
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED
ASSESSMENT OF LAND AT
MILL DROVE SOUTH
COWBIT
LINCOLNSHIRE**

**Work Undertaken For
Templeman Associates Limited**

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Report Compiled by
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National Grid Reference: TF 2657 1812

APS Report No. 62/18

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
PROJECT
SERVICES**



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1. SUMMARY

An archaeological desk-based assessment was undertaken of land adjacent to Mill Drove South, Cowbit, Lincolnshire. The assessment was undertaken in order to determine the archaeological implications of proposed development of the site.

The site is located in an area of significant archaeological interest, spanning the Iron Age (800 BC-AD 43) to the modern day. Iron Age settlements and salterns (salt-making sites) are recorded from dispersed throughout the general vicinity and were located along the levees alongside the Welland and adjacent creeks. This situation appears to have continued into the Roman period (AD 43-410), though are more frequent and extensive in their distribution.

Evidence for Saxon (AD 410-1066) settlement in the area is restricted to a single sherd of pottery recovered from a Roman site.

Cowbit developed as a village during the 12th century, following the construction of the New Fendyke, a bank designed to limit flooding from the fen to the south. The village appears to be focussed on the church of St Mary with much of the surrounding area lying within the open fields.

This situation continued into the post-medieval period (AD 1540-1900) with the area being enclosed by the early 19th century. During the mid-19th century, the western part of the Site was developed into a railway siding, of which an engine shed still remains though all other elements have been removed. The eastern part of the Site was developed in the mid-20th century as a nursery.

There is potential for remains of the Iron Age and Roman period to survive at the Site, though these are more likely to be impacted upon by the railway sidings and nursery buildings. Given its former use, the proposed development will also have an impact on the setting of Cowbit railway station.

A walkover survey of the Site revealed no archaeological features and no finds were recorded. The Site is unsuitable for non-invasive archaeological methods (eg. fieldwalking and geophysical survey) prior to any trial trenching.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Definition of Desk-Based Assessment

An archaeological desk-based assessment is defined as a 'programme of study of the historic environment within a specified area or site on land, the inter-tidal zone or underwater that addresses agreed research and/or conservation objectives. It consists of an analysis of existing written, graphic, photographic and electronic information in order to identify the likely heritage assets, their interests and significance and the character of the study area, including appropriate consideration of the settings of heritage assets and, in England, the nature, extent and quality of the known or potential archaeological, historic, architectural and artistic interest. Significance is to be judged in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate' (ClfA 2014).

2.2 Background

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by Templeman Associates Limited to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment relating to land at Mill Drove South, Cowbit, Lincolnshire. This was in order to accompany a planning application for a housing-led development at the site.

2.3 Site Location

Cowbit is located 5km southeast of Spalding and 8km northeast of Crowland in the administrative district of South Holland, Lincolnshire (Fig. 1).

The site is located 630m east of the centre of the village as defined by the parish church of St Mary at National Grid Reference TF 2657 1812 (Fig. 2).

Situated on the north side of Stonegate and Moulton Chapel Road, the site is dissected by Mill Drove South.

2.4 Topography and Geology

Local soils comprise the Wisbech Series, typically coarse silty calcareous alluvial gley soils (Robson 1990, 37). These are developed upon a drift geology of younger marine alluvium which in turn seals a solid geology of Jurassic Oxford Clay (BGS 1992).

The local topography describes the Site lying at a height of c. 3m OD on generally level ground of the south Lincolnshire Fens. The Site encompasses some 1.73 hectares.

3. AIMS

The purpose of the desk-based assessment is to obtain information about the known and potential archaeological resource of the assessment area. In addition to the above, statutory and advisory heritage constraints are identified.

4. METHODS

In the following text, the terms *Site* refer to the limits of the application site and the *Assessment Area* comprises an area within a 1km radius of the centre of the Site.

The research undertaken in the compilation of this archaeological desk-based assessment involved the examination of all available sources relevant to the Site at Scunthorpe, and the immediate surrounding area. These sources consisted of:

- Historical documents, held in the Lincolnshire Archive Office.
- Enclosure, and other maps and plans, held in the Lincolnshire Archive Office
- Recent and early edition Ordnance Survey (OS) maps
- The Historic Environment Record (HER), located at Lincolnshire County Council
- Archaeological and historical books and journals.
- Aerial photographs

A full list of the sources is contained within

the bibliography.

This research was supplemented by a walkover survey of the Site, undertaken to assess the current ground conditions, land-use patterns and to ascertain the presence of any surface finds of an archaeological character, and of features that might indicate the presence of archaeological remains. The site reconnaissance also entailed visiting nearby designated heritage assets to determine whether they were inter-visible with the Site and to assess setting issues.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Historical Evidence

Cowbit is first referred to in 1267 as *Coubiht*, from the Old English *cū* meaning 'a cow' and *'byht'* meaning a bend, a 'bight'. This gives a topographical derivation denoting a bend in the River Welland that partially enclosed pasture for cows (Cameron 1998, 34).

