# Stanmore Village, Bridgnorth
# Archaeological and Heritage Technical Note
# edp5653_r001d

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This Archaeological and Heritage Technical Note has been prepared by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP), to provide an understanding and appraisal of potential archaeological and heritage issues in respect of proposals around Stanmore Village, Bridgnorth, Shropshire; hereafter referred to as 'the Site'. The Site is being promoted by Stanmore Consortium and this is an updated report based on a new red line boundary, which is illustrated on **Plan EDP H1** and where the old boundary is included for information only.

1.2 This Technical Note identifies: (1) the archaeological potential of the Site, including the potential for hitherto unrecorded archaeological remains; and (2) the potential for the development of the Site to result in changes to the 'setting' of designated heritage assets in a way that could result in harm to their significance.

1.3 The Site is located to the east of Bridgnorth, it comprises three distinct and separate land parcels and is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 373781, 293077 (**Plan EDP H1**). The Site is being put forward for promotion through the Local Plan for the following:

- Up to 850 new homes of all types and tenures;
- Up to 16 ha of new employment land;
- Extensive new public open space, including a central linear parkland;
- Green Infrastructure (GI) corridors of ecologically rich native planting with extensive tree coverage and incorporating sustainable drainage systems;
- Pedestrian linkage to Bridgnorth via a boardwalk through woodland; and
- Protection, enhancement and management of Hermitage Hill Coppice.

1.4 As set out above, the land within the Site is broken up across three parcels, where their locations and extents are each illustrated on **Plan EDP H1**.

1.5 The larger parcel (A) in the west comprises large, arable fields, the two smaller parcels to the east (B and C) comprise scrub covered grassland, woodland and a small arable field. The northern boundary of Parcel A is formed by the A454, which turns south and runs through the Site to join the A458, which forms its southern boundary. The western part of the Site is adjacent

to Hermitage Hill Coppice, with a 15m buffer against the woodland, with residential and commercial development on the eastern edge of Bridgnorth beyond. The southern and eastern boundaries consist of hedgerows. To the north, south and east is further arable farmland.

## 2. Methodology

2.1 The preparation of this Technical Note has principally involved consultation of readily available archaeological and historical information, including:

- The National Heritage List for England (NHLE), curated by Historic England (HE);
- Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER);
- Selected online sources including historic mapping;
- National and Local Planning Policy; and
- Site visits undertaken in June 2019 and September 2020.

2.2 Data was requested for a study area extending 1km from the Site, although the overview of recorded archaeological assets and features of potential interest presented as **Plan EDP H1** concentrates on those within the Site.

***Legislative Context***

2.3 The relevant legislation concerning the treatment of scheduled monuments is the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979* (HMSO, 1979). This Act details the designation, care and management of scheduled monuments, as well as detailing the procedures needed to obtain permission for works which would directly impact upon their preservation. The act does not confer any statutory protection on the setting of a scheduled monument, although this is still considered as a policy matter in Paragraph 194 (and elsewhere) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

2.4 S66(1) and 72(1) of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* set out the duties of a Local Planning Authority (LPA) in respect of the treatment of listed buildings and conservation areas through the planning process. The two set out the statutory duties of the decision maker, where proposed development would affect a listed building or its setting or the character or appearance of a conservation area.

2.5 The '*special regard*' duty of the 1990 Act has been tested in the Courts and confirmed to require that '*considerable importance and weight*' is afforded by the decision maker to the desirability of preserving a listed building and its setting or the character or appearance of a conservation area. However, there is no absolute requirement to 'preserve' and it still falls to the decision

maker (such as an LPA) to assess the proposal which is before them and to determine whether it would represent '*acceptable change*' even if it would fail to '*preserve*'.

***Planning Context***

2.6 The appraisal set out in this Technical Note is undertaken in the context of National and Local Planning Policy, including the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF; 2019); *Shropshire Council Core Strategy* (2011) and the *Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Management of Development Plan* ('SAMDev Plan', 2015).

2.7 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in June 2019 and Section 16 sets out the government's approach to the conservation and management of the historic environment, including listed buildings, through the planning process. The opening paragraph, 184 recognises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

2.8 Key paragraphs of the NPPF are: 189, which is concerned with submission requirements; 193, which is concerned with impacts on designated heritage assets; 195 and 196, which are concerned with the decision-making process where harm would accrue to a designated heritage asset; and 197 which addresses effects on non-designated heritage assets.

2.9 Shropshire Council Core Strategy includes *Policy CS6: Sustainable Design and Development Principles*, which includes the requirement that development:

"*Protects, restores, conserves and enhances the natural, built and historic environment and is appropriate in scale, density, pattern and design taking into account the local context and character, and those features which contribute to local character, having regard to national and local design guidance, landscape character assessments and ecological strategies where appropriate; contributes to the health and wellbeing of communities, including safeguarding residential and local amenity and the achievement of local standards for the provision and quality of open space, sport and recreational facilities.*"

2.10 Core Strategy *Policy CS17: Environmental Networks* states:

*"Development will identify, protect, enhance, expand and connect Shropshire's environmental assets, to create a multifunctional network of natural and historic resources. This will be achieved by ensuring that all development:*

- *Protects and enhances the diversity, high quality and local character of Shropshire's natural, built and historic environment, and does not adversely affect the visual, ecological, geological, heritage or recreational values and functions of these assets, their immediate surroundings or their connecting corridors;*

- *Contributes to local distinctiveness, having regard to the quality of Shropshire's environment, including landscape, biodiversity and heritage assets; and*

- *Does not have a significant adverse impact on Shropshire's environmental assets and does not create barriers or sever links between dependant sites."*

