



DCO Submission

Environmental Statement

Chapter 10: Heritage (built and archaeology)
Appendix 10.6: Historic Landscape Assessment

Document 6.10F

On behalf of
Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited

Prepared by RPS Group
October 2022

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

Oxfordshire Strategic Railfreight Interchange, Ardley

26776
Historic Landscape
Assessment
1
11 October 2022

Document status

Version	Purpose of document	Authored by	Reviewed by	Approved by	Review date
1	Draft	Richard Smalley	Nick Cooke	Nick Cooke	7/10/22

Approval for issue

7 October 2022

The report has been prepared for the exclusive use and benefit of our client and solely for the purpose for which it is provided. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by RPS Group Plc, any of its subsidiaries, or a related entity (collectively 'RPS') no part of this report should be reproduced, distributed or communicated to any third party. RPS does not accept any liability if this report is used for an alternative purpose from which it is intended, nor to any third party in respect of this report. The report does not account for any changes relating to the subject matter of the report, or any legislative or regulatory changes that have occurred since the report was produced and that may affect the report.

The report has been prepared using the information provided to RPS by its client, or others on behalf of its client. To the fullest extent permitted by law, RPS shall not be liable for any loss or damage suffered by the client arising from fraud, misrepresentation, withholding of information material relevant to the report or required by RPS, or other default relating to such information, whether on the client's part or that of the other information sources, unless such fraud, misrepresentation, withholding or such other default is evident to RPS without further enquiry. It is expressly stated that no independent verification of any documents or information supplied by the client or others on behalf of the client has been made. The report shall be used for general information only.

Prepared by:

RPS

Deputy Operations Director - Heritage

Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Prepared for:

Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited

Contents

1	INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF STUDY	1
1.1	Background	1
1.2	Scope and Methodology	1
1.3	Local Landscape Context.....	2
2	GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY	5
2.1	Geology	5
2.2	Topography	5
3	ASSESSMENT OF HISTORIC LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND SURVIVAL	6
	Timescales used in this report.....	6
	Prehistoric.....	6
	Romano-British.....	7
	Early-Medieval and Medieval	7
	Post Medieval	9
4	DISCUSSION	11
5	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	13

Figures

Figure 1 – Site Location

Figure 2a – HLC Plot (by period)

Figure 2b – HLC Plot (by broad type)

Figure 2c – HLC Plot (by previous type)

1 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF STUDY

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 This Historic Landscape Assessment has been prepared by Richard Smalley BA (Hons) MCIfA FSA of RPS on behalf of Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited.
- 1.1.2 The subject of this assessment is the proposed Oxfordshire Strategic Railfreight Interchange, near Ardley, Oxfordshire, centred on OS NGR 453147, 225884. The proposed development includes a number of elements which are outlined as:
- Main Site – the area to be occupied principally by the rail terminal and warehousing;
 - J10 Highways Improvements – the highway works to be carried out in connection with the improvement of J10 of the M40 motorway;
 - Ardley Bypass – a bypass to the east of the village of Ardley;
 - Middleton Stoney Relief Road – a relief road to the north-east of the village of Middleton Stoney linking the B4030 to the B430.
- 1.1.3 When describing these four elements as a whole, the term “Site” will be used in this report.
- 1.1.4 The assessment has been prepared in response to the Scoping Opinion provided by the Planning Inspectorate in July 2021 (ID 4.8.3/5.333), which states that:
- “The Inspectorate considers that given the nature of the application site and its surroundings and the limited information available at this stage about the Proposed Development, and assessment of effects on historic landscape character should also be scoped into the assessment where significant effects are likely to occur.”*

1.2 Scope and Methodology

- 1.2.1 This Historic Landscape Assessment considers the archaeological and historic landscape context of the Site in its wider environment, but the scope of the assessment in terms of the presence/absence of historic hedgerows and other historic landscape features is limited to the confines of the Main Site, the proposed Middleton Stoney Relief Road, the proposed Ardley Bypass and the proposed improvements to J10 of the M40 motorway.
- 1.2.2 This assessment comprises an examination of evidence on the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and other sources. The Site has been visited on several occasions between 2020 and 2022. The assessment is further informed by the results of:
- A geophysical survey
 - Archaeological trial trench evaluation
 - Aerial photographic survey
 - LiDAR data
- 1.2.3 The report also includes utilises mapping of the development of the Site as a whole from the 18th century until the present day, and an analysis of any surviving historic hedgerows and other features recorded on relevant historic maps and by site visits.

1.3 Local Landscape Context

1.3.1 There are no protected landscape designations covering the Site or the immediate surrounding area.

National Character Areas

1.3.2 The Site as a whole lies within the north-eastern edge of *National Character Area 107* “*Cotswolds*”. Natural England’s Character Area Profile describes the key characteristics of area as:

- Defined by its underlying geology: a dramatic limestone scarp rising above adjacent lowlands with steep combs, and outliers illustrating the slow erosion of escarpments. The limestone geology has formed the scarp and dip slope of the landscape, which in turn has influenced drainage, soils, vegetation, land use and settlement.
- Open and expansive scarp and high wold dipping gently to the southeast, dissected by river valleys.
- Arable farming dominates the high wold and dip slope while permanent pasture prevails on the steep slopes of the scarp and river valleys with pockets of internationally important limestone grassland.
- Drystone walls define the pattern of fields of the high wold and dip slope. On the deeper soils and river valleys, hedgerows form the main field boundaries.
- Ancient beech hangers line stretches of the upper slopes of the scarp, while oak/ash woodlands are characteristic of the river valleys. Regular blocks of coniferous and mixed plantations are scattered across the open high wold and dip slope.
- Large areas of common land, important for unimproved calcareous grassland, are characteristic of the scarp and high wold around the Stroud valleys and along the crest of the scarp to Cleeve Hill.
- The majority of the principal rivers flow south-eastwards forming the headwaters of the Thames with the exception of rivers in the west which flow into the River Avon and then the Severn Estuary.
- Rich history from Neolithic barrows, iron-age hill forts and Roman roads and villas to deserted medieval villages, grand country houses, cloth mills and Second World War airfields. The field patterns largely reflect both the medieval open field system, with fossilised areas of ridge and furrow, and later planned enclosures.
- Locally quarried limestone brings a harmony to the built environment of scattered villages and drystone walls, giving the area a strong sense of unity for which the Cotswolds are renowned. Bath stone is also famous and has been used for building since Roman times, both locally in the principal buildings and streets of Bath and more widely, for example for Buckingham Palace in London. Parkland, gardens and historic designed landscapes are features particularly of the dip slope and broad lowland, such as Lawrence Johnston’s garden at Hidcote, and Heather Muir’s garden at Kiftsgate, parkland at Stanway, Chastleton and Blenheim Palace. Prominent natural and built features in the landscape include the City of Bath WHS, Brailes Hill, Broadway Tower, Cleeve Hill, the Tyndale monument, Freezing Hill, Kelston Round Hill and Blenheim Palace WHS.

1.3.3 The Character Area Profile also describes the landscape through time. This is not reproduced at length but is summarised by the following paragraphs (Natural England 2015).

- 1.3.4 There is evidence of over 6,000 years of human occupation and land use. Although Mesolithic remains have been found, archaeological evidence suggests that the large-scale clearance of the lime-dominated woodland and settlement did not begin until the Neolithic.
- 1.3.5 Roman influences are prominent in the landscape; Roman roads, settlements and the remains of villas can be found throughout the area. Cotswold stone has been used for construction since at least the Neolithic, but it was the Romans who developed the materials for buildings. Roman roads have had a lasting influence on the area, and of particular note is the Fosse Way which runs the full length of the Cotswolds.
- 1.3.6 Saxon settlement saw the establishment of much of the human infrastructure of the area; most place names in the Cotswolds are of Saxon origin. The principal land uses have long been agriculture, particularly sheep grazing. Reference to Domesday Survey of 1086 shows that many present-day villages were already in existence at that time, surrounded by very large open fields subdivided into strips. Much of the land was owned by extensive ecclesiastical and feudal estates, some of these based outside the Cotswolds.
- 1.3.7 Population decline, beginning in the mid-14th century and resulting from climate change, poor harvests and plague (including the Black Death of 1348), precipitated significant change in the Cotswolds. Sheep farming became a major occupation, especially on the established ecclesiastical estates, and wool and cloth production became a mainstay.
- 1.3.8 After the Dissolution of the Monasteries and on the back of the wealth generated by wool production, many fine country houses and parks were established including Blenheim Palace, now a WHS, Compton Wynyates, Sherborne Park, Dyrham Park, Badminton and Cirencester Park. This wealth also contributed to the development of a distinct architectural tradition within settlements and across the rural landscape.
- 1.3.9 Further enclosure of farmland and downland for cropping and pasture followed, mostly on a piecemeal basis, in tandem with the creation of new farmsteads and the building of large barns, but principally driven by Parliamentary enclosure in the late 18th century and early 19th century (concentrated in the central and eastern wolds).
- 1.3.10 The cloth industry expanded from the 17th to 19th centuries in the valleys around Dursley, Stroud, Chalford and Painswick. Taking advantage of local water power and deposits of fuller's earth, large multi-storey stone mill buildings were erected to card, spin, weave and finish the cloth, such as Bliss Mill at Chipping Norton. Communities expanded with modest terraced houses for workers built along hillsides, while mill owners erected fashionable grand houses. By 1850 the wool industry was in decline as the Industrial and Agricultural Revolutions shifted competitive advantage to other parts of the country, and increasingly to mills in the north of England.
- 1.3.11 During the Second World War, the area was strategically important. Many wartime airfields were created by clearing the landscape of nearly all natural and manmade features; while some, like Kemble, remain in use, many more have been given back to farming, though they are still evident in the form of very large, featureless fields. After the war farms prospered anew as home-produced

meat and cereals were in demand and new techniques and heavy mechanisation meant that profitable farming once again became possible. This brought more changes to the landscape with the construction of large agricultural sheds to house machinery, the widening of field entrances and the removal of field boundaries. Mechanised road traffic and improvements to the road network opened up the area to tourism and commuting. The M5 running parallel to the scarp, the M4 cutting across the southern part of the area, and the M40 touching the north-eastern edge of the NCA, provided fast links to London, Bristol, Birmingham and the West Midlands.

Historic Landscape Characterisation

- 1.3.12 The Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) commenced in 2012. The dataset was completed in 2016, and the report produced in July 2017 (Tompkins 2017). The HLC demonstrates that the Oxfordshire countryside is predominantly agricultural in nature, with almost 74% of the landscape characterised by Enclosure Types. This landscape type is evident throughout the county and is only less common in the wooded areas of the Chiltern Hills and in the county's main settlements.
- 1.3.13 The older Enclosure Types, particularly Ancient and Piecemeal Enclosures, have concentrations in the north-west and south-eastern parts of the county and they tend to correspond broadly with the Cotswold and Chiltern Hills.
- 1.3.14 More modern Enclosure Types, such as Reorganised and Prairie Enclosures, are more common in the southern and south-western parts of the county, around Wantage and Faringdon.
- 1.3.15 Woodland landscape types are most common in the south-east of county, related to the Chiltern Hills, and particularly the Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB), and the remains of the ancient Wychwood Forest to the north-west of Oxford.
- 1.3.16 *Medieval*: surviving Medieval features are evident throughout the county, largely in the cores of rural and urban settlements. It is noted that the sites identified in the south-eastern corner of the county, in the Chiltern Hills, tend to be smaller and fewer in number than elsewhere.
- 1.3.17 *Post Medieval*: these landscapes are also widespread in Oxfordshire. They tend to be focused in rural areas and mostly comprise Enclosure types. The southern edge of the county, around the North Wessex Downs, has a marked lack of Post Medieval landscapes. This is also the case for a band of land running north-west and south-east from Banbury, which is likely to relate to the reorganisation of the landscape along the M40 motorway. In the late 18th century, much of the landscape had been enclosed; however, large areas of the county still comprised unenclosed land. By the end of the 19th century, the majority of Oxfordshire's open fields and unenclosed land had been enclosed, with the notable exception of the south-eastern corner of the county. This reorganisation involved the removal of many old field boundaries. By the close of the 19th century, the county was traversed by railway lines linking the expanding urban centres.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 Geology

