



**HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT  
DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT**

**LAND TO THE NORTH OF THE DROVE WAY,  
ISTEAD RISE,  
GRAVESHAM**

**PREPARED ON BEHALF OF  
PTARMIGAN LAND A LTD**

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## Contents

|                                                  |     |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Non-Technical Summary .....                      | iii |
| 1 INTRODUCTION .....                             | 1   |
| 2 LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE .....         | 2   |
| 3 METHODOLOGY .....                              | 7   |
| 4 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION .....            | 10  |
| 5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ..... | 11  |
| 6 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE .....               | 17  |
| 7 IMPACT ASSESSMENT .....                        | 19  |
| 8 CONCLUSIONS .....                              | 20  |
| 9 REFERENCES .....                               | 21  |

Figures

Plates

Appendix 1: Gazetteer of heritage assets

## List of Figures

- Figure 1. The study site and search area showing Designated Heritage Assets
- Figure 2. The study site and search area showing HER Monuments
- Figure 3. The study site and search area showing HER Events
- Figure 4. The study site showing Kent County Council (KCC) Archaeological Notification Areas (ANAs)
- Figure 5. The study site and search area showing HER Cropmark data
- Figure 6. The study site and search area showing Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)
- Figure 7. LIDAR Composite 1M DSM 2023 Hillshade
- Figure 8. OS 6 Inch Map of 1869
- Figure 9. OS 25 Inch Map of 1897
- Figure 10. OS 25 Inch Map of 1933
- Figure 11. Aerial Photograph 1940
- Figure 12. Aerial Photograph 1960
- Figure 13. National Grid Map of 1966
- Figure 14. National Grid Map of 1973
- Figure 15. Aerial Photograph 1990

## List of Plates

- Plate 1. View of the study site, looking west
- Plate 2. View of the study site, looking north
- Plate 3. View of the study site, looking south-east
- Plate 4. Location of potentially capped chalkwells recorded by the HER (PrefRef: TQ 67 SW 106) at the southern extent of the study site, largely obscured by vegetation, looking south.

## **Non-Technical Summary**

This historic environment desk-based assessment of Land to the North of The Drove Way, Istead Rise, Gravesham has been prepared by GHC Archaeology & Heritage Limited on behalf of Ptarmigan Land A Ltd. The assessment has been undertaken to inform a planning application for a proposed residential development, including access and landscaping. It is located within the administrative boundary of Gravesham Borough Council.

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

The assessment has established that no designated or non-designated heritage assets will be impacted by the proposed development.

This assessment has concluded that there is the moderate potential for prehistoric to Roman period remains, and low potential for remains of all other dates to survive below-ground within the study site. The proposed development works have the potential to impact any archaeological deposits which may survive within the study site. However, preservation levels of any archaeological remains that may have been present are expected to be very low following the site's previous uses for chalk working and, most importantly, as a plantation where the planting and subsequent grubbing out of trees across the study site and subsequent return to pasture would have had significant below ground impacts.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This historic environment desk-based assessment of Land to the North of The Drove Way, Istead Rise, Gravesham has been prepared by GHC Archaeology & Heritage Limited on behalf of Ptarmigan Land A Ltd. The assessment has been undertaken to inform a planning application for a proposed residential development, including access and landscaping. It is located within the administrative boundary of Gravesham Borough Council.
- 1.2 This document provides an assessment of the heritage interest in the study site, the potential for the survival of archaeological remains within the study site and assesses the potential impacts that the proposed development could have on these and other heritage assets in the vicinity.
- 1.3 The assessment has been undertaken to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF; Section 16: 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'; revised December 2024) and is in line with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) guidelines *Standard and guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment* (CIfA 2020).

## 2 LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE

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

### Current Legislation

- 2.2 The applicable legislative framework is summarised as follows:
- Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (AMAAA) 1979;
  - Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (P(LBCA)) Act 1990;
  - Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) 1990;
  - Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (LuRA) 2023.
- 2.3 The AMAAA largely relates to Scheduled Monuments (SMs) and designated archaeological areas, detailing in particular what can and cannot be undertaken on archaeological grounds.
- 2.4 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the 1990 Act) provides for the protection of listed buildings and Conservation Areas and is largely expressed in the planning process through policies in regional and local planning guidance, as outlined below. This act is the primary legislative instrument addressing the treatment of listed buildings and Conservation Areas through the planning process.
- 2.5 Section 66 of the 1990 Act states that ‘*...in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses*’.
- 2.6 The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 has introduced changes to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to provide statutory duty for the determining authority to have *special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the asset or its setting*. The relevant assets are defined as Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields, Protected Wrecks and World Heritage Sites. It also updates the P(LBCA) Act add *or enhancing* after *preserving* in section 66. However, at the time of writing neither the TCPA or the P(LBCA) have been updated.

