



# HPS

Professional Archaeological Services



Site of Proposed Churchward ASC School, SW25 2QL

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**Client:** HSP Consulting

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**Project:** Desk-Based Assessment

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## Non-Technical Summary

In February 2018 Heritage Planning Services Ltd was commissioned by HSP Consulting (the client) to prepare an archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) for land at the site of the proposed Churchward ASC School (the study area).

The study area comprises c. 1.7ha of land, part of a larger field, located in Blunsdon St Andrew on the northern slope of Widhill and accessed from the south side of a new lane connecting Tadpole Lane with the A419. At the time of inspection (Feb 2018) this land was grazed by a flock of sheep.

The visit confirmed that earthworks were present on the study area, the feint traces of Medieval/Early Post Medieval ridge and furrow cultivation. Further evidence for this was obtained from historic aerial photographs, which also indicated the potential for other undated features within the study area, including a potential trackway that might predate the Medieval cultivation.

Previous archaeological investigations in the vicinity have also highlighted the potential for Prehistoric and Roman activity, though it is not clear whether any of this extended into the study area.

Based on the available evidence it is concluded that while there is good evidence for Medieval/Post Medieval farming of the study area, this is of relatively low importance. However, this activity may have obscured earlier features, while other undated features may merit further investigation.

# 1. Introduction

## Background

- 1.1. In February 2018, Heritage Planning Services Ltd was commissioned by HSP Consulting (the client) to prepare an archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) for the site of the proposed Churchward ASC School, SN25 2QL (hereafter referred to as the study area).
- 1.2. Planning permission is being sought for the development of the site as a school.
- 1.3. The study has been undertaken following a request from HSP Consulting for a Desk-Based Assessment, due to the possible historic environment implications of redeveloping the site.
- 1.4. This document has been compiled by David Etheridge BA, Mphil and managed by Sam Driscoll BA, MA, MCIFA.
- 1.5. The Project has been completed under HPS project reference HPS-270/18.

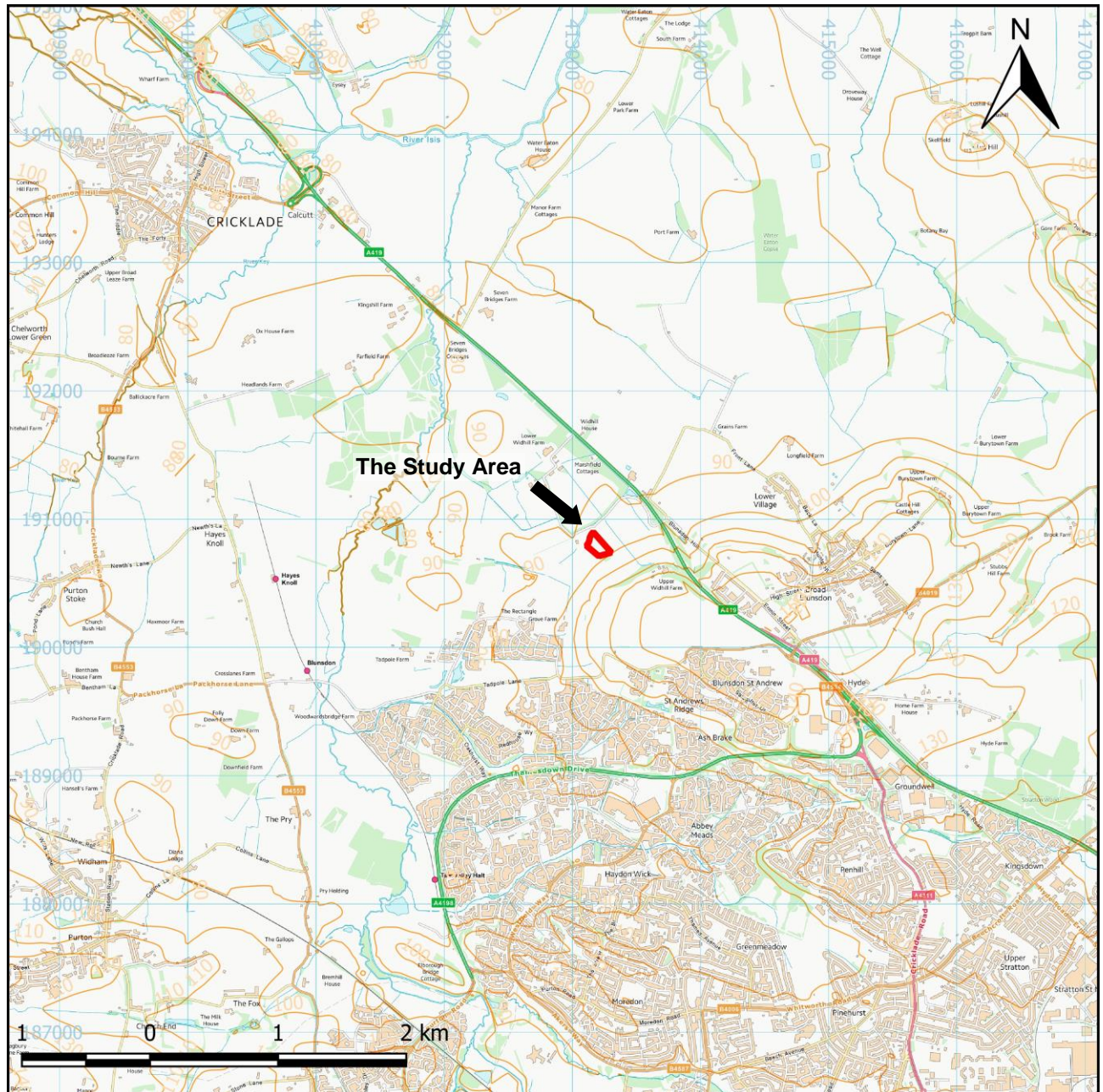


Figure 1. Location of the Study Area.

## The Study Area

- 1.6. The study area lies within the parish of Blunsdon in the county of Wiltshire, c. 6.4km north northwest of Swindon town centre and close to the northern edge of the Swindon conurbation. It is located c. 500m west of the A419 (NGR SU 1320 9079, 413200 190790), which broadly follows the line of Ermin Street, the Roman Road from Gloucester to Silchester. The study area comprises c. 1.7ha of grazing land, part of a larger field on the north side of Widhill, between 90 and 100m aOD. The northern edge of the study area lies at the foot of the hill. The land then continues northwards for some distance in a fairly level plateau.



- 1.7. The area is characterised by fields of mixed farming, with both arable and grazing in evidence, though the most recent aerial imagery (2006, Google Earth) suggests that arable predominates. However, the site visit confirmed that land to the west of the study area has recently been developed as a secondary school, with land further to the west developed as housing.
- 1.8. The underlying geology of the study area is mudstone of the Oxford Clay Formation Formation, laid down in the Jurassic period; no superficial deposits (drift) are recorded (BGS 2018).

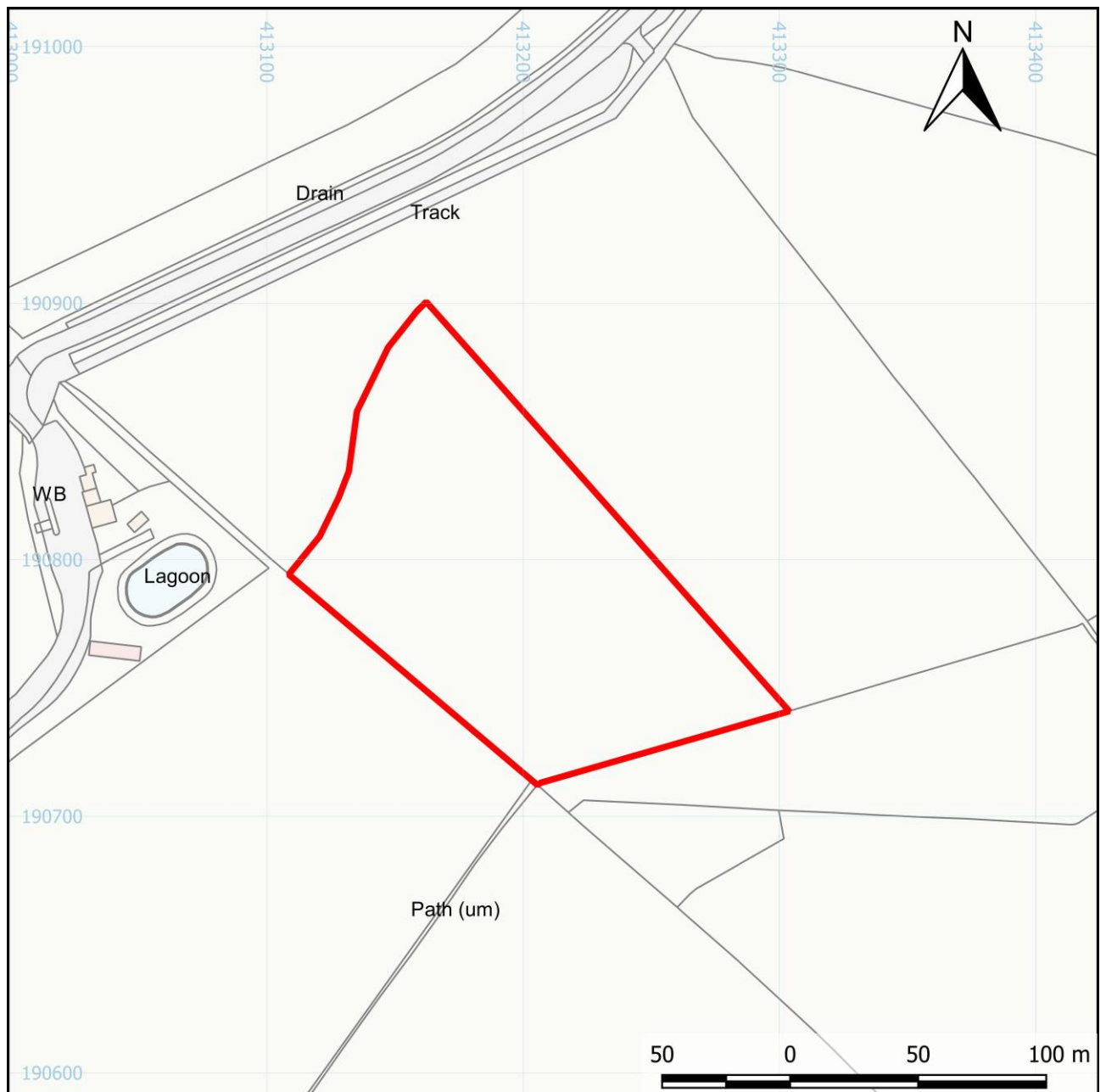


Figure 2: Project Site Detailed Location. Approximate boundary of the study area outlined in red.





## 2. Planning Policy

### NPPF

- 2.1. "In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum, the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary." Paragraph 128.

### Aims

- 2.2. The aim of this study is to:

- Identify the presence of designated and non-designated cultural heritage assets within the Study Area;
- Identify the potential of the study area to include archaeological deposits and to determine, where possible, their condition and likely level of survival;
- Provide an assessment of the known or predicted heritage assets considering their archaeological, historic, architectural and artistic interests;
- Define the potential development impact to the archaeological resource.

## 3. Methodology

- 3.1. This document has been prepared in accordance with the CIfA Standard and Guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment (revised Dec 2014), which states that a DBA '*will determine, as far as is reasonably possible from existing records, the nature, extent and significance of the historic environment within a specified area*' and that in '*development context desk-based assessment will establish the impact of the proposed development on the significance of the historic environment (or will identify the need for further evaluation to do so), and will enable reasoned proposals and decisions to be made whether to mitigate, offset or accept without further intervention that impact*' (CIfA 2014: 4).