Cowbit village evolved in the 13th century near the junction of the drove road leading to the fen from Spalding, and Stone Gate, the third in the series of early medieval fen banks which protected the silt land towards Spalding from the winter floods (Hayes and Lane 1992, 174). The Site would likely have served an agricultural function as part of Spalding's hinterland. It remained in such use until the 19th century.

The Church of St Mary is likely to mark the centre of the historic village and is located approximately 630m to the west of the Site at the junction of Stonegate and Barrier Bank. St. Mary's Church is believed to have been built by Prior de Moulton of Spalding in the late 14th century, although possible remains of an earlier church may be found in enormous stones reused in the south porch walls and the heads from a corbel table reused in the chancel roof (Pevsner and Harris 1989, 235).

Relevant to the western area of the Site was the construction of the Spalding to March railway by the Great Northern Railway in conjunction with the Great Eastern Railway. The line was proposed to supply the eastern counties with coal from Yorkshire. The line was opened in April 1867 for freight and passengers from August of that year, following the construction of Cowbit Station with an associated goods siding to the north of Stone Gate. Dwindling passenger numbers saw the station close in 1961 and the sidings were closed three years later. The line was eventually closed between March and Spalding in 1982 (Squires 1988, 133-36).

5.2 Cartographic Evidence

Historic maps of the assessment area were examined as part of research carried out for this report. Extracts from these are reproduced as Figures 3 and 4.

The earliest detailed map of the site and its environs is entitled '*A Plan of part of Cowbit and Peakhill in the County of Lincoln*' dating to 1819 (Fig. 3). This shows the arrangement of fields and roads prior to the construction of the railway in 1867. Mill Drove and Stone Gate are named as such with the site occupying enclosed areas either side of the former. The enclosed fields to the west of Mill Drove are generally smaller and are reminiscent of burgage plots, though there are no associated buildings. The eastern area occupies part of a single field, as well as an area verging Mill Drove.

The 1st edition 25" Ordnance Survey map of shows a number of changes having occurred following the railway construction (Fig. 4a). The most notable change is the layout to Mill Drove and Back Gate and their junction with Stone Gate, causing both to meet Stone Gate at an oblique angle. The western area is shown occupied by railway sidings and the rail line north to Spalding. Evident within the sidings is the engine shed, still extant, with a number of buildings located adjacent to the Site. The eastern area still occupies almost half of a field, with the strip of land verging the road removed to allow for the realignment of Mill Drove. A triangular pond occupies the northwest

corner of this area with a group of buildings located adjacent to the northern boundary.

There is little change apparent in the subsequent Ordnance Survey mapping of 1904 (Fig. 4b). There have been a few changes to boundaries outside of the Site but no development has otherwise reached the general vicinity. Subsequent maps also indicate little change until the aftermath of the Second World War when buildings are first depicted in the eastern area, which were to become Croft House Nursery. By 1969, the nursery appears to have expanded and a number buildings are shown to the north along Mill Drove. By this date, most of the railtrack serving the sidings has been removed, leaving only two lines heading towards Spalding along with the engine shed. Subsequent mapping shows the gradual encroachment of housing along Stone Gate (Fig. 2).

5.3 Aerial Photographic Data

The assessment area has previously been examined for cropmarks, though none are recorded in close proximity to the Site. Archaeological features identified from aerial photographs have been recorded by the Historic Environment Record and are discussed below.

Lidar imagery of the area suggests that the Site lies along a roddon, or infilled watercourse, these were often favoured positions for settlement as they were raised slightly above the surrounding land. However, it is not known if the watercourse was active during the Iron Age or Roman periods, though evidence suggests that settlement avoided the roddon upon which the Site is located.

5.4 Archaeological Data

A search of the Lincolnshire Historic Environment Record was made, for known archaeological sites or finds around the Site. Other, secondary sources were also examined. Details of archaeological and historical remains

falling within 1km of the proposed development site are numbered and collated in Table 1 and located on Figure 5.

The archaeological background to Cowbit is further enhanced as it was fieldwalked as part of the Fenland Survey.

Prehistoric

There are six entries relating to the prehistoric period, all dating to the Iron Age. Earlier remains are likely to be buried beneath a thick layer of alluvium.

Iron Age pottery has been found to the southeast of the Site (Fig. 5, No. 1) and may indicate as settlement of the period while to the northwest, a saltern (salt-making site) was identified during the Fenland Survey (No. 2). A further four discrete settlements and salterns occur within the assessment area and would have been located on the wide levees of the former course of the Welland, which would have been tidal at this time (Hayes and Lane 1992, 177). Pottery recorded from these sites spans the Middle Iron Age to Late Iron Age.