2.11 Shropshire Council SAMDev Plan contains *Policy MD13: The Historic Environment*, which states:

*"In accordance with Policies CS6 and CS17 and through applying the guidance in the Historic Environment SPD, Shropshire's heritage assets will be protected, conserved, sympathetically enhanced and restored by:*

- *Ensuring that wherever possible, proposals avoid harm or loss of significance to designated or non-designated heritage assets, including their settings;*

- *Ensuring that proposals which are likely to affect the significance of a designated or non-designated heritage asset, including its setting, are accompanied by a Heritage Assessment, including a qualitative visual assessment where appropriate; and*

- *Ensuring that proposals which are likely to have an adverse effect on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, including its setting, will only be permitted if it can be clearly demonstrated that the public benefits of the proposal outweigh the adverse effect. In making this assessment, the degree of harm or loss of significance to the asset including its setting, the importance of the asset and any potential beneficial use will be taken into account. Where such proposals are permitted, measures to mitigate and record the loss of significance to the asset including its setting and to advance understanding in a manner proportionate to the asset's importance and the level of impact, will be required*".

2.12 The Council's SAMDev Plan also includes *Policy MD2: Sustainable Design*, which sets out that:

*"Further to Policy CS6, for a development proposal to be considered acceptable it is required to:*

- *Protecting, conserving and enhancing the historic context and character of heritage assets, their significance and setting, in accordance with MD13; and*

- *Consider design of landscaping and open space holistically as part of the whole development to provide safe, useable and well-connected outdoor spaces which respond to and reinforce the character and context within which it is set, in accordance with Policy CS17 and MD12 and MD13, including:*

    - *Natural and semi-natural features, such as, trees, hedges, woodlands, ponds, wetlands, and watercourses, as well as existing landscape character, geological and heritage* assets."

***Guidance***

2.13 The assessment process has given due consideration to HE guidance on Conservation Areas, which is set out in *Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (HE, 2019) and setting, in *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning, Note 3 (Second Edition), The Setting of Heritage Assets* (HE, 2017).

2.14 When assessing the impact of proposals on the setting of heritage assets, it is not a question of whether there would be a direct physical impact, but instead whether change within its 'setting' would result in a loss of its 'significance'.

2.15 The HE (2017) guidance observes that: "*The NPPF makes it clear that the extent of the setting of a heritage asset is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve*" and that: "*Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate the significance or may be neutral.*"

2.16 On a practical level, the HE (2017) guidance identifies an approach to assessing setting in relation to development management which is based on a five-step procedure; i.e.:

- Identify which heritage assets are capable of being affected;
- Assess whether, how and to what degree, setting makes a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s);
- Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance;
- Explore ways of maximising enhancement and avoiding or minimising harm; and
- Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.

## 3. Designated Heritage Assets

3.1 There is part of one designated heritage asset (as defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF) within the Site. This is *The Hermitage* scheduled monument (1004782), located in the far north-western corner of the Site. There are no other designated heritage assets in the Site.

3.2 There are 53 listed buildings and one Conservation Area within the 1km study area. All bar eight of the listed buildings lie within Bridgnorth Conservation Area.

***Scheduled Monument***

3.3 Part of *The Hermitage* scheduled monument (**1004782**) lies within the far north-western corner of the Site, situated within the ancient woodland of 'Hermitage Hill Coppice' and occupying the west facing side of a steep slope. *The Hermitage* comprises a series of chambers in the sandstone, which were fenced off from access in 2010. It is thought to be of Anglo-Saxon origin and the solitary dwelling place of Athelardestan; believed to be the brother of King Athelstan, who fled to the hermitage to seek religious solitude.

3.4 *The Hermitage* was carved out of the soft red sandstone where natural cave formations also exist. It survives as four chambers, one of which was used as a chapel and is separated from the others by a crudely moulded circular arch with a shallow round headed recess at its east end. The chambers were partially excavated and surveyed in 1877. As such, aside from its entrances on the west-facing, steeply sloped cliff-faces of Hermitage Hill, the monument is underground, extending back under the site from the cliff-edge. The entrances on the ground surface are located within an area of woodland which is set aside as a protected green space and is not part of the proposed development Site.

3.5 Located on the cliff edge overlooking Low Town, the cave system was in continued use until the early 20th century for the homeless. The Town Clerk, Hubert Smith, recorded two cottages in the caves in 1877, one of which included a fireplace, chimney, window and doorway (**Images EDP 3.3** and **3.4** below). The Custodian's Cottage in the caves was occupied by Jinny and Bill Norton until 1939 when they and their neighbours moved into Stourbridge Road[1]. There are accounts of a tunnel leading from the caves to different parts of Bridgnorth, although no physical evidence for this has been found.

3.6 According to the scheduling citation, hermitages fell out of favour with the general dissolution of religious establishments in the mid-16th century. Around 500 hermitages are known from documents, but the locations of very few have been identified. As such, this is a rare monument type. The citation advises that all examples which exhibit surviving archaeological remains are worthy of protection. The citation further describes:

"*There is some damage to part of the western end, the hermitage provides a rare and well-preserved example of an early rock cut hermitage and will contribute to our knowledge and understanding of monasticism during the medieval period. The standing fabric of the hermitage, the chapel and associated rock cut features are expected to illuminate both the construction and development of the hermitage throughout its history. They will prove information relating to the dates of any developments at the site as well as evidence for changing ritual and religious practices from the Anglo-Saxon period until at least the 17th century. Buried remains, including artefacts and environmental deposits, will include information about the daily activities, range of contracts and the status of the occupants at the hermitage.*"

[1] https://www.aboutbridgnorth.com/the-hermitage-caves/ (access 19/06/2019)

3.7 The significance of the asset is assessed as deriving from its considerable archaeological interest as a relatively rare form of monument, although also from its considerable historical interest, both for its medieval origins, but also for its documented use in modern times. It also retains some architectural interest for the anthropogenic impact on the natural caves and surviving detailing. These interests are interlinked, with the physical remains having potential to contribute to our knowledge and understanding of monasticism during the medieval period.