### National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.7 Section 16 of the NPPF (revised December 2024), entitled ‘Conserving and enhancing the historic environment’ provides guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the conservation and investigation of heritage assets.
- 2.8 Overall, the objectives of Section 16 of the NPPF can be summarised as seeking the:

- Delivery of sustainable development;
  - Understanding the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits brought by the conservation of the historic environment, and
  - Conservation of England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- 2.9 Section 16 of the NPPF recognises that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. Paragraph 207 states that planning decisions should be based on the significance of the heritage asset, and 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.
- 2.10 A Heritage Asset is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as: *'A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).'*
- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 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. Heritage Assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.
- 2.13 Significance (for heritage policy) is defined as: *'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.'*
- 2.14 Paragraphs 212-214 consider the impact of development proposals upon the significance of designated heritage assets. Paragraph 212 states that where a development is proposed that would affect the significance of a designated heritage asset, *"great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater this weight should be)"*. Paragraph 215 emphasises that *"where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to (or total loss of significance) of a designated heritage asset, this harm or loss should be weighed against the public benefits"* of the scheme, bearing in mind the great weight highlighted in Paragraph 212.
- 2.15 In short, government policy provides a framework which:

- Protects nationally important designated Historic 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.

### Planning Practice Guidance

- 2.16 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG; MHCLG 2019) is a web-based resource which is to be used in conjunction with the NPPF. It is aimed at planning professionals and prescribes best practice within the planning sector. The relevant section is entitled '*Historic Environment*'. The guidance given in this section sets out the best practice to applying government policy in the NPPF. It also provides clear definition of the terms used to identify heritage interest and how this applies to understanding 'significance' in reference to heritage-related planning policy, i.e. archaeological interest, architectural and artistic interest, and historic interest (Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 18a-006-20190723).
- 2.17 As defined within the PPG, 'Non-Designated Heritage Assets' are *"buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets. A substantial majority of buildings have little or no heritage significance and thus do not constitute heritage assets. Only a minority have enough heritage significance to merit identification as non-designated heritage assets"* (Paragraph: 039 Reference ID: 18-039-20190723).
- 2.18 In terms of non-designated heritage assets, the PPG states that there are two categories of non-designated sites of archaeological interest (Paragraph:041 Reference ID: 18a-041-20190723):
- Those that are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments and are therefore considered subject to the same policies as those for designated heritage assets.
  - Other non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest.

### Local Planning Policy

- 2.19 Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted in September 2014 and contains the following policy of relevance to this assessment:

#### ***Policy CS20: Heritage and the Historic Environment***

*5.16.10 The Council will accord a high priority towards the preservation, protection and enhancement of its heritage and historic environment as a non-renewable resource, central*

*to the regeneration of the area and the reinforcement of sense of place. Particular attention in this regard will be focused on those heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. Securing viable, sustainable and appropriate futures for such assets at risk will need to be reconciled with the sensitivity to change that many present.*

*5.16.11 Proposals and initiatives will be supported which preserve and, where appropriate, enhance the significance of the Borough's heritage assets, their setting where it contributes to the significance of the asset and their interpretation and enjoyment, especially where these contribute to the distinct identity of the Borough. These include:*

- *Gravesend Town Centre, its development as a heritage riverside town, and its setting;*
- *The Borough's urban and rural conservation areas; and*
- *Surviving built features and archaeology relating to the Borough's maritime, military, industrial and transport history.*

*5.16.12 When considering the impact of a proposed development on a designated heritage asset, the weight that will be given to the asset's conservation value will be commensurate with the importance and significance of the asset. For non-designated assets, decisions will have regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.*

## **Professional Guidance**

- 2.20 The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment* (2020) provide guidelines and recommendations for best practice in undertaking archaeological desk-based research and assessment.
- 2.21 The Historic England (HE) publication *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment* (GPA2; HE 2015) outlines a seven-stage process for the assembly and analysis of relevant information relating to heritage assets potentially affected by a proposed development:
- Understand the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits brought by the conservation of the historic environment;
  - Understand the significance of the affected assets;
  - Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance;
  - Avoid, minimise and mitigate impact in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF;
  - Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance;
  - Justify any harmful impacts in terms of the sustainable development objective of conserving significance and the need for change; and
  - Offset negative impacts on aspects of significance by enhancing others through recording, disseminating and archiving archaeological and historical interest of the important elements of the heritage assets affected.

- 2.22 In order to understand the nature, extent and level of significance the note advocates considering the four types of heritage value an asset may hold, as identified in Conservation Principles (English Heritage 2008): aesthetic, communal, historic and evidential. Significance results from a combination of any, some or all of the values.
- 2.23 The HE publication *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition): The Setting of Heritage Assets* (GPA3; HE 2017) recognises that whilst setting is not a heritage asset, elements of a setting ‘*may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral*’ (para. 4). Setting is described as being distinct to curtilage, character and context. This guidance also notes that the contribution of setting to the significance of a heritage asset is often expressed by reference to views, although the importance of setting lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset, and this can be influenced by a number of other factors.
- 2.24 In order to assess the contribution made by setting to the significance of a heritage asset, and the implications of new developments, the guidance recommends that a systematic and staged ‘5-step process’ to assessment should be adopted, namely:
- i) identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected;
  - ii) assess the degree to which these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated;
  - iii) assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance or on the ability to appreciate it;
  - iv) explore the way to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm;
  - v) make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.
- 2.25 This report therefore follows steps (i) and (ii) to identify the local heritage assets and their settings and then makes an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed development having regard to steps (iii) and (iv).
- 2.26 The HE advice note, *Statement of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets. Historic England Advice Note 12* (HEAN12; HE 2019), brings together all of the above guidance in an analysis of an appropriate approach for applicants for heritage and other consents in providing an understanding of the significance of heritage assets in line with NPPF. This is aimed at providing assistance for owners, applicants, local planning authorities, planning and other consultants in the implementation of not only the guidance but also historic environment legislation and policy. It emphasises the level of detail required in support of both planning and listed building consent applications, which should be no more than is necessary, i.e. proportionate to the significance of the heritage asset affected, to reach an informed decision.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