Roman

Roman settlement and salt-production sites are more numerous than in the preceding period. Evidence suggests that these were located slightly further to the east than during the Iron Age, possibly as a result of peat formation developing on Deeping Fen to the west. The nearest Roman saltern to the Site (Fig. 5, No. 10) is situated to the east and was partially revealed during work along the Spalding to Eye link road (A16).

Settlement of this period has been recorded to the south of the Site, west of Back Gate, where a number of cremations were recently discovered (No. 15). Cropmarks and surface finds indicate the presence of a further seven settlements dispersed throughout the assessment area.

Saxon

A single fragment of possible Early Saxon pottery was identified during the Fenland Survey (Fig. 5, No. 17). This came from the area north of the Site, which lies on slightly higher ground, and may not have been subjected to the extensive post-Roman marine flooding recorded throughout the

region.

Medieval

The principal entry for this period at the HER is the settlement of Cowbit itself (Fig. 5, No. 20) which is believed to date no earlier than the latter part of the 12th century and evidenced by the church of St Mary (No. 19). The New Fendyke, following the course of Stone Gate, was the furthest south reclamation of the fen achieved during this period. However, pottery dating to the 11th to early 12th century was recovered during archaeological investigations to the southeast of the Site (No. 22).

The Site would have lain amongst the open fields which at this time would have been part of Spalding. Evidence for agricultural practises have been recorded at several localities and include ditches (Nos.21-23), a stock enclosure (No. 24) and, to the immediate south of the Site, dylings (No. 18).

Post-medieval

Post-medieval entries recorded at the HER relate to extant buildings or features excavated during the course of the A16 construction.

Of the buildings, Cowbit railway station to the south of the Site (Fig. 5, No. 27), is of some relevance, particularly as the sidings once located in the western area were part of the complex. The range of buildings forming the station are still extant and comprise the station and signal box, though other elements such as the Railway Hotel appear to have been demolished. The extant engine shed within the Site is probably contemporary and, as such, forms a part of the setting of the station.

Beyond the station, lies the 18th century windmill tower (No. 26), which is a listed structure. This is missing its cap and sails but remained in use until 1969.

A recent survey of historic farmsteads have contributed three entries to the HER (Nos. 35-37), of which Fairview Farm was located on the northern boundary to the Site, though few of the

original buildings are evident.

Many of the remaining entries relate to excavated features of the period, recovered during excavations along the A16 route (Nos. 30-33), as well as works along Cowbit, where a possible brick kiln is suggested (No. 28), and at the primary school (No. 29).

Modern

A single modern ditch was examined in advance of the A16 works and is the only feature of this period (Fig. 5, No. 38).

Undated

Undated entries are either associated with cropmarks that, based on their style, cannot be assigned a period, or excavated features that did not produce artefactual material. Cropmarks include linear ditch systems, field boundaries and enclosures.

Previous Archaeological Intervention

A total of 23 records are recorded at the HER for interventions within the assessment area. Of these, six relate to various investigations undertaken along the route of the A16. Several also relate to continuing development on land off Backgate. The two below ground interventions closest to the Site, some 93m to the west and 145m to the north, revealed only topsoil and natural deposits.

5.5 Walkover Survey

The walkover survey was carried out on the 11th October in bright conditions. For ease of description, the Site has been divided into separate components, the western area being Area A and Area B relating to the land east of Mill Drove South.

Area A

This area can be accessed from directly from Mill Drove South (Plate 1) as well as a track leading along the western edge from Stone Gate. The area is irregularly shaped, due in part to its former use as sidings. Nothing remains of the sidings apart from a red-brick engine shed which dominates the area (Plates 2 and 3).

There are areas of hardstanding, though this is obscured by light shrubbery in the southern portion of the area with dense

brambles to the north (Plate 4).

There is evidence for widespread dumping of various material across the area, though more dumps are associated with the track along the western edge.

As an overgrown area, no archaeological features were visible and no artefacts were retrieved (Plate 2).

Area B

Area B is accessed from Stone Gate via a drive. Two further entrances are located along Mill Drove South (plate 5) but these have partially been blocked. The area is bounded by an established hedge.

The western part of Area B is occupied by a number of industrial buildings relating to the former use of the Site as a nursery (Plate 6). The buildings are brick or wood with an area of glasshouses. The brick buildings are typically of mid-20th century construction. Tarmac/concrete drives serve the range of buildings. A small grassed area is currently occupied by a number of caravans.

The eastern part of Area B is largely grassed and also stores caravans and other vehicles as well as plastic wheelie bins (Plate 7). Again nothing of archaeological interest was recorded.

6. CONSTRAINTS

6.1 Heritage Constraints

Statutory and Advisory Constraints

There are no Scheduled Monuments protected by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979 (HMSO 1979) lying within the Assessment Area.

There are only two listed buildings within the Assessment Area. They are the Grade I listed St Mary's church and a Grade II windmill. The latter lies 145m south of the Site.

