

LAND AT LAVENHAM FEN FARMS WIMBLINGTON CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Results of a Desk Based Assessment



The Old Dairy
Hacche Lane Business Park
Pathfields Business Park
South Molton
Devon
EX36 3LH

Tel: 01769 573555
Email: mail@swarch.net

Report No.: 151218
Date: 18/12/2015
Author: P. Webb
S. Walls

Land at Lavenham Fen Farms, Wimblington, Cambridgeshire

Results of a Desk Based Assessment

For

Kirsty Lodge

of

Aardvark EM Limited

By



SWARCH project reference: CSWT15
National Grid Reference: TL 5417 2918
Project Director: Dr. Bryn Morris
Project Officer: Dr Samuel Walls
Research: Peter Webb
Report: Peter Webb; Dr Samuel Walls
Report Editing: Beth Whitlock
Graphics: Peter Webb; Beth Whitlock

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Summary

This report presents the results of a desk-based assessment carried out by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) on land at Lavenham Fen Farms, Wimblington, Cambridgeshire, prior to the proposed construction of an anaerobic-digester (AD) plant.

The proposed AD plant would be installed within a field to the immediate south of modern industrial buildings on the south-eastern edge of the historic core of the settlement at Wimblington. The cartographic analysis suggests that the proposal site may have been located on the perimeter of the medieval farmland, with the curving eastern boundary to the field, acting as the boundary to the fens until the 18th century.

The proposal site is located on a clay island with the fens, and there is high potential for prehistoric and Romano-British remains. Previous archaeological work and findspots within the village have revealed primarily medieval and post-medieval activity; however excavations along the March to Chatteris Pipeline revealed the remains of numerous prehistoric features in the fields to the immediate south of the proposal site. Despite some possible truncation the archaeological potential of the site is medium to high, given the density of prehistoric and Roman activity nearby.

The development is located at a reasonable distance from any designated heritage assets, and there is likely to be very minimal harm upon the settings of any historic assets. The use of planted bunds and additional planting would provide some additional visual screening and potential mitigation for any likely impact on the settings of nearby heritage assets.

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1.0 Introduction

Location: Land at Lavenham Fen Farms, Wimblington, Cambridgeshire
Parish: Wimblington
County: Cambridgeshire
NGR: TL 5417 2918

1.1 Project Background

This report presents the results of a desk based assessment carried out by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) on land at Lavenham Fen Farms, Wimblington in Cambridgeshire (Figure 1). The work was commissioned by Kirsty Lodge of Aardvark EM Limited (the Client) in order to identify any archaeological sites or features that might be affected by the proposed construction of an Anaerobic Digester (AD) plant.

1.2 Topographical and Geological Background

The site is located on fen-land close to the Sixteen Foot Drain, 17km north-west of the city of Ely and 5km south of March in Cambridgeshire at a height of approximately 2m (AOD) on land currently used for agricultural purposes (see Figure 1).

The soils of this area are the deep humose fine loamy over sandy and fine loamy over clayey soils of the Clayhythe Association (SSEW 1983). These overlie the sedimentary mudstones of the Ampthill Clay Formation (BGS 2015).

1.3 Historical Background

Wimblington is located within the modern parish of Wimblington, formerly part of the parish of Doddington, on a long north-south orientated island of clay within a fenland landscape comprising large farms growing wheat, potatoes and sugar-beet, with woodland to the north of Doddington.

The place –name Wimblington (OE pers.n. *Wimbel*, probably shortened from *Wynnbeald + ing + tūn*) means ‘Estate of Wimbel’, and has variously been known as *Wimblingetune* (c.975), *Wimblingtune* (c.1170), *Wymb(e)linton-yng* (1251-1617).

Wimblington is first mentioned in the late 10th century, when the land was obtained by Brithnoth, the Abbot of Ely, and given to the monastery of Ely. In the 11th century it is part of the Domesday manor of Doddington, and land of the church until leased to Robert Rowden in 1493 by Bishop Alcock, and subsequently Alexander Balam during the reign of Henry VIII. In the 16th century the Bishops of Ely were forced to hand over some of their lands to the crown, and in 1581 it was leased to the son of Bishop Cox, Sir Richard for three lives. In 1600 some of the lands were granted to William Cottney, including Little Parks, though the majority were held on lease by Sir John Peyton, Governor of Jersey, who gained manorial rights outright in 1602. The manor subsequently passed through his line until the end of the 19th century.

