



**Gavray Drive,
Bicester**

**Archaeological and
Heritage
Assessment**

Prepared by:
**The Environmental
Dimension Partnership
Ltd**

On behalf of:
L&Q Estates

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Non-technical Summary

- S1 This archaeological and heritage assessment was undertaken by the Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) to inform an outline planning application for the residential development of Gavray Drive, Bicester (i.e. the site). The Local Plan includes the site as an allocation for 300 dwellings.
- S2 The site does not include any designated heritage assets, as defined in Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), where there would be a presumption in favour of their retention. Furthermore, the proposed development has not been identified as having the potential to affect any designated heritage assets in the surrounding area, in terms of changes to their setting. As such, the proposed development is considered to be in-line with the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*, the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF and Policy ESD15 of the Local Plan.
- S3 The site has previously been subject to four phases of investigation which have identified a single Iron Age pit, part of a Roman enclosure ditch, the possible remains of a Roman (or later) field system and some stray sherds of Anglo-Saxon pottery. There is no indication that the site contains extensive or significance archaeological remains and their mitigation through fieldwork investigation has been agreed previously with the council's archaeological advisor through a Specification for Archaeological Mitigation. This separate document has been updated to reflect the latest proposals and is provided as part of the planning application. Furthermore, the retention of large areas of public open space in the south-east will limit the overall effect on buried archaeology to a moderate level. As such, the proposals are considered to comply with the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF and Policy ESD15 of the Local Plan.
- S4 In general terms, the site is identified in the Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Character (HLC) project as 're-organised enclosures', which is a common type in the county more widely. However, individual features, such as surviving early post-medieval land divisions and medieval ridge and furrow, lend a level of HLC interest and appreciation of 'time depth'. Given the impacts of more recent development and land management, the HLC of the site overall is considered to be of 'local' value.
- S5 It should be borne in mind that the HLC was not a reason for refusal or a key consideration in determining the planning application previously. Nevertheless, the majority of historic landscape features in the south-east of the site, which has the greatest interest in this respect, will be retained in the proposals and therefore the impact on the HLC value will be limited. There is also no reason to believe that this would not also comply with Policy ESD15 of the Local Plan.

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Section 1

Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) and presents the results of an archaeological and heritage assessment of land at Gavray Drive, Bicester. This report has been prepared on behalf of the landowners of the site, namely: L&Q Estates ('the Applicant'); Charles Brown & Simon Digby; and London & Metropolitan International Developments.
- 1.2 The aims of this report are: i) to establish the site's likely archaeological potential, in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, DCLG, 2019); and ii) to assess the site in terms of its historic landscape value. With respect to 1.2.ii, this includes an evaluation of the historic landscape as a complete resource and its component parts, i.e. including hedgerows.
- 1.3 In addition, the potential for the proposed development to affect any designated heritage assets in the wider area is also considered, in terms of changes to their setting.
- 1.4 In accordance with the requirements of the NPPF, baseline archaeological and historic sources have been augmented through the completion of a walkover survey, which in this case was undertaken in March 2021.

Location and Boundaries

- 1.5 The site is located on the eastern edge of the town of Bicester, Oxfordshire. It comprises 13 fields arranged in a roughly wedge shape, oriented broadly east-west, the total size of which is c.25 hectares (ha).
- 1.6 It is surrounded and internally divided by hedgerows and is divided in two by a brook, which crosses the site from roughly north to south. It is bounded to the north-east by the Birmingham to London railway line, to the north-west by the Brackley to Oxford railway line, to the south-west by Gavray Drive and to the south-east by the A4421.
- 1.7 The site is currently a mix of self-seeded coppices, open grassland and arable farmland. It is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 459647, 222375, and its location and layout are shown on **Plan EDP 1**.

Geology and Topography

- 1.8 With regard to the underlying solid geology, the site is located on deposits of sandstone and siltstone of the Kellaways Sand Member. These are overlain along the line of the brook and its immediate vicinity by alluvium. In the far south-east, the site is underlain by Peterborough Member mudstone (www.bgs.ac.uk).

- 1.9 The site is roughly flat and located at a height of c.68m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

Proposed Development

- 1.10 The site is allocated in the Local Plan under *Strategic Development: Bicester 13 – Gavray Drive* for 300 dwellings. The outline application for the site is for 202 dwellings, with associated green space and access.

Section 2 Planning Guidance

- 2.1 This section summarises the key elements of the legislative and planning policy context, relating to the proposed development of the site, at both national and local levels.

Legislation

Scheduled Monuments

- 2.2 The relevant legislation concerning the treatment of scheduled monuments is the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979* (HMSO 1979). This act details the designation, care and management of scheduled monuments, as well as the procedures needed to obtain permission for works that would directly impact upon their preservation. The act does not confer any statutory protection on the setting of scheduled monuments, although this is considered as a policy matter in paragraph 194 of the NPPF.

Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

- 2.3 Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* set out the duties of Local Planning Authorities (LPAs), in respect of the treatment of listed buildings and conservation areas through the planning process.
- 2.4 Section 66(1) of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* sets out the statutory duty of the decision-maker, where proposed development would affect a listed building or its setting. It sets out the statutory duty as follows:

“In considering whether to grant planning permission [or permission in principle] for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”

- 2.5 This ‘special regard’ duty has been tested in the Court of Appeal and confirmed to require that ‘considerable importance and weight’ should be afforded by the decision maker to the desirability of preserving a listed building along with its setting. The relevant Court judgement is referenced as *Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd v East Northants DC, English Heritage and National Trust [2014] EWCA Civ 137*.
- 2.6 However, it must be recognised that section 66(1) of the 1990 Act does not identify that the local authority or the Secretary of State *must* preserve a listed building or its setting. Neither is it the case that a proposed development that does not ‘preserve’ is unacceptable and should be refused. It is for the decision maker to evaluate and determine.