All other archaeological remains within the Study Area are protected only through the implementation of the National Planning Policy Framework which identifies the historic environment as a non-renewable resource. Its fragile and finite nature is a particularly important consideration in planning. The effect of an application on the significance of a heritage asset or its setting is a material consideration in determining the application.

6.2 Other Constraints

No specific checks for buried services within the Site were undertaken as part of this assessment. It is expected that services were provided to the former nursey complex, of which some may still be active. Moreover, there are active services along Mill Drove South.

The presence of standing buildings can pose a risk during trial trenching. Any trial trenches should, therefore, be located away from standing walls.

7. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

Past impact at the Site is largely agricultural in origin, particularly since the medieval period, until the 19th century, thereafter railway sidings were constructed in the western area. A nursery was established in the eastern area following the Second World War.

Of these, the biggest impact on the Site was the establishment of the railway sidings. Ballast would have been used for the track beds and the weight is likely to have impacted any buried deposits, though deeper features may survive. Associated infrastructure including the standing engine shed and signalling gear may have further impacted archaeological deposits.

The eastern area appears to have remained in agricultural use until it was partly developed for the nursery following the Second World War. As such, the impact on buried archaeological remains, if present, is likely to be less, although a large triangular pond recorded on early Ordnance Survey maps will have destroyed any remains in

this part of the Site.

The proposals for the Site is for low density residential development across the two areas. A slightly higher density has been proposed for the extreme north end, taking the form of a row of terrace type housing. The principal impact of the proposed development would be from service and foundation trenches.

There is likely to be a partial impact on the visual integrity of the listed windmill, though this is not considered to be overly compromised by the development. There will also be an impact on the setting of the non-designated asset, comprising Cowbit railway station.

8. ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Site falls within an area of major archaeological interest. Iron Age remains are recorded in the general area, though are quite dispersed within the assessment area. Remains of this period include settlement as well as salterns. The potential for Iron Age remains surviving at the Site is considered moderate.

Roman remains appear to be more extensive, as evidenced by cropmark complexes, and also comprise salterns along with settlements. However, these appear to avoid the roddon upon which the Site sits as evidenced by Lidar data. Therefore, potential is considered to be moderate to high.

A single find of early Saxon pottery would indicate low potential for remains of this period surviving. During the medieval and post-medieval periods, the Site served an agricultural function. Remains of settlement are unlikely to be situated within the Site boundary, though buried evidence for field boundaries can be expected.

The Site encompasses a former railway siding of which an extant engine shed remains. This may require formal recording prior to its demolition as it is

part of the setting of the adjacent railway station.

A walkover survey found no surface indications of archaeological potential. Fieldwalking and geophysical survey cannot be used effectively to determine the presence of archaeological remains due to standing buildings, dumped materials and undergrowth.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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All of the following items were consulted during the research. However, as some of them (particularly maps) did not relate to the specific examination area, and some duplicated information available in other references, not all are listed in the text.

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11. ABBREVIATIONS

APS	Archaeological Project Services
BGS	British Geological Survey
CIfA	Institute for Archaeologists
HER	Historic Environment Record
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
OS	Ordnance Survey

Table 1: Archaeological sites and findspots within the assessment area

Map No.	HER No.	Description	Period	National Grid Ref
1	20320	Pottery	Iron Age	TF 267 179
2	23105	Saltern	Iron Age	TF 2638 1838
3	23133	Saltern	Iron Age	TF 2682 1770
4	23135	Saltern and settlement	Iron Age	TF 2671 1746
5	23138	Artefact scatter	Iron Age	TF 2667 1734
6	23146	Saltern	Iron Age	TF 2624 1740
7	20325	Settlement and salterns	Romano-British	TF 2579 1769
8	20335	Settlement cropmarks	Romano-British	TF 2726 1868
9	22098	Artefact scatter	Romano-British	TF 2671 1749
10	23100	Saltern	Romano-British	TF 2685 1815
11	23101	Settlement	Romano-British	TF 2640 1859
12	23103	Settlement	Romano-British	TF 2632 1846
13	23134	Settlement	Romano-British	TF 2689 1784
14	23137	Saltern and settlement	Romano-British	TF 2667 1735
15	23686	Settlement	Romano-British	TF 2647 1778
16	23868	Settlement	Romano-British	TF 2643 1746
17	23102	Pottery	Saxon	TF 2640 1859
18	20323	Dyings	Medieval	TF 265 180
19	22168	Church of St Mary	Medieval	TF 2598 1800
20	23106	Settlement of Cowbit	Medieval	TF 2630 1765
21	23869	Excavated features	Medieval	TF 2643 1746
22	23902	Ditches and pit	Medieval	TF 2687 1790
23	23903	Ditch	Medieval	TF 2690 1780
24	25741	Stock enclosure	Medieval	TF 2686 1791
25	20326	Extraction pit for bank	Post-medieval	TF 2601 1781
26	20328	Windmill	Post-medieval	TF 2661 1792
27	23554	Railway station	Post-medieval	TF 2662 1801
28	23687	Pottery scatter and possible brick kiln	Post-medieval	TF 2646 1778
29	23817	Pottery	Post-medieval	TF 260 719
30	23870	Excavated features	Post-medieval	TF 2643 1746
31	23901	Dyke/watercourse	Post-medieval	TF 2687 1801
32	23905	Ditches	Post-medieval	TF 2690 1780
33	23906	Pond	Post-medieval	TF 2696 1762
34	25653	Methodist chapel	Post-medieval	TF 2611 1782
35	26277	Fairview Farm	Post-medieval	TF 2664 1813
36	26342	Unnamed farmstead	Post-medieval	TF 2711 1805
37	26343	Unnamed farmstead	Post-medieval	TF 2695 1800
38	23898	Ditch	Modern	TF 2656 1856
39	20314	Cropmarks	Undated	TF 2677 1740
40	20316	Cropmark ditches and trackways	Undated	TF 2641 1871
41	20339	Cropmark ditches and watercourses	Undated	TF 2737 1766
42	23867	Excavated features	Undated	TF 2643 1746
43	23896	Ditch	Undated	TF 2637 1872
44	23897	Ditches	Undated	TF 2646 1864