3.8 Although part of the scheduled area extends into the Site, as noted above, this part of the monument is entirely below-ground, comprising caves beneath the Site. As such, given that development impacts that would be to such a depth as to intersect with the cave can easily be avoided, the presence of part of the scheduled monument in the Site does not represent an 'in principle' constraint to development in the north-west part of the Site. The details described in the schedule citation indicate that all known archaeological remains comprise the caves and their entrances; and there are no known above ground remains other than the cave entrances within Hermitage Hill Coppice that are not within the Site.

3.9 With regard to its setting, *The Hermitage* is well contained within Hermitage Hill Coppice, which is also designated as ancient woodland. This contributes strongly to the setting of the scheduled monument. The cave entrances open out to the west and it is from this aspect, within the woodland, and from the narrow footpaths that run through it, that they are experienced. Furthermore, some of the caves are now fenced with modern security fencing and have attracted anti-social behaviour resulting in rubbish being present at and around them (**Image EDP 3.1**). These factors detract from an experience of the cave entrances within the woodland, making them hard to appreciate and thus represent a negative aspect of their setting.

**Image EDP 3.1**: View of some of the Scheduled cave entrances at The Hermitage illustrating their setting within dense woodland and security fencing.

3.10 As an element of the setting of the asset, the arable fields within the Site are entirely neutral in their contribution to the monument's heritage significance. Due to their west facing aspect and surrounding woodland, the caves cannot be experienced from the land to the east within Parcel A of the Site.

3.11 The former location of a spring or well (**386**), thought to be used by the occupants of the cave dwellings, is recorded within the north-western field; although there is no known surviving remains of the spring. Although there is some historic connection with land in the north-west of the open part of the Site owing to the spring/well, this cannot be experienced now or appreciated because the well is no longer extant and the land comprises a modern arable field adjacent to woodland (**Image EDP 3.2**).

**Image EDP 3.2**: View across the field in the north-west part of the Site, illustrating the character of the land as an arable field, the edge of the woodland and the lack of any appreciation of the Hermitage caves or features related to their significance.

3.12 Given the location and nature of the scheduled monument below ground and with its entrances in an area of woodland to be retained beyond the boundary of the Site, and, that the Site does not, at face value, represent a part of the monument's setting that makes any contribution to its significance, it is concluded that the scheduled monument does not represent a significant constraint to the deliverability and/or capacity of the Site for development. Indeed, there is no reason to believe that the Site could not come forward in a way that would either preserve or actively enhance the significance of this Scheduled Monument, as it is within the applicant's

control and could hence be subject to improved management and presentation through the development.

**Image EDP 3.3**: Historic image of the Hermitage Caves (https://www.aboutbridgnorth.com/the-hermitage-caves accessed 19.06.19).

**Image EDP 3.4**: Historic image of the Hermitage Caves (https://www.aboutbridgnorth.com/the-hermitage-caves accessed 19.06.19).

***Bridgnorth Conservation Area and Listed Buildings***

3.13 Bridgnorth Conservation Area was designated on 28 May 1971. Extensions to the Conservation Area were adopted by Bridgnorth District Council on 05 January 1981, 23 July 1948 and 16 June 1999. At its closest point the Conservation Area lies some 620m to the west of the Site.

3.14 According to the Bridgnorth Conservation Area Appraisal (BCAA; April 1999), the Conservation Area is situated within the narrow Severn Valley and comprises virtually the whole of the historic core of the town, expanding from the Endowed School and the former railway line north-east of Severn Cliff to Panpudding Hill and the Old Stourbridge Road in the south, and from Mill Street and Bernard's Hill on the east to Salop Street and Oldbury Wells on the west. The Conservation Area includes Castle Hill; the site of the medieval town gates; the parish churches; the historic, commercial and residential streets of both High and Low Town; part of the Severn Valley Railway; and the earthworks located on Panpudding Hill.

3.15 The BCAA describes Bridgnorth as an exceptionally well-preserved historic market town, with a high concentration of historic buildings of many different types, sizes and styles in a range of traditional materials, randomly mixed together, which gives the streets of Bridgnorth an enormously diverse appearance. The dramatic difference in levels is a major element of the town's character, dividing the town into High Town and Low Town. The BCAA states:

"*To the east the valley side has some dramatic outcrops of rock, especially High Rock and The Hermitage, and a dense coverage of mature trees. This forms an impressive backdrop to views out from High Town, restricting distant views and giving a sense of enclosure. There are more distant views out into the countryside to the north and south along the river.*"

3.16 There are nearly 240 listed buildings within Bridgnorth Conservation Area, including public buildings, chapels, commercial buildings, houses and outbuildings. There is a great variety of buildings of many different dates, types, sizes, styles, materials and details – which forms one of Bridgnorth's most striking characteristics.

3.17 Some 45 of these listed buildings are with the 1km study area. According to the BCAA the collection of historic buildings "*...are outstanding, but it is the very high concentration of old buildings of lesser individual importance, listed and unlisted, which together make the greatest contribution to Bridgnorth's special character and appearance*".

3.18 Many of these listed buildings are well contained within their local street scene. The positive aspects of their setting are derived from their immediate surroundings and their relationships with the other historic structures in Bridgnorth. Some of these are landmark buildings, visible from some distance from the Severn Valley, as well as in looking from Low Town to High Town. However, as described above, there is no visual relationship between the Conservation Area and its constituent listed buildings and the land within Parcel A of the Site beyond Hermitage Hill Coppice to the east.