Enclosure in the parish of Wimblington began in 1805, following an Inclosure Act of 1791, with further inclosure acts in 1830 and 1845. The tithe apportionment indicates that in 1840 the site was already enclosed.

1.4 Archaeological Background

There has been substantial archaeological investigation in the Wimblington environs, resulting in the discovery of numerous prehistoric sites, dating from the Palaeolithic to the Iron Age, indicating the likely prehistoric settlement of the raised islands within the surrounding fens. A series of enclosure features identify a similar settlement pattern continuing into the Roman period, with some drainage of the fens occurring at this time. That the land was suitable for agriculture in the medieval period is also shown by elements of the relict field system and plough furrows. Significant development of the village occurred in the post-medieval period, with the construction of numerous listed buildings dated to the 17th-19th centuries, including the parish church of St. Peter.

1.5 Methodology

The desk-based assessment follows the guidance as outlined in: *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment* (CifA 2014a).



Figure 1: Site location (the location of the proposed development is indicated).

2.0 Desk-Based Assessment

2.1 Documentary Background

Wimblington is located in the modern parish of Wimblington, formerly part of the parish of Doddington, only becoming a separate parish in 1874. Wimblington is within the hundred of North Witchford, and Diocese of Ely. The village is located on a long north-south orientated island of clay within a fenland landscape comprising large farms growing wheat, potatoes and sugar-beet.

Whilst Wimblington is first mentioned in the late 10th century, when Brithnoth, the first Abbot of Ely, 'obtained 60 acres of land in Doddington and Wimblington by exchange with Wine, son of Osmund' which he gave to the monastery of Ely, it is not recorded in Domesday despite some of the lands referred to being included in the manor of Doddington, including the fishery of 'Weremere'. As part of the manor of Doddington, the lands of Wimblington were owned by the church, and was leased to Robert Rowden in 1493 by Bishop Alcock, and subsequently to Alexander Balam during the reign of Henry VIII. In the 16th century the Bishops of Ely were forced to hand over some of their lands to the crown, including at Doddington, though Bishop Cox kept Doddington palace until his death in 1581, after which it was leased to his son, Sir Richard for three lives. In 1600 some of the lands were granted to William Cottney, including Little Parks, though the majority were held on lease by Sir John Peyton, Governor of Jersey, who gained manorial rights outright in 1602. The manor subsequently passed through his line until the end of the 19th century.

It is still not distinguished from Doddington in the 13th century, though is mentioned as including three guilds, of the Holy Trinity, the Purification, and St. Peter, which owned two guildhalls and a chapel, one of which was in the possession of the lord of the manor, Sir John Peyton II by 1635. By 1669 the commons of Wimblington, including Sonea and Horsemoor Fen, had become overstocked, and Sir Algernon Peyton, came to agreement with the tenants limiting the stock they could keep, subject to fines, whilst areas were also inclosed for each homestead. In the late 17th and early 18th centuries the draining of the fens led to a significant increase in the value of the land, causing a series of lawsuits between rectors and their parishioners. Petitions were also made throughout the 18th century to improve drainage of the land (CCRO) and for improvements to be made to transport links, and particularly bridges across the dykes (CCRO).

In 1715 Thomas Eaton gave land and houses to provide a school at Wimblington, with a School Board established in 1881, but only taking control of the school in 1896, after which time the school was enlarged on a number of occasions, though by the early 20th century the buildings had become dangerous and a new school was built in 1924.

Much of the land surrounding Wimblington was enclosed in 1805, following an Inclosure Act of 1791, this comprised an area of 676 acres of land divided between 15 land-owners, including the lord of the manor, Sir Henry Peyton. Further enclosure occurred in 1830 and 1845.

The rectory at Wimblington was established in 1874, along with the Church of St. Peter from which time it was under the patronage of the Peyton family until between 1900 and 1905 when it was transferred to the Hill family, and in 1927 the Ratford family. Prior to this a Wesleyan Methodist chapel had been established in the village from 1809 (much of the above is based on Pugh 2002).

