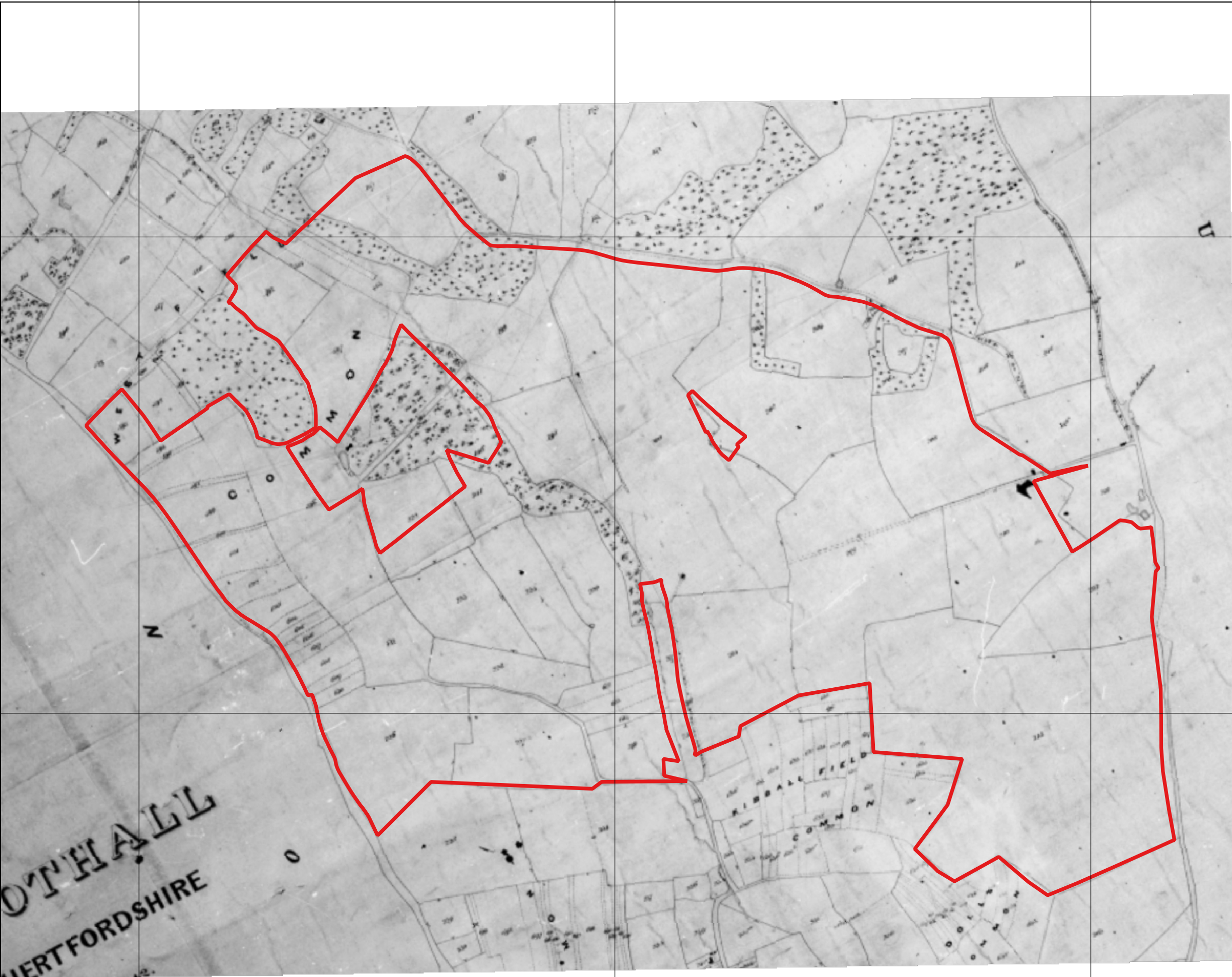
Title:
Figure 3. The study site and 1km search area with the location of HER PAS records