3.19 As such, it is judged that the character, appearance and setting of Bridgnorth Conservation Area could be conserved in the event of development within the Site (east of Hermitage Hill Coppice), and there would be no harm to listed buildings within the Conservation Area as a result of change to their setting. This position was verified during the course of the site visit. As such none of these listed buildings are considered further within the assessment.

***Listed Buildings Outside Bridgnorth Conservation Area***

3.20 There are eight listed buildings within the 1km study area, which are not within Bridgnorth Conservation Area. Further details are given below on the following assets, where potential effects as a result of changes to their setting have been identified. Although, the current mixed character of the Site and environs, where this encompasses industrial and residential elements, as well as large modern agricultural buildings, is obviously recognised

3.21 Those buildings which could potentially be affected are:

- *Swancote Farm House* (**1190070**) which lies c. 930m east of Parcel A and c. 820m north of Parcels B and C;
- *Garden House at Swancote Farm* (**1053758**) which is immediately adjacent to *Swancote Farm House*;
- *Stanmore Hall* (**1367568**) which lies c. 280m to the south-east of Parcel A of the Site; and
- *Burcote Villa* (**1367567**) which lies c. 1km to the north-east of Parcel A of the Site.

3.22 No potential for any impact has been identified on the remainder of listed buildings due to the factors of local topography and intervening built form, vegetation and distance.

*Swancote Farm House (**1190070**) and Garden House at Swancote Farm (**1053758**)*

3.23 Both *Swancote Farm House* and the *Garden House at Swancote Farm* date to the 18th century and are built of red brick. The farmhouse faces south on to the A454. It is now used as a country club. The Garden House is an outbuilding in the grounds of the farmhouse, with a pigeon loft. The heritage significance of the assets derives mainly from their primary architectural interest and the possible former historic connection with the non-designated Swancote Farm (**25949**), situated across the A454 from it and now part of a modern, industrial farm.

3.24 The farmhouse and the Garden House are situated within a naturally occurring dip in the local topography and are surrounded by trees, including those on the south side of the A454, as well as adjacent paddocks, which are functionally related to the farmhouse. The modern farm to the south, which is bounded by trees, as well as broad arable fields to the south-west separate the Site from the farmhouse and garden house. As such, all of the Site's parcels are well-removed and screened from the listed buildings.

3.25 Whilst there are distant views of the upper floors and roof of *Swancote Farm House* from land at the western edge of Parcel A of the Site, these are entirely incidental, on account of the land's elevation and do not allow for an appreciation of the architectural quality of the houses, nor are they from land that has any known historical association with the farm, rather being from land that was in the 19th century at least (as set out on the Tithe Map Apportionment for Worfield Parish of 1838) associated with Hermitage Farm.

3.26 As such, it is considered that development within the Site could be accommodated without causing harm to the heritage significance of either asset. Therefore, neither *Swancote Farm House* nor *Garden House at Swancote Farm* present an in-principle or over-riding constraint to the development of the Site and are unlikely to have a bearing on its capacity.

*Stanmore Hall (**1367568**)*

3.27 This Grade II listed three-storey house dates from c.1870. *Stanmore Hall* is built in a variety of styles including a French Renaissance roof and Venetian gothic windows in the upper part of the hall. The heritage significance of the asset derives mainly from its primary architectural interest, with some historical interest as a notable country house.

3.28 *Stanmore Hall* is situated within the non-designated Stanmore Grove park and garden (**7549**) which is recorded on the HER and extends mostly to the south-east of the house. The main elevation to the house faces south-east over the formal gardens, in the direction of Stanmore Hall Touring Caravan Park, which is now situated in the north-east corner of the former park. The whole area is well wooded. The gardens and surrounding park to Stanmore Hall provide the elements of its setting which make the strongest positive contribution to its heritage significance.

3.29 Land within the site is physically separated from the grounds and former park to *Stanmore Hall* by the A458 and by the park's wooded belts on its north-west side. The land at the site has no historical association with Stanmore Hall and, on historic maps, is illustrated beyond the extent of the parkland. Intermittent glimpses of the upper parts of the house are possible from within the southern end of Parcel A at the higher elevations. However, these are heavily filtered by intervening trees and have little relevance to the house's significance, being incidental views to its rear elevation from land that has no association with it. As such, the land at the site makes no contribution to the significance of Stanmore Hall.

3.30 Views of any development within the Site from the immediate environs to *Stanmore Hall* would be screened out by the existing treescape, other than at the margins of the former parkland, i.e. on the A458, where development in the southern part of Parcel A would be visible as an extension of the urban edge of Bridgnorth. However, the parkland itself is not a designated asset and, although its wider setting would change, development would only be visible at most from the upper floors of the house and otherwise, would not be experienced in conjunction with the listed building. Given that the well-enclosed parkland setting of the house would be unchanged it is unlikely that development would result in any harm to the asset's significance. Consequently, *Stanmore Hall* does not present a constraint to the development of the Site and

is unlikely to have a bearing on its capacity, as such the presence of the listed building should not impede the Site's allocation.

*Burcote Villa (**1367567**)*

3.31 The Grade II listed *Burcote Villa* is an early 19th century farmhouse, built from red brick over two storeys and with a tile roof. The heritage significance of the asset derives mainly from its primary architectural interest, with some local historical interest as a farmhouse.