2.2 Cartographic Evidence

2.2.1 Early cartographic sources

There are numerous maps available to the survey, the earliest good example being the Ro Cotton map of 1603, which whilst not being particularly detailed shows settlements and road systems and a representative outline of some of the field patterns. Whilst not showing any detail of the site itself, it shows a settlement at Wimblington as already being established between various fens and moor(e)s.



Figure 2: Extract from the 1603 Cotton map; the approximate location of the site is indicated.

The first detailed map is the OS surveyor's draft of 1811, which shows the surrounding landscape in some, if perhaps misleading, detail. It shows the village of Wimblington as a well established village within the predominantly straight bounded field of post-medieval enclosure and associated with the fenland drainage. Some of the fields, however, show the curving boundaries indicative of earlier phases of enclosure, in some instances probably based on medieval strip-fields. The pattern of fields on the draft map is, however, often approximated rather than an accurate depiction, though the roads and settlement layouts are typically fairly accurate depictions.



Figure 3: Extract from the 1819 Thomas Yeakell Ordnance Survey surveyor's draft (British Library); the approximate location of the site is indicated.

2.2.2 The 1840 Wimblington Tithe Map

The first detailed map available to this study is the 1840 tithe map, which in contrast to the Surveyors Draft, shows a much greater number of fields in the area south of the core of the historic settlement. The proposal site at this time was located within a large irregular shaped field, with a pronounced curving eastern boundary, which is particularly pronounced in an area of largely straight boundaries. The curving boundary can be seen continuing in the field to the north to Manea Road and the road junction with Frogs Abbey Lane. This curving boundary may have once continued to meet the Doddington Road to the west, and could be interpreted as formerly acting as the outer boundary for the permanently farmed and settled area of Wimblington in the medieval and early post-medieval period. St. Peter's Church had not yet been constructed, but several buildings are depicted in the two fields to the north. The fields to the south have the appearance are clearly late enclosures, but do not fit the pattern of the 1791 inclosure award fields, so were presumably enclosed before this date.

The apportionment indicates these fields formed part of the holdings of Thomas Richards Snr. (see Table 1). His son Thomas Richards Jnr. appears to have also owned lands nearby.

Land at Lavenham Fen Farms, Wimblington, Cambridgeshire



Figure 4: Extract from the 1840 Wimblington Tithe map (Cambridge Archives); the approximate location of the site is indicated.

Field No.	Owner	Tenant	Field Name	Field Use
45	Thomas Richards Senior	Himself	Common	Up and down
46			Common	Up and down
617			Close	Grass
634			Close	Grass
635			Close	Grass
638			Close	Arable
639			Close	Grass
640			Close	Grass
641			Lundyke	Grass
642			Lundyke	Grass
643			Lundyke	Arable
452	Johnson Bavin	Robert Feavle	Park Field	Arable
453	Joseph Bavin Senior	Robert Fuller	Parkfield	Arable
454	Robert Lewin Hutchinson Esq	Barber Holmes	Parkfield	Arable
455	Robert Phillips	Himself	Parkfield	Arable
598			Close	Arable
636	George Gray	William Collins	Close	Arable
637	Thomas Richards Junior	Himself	Close	Arable

Table 1: Extract from the 1840 Wimblington tithe apportionment.

2.2.3 Ordnance Survey mapping

The 1st edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map depicts a landscape broadly similar in outline, but subject to limited loss of field boundaries alongside similarly minimally increased residential activity within the village. The main developments by 1887 were the construction of the St. Ives and March Railway and the associated station, opened in 1848, and the construction of St. Peter's Church. The large field in which the proposal site was located was sub-divided by the railway, with all of the former boundaries in the area to the west of the railway removed, to form a landscaped garden for Park House. Fendike Farm to the east of the proposal site had also been established by 1887.

A boggy area of ground is shown against the curving eastern boundary of the field containing the proposal site.