- 2.1.1 The underlying geology for the Site is Limestone of the White Limestone Formation, which is the predominant rock type for the relevant National Character Area (Natural England 2015). This geology type comprises sedimentary bedrock formed in the Jurassic period, between 168.3 million and 166.1 million years ago. No superficial deposits are recorded by the British Geological Society's online viewer (<https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk> accessed 4th August 2022).

2.2 Topography

- 2.2.1 The Main Site covers approximately 300 hectares, and the topography varies within the redline boundary. The overall development area within the order limits is 411.78ha.
- 2.2.2 The topography of proposed Ardley Bypass and J10 Highways Improvements to the north-east of the Main Site slopes gradually downhill from Baynard's Green to the M40 motorway (120m-110m above Ordnance Datum (aOD)). It then rises again to approximately 123m aOD before sloping down to 115m aOD where it meets the Main Site.
- 2.2.3 The Main Site's topography undulates, but generally slopes downhill from north-west to south-east with a height aOD ranging from approximately 127m at its highest point, to approximately 102m at its lowest.
- 2.2.4 The proposed Middleton Stoney Relief Road to the south-east of the Main Site predominantly slope downhill for the first 1.5km (104m aOD – 85m aOD, west-east) before rising again along the length of the undulating B4030 road.
- 2.2.5 A number of small waterways cross the Site as a whole. A small brook meanders from north to south through the Main Site. This brook joins the Gaggle Brook which crosses the central part of the proposed Middleton Stoney Relief Road. Another brook crosses the north-eastern corner of the Main Site.

3 ASSESSMENT OF HISTORIC LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND SURVIVAL

Timescales used in this report

Prehistoric

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

Historic

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

Prehistoric

- 3.1.1 There are no upstanding Prehistoric landscape features evident within the Site.
- 3.1.2 Aerial photographic study, geophysical survey and archaeological trial trenching undertaken within the Site has recorded the presence of Prehistoric settlement activity. As this evidence is all buried with no above-ground physical remains, they are not considered to be landscape features.
- 3.1.3 The archaeological evidence shows that the Site formed part of a Prehistoric landscape which was utilised in the Iron Age for livestock management, domestic and settlement purposes. However, any remains relating to this activity have been removed from the landscape over the last c.2600 years and evidence is restricted to truncated, below-ground features.
- 3.1.4 HER data shows that the wider landscape (up to 3km) has been utilised throughout Prehistory. As can be seen on Figs. 2a-2j, early Prehistoric evidence (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic) is spread across the landscape at a relatively low density. An increase in evidence, though still spread out, can be noted for the Bronze Age, most likely reflecting an increased opening up of the landscape at this time as agriculture took hold and became more widespread. The Iron Age is the most well represented in the local landscape, with a number of sites within the Site itself.
- 3.1.5 The B430, which forms the western boundary of the Main Site in two places, follows the line of a boundary feature known as Aves Ditch. Originally this, and the road were thought to form part of the network of Roman roads in this area, but a recent reappraisal has suggested that Aves Ditch likely forms part of an Iron Age boundary, possibly representing a tribal division.

Romano-British

- 3.1.6 Oxfordshire was utilised and settled during the Roman period. A Roman fort was established at Alchester, to the south of Bicester, some 5km south-east of the Main Site, shortly after the initial Roman Conquest. A civilian settlement developed outside the walls, and when the fort was abandoned, expanded into the area formerly occupied by the fort. The Roman name for this town is not known, but it lay at the heart of the Roman network of roads in the area – Akeman street, runs from east to west to the south of the Site, and the Silchester to Towcester Road, which runs from north east to south west runs to the east of the Site. As mentioned above the road along Aves Ditch may also have been formalised in the Roman period.
- 3.1.7 Evidence for Roman activity is known in the wider 3km search area, though these seem to be isolated and spread out, with a particular concentration to the south of Bicester. The Site lies within the hinterland to the north-west of the Roman town at Alchester. However, there are no upstanding Roman landscape features evident within the Site.
- 3.1.8 Archaeological trial trenching within the Site has recorded evidence for Roman settlement, including buildings, ditches, kilns and a rubble surface/floor. The artefacts associated with these features included fine table wares, coins, brooches etc. suggest an elevated status for the inhabitants of that time.
- 3.1.9 In the Romano-British period the Site lay in the agricultural hinterland to the Roman town at Alchester, with Roman roads to the south, east, and probably also to the west. Archaeological evidence shows that a potentially high-status Roman settlement was once present within the Site. Any above-ground remains relating to this activity have been lost over the last c.2000 years and as such all evidence of such is restricted to truncated, below-ground features.

Early-Medieval and Medieval

- 3.1.10 The Site sits within a wider landscape containing a number of Early-Medieval/Medieval settlements, which form the basis for the modern settlement pattern. The settlements at Ardley, Stoke Lyne, Middleton Stoney, Saxintone and Lower and Upper Heyford are all recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 AD. Each of these settlements were held by different (and sometimes multiple) landowners at that time, and all lay within the *hundred* of Kirtlington.
- 3.1.11 The land within the Site lay predominantly within the parish of Ardley during the Early-Medieval and Medieval periods; a 10th century charter granted by Ethelred II describes the Saxon boundaries of Ardley (British History Online). The northern boundary of the parish lay to the north of the village, at the river, whilst the eastern boundary was formed by Gagle Brook and the western by Aves ditch. The parish was divided in two by the medieval road from Oxford to Northamptonshire mentioned as a *via regia* as early as the 13th century. That road forms the eastern edge of the main Site.