Map No.	HER No.	Description	Period	National Grid Ref
45	23899	Ditches	Undated	TF 2685 1829
46	23900	Ditches	Undated	TF 2688 1805
47	23904	Ditches	Undated	TF 2690 1780
48	27246	Ditch and pit	Undated	TF 2653 1752



Figure 1 - General location plan

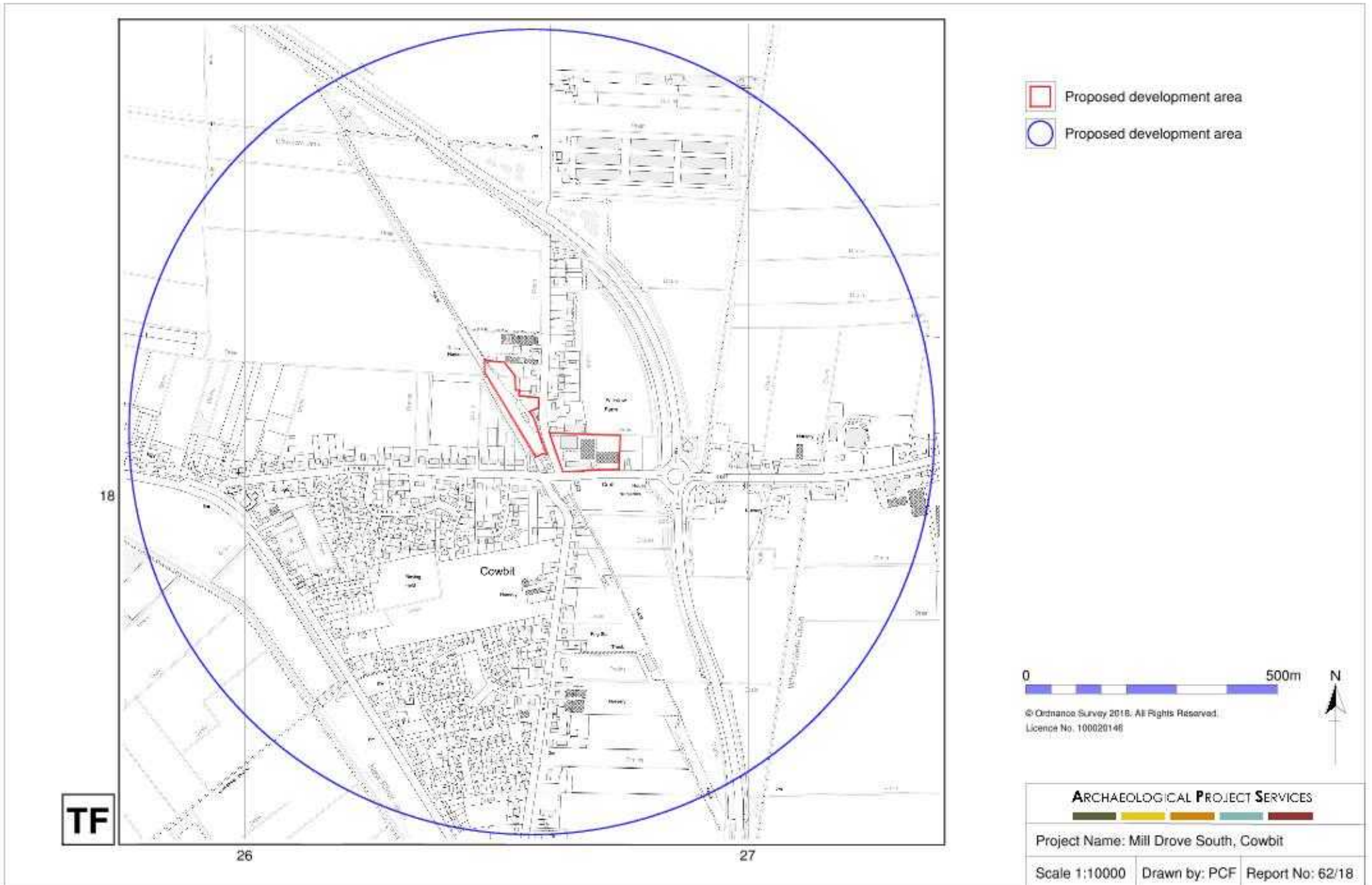