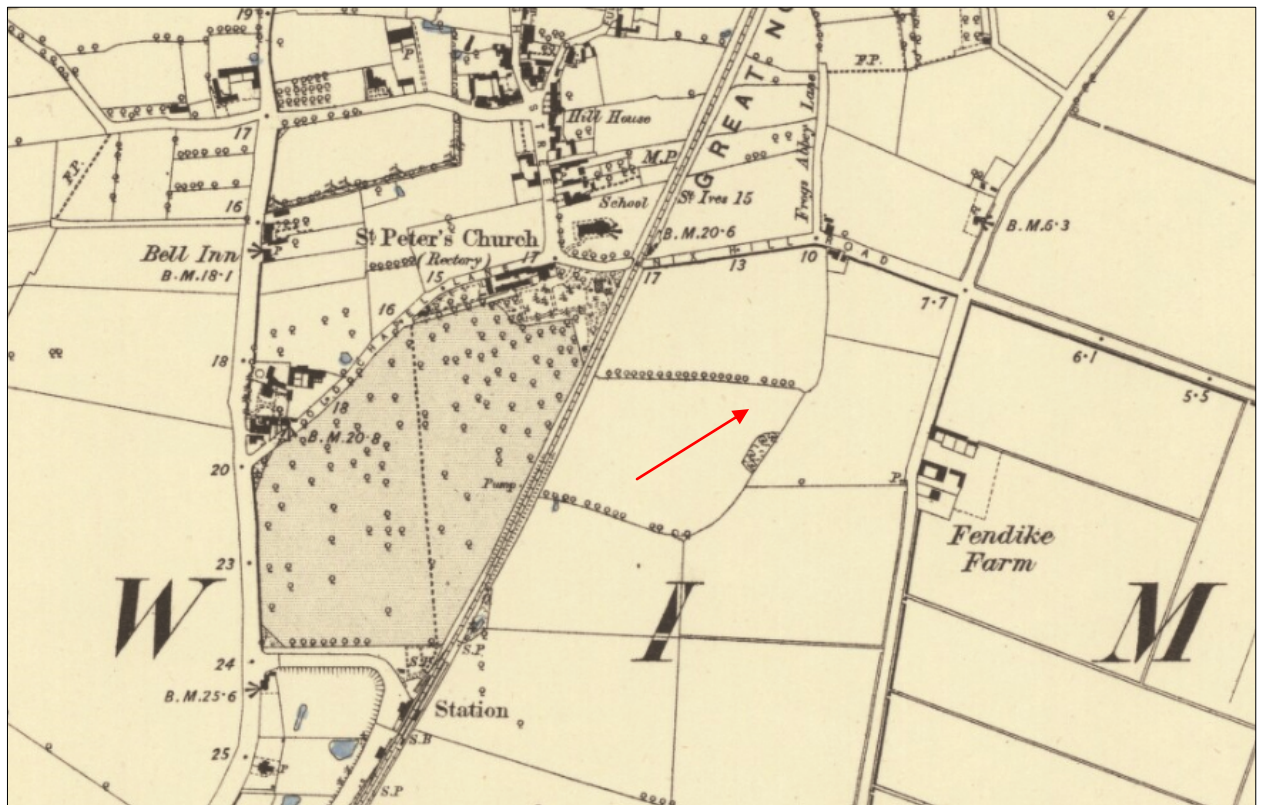


Figure 5: Extract from the 1887 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map for Cambridgeshire (sheet XVI) surveyed 1886; the approximate location of the site is indicated.

The subsequent 2nd edition map shows very limited alteration in the intervening years, with limited residential development in the village, including the addition of a blacksmiths to the south of Hill House. The most notable addition related to the site is the addition of new buildings at Fendike Farm, now renamed Nix Hill Farm, to the immediate west of the proposed area.



Figure 6: Extract from the 1903 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey map for Cambridgeshire (sheet XVI), revised 1900); the approximate location of the site is indicated.

The 1927 OS Map suggests that the landscape remained fairly static and the residential development of Wimblington appears to continue at a leisurely pace, a pattern which continued into the 1940s and 1950s. The new school had been constructed by this date.