#### Information Sources

- 3.1 A gazetteer of all records held on Historic England's National Heritage List for England (NHLE) of designated historic assets, as well as monument and event records held by Kent Historic Environment Record (HER), including an extract from the Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC), for within 1km of the study site is provided in Appendix 1, and their locations marked on Figures 1-3.
- 3.2 Kent Archives were consulted for historical maps, plans and relevant documentary sources were consulted in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the ClfA (2020).
- 3.3 A range of published and unpublished documentary sources, including the *South East Research Framework* (<https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/history-and-heritage/south-east-research-framework>) and Historic England's Aerial Photo Explorer have also been consulted.
- 3.4 The Environment Agency website for LiDAR data published on the DEFRA Data Service Platform was also consulted in order to identify any previously unrecorded earthworks or other surface remains within the study site (Figure 7).
- 3.5 A site visit was undertaken on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2026 in clear, sunny conditions to provide an assessment of the character of the site and appraise the potential impact of the proposed development on any heritage assets (see Plates 1-4).

#### Assessment Criteria

##### *Significance*

- 3.6 Significance is defined in the NPPF (MHCLG 2024) as '*the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.*'
- 3.7 HE's *Conservation Principles* (previously English Heritage 2008) identified four high level values: evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal. The PPG (MHCLG 2019) accompanying NPPF (2024) defines significance in the planning context as resulting from the heritage interest of an asset determined by the following:
  - *Archaeological Interest*: the potential of an asset to yield evidence of past human activity that could be revealed through future investigation. Archaeological interest includes above-ground structures, as well as earthworks and buries or submerged remains.
  - *Architectural and Artistic Interest*: derives from a contemporary appreciation of an asset's aesthetics. Architectural interest is an interest in design, construction,

craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures. Artistic interest can include the use, representation or influence of historic places or buildings in artwork. It can also include the skill and emotional impact of works of art that are part of heritage assets or assets in their own right.

- *Historic Interest*: the way in which an asset can illustrate the story of past events, people and aspects of life (illustrative value, or interest). It can be said to hold communal value when associated with the identity of a community.

- 3.8 There are no single defining criteria that dictates the overall asset significance; each asset has to be evaluated against the range of criteria listed above on a case-by-case basis. These values are not intended to be restrictive but are identified in order to help establish a method for thinking systematically and consistently about the heritage values that can be ascribed to a place and contribute to a heritage asset's significance.

### ***Setting***

- 3.9 The NPPF defines the setting of a heritage asset as: *'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral'*.
- 3.10 HE's *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets Setting* (HE 2017) was used to inform the methodology for this assessment which follows steps i) to iv) outlined in the guidance.

### ***Definition of Harm***

- 3.11 Current guidance by Historic England is that 'change' does not equate to 'harm'. The NPPF and its accompanying PPG effectively distinguish between two degrees of harm to designated heritage assets – substantial and less than substantial. Paragraph 214 of the NPPF states that:

*'Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss...'*

- 3.12 Paragraph 215 of the NPPF states that:

*'Where a development proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposals...'*

- 3.13 In determining the effects of the Proposed Scheme this heritage statement is cognisant of case law. Including the below:

- Flag Station, Mansel Lacy, Herefordshire [22/09/2015] Case Number EWHC 2688

- 3.14 This ruling has emphasised the primacy of the 1990 Planning Act – and the fact that it is up to the decision makers in the planning system to ‘have special regard to the desirability of preserving the [listed] building or its setting’. As stated by HH Judge David Cooke in a judgment of 22 September 2015 regarding the impact on the setting of a listed building:

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

- PALMER Appellant and Herefordshire Council and ANR [04/11/16] Case No: C1/2015/3383

- 3.15 The judgment was agreed by Lord Justice Lewison at the Court of Appeal, who stated that:

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

- 3.16 In assessing harm to non-designated heritage assets, the NPPF does not differentiate between substantial and less than substantial harm and is clear that no additional weight is added to the asset in determining the application.

## **4 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION**

- 4.1 The study site comprises c. 5.7ha of land currently in use as an arable field on the northern edge of Istead Rise, a village situated approximately 3 miles south of Gravesend (centred at NGR TQ 63383 70429; Figure 1). The study site itself is bounded to the south by 20<sup>th</sup> century residential development. Istead Rise Community Centre is situated to the south-east.
- 4.2 A wooded area borders the study site on the eastern side and there are further dense, mature tree planting along the northern, western and part of the southern side as well. The only exception to this is a small section of the southern boundary which is adjacent to the fenced rear gardens of properties fronting The Drove Way. Arable fields lie beyond to this to the north, east and west. Access to the study site is via a farm that extends northwards towards Hog Lane.
- 4.3 The bedrock geology of the majority of the study site comprises Seaford Chalk Formation with a small section (less than 20m) of an island of Thanet Formation Sand recorded as extending into the eastern boundary of the study site. No superficial deposits have been recorded (BGS 2026).

## 5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### Introduction

- 5.1 This section reviews existing archaeological and heritage evidence for the study site and the surrounding area. It is not the purpose of this document to create a detailed archaeological or historical narrative of the area, but to provide an assessment of the study site's historical development and archaeological potential in accordance with national and local planning policies. Heritage assets are identified by their Kent HER 'PrefRef ID' numbers.

