

Archaeological Desk Based Assessment

Land at Reeds Lane, Sayers Common, West Sussex

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Archaeological Desk Based Assessment

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Approval for issue

Suzanne Gailey	[REDACTED]	October 2025
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Executive Summary

Land at Reeds Lane, Sayers Common, West Sussex has been assessed for its below ground archaeological potential.

No Scheduled Monuments or other designated assets lie on the Site and the Site is not considered to contribute to the significance of any nearby designated heritage assets. The Site is not located within an Archaeological Notification Area as defined by Mid Sussex District Council

Based on the available evidence the site is considered to have a low potential for evidence dating to all past periods of human activity and as a consequence the proposed development is considered unlikely to have a significant archaeological impact.

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1 Introduction & Scope of Study

- 1.1 This below ground archaeological desk-based assessment has been prepared by RPS on behalf of Reside Holdings Ltd.
- 1.2 The subject of this assessment, also known as the study site, is land at Reeds Lane, Sayers Common, West Sussex. The site is centred at National Grid Reference TQ 26234 18177 (Figure 1) within the administrative area of Mid Sussex District Council.
- 1.3 Reside Holdings Ltd have commissioned RPS to establish the archaeological potential of the site and to provide guidance on ways to address any archaeological constraints identified.
- 1.4 In accordance with relevant policy and guidance on archaeology and planning, and in accordance with the 'Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessments' (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists October 2020), this assessment draws together the available archaeological, topographic and land-use information in order to clarify the archaeological potential of the site.
- 1.5 This desk-based assessment comprises an examination of evidence on the West Sussex Historic Environment Record (HER), and other sources, and includes the results of a comprehensive map regression exercise. HER data has a time limit of 12 months from the original search date and cannot be relied on after that.
- 1.6 This assessment thus enables relevant parties to assess the archaeological potential of various parts of the site and to consider the need for design, civil engineering, and archaeological solutions to the archaeological potential identified.

2 Planning Background & Development Plan Framework

2.1 In March 2012, the government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which was most recently updated in December 2024. The NPPF is supported by the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), which was published online 6th March 2014 and has since been periodically updated.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

2.2 The NPPF and NPPG are additionally supported by three Good Practice Advice (GPA) documents published by Historic England: GPA 1: The Historic Environment in Local Plans; GPA 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (both published March 2015). The second edition of GPA3: The Setting of Heritage Assets was published in December 2017.

National Planning Policy

2.3 Section 16 of the NPPF, 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. 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;
- Conservation of England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance; and
- Recognition that heritage makes to our knowledge and understanding of the past.

2.4 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 local planning authorities should require applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by their development proposal, 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.

2.5 *Heritage Assets* are defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as: a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. They include designated heritage assets (as defined in the NPPF) and assets identified by the local planning authority during the process of decision-making or through the plan-making process.

2.6 Annex 2 also defines *Archaeological Interest* as a heritage asset which holds or potentially could hold evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

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.

2.8 *Significance (for heritage policy)* is defined as: The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

2.9 *Setting* is defined 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

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positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

2.10 In short, government policy provides a framework which:

- Protects nationally important designated Heritage Assets;
- 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.

2.11 The NPPG reiterates that the conservation of heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance is a core planning principle, requiring a flexible and thoughtful approach. Furthermore, it highlights that neglect and decay of heritage assets is best addressed through ensuring they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation. Importantly, the guidance states that if complete, or partial loss of a heritage asset is justified, the aim should then be to capture and record the evidence of the asset's significance and make the interpretation publicly available. Key elements of the guidance relate to assessing harm. An important consideration should be whether the proposed works adversely affect a key element of the heritage asset's special architectural or historic interest. Additionally, it is the degree of harm, rather than the scale of development, that is to be assessed. The level of 'substantial harm' is considered to be a high bar that may not arise in many cases. Essentially, whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the NPPF. Importantly, harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting. Setting is defined as the surroundings in which an asset is experienced and may be more extensive than the curtilage. A thorough assessment of the impact of proposals upon setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the heritage asset and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it.

2.12 In considering any planning application for development, the planning authority will be mindful of the framework set by government policy, in this instance the NPPF, by current Development Plan Policy and by other material considerations.

Local Planning Policy

2.13 The Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 was adopted in March 2018. It contains the following relevant policy:

DP34: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets

Other Heritage Assets

Development that retains buildings which are not listed but are of architectural or historic merit, or which make a significant and positive contribution to the street scene will be permitted in preference to their demolition and redevelopment.

The Council will seek to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the character and quality of life of the District.

Significance can be defined as the special interest of a heritage asset, which may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic.

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Proposals affecting such heritage assets will be considered in accordance with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and current Government guidance.