3.2. All work was carried out in line with the following standards and guidance-

- *Standard and guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment*. The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Guidance Document, University of Reading, Reading;
- *The Management of Archaeological Projects-2*. English Heritage, 1991;
- *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Paragraph 128*. Communities and Local Government 2012.

3.3. The aim was to produce a document that not only considered the potential for archaeological remains on the Project Site, but to also put these into their historical and archaeological context.

3.4. The primary repositories for information consulted comprised:

- Wiltshire Historic Environment Record;
- National Heritage List for England (NHLE);
- AMIE database/Pastscape;
- Geological Maps;
- Ordnance Survey maps of the site and its environs;
- Historical maps and documents held in the Wiltshire History Centre;
- Appropriate archaeological and historical journals and books;
- Unpublished research reports and archives, including those held by relevant museums and local societies.



## 4. Baseline Survey: The Site Visit

4.1. A site visit was carried out on the afternoon of 27 February 2018. The conditions were cold to below freezing, with an easterly breeze; cloud cover varied between 50-60% and there was the occasional light flurry of snow. Low bright sunlight with contrasting shade made photography difficult in places.



*Photo 1. Part of the study area within the larger field, looking down slope and northwest.*

4.2. At present the study area comprises a substantial part (c. 1.7ha) of a field located on the north side of Widhill, at NGR SU 1320 9079 (413200 190790). From the northern edge, which is fairly level, the field rises upwards to the southeast.

4.3. In plan the study area is an irregular polygon on a roughly northwest to southeast alignment. The shape of the north-western boundary reflects the course of a new access road constructed since the latest OS mapping, which passes the study area on that side (see Photo 2).



*Photo 2. View along the northern edge of the study area, showing the new access road, looking northeast.*

4.4. The study area, as the rest of the field at the time of the visit, was covered in short grass. At the time of the visit a flock of sheep were grazing in the field.

4.5. With the exception of the north-western boundary, which is defined by the new access road, and the south-western boundary, which is defined by the western edge of the present field, the other parts of the study area boundary are not defined on the ground. A



*Photo 3. The south-western boundary of the study area, looking southeast.*

mature hedge and a drainage ditch define the south-western boundary, with a modern stock proof fence running along the inside edge.



4.6. Access to the study area was gained from the northeast corner of the field, at a low point in the fence, there being no direct vehicular or personal access to the field from the new built access road.

4.7. Drainage ditches surrounded the field on both sides. On the northern side, where the ground was lowest, there were patches of standing water. It is not clear whether this is a long standing issue or a recent result of the construction of the access road.



*Photo 4. Ridge and furrow earthworks crossing the study area, looking west from the SE corner of the field.*

4.8. No standing buildings or other built structures were observed within or adjacent to the study area, nor is there surface evidence of any.

4.9. Ridge and furrow cultivation was evidence at two places within the field/study area. Towards the northern end of the field, where they appeared as a row of linear brown scars in the turf, on a roughly northeast-southwest alignment (see Photo 2), while from the northern edge of the field they appeared as feint earthworks on a similar alignment (See Photo 4).

4.10. No other archaeological features were observed, and no finds were made.

4.11. From the walkover survey it is concluded that the study area contains evidence for Medieval and/or early Post Medieval arable agriculture. The features associated with this (ridge and furrow) appear to be relatively slight, indicating they have been denuded by more recent ploughing. If any earlier archaeology was present below the topsoil, then surface level indicators would have been removed by the ridge and furrow, together with the later ploughing.

## **5. Baseline Survey: Archaeological and Historical**

### Introduction

5.1. The information presented here is derived from sources including the Wiltshire County Council Historic Environment Record, the Historic England National Monuments Record database (PastScape), the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), the Historic England Archive, and surviving cartographic resources, along with other published or documentary sources.

5.2. Trawls of the National Heritage List for England, Magic.gov.uk, PastScape, the Historic England Archive and the Wiltshire and Swindon HER have revealed the following:



## Statutory Constraints

5.3. No statutory heritage constraints have been identified within the study area.

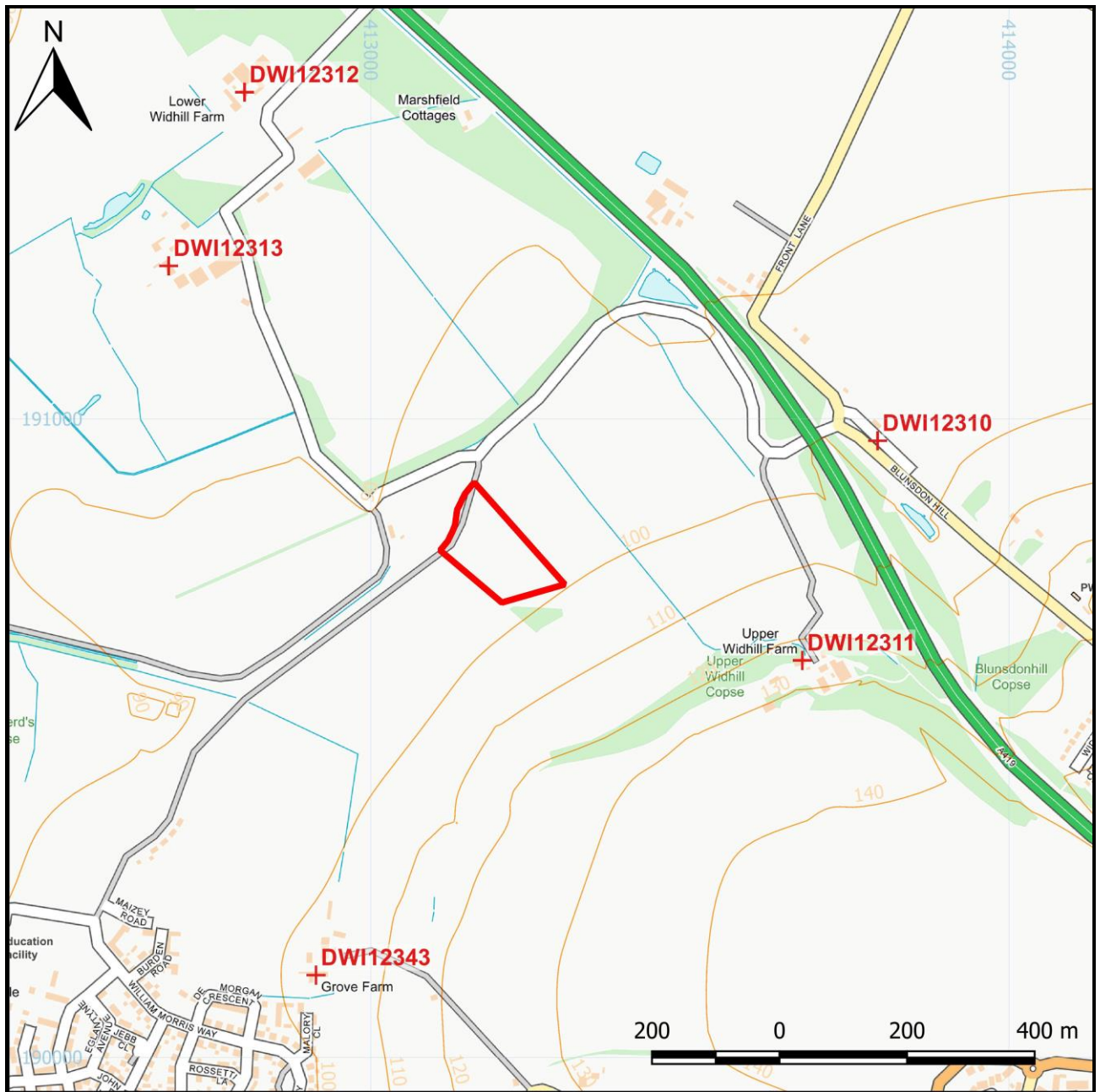


Figure 3. Listed Buildings, citing DesigUID.

## Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

5.4. There are no listed buildings within the study area, which does not lie within a conservation area.



- 5.5. There are five listed buildings within a 1km radius of the study area. The closest is Upper Widhill Farm (DWI12311), a Grade II listed farmhouse of late 17th or early 18th century date, located c. 390m ESE of the study area. The farmhouse is not currently visible from the study area.
- 5.6. Some 540m to the east, on the north side of Blunsdon Hill road, is a Grade II listed milestone of 18th or early 19th century date (DWI12310).
- 5.7. Chapel Farmhouse, is a Grade II listed structure of 18th century date (DWI12313), located c. 590m northwest of the study area. The name is said to derive from a chapel of ease (no date given) believed to have stood on the site, that was attached to St Sampson, Cricklade (ibid.). The farm is visible from the study area.
- 5.8. Grove Farmhouse is a Grade II listed late 18th century structure, with early and mid 19th century alterations and additions (DWI12343); it is located c. 650m southwest of the study area.
- 5.9. The Grade II listed early 18th century Lower Widhill Farmhouse is located some 720m northwest of the study area (DWI12312).
- 5.10. The overriding picture is of a sparsely settled landscape enclosed from the 17th century through to the late 18th century, with enough surplus to fund building improvements into the mid 19th century. As is usual, the dwellings of the farm labourers from this time are not represented as listed buildings and are unlikely to have survived. Evidence for settlement and agriculture before the 17th century may be preserved in the archaeological record.

### **Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other Heritage Statutory Constraints**

- 5.11. The nearest Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) comprises the earthworks and buried remains of an extensive Roman water shrine, located some 1.3km southeast of the study area (HE 2018, 1018496). The scheduled area is extensive, covering c. 4.9ha; a relatively large amount of silver bullion and plate has been recovered from the small area that was subject to excavation (ibid.), indicating the relative wealth and importance of the site during the 2nd to 4th centuries.
- 5.12. The next nearest SAM is the 'slight univallate hillfort' dated to the early Iron Age, with associated Medieval lynchets, of Castle Hill (HE 2018, 1016324), located some 2.3km east of the study area.
- 5.13. The nearest AONB is the North Wessex Downs, which lie some 10km to the south, while the Cotswold AONB lies some 13km to the north.
- 5.14. The northernmost designated area of The Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated World Heritage Sites lies some 19km to the south.



5.15. No other statutory constraints were located within a meaningful distance of the study area.

### **Non-Statutory National Constraints**

5.16. The nearest registered park and garden is the Grade II listed Lydiard Park, located c. 6.4km southwest of the study area.

5.17. The nearest registered battlefield is the Battle of Roundway Down, 1643, located c. 26km to the SSE.

### **Events**

5.18. The results of this trawl are unusually extensive. This relates to post 1991 large-scale development, where archaeological survey and excavation have been a requirement of the planning process.

### **Desk-Based Assessments (DBA)**

5.19. Two desk-based assessments have been undertaken on land to the southwest and southeast of the study area. A preliminary assessment was undertaken on land north of Tadpole Lane – this was reported on in 2005; the study identified that many of the known sites within that study area were crop marks and earthworks relating to Medieval and later agriculture (EWI7965).

5.20. A DBA was undertaken in 2008 on land to the north of Blunsdon St Andrew; the report indicated there was no known archaeology within that study area, but several sites were known from the vicinity (EWI7966).