### Designated Heritage Assets

- 5.2 Historic England does not record any designated heritage assets within the study site, and a single designated heritage asset in the wider 1km search area: Downs Hall, a Grade II Listed Building (NHLE 1350211). This heritage asset is located c.630m to the south and is screened from the study site by intervening built form, nor are there any historic connections between the two. As such, it is not considered that Downs Hall is potentially sensitive to development of the study site and, therefore, following step i) of the Historic England guidance (2017) has been scoped out of further assessment.

### Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 5.3 There are no known non-designated heritage assets that fall within the study site or the wider 1km search area.

### *Kent Historic Environment Record*

- 5.4 The Kent HER includes 168 records relating to archaeological remains, buildings and finds within the wider 1km search area. All the records are broken-down by period as follows. Some records cover more than one period: details of all HER entries can be found in the gazetteer in Appendix 1 and are illustrated on Figures 2 and 3.

| Period          | Within Study Site | Within Search Area |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Prehistoric     | 0                 | 39                 |
| Roman           | 0                 | 36                 |
| Saxon           | 0                 | 7                  |
| Medieval        | 2                 | 63                 |
| Post-medieval   | 0                 | 40                 |
| Modern          | 0                 | 4                  |
| Unknown/Undated | 1                 | 8                  |

## **Previous Investigations**

- 5.5 The Kent HER records 32 archaeological investigations as having been carried out within the wider 1km search area (Appendix 1; Figure 3). These investigations represent a mixture of non-invasive works (e.g. geophysical survey, desk-based assessment, fieldwalking) and invasive fieldwork (e.g. watching brief, evaluation, targeted excavation). No events are recorded by the HER as having included the study site within their extent. Details of the findings of these investigations, where relevant, are discussed chronologically below.

## **Prehistoric Period (c. 9500 BC – c. AD 43)**

- 5.6 There are no entries relating to Prehistoric activity recorded by the HER within the study site. However, the study site is included within a Kent County Council Archaeological Notification Area (ANA) due to having some palaeolithic potential and as an area of multi-period background potential (Figure 4). There is no further information provided on how this level of potential was assessed but may relate to the presence of a cropmark of a trackway of possible Prehistoric date (MKE9466) located c.100m west of the study site.
- 5.7 Within the wider search area, the earliest evidence of activity was recorded during a Strip, Map and Sample excavation carried out as part of the A2 Activity Park development in Gravesend in 2009/2010 (EKE13197; c.950m north-east of the study site). Here, the Palaeolithic (TQ 67 SW 621), Mesolithic (TQ 67 SW 1808) and Neolithic/Early Bronze Age (TQ 67 SW 622) periods were represented by lithics, largely residual flint flakes. The assemblage included a rare Neolithic/Early Bronze Age polished flint chisel. Evidence of more permanent activity commencing in the Middle Bronze Age period was identified during the works in the form of a ring ditch, seven cremations and a field boundary ditch (TQ 67 SW 624, TQ 67 SW 623); followed by further settlement in the Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age periods (TQ 67 SW 625). Features recorded were largely agricultural in function including a droveway and field boundary ditches, grain storage and waste pits, post-built structures (TQ 67 SW 627) and a metalled holloway.
- 5.8 Excavation of a number of previously identified cropmarks in 1995 revealed a sub-rectangular ditched enclosure thought to be the remains of a Neolithic mortuary enclosure or long barrow (EWX9111, TQ 67 SW 418; c.1km north-east of the study site). Further mortuary sites of Bronze Age date were recorded during investigations at Northumberland Bottom (EWX9125), including a Beaker Pit which contained a burial with two flexed adult inhumations and the disturbed remains of an infant, with two Beaker vessels found associated with the adults (TQ 67 SW 542); and a Late Bronze Age cremation burial contained within an urn (TQ 67 SW 544). Other remains of Late Bronze Age date identified during the works included a boundary ditch, pit and residual flints (TQ 67 SW 1060). A later phase of Iron Age activity was also recorded during the works, including ditches, enclosures and an enclosed settlement (TQ 67 SW 1061, TQ 67 SW 546, TQ 67 SW 547, TQ 67 SW 554).