2.14 The Mid Sussex Local Plan (2004) contains the following saved policy relating to archaeology:

B18

SITES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST AND THEIR SETTINGS WILL BE PROTECTED AND ENHANCED WHERE POSSIBLE. IN PARTICULAR, THE FABRIC AND SETTING OF SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS AND OTHER NATIONALLY IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES SHOULD BE PRESERVED INTACT.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS OR CHANGES OF USE OR MANAGEMENT WHICH WOULD HAVE A DETRIMENTAL IMPACT ON SITES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE AND THEIR SETTINGS WILL NOT NORMALLY BE PERMITTED. AN EXCEPTION MAY BE MADE ONLY WHERE THE BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL (WHICH CANNOT REASONABLY BE LOCATED ELSEWHERE) ARE SO GREAT AS TO OUTWEIGH THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE SITE.

WHERE IT APPEARS THAT A PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT MAY AFFECT THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST OF A KNOWN OR POTENTIAL SITE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE, THE APPLICANT WILL BE REQUIRED TO CARRY OUT AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AND FIELD EVALUATION. A STATEMENT OF THE FINDINGS WILL BE REQUIRED TO ACCOMPANY THE PLANNING APPLICATION. THERE WILL BE PREFERENCE FOR PRESERVATION IN-SITU IN PREFERENCE TO EXCAVATION RECORDING AND PUBLICATION OF FINDINGS.

WHERE APPROVED DEVELOPMENT WILL AFFECT A SITE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST, THE DEVELOPER WILL BE REQUIRED EITHER BY AGREEMENT OR BY CONDITIONS OF PLANNING PERMISSION TO HAVE UNDERTAKEN A FULL INVESTIGATION AND RECORDING BY EXCAVATION AND THE PUBLICATION OF FINDINGS.

2.15 The draft Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039 is currently under examination by the Planning Inspectorate. The Regulation 19 Submission Draft contains the following draft policy:

DPB2: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets

Other Heritage Assets

Development that retains buildings which are not listed but are of architectural or historic merit, or which make a significant and positive contribution to the street scene will be permitted in preference to their demolition and redevelopment.

The Council will seek to preserve and enhance heritage assets and their settings in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the character and quality of life of the district, and will look at opportunities to enhance or better reveal their significance.

Proposals affecting such heritage assets will be considered in accordance with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and current Government guidance.

Proposed development must undertake pre-determination evaluation of potential archaeological features on the site prior to any planning applications being submitted, unless it can be demonstrated that such evaluation is not appropriate for the site. Appropriate mitigation may be required depending on the outcome of that evaluation.

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Where appropriate, a Heritage Impact Assessment must be provided to establish the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the impact of development on this significance, and if appropriate, mitigation strategies.

- 2.16 No designated heritage assets lie on or close to the site. The closest Listed Building 'Aymers Sayers' lies approximately 400m east of the study site and is separated from the site by modern development. As a result the proposed development is considered unlikely to impact on the significance of this Listed Building and as such built heritage matters are not considered further in this assessment.
- 2.17 The study site is not located within an Archaeological Notification Area as defined by Mid Sussex District Council.
- 2.18 In line with relevant planning policy and guidance, this desk-based assessment seeks to clarify the site's archaeological potential and the likely significance of that potential and the need or otherwise for additional mitigation measures.

3 Geology & Topography

Geology

3.1 The British Geological Survey (BGS Online 2017) records the underlying geology of the study site as Weald Clay Formation (Mudstone). No superficial deposits are recorded.

Topography

3.2 The study site is generally level at a height of c.17m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

3.3 There are a number of watercourses in close proximity to the site, the nearest of which is c.60m north of the study site.

4 Archaeological & Historical Background with Assessment of Significance

Timescales used in this report

Prehistoric

Palaeolithic	900,000 -	12,000 BC
Mesolithic	12,000 -	4,000 BC
Neolithic	4,000 -	1,800 BC
Bronze Age	1,800 -	600 BC
Iron Age	600 -	AD 43

Historic

Roman	AD 43 -	410
Saxon/early medieval	AD 410 -	1066
Medieval	AD 1066 -	1485
Post medieval	AD 1486 -	1799
Modern	AD 1800 -	Present

Introduction

- 4.1 This chapter reviews the available archaeological evidence for the study site and the archaeological/historical background of the general area, and, in accordance with NPPF, considers the potential for any as yet to be discovered archaeological evidence on the study site.
- 4.2 What follows comprises a review of known archaeological assets within a 1km radius of the study site Appendix 1, also referred to as the study area, held on the Kent Historic Environment Record (HER), together with a historic map regression exercise charting the development of the study area from the 18th century onwards until the present day.
- 4.3 Chapter 5 subsequently considers the site conditions and whether the proposed development will impact the theoretical archaeological potential identified below.

Previous archaeological work

- 4.4 No previous archaeological work has taken place on the site. However a programme of archaeological evaluation trial trenching was undertaken on land approximately 200m east of the study site (CgMs/ASE 2019 EWS1950). No archaeological finds or features pre-dating the late Post Medieval period was recorded.

Prehistoric

- 4.5 Prehistoric findspots within the study area are limited to isolated finds, a scatter of Mesolithic flintwork found c.700m south east of the study site (HER Ref: MWS3764, TQ 2701 1783), and an Early Bronze Age macehead recorded in the same area (HER Ref: MWS1246, TQ 270 180).