Legend:
 Study site
 Search Area 1km
● HER 'PAS' point

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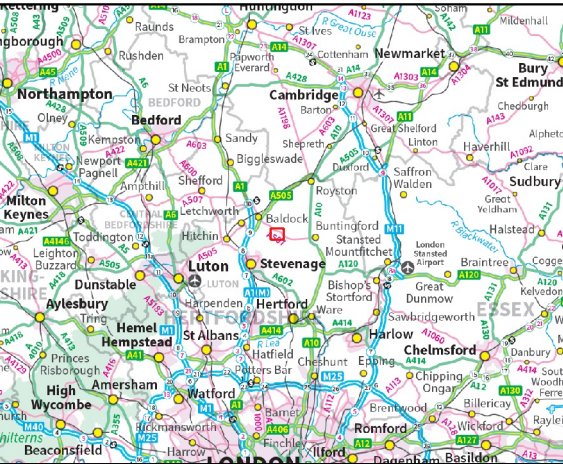
Westfield Energy Conservation Park

Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment

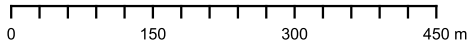
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Figure 5. Extract from the 1843 Tithe map of Clothall

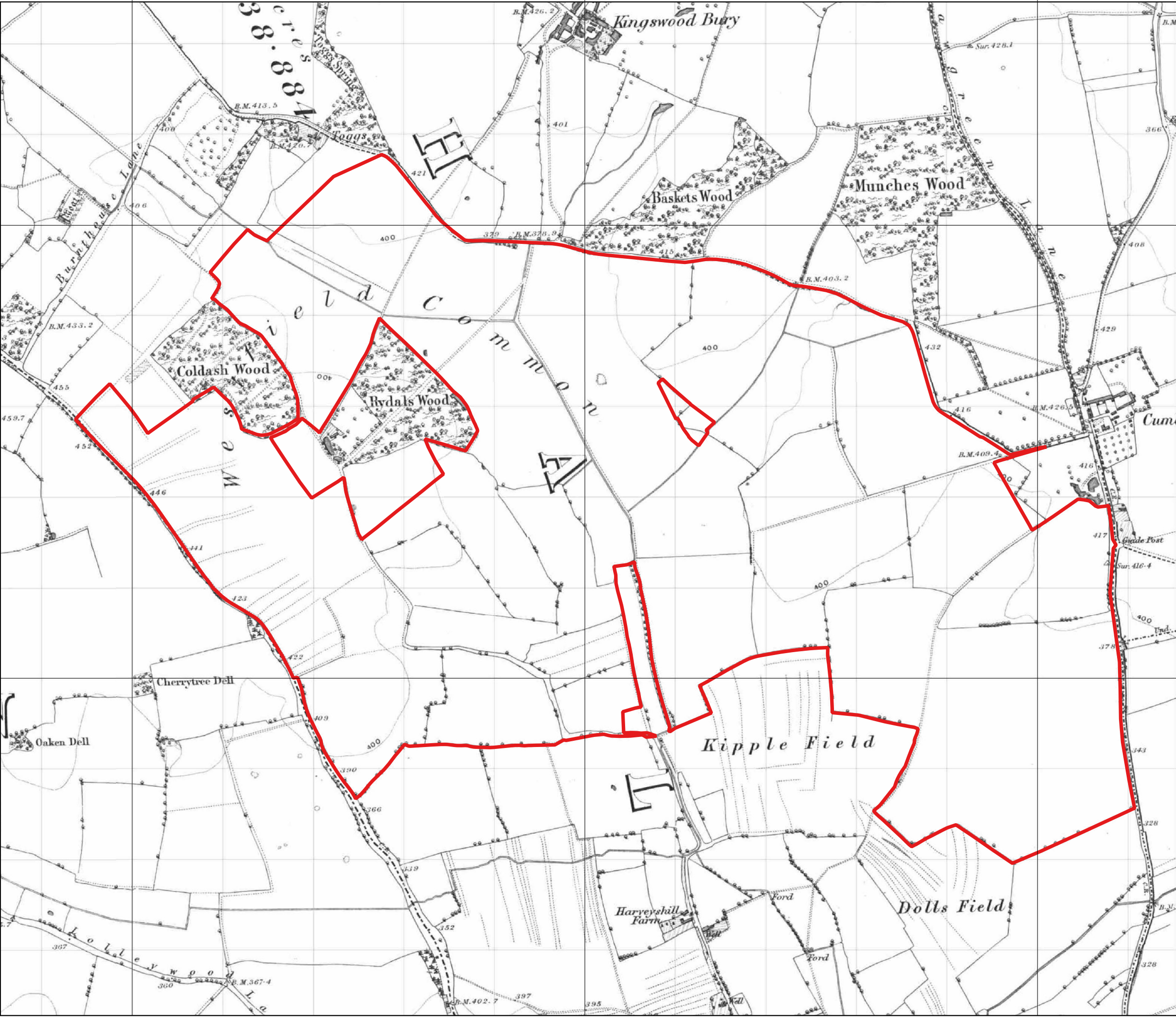
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Co-ordinate system: OSGB36 / British National Grid
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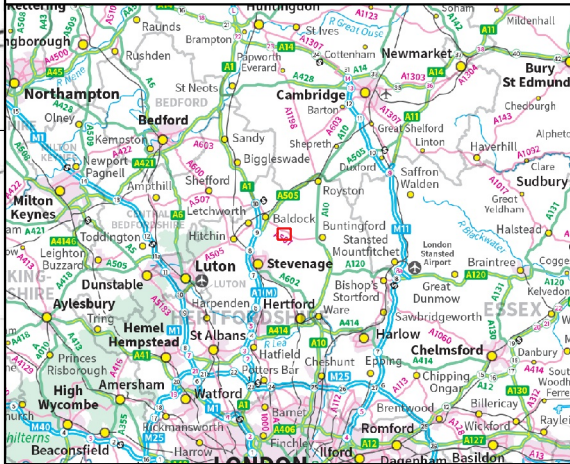
Westfield Energy Conservation Park

Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment

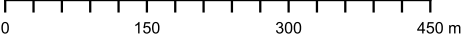
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Figure 6. Extract from the 1883 Ordnance Survey
1:10,560 map

Legend:
 Study site

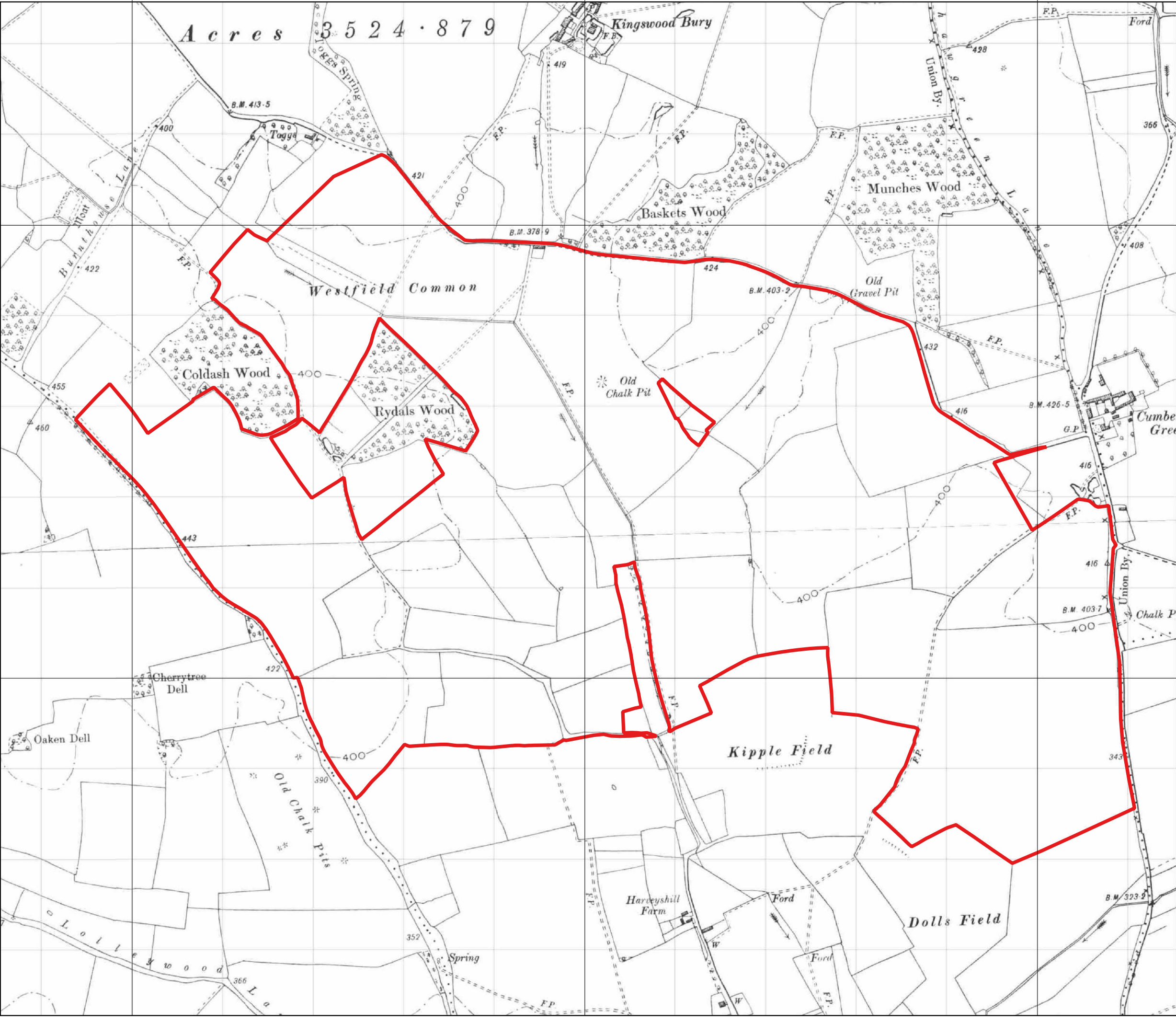
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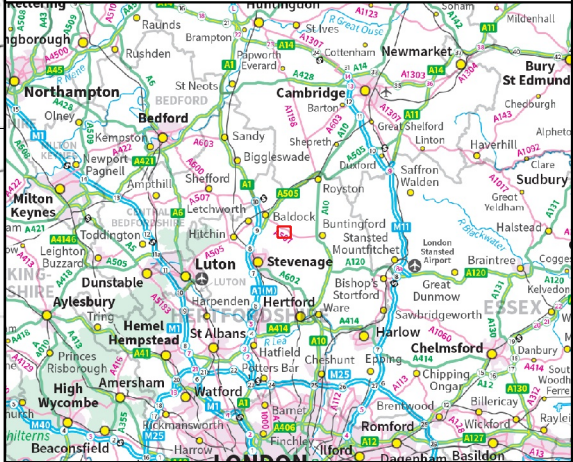
Westfield Energy Conservation Park

Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment

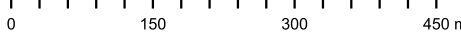
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Figure 7. Extract from the 1896 Ordnance Survey
1:10,560 map