- 5.9 A second Early Bronze Age Beaker Pit was identified as part of a series of archaeological investigations carried out as part of the A2 Pepperhill to Cobham Widening Scheme between 2004 to 2007 including an environmental impact assessment (EWX9173), a metal-detecting survey (EWX9117), watching brief (EKE9902), a badger sett excavation (EKE12164), Strip, Map and Sample excavations (EKE9835, EKE9916), and further archaeological works (EKE9903), all located c.850m to c.1km north of the study site. The Beaker Pit contained the fragmented remains of at least five vessels (TQ 67 SW 461). A number of Late Bronze Age enclosures and unaccompanied cremations were also recorded. In the Iron Age, the Bronze Age features were replaced by four-post structures set in clusters, which incorporated placed deposits of whole pots, iron objects, charred grain and loom weights (TQ 67 SW 488). In the Middle Iron Age, a series of enclosure ditches were created, which also had evidence of ritual deposition. One inhumation burial was identified along with several cremations, found in accompaniment with two pots, four brooches, a bronze bound decorated yew bucket and a bronze sheath (possible a drinking horn). Other prehistoric features identified during the works included a metallised surface (TQ 67 SW 486) and Iron Age features including a segmented ditch with associated pits (TQ 67 SW 462).
- 5.10 Cropmarks relating to features of potential Prehistoric origin are recorded throughout the search area (Figure 5), including two circular/subcircular enclosed settlements of probable Bronze Age date (TQ 67 SW 126, c.560m east of the study site and TQ 67 SW 135, c.780m north-east); a probable field system (TQ 67 SW 137, c.815m north-east); and fragments of ditches and pits of uncertain date, potentially Prehistoric or post-medieval (TQ 67 SW 1826, c.600m north). An earthwork bank thought to potentially be of Prehistoric date is also recorded c.120m to the north of the study site (TQ 67 SW 490).
- 5.11 The remaining records relate to isolated findspots including a Neolithic axe (TQ 67 SW 22, c.650m north-east of the study site); a Bronze Age copper alloy spear (MKE66902, c.520m south-east); a Bronze Age gold bracelet (MKE66928, c.700m north); Bronze Age flints (TQ 67 SW 504; c.980m north, and TQ 67 SW 508; c.860m north); Prehistoric flints (TQ 67 SW 609, c.800m east; TQ 67 SW 490, c.120m north) and pottery (TQ 67 SW 501, c.900m north); an Iron Age copper alloy scabbard (MKE120873, c.470m south-west); and Iron Age coins (MKE58050, c.90m north-west; MKE58799, c.940m north-west; MKE58806, c.90m west; MKE66686, c.960m north; MKE66849, c.780m south-west; and TQ 67 SW 19, c.670m north-east).
- 5.12 There is relatively extensive evidence for Prehistoric activity within the wider 1km search area, due in part to the scale of archaeological works that have been carried out in the vicinity of the A2, c.850m to the north of the study site and beyond. Remains in closer proximity to the study site are limited to casual findspots, particularly Iron Age coins; and a potentially Prehistoric earthwork bank c.120m to the north. It is considered that there is moderate potential for remains of Prehistoric date to be present within the study site, although there are no specific conditions present to suggest it was a particularly favourable

location for settlement or other intensive activity. Should such remains be present, they are likely to be of local interest.

### **Roman Period (c. AD 43 – c. 410)**

- 5.13 No HER entries relating to Roman activity have been recorded within the study site.
- 5.14 Investigations undertaken as part of the A2 Pepperhill to Cobham widening scheme revealed a cemetery of Roman date encompassing two high status cremation burials in square pits and several other lower status cremation burials and later inhumations (TQ 67 SW 464, EKE9903, c.850m north-east of the study site). The cemetery was associated with a domestic enclosure, presumably of relatively high status considering the two cremation burials, and the excavations of the complex identified several ditches, a collapsed oven and two Roman roads.
- 5.15 An evaluation at Northumberland Bottom identified late Iron Age to Roman features comprising pits, ditches, slots and post-holes and two hearths (TQ 67 SW 1061, EKE10032, c.700m north of the study site). Excavations at the same site recorded several features of Roman date (TQ 67 SW 548, EWX9125), predominantly focused within a group of enclosures established in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and in use until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD at the latest. Domestic activity comprised a number of pits, ovens (including a beehive oven constructed at the base of a pit) and possible structural elements including a timber building. There were also several metalled roads present and evidence of crop processing. Two neonate burials were identified, one interred with a carinated beaker in Upchurch fine grey ware dated AD 70-130.
- 5.16 A Roman enclosure was identified during the strip, map and sample excavation at the A2 Activity Park (TQ 67 SW 632, EKE13197, c.970m north of the study site). Finds recovered from the enclosure ditches included a piece of imbrex and a pottery vessel dating to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. A pit recorded to the north of the enclosure also contained early Roman pottery.
- 5.17 A field system made up of rectangular enclosures of Late Iron Age/Early Roman to 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD date is also recorded by the HER to the north of the study site (TQ 67 SW 123, EKE11577, c.750m north-east of the study site). The field system comprised eight ditches delineating rectangular shaped fields. A pit and post-hole were further identified and the finds assemblage hinted at the presence of buildings within the vicinity in the form of brick, tile and daub.
- 5.18 There are several cropmarks of putative Roman date recorded within the search area including three rectangular enclosed settlement complexes (TQ 67 SW 125, c.990m north of the study site; TQ 67 SW 127, c.840m north-east; and TQ 67 SW 134, c.650m north-east), only one of which has internal features (TQ 67 SW 127). There is also a linear cropmark of unknown date or function that has been interpreted within the HER as probably Roman (TQ 67 SW 140, c.950m north).

- 5.19 The remaining records relate to isolated findspots including coins (TQ 67 SW 11, MKE57988, MKE57995, MKE58136, MKE58380, MKE58508, MKE58509, MKE66677, MKE66898, MKE67275, MKE67279, MKE67280, MKE67281, MKE67282, MKE67283, MKE95010); brooches (MKE58639, MKE67447, MKE110585); a stylus (MKE58381); and pottery (TQ 67 SW 501, TQ 67 SW 502).
- 5.20 As with the Prehistoric evidence, Roman activity has been recorded throughout the search area although is largely focused in the location of the investigations carried out to the north of the study site, in the vicinity of the A2. It is considered that there is moderate potential for remains of this period date to be present within the study site. Should such remains be present, they are likely to be of local interest.