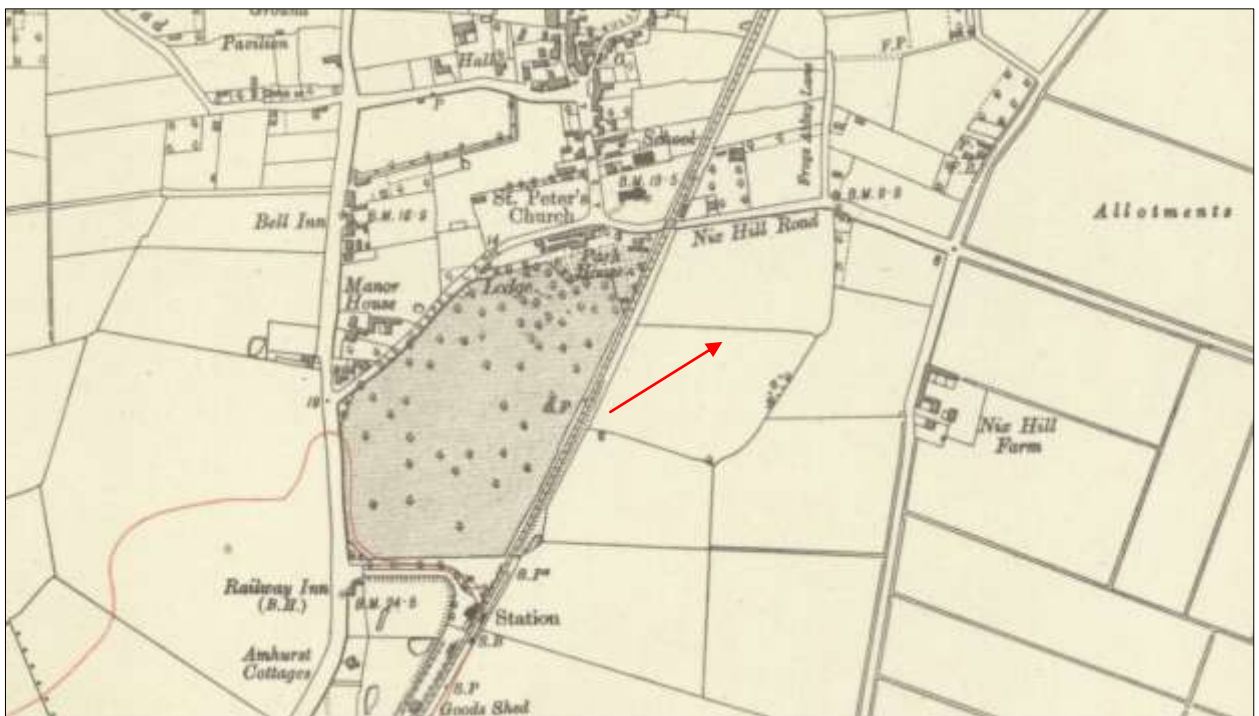


Figure 7: Extract from the 1927 Ordnance Survey map for Cambridgeshire (sheet XVI) revised 1925; the approximate location of the site is indicated.

2.2.4 Subsequent Changes

It is not until the late 20th century that there is significant development of Wimblington, including the addition of substantial agricultural, industrial and residential buildings in the fields immediately to the north of the proposed site. The railway line and station closed in 1967, with the old railway line reused in 1986 for the A141 Road (Chatteris - March bypass).

2.3 Archaeological Background

There has been substantial archaeological investigation in the Wimblington environs, resulting in the discovery of numerous sites, notably along the route of the March to Chatteris pipeline. The area includes numerous prehistoric finds and features, dating from the Mesolithic (No.9) through the Neolithic/Bronze Age (No.16) and to the Iron Age (No. 18), and including Palaeolithic (No.3) and Bronze Age (No.1) findspots, indicating the likely prehistoric settlement of the raised islands within the surrounding fens. The importance of this area is also shown by the Iron Age hillfort, Stonea Camp, further to the east. This continues into the Roman period, with a series of enclosure features (Nos. 12, 22, 23 and 24) on land to the north likely to link to the earliest drainage of the fens. That the land was suitable for agriculture in the medieval period is also shown by elements of the relict field system and plough furrows (No.17). Significant development of the village occurred in the post-medieval period, with the construction of numerous listed buildings dated to the 17th-19th centuries, including the parish church of St. Peter (No.5).