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4.6 This absence of prehistoric remains within the study area could be, at least in part, a product of a lack of previous systematic archaeological survey in the area. However, despite this, it is likely that the study site lay within woodland from at least the Mesolithic period, and it is considered to have a low potential for prehistoric remains.

Roman

4.7 There are no records of Roman remains within the study area. The nearest recorded Roman road is c.3km to the south (Margary 1955).

4.8 The study site most likely lay within woodland during the Roman period and therefore will have probably been located away from areas of occupation or intensive human activity. Therefore, a low archaeological potential is identified for this period at the study site

Anglo-Saxon and Medieval

4.9 No records of Saxon remains are recorded by the HER within the study area.

4.10 Sayers Common is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 and the nearest recorded estates were at Benefeld and Hurstpierpoint (Domesday Online 2017).

4.11 The surrounding area was most likely characterised by scattered farmsteads during the Medieval period and the study site itself most likely lay within common land from which the settlement name 'Sayers Common' would later be derived. Therefore, a low archaeological potential is identified for Anglo-Saxon and Medieval settlement evidence.

Post Medieval & Modern (including map regression exercise)

4.12 During the Post Medieval period the site continued to comprise agricultural land in a landscape comprising scattered farmsteads. A probable farm and north/south trackway was located to the west of the site by the 18th century (Fig. 2). There was no change by the early 19th century (Fig. 3).

4.13 A number of further farmsteads are recorded by the HER, although none are relevant to the study site.

4.14 The Tithe Map records the site in more detail as comprising part of 3 parcels of land:

- 17- Brick Yard Field; arable
- 18- Acre Plat; pasture
- 19- Brick Yard Field; pasture

4.15 Field name evidence therefore suggests that the site historically been in use as part of a brick field (Fig. 4).

4.16 By the late 19th century 3 wells were located in the west of the site, potentially remnant of former quarrying of the site. The site was also traversed by two footpaths by this date (Fig. 5 and 6)

4.17 There was no change by the early 20th century (Fig. 7) apart from the removal of all field boundaries and by the 1930s one of the footpaths had been removed (Fig. 8).

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4.18 More recently the north-east of the site has been occupied by a site compound used for parking vehicles and a large mound of spoil most likely associated with the construction works occurring on the adjacent site to the east (Fig. 10).

4.19 Based on the available evidence the site has a low/nil potential for significant evidence dating to the Post Medieval and modern period

LiDAR

4.20 No significant archaeological anomalies are identified on the LiDAR image. The remains of the former field boundaries are visible on the plot (Appendix 2).

Assessment of Significance (Designated Assets)

4.21 Existing national policy guidance for archaeology (the NPPF as referenced in section 2) enshrines the concept of the 'significance' of heritage assets. Significance as defined in the NPPF centres on the value of an archaeological or historic asset for its 'heritage interest' to this or future generations.

4.22 There are no designated heritage assets on the site and no designated archaeological assets will be directly physically impacted by the proposed development.

Assessment of Significance (Non-Designated Assets)

4.23 NPPF describes significance as: The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

4.24 The site is considered to have a low potential for archaeological evidence dating to all past periods of human activity.

4.25 As identified by desk based work, archaeological potential by period and the likely significance of any archaeological remains which may be present is summarised in table form below

Period	Identified archaeological potential	Identified archaeological significance
Prehistoric	Low	Low (Local)
Roman	Low	Low (Local)
Anglo-Saxon	Low	Low (Local)
Medieval	Low	Low (Local)
Post medieval	Low	Low (Local)

5 Site Conditions, The Proposed Development & Review of Potential Development Impacts on Archaeological Assets

Site Conditions

- 5.1 The bulk of the site comprises a treelined pasture field with a PROW leading from the south-eastern corner of the site on a north-west/south-east trajectory. The north-east of the site is currently being used to store spoil associated with the adjacent construction whilst the east of the site is being used as a car park for construction vehicles associated with the adjacent construction works (Figure 10).
- 5.2 Any soil stripping ahead of the construction of the site compound in the east of the site could have had a potential below ground impact whilst the excavation of wells in the west of the site will have removed any archaeological potential from within their footprint. Field name evidence from the early 19th century Tithe map could suggest that the site was once in use as part of a brick field and if this is the case then such quarrying will have removed any archaeological interest from the site. Past ploughing on the site may also have a cumulative below ground impact.

Proposed Development

- 5.3 It is proposed to develop the site with residential houses and associated landscaping and infrastructure.

Review of Potential Development Impacts on Designated Archaeological Assets

- 5.4 There are no designated heritage assets on or close to the site and as such the proposed development will not have a direct impact on any designated heritage assets.

Review of Potential Development Impacts on Non-Designated Assets

- 5.5 Based on the available evidence the proposed development is considered unlikely to have a significant archaeological impact.