### **Medieval Period (c. AD 410 – c. 1540)**

- 5.21 Early medieval evidence recorded by the HER is generally limited to findspots: a copper alloy strap fitting (MKE66678, c.1km north), a copper alloy harness (MKE66983, c.450m south-west), a lead gaming piece (MKE67117, c.600m west) and a silver coin (MKE113265, c.750m south-west). The exception to this was found during the A2 widening scheme, where the Bronze Age and Iron Age site was, after a period of abandonment, re-used during the early medieval and medieval periods. Sunken-featured buildings, sub-rectangular pits, kilns and deneholes of this date were recorded during the excavations (TQ 67 SW 488, EKE9835, c.880m north).
- 5.22 The vast majority of entries relating to medieval activity recorded by the HER comprise findspots, two of which are located within the study site: a copper alloy sword (MKE66666) and a silver coin (MKE58002). A full list of medieval findspots recorded within the search area is included in Appendix 1.
- 5.23 The excavations at Northumberland Bottom (EWX9125) identified a large enclosure of probable 12<sup>th</sup> century date, formed by a penannular ditch with an entrance on the north-eastern side, with post-holes to either side of the entrance forming a gateway. The interior of the enclosure was subdivided and contained a post-structure, indicating that it was probably used for animal corralling (TQ 67 SW 552, c.760m north). The enclosure was heavily modified and extended in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and a working hollow or sunken-floored building with an oven was built.
- 5.24 A medieval ditch was also recorded during an evaluation at land west of Tollgate (TQ 67 SW 505, EKE11577, c.740m north-east). No other details of this feature are included within the HER entry.
- 5.25 There are relatively extensive records of medieval date recorded in the vicinity of the study site. These are, however, largely restricted to casual findspots rather than a single agricultural enclosure rather than relating to any intensive period of occupation. Istead Rise itself was not established as a settlement until the Inter-War period and it is not considered that the

study site has any more than low potential to contain significant (i.e. non-agricultural) remains of medieval date.

### **Post-medieval and Modern Periods (c.1540 – Present)**

- 5.26 Within the wider 1km search area, there are 22 heritage assets recorded by NHLE and the Kent HER which appear to have been established in the post-medieval – modern periods. All of these entries relate to buildings or unstratified finds which are of a well-defined extent that generally add little to the understanding of the study site's archaeological potential.
- 5.27 The Historic Landscape Characterisation for Kent classifies the study site as a rectilinear field with wavy boundaries (?late medieval to 17<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century enclosure; Figure 6).
- 5.28 There are no features of archaeological interest apparent on the LiDAR 2023 DSM Hillshade (Figure 7).
- 5.29 During the post-medieval to modern periods, understanding of settlement, land-use and the utilisation of the landscape is enhanced by cartographic sources, which can provide additional to data contained within the HER.
- 5.30 The earliest available cartographic depiction of the study site is the Northfleet Tithe Map of 1838 (not reproduced) and there are no changes apparent on the subsequent first edition OS map of 1869 (Figure 8) where the study site is shown as part of one of several large fields in the intervening land between the main routes of Downs Road to the west and Wrotham Road to the east. The eastern part of the site extends into 'Cockharris Shaw', with the word 'shaw' meaning small wood or thicket. Further trees are depicted along the northern and western field boundaries.
- 5.31 The 25 inch OS map of 1897 (Figure 9) does not show any changes within the study site itself, other than the shaw being slightly smaller, no longer extending into the south-eastern corner. Adjacent to the north-eastern corner is a pit labelled 'Old Chalk Pit'.
- 5.32 The shaw is shown as once again extending into the south-eastern corner of the study site on the subsequent edition of 1908 (not illustrated), although there are no other changes apparent. Two small buildings had been constructed to the south of the study site, beyond which is a larger hatched structure (possibly denoting a glass house or agricultural building). The fields to the east had also been sub-divided.
- 5.33 These buildings had been demolished by the publication of the 1933 map (Figure 10), and instead the study site, fields to the south and fields to the east are all shown as part of an orchard or plantation, likely associated with Istead Nurseries to the south. This is also apparent on an aerial photograph dating to 1940 (Figure 11) and OS map of 1946 (not illustrated).
- 5.34 Between the publication of the latter and an aerial photograph captured in 1960 (Figure 12), residential development had been constructed to the west, south and south-east of the study site, although there are no changes to the study site itself.

- 5.35 Development continued rapidly in the decades following (as shown on OS maps of 1966 (Figure 13) and 1973 (Figure 14)) and by 1990 (Figure 15), the trees within the study site had been removed and it appears to have been in use as an arable field, with residential properties bordering along the southern side.
- 5.36 During the post-medieval and modern periods, the study site appears to have been in use as an orchard/plantation and part of the wider agricultural landscape. The study site is, therefore, considered to have no potential for significant (i.e. non-agricultural) post-medieval and modern evidence.

### **Unknown**

- 5.37 In the course of building operations on the housing estate to the south off The Drove Way, the HER records that two chalkwells were broken into by the contractors at the southern extent of the study site (TQ 67 SW 106). They reported that within the chalk workings, one of the chambers retained a wall of flint that had been set up to block the entrance from the shaft. However, nothing was found to date the period of the chalkwells construction or operation. The site visit undertaken to inform this assessment identified a possible location of the capped chalkwells, although further investigation would be required to confirm this (Plate 4).
- 5.38 The remaining HER entries of unknown date relate to cropmark features, which are shown on Figure 5 and detailed in Appendix 1.