- 2.7 The discussion of ‘harm’ is of relevance in the judgement in respect of *R (Forge Field Society) v Sevenoaks District Council [2014] EWHC 1895 (Admin)* also makes this clear at paragraph 49 when it states that:

“This does not mean that an authority’s assessment of likely harm to the setting of a listed building or to [the character or appearance of] a conservation area is other than a matter for its own planning judgement. It does not mean that the weight the authority should give to harm which it considers would be limited or less than substantial must be the same as the weight it might give to harm which would be substantial. But it is to recognise, as the Court of Appeal emphasised in Barnwell, that a finding of harm to the setting of a listed building or to [the character or appearance] of a conservation area gives rise to a strong presumption against planning permission being granted. The presumption is a statutory one. It is not irrebuttable. It can be outweighed by material considerations powerful enough to do so. But an authority can only properly strike the balance between harm to a heritage asset on the one hand and planning benefits on the other if it is conscious of the statutory presumption in favour of preservation and if it demonstrably applies that presumption to the proposal it is considering.”

- 2.8 This key point is also made in paragraph 54 of *Forest of Dean DC v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government [2013] EWHC 4052*; i.e.:

“...Section 66 (1) did not oblige the inspector to reject the proposal because he found it would cause some harm to the setting of the listed buildings. The duty is directed to ‘the desirability of preserving’ the setting of listed buildings. One sees there the basic purpose of the ‘special regard’ duty. It does not rule out acceptable change. It gives the decision-maker an extra task to perform, which is to judge whether the change proposed is acceptable. But it does not prescribe the outcome. It does not dictate the refusal of planning permission if the proposed development is found likely to alter or even to harm the setting of a listed building.”

- 2.9 In other words, it is up to the decision maker (such as a local authority) to assess whether the proposal which is before them would result in ‘acceptable change’.

- 2.10 Furthermore, insofar as conservation areas are concerned, section 72(1) of the 1990 Act identifies the following:

“In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area...special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.”

- 2.11 In addition to the case law discussed above, it must be recognised that, as established by the Courts (*South Lakeland DC v Secretary of State for the Environment, (1992) 2 WLR 204*): (1) there is **no** statutory duty to enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area – the Courts have confirmed that development that ‘preserves’ them is acceptable; and (2) the statutory duty only covers development that is within a conservation area – the ‘setting’ of a conservation area is addressed by planning policy.

- 2.12 Paragraph 194 of the NPPF (MHCLG 2019) transposes section 66(1) and section 72(1) of the 1990 Act into NPPF.
- 2.13 The balancing exercise to be performed – between the harm arising from a proposal and the benefits which would accrue from its implementation – is then subsequently presented in paragraphs 195 and 196 of the NPPF.

National Planning Policy

- 2.14 The NPPF was revised in February 2019. Section 16 sets out the government’s approach to the conservation and management of the historic environment, including both listed buildings and conservation areas, through the planning process. The opening paragraph, 184, recognises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner proportionate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

- 2.15 Paragraph 189 concerns planning applications, stating that:

“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.”

- 2.16 Paragraph 193 considers the weighting given within the planning decision with regard to impacts on designated heritage assets, stating that:

“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.”

2.17 Paragraph 194 considers the level of harmful effects on designated heritage assets and states that:

“Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) Grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional; and*
- b) Assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, Grade I and II* listed buildings, Grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.”*

2.18 With regard to the decision-making process, paragraphs 195 and 196 are of relevance. Paragraph 195 states that:

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

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site;*
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation;*
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.”*

2.19 Paragraph 196 states that:

“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.”

2.20 With regard to non-designated heritage assets, paragraph 197 states that:

“The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.”

- 2.21 Additionally, paragraph 201 states that: *“Not all elements of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance.”*

Local Planning Policy

- 2.22 The *Cherwell District Council Local Plan* was adopted in 2011 and contains the following relevant policy:

“Policy ESD 15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment

Successful design is founded upon an understanding and respect for an area’s unique built, natural and cultural context. New development will be expected to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high quality design. All new development will be required to meet high design standards. Where development is in the vicinity of any of the District’s distinctive natural or historic assets, delivering high quality design that complements the asset will be essential.

New development proposals should:

- *Be designed to deliver high quality safe, attractive, durable and healthy places to live and work in. Development of all scales should be designed to improve the quality and appearance of an area and the way it functions.*
- *Deliver buildings, places and spaces that can adapt to changing social, technological, economic and environmental conditions.*
- *Support the efficient use of land and infrastructure, through appropriate land uses, mix and density/development intensity*
- *Contribute positively to an area’s character and identity by creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness and respecting local topography and landscape features, including skylines, valley floors, significant trees, historic boundaries, landmarks, features or views, in particular within designated landscapes, within the Cherwell Valley and within conservation areas and their setting*
- *Conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non designated ‘heritage assets’ (as defined in the NPPF) including buildings, features, archaeology, conservation areas and their settings, and ensure new development is sensitively sited and integrated in accordance with advice in the NPPF and NPPG. Proposals for development that affect non-designated heritage assets will be considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset as set out in the NPPF and NPPG. Regeneration proposals that make sensitive use of heritage assets, particularly where these bring redundant or under used buildings or areas, especially any on English Heritage’s At Risk Register, into appropriate use will be encouraged*

- *Include information on heritage assets sufficient to assess the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. Where archaeological potential is identified this should include an appropriate desk based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.*
- *Respect the traditional pattern of routes, spaces, blocks, plots, enclosures and the form, scale and massing of buildings. Development should be designed to integrate with existing streets and public spaces, and buildings configured to create clearly defined active public frontages.*
- *Reflect or, in a contemporary design response, re-interpret local distinctiveness, including elements of construction, elevational detailing, windows and doors, building and surfacing materials, mass, scale and colour palette*
- *Promote permeable, accessible and easily understandable places by creating spaces that connect with each other, are easy to move through and have recognisable landmark features*
- *Demonstrate a holistic approach to the design of the public realm to create high quality and multi-functional streets and places that promotes pedestrian movement and integrates different modes of transport, parking and servicing. The principles set out in The Manual for Streets should be followed*
- *Consider the amenity of both existing and future development, including matters of privacy, outlook, natural lighting, ventilation, and indoor and outdoor space*
- *Limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation*
- *Be compatible with up to date urban design principles, including Building for Life, and achieve Secured by Design accreditation*
- *Consider sustainable design and layout at the masterplanning stage of design, where building orientation and the impact of microclimate can be considered within the layout*
- *Incorporate energy efficient design and sustainable construction techniques, whilst ensuring that the aesthetic implications of green technology are appropriate to the context (also see Policies ESD 1 - 5 on climate change and renewable energy)*
- *Integrate and enhance green infrastructure and incorporate biodiversity enhancement features where possible (see Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment and Policy ESD 17 Green Infrastructure). Well designed landscape schemes should be an integral part of development proposals to support improvements to biodiversity, the micro climate, and air pollution and provide attractive places that improve people's health and sense of vitality*