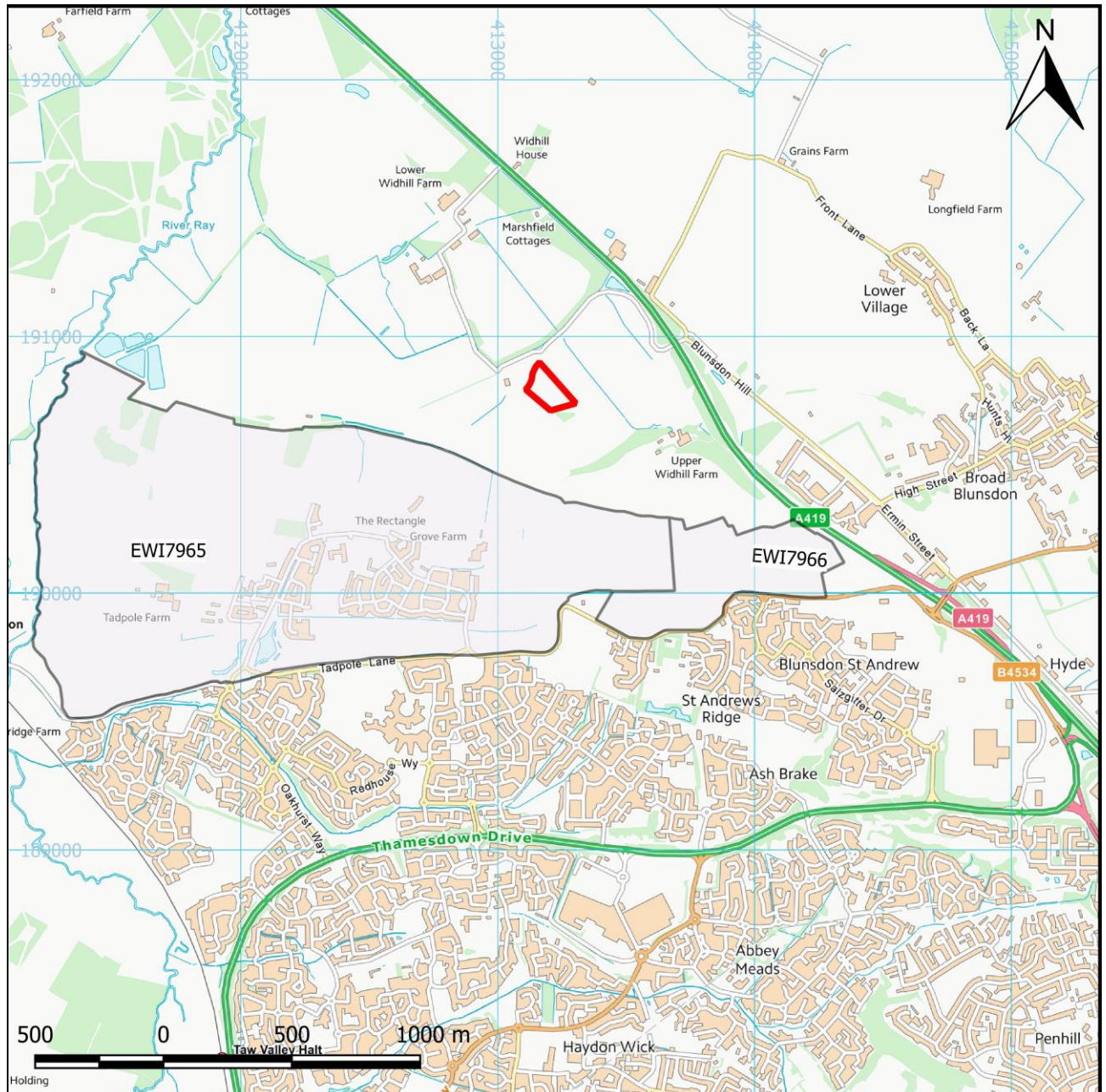


Figure 4. Distribution of Desk-Based Assessments in a 1km radius of the study area. Data derived from Wiltshire & Swindon HER.

## Geophysical Surveys

- 5.21. Five geophysical surveys have been identified within a 1km radius of the study area. Two surveys (2002-3) along the route of the Blunsdon bypass identified potential archaeological features (EWI6417 & 6996).
- 5.22. Survey was undertaken in 2008-9 over a large area of land north of Tadpole Lane; the results identified potential Romano-British and Medieval sites towards the River Ray, on the western side of the survey area (EWI7967). Linear and rectilinear features identified in the eastern part of the survey were thought to represent enclosures, while the presence of Medieval ridge and furrow was noted throughout the survey area (ibid.).



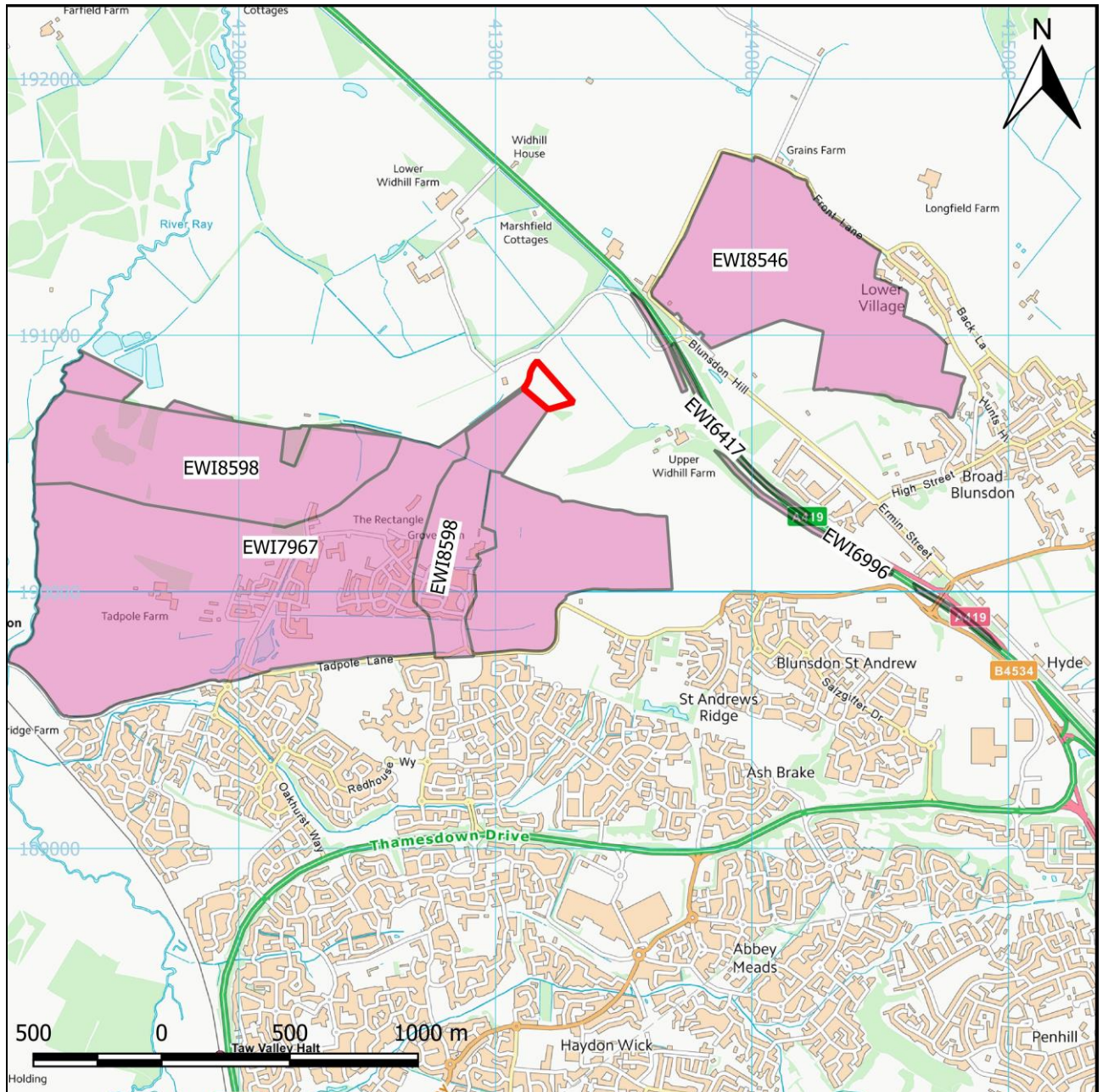


Figure 5. Distribution of geophysical surveys in a 1km radius of the study area. Data derived from Wiltshire & Swindon HER.

5.23. A 57ha magnetometer survey was undertaken in 2016, on land of St Leonard's Farm, located north of Blunsdon Hill (Ermine Street); despite the presence of circular crop marks, only features related to post-Medieval agriculture and drainage were identified (EWI8546).

5.24. In 2011 further survey was undertaken on land north of Tadpole Lane; features of archaeological potential were identified in the north-western part of the survey area (EWI8598).



## Evaluations (Trial Trenching)

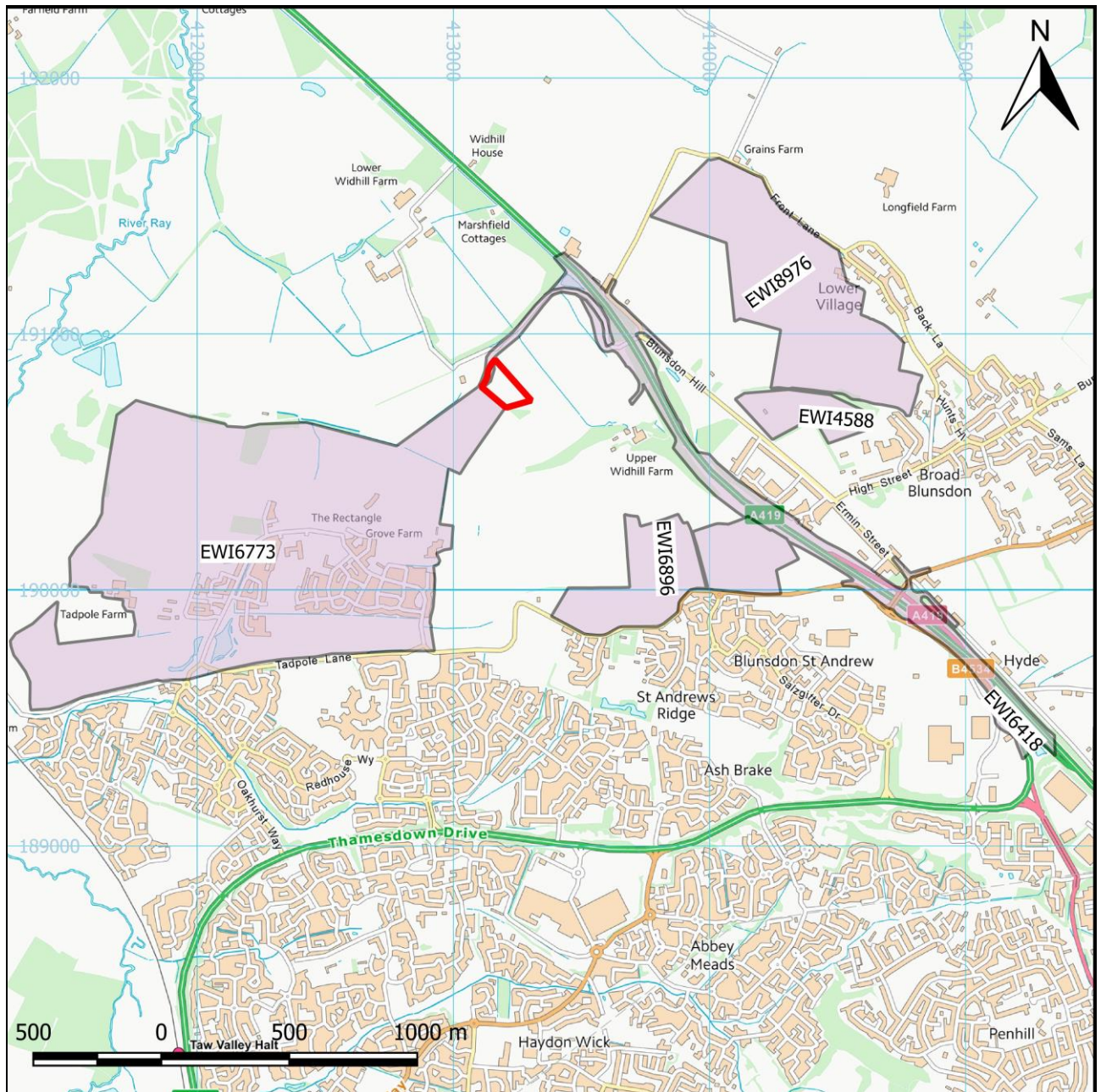


Figure 6. Distribution of archaeological evaluations in a 1km radius of the study area. Data derived from Wiltshire & Swindon HER.