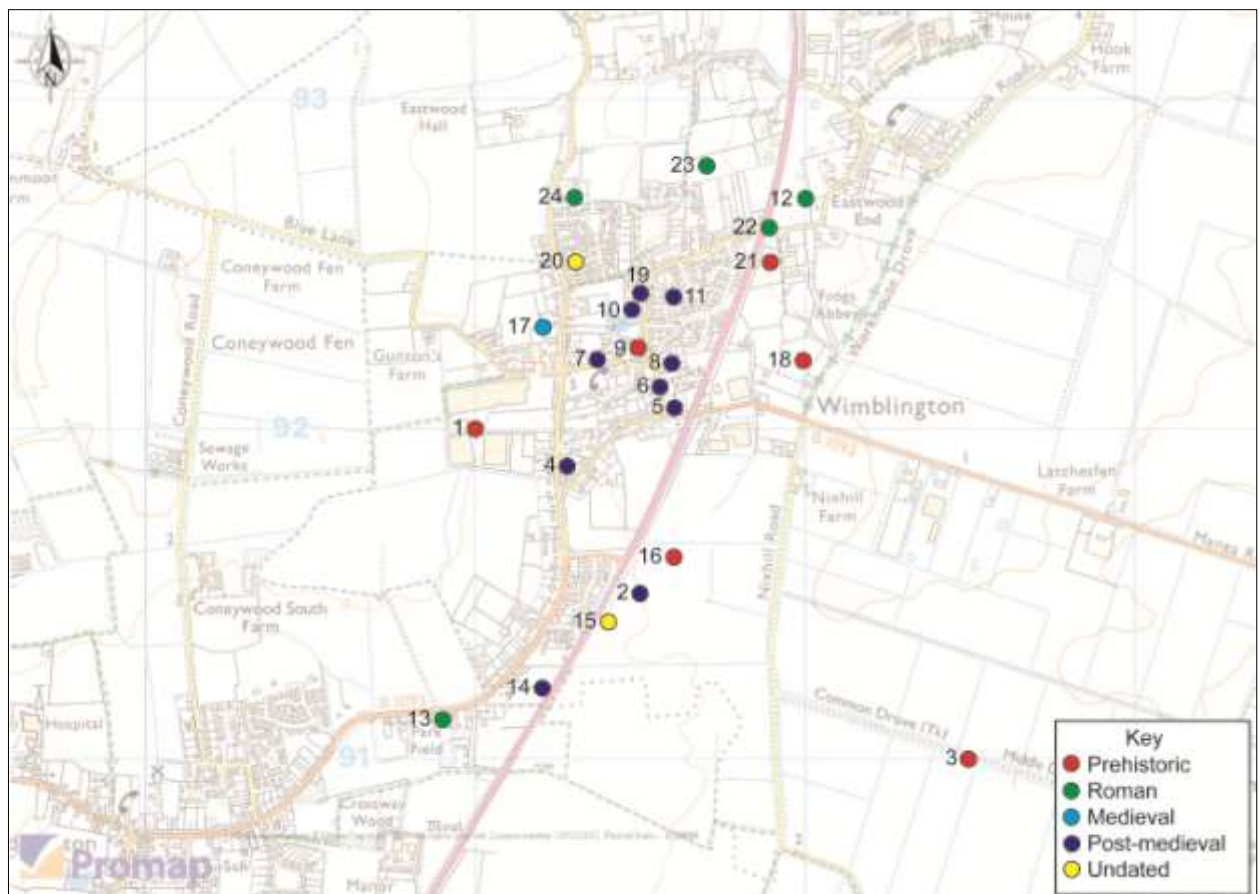


Figure 8: Map of nearby heritage assets (source: Cambridgeshire HER).