3.32 *Burcote Villa* is situated within the non-designated Burcote Villa Farm (**25985**), a 19th century farmstead which is recorded on the HER to the east. The main elevation of the farmhouse faces to the south-east. Burcote Villa Farm provides those elements of the setting of the villa which make the strongest positive contribution to its heritage significance.

3.33 Land within the Site is physically separated from the *Burcote Villa* by arable fields and the topography and landscaping surrounding *Burcote Villa* and the A454, which provides effective screening, allowing only a distant view from land in the north of Parcel A of the Site to the asset. There is no apparent historic connection with *Burcote Villa* and land within the Site.

3.34 There is therefore little or no potential for an impact on *Burcote Villa* and, consequently, *Burcote Villa* does not present an in-principle constraint to the development of the Site and is unlikely to have a bearing on its capacity.

## 4. Non-designated Heritage Assets

***Within the Site***

4.1 Shropshire HER records 10 previously recorded non-designated heritage assets within the Site, the earliest of which date to the Mesolithic period.

4.2 A flint scatter (1341) comprising 24 flakes; comprising mostly fragmentary waste but also two cores and two scrapers; was identified during fieldwalking in the south of the Parcel A of the Site. It is unclear from the HER record whether the collection was made across the whole fieldwalking area or was from a specific location within the field. Such an assemblage undoubtedly attests to activity of this date in the Site, although given the general transience of such activity, there may not necessarily be any associated below-ground archaeological features or specific focus of activity. Further information on the collection, the provenance of the record and on the likelihood of further Mesolithic material within the Site would be required to support an application to develop the site. However, on the basis of the HER record, there is no suggestion that the presence of this material represents a constraint to the Site's capacity for development and should not impede its allocation.

4.3 Within Parcel A of the Site recorded cropmarks indicate three rectangular or sub-rectangular enclosures, identified from aerial photographs. Two of these are single ditched (**205**, **2321**), one

double ditched (**2320**), and these are thought to date to from the early Iron Age or Roman period. A pit alignment ascribed a general prehistoric period has also been identified from cropmarks in the north of the Site. These most commonly represent boundary features of an Iron Age date, although this has not been tested through archaeological investigation.

4.4 It is noteworthy that cropmarks do not necessarily directly indicate the presence of archaeological remains, being sometimes caused instead by non-archaeological factors and processes. Further archaeological evaluation would be required to elicit whether these features do reflect buried archaeology, however, on the basis of the information in the HER, there is no indication that remains might exist that would be of such high significance so as to require preservation *in situ* within the Site. The greatest likelihood is that the loss of any archaeological remains found within the site could be mitigated through a programme of excavation and recording in consultation with the Shropshire Council Historic Environment Team and, therefore, archaeological remains related to these cropmarks would not represent a constraint to the Site's development.

4.5 The route of a possible Roman Road (**4076**), connecting the fort at Greensforge near Stourbridge to the forts at Forden Gaer, Caersws and Castell Collen, is suggested to run adjacent to and intersect with the northern boundary of the Site. However, no physical evidence for this road is known within the vicinity of the Site. As for the cropmarks above, the presence of the Roman road could be assessed through archaeological evaluation, however, archaeological remains related to it should not represent a constraint to the Site allocation for development as their loss could be mitigated through archaeological recording.

4.6 The only features of medieval interest within the Site are *The Hermitage* (**1004782**) and the recorded location of the Hermitage Well (**386**), which are discussed above.

4.7 The former site of Bridgnorth Race Course (**32056**), dating from the early 18th century, intersects with a small part of Parcel A and covers the entirety of Parcel B of the Site. The racecourse was identified on an undated plan of the Morfe Estate (**Image EDP 4.1**). No apparent remains of the racecourse were noted within the Site during the Site visit and none are depicted upon any subsequent cartographic sources including the 1839 Worfield Tithe Map (**Image EDP 4.2**). The settlement of The Hobbins; including Hobbins House, Stanmore Country Park and Stanmore Industrial Estate; lie within the boundary of the racecourse. The previously mentioned cropmark of the prehistoric pit alignment also lies within the boundary of the racecourse. Given the lack of evidence for remains related to it, the presence of the former racecourse does not represent a constraint to the Site's allocation for development.