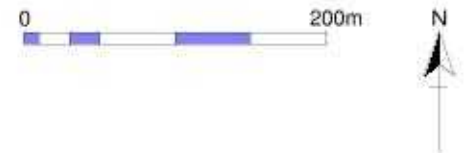
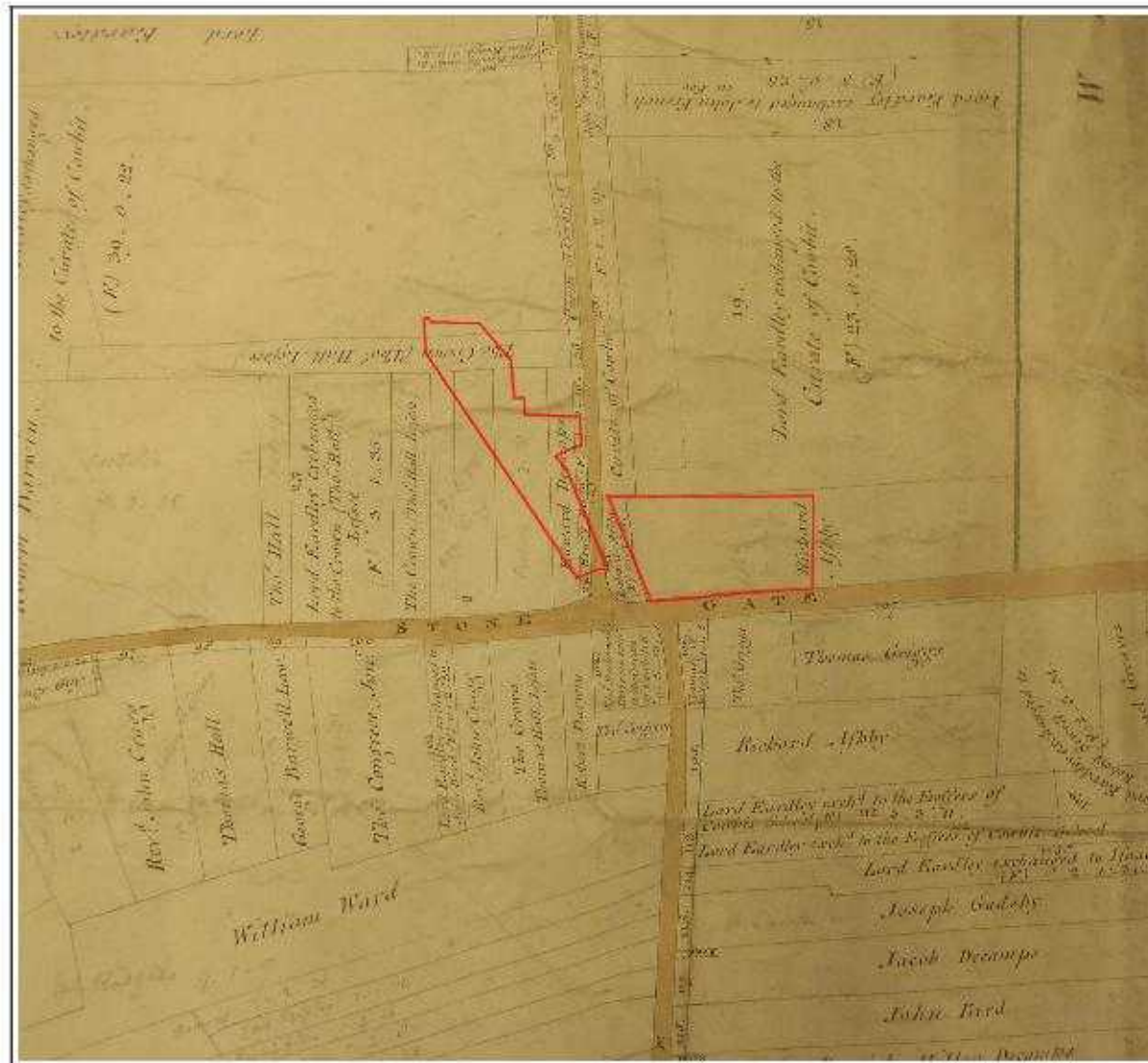


Figure 2 - The assessment area showing the proposed development site



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Figure 3 - Extract from 'Plan of part of Cowbit and Peakhill...', 1819



