



The Grange Hotel, Brent Knoll, Somerset, TA9 4HJ

Archaeological Desk Based Assessment and Heritage Statement

03 March 2021

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## Non-Technical Summary

Heritage Planning Services Ltd has been commissioned by WH Architects (the agent) to prepare an archaeological desk-based assessment and heritage statement in relation to the Grange Hotel, Brent Knoll, Somerset, TA9 4HJ (Project Site).

The DBA has been commissioned to support an outline application for the renovation of the existing Grange Hotel and the redevelopment of land to the southeast. Plans for the new development will include a range of new facilities, such as an Events and Banqueting Suite to accommodate weddings and conferences, a swimming pool and leisure suite, gymnasium and a target of 70 lodges.

This report has been undertaken to identify the nature, extent and significance of any archaeological resource within the Project Site and its environs (the Study Area) and to assess the impact that the extension of the site may have on the setting of nearby designated assets, notably the Scheduled Monument of Brent Knoll hillfort.

This assessment has determined that the Project Site has the potential to preserve Roman activity and possible Prehistoric activity. However, the low-lying nature of the site is likely to have precluded significant settlement activity in these periods.

There will be an adverse impact to the setting of the scheduled monument of Brent Knoll Hillfort. The development will be clearly visible from its south eastern ramparts, although not from the interior. The infilling of historic agricultural land and open space will be notable from the summit. However, the shielding/screening, low-lying nature of the new buildings, materials, design and use of "green-roof" planting will reduce this impact. There will be harm, but this harm is considered to be less than substantial.

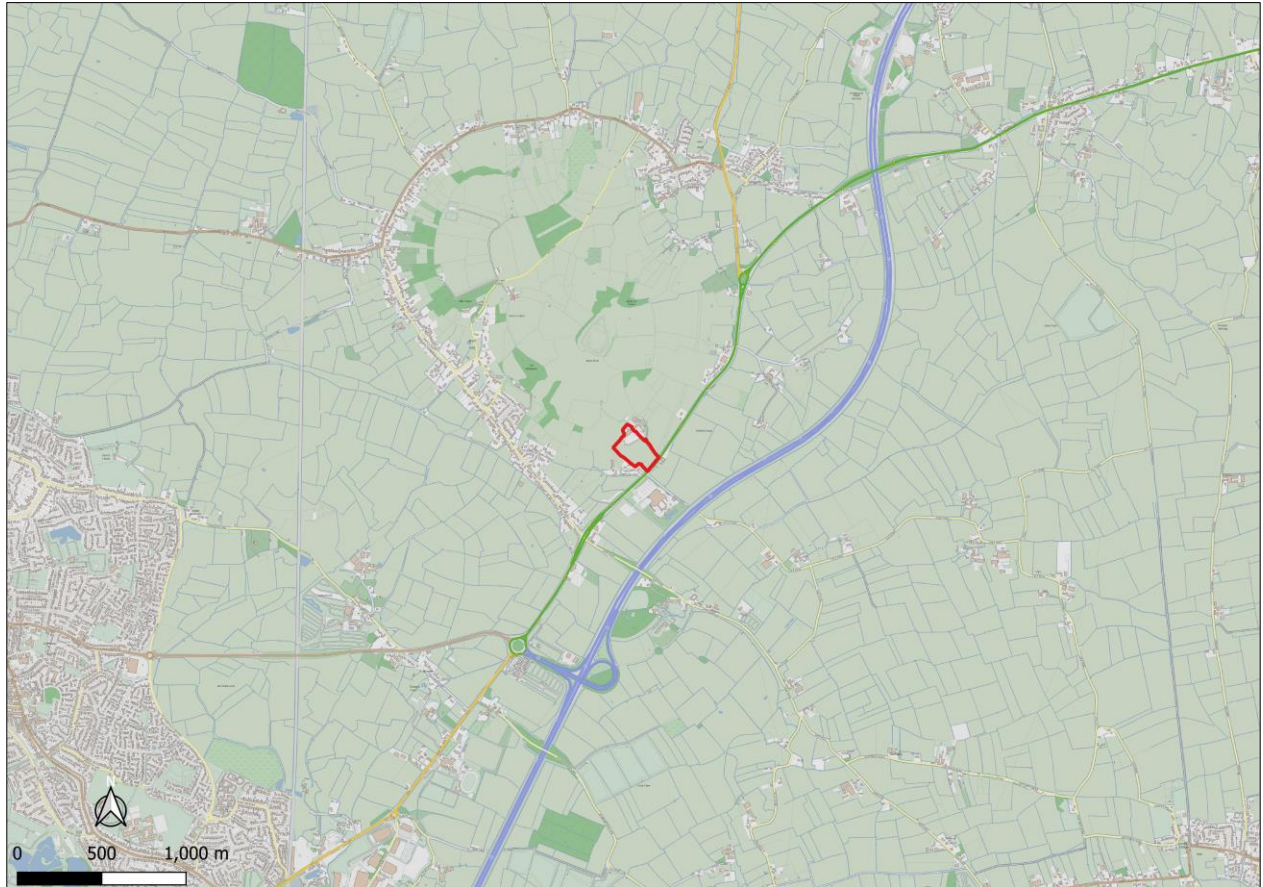
Whilst overall the development is considered to be acceptable in heritage terms, it is recommended that a programme of archaeological investigation and recording be carried out to further determine the archaeological potential of the Project Site.

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Heritage Planning Services Ltd has been commissioned by WH Architects (the agent) to prepare an archaeological desk-based assessment and heritage statement in relation to the Grange Hotel, Brent Knoll, Somerset, TA9 4HJ (Project Site).
- 1.2. The DBA has been commissioned to support an outline application for the renovation of the existing Grange Hotel and the redevelopment of land to the southeast. Plans for the new development will include a range of new facilities, such as an Events and Banqueting Suite to accommodate weddings and conferences, a swimming pool and leisure suite, gymnasium and a target of 70 lodges.
- 1.3. This report has been undertaken to identify the nature, extent and significance of any archaeological resource within the Project Site and its environs (the Study Area) and to assess the impact that the extension of the site may have on the setting of nearby designated assets, notably the Scheduled Monument of Brent Knoll hillfort.
- 1.4. A 1 km radius of the Project Site has been established as the Study Area.
- 1.5. The report has been prepared by Sam Driscoll MCIfA, Director, Heritage Planning Services and completed under HPS project reference HPS-383/21.
- 1.6. This report was prepared during the Covid-19 pandemic and during the third national lockdown (February 2021). As such, physical archives could not be accessed. Instead, information has been sought from online and digital archives (e.g. the Historic Environment Record).

## The Project Site

- 1.7. The Project Site is located less than 1 km to the east of Brent Knoll village, in the small hamlet of Battleborough. Its eastern boundary is bordered by the A38 and beyond that the M5. The Project Site is located south of Brent Knoll Hill, a dominant feature in a low-lying landscape.