## **6 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

- 6.1 Paragraph 207 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should be based on the significance of the archaeological asset, and that the level of detail supplied by an applicant should be proportionate to the importance of the asset and should be no more than sufficient to review the potential impact of the proposal upon the significance of that asset.
- 6.2 It is recognised that not all parts of a heritage asset will necessarily be of equal significance. In some cases, certain elements could accommodate change without affecting the significance of the asset. Change is only considered harmful if it erodes an asset's significance. Understanding the significance of any heritage assets affected and any contribution made by their setting (paragraph 208, NPPF 2024) is therefore fundamental to understanding the scope for and acceptability of change.

### **Designated Heritage Assets**

- 6.3 There is a single designated heritage asset within the 1km search area: Downs Hall Grade II Listed Building (NHLE 1350211). It is not considered that this heritage asset is potentially sensitive to development proposals.

**Potential Sub-surface Archaeological Remains**

- 6.4 The study site has been assessed as having moderate potential for Prehistoric – Roman period remains. Previous survey works have identified relatively extensive remains of this date including settlement and funerary deposits, particularly to the north of the study site as part of works ahead of the construction for the A2. The significance of such remains would depend on their contribution to regional research objectives but is likely to be local.
- 6.5 Following the Roman period, the study site appears to have been in agricultural use, with a phase of use as a plantation in the post-medieval to modern periods although there is evidence of chalk extraction of unknown date having taken place at the southern boundary. It is considered that there is low potential for remains of medieval to modern date to be present within the study site beyond agricultural features, with such remains likely to be represented by field boundaries and land drains. Any available evidence would suggest that such surviving remains would make no appreciable contribution to regional research objectives. As such, should such remains be present within the study site, their significance is likely to be negligible.

## **7 IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

### **Proposed Development**

- 7.1 The study site is being proposed for development of up to 100 residential dwellings (Class C3), including the formation of new accesses from The Drove Way, the provision of new areas of public open space and all other associated infrastructure and ancillary works (all detailed matters reserved other than means of access).

### **Previous Impacts**

- 7.2 For the majority of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the study site was part of a much larger plantation to the north of Istead Nurseries and it is likely that tree-planting would have truncated any archaeological remains present, depending on the species of trees selected, their rooting structure and the depth of overburden. The subsequent grubbing out of the trees and roots to return it to pasture would have also caused extensive disturbance to a considerable depth. It is also possible that the study site's latter use as an arable field would have caused low-level but widespread impacts across the study site as a whole from associated works, such as ploughing. Additionally, historic mapping indicates that the landscape surrounding the study site has been quarried, with chalk pits labelled throughout the search area and chalkwells recorded within the study site. There are no chalk working features within the study site visible on historic maps or the LiDAR data to assess the potential levels of below-ground disturbance associated with this activity.

### **Designated Heritage Assets**

- 7.3 No designated heritage assets will be impacted by the proposed development.

### **Potential Sub-Surface Archaeological Remains**

- 7.4 This assessment has concluded that there is the low to moderate potential for Prehistoric – Roman period remains, and low potential for remains of all other dates to survive below-ground within the study site. However, preservation levels of any archaeological remains that may have been present are expected to be very low following the planting and subsequent grubbing out of trees across the study site during its use as a plantation and subsequent return to pasture. Groundworks associated with the proposed development works have the potential to impact any archaeological deposits which may survive within the study site.

## **8 CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1 This historic environment desk-based assessment draws together the available archaeological, historical, topographic and land-use information in order to clarify the heritage significance and archaeological potential of land at Istead Rise, Kent. The assessment addresses the information requirements set out in the NPPF and provides the proportionate response sought by the NPPF.
- 8.2 The assessment has established that there are no designated heritage assets within the study site and there are none within the 1km search area considered sensitive to the proposals.
- 8.3 This assessment has concluded that there is moderate potential for Prehistoric to Roman remains, and low potential for remains of all other archaeological periods to survive below-ground within the study site. The proposed development works have the potential to impact any archaeological deposits which may survive within the study site, although preservation levels are likely to have been adversely affected by the previous use as a plantation, and potentially for chalk extraction also.