- *Use locally sourced sustainable materials where possible. The Council will provide more detailed design and historic environment policies in the Local Plan Part 2.*

The design of all new development will need to be informed by an analysis of the context, together with an explanation and justification of the principles that have informed the design rationale. This should be demonstrated in the Design and Access Statement that accompanies the planning application. The Council expects all the issues within this policy to be positively addressed through the explanation and justification in the Design & Access Statement. Further guidance can be found on the Council's website.

The Council will require design to be addressed in the pre-application process on major developments and in connection with all heritage sites. For major sites/strategic sites and complex developments, Design Codes will need to be prepared in conjunction with the Council and local stakeholders to ensure appropriate character and high quality design is delivered throughout. Design Codes will usually be prepared between outline and reserved matters stage to set out design principles for the development of the site. The level of prescription will vary according to the nature of the site."

- 2.23 The site is allocated under *Strategic Development: Bicester 13 – Gavray Drive* (re-adopted) for 300 dwellings. This policy does not contain any specific considerations regarding the historic environment, other than that “[d]evelopment proposals [are] to be accompanied and influenced by landscape/visual and heritage impact assessments” and “[a]n archaeological field evaluation [is required] to assess the impact of the development on archaeological features”. The latter has previously been completed and the results included below.
- 2.24 The plans, policies and guidance notes listed above have all been considered in the preparation of this assessment.

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Section 3 Methodology

3.1 This report has been produced in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment* issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA, 2017). These guidelines provide a national standard for the completion of desk-based assessments.

3.2 The assessment process principally involved consultation of readily available archaeological and historical information from documentary and cartographic sources. The major repositories of information comprised:

- Information held by the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) on known archaeological sites, monuments and findspots, within the vicinity of the site;
- Information from the Portable Antiquities Scheme;
- The Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Character (HLC) project (OCC 2017);
- LiDAR data from DEFRA;
- Fieldwork reports from previous phases of investigation within the site;
- Maps and documents held by the Oxfordshire History Centre;
- The National Heritage List for England curated by Historic England;
- Aerial photographs held by the Historic England Archive; and
- Records made during a site visit in March 2021.

3.3 This report provides a synthesis of relevant information for the site and thereafter concludes with an assessment of its likely archaeological potential, made with regard to current best practice guidelines. There is no National Mapping Programme data covering the site.

3.4 An outline planning application was previously sought for this site in 2004 and granted in 2006 (Ref: 04/02797/OUT). Extensions to this permission were applied for and granted in 2010 and 2012. The 2006 consent included a condition worded as follows:

“No development shall take place within the site until the applicant has secured the implementation of a staged programme of archaeological investigation measures in accordance with a written scheme of investigations which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The programme of work shall include all processing, research and analysis necessary to produce an accessible and useable

archive and full report for publication. The work shall be carried out by a professional archaeological organisation acceptable to the local authority.”

- 3.5 In response, a specification for archaeological recording was subsequently produced by EDP (2006) and agreed with Cherwell District Council's (CDC's) archaeological advisor Richard Oram at Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), elements of which were confirmed as acceptable again in 2014. This outlined a methodology of excavation targeted on the results of a previous trial trench evaluation, and 'strip and record' fieldwork combined with archaeological watching briefs and trial trenching.
- 3.6 The results and agreed methodologies of this earlier phase of archaeological assessment and CDC negotiation will be considered within this assessment.
- 3.7 The HLC of the site was assessed with reference to previous studies (OAU 1997) and historic maps. Individual component parts, i.e. ridge and furrow, trackways, hedges, etc., were evaluated to establish age and survival. A holistic assessment of the site landscape is then provided and its significance established by reference to its rarity and completeness.
- 3.8 An assessment has been made of the potential for effects on heritage assets, in terms of their 'setting', in line with the five-step process outlined in the national guidance (HE, 2017) and other relevant documents related to the assessment and management of the historic environment (HE, 2015). Due regard was also given to guidance concerning conservation areas (HE 2019).
- 3.9 As far as identifying the heritage assets potentially affected by the proposed scheme is concerned (i.e. Step 1 of HE 2017), due consideration has been given to the following factors which are considered to influence the potential for the setting of heritage assets to be materially affected: (1) the site is located on the edge of a densely-developed urban location; (2) the scale and massing of the proposals, which are of a standard residential proportion; and (3) the character and setting of surrounding heritage assets, part of which are encompassed within the varied built townscape of Bicester.

Section 4

Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Information

Introduction

- 4.1 The site does not include, nor does it form any part of, any designated heritage assets, as defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF. The designated heritage assets in the wider area have been assessed to identify those that may be affected by the implementation of the proposed development. The locations of designated heritage assets considered below are shown on **Plan EDP 1**.
- 4.2 Four phases of archaeological investigation have previously been conducted within the site, as recorded on the Oxfordshire HER. These have recovered finds dating from the prehistoric to Georgian periods. There are also HER records for previously recorded archaeological features in the wider study area from the prehistoric to modern periods, the locations of which are shown on **Plan EDP 2**.