*Figure 1: General site location. Project Site outlined in red.*

- 1.8. Geologically the site is defined by Dyrham Formation Mudstone, abutting Charmouth Mudstone deposits to the south. The latter are sealed by superficial Tidal Flat Deposits of Clay, Silt and Sand, formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period.
- 1.9. The proposed development area is situated on low lying land that rises from c. 6.8 m in the south to 10 m, to the north of the plot. The ground rises steeply to the rear of the Grange Hotel, which is located at the foot of Brent Knoll.



Figure 2: Detailed site location. Project Site outlined in red.

- 1.10. A site visit was carried out on the 15<sup>th</sup> February in bright, dry conditions.
- 1.11. The Grange Hotel is accessed northwest off the A38, via a long track which preserves the early 19<sup>th</sup> century farm entrance. The hotel is located on high ground, to the northeast of the site. The steep slope at the base of Brent Knoll gives way to gently sloping pasture to the south, with drainage ditches to the southwest and southeast, running parallel to the field boundaries.
- 1.12. Wide linear earthworks were noted at the time of the site visit, running the length of the site from the northwest to the southeast. The earthworks may represent ridge and furrow.





*Photo 1: View of The Grange Hotel, looking northwest (Brent Knoll rising in background to the right).*



*Photo 2: South facing view of the Project Site from The Grange Hotel, with access off the A38 to the left and meadow to the right*



*Photo 3: Southeast facing view of the proposed development area.*

## 2. Proposed Development

2.1. The proposed development plans comprise the expansion of the existing hotel complex to provide an improved facility, meeting the needs of visitors and guests (see Figure 3). The redevelopment will include<sup>1</sup>:

- New function and events facilities for large groups.
- A new Bar / Lounge and Dining facility for guests and visitors to include a take away service for the lodge users.
- Leisure Suite
- Gymnasium
- Spacious new guest rooms to offer good quality accommodation; a target of 70 rooms in total including the existing rooms which will be upgraded and renovated as part of the scheme.
- A target of 70 one and two bedroom lodges with self catering facilities and private terraces.
- Externally there will be areas sheltered from road noise and the surrounding space will be landscaped to create an appropriate setting for the hotel.

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<sup>1</sup> The reader should refer to the Design and Access Statement prepared by WH Architects and any associated plans.



- Car parking to serve the enlarged hotel and facilities.
- A Visitor Centre and Reception building.



Figure 3: Proposed Site Plan (© WH Architects).

- 2.2. The restaurant and café, banqueting, events and conference centre and the leisure suite are generally proposed to be single storey buildings with pitched roof forms and some limited areas of upper floor accommodation. In character they will follow the form of an agricultural / farm building group. Landscaping will include additional tree planting.
- 2.3. The existing hotel building will be extended by adding a new east / west wing that will form an enclosure to the existing garden area to the south. Due to a significant drop in ground level to the south, the new wing will be visually subservient to the existing building.
- 2.4. The third area of the scheme comprises garden lodge rooms which are proposed as single storey buildings which will follow the ground levels. These are to be built in small informal groups with green roofs and landscaped gardens.

### 3. Planning Policy and Developmental Framework

3.1. With regards to the relevant policy and development framework, the following are considered appropriate to the current proposal:

- *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2019;*
- *Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), 2019;*
- *Sedgemoor Local Plan, 2011-2032 (adopted February 2019): Policy D26 Historic Environment*

#### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2019;

"189. 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. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

192. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

196. Where a development proposal will 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 proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

199. Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part)

in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

200. Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.”

### **Sedgemoor Local Plan 2011-2032 (adopted February 2019).**

#### **Policy D26**

##### **General**

Development proposals should avoid harm to, sustain and, where appropriate enhance the significance of heritage assets and their setting (including those on Local Lists), in a manner consistent with their historical significance. This will ensure a continued role in distinguishing the District’s unique sense of identity and place.

The Council will require development proposals affecting heritage assets or their setting to be supported by sufficient information (proportionate to the assets importance) to understand the significance of the heritage asset and how it will be potentially affected. This should have appropriate regard to the Somerset Historic Environment Record. Development proposals affecting heritage assets or their settings will be expected to exhibit appropriately sympathetic design in terms of siting, mass, scale and use of materials.

The Council will encourage proposals that make a positive contribution to the conservation of heritage assets and their setting, including through sensitive regeneration that brings redundant or under-used buildings and areas into appropriate and viable use in a manner consistent with their conservation. The Council will also encourage schemes that promote the management, interpretation and improved public access to heritage assets, or promote local skills and crafts relevant to the historic environment.

The Council will work with partners to:

- Provide relevant guidance and assistance to owners and developers on particular aspects of the historic environment and their responsibilities, including information on owning

designated heritage assets, their interpretation and access by members of the public as well as advice on appropriate development schemes;

- Carry out regular surveys to identify designated heritage assets at risk that are not currently part of Historic England's surveys and develop strategies to protect them;
- Encourage and help communities to develop Local Lists within relevant Neighbourhood Plans; and
- Carry out conservation area appraisals of the conservation areas within the district and, as part of this, prepare management plans for them.

### **Designated Heritage Assets**

Great weight will be given to the conservation of Sedgemoor's designated heritage assets. Where applicable development will be supported where it proposes:

- The repair and conservation of designated heritage assets, including the regeneration of heritage at risk or any designated heritage assets that are vacant;
- Appropriate design, form, scale and materials including contemporary solutions which positively enhance the character, appearance and significance of the designated heritage asset;
- A viable use for designated heritage assets, consistent with their historic character, with a clear presumption against their demolition;
- An emphasis on the importance of the setting of designated heritage assets, as well as important views to or from the assets themselves; and
- Appropriate energy efficiency measures where the principles of minimum intervention and reversibility are adopted and that do not harm the significance of the asset.

Any harm to the significance of a designated heritage assets must be clearly justified. Harm that is less than substantial will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal; whether it has been demonstrated that all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain the existing use, find new uses, or mitigate the extent of the harm to the significance of the asset.

Where development resulting in the loss of a designated heritage asset is exceptionally permitted, the Council will require the recording of features of interest that would be destroyed in the course of any proposed works. The recording shall be carried out in accordance with appropriate building recording and analysis standards. The results shall form part of the Somerset Historic Environment Record for that site and made publicly available.

**Non-Designated Heritage Assets**

Non-designated heritage assets include buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. The weight given to the conservation of non-designated heritage assets during the determination of the planning applications will be based on the asset's significance and the magnitude of any harm. Harm or loss will only be permitted where it is judged that the benefits of the development outweigh the local significance of the asset and the scale of harm caused.

Non-designated heritage assets should be identified early in the design process to ensure that the impact on their significance is addressed in any development proposal. The retention, repair and re-use of non-designated heritage assets will be encouraged.