6 Summary & Conclusions

- 6.1 In accordance with relevant government planning policy and guidance, a desk based assessment has been undertaken to clarify the below ground archaeological potential of the Study Site
- 6.2 There are no Scheduled Monuments or other designated assets on or close to the Site and the Site is considered to have a low potential for remains dating to all past periods of human activity.
- 6.3 Based on the available evidence therefore the proposed development is considered unlikely to have a significant archaeological impact.

Sources Consulted

General

British Library

West Sussex Historic Environment Record

The National Archive

Internet

British Geological Survey – <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>

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Domesday Online – <http://www.domesdaybook.co.uk/>

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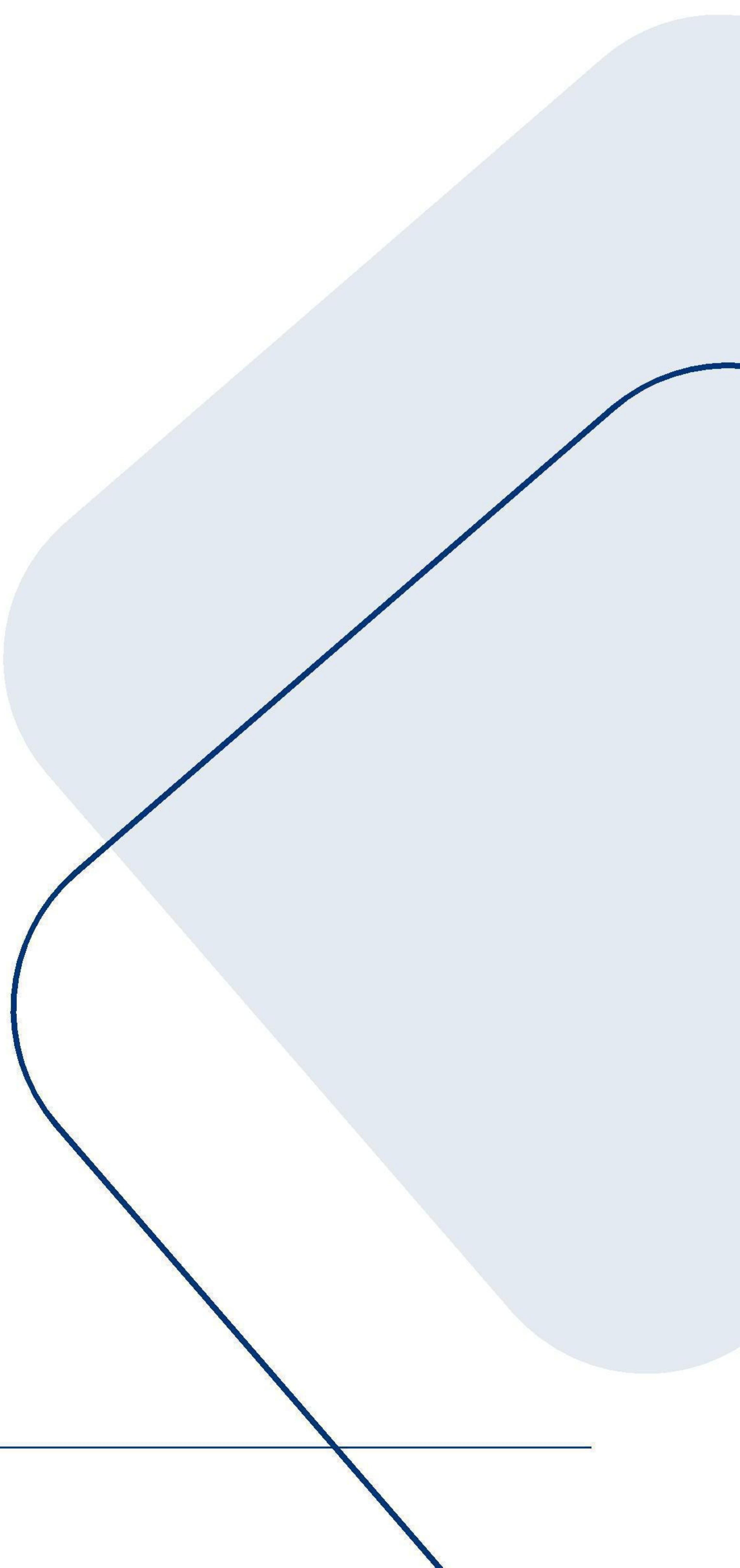
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government Planning practice guidance, 2019, Historic environment