Designated Heritage Assets

- 4.3 There are no designated heritage assets within close proximity to the site, with the closest being the Wretchwick deserted medieval settlement scheduled monument (**3257**), c.350m to the south. The scheduling information for this monument identifies that it *“includes the remains of Wretchwick medieval village and its associated earthwork boundaries”*.
- 4.4 This settlement was recorded in the Domesday Book (1086) and by the 13th century was owned by Bicester Priory. The population suffered in the Black Death at the end of the 14th century and it was subsequently depopulated by the Bicester priory. By 1791, it consisted of a single farm. The archaeological remains of this settlement consist of holloways, building platform earthworks and water management channels. The two parcels may represent an earlier settlement to the north-east, with a later, more regularly planned, expansion to the south-west.
- 4.5 The scheduling information identifies the ‘reasons for designation’ that are specific to this monument as follows:
- “This monument survives well despite the adjacent fields having been built over by modern development. The earthworks are known by analogy from the part excavation of adjacent platforms to contain archaeological and environmental remains relating to the construction, economy and fate of the settlement and its inhabitants.”*
- 4.6 As such, the principal contribution to this asset’s significance are the archaeological and historic interests of its physical remains, as a relatively well preserved deserted medieval settlement that has good potential to contain deposits and features that could further elucidate the lives of such rural communities. Given that there are no above ground

- surviving elements, there is considered to be little architectural interest, limited to whatever can be understood of the original structures from the surviving remains, and no identified artistic interest.
- 4.7 In terms of its setting, the wider farmland, which was cultivated by the inhabitants of the village, is considered to be a positive contributor to its significance, but much of this has now been developed or altered, in particular the adjacent Wretchwick Way modern road and the modern Langford Village estate to the north, both of which characterise the setting in this direction in terms of modern residential urbanity.
- 4.8 The south half of the site was possibly part of the cultivated farmland associated with this settlement, or possibly Launton, but, in any case, it is now physically separated by modern development from this scheduled monument and has no visual or functional links to the designated area. This very limited and intangible potential historic connection is considered to be so ephemeral as not to contribute to the significance of this asset.
- 4.9 Therefore, the site is not considered to form part of the scheduled monument's setting or contribute to its significance as a heritage asset. The implementation of the proposed development is also not considered to have the potential to affect this asset, in terms of changing its setting, such that could harm its significance, and it will not be considered further in this report.
- 4.10 In the wider area, there are several listed buildings located in two broad groupings comprising: (1) those located within the Bicester Conservation Area and its immediate area, c.400m to the west; and (2) those located within Launton, c.500m or more to the east.
- 4.11 These listed buildings comprise a mixture of structures, including houses, churches, a former lock-up, and a station house. The character of these assets suggests that they predominantly draw their significance from the architectural and historic interests of their built form. The positive contributions of their setting derive mainly from their location within the street scenes of Bicester and Launton, and relationships that are specific to their function, such as their property plots and, in the case of the station house, the railway.
- 4.12 There are no identified connections between the site and these listed buildings, including any visual relationship. Indeed, the site is separated physically and visually from these buildings by expanses of modern development on the edge of Bicester, or an intervening railway embankment, commercial warehouses and farmland in the direction of Launton.
- 4.13 As such, the site is not considered to form part of the setting of these listed buildings or contribute to their significance. There is no reason to believe that the implementation of the proposed development would result in harm to their significance and they will not be considered further in this report.
- 4.14 In terms of the Bicester Conservation Area itself, c.400m to the west, the adopted conservation area appraisal indicates that the principal aspects of the character and appearance are mostly concerned with the historic fabric, layout of the historic roads and

open spaces which have persisted since at least the 18th century (CDC 2011 10 and 32). The setting of this asset is characterised by being entirely surrounded by the late 20th century expansion of Bicester and now entirely separated from the wider countryside. Similar to those assets discussed above, the site does not form part of the setting of this conservation area, and nor does it contribute to its significance. The proposed development is also unlikely to result in harm to the significance of this asset and it will not be considered further.

- 4.15 Therefore, in summary it is considered that the proposed development of the site does not have the potential to affect any designated heritage assets, in terms of resulting in changes to their setting such that could harm their significance. The information above represents Step 1 of HE 2017 and, given its conclusions, it is not necessary to proceed with Steps 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Non-designated Heritage Assets

Palaeolithic - Iron Age (c.500,000 BC – AD 43)

- 4.16 There is one prehistoric heritage asset recorded on the Oxfordshire HER within the site, with 11 more in the wider study area.
- 4.17 The single prehistoric asset within the site is an Iron Age pit (**16071**) found during an archaeological investigation in the north-west (**EOX1936**). No other *in situ* archaeological remains from this period were identified within the site.
- 4.18 Within the study area, the earliest datable archaeology comprises a large assemblage of Mesolithic flintwork (**28310**), which were identified during an evaluation (**EOX5519**) c.900m to the south-west of the site. The same investigation site contained Bronze Age to Iron Age pits, ditches and a possible ditched rectilinear enclosure.
- 4.19 Evidence for prehistoric activity (**29211**) was identified during a watching brief (**EOX6629**) c.845m to the north-east. The finds included a struck piece of jasper or chert and Bronze Age material including flints and a collard urn. A piece of prehistoric struck flint (**16990**) was identified with two medieval ditches and Roman pottery during an excavation (**EOX1743**) c.920m to the south-west of the site.
- 4.20 Aerial photographs have identified two potential ring ditches, c.715m north-west of the site (**5631**) and c.910m to the north (**5630**) which are interpreted as being of broadly prehistoric date within the Oxfordshire HER. A round barrow cemetery (**5629**) comprising several single ring ditches and a double ring ditch, destroyed by the development of a former airfield c.950m north of the site were also identified on aerial photographs and dated to the broad prehistoric period.
- 4.21 Prehistoric – Roman activity and evidence for settlement (**28992**) has been identified during trial trenching (**EOX6407**). Whilst the HER point is c.715m to the south of the site, the north-west edge of the evaluated area was c.20m to the south-east of the site. Bronze

Age remains were limited to some finds of flint and pottery, one forming a concentration in a ditch, but the main activity from this period was a Middle Iron Age enclosure (OA 2017), located c. 800m to the south-east of the site.