**Local Archaeological Remains**

Where development proposals will affect Areas of Archaeological Potential (as defined on the Policies Map) and elsewhere where there is reason to believe that there may be archaeological remains, a sufficiently detailed assessment of the nature, character and importance of the site will be sought prior to the determination of any application. A proportionate response will be taken to the detail of the assessment required. Where an initial assessment suggests a site includes or has the potential to include archaeological remains applicants will be required to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment. Where necessary and proportionate this should be followed by a more detailed assessment (e.g. including field evaluation).

Development proposals which would damage or destroy locally important archaeological remains will not be supported, unless the benefits of the development outweigh the local significance of the remains and a suitable mitigation strategy of recording, analysis and publication is designed. Where physical preservation in situ is not possible, mitigation strategies will be required for the protection and/or recording of the site.

## 4. Archaeological Baseline Survey

4.1. The information presented here is derived from sources including the Somerset Historic Environment Record (HER), 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.

4.2. A radius of 1 km from the Project Site has been established as the Study Area.

4.3. It was not possible to consult documents or maps held in the South West Heritage Trust and Swindon History Centre, due to COVID-19 closure. However, digital archives were consulted where possible.

### Nationally Designated Assets

4.4. There are no designated assets directly on the Project Site.

4.5. The Project Site is located c. 700 m southeast of the Scheduled Monument of Brent Knoll hillfort (NHLE 1008248), directly north of the Grade II Battleborough Farmhouse (NHLE 1262835) and c. 500m northeast of the Grade II Croft House and Garden Wall (NHLE 1251051).

4.6. Brent Knoll is a large univallate (single rampart) hillfort with a complete circuit of defences and a Holloway, possibly the original entrance path, to its east. Although much of the interior has been quarried, there remain pockets of surviving and clearly important archaeology. It stands dominant in the low-lying landscape of the Somerset Levels, reaching a height of 139 m with views across the Bristol Channel and inland.

4.7. Assessment of the impact on the setting of these monuments is given below (see **Error! Reference source not found.** below).



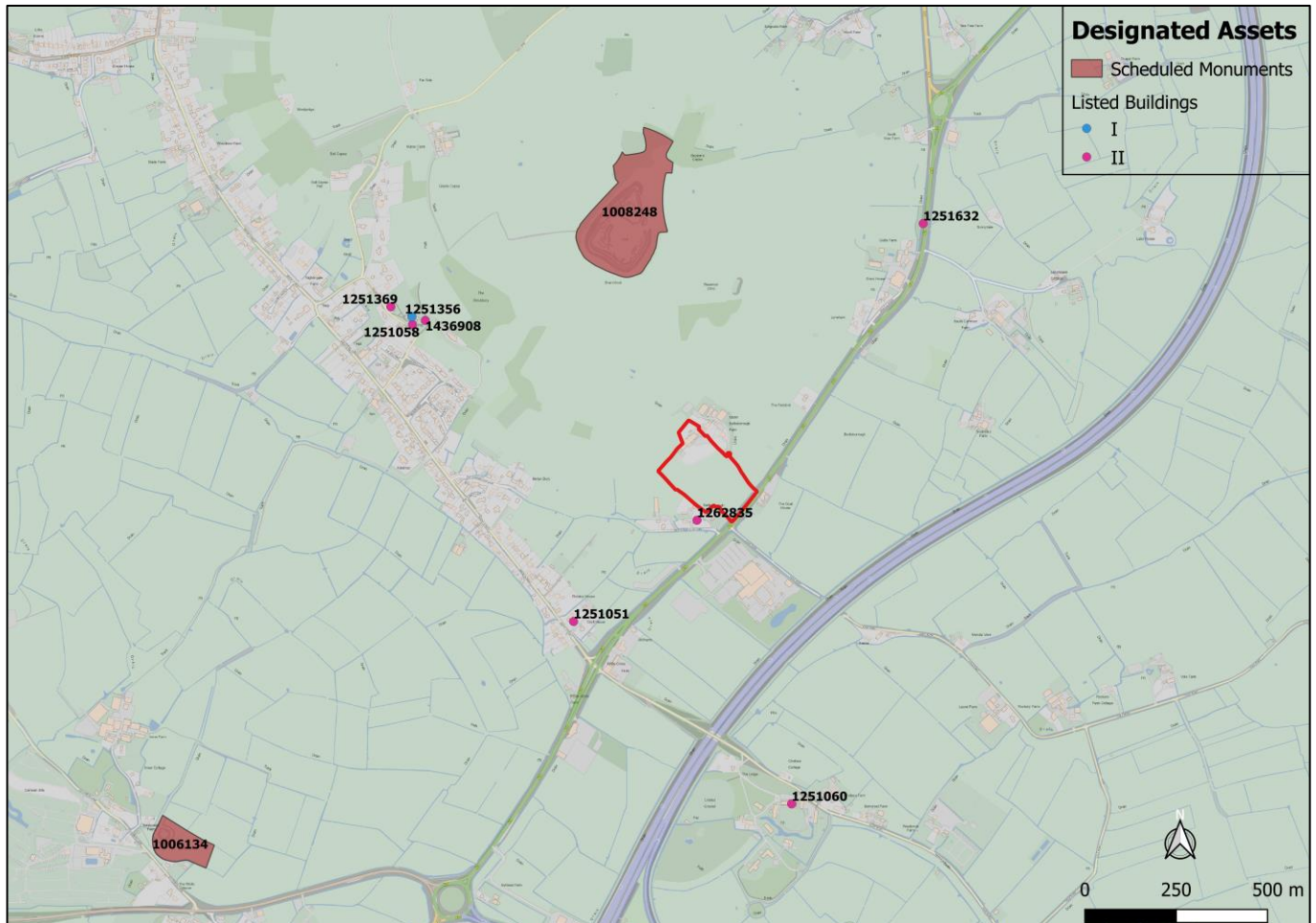


Figure 4: Designated Assets within the Study Area.

## Events

- 4.8. A watching brief was undertaken immediately south of the main hotel building in 2005 (SHER PRN17753). Whilst it revealed a ditch which was part of the present field boundary, no evidence pre-dating the 18<sup>th</sup> century was recorded, although a considerable depth of hill wash was noted.
- 4.9. A geophysical survey was carried out directly to the northeast of the Project Site's eastern boundary, in advance of works on the Cheddar to Brent Knoll water pipeline. The survey area cut across features recorded as a Medieval field system (SHER PRN 36112) and identified anomalies of possible archaeological origin (Urmston 2013). Subsequent excavation of these features (SHER PRN 32166) determined that they were indeed part of a Medieval field system directly adjacent to the Project Site.
- 4.10. A trench evaluation c. 230 m south of the Project Site (SHER 17474) picked up abraded sherds of Romano-British pottery, but no archaeological features were observed. A subsequent watching brief took place on the site, but the report is not yet available (SHER 28351).