- 5.25. In 1990 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the site of Blunsdon House Hotel golf course; the features revealed appeared to be post-Medieval and relatively insubstantial (EWI4588).
- 5.26. Archaeological evaluation along the route of the Blunsdon bypass (2003) revealed several shallow pits containing prehistoric flint flakes in the central part of the area, while towards the southern end a ditch with Iron Age and Romano-British pottery was found (EWI6418). Past ridge and furrow cultivation was also evidenced (*ibid.*).



5.27. One historic environment event is recorded within the study area, Event EWI6773, an archaeological evaluation at Tadpole Farm, which took place in 2011. The evaluation area was extensive; the portion of the study area included comprised only a small part of the whole, which consisted of 400 trial trenches. Trench location plans were not included with the published report (Barber 2011), so it is not possible to determine whether any trenches were excavated within the study area and what the results from those trenches were. The section within the study area relates to the course of what is now the new access road from the A419. It is possible that trenches were outside and to the north of the study area, but any findings from these trenches would be significant in indicating the archaeological potential of the study area.

5.28. In 2011 an archaeological evaluation took place on land north of Blunsdon St Andrew. Four medieval pits and some undated quarry pits were exposed; the excavators noted the surviving features were heavily truncated by later ploughing (EWI6896).

5.29. In 2017 archaeological evaluation on land at St Leonard's Farm located a probable Romano-British settlement in the northwest of the survey area, with evidence for undated and Prehistoric agricultural activity throughout the remainder (EWI8976).

#### **Monitoring (Watching Briefs)**

5.30. In 1987 archaeological monitoring took place along the Thames Water Pipeline from Latton to Blunsdon; few archaeological features were observed and none appear to have been in the vicinity of the study area (EWI3837).

5.31. In 1990 archaeological monitoring took place along the route of the Calne to Fairford Pipeline; no archaeological features appear to have been reported in the vicinity of the study area (EWI3804).

5.32. Archaeological monitoring (2006-2008) along the route of the Blunsdon bypass led to the excavation of three sites (EWI6999). Sites A and B both contained evidence for focused Prehistoric activity while Area A had evidence for Romano-British activity of the 1st to 2nd centuries AD (ibid.).

5.33. Archaeological monitoring of a new play area on the edge of Blunsdon St Andrew in 2009 revealed no features, though several sherds of Romano-British and Medieval pottery were recovered from the topsoil (EWI7991).

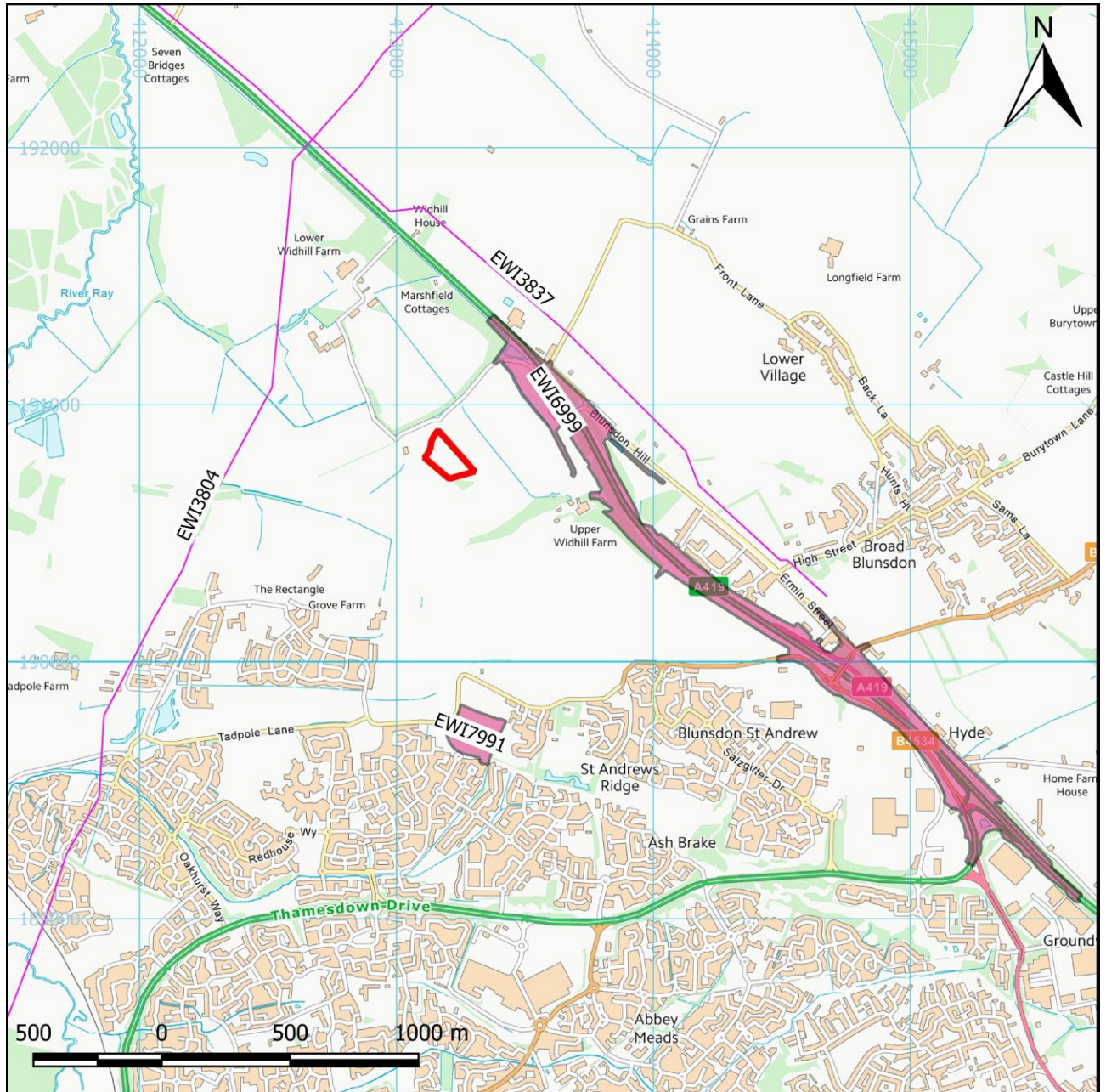


Figure 7. Distribution of archaeological watching briefs in a 1km radius of the study area. Data derived from Wiltshire & Swindon HER.

## Monuments

5.34. No HER monument records fall within the study area.

### Prehistoric

5.35. Three findspots or features of Prehistoric date have been identified within the trawl radius, however none are within or in the immediate vicinity of the study area. Record MWI16864 notes the findspot of a Neolithic leaf-shaped arrowhead.

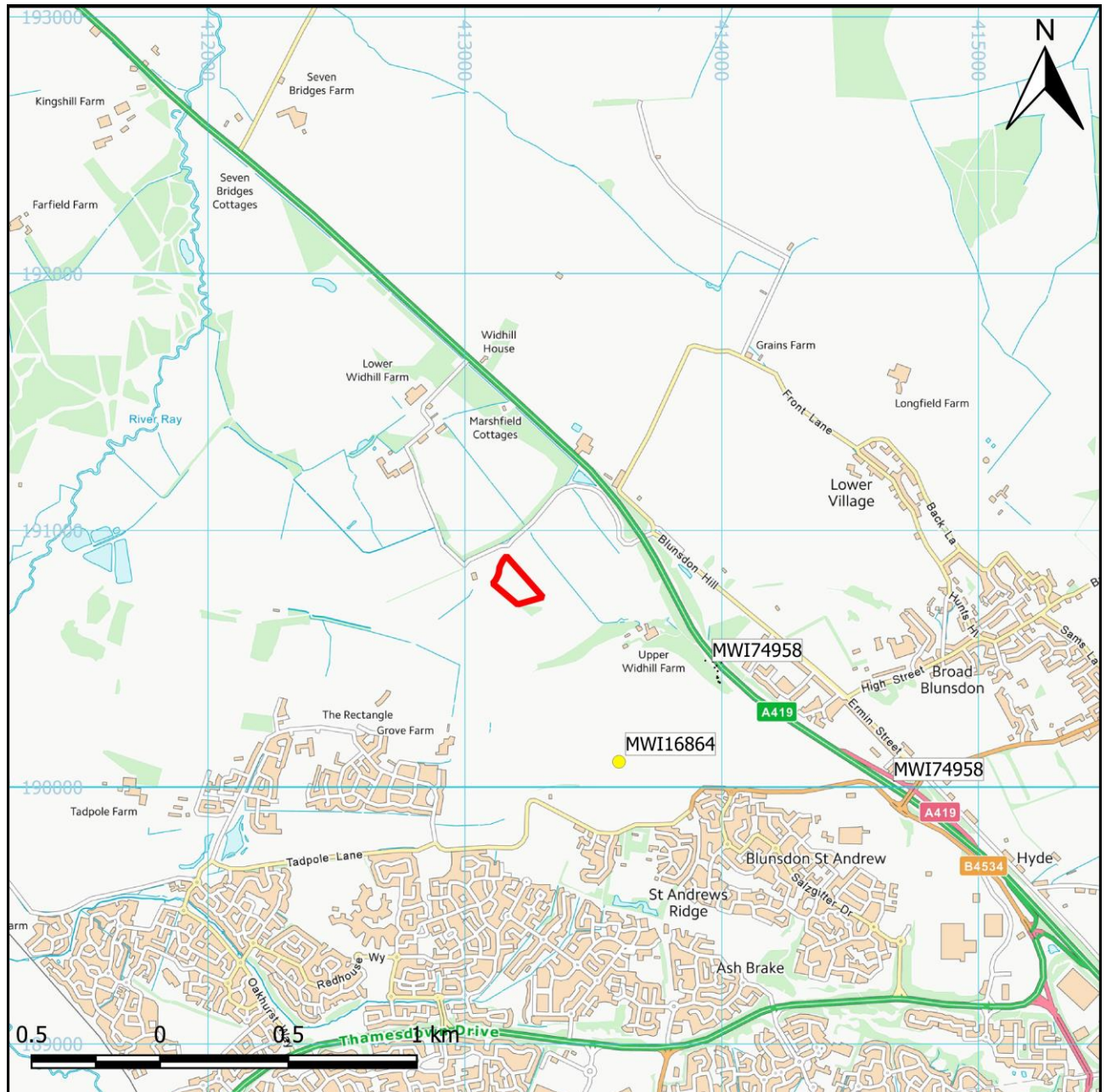


Figure 8. Prehistoric monuments and finds within a 1km radius of the study area. Data derived from Wiltshire County Council HER.

5.36. During the watching brief along the Blunsdon bypass, Prehistoric pits and associated possible post-holes were recorded; the former were dated by pottery to the Middle Bronze Age-Middle Iron Age (MWI74958) Two separate groups of features along the bypass have been amalgamated in this record (ibid.).