- 3.1.12 The southern third of the Site lies in the parish of Middleton Stoney. Much of this parish was woodland at the time of the Domesday survey of 1086, and with the exception of the park (which was emparked early in the 13th century with the permission of King John) the land was unenclosed until the 17th century.
- 3.1.13 We can reconstruct a fair amount of the Medieval landscape in and around the Site from later maps, in particular the Tithe Maps, which contain field names and other evidence which can help shed light on past land use.
- 3.1.14 Ardley is recorded in a number of Saxon documents. In 995 King Ethelred II granted land there to Æthelwig, the reeve of Buckingham. Much of the parish seems to have been wooded in the Saxon period; a Saxon settlement in the vicinity of the modern Ashdown Farm, was known as 'Eardulfes lea', or Eardwilf's clearing in the wood (British History Online). The only Anglo-Saxon feature recorded within the main Site in the HER, a boundary ditch (HER MOX23726), By the time of Domesday survey in 1086, the settlement at Ardley was not small, comprising 23 households, 8 villagers and 15 smallholders. There were 11 ploughlands, farmed by 10 plough teams, 4 of which belonged to the lord, Earl Hugh of Chester.
- 3.1.15 The village of Ardley lay at the northern end of the parish, with a 12th century motte and bailey castle at its western end. To the south and south-west of the castle lay Ardley Wood, originally farm more extensive than depicted on later maps. The open strip fields farmed by Ardley's villagers lay to the south-east of the village, predominantly to the east of the road to Oxford. Here the name of Ardley Fields Farm Cottage and field names such as Upper Longlands and Lower Longlands support this interpretation. Initially, Medieval records speak of two fields, a North Field and a South Field are mentioned in a charter of 1235, and there are clear indications that at least some of the land was enclosed at this early stage. Later glebe records, of 1676 indicate that the glebe land held in the open fields was still held in open strips, so clearly not all land in the open fields was enclosed.
- 3.1.16 Much of the Main Site, however, was rough grazing comprising common land or heath land. The place name evidence on the Tithe Map indicates that there was a 'Great Heath' on the western edge of the parish, adjacent to Aves Ditch, along with a 'Westmoor', 'Church Furze' and a 'Heath Ground'. The Great Heath is also mentioned in earlier documents. There is evidence for further heathland to the south, on the border with Middleton Stoney, where Parsons Heath, Middleton Piece Heath and Margretts Heath are all recorded. Three areas of common ground are recorded as place names – Far Common lies close to the western edge of the parish, just outside the area of the main Site, whilst two areas of enclosed former common are recorded close to Ashdown Farm – Cow Common and Further Common.
- 3.1.17 As mentioned above, there is some evidence for partial enclosure of the strip fields for the parish of Ardley as early as the 13th century, whilst another charter, dated to the early 13th century records the fencing of a new assart to protect it from stock damage.

- 3.1.18 About a third of the Main Site extends into the northern part of the parish of Middleton Stoney. Like Ardley, Middleton Stoney has its origins in the Saxon period. At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, the manor was held by Richard Puingiant. It was larger than Ardley, comprising 37 households - 25 villagers, 7 smallholders and 5 slaves. There were 16 ploughlands, with 3 plough teams belonging to the lord. The parish was also extensively wooded – an area of 8 by 8 furlongs is recorded. There do not appear to have been any meadow lands within the parish itself – a 14th century document recording the extents of the parish mentions 5 acres of meadow, belonging to the manor, but these lay in 2 other parishes (British History Online).
- 3.1.19 Like Ardley, there is little evidence for the land being enclosed, with the exception of the deer park to the west of the village, permission for the emparkment of which was granted by King John in 1201, along with a charter for the manor to hold a market. The original deer park was much smaller than the current park – it was substantially expanded under the ownership of the Earl of Jersey in the early 19th century, to encompass the site of the old manor, the church, the surviving remnants of the former castle and substantial elements of the former village, which was largely rebuilt outside the bounds of the expanded park. Neither the main Site nor any of the outlying land take for the scheme overlies this parkland.
- 3.1.20 The Great Heath which dominated the western edge of Ardley extended into the north-western corner of the parish of Middleton Stoney – it is recorded as Middleton Heath on the Tithe Map. The Medieval records mention a North Field and also South Fields. One of these appears to have lain to the north-west of the village, bordering the heath, judging from the field name evidence (West Long Ground, Middle Long Ground and East Long Ground are all mentioned on the tithe map) the characteristic sinuous long boundaries and the stepped edges to other boundaries. These strip fields lie within the bounds of the main Site. A single area of former common (The Common) is recorded to the north of the village on the Tithe Map – it lies outside the bounds of the Site.
- 3.1.21 As with Ardley, there is good evidence to suggest that most of the land within the parish of Middleton Stoney remained unenclosed throughout the medieval period.
- 3.1.22 In summary, the evidence suggests that the majority of the Main Site in Ardley was heathland, common land or woodland in the Medieval period, whilst in Middleton Stoney it includes areas of Heathland and some of the village's strip fields. In both parishes most of this land would not have been enclosed until the Post Medieval period, and the enclosure boundaries recorded on the Tithe Map are all likely to be post-medieval in date, albeit that some (such as the boundaries around West, Middle and Long Ground in Middleton Stoney) may represent a fossilisation the limits of Medieval strip fields.