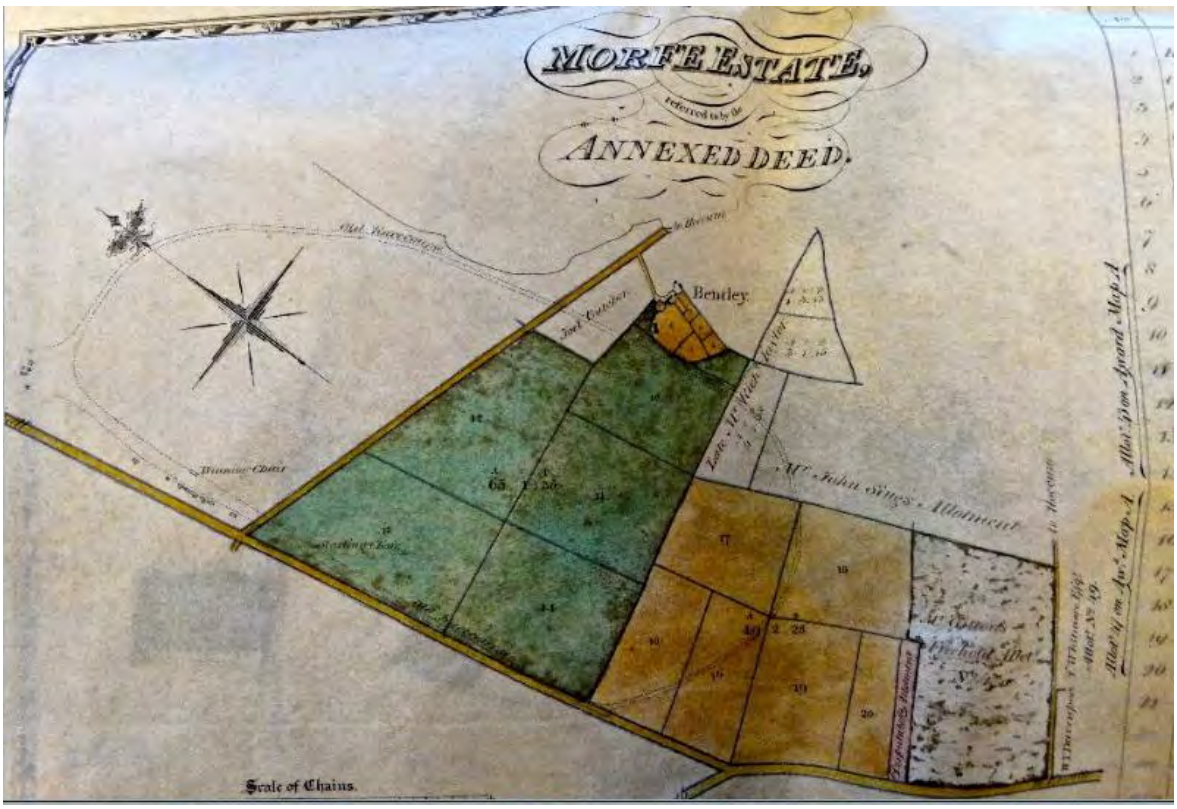



**Image EDP 4.1**: Extract from Morfe Estate map (undated).

**Image EDP 4.2**: Extract from the 1839 Worfield Tithe map.

4.8 Hermitage Farm (**25951**), a non-designated 19th century farmstead, lies within Parcel A of the Site. It was first identified and classified as possessing heritage interest by the Historic Farmsteads Characterisation Project 2008 - 2010. The main façade of the house looks out onto the south of Parcel A and the house is experienced from across the surrounding farmland within the Site, which reflects its historical and functionally related setting of agricultural land. In this respect, the majority of the asset's significance is contained in its physical fabric although the surrounding fields do make a small contribution.

4.9 As a non-designated heritage asset, in respect of Paragraph 197 of the NPPF, the significance of Hermitage Farm, and the contribution of its setting to this, would need to be addressed in an assessment of any development proposals, and a balanced judgement made based on the scale of loss. However, there is scope for the house to be retained and for its architecture to have an influence on the Site's character and, as such, it is considered that, given this potential for the building's evolution as a part of the development, that the house does not represent a constraint to the Site's capacity for development and should not impede its allocation.

***Within the Study Area***

4.10 There are numerous records within the HER from the study area, with records relating to activity from the prehistoric to modern periods.

4.11 Two additional cropmarks for pit alignments have been identified, some 420m to the south-east (**28775**) and some 840m to the east of the Site (**28738**), which give more credence to these being Iron Age boundary features. Findspots of prehistoric flint have also been recorded on the HER. These include a second Mesolithic flint scatter (**1337**), some 920m to the north of the Site; a Neolithic polished stone axe (**2696**) some 720m to the west and another assemblage containing a prehistoric knife, scraper and some struck flakes (**1343**) 1km to the north.

4.12 There are no definitively Bronze Age remains recorded anywhere within the study area.

4.13 A further two sub-rectangular enclosures have been identified by cropmarks within the study area, both of which are thought to date from the early Iron Age or Roman period. These are a single ditched enclosure (**401**) some 845m to the north of the Site and a double ditched enclosure (**203**) some 945m to the south of the Site.

4.14 The only other known Roman record within the 1km study area relates to the findspot of a coin of Valens (**386**), which dates from 364 - 378 AD. It is recorded some 740m to the west of the Site within the Low Town of Bridgnorth.

4.15 The town of Bridgnorth (**6044**) was of great strategic importance in the medieval period. It was one of only three places on the central part of the River Severn with a bridge to cross. It was therefore an important route towards Wales and a mid-point between Worcester and Shrewsbury which were the only other crossing places.

4.16 The medieval street system (**5647**) has continued in use with some alteration through the post-medieval period (**6046**). The town has numerous tenement plots (**5650**, **5649**, **5634**, **5636**, **5637**, **5638**, **5639**, **5687**, **5688**) spread throughout it and a market place (**5685**) at St Johns. Within the town a Franciscan Friary (**381**) was in existence by 13th century, along with St James Leper Hospital (**390**). The medieval chapel at St James hospital has been incorporated in St James cottage (**20399**). Skeletal remains (**29094**) were discovered which are likely to have been from the chapel.

4.17 Defences (**374**) encasing the town were built during the medieval period and the Cripple Gate or town gate (**397**) granted access into the town. Low Town, to the east of the River Severn, had its own set of defences (**424**) and its own market place (**5684**). The Grade II listed *bridge* (**1053177**) connecting High Town and Low Town has medieval origins, but was largely rebuilt in 1795 and then 1823.

4.18 Utilising the natural resources available, a 'bylet' (**20948**) water channel was built of the River Severn allowing residents to take and return water to the river. A fish weir (**2940**) has also been recorded along the course of the bylet. The extent of the medieval wharf (**5610**) along the River Severn is unknown. The sandstone geology made it easy for caves to form and these were often used by the town's inhabitants. Along with *The Hermitage* there are three other cave dwellings (**4800**, **4801**, **4803**) recorded into the HER in Bridgnorth, some 950m to the west of the Site. Although dated as post-medieval, they may in fact have been in use much earlier. The flights of steps of between High Town and Low Town, which are carved out of the sandstone, are probably of medieval origin.