- 4.22 The remains of a later prehistoric settlement, consisting of sub-rectangular enclosures, pits, gullies and a house dated by pottery evidence to the Middle-Late Iron Age (**16120**), were located by archaeological investigation (**EOX1355**) c.250m south of the site.
- 4.23 An archaeological excavation in 2004 (**EOX1389**), c.125m to the north of the site, identified a small number of Neolithic/Bronze Age unstratified flints (NA 2004). The *in situ* features represented three phases of occupation (**26122**). These comprised late Iron Age, followed by 2nd/3rd century AD and later Saxon activity. In its earliest (late prehistoric/early Roman) form, the archaeology comprised north-south and east-west aligned ditches forming a “newly created” field system and a small collection of pits (NA 2004).
- 4.24 A total of 30 linear features, either ditches or gullies, four pits and two amorphous spreads (**29212**) dated to the Late Iron Age – Roman periods were found during trial trenching c.915m to the north-east of the site. These indicate possible agricultural land divisions forming fields and paddocks.
- 4.25 Ditches and post holes (**29209**) have been identified during trial trenching (**EOX6622**) c.915m to the south-west of the site. dating from the Iron Age to the medieval period. Finds recorded include Iron Age pottery from one of the ditches.
- 4.26 A ditch containing Iron Age and Roman pottery, and a possible post hole (**16540**) were recorded by metal detectorists after an area of land was stripped for a new road c.765m north-east of the site.
- 4.27 The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) contains records for 20 stray Iron Age coins found within 1km of the site, which underline that the landscape was well used at this time.
- 4.28 The site, therefore, appears to be situated in an area that was settled and cultivated in the late prehistoric period, with earlier evidence for transient activity and ritual features. However, although one archaeological trial trench excavated within the site located an Iron Age pit, this should be viewed in the context of the other 28 trial trenches which did not locate any confirmed prehistoric activity.
- 4.29 The site is situated within 250m of late prehistoric settlements to the north-east and south-west, but appears, on the sparseness of evidence within it, to have been situated within the agricultural hinterland between them. An alternative interpretation could be that the combination of medieval-modern ploughing has removed nearly all traces of former activity. Either way, there is a moderate potential for archaeological deposits from this broad period to be present on site, albeit probably restricted to the north-west end, most likely related to localised agricultural activity.

Romano-British (AD43 – 410)

- 4.30 There is at least one previously recorded archaeological find from the Roman period within the site on the Oxfordshire HER and there are six in the wider study area.
- 4.31 The single find from this period within the site is a possible enclosure ditch containing Roman pottery, found during an archaeological evaluation in the south-east of the site (**EOX103**). It should be noted that this ditch, which delineates the edge of an enclosure, was found on the north-east edge of the site and was extending further north east, rather than into the site. Some other amorphous features were recorded, also containing Roman pottery, and cut by this ditch.
- 4.32 The same evaluation (**EOX103**) recorded as many as 17 undated ditches and gullies. Whilst it should be noted that the origin of many of these is uncertain and some may be the result of geology or animal disturbance, the investigators interpreted that some may be related to Roman or later field boundaries.
- 4.33 The location of the late Iron Age field system (**26122**), which was found by archaeological evaluation (**EOX1389**) c.125m north-east of the site, continued into the early Roman period and had intensified by the 2nd century AD. This second phase of occupation in this location comprised of a trackway, two wells and two pit groups, as well as soil layers containing pottery and stone. This may indicate the presence of settlement, but no structural remains were identified (NA 2004). A writing tablet was recovered from the fill of one of the wells (Council's archaeological advisor EIA scoping response dated November 2020).
- 4.34 In the 3rd century the southern end of this area was reorganised into a number of enclosures and generally saw a further intensification of activity. These remains were interpreted as related to a Roman farmstead, which may have lain in the present location of the railway line (NA 2004).
- 4.35 It may be that the single enclosure ditch and undated gullies/ditches from within the south-eastern end of the site (see paragraph 4.30 and 4.31) may well relate to these remains found to the north.
- 4.36 Similarly, the trial trench evaluation to the east of the site (**EOX6407**), c.20m to the south-east at its closest, found a lattice work of largely undated ditches that may represent Roman or later field systems connected with the undated ditches and gullies in the south-east of the site. Where they could be dated, these ditches were from the 2nd/3rd century AD. This investigation also located two areas of Roman settlement (**28992**; OA 2017), c.700m to the south-east of the site. Further agricultural activity (**29212**), c.915m to the north-east, is recorded in the wider study area.
- 4.37 Within Bicester, c.880m to the south-west of the site, an archaeological evaluation (**EOX11**) identified a high-status settlement (**16268**) dating from the Roman to Anglo-Saxon periods. A second area of Roman to Anglo-Saxon settlement (**17407**) has been identified, c.850m to the south-west of the site, through excavation (**EOX1961**).

- 4.38 A possible Roman road (**8922**) linking the town of Alchester to the south and Towcester to the north, is located c.1.015km to the west of the site. Otherwise, Roman pottery was identified (**16990**) during an excavation (**EOX1743**) c.925m to the south-west of the site.
- 4.39 Apart from a hoard of 440 coins from the 4th century AD, found during the removal of a tree in 1979 (the location of which is confidential), the PAS information records a spread of three coins and a single box fitting within a 1km radius of the site. This further underlines the Roman presence in the landscape at this time.
- 4.40 As with the prehistoric period, the site is situated in an area that was well-utilised during this period, with a possible settlement nearby to the north-east. However, it should be noted that, despite the excavation of 29 trial trenches across the site, there appears to be a limited amount of firmly datable Roman activity. As with the prehistoric period, this may to an extent be the result of subsequent ploughing regimes, or may reflect that its use during the Roman period left little mark in the archaeological record (e.g. rough grazing).
- 4.41 As such, the site most likely continued in use as agricultural land throughout this period. Therefore, there is a high potential for archaeology from this period to be present, albeit only of 'low value'; i.e. field boundaries. There is also some potential for edge of settlement activity on the north-east edge (to the south-east of the brook that divides the site), related to the Roman settlement activity found on the opposite (north) side of the railway line.