Post Medieval

- 3.1.23 The 1839 Ardley Tithe Map and the 1841 Middleton (Middleton Stoney) Tithe Map provide useful information for this period. It is noted that parts of the proposed J10 Highways Improvements and Middleton Stoney Relief Road are covered by unavailable tithe maps.

- 3.1.24 In Ardley, more formalised enclosure of the landscape appears to have taken place in the late 17th or 18th century, and 1770, when the whole parish is described as being enclosed. By the late 18th century, much of the land was farmed by four large farms, the largest of which was Ashdown Farm. By the late 18th century, most of these were owned by the Duke of Marlborough, who had bought the manor in 1753, and who's successors held it until the late 19th century. The glebe lands (held by the Reverend John Lowe) also lie partially within the Site, as do smaller landholdings held by the Reverend John Ballard, Thomas Bonner and Thomas Stuchbury-Wilson. By this time, the farmed land was split roughly equally between pasture and arable, and the woodland much reduced, as shown on the Tithe Map.
- 3.1.25 The enclosure of Middleton Stoney parish appears to have begun c. 1686, when there is a record of the glebe land, which had up to that point comprised numerous individual plots in the common fields were rationalised and enclosed. This was followed shortly afterwards in 1709 by an agreement between the remaining landholders of the common fields to enclose them (British History Online). The enclosure was confirmed in Chancery in 1714, and shown in a map of 1710.
- 3.1.26 By the time the Tithe Map had been drawn up, there were 5 principal farms within the parish. Most of the land was given over to arable, with some woodland and a small amount of pasture. The vast majority of the land within the Site was owned by the Earl of Jersey, apart from the glebe lands, which were held by the Reverend Richard Pretzman.
- 3.1.27 The layout of the fields within the Site remained largely unchanged throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, though some boundaries have been removed during this period. The main changes evident in the landscape during that time occurred outside the Site under consideration, including the construction of the Chiltern Main Line railway, the Upper Heyford Airfield and the M40 motorway.
- 3.2 The enclosure of the land within the Site appears generally to have happened in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. This enclosure fossilised some elements of the medieval landscape in its boundaries, and even more in the field names. There has been little significant change to these boundaries since the enclosure, although some boundaries have been removed to create larger fields. This pattern of a largely unenclosed medieval landscape being enclosed in the late 17th or 18th century and split between wealthy landowners, often of several farms, is one common to Oxfordshire and surrounding counties. In the wider landscape modern intrusions such as the expansion of nearby settlements the railway, Upper Heyford airfield the construction of the M40 and development within the Site itself have reduced the coherence of the wider landscape.
- 3.3 The Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) records almost all of the Site as having an *Enclosure Broad Type*. Small parts of the Site are characterised differently, with *Communication* in the north, and *Civic Amenities* in the central area. All of the HLC types within the Site are recorded as being of a Post Medieval or Modern date.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1 Using data from the Oxfordshire HER, historic maps and documents it is possible to reconstruct the development of the landscape in and around the Site.
- 4.2 It is clear that the Site formed part of a sparsely occupied landscape during the early Prehistoric period. The post glacial landscape would have been inhabited initially by nomadic bands of hunter gatherers. Only in the Neolithic would the population have become increasingly sedentary, clearing some land for agriculture and settlement and building communal monuments. This agricultural sedentism flourished in the Bronze Age, and there would have been greater clearance of woodland from farmland and the population would have increased. The landscape became more densely settled from the Iron Age (600 BC-AD 43), which is also when we have the first evidence for occupation within the Site itself. None of this prehistoric activity has left any physical traces within the Site itself, although Aves ditch, which forms part of the western boundary of the site is thought to have marked an Iron Age tribal boundary.
- 4.3 The Roman period saw much change in the surrounding landscape. Alchester, to the south of Bicester, saw the construction of a Roman fort soon after the conquest. This lay at the junction of two Roman roads, and gradually developed into a town. The Site lay in the agricultural hinterland of this town, and seems to have been at least partly occupied by a high status rural settlement. Although the legacy of the Roman period was left in the wider landscape in the form of the road network and some towns, it left no visible marks on the site itself.
- 4.4 The Saxon period saw the establishment of a network of villages and parishes, including both Ardley and Middleton Stoney. The bounds of these, when recorded in contemporary charters were often natural features such as rivers or woods, reflecting the lack of prominent man-made landscape features, although Aves ditch is mentioned in the Saxon bounds for Ardley. These new landscapes were heavily wooded, and almost entirely unenclosed, with open fields formed by the villagers and much of the land in both parishes being demesne land. There were extensive areas of heath and moorland, especially in Ardley. As a result, the land within the Site was largely unenclosed heathland, woodland, open strip fields and some common land in the medieval period.
- 4.5 Wide scale enclosure of the landscape took place mainly in the late 17th and 18th centuries. In some places, most notably in the enclosure of some of the strip fields in Middleton Stoney, this enclosure has fossilised some of the medieval landscape features. This enclosure saw a major shift in how the land was farmed, with much of the land in both parishes farmed from a small number of large farms, although this was mostly a formalisation of a shift that had been happening for quite some time.
- 4.6 There have been some notable changes to the wider landscape in the modern period, including the expansion of both towns such as Bicester and the villages themselves, the coming of the railway, the construction of the airfield at Upper Heyford and the construction of the M40. The construction of the Ardley Energy Recovery Facility represents a sizeable modern development within the landscape.

- 4.7 The modern pattern of landscape enclosure within the Site dates almost exclusively to the Post-Medieval period, albeit incorporating some elements of the earlier Medieval landscape, and with some modern alteration, loss and modification. The historic development of the landscape, with increasing agricultural clearance and settlement throughout Prehistory, the imposition of a network of roads and urban centres in the Roman period, followed by a more organic development of villages and parishes in the Early Medieval period, a largely open Medieval landscape with woodland, heath, common land and open strip fields held largely by manorial lords, the gradual piecemeal enclosure of some elements of the landscape followed by more formal enclosure of entire parishes in the late 17th and 18th century, followed in turn by modern alteration and encroachment is one common in the wider area.