4.19 A fire in High Town in 1646 destroyed the majority of the earlier medieval buildings. However, some of the 16th century and 17th century timber framed buildings have survived. Bridgnorth continued to develop through the next few centuries.

4.20 Approximately 95m west of Parcel B of the Site, lies Hobbins House (**25950**), a 19th century farmstead also recorded on the Historic Farmsteads Characterisation Project. Hobbins House faces to the east towards Stanmore Country Park. Its former setting of farmland is now entirely occupied by a modern housing development into which the house is incorporated. The site does not include any land that could be considered as part of its setting.

4.21 The Site of the former RAF Bridgnorth (**29127**) is recorded c.70m south of Parcel B of the Site. This camp was known as RAF Bridgnorth, which opened in 1939 to provide basic training for new recruits and closed in 1963. There was no runway associated with the camp. To the south of the former racecourse lies a Royal Observer Corps monitoring post (**32791**), which was active between May 1961 and October 1968. Stanmore Industrial estate now lies on the site of RAF Bridgnorth. There is a memorial garden within Stanmore Country Park which marks the Site of the RAF Bridgnorth and commemorates those members of the RAF who served there.

## 5. Past Investigation

5.1 The HER 'event record' identifies a single record of intrusive archaeological investigation within the Site. Following a desk-based assessment a programme of strip, map and record as well as a watching brief (**ESA7945**) was carried out on land between Swancote Farm and Bridgnorth Aluminium as part of planning permission for the excavation of a cable trench. The watching brief was carried out in three areas where the cable trench passed close to archaeological features.

5.2 However, no finds or features of archaeological significance were identified, including where the works crossed one of the cropmark enclosures (**2321**). As noted above, the cropmarks may not in fact relate to buried archaeological remains and the presence of archaeological remains within the Site should be ascertained through archaeological evaluation prior to development.

## 6. Cartographic Sources

6.1 The earliest map consulted was John Rocque's 1752 Survey of the County of Salop. No internal field boundaries are depicted upon this map. The road network within Bridgnorth and the Site is shown as well established. Robert Dawson's 1815 map of Bridgnorth shows the same level of detail.

6.2 The Morfe Estate map discussed above (**Image EDP 4.2**) is undated, although it is believed to pre-date the Worfield Tithe Map of 1839. The estate map covers the centre of the Site, indicating the racecourse and some field boundaries which show large open fields. The Worfield Tithe Map is the first to show detail within the Site, where the majority of the fields are now rectangular. Hermitage Farm is present and a body of water is present to the south. The coppice of trees running along the west of the Site is mapped and labelled, Hermitage Hill.

6.3 The OS First Edition map of 1883 to the later editions of 1924 demonstrate that the field pattern within the Site remained largely the same, although several field boundaries were removed.

6.4 No other heritage assets within the Site have been identified from historic maps, beyond those already described within Shropshire HER.

## 7. Historic Landscape Character

7.1 The information regarding Historic Landscape Character (HLC) held by Shropshire HER identifies the majority of the arable fields in Parcel A of the Site as Planned Enclosure (**F18583**, **F18584**). The north of the Site is identified as 'very large post-war fields' (**F18582**). A second area within Parcel A is identified as 'very large post-war fields' (**F18585**). Parcel B is associated with Stanmore Industrial Estate and it is identified as Industrial Complex (Ind379). Parcel C of the Site has been identified as 'other small rectangular fields (**F18574**). None of these definitions suggest any heritage significance to the landscape character of the land within the Site that might represent a constraint to its development.

## 8. Conclusions

8.1 There is one designated heritage asset (as defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF) partly within the Site. This is *The Hermitage* scheduled monument (**1004782**), located in the far north-western corner. The details described in the scheduling citation indicate that all known archaeological remains related to the monument comprise caves and their entrances. There are no known above ground remains within the Site, with the entrances within Hermitage Hill Coppice located beyond the Site boundary to the west.

8.2 The above-ground remains of *The Hermitage* are therefore well contained within Hermitage Hill Coppice, which is also designated as ancient woodland. The arable fields within the Site are concluded to be a neutral element of the setting of the asset and make no contribution to its significance one way or the other. Hence, whilst further assessment will be required of emerging development proposals, it is considered that development within the Site could easily be accommodated without causing harm to the heritage significance of *The Hermitage* scheduled monument. Indeed, there is no reason to believe that the Site could not come forward in a way that would either preserve or actively enhance the significance of this Scheduled Monument, as it is within the applicant's control and could hence be subject to improved management and presentation through the development.

8.3 No potential for any adverse impact has been identified on any other designated heritage assets outside the Site and so, in this respect, the presence of designated heritage assets outwith the Site does not represent a constraint to the Site's development or its capacity for development and, should not impede its allocation.

8.4 Some potential for archaeological remains has been identified within the Site. Notably, cropmarks suggesting the presence of possible Iron Age or Roman enclosures, within Parcel A. An archaeological watching brief carried out on the excavation of a cable trench crossing one of these enclosures recorded no finds or features of archaeological significance. If the cropmarks are demonstrated to reflect buried archaeological remains, such remains are unlikely to represent a constraint to the Site's development and their loss could be mitigated through a programme of archaeological recording in consultation with the Shropshire Council Historic Environment Team.