Land at Lavenham Fen Farms, Wimblington, Cambridgeshire

No.	Mon ID.	Name	Record	Info
1	372501	Bronze Age rapier	Findspot	Bronze Age rapier
2	500610	Wimblington Station	Building	Site of Wimblington Station on the St. Ives and March Railway, opened in 1848 and closed in 1967
3	870037	Palaeolithic flake	Findspot	Unworn possible Levalloisian flake
4	List1331681 NMR507809	The Manor House	Building	Grade II listed (1331681) late 17 th or early 18 th century local red- and buff-brick house with later alterations
5	List1126584 MCB14827	Parish Church of St. Peter	Building	Grade II listed (1126584) church built 1874, coursed limestone rubble with ironstone bands and limestone dressings
6	List1161423	North House	Building	Grade II* listed (1161423) 17 th or early 18 th century local red-brick house (No. 2 Church Street)
	List1310118	No. 7 Church Street	Building	Grade II listed (1310118) early 19 th century gault brick house
7	List1161419	Addison House	Building	Grade II listed (1161419) house built c.1830 of local gault brick
	MCB17779	Post-medieval and modern features, Norfolk Street	Monument	Archaeological evaluations revealed a series of large rectangular and smaller circular pits containing 17 th -20 th century artefacts
8	ID1915515	Land at 3 Church Street	Event	Archaeological evaluations in 2006 at 3 Church Street identified a 17 th century ditch
	MCB17376	Post-medieval and modern features, Church Street,	Monument	Archaeological excavations identified a re-cut post-medieval ditch and modern features
9	NMR1831234	Land adjacent to 3 Norfolk Street	Event	Archaeological evaluations in 2005 identified Mesolithic ditches and gulleys along with post-medieval pits and ditches
	MCB16492	Prehistoric and post-medieval features, Norfolk Street	Monument	Archaeological excavations identified a possible Mesolithic ditch terminus alongside post-medieval features
	List1161430	No. 6 and 8 Norfolk Street	Building	Grade II listed (1161430) late 17 th and early 18 th century cottages of painted local brick with thatched roofs and later alterations
10	List1126585	No. 31 Norfolk Street	Building	Grade II listed (1126585) late 18 th or early 19 th century gault brick cottage with thatched roof
11	ID1919242	Land at 7 Norfolk Street	Event	Archaeological evaluations in 2007 identified post-medieval and modern features
12	ID1901812	Land south-west of 3 Eastwood End	Event	Archaeological evaluations in 2009 identified a Roman boundary ditch and medieval post-hole and boundary ditch
	MCB18530	Roman and Medieval ditches, Wimblington	Monument	Archaeological excavations revealed Roman ditches, including a boundary ditch, along with Medieval ditches
13	MCB01424	Roman brooch find, Old Brickmaker's Arms	Findspot	A bronze fibula with one pin and catchplate missing, dating to 1 st century to first half of 2 nd century AD
14	MCB17561	Iron Age/Roman enclosures, Isle of Ely Way, Wimblington	Monument	Archaeological excavations identified remains spanning the Neolithic/Bronze Age to post-medieval periods, including Iron Age enclosures
	MCB17562	Post-medieval and undated features, Isle of Ely Way,	Monument	Archaeological excavations along the route of the March to Chatteris pipeline identified archaeological remains spanning the Neolithic/Bronze Age to post-medieval periods
	MCB17560	Neolithic/Bronze Age remains, Isle of Ely Way, Wimblington	Monument	Archaeological excavations along the route of the March to Chatteris pipeline identified pits and ditches dating to the Neolithic/Bronze Age
	CHER01525	Puppet find, Carpenters Arms, Wimblington	Findspot	Clay head, foot and hand of a puppet found at Carpenters Arms. Uncertain date, but possibly medieval
	CHER02011	Quern-stone find, Wimblington	Findspot	Upper stone of a bee-hive quern of puddingstone dating to the Iron Age/Romano-British period
15	MCB17559	Undated features, Isle of Ely Way, Wimblington	Monument	Archaeological excavations along the route of the March to Chatteris pipeline identified ditches of an unknown date
16	MCB17558	Prehistoric ditches, Isle of Ely Way/Nixhill Road,	Monument	Archaeological excavations along the route of the March to Chatteris pipeline identified features and finds from the Neolithic to Iron Age
17	MCB17215	Roadside ditch, 5-7 March Road,	Monument	Archaeological evaluations identified two medieval furrows and a roadside ditch of possible pre-medieval date
18	MCB17557	Prehistoric pits, south of Eastwood End, Wimblington	Monument	Archaeological excavations along the route of the March to Chatteris pipeline identified pits with burnt flint; and Iron Age pottery nearby
19	MCB17250	Methodist Chapel	Building	Wesleyan chapel established in 1809
20	CHER11646	Irregular enclosure and linear features, Wimblington	Monument	Series of irregular enclosures and associated features identified as cropmarks on aerial photographs
21	MCB17556	Prehistoric pit, south of Eastwood End, Wimblington	Monument	Archaeological excavations along the route of the March to Chatteris pipeline identified a pit, possibly prehistoric in date
22	MCB17555	Roman and undated features, Isle of Ely Way/Eastwood End, Wimblington	Monument	Archaeological excavations along the route of the March to Chatteris pipeline identified Roman and post-medieval features
23	MCB17554	Roman and undated features, west of Isle of Ely Way	Monument	Archaeological excavations along the route of the March to Chatteris pipeline identified Roman and post-medieval features
24	CB15647	Roman flagon find,	Findspot	Almost complete Roman flagon