5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 This Historic Landscape Characterisation exercise has determined that the pattern of enclosure of the landscape evident within the Site is one of largely Post-Medieval (late 17th and 18th century) enclosure of a largely unenclosed Medieval landscape. Within the wider landscape there are surviving elements of earlier Iron Age and Roman landscapes, but these will be unaffected by the proposed scheme.
- 5.2 This pattern of a largely unenclosed Medieval landscape becoming enclosed in the Post-Medieval period, and then gradually altered and encroached by modern development is a common one throughout Oxfordshire, and indeed Lowland Britain. In this regard the landscape within the proposed Site is neither unusual, nor particularly well preserved – it has seen an amount of modern alteration and encroachment. A reflection of the widespread nature of this form of landscape can be seen in the plot of the Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation for the area (Figures 2a-2c). The broad characterisations (Figure 2b) demonstrate how widespread enclosure is in the surrounding area, whilst the more detailed characterisation by former land type (Figure 2c) further indicates the widespread nature of both planned enclosure and piecemeal enclosure in the area surrounding the Site.
- 5.3 The proposed development would mean the loss of much of the landscape pattern within the Site, including the loss of historic hedgerows, many of which are likely to be categorised as ‘important under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 (as amended 2003). However, because the form of the historic landscape within the Site is not particularly unusual, in the local area or further afield, it is considered that this impact would not result in a significant or unacceptable loss of landscape type regionally, and would be less than substantial in EIA terms.

Sources Consulted

General

Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record
Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation

Internet

British Geological Survey – <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>
British History Online – <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/>
Domesday Online – <http://www.domesdaybook.co.uk/>
Historic England: The National Heritage List for England <http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>
National Planning Policy Framework – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

Bibliographic

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, (amended by the National Heritage Act 1983 & 2002, updated in April 2014)
Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2021, Code of conduct: professional ethics in archaeology
Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, Standard & Guidance for historic environment desk based assessment 2014, updated 2020.
Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2013, Scheduled Monuments & nationally important but non-scheduled monuments
Historic England *Archaeological Priority Area Guidelines* July 2016 unpublished document
Historic England (formerly English Heritage), Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment 2008 (new draft 2017)
Kain, R. J. P., Chapman, J. and Oliver, R. R. (2004) *The Enclosure Maps of England and Wales 1595-1918*
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2021, National Planning Policy Framework
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government Planning practice guidance, 2019, Historic environment
Muir, R. (2004) *Landscape Encyclopaedia: a Reference Guide to the Historic Landscape*
Natural England (2015) *National Character Area Profile: 107. Cotswolds*
Planning Inspectorate (2021) *Scoping Opinion: Proposed Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange*. Case Reference TR050008
Sumo (2022) *Geophysical Survey Report: Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange, Ardley, Oxfordshire*. Report no. 02545.
Tompkins, A. (2017) *Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project: Full Report*. HE Project Number 4659 MAIN