Wymer, J 1968 Lower Palaeolithic Archaeology in Britain

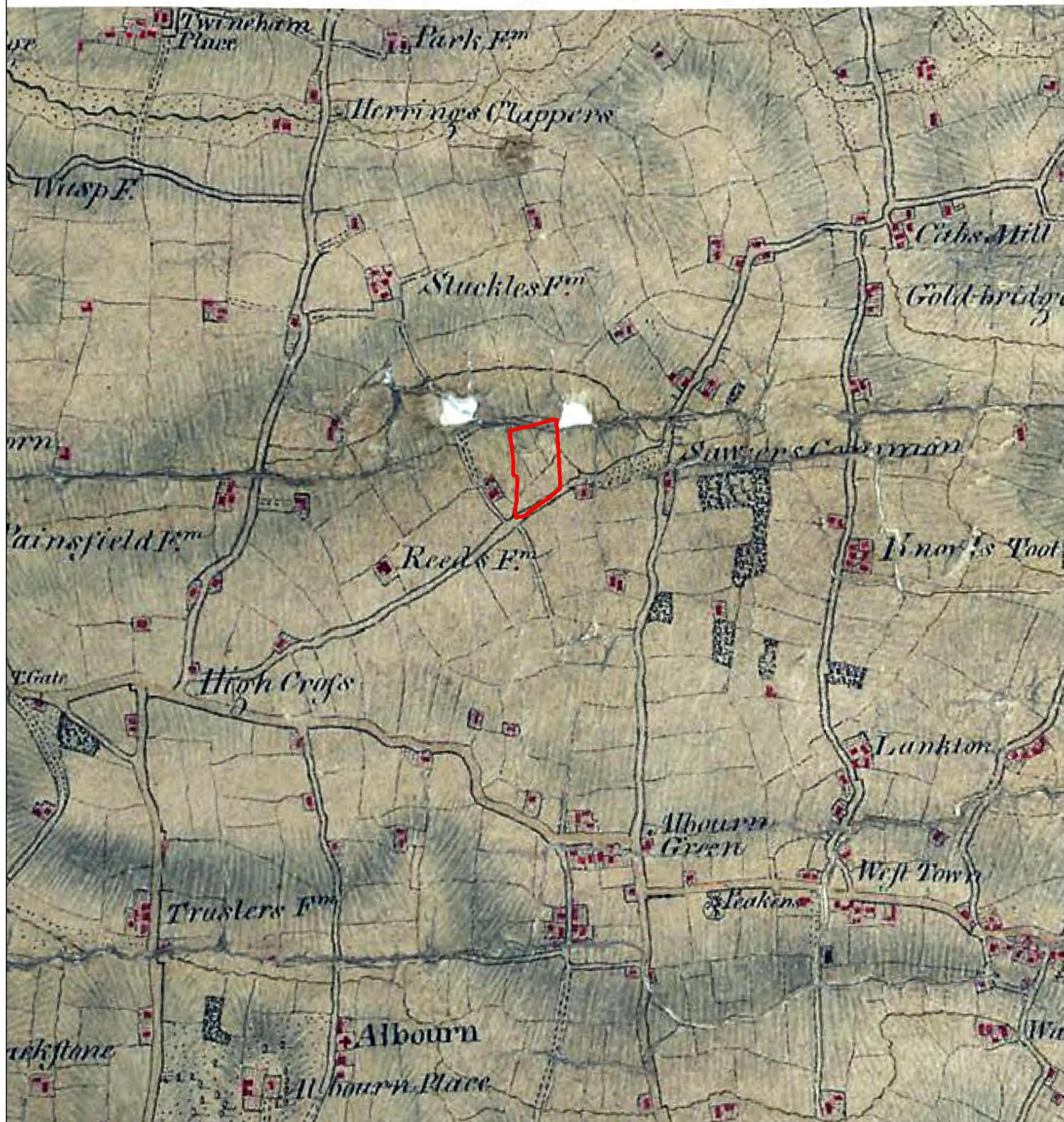
Cartographic

- 1798 Ordnance Survey Drawing
- 1813 Ordnance Survey Old Series
- 1839 Albourne Tithe Map
- 1879 Ordnance Survey
- 1899 Ordnance Survey
- 1912 Ordnance Survey
- 1938 Ordnance Survey