Early Medieval (AD 410 -1066)

- 4.42 There is only one previous early medieval archaeological record identified on the Oxfordshire HER within the site and there is a further seven within the wider study area.
- 4.43 The single archaeological record from this period within the site is the findspot of five Anglo-Saxon pottery sherds found during an archaeological evaluation at the south-east end (**EOX103**). These were recovered from topsoil deposits and two irregular features, which may have been tree throws or natural hollows.
- 4.44 Similarly, the archaeological excavation in 2004 (**EOX1389**), c.125m to the north of the site, recovered Anglo-Saxon pottery (**26122**) from the topsoil, albeit no datable features were located from this phase of activity.
- 4.45 The town of Bicester, the historic core of which is broadly situated over c.600m north-west of the site, is composed of two manors, those of Kings End and Market End, which were settled in this period (CDC 2011. 10).
- 4.46 Physical evidence for early medieval settlement (**16137**) within Bicester has been identified through an excavation (**EOX1122**), c.715m to the south-west of the site. The investigation identified possible Anglo-Saxon structures and a series of gullies. A second area of settlement (**16268**) was recorded c.880m to the south-west of the site during an archaeological evaluation (**EOX11**). This investigation confirmed the marshy nature of the land surrounding Bicester in the 10th and 11th century.

- 4.47 Adjacent to the lay settlement, a monastic site with a ditched enclosure (**29210**) has been interpreted as an Anglo-Saxon Minster predating the subsequent medieval priory (**1593**). This was found c.995m to the south-west of the site during a strip, map and sample (**EOX6623**) prior to the construction of flats. The boundary of the Minster precinct and remains of the later medieval Augustinian priory (**16135**) have been identified through excavation (**EOX721**), c.880m to the south-west of the site.
- 4.48 Beyond the apparent limits of the settlement, an ancient hedgerow (**16631**), which may be of early medieval date, is located adjacent to Jarvis Lane c.415m north of the site; an Anglo-Saxon ditch (**16163**) has been identified c.800m to the south-west; and two pits (**26124**) dating to the Anglo-Saxon period have also been identified c.970m to the south-west, towards the Kings End area of Bicester.
- 4.49 Although the pottery found within the site is relatively rare for the area, despite the extent of evaluation work conducted on the site there was no definite primary context archaeology located. Therefore, the site has a low potential for *in situ* archaeological deposits, but a moderate potential for unstratified artefacts from this period.

Medieval (AD 1066 – 1485)

- 4.50 There are no previously identified archaeological remains from this period recorded on the Oxfordshire HER within the site, but there are several in the wider study area. As may be expected, there is a particular concentration within the historic cores of known contemporary settlements.
- 4.51 Within Bicester, a single trench (**EOX2184**) c.800m south-west of the site identified a possible medieval causeway (**12387**), which at that time linked the lay settlement to the east to the Augustinian priory and the manor of Kings End to the west. Towards the historic core of Bicester, a medieval building (**17337**) was identified through excavation (**EOX1891**) c.580m to the south-west of the site, along with earlier agricultural features which were backfilled prior to the construction of the house in the 14th century,
- 4.52 A watching brief (**EOX1521**) c.840m south-west of the site, identified a pit, ditch and wall (**16933**) that were dated to the medieval period. The 11th century pit was interpreted as potentially indicating the eastern limit of the medieval settlement of Kings End; whereas the ditch, which was dug in the 13th century, and the wall marked the edge of the cultivated hinterland. The location of the 12th century Bury End Manor House (**10654**) is thought to lie c.895m to the south-west of the site, albeit this interpretation is tentative. A 14th century document mentions fishponds and a dovecote, and placed the manor house close to St Edburg's Church.
- 4.53 Within the graveyard of St Edburg's Church, c.935m south-west of the site, are the remains of a medieval cross (**10655**), the shaft of which was cut in the 18th century to bear a sundial. The remains of the market cross (**2790**) are also identified c.605m north of the site. The Site of St John's Chapel (**1595**), thought to have been demolished in the 14th or 15th century, also lies within the historic core of medieval Bicester, c.930m to the west of

the site. Unstratified medieval pottery (**11500**) was recovered during an excavation (**EOX2183**) in the town centre, c.650m to the south-west of the site.

- 4.54 Remains related to the medieval Augustinian priory of St Edburg, which was dissolved in the 16th century, have been recorded in multiple archaeological investigations c.840-925m to the south-west, including excavation (**EOX721**, **EOX6623**, **EOX6625**, **EOX3389**), trial trenching (**EOX6622**) and a watching brief (**EOX38**). These investigations revealed such remains as the wall foundations of the cloisters, chapter house and priory church, as well as an associated burial (**29209**, **16135**, **27461** and **15868**). The former location of associated fishponds are also recorded close by (**13746**).
- 4.55 Within the historic core of Launton, c.670m to the north-east of the site, a watching brief (**EOX1547**) located a medieval pit, pottery and ridge and furrow (**16941**). A knife contained within the pit was dated to the 12th – 15th centuries.
- 4.56 Wretchwick deserted medieval village (**3257**), mentioned above, is located c.350m south of the site. This was subject to a geophysical survey in 2016 (**EOX6094**) which identified some pits and linear features that may relate to the medieval settlement. A small rectangular ditched enclosure, c.820m south of the site, associated with this settlement, was recorded in advance of destruction by road construction (**EOX1196**).
- 4.57 There are a number of agricultural related features outside of the known medieval limits of the surrounding settlements:
- A single medieval ditch (**29081**) was identified during an excavation (**EOX1389**) c.125m north-east of the site;
 - Medieval pottery (**26318**) was identified in plough soil during an excavation (**EOX1939**) c.110m to the south-west of the site, suggesting manuring of these fields during that period. An archaeological feature of a shallow pit with postholes or tree throw was also identified during the excavation, the precise date is unknown, but it is thought to predate the 13th century;
 - The possible earthwork remains of a windmill, known to exist in 1279 (**12695**), is located c.335m north of the site. This location was subject to geophysical survey and trial trenching between 2017 and 2020 (combined under **EOX6627** and **EOX6630**) which identified remains related to the windmill mound;
 - An excavation (**EOX1743**), c.925m to the south-west of the site, identified two medieval ditches (**16990**);
 - A hedgerow (**16633**) is recorded as having medieval origins, c.550m to the west of the site;
 - Medieval walls and a ditch (**17139**) were uncovered through excavation (**EOX1831**) c.905m to the west, which may relate to a farmstead; and