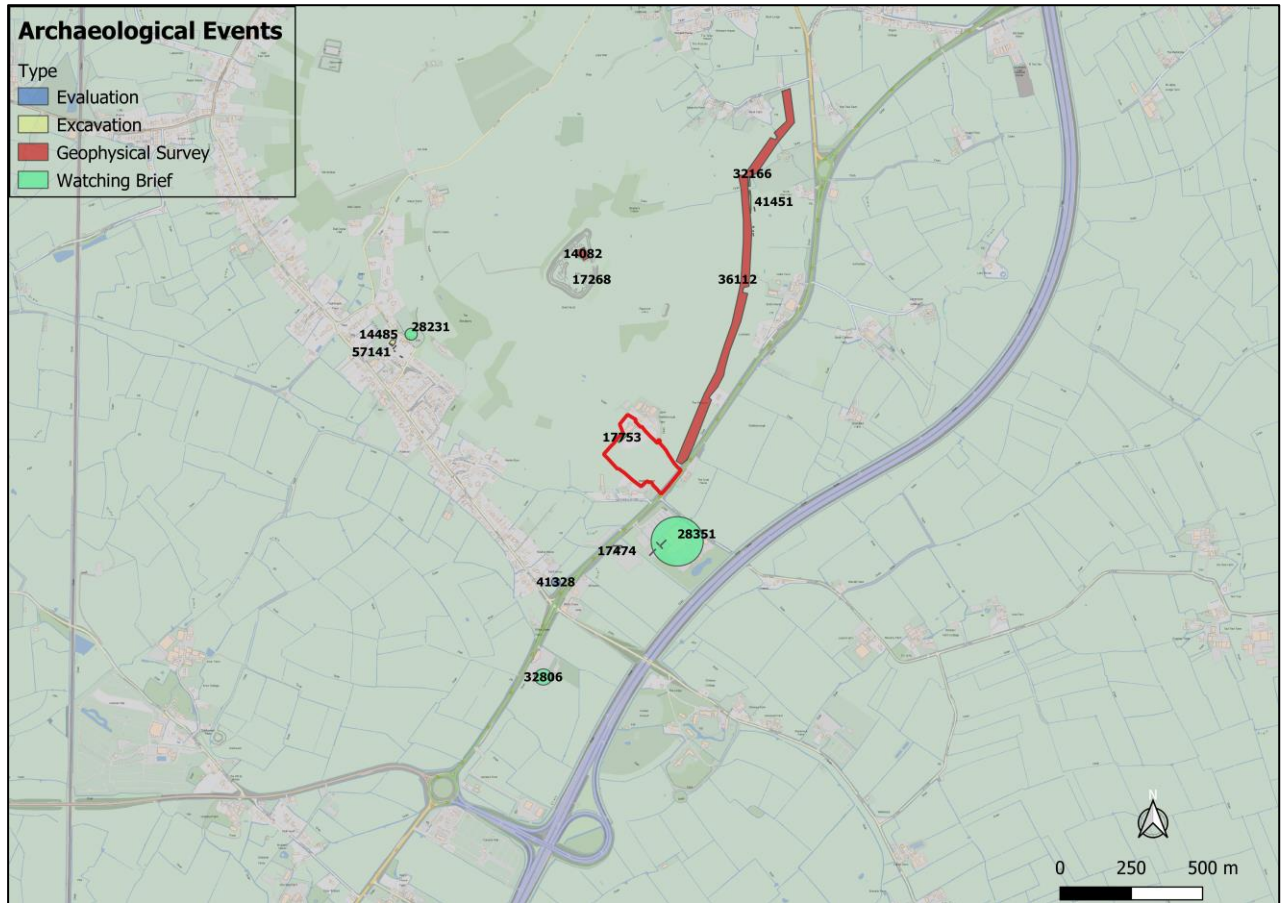


Figure 5: Archaeological Events within the Study Area. Project Site outlined in red.

## Archaeological Sites

### Prehistory

- 4.11. The predominant evidence for Prehistoric activity in the Study Area is Brent Knoll hillfort. Built in the Iron Age, it was also exploited in the Roman period.
- 4.12. Excavation activity (PRN 32166) east of the hillfort and north of the Project Site recorded Iron Age ditches and gullies indicative of wider activity in the area. This included a probable middle to late Iron Age hollow-way leading to the entrance of the fort.
- 4.13. Other than this, Prehistoric activity in the Study Area is limited. However, this is likely to be a reflection on the paucity and nature of archaeological interventions that have taken place rather than a true account of Prehistoric exploitation.
- 4.14. No evidence for similar activity has been identified on the Project Site to date. However, the proximity of the proposed development area to archaeological features of possible Prehistoric date raises the potential for similar archaeology to occur on site. The potential for Prehistoric

activity on the Project Site is considered medium, although the low-lying nature of the Project Site is unlikely to have invited significant settlement activity. Until the Post-Medieval period, reclaiming wetlands in the levels was a considerable undertaking and not necessarily attractive to settlers.

### Roman

- 4.15. Roman activity is noted at a number of locations within the Study Area. At Sanders Garden World, c. 280 m south of the Project Site, Roman material was identified, including pottery, bone and lias slabs covered by a black ash deposit (SHER 11747). This site was subject to evaluation and watching brief (report not yet available).
- 4.16. Roman material (pottery and dressed stone) was also identified c. 385 m southeast of the Project Site (SHER PRN 10086), c. 440 m northwest of the Project Site (SHER PRN 10088) and c. 865 m northwest of the Project Site (SHER 10089) around St. Michael's Church in Brent Knoll village.
- 4.17. Various activities east of the hillfort have continued to identify Roman activity, whilst the hillfort itself has regularly demonstrated use in the Roman period.
- 4.18. It is not surprising that the landscape surrounding a prominent monument such as Brent Knoll was exploited after the Iron Age. As Roman archaeology in various guises has been identified north, south, northeast and northwest of the Project Site, it is reasonable to assume that Roman archaeology may occur on the current Project Site.
- 4.19. The potential for Roman activity should be regarded as medium. However, the low-lying position of the Project Site in an area of reclaimed wetland should be taken into account.

### Early Medieval

- 4.20. Evidence for Early Medieval/Saxon activity is focussed around St. Michael's Church in Brent Knoll (SHER PRN 32120), c. 875 m northwest of the Project Site, which appears to have been the focus of settlement. Brent Knoll was recorded as Brentmerse in a 7<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-Saxon charter wherein it had been granted to Glastonbury Abbey, and the southern boundary of this land holding is probably the old river Siger identified through LiDAR (SHER PRN 29686).
- 4.21. Despite this, there is no evidence to imply that hitherto unknown Early Medieval archaeology would occur on the Project Site. As such, potential for this period should be considered low.