CXLII.10 1888



CXLII.11 1888



CXLII.10 1904



CXLII.11 1904



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Figure 4 - Extracts from 1888 and 1904 Ordnance Survey 25" maps

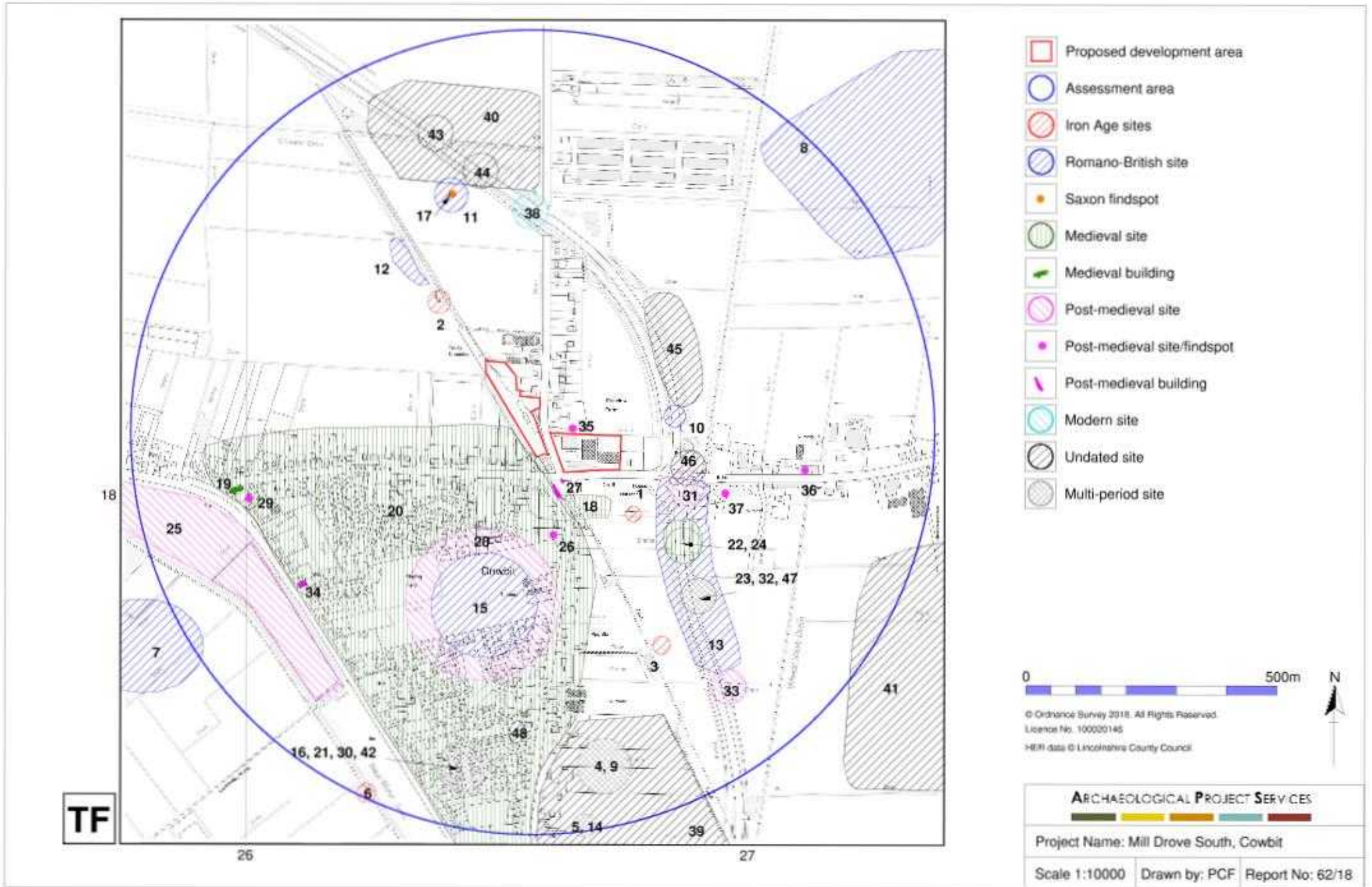
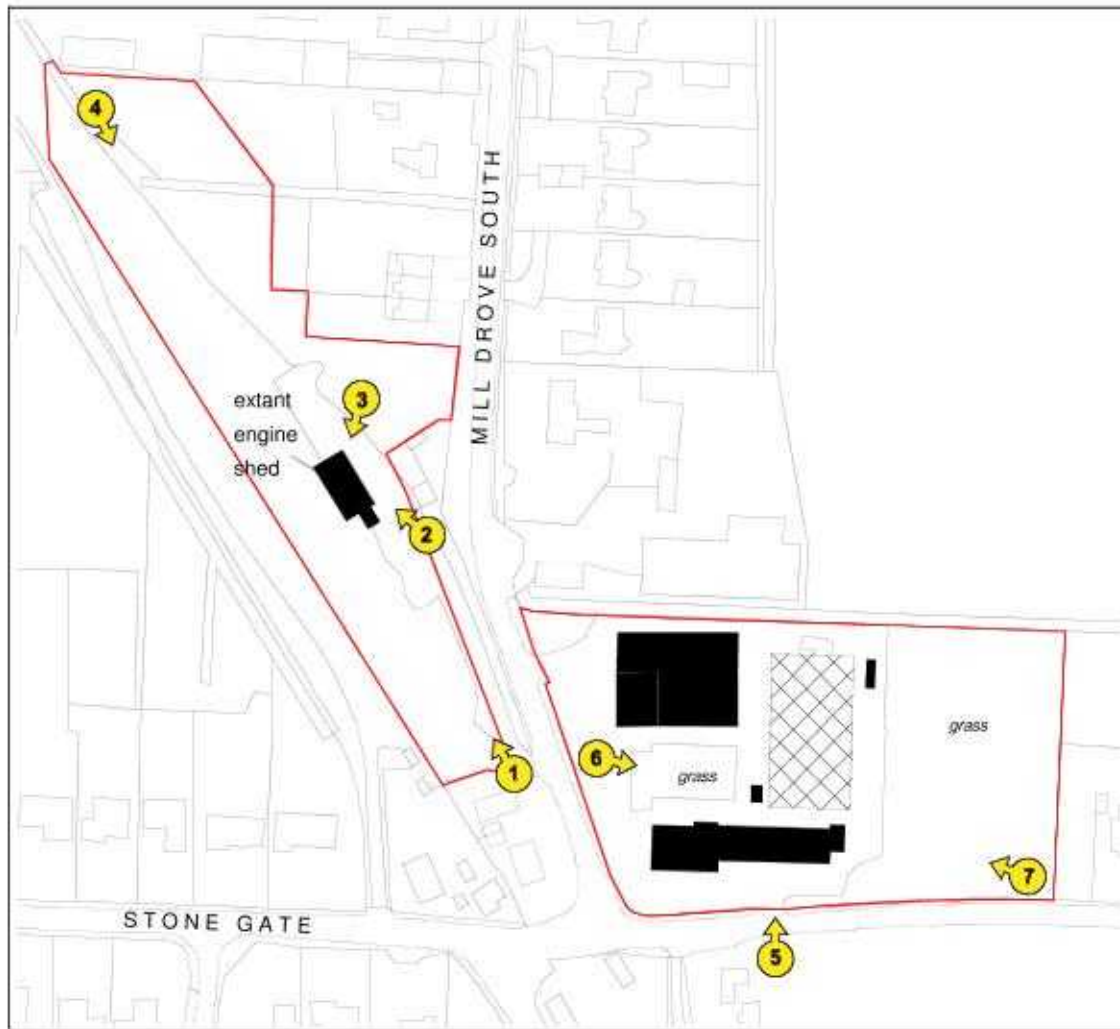