Figures







 Site Boundary



0 200 400 600m
Scale at A4: 1:20,000




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Figure 2

1798 Ordnance Survey Drawing



 Site Boundary



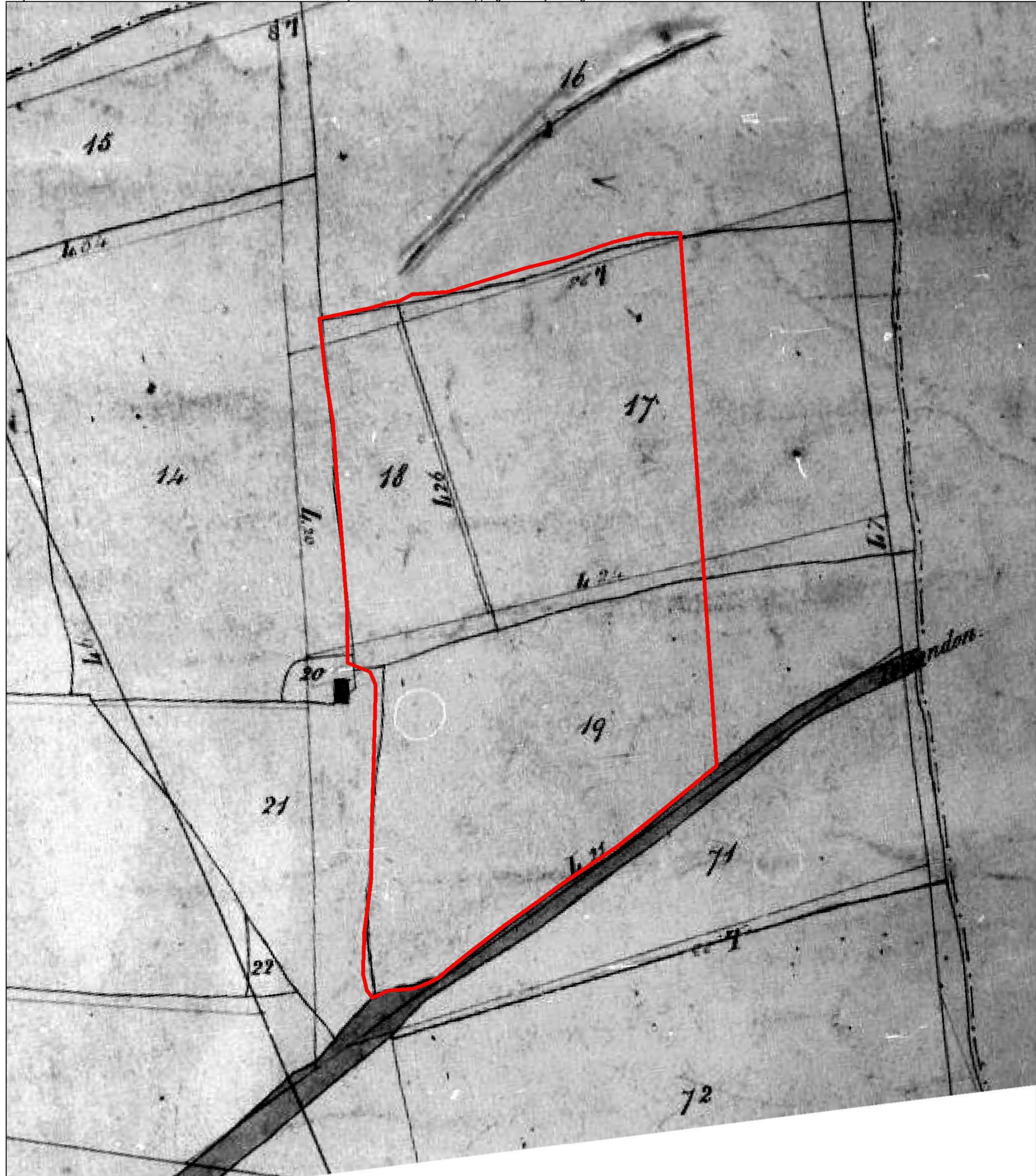
0 200 400 600m
Scale at A4: 1:20,000


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Figure 3

1813 Ordnance Survey Old Series



0 25 50 75m
Scale at A4: 1:2,500

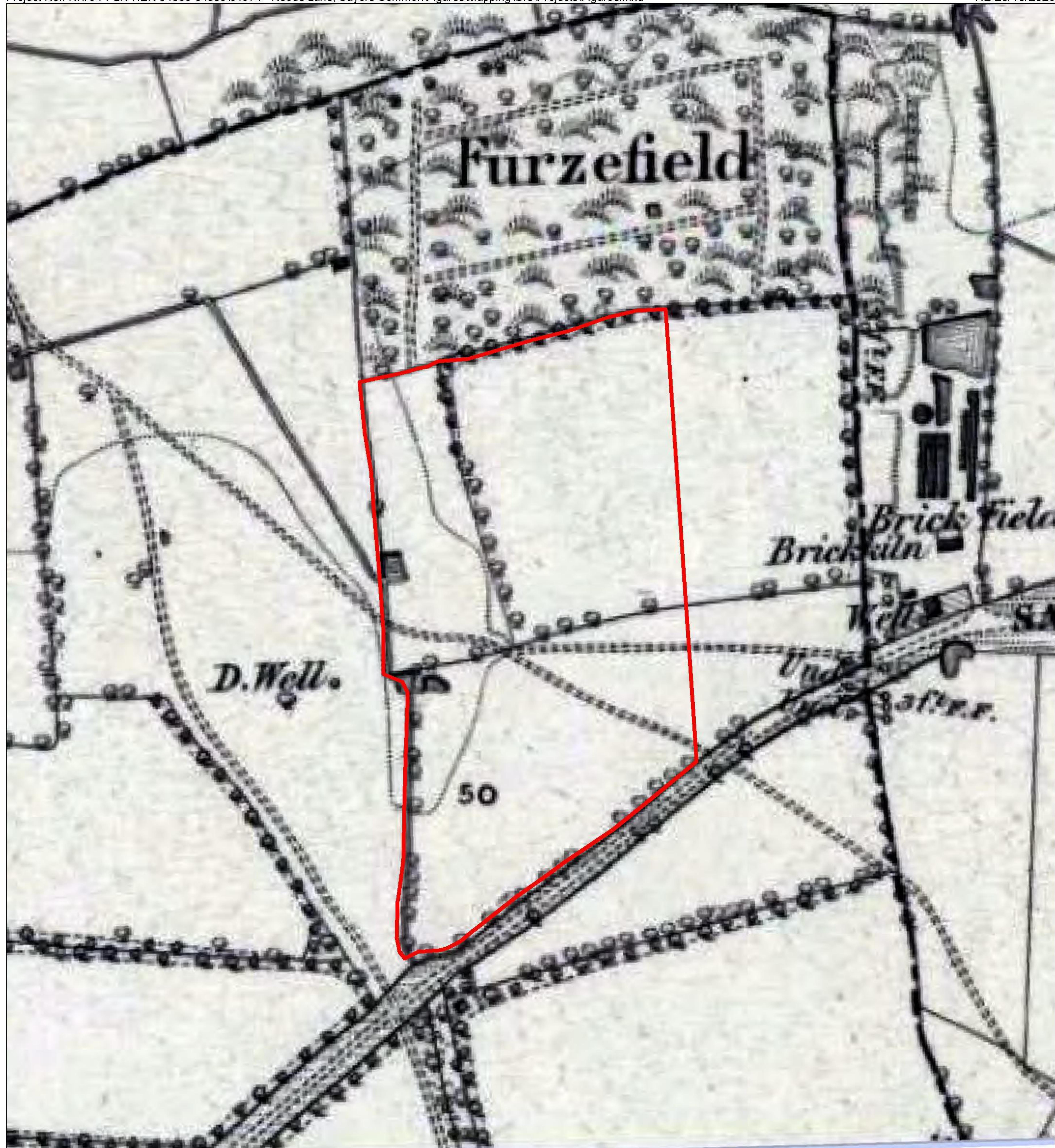


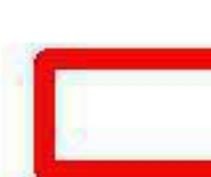
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Figure 4

1839 Albourne Tithe Map



 Site Boundary




0 30 60 90m
Scale at A4: 1:3,000


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Figure 5
1879 Ordnance Survey Map



 Site Boundary




0 50 100 150m
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Figure 6

1899 Ordnance Survey Map



Site Boundary




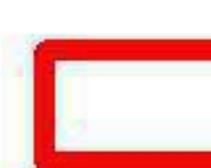
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Scale at A4: 1:5,000

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Figure 7
1912 Ordnance Survey Map



 Site Boundary



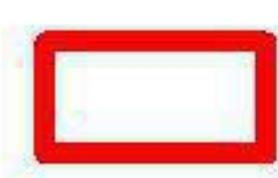
0 50 100 150m
Scale at A4: 1:5,000

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Figure 8
1938 Ordnance Survey Map



 Site Boundary



0 25 50 75m
Scale at A4: 1:2,500

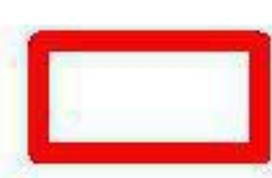
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Figure 9