## Romano-British (AD 44 AD 410)

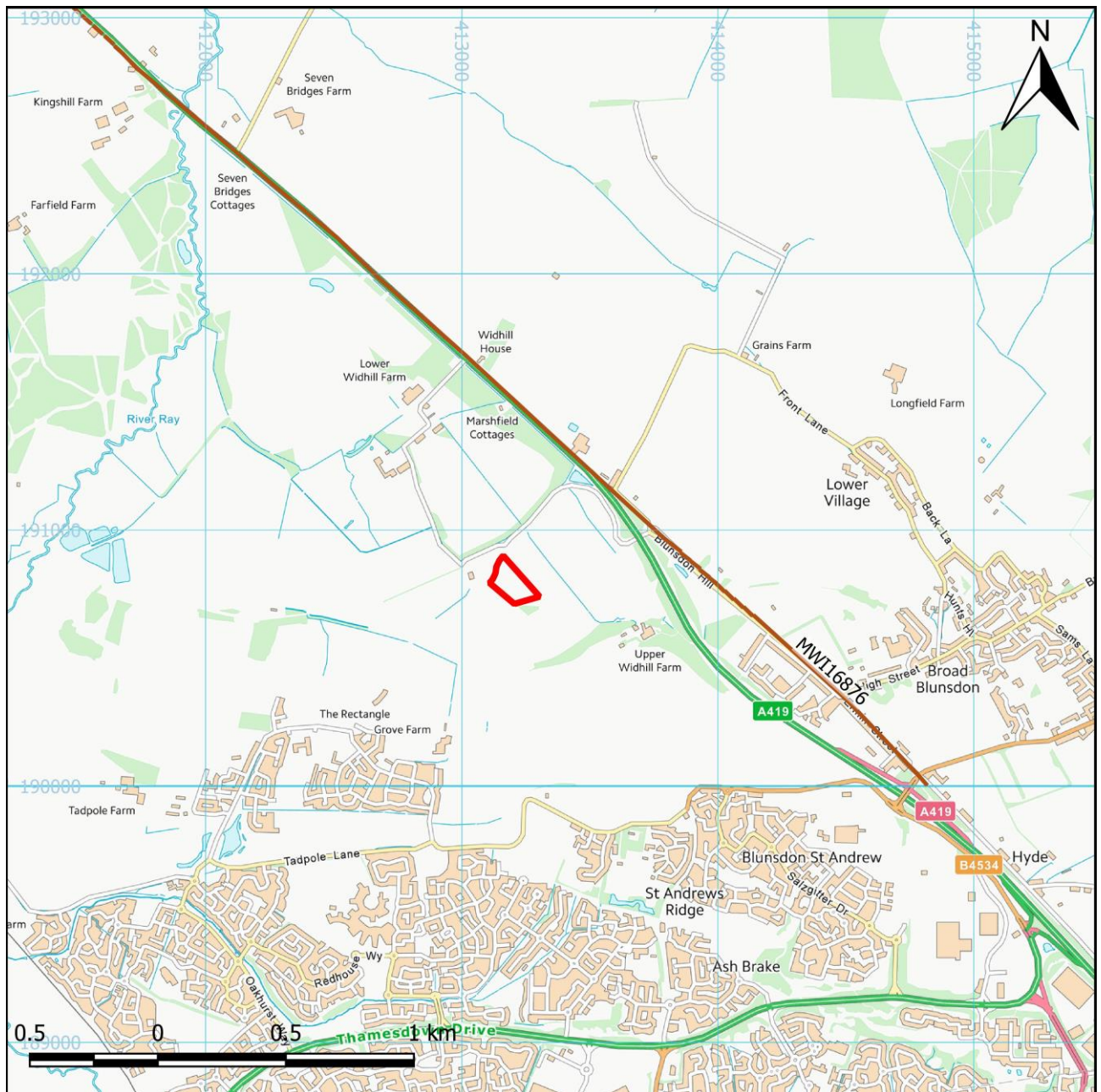


Figure 9. Roman monuments and finds within a 1km radius of the study area. Data derived from Wiltshire County Council HER.

5.37. A single Roman feature is indicated in the trawl (MWI16876), the Roman road known as Ermin Street (not to be confused with Ermine Street), the Roman Road from Gloucester to Silchester. The route of this is partly followed by the present A419. Romano British activity was also recorded during the Blunsdon bypass watching brief (EWI6999), see above. Romano British settlement is also indicated at St Leonards Farm (EWI8976), see above.

5.38. There is a moderate to low potential for low level archaeological finds and features of the Roman period.



## Early Medieval (AD 410 – AD 1066)

5.39. A single rim sherd of Medieval or potentially late Saxon pottery was found c. 680m ENE of the study area (MWI16938).

## Medieval (AD 1066 – AD 1539) and Post-Medieval (AD 1540 – AD 1900)

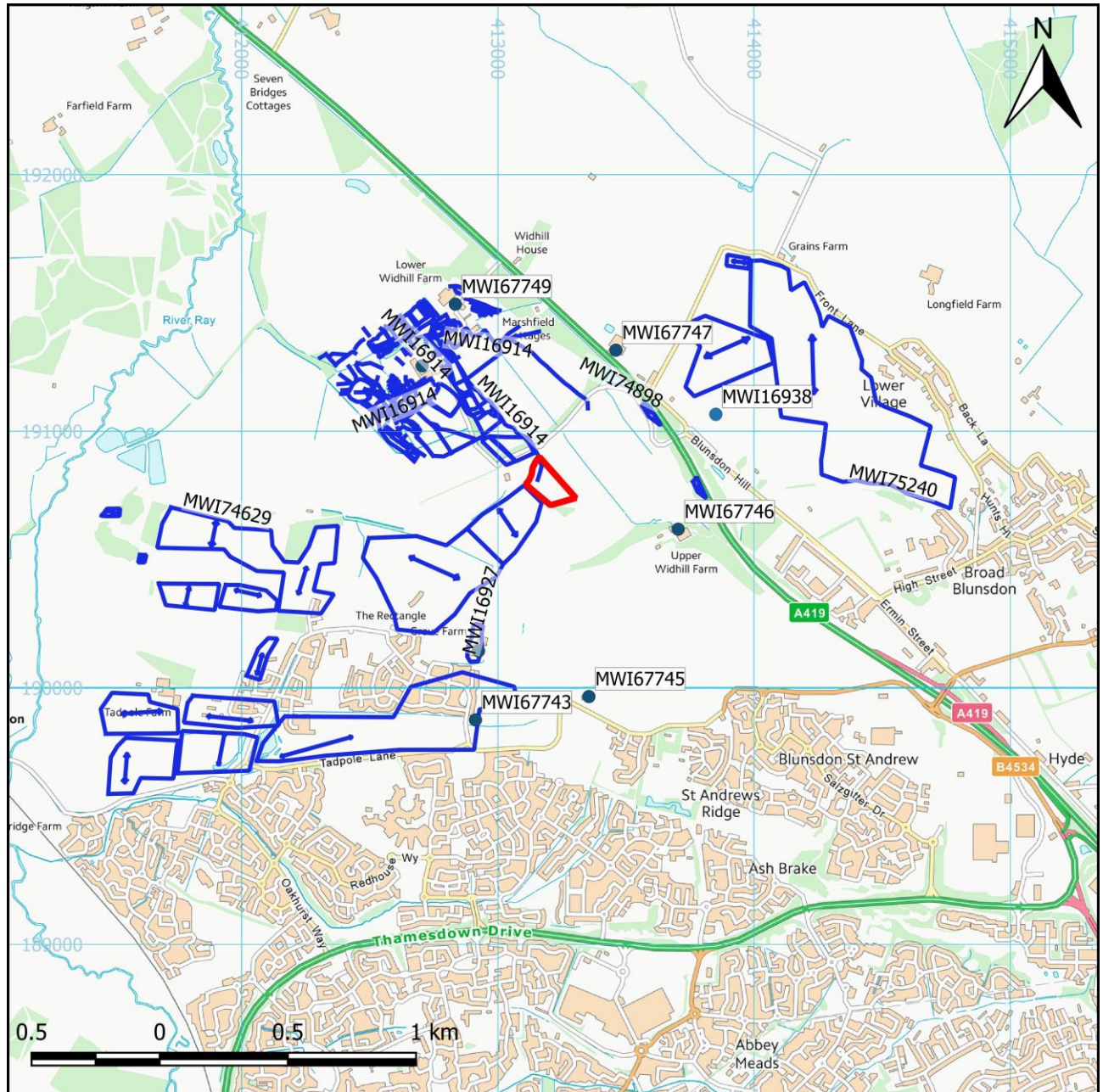


Figure 10. Medieval and Post-Medieval monuments and finds within a 1km radius of the study area. Data derived from Wiltshire County Council HER.

5.40. Within the trawl area are several locations where Medieval or Post Medieval ridge and furrow cultivation has been identified. These are indicated on the above map by areas bordered in blue with the addition of blue arrows; they will not be discussed here individually. Collectively these



features indicate that much of the surrounding area was subject to Medieval and later arable farming, prior to enclosure.

- 5.41. The area around Chapel Farm has been identified as a shrunken Medieval settlement; this is based largely on aerial photographic evidence, but a 1987 evaluation (not listed above) identified sherds of 12th to 14th century pottery, and floors (MWI16914).
- 5.42. Record MWI67746 relates to the 17th century portion of Upper Widhill Farm (see above). Record MWI67749 relates to the 18th century portions of Lower Widhill Farm (see above). Other 18th century listed farmhouses are Chapel Farm (MWI67748) and Grove Farm (MWI67744).
- 5.43. Newlands Farm is recorded as having extant 19th century structures, but is not listed (MWI67747); it appears to be at the approximate location of a barn marked on the Andrews and Drury map of 1773. Burcot House, c. 770m south of the study area, is another unlisted 19th century farmhouse (MWI67745). Some 890m SSE of the study area is the site of an outfarm of Grove Farm, believed to be extant at some point in the 19th century, but since demolished (MWI67743); it is not shown on the 1876 OS map of Wiltshire.

#### Modern (post 1900)

- 5.44. No post 1900 monuments are recorded within the study area.

#### Undated

- 5.45. Eleven records noted in the trawl of HER Monuments are undated. The primary cause of this appears to be as a result of features observed either during previous aerial photographic or geophysical survey analysis. Though some features are typical only of certain periods, e.g. ridge and furrow cultivation, many are not, and their exact character and date cannot be defined without archaeological excavation.
- 5.46. Between 850m and 1km south of the study area a series of ditches on the edge of Blunsdon, either side of Tadpole Lane, have been identified from aerial photographs and geophysical survey (MWI16111).
- 5.47. Between c. 300m and 550m southeast of the study area a group of amorphous linear features have been identified from aerial photographic sources (MWI 16988).
- 5.48. Between c. 150m and 400m northeast of the study area is a sinuous linear feature identified as crop marks on historic aerial photographs (MWI 16995); the feature was also observed by the author as both earthworks and crop marks on historic aerial photographs. As noted in the HER, it appears to have been respected by the adjoining ridge and furrow cultivation marks, indicating





that the feature dates to the earlier post-Medieval period or earlier; this feature has been interpreted as a former trackway (ibid.). Nothing is shown on the historic mapping of the study area (see below), indicating it had been redundant for some time before the later 18<sup>th</sup> century.