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## **Figures**

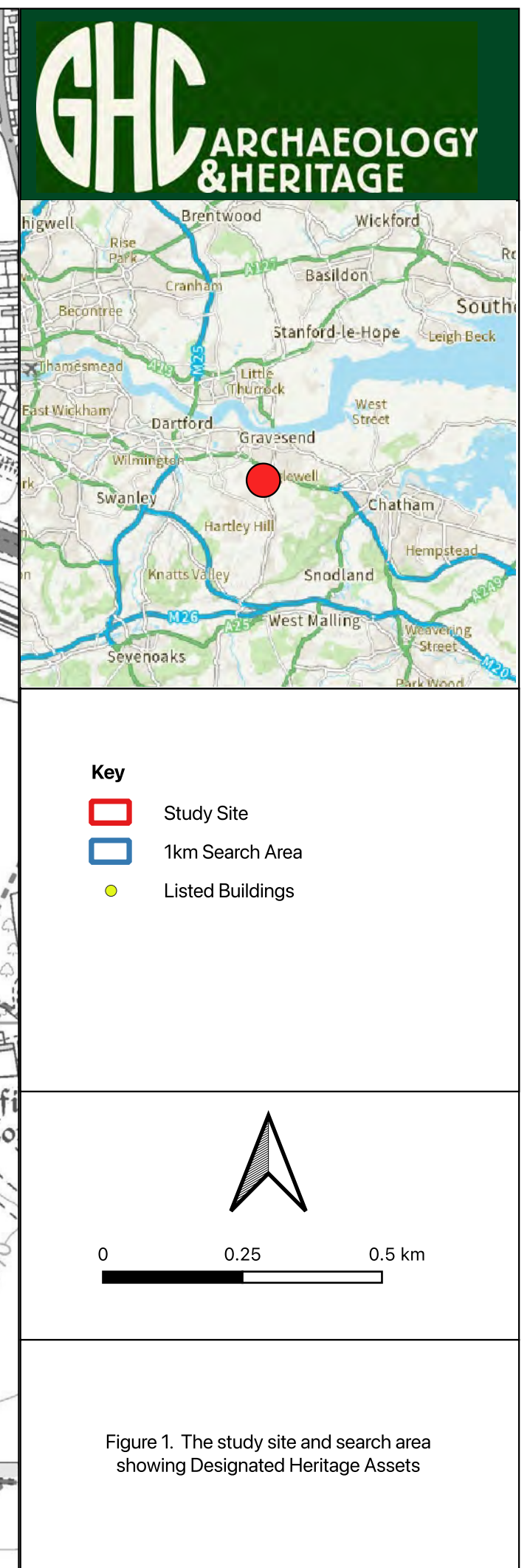
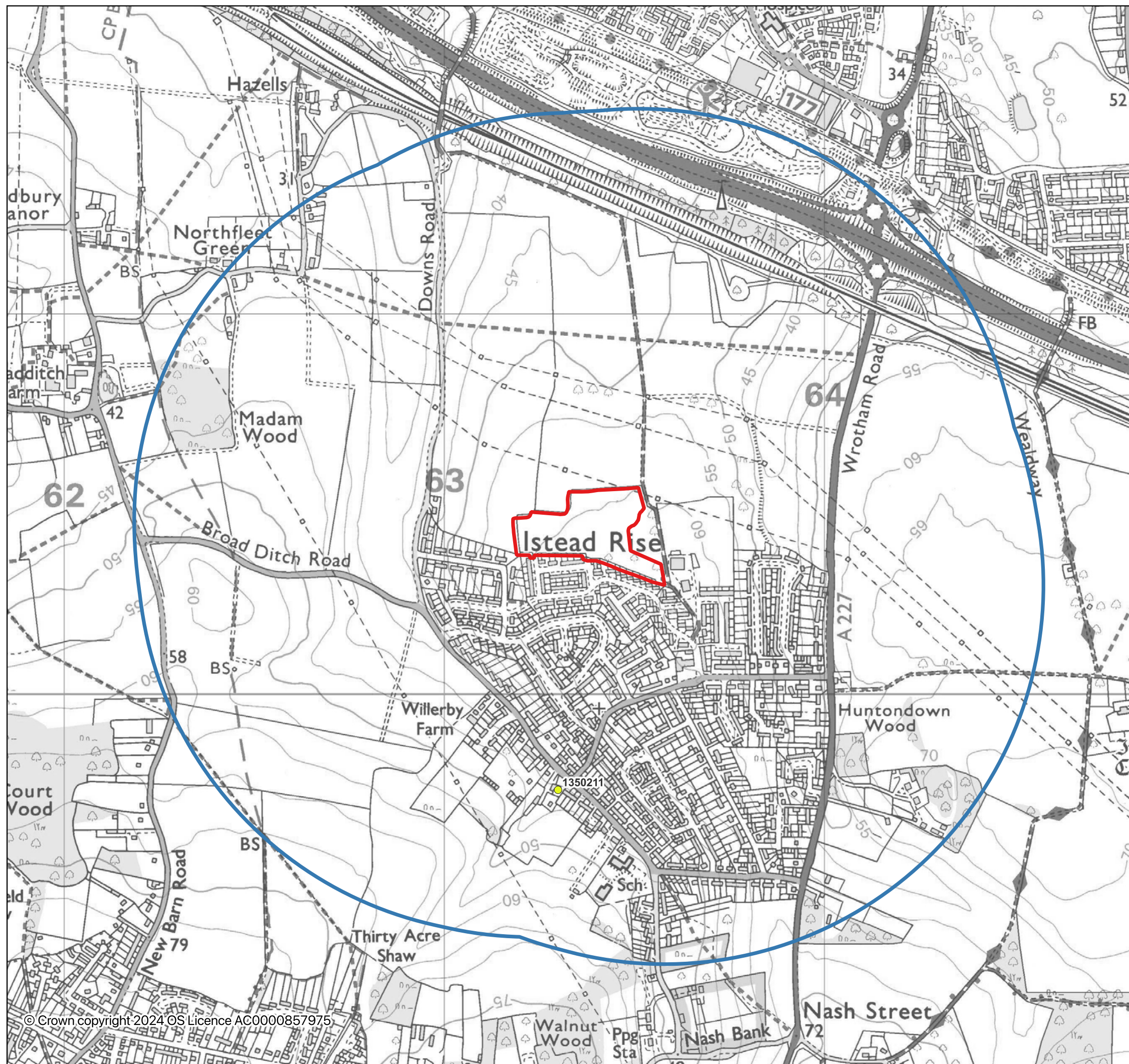


Figure 1. The study site and search area showing Designated Heritage Assets