## Medieval

- 4.22. Brent Knoll is recorded in Domesday as Brentmerse and had 53 villagers, 52 smallholders, 10 cottagers and 6 slaves and was held by the Abbey of Glastonbury. It was within the Hundred of Bempstone.
- 4.23. The core of Brent Knoll is situated west and northwest of the Project Site and is an Area of High Archaeological Potential (AHAP).
- 4.24. Aside from this, Medieval activity is noted directly to the east of the Project Site (SHER PRN 10101) in the form as a Medieval field system, and in various locations east, south, west and north of the Project Site. A range of Medieval pottery was found c. 315 m west of the Project Site during the construction of bungalows (SHER PRN 10093), whilst Medieval strip lynchets wrap around the west and south contours of Brent Knoll hill.
- 4.25. Probable deserted settlements are also noted in the Study Area, highlighting a clear intensification in settlement activity from the preceding period.
- 4.26. Medieval archaeology can be found in a wide arc around the Project Site, raising the potential for archaeology of this date to be preserved. However, the nearest archaeology to the Project Site are the Medieval field systems and it is more likely that if Medieval archaeology survives on site, it would be of this nature.



Figure 6: Archaeological Sites (Prehistory to the Medieval period) within the Study Area. Project Site outlined in red.

## 5. Historic Development of the Project Site

5.1. Due to the closure of the record office at the time of writing, the earliest reference to the Project Site dates to the 1842 Tithe Apportionment and accompanying Tithe Map, which is recorded to have been updated from the original 1811 version. Upper Battleborough Farm is clearly depicted to the north of the modern-day Project Site and Battleborough House and adjacent building are recorded to the south of the plot, bordering the Bristol Road. The original date of the Tithe Map suggests that the buildings were developed by 1811 and are likely to have earlier origins.

5.2. A newspaper article in 1819 carried an advert for a freehold estate called Battleborough Farm, comprising a farm house, barns, stabling and outbuildings, yards, gardens and sundry enclosures of meadow and arable land, together with several cottages and Blacksmith's shop, totalling 190 acres names (Star (London) - Friday 16 July 1819). This is potentially an early description of the Project Site, although it is noted that both the north farm and farm to the southwest were historically referred to by the same name, and only occasionally distinguished as Upper and Lower Battleborough, the former referring to the Project Site. A similar record from 1823 recorded Battleborough Farm as comprising an estimated 148 acers, in the occupation of John Board (Bristol Mirror - Saturday 16 August 1823).

4. The 1841 census records the farm as simply Battleborough, which would appear to account

5 Battleborough House and orchard (to the south of the Project Site) belonged to John Her



Plot Number	Landowner	Occupier	Description of Land and Premises	State of Cultivation	Area		
					A	R	P

23	Joseph Porta	John House	The Croft	Meadow	4	0	12
30	Joseph Porta	John House	House Garden and Orchard	Garden and Orchard	2	3	8
24	John Herridge	John Herridge	House Garden and Orchard	Garden and Orchard	1	2	17
22	Joseph Porta	John House	The Orchard	Orchard	1	2	19
21	John Herridge	John Herridge	Adjoining Turnpike Road		2	2	4
25	John Champion	Robert Champion	Orchard	Orchard	0	3	0
29	John Champion	Robert Champion	Orchard	Orchard	1	3	0
32	Joseph Porta	John House	West Croft	Pasture	16	0	6
31	Joseph Porta	John House	Adjoining West Croft and Orchard	Pasture	14	1	38

Table 1: Extract from the Tithe apportionment for Brent Knoll, 1842.

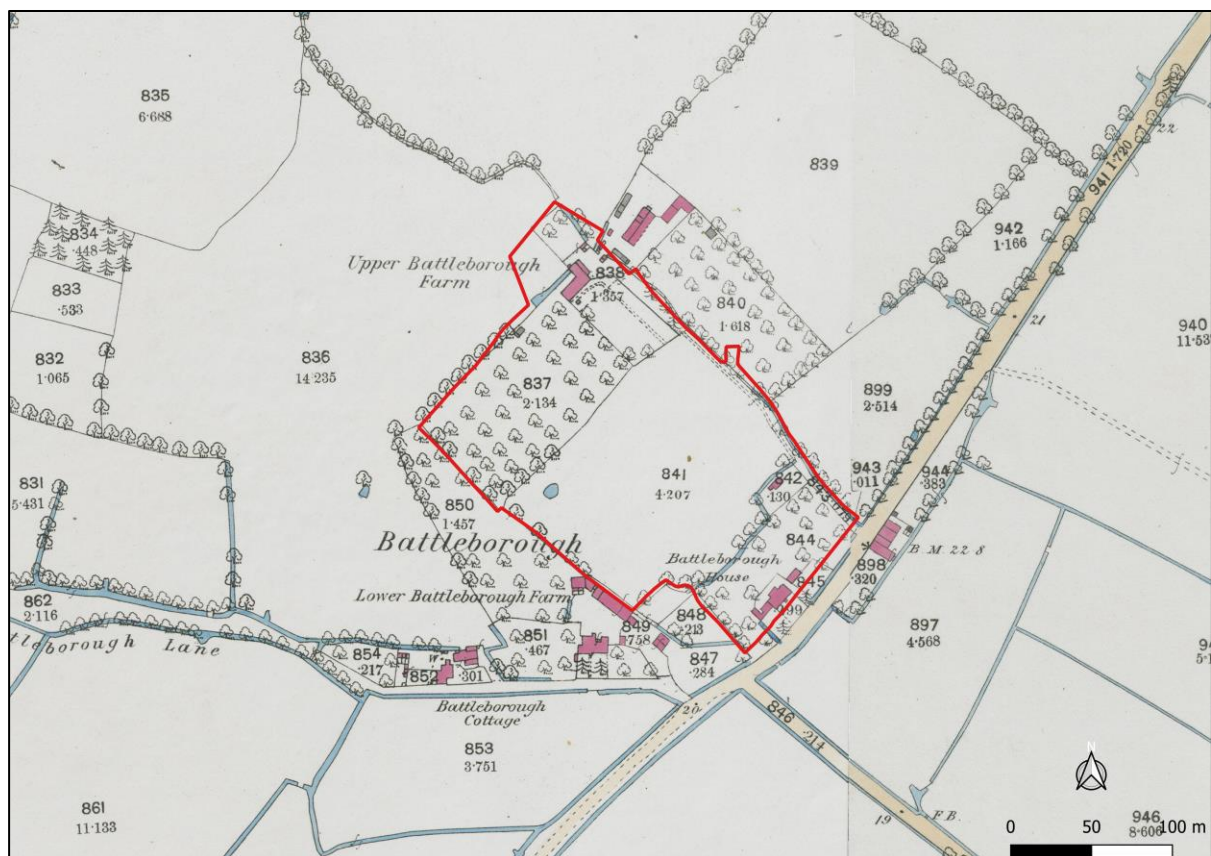


Figure 8: 1886 OS Map (surveyed 1884)