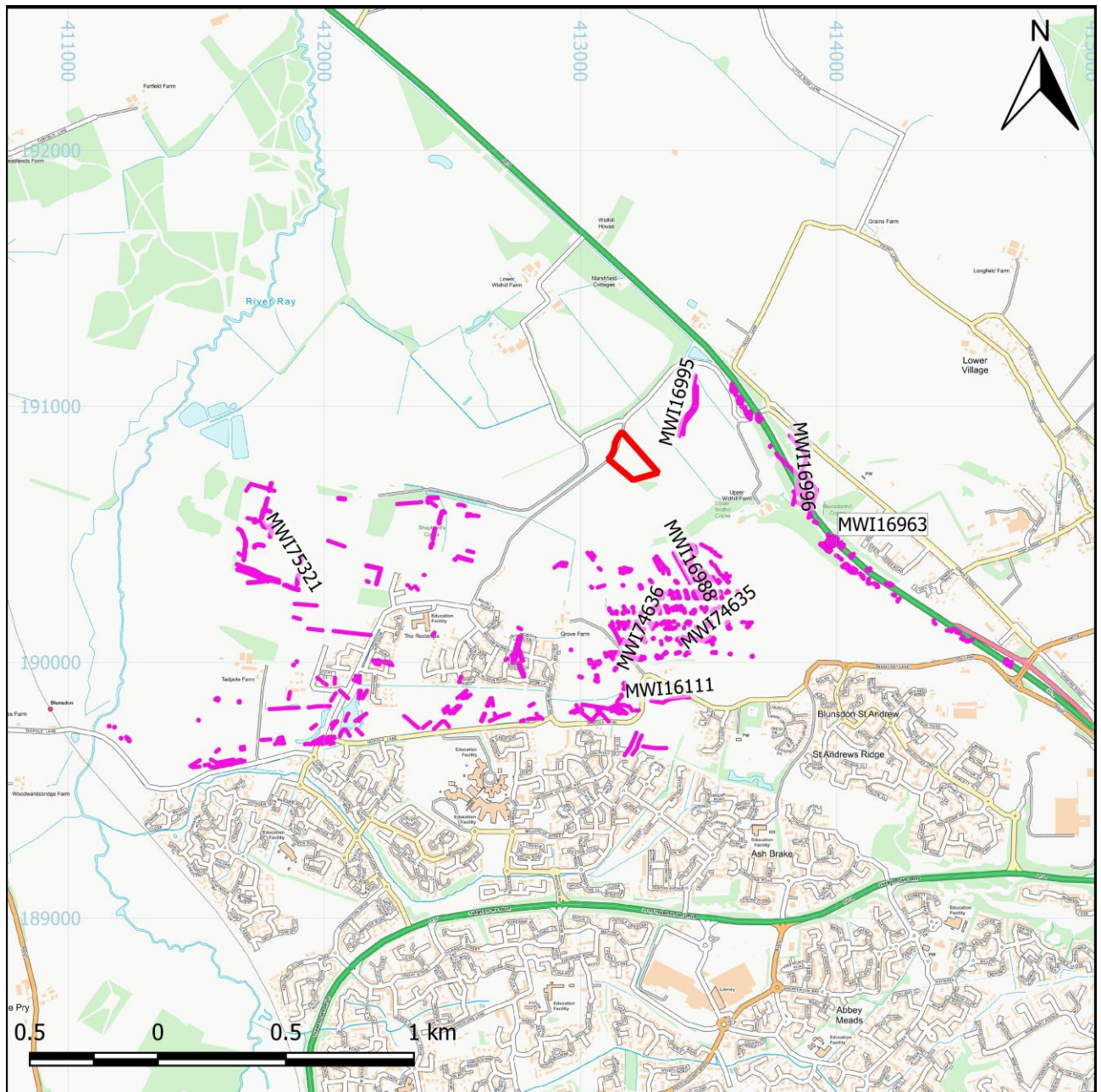


Figure 11. Undated monuments within a 1km radius of the study area. Data derived from Wiltshire County Council HER.

5.49. Record MWI16996 represents a series of features mapped from aerial photographs as part of the assessment of the Blunsdon by-pass route. These appeared to include a distinct group of rectilinear enclosures, but also many smaller enclosures and features, spread out along the route of the by-pass. It is not clear how many of these were positively identified during the evaluation and excavation phases prior to construction.



- 5.50. Record MWI74630 represents a series of ditches recorded during geophysical survey (EWI7967) of 132.6ha of land north of Tadpole Lane. As the features are quite widespread throughout this area it is unlikely they are all related. As an observation this is perhaps not the best way to record a large group of individual and potentially unrelated features.
- 5.51. A distinct series of pits (MWI74631) were identified during geophysical survey (EWI7967). They were relatively close together, c. 775m south of the study area, so more likely to represent a unique phase of activity.
- 5.52. Records MWI74634-6 represents a collection of pits, ditches and small enclosures located within a 200m radius of a point c 600m south of the study area. These were identified during geophysical survey (EWI7967) and have not been subject to reported excavation, therefore it is not possible to ascertain how related these individual features are to each other.
- 5.53. A series of parallel and perpendicular linear ditches indicated during geophysical survey (EWI8598) could represent parts of an earlier field system (MWI75321), however this has not been ascertained by archaeological excavation.
- 5.54. One feature has been excavated but could not be dated, a pit on the Blunsdon by-pass (MWI16963).

### **Conclusions from the Monuments Trawl**

- 5.55. While the results of this trawl show the potential for remote sensing techniques to detect potential archaeological features within the study area, the accuracy of the results from adjoining areas has yet to be verified through archaeological excavation.
- 5.56. It should be noted that not all the findings recorded in the events trawl appear to have been recorded as monuments, skewing, for example, the apparent lack of Roman sites in the monument record.

### **Aerial Photographic Evidence**

- 5.57. As part of this survey a review was undertaken of the available aerial photographic evidence. A 1km radius trawl of the study area was requested from the Historic England Archive (formerly the National Monument Record), and all available oblique and vertical aerial photographs were consulted on 28/2/2018. Aerial photography created between 2002 and 2009 and currently available on Google Earth was also consulted as part of this survey.

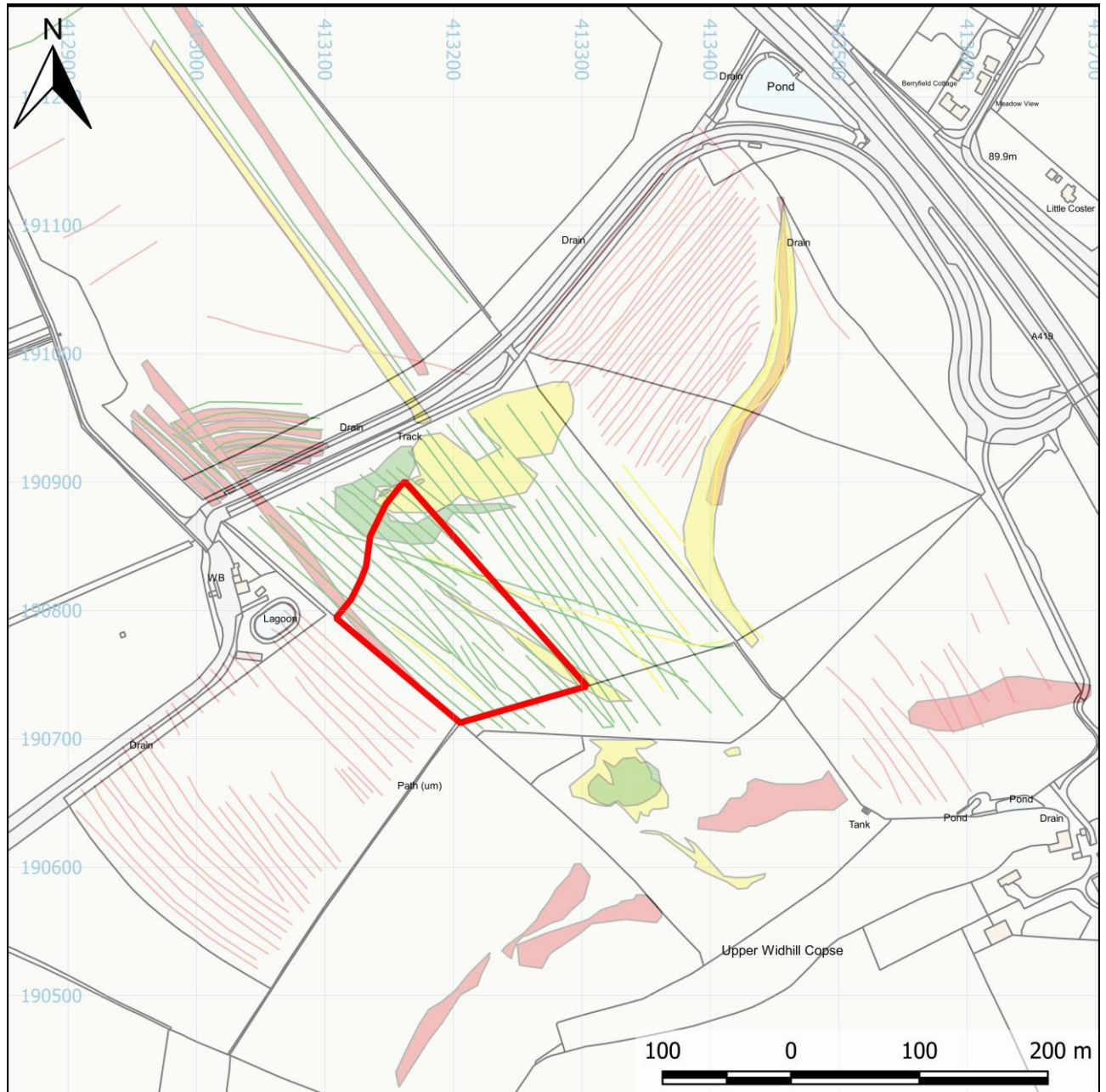


Figure 12. Features observed from historical aerial photographs traced onto the current OS map. Yellow = parch marks, Green = lush marks, Red = raised earthworks.

5.58. Although only the faintest traces were visible on the ground as earthworks, the aerial photography indicates the study area was previously subjected to ridge and furrow arable farming, which probably dates to the Medieval and/or early Post Medieval periods.

5.59. Amorphous lush and parch marks in the northern tip of the study area could be the result of differential drainage – during the site visit, the author noted areas of standing water in the lower part of the field. However, the northern edge of the study area is defined by a new road not shown on the current OS mapping; this road may have had an impact on current drainage patterns. It is therefore not possible to say with certainty that these features are not caused by underlying archaeology.



- 5.60. Diagonal parch/lush marks were observed to cross the northern half of the study area from northwest to southeast, cutting across the alignment of the indicated ridge and furrow. This suggests the route of a former trackway, which may be related to the feature noted in the field to the east (MWI 16995). The relationship of this diagonal feature to the suggested ridge and furrow, whether it pre- or post dated it, was not clear. This feature was not observed during the walkover survey.
- 5.61. A single raised linear earthwork was observed to run into the study area from a clear group of ridge and furrow earthworks to the north. Nothing was observed at this location during the walkover survey. The feature may represent a different phase of ridge and furrow cultivation, or an earlier field boundary.
- 5.62. It is concluded that historical aerial photography has indicated the potential for the survival of archaeological remains. However, the majority of features observed appear to be the result of relatively low level agricultural activity. The lack of clear visibility on the ground may be indicative of the timing of the site visit, but it is possible that the ground has been ploughed or modified since the latest available aerial photographs were taken.



## 6. Historic Development of the Project Site

- 6.1. The study area currently lies within the civil parish of Blunsden St Andrew, in the unitary authority of Swindon. The general area appears to have been known as Widhill; the study area lay between Upper and Lower Widhill Farms.