Legend:
 Study site

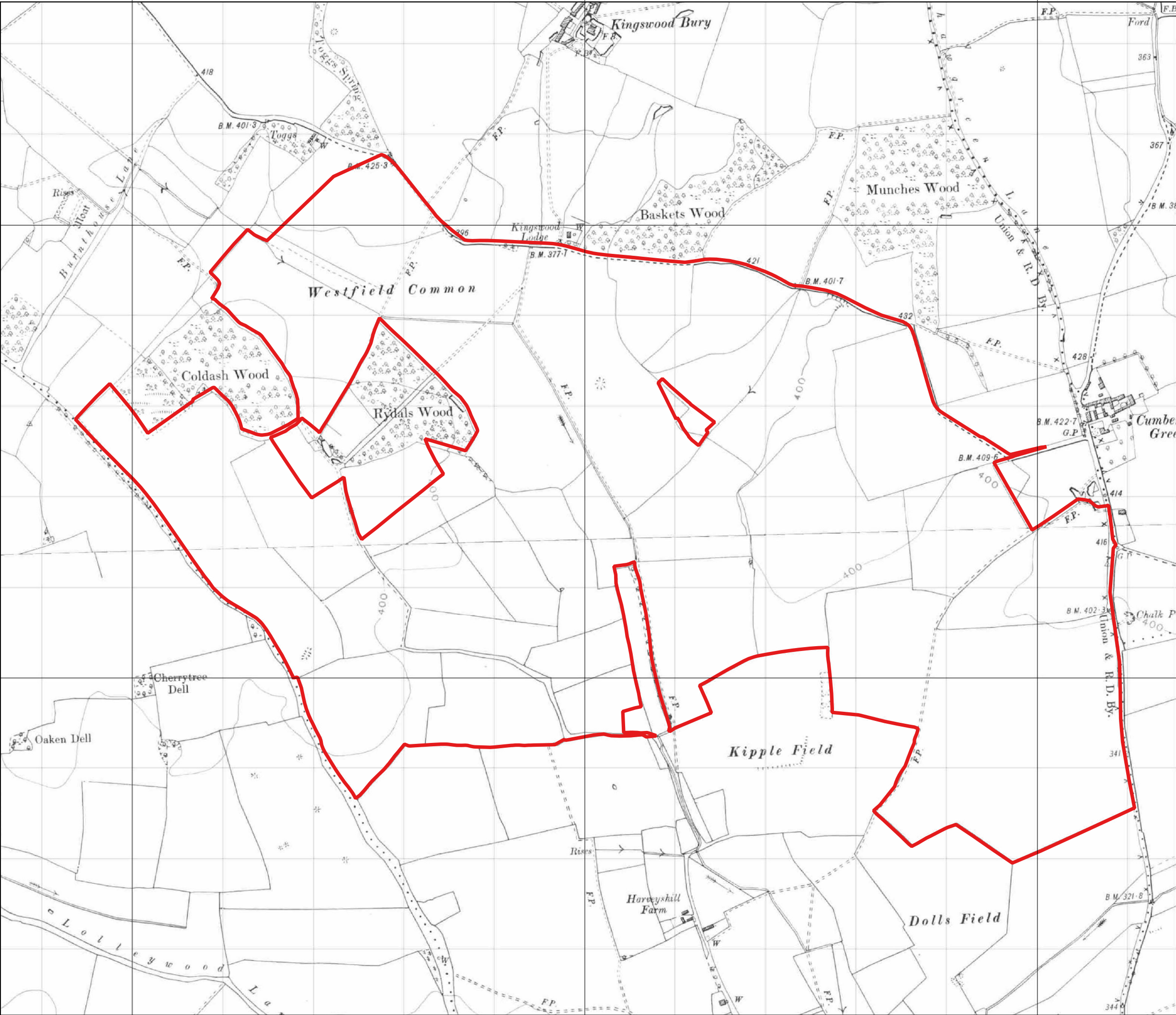
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Westfield Energy Conservation Park

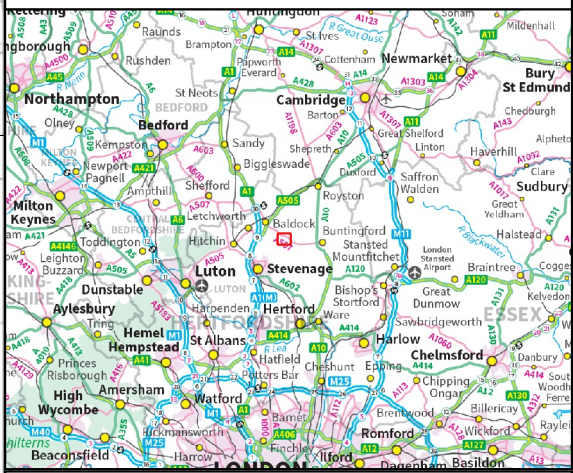
Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment

Title:
Figure 8. Extract from the 1922 Ordnance Survey
1:10,560 map

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Study site

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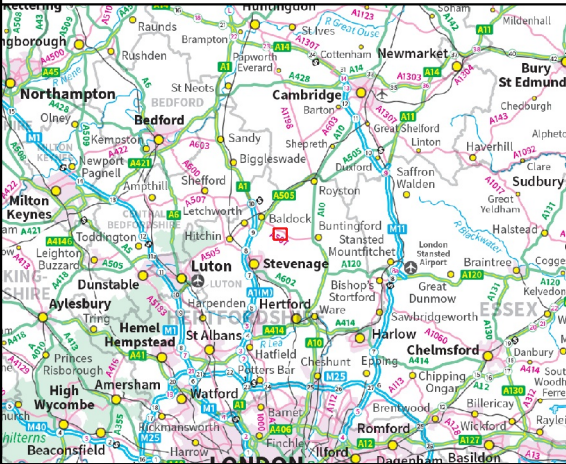
Westfield Energy Conservation Park

Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment

Title:
Figure 11. Aerial view of the application site
(Google Earth 2025)

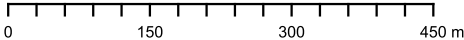
Legend:
 Study site

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Co-ordinate system: OSGB36 / British National Grid

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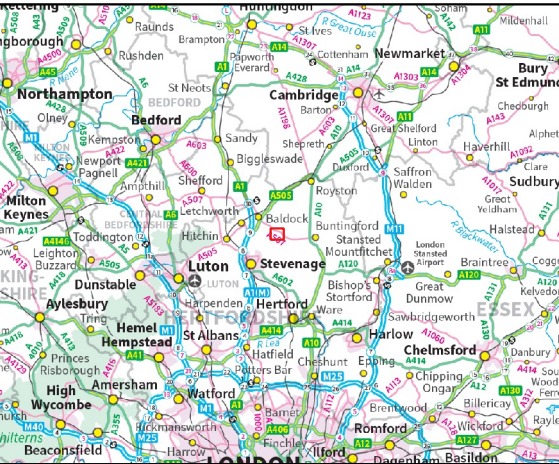
Westfield Energy Conservation Park

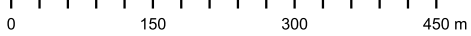
Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment

Title:
Figure 12. Plot of 1m resolution LiDAR DSM (2017)

Legend:
 Study site

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Co-ordinate system: OSGB36 / British National Grid
Scale: 1:8000 @ A3




Plates



Plate 8. View looking south-east across the study site from the northern extent



Plate 9. View looking north-west across the study site from the northern extent



Plate 10. View looking north-east across the study site from the northern extent



Plate 11. View looking north-west across the study site from the centre



Plate 12. View looking east across the study site from the centre



Plate 13. View looking north across the study site from the centre



Plate 14. View looking east across the study site from the southern extent



Plate 15. View looking north-west across the study site from the southern extent



Plate 16. View looking south-east across the study site from the southern extent towards St John the Baptist Church and the Birck Barn at Lodge Farm



Plate 17. View looking south-east across the study site from the southern extent



Plate 18. View looking north-east across the study site from the southern extent



Plate 19. View looking south across the study site from the southern extent towards Cromer Windmill



Plate 20. View looking east across the study site from the eastern extent



Plate 21. View looking north-east across the study site from the eastern extent towards Cumberlow Manor House Scheduled Monument



Plate 22. View looking north-east across the study site from the eastern extent towards Cumberlow Manor House Scheduled Monument



Plate 23. View looking west across the study site from the northern extent



Plate 24. View looking south across the study site from the northern extent



Plate 25. View looking south-west across the study site from the north-western extent



Plate 26. View looking east across the study site from the western extent



Plate 27. View looking north-west across the study site from the western extent



Plate 28. View looking west across the study site from the western extent



Plate 29. View looking south across the study site from the western extent at Munches Farm