- 5.6. In 1861 John House was still registered at Battleborough Farm (for census entry see Battle Borough). By 1880, the farm was occupied by John's youngest son, James, estimated to have been 45 at the time (Weston Mercury - Saturday 30 October 1880).
- 5.7. It is likely that the farm was tenanted to the House family, as in 1873 Upper Battleborough Farm was offered for auction along with the House, Garden and Orchard, and following - Lands adjoining The Nursery (Meadow), The Nursery (Arable), Adjoining the Orchard (Pasture), Roundhill (Meadow), The Orchard (Orchard), The Croft (Meadow), Adjoining West Croft (Pasture), West Croft (Pature), The Fourteen Acres (Arable) and Coppice. The house was described as pleasantly situated, with eminence and commanding extensive views. There was a well on the premises. (Central Somerset Gazette - Saturday 21 June 1873).
- 5.8. The First Edition Ordnance Survey Map (published 1886) recorded the expansion of the farm, which was typical of the latter 19<sup>th</sup> century. The three buildings to the south of the farmhouse were demolished, in order to separate the dwelling from the centre of agricultural activity. The new buildings were sited to the east, making way for a garden to the south.
- 5.9. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the farm may have been tenanted to Francis Grabham, who was registered to a site on the Bristol Road in 1901. In 1903, contemporary newspaper articles record the sale of the farm by the executors of the late Mr Francis Grabham, who were quitting the farm (West Somerset Free Press - Saturday 25 April 1903).
- 5.10. In the late 1940s Battleborough Farmhouse was known as Battleborough Grange. Mr & Mrs Williams occupied the house with their young children and would appear to have been running a Guest House with tearoom and function space for weddings etc. from the premises. A contemporary newspaper article recorded that they were fined £25 for serving cream with tea to customers (Dundee Courier - Tuesday 08 November 1949). Mr & Mrs Williams also reared a large number of calves as a subsidiary business, indicating that farming was still a part of Battleborough Grange, although the site may have been separate from the activities of the farm to the east by this time.
- 5.11. In 1961 land exceeding 58 acres went up for sale at Battleborough Grange and in 1963 Mrs B. H. Williams sold land at Battleborough Grange that had been ringfenced from the original farmstead, estimated at 52 acres. This may represent the formal separation of the farm into two separate land holdings (Wells Journal - Friday 14 April 1961 & Wells Journal - Friday 31 May 1963).
- 5.12. Battleborough House, to the south of the Project Site, was demolished between 1961 and 1975.



- 5.13. By 1986 Battleborough Grange had been converted to a hotel registered as Battleborough Grange Hotel (Bridgwater Journal - Saturday 03 May 1986).

## 6. Setting Assessment

6.1. This section assesses the impact of the development on the setting of nearby designated heritage assets. It uses the approach set out in the Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets. As such, this report will assess which assets could be affected, the degree to which setting and views contribute to the significance of these assets, the effect of the proposed development on that significance and proposals to enhance these assets or mitigate any harm caused by the development.

6.2. The definition of setting is that expressed in NPPF (source) and significance of assets based upon Historic England's (originally written when English Heritage) Conservation Principles, which sets out the following values:

- Evidential - Derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity;
- Historical - derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be illustrative or associative;
- Aesthetic - derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place;
- Communal - derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory. Communal values are closely bound up with historical (particularly associative) and aesthetic values but tend to have additional and specific aspects.

6.3. This report should be read in conjunction with the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Stokes Morgan. This document utilised a number of viewpoints and specifically focussed on the impact of the development from Brent Knoll hillfort. As such, much of what was raised is pertinent to this current heritage assessment.

6.4. A viewshed analysis was undertaken. A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) was established with a 5 km radius from the site, using 1 m DSM LiDAR data from the Environment Agency. The location of the new events suite was taken as the primary viewpoint. This building, although (marginally)

not the highest (at 6.5 m to the roof ridge line), is most centrally set and will be among the more visually prominent buildings.

6.5. The ZTV identified that two designated assets would be intervisible with this building on the Project Site, those being Brent Knoll hillfort (NHLE 1008248) and the Grade II Listed Battleborough Farmhouse.

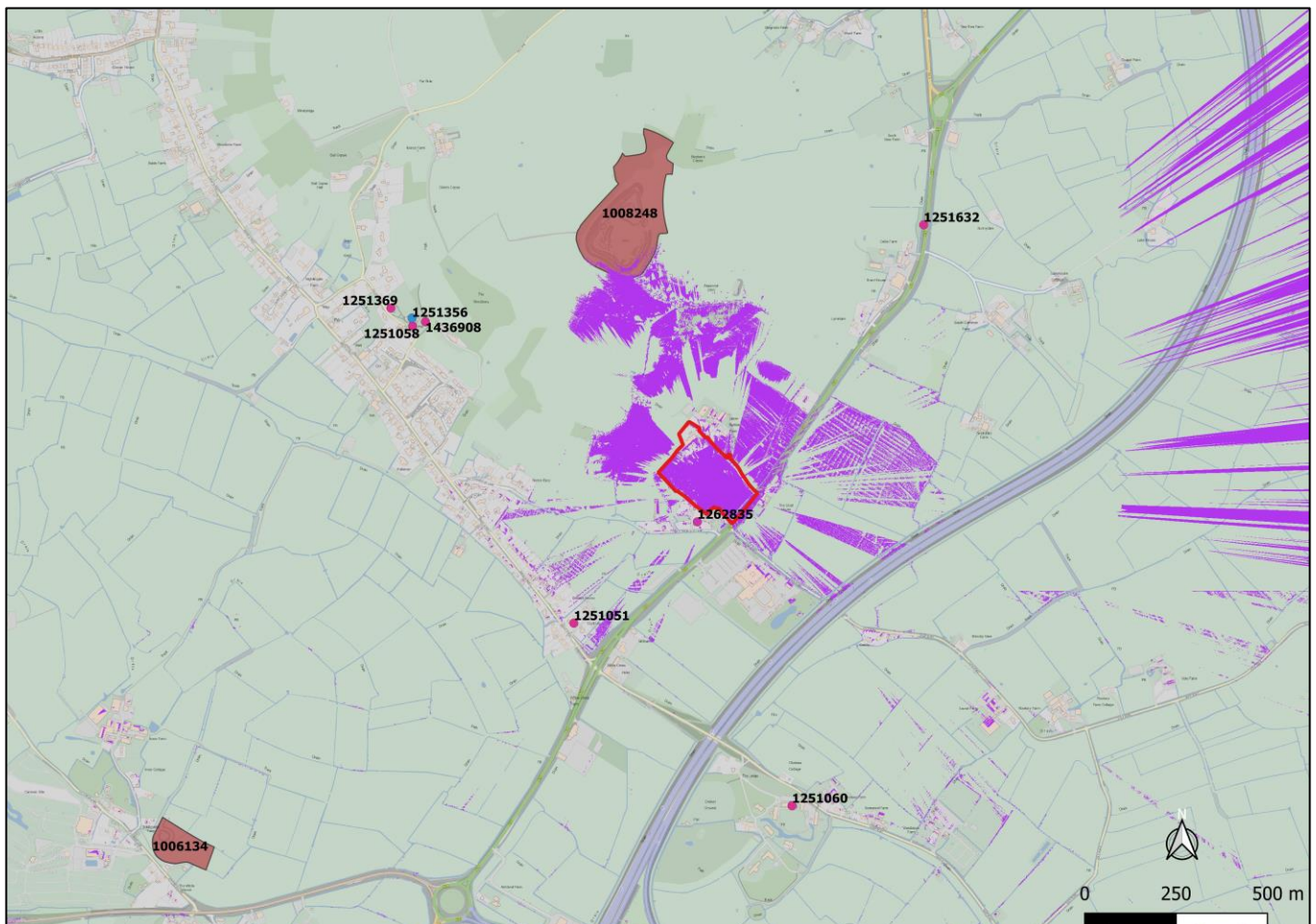


Figure 9: Viewshed results showing intervisibility of the site with nearby heritage assets.