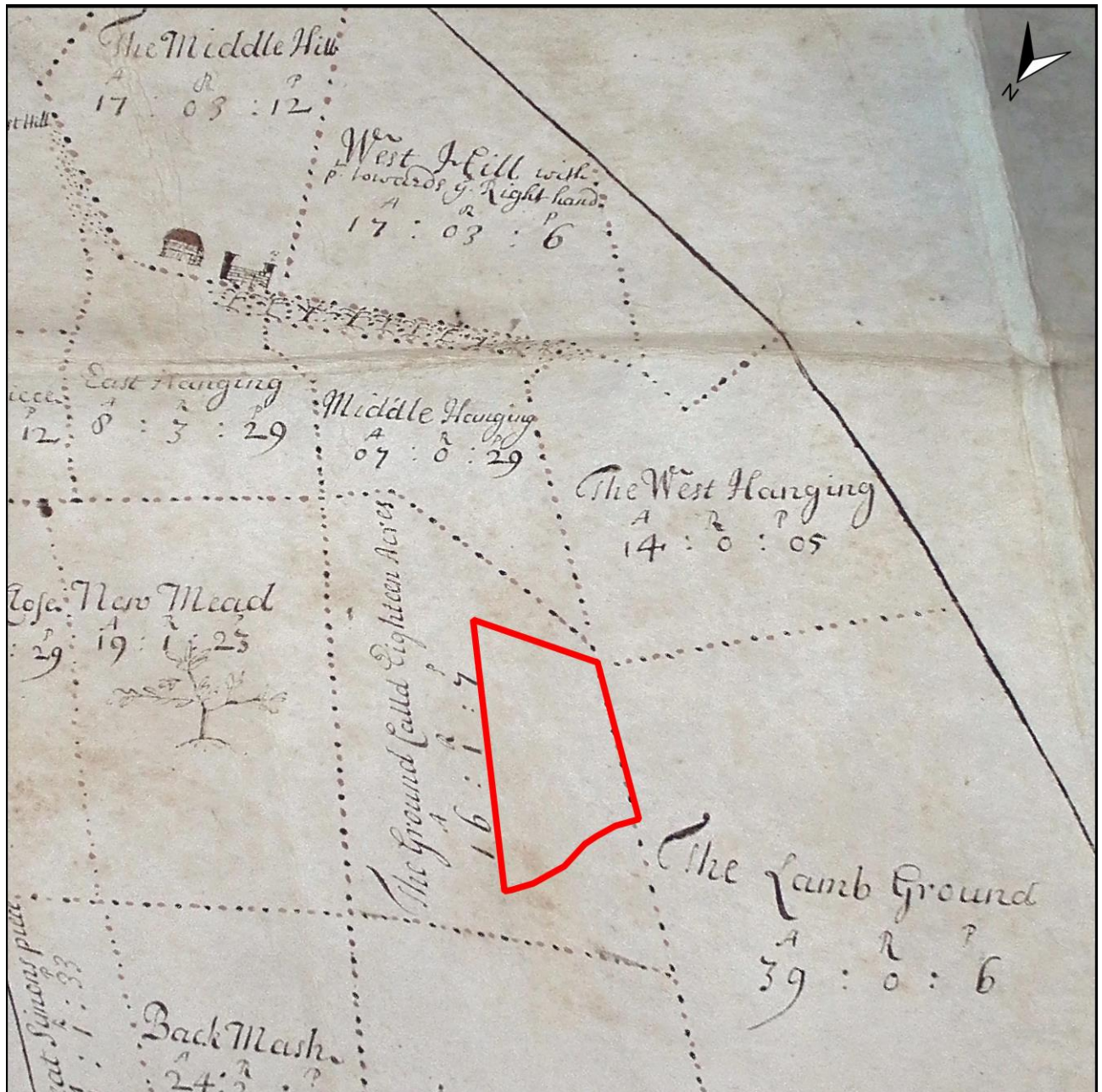


Figure 13. An extract from the 1709 map of the Widhill Estate (not to scale). Reproduced by courtesy of the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, 490/776. NB, this map is oriented with south at the top.

- 6.2. The earliest mention of Widhill (*WILDEHILLE*) in the archives appears to be Domesday (1086), where it was recorded as two manors with the same name: the first with five hides, 30 acres of pasture and 30 acres of meadow, both in 1086 and 1066; the second with five hides, 50 acres of



meadow and 60 acres of pasture (Thorn and Thorn 1979). The Domesday etymology suggests the name means simply 'Wild Hill'.

6.3. These two Domesday manors appear to represent the later Medieval manors of North Widhill and West Widhill. North Widhill appears to have been the second manor in Domesday and West Widhill the first (Bainbridge 2011, 105). It has been postulated that both were nucleated settlements, with North Widhill on the site of Lower Widhill Farm, while West Widhill was probably at the site known as Widhill Farm in 1773 (see Figure 14), but now largely abandoned (Bainbridge 2011, 75).

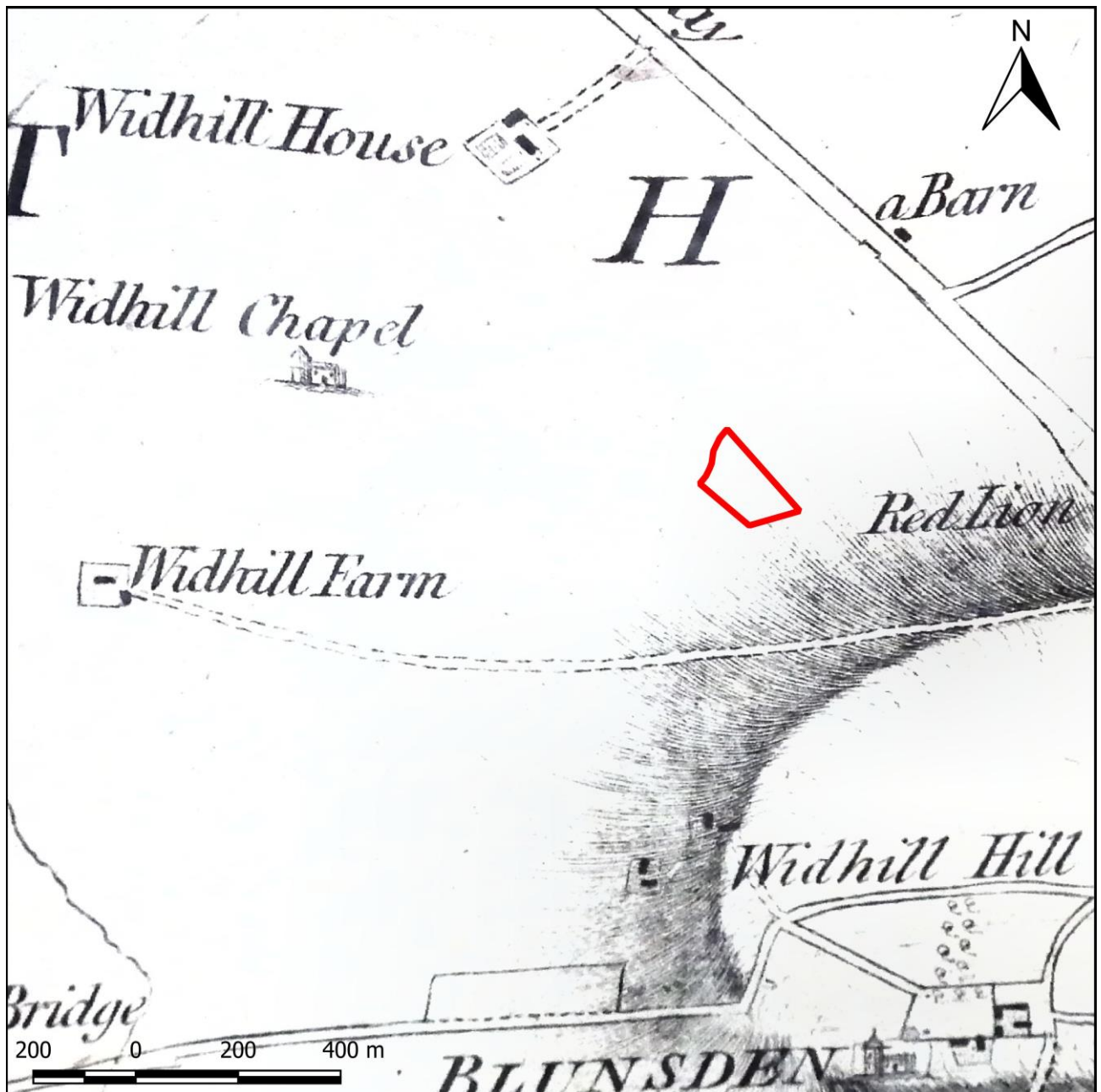


Figure 14. An extract from Andrews and Drury's 1773 map of the county of Wiltshire. Reproduced by courtesy of the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre.



- 6.4. The chapel that lay between the two may have been built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century; as Figure 14 indicates it was still extant in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century and it has been postulated that it was still in use till then (Bainbridge 2011, 75). It was described as a ruin by 1783 (ibid.).
- 6.5. By the late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries the two manors appear to have been merged; by 1605 there was evidence that common land had been bought into arable cultivation and that parts of a former open field had been enclosed for the use of the Vicar of St Sampson's, Cricklade (Bainbridge 2011, 106). By 1709 the combined farm comprised c. 700 acres (ibid.).
- 6.6. Between c. 1680 and c. 1707 the farm was in the hands of creditors, who appear to have done little to maintain it; subsequently it was broken into three separate farms: Lower Widhill Farm, Chapel Farm, and Upper Widhill Farm (Bainbridge 2011, 106). By 1810 all three were dairy farms producing cheese, only Upper Widhill had any arable cultivation (ibid.). This changed gradually during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with an increase in arable on all three farms; from 1857 until 1915 Upper Widhill and Chapel Farms were held together (ibid.).
- 6.7. By the 1930s the farms had reverted to dairying, with very little arable (Bainbridge 2011, 106). In 1982 Wiltshire County Council purchased Chapel Farm; this was transferred to Swindon Borough Council in 1997 (Bainbridge 2011, 93). From 1987 chapel Farm was used for the dumping of waste into large pits pre-dug into the clay (Bainbridge 2011, 106); this was ongoing in 2009 (Google Earth) and appears on current OS mapping. The present workings are located c. 900m west of the study area.
- 6.8. Widhill was transferred from the parish of St Sampson Cricklade to the parish of Blunsdon St Andrew in 1934 (Bainbridge 2011, 14).
- 6.9. In the cartographic record the study area is first shown on a map in the Wiltshire archives dated 1709 (490/776, see Figure 13); this would have been made when the manor was united, some time prior to being broken into three (see above). The landowner was not named, but would have been Nathaniel Jenner (d. 1732); Nathaniel had recently (1707) reclaimed his father's estate from the Crown (Bainbridge 2011, 92). The map does not name tenants. The study area lay within one field, *The Ground Calld Eighteen Acres*, with given measurements of 16 acres, 1 rod and 7 perches. The state of cultivation is not given. Reference on this document is made to an earlier survey of 1627, believed to be no longer extant.