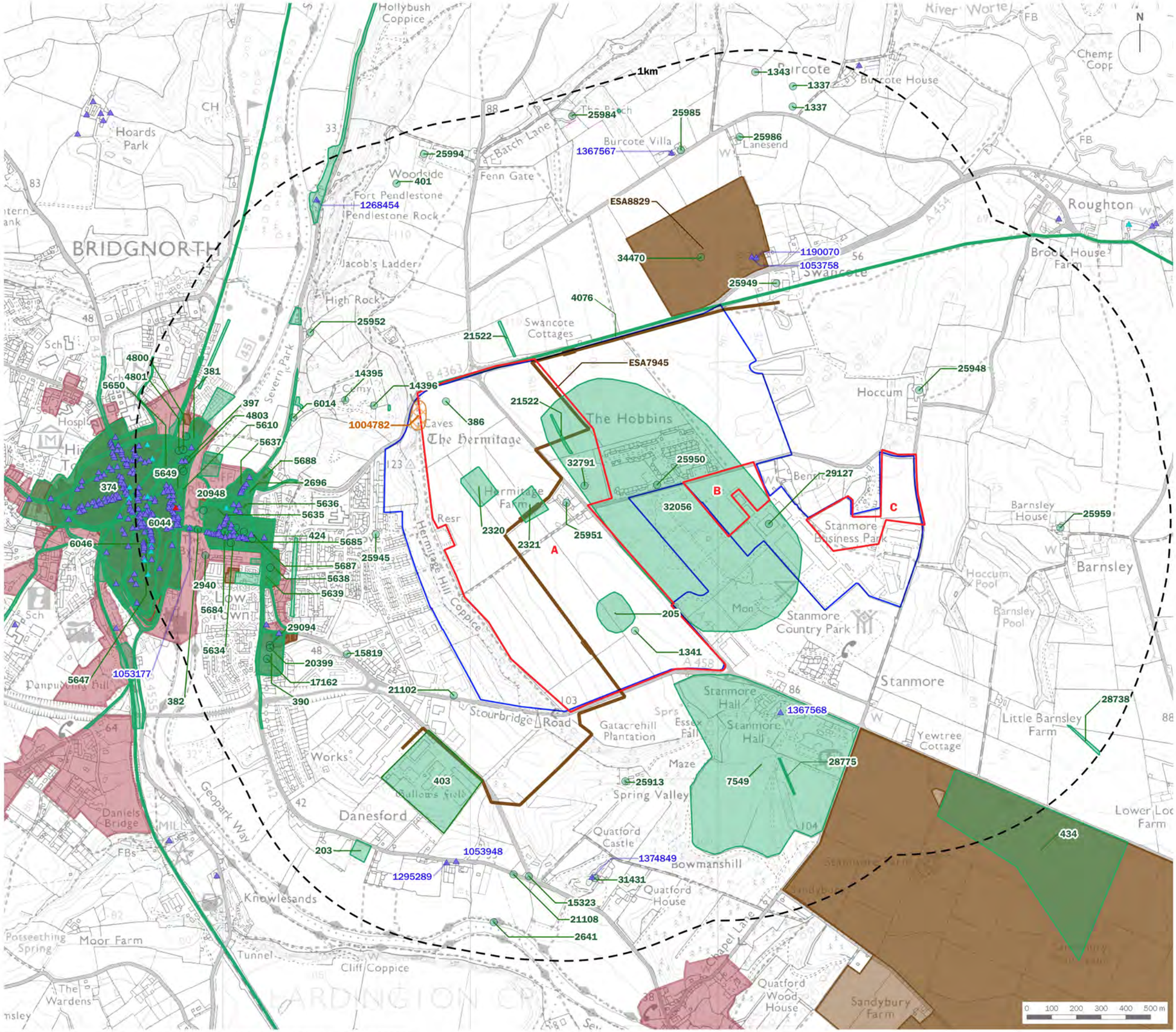
8.5 Other records indicate a Mesolithic flint scatter, the possible route of a Roman road at the northern edge of the Site and the possible location of a well, or spring associated with *The Hermitage* scheduled monument. The presence of archaeological remains related to these records should be established in advance of the Site's development. However, none of these records suggests the presence of archaeology that should require preservation *in situ* and the greatest likelihood is that the loss of remains can be mitigated through archaeological recording. As such, none of these records represents a constraint to the Site's capacity for development or should impede its candidacy for allocation.

8.6 Given the above assets and features of interest, a programme of archaeological survey, assessment and evaluation would be required of any development proposals in order to inform the appropriate response to these and any mitigation measures required. The arable land within the Site is likely to have been in agricultural use since at least the medieval period and cultivation is likely to have impacted on any below ground archaeological remains that may have been present. The 'brownfield' areas of the Site are likely to be highly truncated and be of little archaeological potential, other than perhaps for remains of the nearby RAF Bridgnorth.

8.7 However, it is unlikely at this stage that any archaeological remains within the Site would be of such extent and/or significance to preclude its deliverability or its capacity for development and instead the most likely scenario is that further investigation and recording will be needed in light of planning permission and ahead of construction commencing, in order to mitigate the impact of development in this regard.

8.8 Based on the information to date, there is no evidence to suggest that future development of this Site could not be designed in such a way as to accord with legislation and planning policies addressing the conservation and management of the historic environment.

**Plan EDP H1**
**Overview of Heritage Assets**
(edp5653_d008c 08 September 2020 EJ/RJ)




Site Boundary

Previous Site Boundary

1km Study Area

Scheduled Monument

Listed Building

Grade I Listed

Grade II* Listed

Grade II Listed

Conservation Area

HER Monument

HER Event

client

**Stanmore Consortium**

project title

**Stanmore Village, Bridgnorth**

drawing title

**Plan EDP H1: Overview of Heritage Assets**

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|---|---|---|---|
| date | 08 SEPTEMBER 2020 | drawn by | EJ |
| drawing number | edp5653_d008c | checked | RJ |
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the environmental dimension partnership

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