## **Battleborough Farmhouse**

### **Significance**

6.6. Battleborough is a Grade II former farmhouse, now house, with a probable 17<sup>th</sup> century core. The list description describes it thus: *Stippled roughcast, bitumenised slate roof in 2 sections of slightly differing height, coped verges and a centre coping to roof, 3 pairs of diagonally set rendered stacks. Gothick style. Two storeys and attic, 2:2 bays, 3-light casements, each light with a 4-centred head, stopped labels. Central door opening, 6-panelled door in a conforming style; rendered and gabled porch, slate roof. Heraldic shield with crest between right 2 bays on first*

*floor, beneath raised lettering: "Battleborough". Cross-beamed ceiling to right ground floor room; this room also with a wooden panelled East wall incorporating a niche cupboard, probably of the first half of the 18th century.*

### Contribution of Setting to Significance

- 6.7. Largely, the significance of Battleborough Farmhouse is derived from its aesthetic (architectural) qualities. Views to and from the property were unlikely to have been of great import at the time of its construction. The front elevation is south facing, directed away from Brent Knoll hillfort and towards largely open, low-lying rural land of the Levels.
- 6.8. To the rear (north and adjacent to the Project Site) are a collection of outbuildings forming a courtyard. These buildings have been extant since at least the latter 19<sup>th</sup> century and were almost certainly serving an agricultural purpose. The buildings partially interrupt views from Battleborough Farmhouse towards Brent Knoll.
- 6.9. Today, directly adjacent to the northern part of Battleborough Farmhouse, there are several large trees, interrupting views across to the hill and, importantly, enclosing the asset to a degree.
- 6.10. The northward view would have also looked upon what became the hotel building, but only glimpses of this could be seen, largely from the western side of the house.

### Impact

- 6.11. Setting is not simply defined as views to or from a heritage asset, but how that asset is viewed within the wider environs. Battleborough Farmhouse sits in a relatively open landscape, with undeveloped fields to the northwest and an open space to the north/northeast (the current Project Site). What would originally have been a relatively unenclosed/isolated building has, over many years, become increasingly enclosed. The Garden Centre to the south, houses to the west and further development of new build houses to the southwest (corner of Bristol Road and Brent Street) have all contributed to the reduction of the open setting. Furthermore, trees along the Project Site's south/south western boundary already partially enclose/constrain the farmhouse. The infilling of the land is considered to cause less than substantial harm, at the lower end of the spectrum.
- 6.12. The most notable impact to Battleborough Farmhouse will be the new hotel extension block (to be located just southwest of the existing hotel building).

## Mitigation

- 6.13. The hotel extension will be set at a lower height, subservient and blending into the main hotel building, significantly reducing the visual impact. The tree planting along the boundary bordering Battleborough House and the outbuildings present in the grounds of Battleborough House already limit the views to the Project Site. With mitigation involving planting of trees, the visual impact will be reduced.

## Brent Knoll Hillfort

### Significance

- 6.14. Brent Knoll Hillfort is a good example of a large univallate (single rampart) hillfort, with a complete circuit of defences, an entranceway flanked by guardrooms, and a hollow way leading to it (NHLE 1008248). Although there is still debate on the function of Iron Age hillforts and whether they were truly defensive, Brent Knoll appears to have several features (such as the ramparts and guardrooms) that could be given defensive attributes.
- 6.15. Notable, however, are the landscape positions hillforts, and Brent Knoll in particular, had. Brent Knoll is a hill in an otherwise flat landscape and therefore is a dominant feature over a considerable area. It has panoramic views inland, across the Somerset Levels, and out across the Bristol Channel. Thus, views from and to the fort are clearly part of what make the fort significant.
- 6.16. Although Roman building works and later quarrying activity have occurred within the interior of the asset, the overall shape of the hillfort has not changed substantially since it was built. What has changed is the landscape surrounding the fort.

### Contribution of Setting to Significance

- 6.17. The ability to see out from the hillfort and to see the hillfort from a considerable distance are undoubtedly significant elements of the setting of this monument. There is some argument that hillforts were intended to be seen as displays of status and power, but whether they were defensive or not, their landscape position was clearly important.
- 6.18. Broad/long views are the most important, making the fort visible across landscape and seascape.
- 6.19. Short views to the immediate hinterland of the hillfort are less important. In some cases, Prehistoric and Roman activity occurs at the base of hillforts or in the area immediately surrounding them. In this case, there is nothing to indicate that there was any relationship

between the hillfort and the Project Site. There is no confirmed evidence of a contemporary settlement that could have been viewed from the fort, nor was it a notably strategic parcel of land crucial to the defence or appreciation of the fort.

- 6.20. Instead, it is likely that the Project Site formed a part of the rural landscape surrounding the fort much as it does today. The setting of the hillfort is therefore one of a largely rural landscape, permeated by field boundaries and hedgerows. It is within the Levels, a landscape derived largely from man-made reclamation of wetland which required a substantial labour investment to achieve and maintain. This investment of drainage was not one-off, but an ongoing process over centuries, to ensure that the land could be used for its purpose. Almost certainly, this purpose was agricultural. There are potential remains of ridge and furrow across the site and reclaimed land in the Levels offered increased crop yields and fertile meadowland.

## Impacts

- 6.21. Direct views from and to the Project Site from Brent Knoll hillfort did not make a notable contribution to the significance of the hillfort for reasons explained above. Instead, the Project Site was part of the broader character of rural activity surrounding the fort. As stated in the LVIA, the primary impact will be the loss of the open field element of the Project Site. Currently, the Project Site is grassland leading down to the road and therefore is similar in context to the other fields in the landscape.
- 6.22. The proposed development will result in a notable infilling of historic enclosed farmland. The layout of the field boundaries implies that the shape of the development area has been retained for many centuries.
- 6.23. The infilling of the green space to the south of the Project Site would not be entirely incongruous, as it has occurred around Battleborough Farmhouse, at the Garden Centre to the south, and further residential development has been given permission to the southwest (Sedgemoor Planning app 07/18/00021).
- 6.24. Furthermore, the development is generally low in height (height of tallest building would be c. 7.5 m to the ridge line) with buildings such as the main hotel extension being set on lower ground and subservient to the main structure. The use of green roofs on the lodges, and the character and design of the new proposed buildings would further reduce the impact to the setting of the hillfort.