Cartographic

1797 Davis Map of Oxfordshire
1839 Ardley Tithe Map

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

1841 Middleton Stoney Tithe Map

1875 Ordnance Survey map 1:10,560

1898 Ordnance Survey map 1:10,560

1923 Ordnance Survey map 1:10,560

1954 Ordnance Survey map 1:10,560

1981 Ordnance Survey map 1:10,000

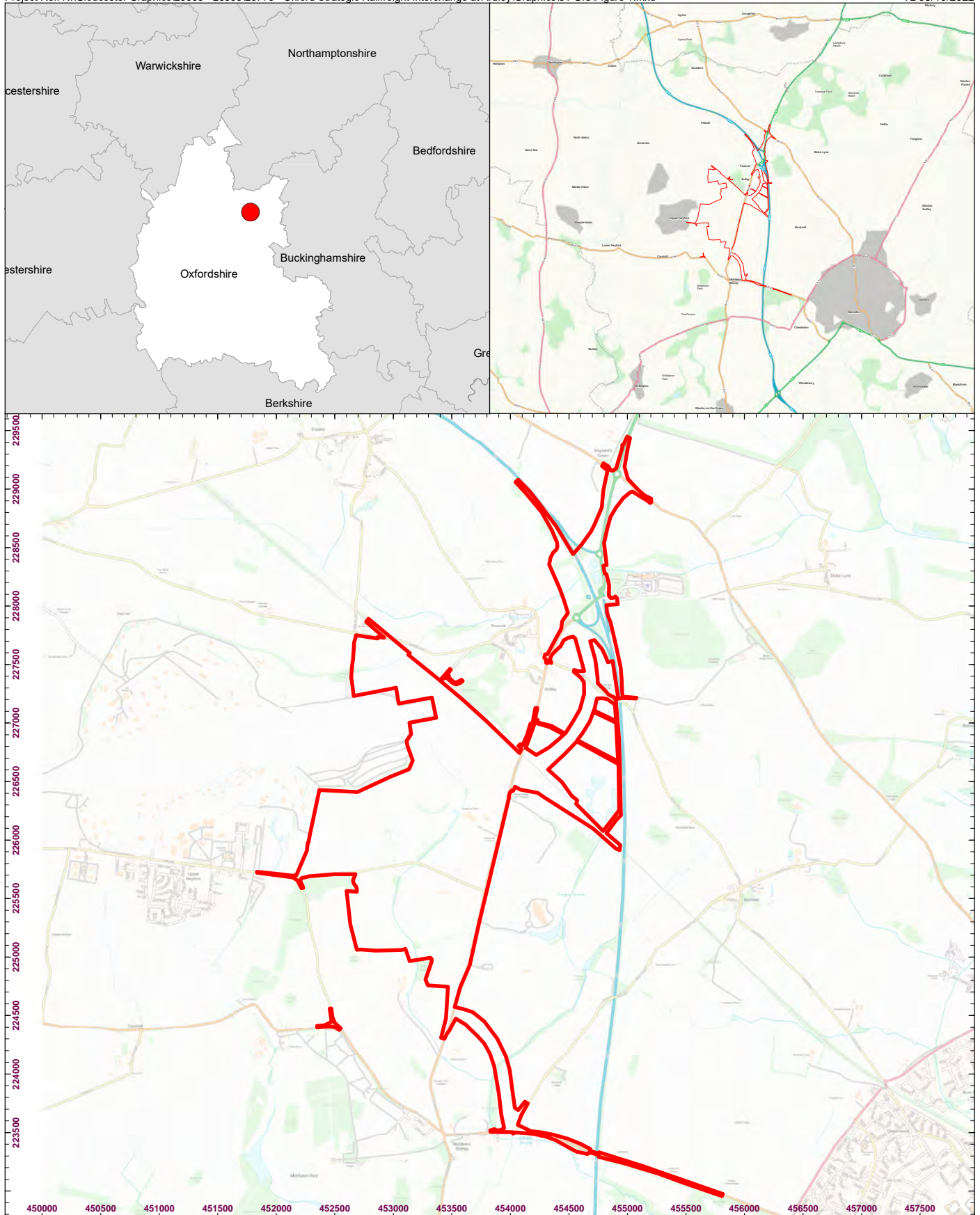
2001 Ordnance Survey map 1:10,000

2010 Ordnance Survey map 1:10,000

2020 Ordnance Survey map 1:10,000



FIGURES



 Site Boundary

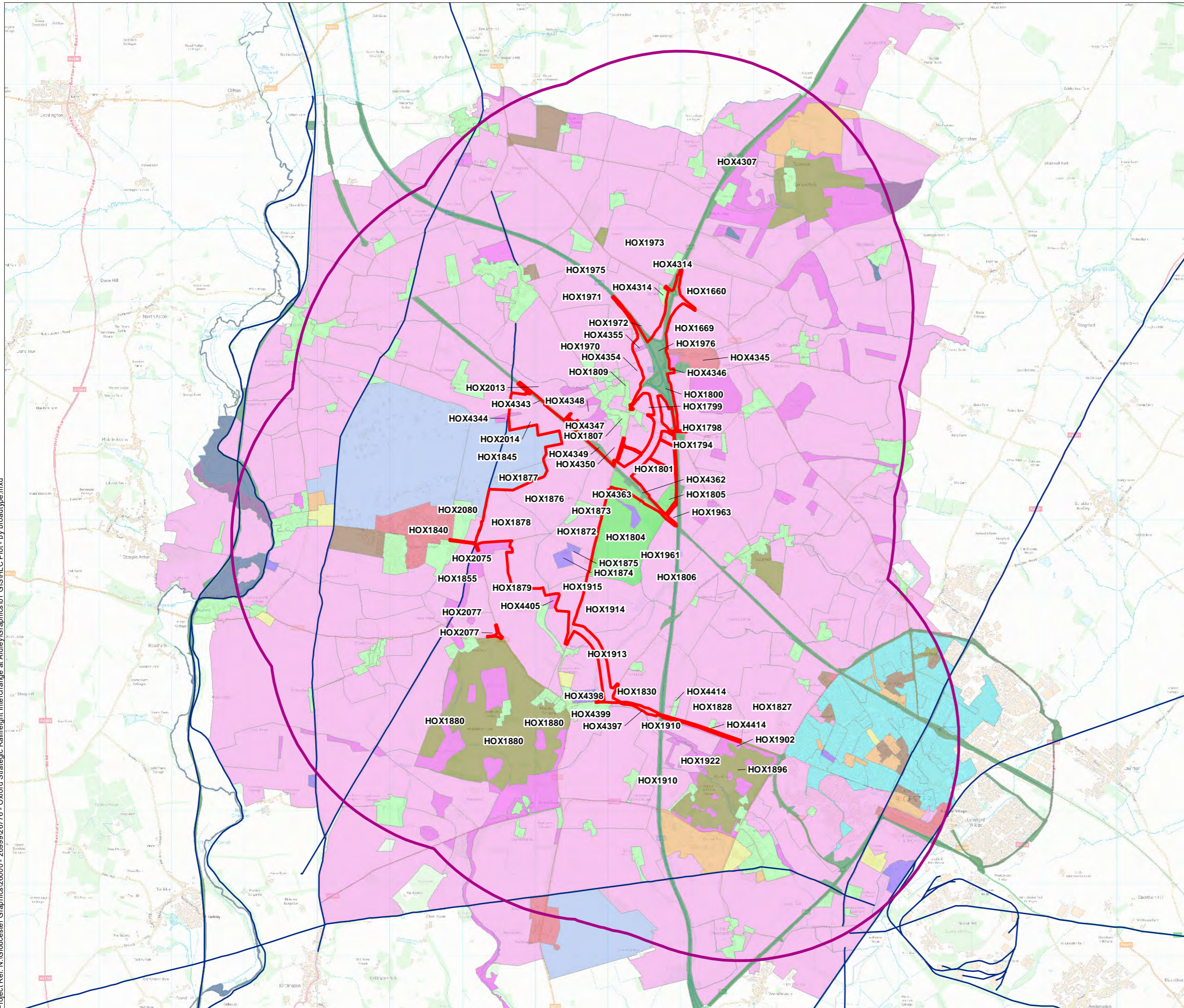


0 500 1,000m
Scale at A4: 1:45,000



Figure 1
Site Location Plan

Project Ref: N:\G:\Boucester Graphics\26000 - 26999\26776 - Oxford Strategic Railfreight Interchange at Ardley\Graphics\01_GIS\HLC_Plot - by broadtype.mxd



Legend

- Site Boundary
- 3km Radius

Historic Landscape Characterisation:

BROAD TYPE

- Civic Amenities
- Civil Provision
- Commercial
- Communication
- Enclosure
- Industry
- Military
- Orchards and Horticulture
- Ornamental
- Recreation
- Rural Settlement
- Unenclosed Land
- Urban Settlement
- Water and Valley Floor
- Woodland

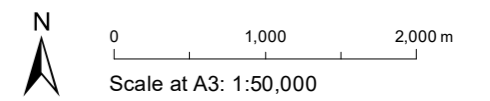
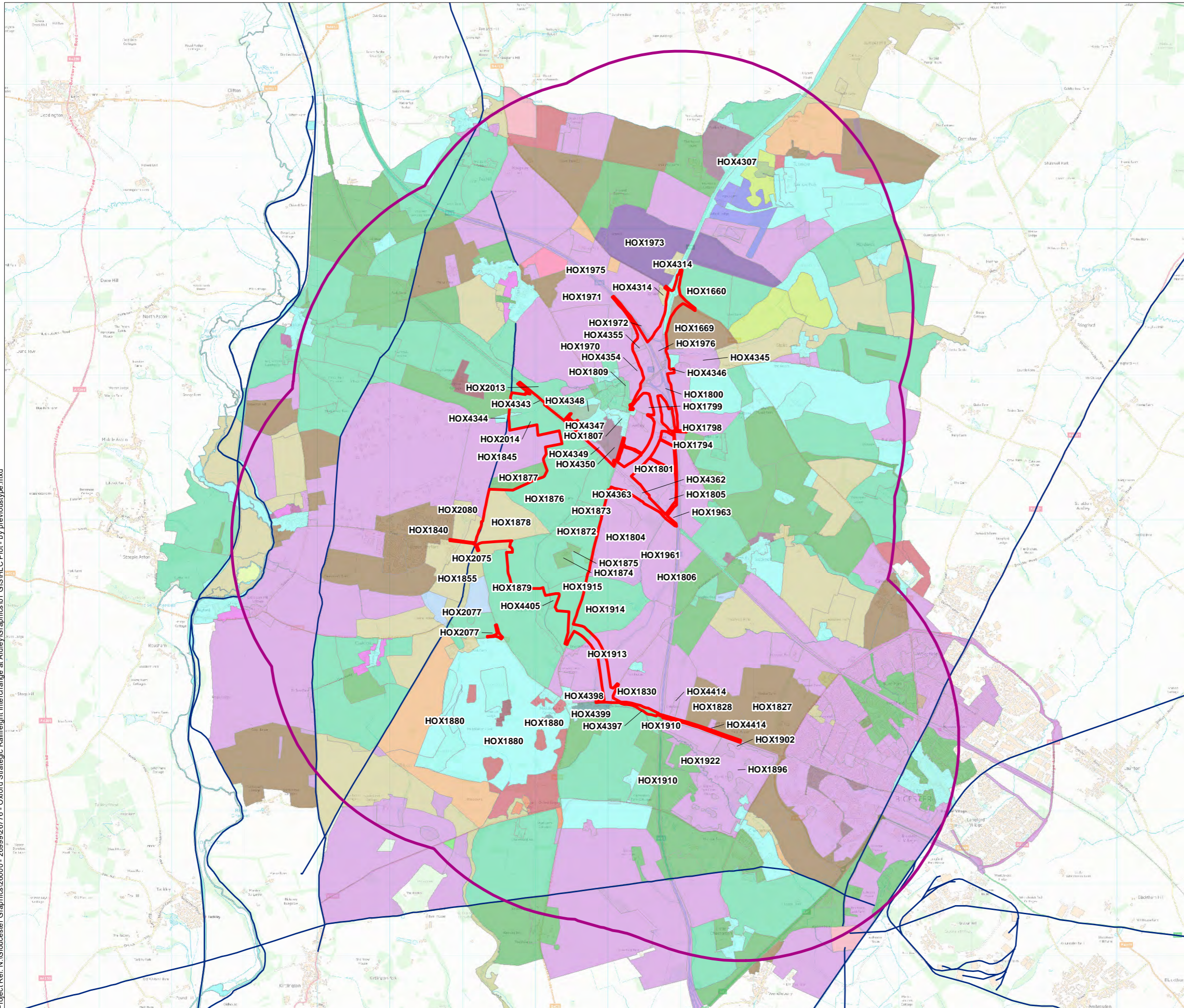


Figure 2b

HLC Plot (by broad type)

Project Ref: N:\G:\Boucester Graphics\26000 - 26999\26776 - Oxford Strategic Rail/Inflight Interchange at Ardley\Graphics\01_GIS\HLC Plot - by previous type.mxd



Legend

- Site Boundary
- 3km Radius

Historic Landscape Characterisation:

PREVIOUS TYPE

-
- Assarted Enclosure
- Civic Amenities - Utilities
- Civil Provision - Health Care Facility
- Closes
- Crofts (medieval & Post Medieval)
- Enclosure - Paddocks and Stables
- Industry -Extractive Works
- Military - Castle
- Open Field System
- Orchard and Hort - Allotment
- Orchard and Hort - Orchard
- Orn-Parkland / Designed Landscape
- Piecemeal Enclosure
- Planned Enclosure
- Prairie / Amalgamated Enclosure
- Reorganised Enclosures
- Rural - Country House
- Rural - Hamlet
- Rural - Village
- Rural -Farmstead
- Unenclosed -Green
- Unenclosed -Rough Ground
- Water - Water Meadow
- Woodland - Ancient Woodland
- Woodland -Plantation
- Woodland -Secondary Woodland
- Woodland -Woodland Pasture

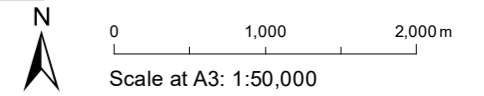


Figure 2c

HLC Plot (by previous type)



rpsgroup.com