2001 Aerial Photograph
(GoogleEarth)



 Site Boundary



0 25 50 75m
Scale at A4: 1:2,500

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Figure 10

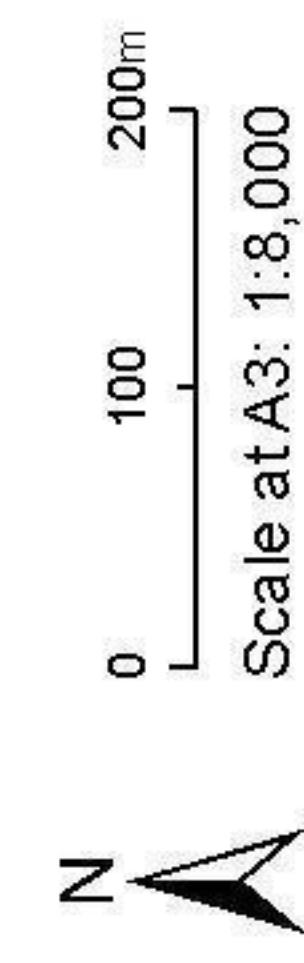
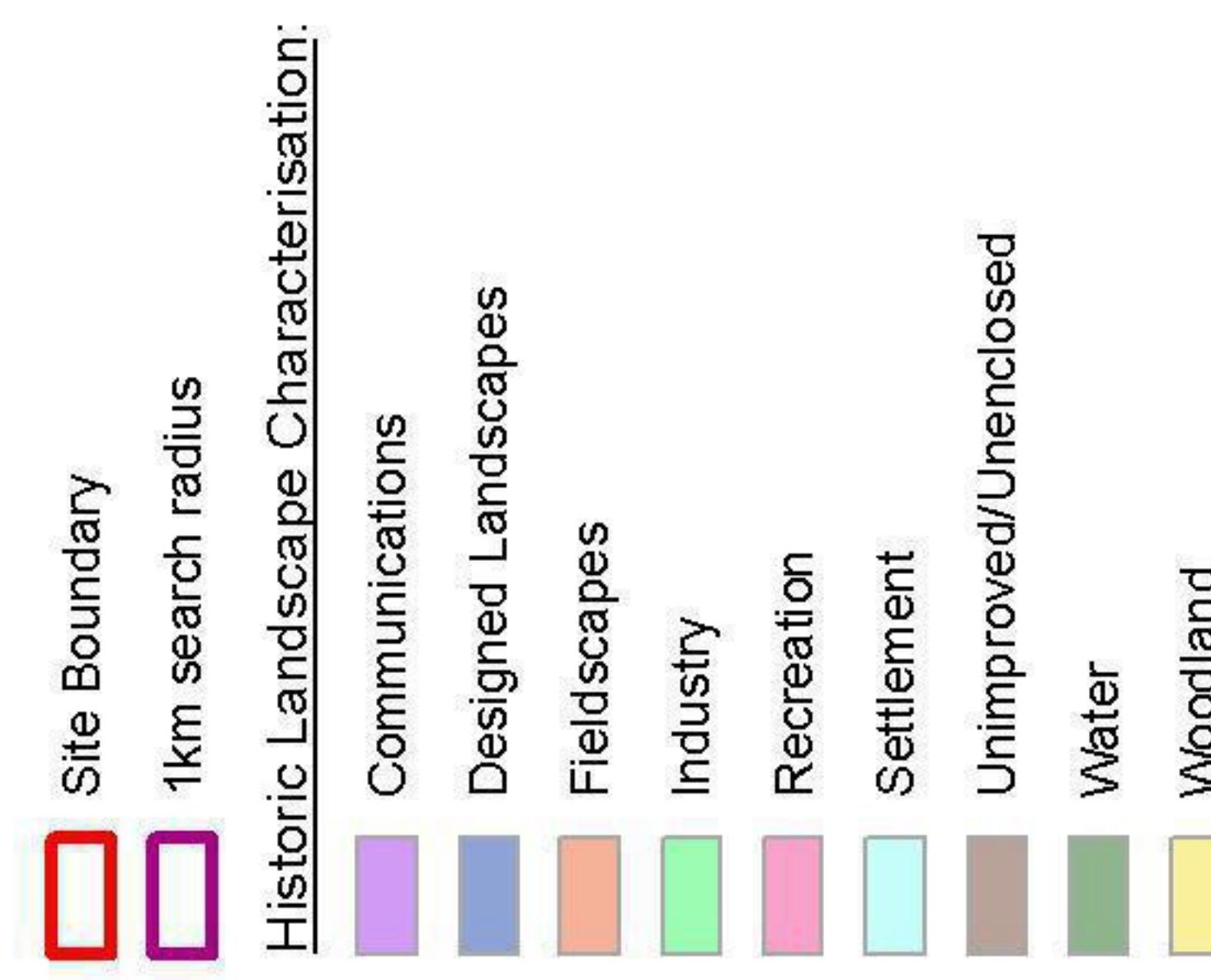
2025 Aerial Photograph
(GoogleEarth)

Appendices

Appendix 1

HER Location Plan (West Sussex Historic Environment Record 2025)


Legend



TETRA TECH

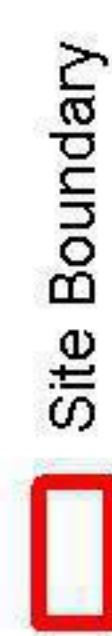
HLC Plan (West Sussex Historic Environment Record 2025)

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Appendix 2

LiDAR Plot

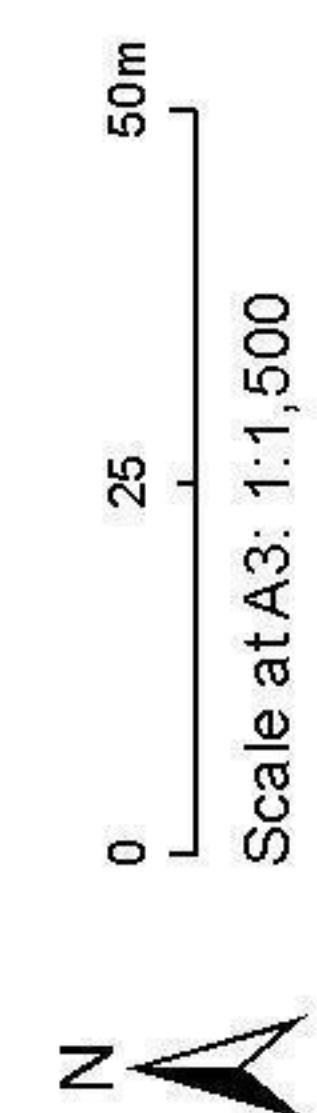
Legend

Site Boundary

LiDAR DATASource:
Environment Agency

Data Type: DTM

Resolution: 1m

Date Captured:
20.01.2020Processing:
Multi-direction Hillshade overlaid on
simple Local Relief Model

Scale at A3: 1:1,500

**Appendix 2****LiDAR Plot**