## 7. Summary and Conclusion

- 7.1. This assessment has determined that the Project Site has the potential to preserve Roman activity and possible Prehistoric activity. However, the low-lying nature of the site is likely to have precluded significant settlement activity in these periods.
- 7.2. There will be an adverse impact to the setting of the scheduled monument of Brent Knoll hillfort. The development will be clearly visible from its south eastern ramparts, although not from the interior. The infilling of historic agricultural land and open space will be notable from the summit. However, the shielding/screening, low-lying nature of the new buildings, materials, design and use of "green-roof" planting will reduce this impact. There will be harm, but this harm is considered to be less than substantial.
- 7.3. Whilst overall the development is considered to be acceptable in heritage terms, it is recommended that a programme of archaeological investigation and recording be carried out to further determine the archaeological potential of the Project Site.

## 8. Bibliography

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## 9. Appendices

### Appendix 1: Scheduled Monuments

NHLE Ref	Name	Hyperlink
1008248	Brent Knoll hillfort and associated field system	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1008248">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1008248</a>
1006134	Moated site at Edithmead	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1006134">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1006134</a>

### Appendix 2: Listed Buildings

NHLE Ref	Name	Grade	Date Listed	Hyperlink
1251051	Croft House And Garden Wall	II	31/05/1985	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1251051">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1251051</a>
1251058	Monument To Edward Symes, In The Churchyard 10 Metres South Of South Chapel, Church Of St Michael	II	31/05/1985	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1251058">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1251058</a>
1251060	Somerset Court	II	31/05/1985	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1251060">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1251060</a>
1251356	Church Of St Michael	I	09/02/1961	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1251356">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1251356</a>
1251369	Old Courthay	II	31/05/1985	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1251369">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1251369</a>
1251632	Milepost At Ngr St 3495 5100	II	31/05/1985	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1251632">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1251632</a>
1262835	Battleborough Farmhouse	II	31/05/1985	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1262835">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1262835</a>
1436908	Brent Knoll War Memorial	II	31/08/2016	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1436908">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1436908</a>

### Appendix 3: Events Gazetteer

PRN	Name	Event Type
41328	Evaluation (2019), S of 2 Brent Street, Brent Knoll	Evaluation
28351	Watching brief (2011), Sanders Garden World, Brent Knoll	Watching Brief
17753	Watching Brief (2005), Battleborough Grange Hotel, Brent Knoll	Watching Brief
14082	Geophysical survey (2006), Brent Knoll hillfort	Geophysical Survey
17268	Excavation (2004), Brent Knoll Hillfort	Excavation
32806	Watching brief (2014), Westcountry Motor Homes, Brent Knoll	Watching Brief
28231	Watching brief (2008), St Michael's church, Brent Knoll	Watching Brief
14485	Excavation (2006-2007), St Michael's House, Brent Knoll	Excavation
57141	Evaluation (2000), St Michael's House, South Brent	Evaluation
41451	Watching brief (2019), Brent Knoll pipeline	Watching Brief
32166	Excavation (2013), pipeline, E of Brent Knoll	Excavation
36112	Geophysical survey (2013), Cheddar to Brent Knoll water pipeline	Geophysical Survey
17474	Evaluation (2004), Sanders Garden Centre, Bristol Road, Brent Knoll	Evaluation

### Appendix 4: Archaeological Sites Gazetteer

PRN	Name	Period
10082	Strip lynchets and field system, Brent Knoll	Medieval
11113	Brent Knoll hillfort, Brent Knoll	Iron Age



1010 1	Medieval field system, NE of Battleborough, Brent Knoll	Medieval
1010 0	AP marks, N of Battleborough, Brent Knoll	Unknown
1599 5	Second World War slit trenches, Brent Knoll	WWII
1194 1	Hollow way, Brent Knoll	Unknown, poss Iron Age
1194 3	Trackway, Brent Knoll	Unknown
1194 0	Quarries, Brent Knoll	Post-Medieval
1709 3	Signpost, White Cross, Brent Knoll	C20
1709 2	Milestone 50m south east of White Cross Farm, Brent Knoll	Post-Medieval
3212 0	Ninth-century and later settlement, Brent Knoll	Saxon
1322 1	Saddlers Cottage and Wayside, Brent Street, Brent Knoll	Post-Medieval
1763 5	War memorial, Church of St Michael, Brent Knoll	C20
3273 4	Badgworth Court, Harp Road, Brent Knoll	Post-Medieval
2458 7	Eighteenth-century Turnpike road, East Brent to Thurloxtton	Post-Medieval
2968 6	Medieval and earlier River Siger, Burnham and East Huntspill	Medieval
1709 7	Milestone and milepost, A38, East Brent	Post-Medieval
1048 8	Deserted farm, E of Smithfield Farm, East Brent	Unknown, possibly Medieval
1194 2	Earthworks, NE of Battleborough	Unknown, possibly Roman
1048 5	Earthworks, N of Brent Knoll hillfort, East Brent	Unknown, possibly Medieval
1115 2	Landscape remains, NW and E of Brent Knoll, Brent Knoll	Unknown, possibly Roman
1709 4	New Inn Beer House, Brent Street, Brent Knoll	C20
1174 8	Axehead find, SE of Battleborough, Brent Knoll	Post-Medieval
1174 7	Roman site, SE of Battleborough, Brent Knoll	Roman
1180 1	AP marks, S of Brent Knoll	Unknown
1117 0	Floodbanks, S and SW of Somerset Court, Brent Knoll	Unknown
1009 3	Medieval and later finds, W of Battleborough, Brent Knoll	Medieval
1008 6	Roman and post medieval finds, south-east of Battleborough, Brent Knoll	Roman
1823 4	Possible deserted settlement site, E of Smithfield Farm, East Brent	Unknown, possibly Medieval
1709 1	Smithfield Cottage Site, Brent Knoll	C20
1008 1	Roman and medieval settlement, Smithfield Cottage, Brent Knoll	Roman & Medieval
1288 3	Eighteenth-century Turnpike road, East Brent to Churchill Rocks	Post-Medieval
1009 9	Roman and medieval to modern ditches and pond, W of Brent Knoll Cottage, Brent Knoll	Roman & Medieval
1009 5	Medieval and later finds, S of St Michael's church, Brent Knoll	Medieval
1009 2	Roman, medieval and later finds south-west of St Michael's Church, Brent Knoll	Roman & Medieval
1008 9	Roman finds, NE of St Michael's Church, Brent Knoll	Roman
1008 8	Roman finds, north-west of Battleborough, Brent Knoll	Roman
1045 5	Church of St Michael and churchyard, Brent Knoll	Medieval



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