- Possible fishponds recorded c.970m to the south of the site (**12779**).
- 4.58 Otherwise, the site of a medieval quarry (**13882**) lies c.960m to the west of the site, which was intensively used and then backfilled and built over toward the close of this period.
- 4.59 The PAS information identifies one spread of three sherds of medieval pottery (possibly derived from manuring), one coin, two weights and one brooch within a 1km radius of the site.
- 4.60 Cropmark, LiDAR and historic map evidence demonstrates the extent of surviving and non-extant remains of ridge and furrow across the site. The only area of the site which appears not to have been cultivated is immediately east and west of the brook splitting the site in two. This was presumably because the land here was boggy and/or prone to flooding, and therefore left as 'waste'.
- 4.61 The site most likely comprised agricultural land throughout this period and so, whilst there is a high potential for archaeological deposits from this period to be present within it, they will most likely be of 'negligible value'; i.e. plough soils and field boundaries.

Post-medieval and Georgian (AD 1485 – 1837)

- 4.62 There are two records for previously identified archaeological remains from these two periods recorded on the Oxfordshire HER within the site, and there are several more recorded in the study area.
- 4.63 The records within the site comprise: (1) a post-medieval stone spread, which was located by the evaluation in the north-west half (**EOX1936**); and (2) an area of post-medieval ridge and furrow (**28282**).
- 4.64 Within Bicester, there are several buildings recorded on the Oxfordshire HER dating to the post-medieval period. These include: 29/29a Market square (**16723**), c.740m to the south-west, a 16th/17th century timber framed building; the former salvation army hall (**1457**), c.725m west; and the site of Shillingfords brewery (**873**), c.815m south-west. The aforementioned causeway (**16136**), linking the settlements either side of the River Bure, was still in use at this time.
- 4.65 Several Toll Houses (**10165**, **12777**, **10163**) have also been recorded within Bicester, as has a Bell Foundry (**909**), in operation between 1728 and 1743, c.815m to the south-west; the location of a Pest House (**1801**) built in 1752 for patients with smallpox, c.885m to the south-west; the earthwork remains of an ornamental pond (**2791**), located c.590m north-east; and a brickworks (**558**), which was redundant from at least the early 20th century, located c.665m south-west. Several post-medieval pits (**12364**, **12365**) have also been identified, c.750m to the west of the site on Sheep Street, within the centre of Bicester.
- 4.66 A watching brief (**EOX3319**) adjacent to a former chapel identified two brick-built crypts (**27707**), c.770m south-west of the site, each containing a single skeleton. A separate

watching brief (**EOX6621**) identified two further brick-built crypts and some disarticulated human remains within St Edburg's graveyard, c.950m to the west. A further watching brief (**EOX6431**) in 2018 within the graveyard disturbed additional human remains.

- 4.67 Otherwise, an additional area of post-medieval ridge and furrow (**28473**) has been recorded within the study area, c.775m to the north-east of the site; post-medieval pottery (**11877**) has been identified c.890m to the west; and the Launton Congregational Chapel (**5145**) is located c.950m to the east.
- 4.68 The PAS information identifies one post-medieval weight, six buckles or strap ends and one toy metal cup within a 1km radius area around the site.
- 4.69 It appears that the site continued in use as agricultural land during these periods, as suggested by the evidence (see **Early Maps**). Therefore, it has a high potential to contain archaeology from these periods, albeit most likely comprising of 'negligible value' remains; i.e. field boundaries and plough soils.

Victorian and Modern (AD 1837 - Present)

- 4.70 There are no records for previously identified Victorian or modern archaeology within the site, as contained on the Oxfordshire HER, and there are several in the study area.
- 4.71 The remains recorded within the study area comprise a series of features and deposits, the location, extent and character of which are well understood and are not considered to influence the site's potential to contain hitherto unrecorded archaeology. These comprise:
- An archaeological evaluation in 2011 (**EOX3266**) located a series of post-medieval or modern field boundaries c.50m north of the site;
 - The former united Methodist free church (**552**), c.850m west of the site;
 - A Methodist Church (**553**), c.755m to the west and a former Wesleyan Chapel (**548**), c.860m to the west;
 - The Bicester London Road (railway) Station (**601**), c.795m to the south;
 - The former location of No 17 The Causeway (**16212**), c.840m to the south-west; and
 - A WWII loopholed wall (**29159**) which was part of the Bicester anti-tank 'island' c.195m north-west.
- 4.72 As with the preceding periods, it appears that the site continued in use as agricultural land throughout the Victorian and modern periods, as suggested by historic map and aerial photographic evidence. There was a farmstead noted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey (OS) Map (see **Early Maps**) in the south-east of the site, but this is now demolished and all above ground remains have been removed.

- 4.73 The site has a high potential for archaeological remains from these two periods, albeit almost certainly of 'negligible value', i.e. field boundaries, plough soils and the localized remains of a Victorian farmstead.