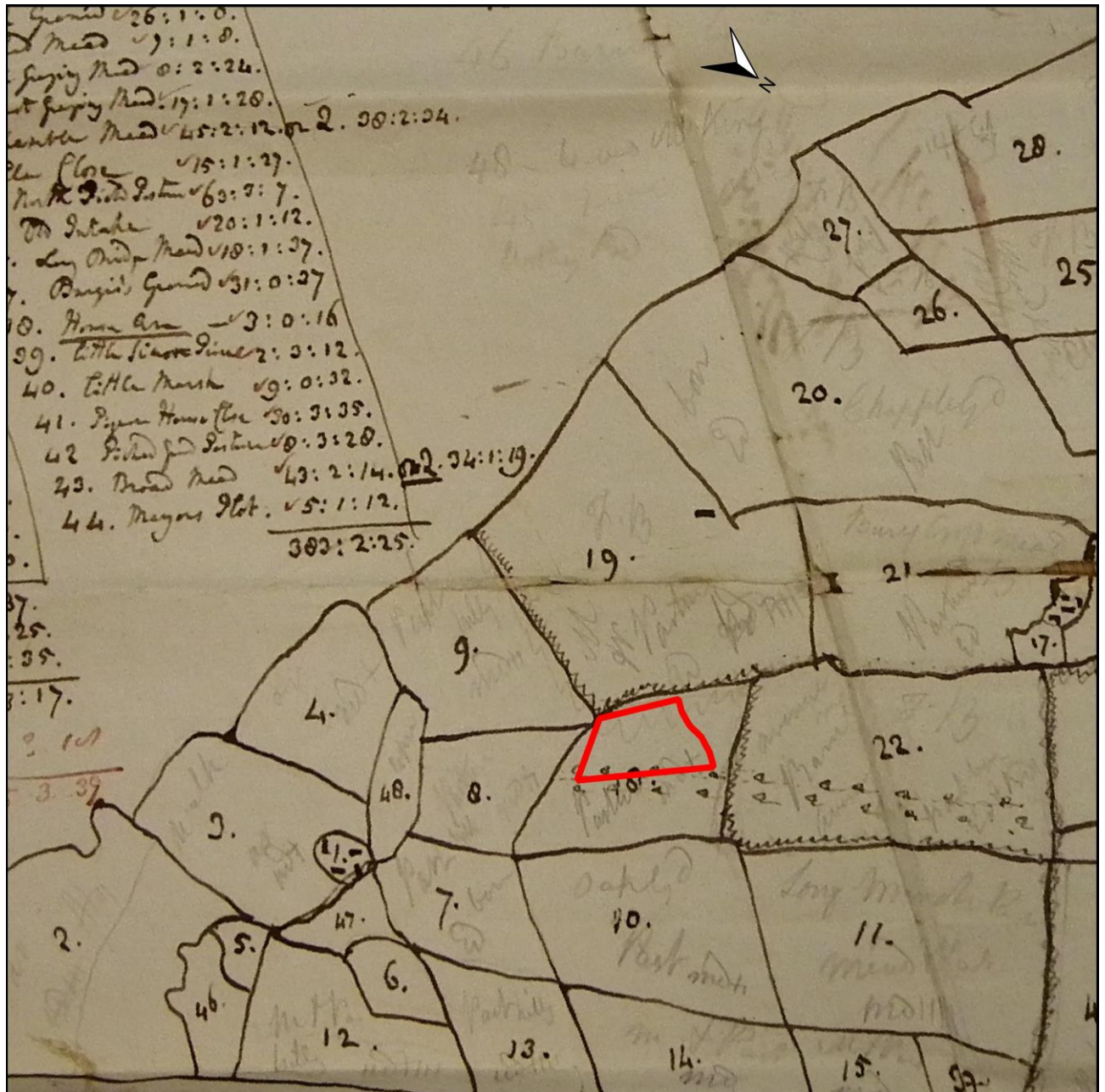


Figure 15. An extract from the c.1809 plan of the Widhill Estate (not to scale). Reproduced by courtesy of the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, 490/778. NB, this map is oriented with north at the lower RH corner.

- 6.10. The Andrews & Drury 1773 map of Wiltshire does not show any detail of the study area (see Figure 14), though it does show the site of the chapel and (former) Widhill farm, both now lost.
- 6.11. Nathaniel Jenner (d. 1764), son of Nathaniel, arranged for his estate at Widhill to be sold by his trustees. In 1769 it was purchased by Viscount Folkstone, later the Earl of Radnor. From then until 1915 the manor remained in the hands of the Earls.
- 6.12. The next available mapping of the study area is an annotated c.1809 sketch map (WSHC 490/778, see Figure 15). The map indicates the study area lay within a field called Eighteen Acres, which was measured at 18 acres, 0 rods and 20 perches.



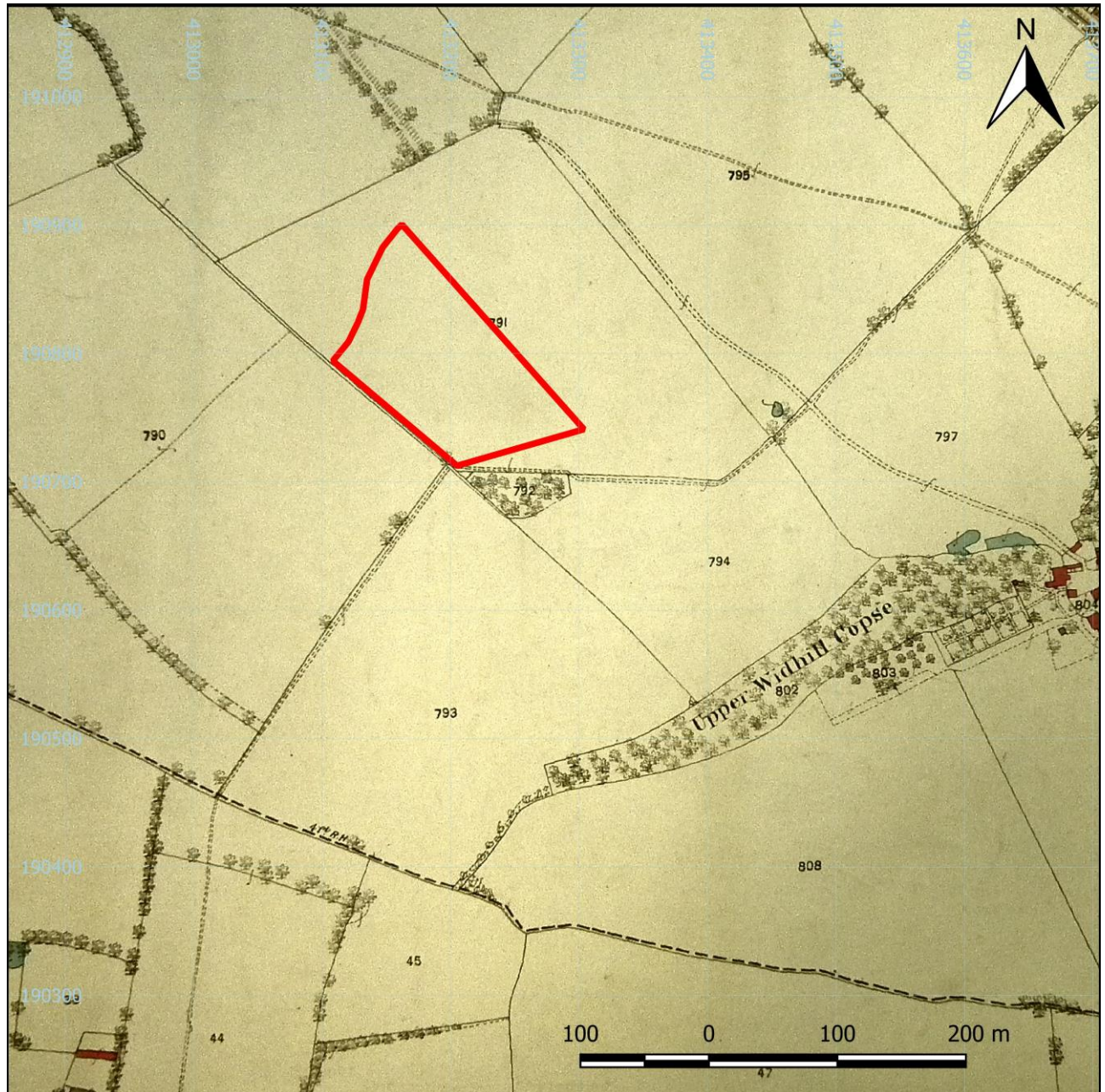


Figure 16. Extract from the OS 1876 1:2,500 map of Wiltshire. Reproduced by courtesy of the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre.

6.13. Widhill was a separate tithing of Cricklade at the time of the tithe survey of 1838. There is no copy of the map in the Wiltshire Archives, so the copy held in The National Archives (IR/30/38/279) and available online via *The Genealogist* was consulted. This shows that the study area was entirely within plot 31, owned by the Earl of Radnor and let to William Smith. It consisted of over 16 acres of meadow or pasture, known as Eighteen Acres.

6.14. The OS map of Wiltshire from 1876 is the next available (see Figure 16). This shows the study area entirely within plot 791, which appears similar in shape to Tithe plot 31. No features or structures of archaeological significance are shown within the plot, but in the plot to the north is what appears to be a tree-lined linear earthwork, the projection of which would pass through plot



791, but not through the study area. this feature correlates with a linear parch mark seen on aerial photography (see Figure 12), and a tree-lined avenue shown on the sketch plan of 1809 (see Figure 15). It is not shown on the 1709 plan nor Andrews & Drury 1773 map, though this is no guarantee that it was not present at those dates, since it was also excluded from the Tithe map. However, it was not shown on subsequent OS maps, and since these are generally more reliable it seems likely this feature had been removed by the OS map of 1900. The subsequent OS maps of 1900 and 1923 show no additional information and are not included here.

6.15. In 1915 the study area was included in an auction of land on the Widhill estate; it was part of lot 9, then in the occupation of Mr J T Carter (WA 1033/207/29).



Figure 17. Extract from the OS 1:2,500 map of 1946. Reproduced by courtesy of the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre.



- 6.16. The next available OS mapping, from 1946, shows very little change in detail. However, the southern boundary of the study area was defined by a footpath shown crossing the field in an WSW-ENE direction (see Figure 17).
- 6.17. By the OS 1:10,000 map of 1990 (not illustrated) there had been significant changes in the surroundings, though no changes within the study area were visible. The northern edge of the field was defined by the new access road to the Chapel Farm waste disposal site; land to the west and northwest of the study area had been partitioned off and was already in use as a dump. The A419 Ermin Street had been widened since 1946, but not duelled.
- 6.18. As noted above, the latest changes to the study area, including the creation of the present northern boundary, have yet to be recorded in the published cartographic record.

## 7. Summary

- 7.1. The desk-based assessment has confirmed that there are no statutory heritage constraints within the study area. There have been no previous reports of buried archaeology within the study area.
- 7.2. Prehistoric activity in the general area is poorly evidenced in the archaeological record, though undated features observed as crop marks may prove to be of this date.
- 7.3. Roman activity is reasonably well attested in the general area, with the route of the former Ermin Street along the old course of the A419, together with a small group of sites, potential evidence for settlement along the route of the road. Some 1.3km to the south are the remains of a substantial Roman water shrine.
- 7.4. Early Medieval activity in the broader area is also poorly evidenced, though Domesday indicates the Manor of Widhill was extant by the mid to later 11<sup>th</sup> century.
- 7.5. Later Medieval and early Post Medieval activity is well represented within the broader study area, with both documentary and aerial photographic evidence. Crop marks and earthwork evidence indicate the study area and surrounds was in arable cultivation at some point during this period. The field in which the study area lies had been enclosed by 1709 and may have been so since c. 1600. Evidence from the 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century indicates that dairying was important in the area; during this time the study area was recorded as meadow/pasture. Dairying seems to have waned in the latter quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; a neighbouring farm is now used for waste disposal, while land adjoining the study area to the west has recently been developed as a school.



7.6. There are a small number of unexplained/undated linear features appearing as crop marks within the study area. One of these appears to indicate a former trackway on a different alignment to the Medieval ridge and furrow cultivation. It is not clear whether this pre-dates or post-dates the Medieval cultivation. The denuded nature of the earthworks suggest that there has been later ploughing.

## **8. Conclusion**

- 8.1. Overall the archaeological potential of the study area is moderate to low, with archaeological evidence largely limited to earthworks of former Medieval agriculture. There is the potential that this has obscured earlier features that might otherwise be visible as crop marks/earthworks. One linear crop mark feature may predate the medieval earthworks. There is some background potential indicating Roman period activity in the general area, but nothing to indicate this is present within the study area.
- 8.2. The bulk of the study area appears suitable for field evaluation by geophysical survey followed by targeted and random trial trenching. Surface water at the northern (low lying) end of the study area may indicate this part of the study area is less suitable for evaluation.



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## Methodology

This DBA has been undertaken in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment* (CIfA 2014), which states that a DBA 'will determine, as far as is reasonably possible from existing records, the nature, extent and significance of the historic environment within a specified area' and that in 'development context desk-based assessment will establish the impact of the proposed development on the significance of the historic environment (or will identify the need for further evaluation to do so), and will enable reasoned proposals and decisions to be made whether to mitigate, offset or accept without further intervention that impact (CIfA 2014: 4).

## Study Area

A 1km Study Area was established for the study area to contextualise the known and potential archaeological resource.

## Data Collation

The DBA involved consultation of available archaeological and historical information from documentary, cartographic, photographic and historic environment record sources. The aim was to produce a document that not only considered the potential for archaeological remains on the study area, but to also put these into their historical and archaeological context.



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