Table 2: List of nearby heritage assets (source: Cambridgeshire HER).

2.4 Potential Impact upon the Setting of Heritage Assets

The proposed site is located approximately 200m south-east of the Grade II Listed Church of St Peter and approximately 450m east of the Grade II Listed Manor House. Further Grade II and Grade II* Listed buildings are located to the north and north-east, and c.1.4km to the south-west is the scheduled Moated Bishops' Palace at Manor Farm and c.3km to the south-east is the Scheduled Romano-British Settlement Near Honeybridge and c3.5km to the north-east is Stonea Camp. The busy A141 separates all of the closest assets and listed buildings

Given the relatively flat terrain, many of the designated structures and landscapes in this area can be seen and/or have views over quite wide distances. Local blocking can often be very effective in this landscape, with trees, buildings, etc., providing adequate screening. The church tower of the Grade II Listed St. Peter's Church for example is visible over several kilometres.

The proposal site already has a semi-industrialised character with a number of large buildings, on and near the site. The village of Wimblington is in fact to some extent framed by large industrial buildings, with Knowles Transport to the west of the village, the area around the proposal site to the east, and the large grain silos and farming industry buildings to the north. There are also various wind farms within the wider landscape.

The construction of an AD plant on such a site is unlikely to cause substantial harm upon the settings of any designated heritage assets and landscapes, given the existing modern impacts, and the elements of local blocking and distances involved. However some minimal levels of impact are possible, particularly given the largely open character of this landscape. The use of planted bunds and additional planting would provide some additional visual screening and potential mitigation for any likely impact on settings.

3.0 Summary

The proposed AD plant would be installed within a field to the immediate south of modern industrial buildings on the south-eastern edge of the historic core of the settlement at Wimblington. The cartographic analysis suggests that the proposal site may have been located on the perimeter of the medieval farmland, with the curving eastern boundary to the field, acting as the boundary to the fens until the 18th century.

The proposal site is located on a clay island with the fens, and there is high potential for prehistoric and Romano-British remains. Previous archaeological work and findspots within the village have revealed primarily medieval and post-medieval activity; however excavations along the March to Chatteris Pipeline revealed the remains of numerous prehistoric features in the fields to the immediate south of the proposal site.

The proposal site may have been in part disturbed by 20th century earth movements during the construction of the modern industrial units and areas of hard-standing to the immediate north, which may have truncated or destroyed archaeological deposits or feature. Despite this possible truncation the archaeological potential of the site is medium to high, given the density of prehistoric and Roman activity nearby.

The development is located at a reasonable distance from any designated heritage assets, and there is likely to be very minimal harm upon the settings of any historic assets. The use of planted bunds and additional planting would provide some additional visual screening and potential mitigation for any likely impacts on the settings of nearby heritage assets.

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Wimblington Tithe Map 1840

Wimblington Tithe Apportionment 1840

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1903 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition map, 1: 10560

1927 Ordnance Survey Revision map, 1:10560



The Old Dairy
Hacche Lane Business Park
Pathfields Business Park
South Molton
Devon
EX36 3LH

Tel: 01769 573555
Email: mail@swarch.net