Figure 5 - Archaeological sites and findspots from within the assessment area



 Camera view with plate number



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Figure 6 - Results of the walkover survey



Plate 1 – View looking across Area A, looking northwest



Plate 2 – The extant engine shed, looking northwest



Plate 3 – The engine shed from the northeast



Plate 4 – View looking south from the northern edge of the Site showing the bramble cover



Plate 5 – View showing the principal entrance to Area B, looking north



Plate 6 – View showing the arrangement of buildings in the western part of Area B, looking east



Plate 7 – View looking northwest over the eastern part of Area B

Appendix 1

GLOSSARY

Alluvium	Deposits laid down by water. Marine alluvium is deposited by the sea, and fresh water alluvium is laid down by rivers and in lakes.
Cropmark	A mark that is produced by the effect of underlying archaeological or geological features influencing the growth of a particular crop.
Geophysical Survey	Essentially non-invasive methods of examining below the ground surface by measuring deviations in the physical properties and characteristics of the earth. Techniques include magnetometry and resistivity survey.
Iron Age	A period characterised by the introduction of Iron into the country for tools, between 800 BC and AD 50.
Medieval	The Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1066-1500.
Manuring Scatter	A distribution of artefacts, usually pottery, created by the spreading of manure and domestic refuse from settlements onto arable fields. Such scatters can provide an indication of the extent and period of arable agriculture in the landscape.
Post-medieval	The period following the Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1500-1800.
Prehistoric	The period of human history prior to the introduction of writing. In Britain the prehistoric period lasts from the first evidence of human occupation about 500,000 BC, until the Roman invasion in the middle of the 1st century AD.
Roddon	Raised banks of clay or silt representing sinuous channels which formed dendritic patterns and which later became silted up. Roddons stand proud of the fen surface due to tidal levees and also due to post depositional compression and wastage of the surrounding peat.
Romano-British	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 43-410 when the Romans occupied Britain.
Saxon	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 410-1066 when England was largely settled by tribes from northern Germany