Undated

- 4.74 There are two records for previously undated archaeological remains within the site, as contained within the Oxfordshire HER, and there are several within the study area.
- 4.75 In the north-west of the site, an archaeological evaluation (**EOX1936**) identified two undated gullies. A second evaluation (**EOX103**) in the south-east of the site, recorded as many as 17 undated ditches and gullies, with a further seven possible pits and one possible post hole. The origin of many of these is uncertain and some may be the result of geology or animal disturbance, rather than archaeological activity, but some may also date to Roman and/or later farming activity.
- 4.76 The remaining undated archaeological features are not considered to influence the potential of the site to contain similar remains, and comprise the following:
- An archaeological evaluation in 2011 (**EOX3266**) located a ditch c.50m north of the site, which, whilst an exact date was not established, was thought to pre-date the post-medieval period;
 - An archaeological feature (**26318**), which may either be a pit or a tree throw, was located by archaeological evaluation (**EOX1939**) c.110m west. It was sealed beneath medieval deposits;
 - An archaeological evaluation (**EOX2011**) located an undated wall and paleo channel (**17489**), c.850m to the west; and
 - Undated, possible post-medieval ditches, found during trial trenching in 2019 (**EOX6537**), c.930m to the east.
- 4.77 Although the locations of several undated features in the north-west and south-east of the site demonstrate an archaeological potential within it, without any dating evidence these could originate from any of the prehistoric to modern periods. Also, as mentioned above, many may be the result of natural processes, rather than archaeological activity and could be of little or no significance. These undated remains are not considered to further influence the archaeological potential identified above in the period-specific sections.

Previous Archaeological Investigation

- 4.78 The archaeological investigations within the site are discussed separately below (see **Site Investigations**). In addition to these, two further archaeological fieldwork projects have taken place within the study area.

- 4.79 In 2005, Oxford Archaeology conducted an evaluation in advance of building construction (**EOX1522**), c.525m north of the site, but no archaeological remains were located. An archaeological evaluation in 2016 (**EOX6444**) is recorded c.760m to the south-west, but no further information is included in the HER entry. A trial trench evaluation (**EOX3532**) immediately to the north-west of the site did not identify any significant archaeological remains.
- 4.80 Other than the trial trenching to the north-west (**EOX3532**), which underlines the scarcity of remains in this direction, these additional investigations are not considered to further influence the archaeological potential identified above in the period-specific sections.

Early Maps

- 4.81 The earliest assessed map to show the site and the surrounding area is the Launton Parish Map of 1607 (not reproduced here). This depicts only the part of the site within the Launton parish boundary, roughly comprising those fields south-east of the brook and not including the fields which are today directly adjacent to Gavray Drive. This map depicts the land within this part of the site as divided into 12 fields, all of which were thin strip fields aligned north-west to south-east. The names of the owners and sizes of the fields are annotated on this map, but no further information is included. A trackway entered the site from the north-east, leading from Launton village, and branched out to form an 'H-shaped' arrangement of trackways within the boundary.
- 4.82 The part of the site which lies on the north-west side of the brook is first depicted on 'A New Map of the Two Manors of Bicester Market-End and Kings-End e&c' dated 1753 (see **Plan EDP 3a**). This depicts the land as divided into 22 strip fields, which conform to the arrangement of ridge and furrow earthworks noted on aerial photographs. The area of land directly adjacent to the brook appears to have been 'waste'.
- 4.83 The Plan of the Parish of Launton c.1814 (see **Plan EDP 3b**) shows a continuation of the trackway arrangement shown on the Launton Parish Map of 1607, although some field boundaries had been rearranged, resulting in this part of the site being divided into 10 fields. The Launton Tithe Map of 1850 (not reproduced here) only shows three of these fields and part of the internal trackway, but it does demonstrate that these fields remained the same size and layout as that depicted on the map of 1814.
- 4.84 The First Edition OS Map of 1881 (see **Plan EDP 4**) depicts all of the land within the site boundary. It is shown as comprising 19 fields and a farm complex named 'Frogley's Farm', as annotated on later OS editions. There are some alterations to the farmyard layout on subsequent OS editions, but this complex can be characterized as consisting of a U-shaped farm range with outlying structures, including a well. By 1984, all but one building of this complex had been demolished, with the remaining structure removed soon afterwards.
- 4.85 Later editions of the OS maps (not reproduced here) show some minor boundary rearrangement in the south-west of the site, but the basic layout remained much the same as that depicted on the First Edition OS map.

- 4.86 These assessed maps demonstrate that the site was in agricultural use throughout the 17th to 20th centuries. They also demonstrate that it has the potential to contain remains related to a non-extant Victorian farm complex, localised in the south-east.

Secondary Sources

- 4.87 The available secondary sources do not provide any evidence for the presence of previously unrecorded archaeological remains of significance within the site. Indeed, they provide little evidence for its early history.
- 4.88 The history of the town and parish of Bicester is recorded in the Oxfordshire Victoria County History (VCH 1959). Within the parish of Bicester, Iron Age and Roman settlement was historically recorded in the south, but the current town was identified as being established by the Anglo-Saxons, further north.
- 4.89 It is possible that the part of the later town, which lay on the north side of the River Bure, was fortified by Edward the Elder and served as part of the defensive line of mid-late Saxon burghs. The Domesday Book (1086) records the manor as being held by Richard D'Oilly in the decades following the Norman Conquest.

Aerial Photographs

- 4.90 A total of 39 vertical and 36 oblique aerial photographs, covering the site and its immediate environs, were identified within the collection maintained at the Historic England Archive in Swindon.
- 4.91 The available images span the period from April 1946 to July 1995 and add detail to the land use and development sequence shown on those historic maps available at the Oxfordshire History Centre.
- 4.92 The photographs confirm the presence of ridge and furrow earthworks within the site and the use of the land within the boundary for agriculture throughout the 20th century. They also enhance the understanding of the pre-enclosure landscape, which is discussed in greater detail below. No archaeological remains beyond those described above are visible within the site on the available photographs.

Site Walkover

- 4.93 The site was visited in March 2021 to assess the current ground conditions and topography within it, as well as to confirm the continuing survival of any known archaeological remains and to identify any hitherto unknown remains of significance.

- 4.94 In the west of the site some fields were only partially accessible and a few were not accessible at all. This was due to dense unmanaged undergrowth, including substantial areas of blackberry bushes, which prevented progress into certain parts.
- 4.95 Extant ridge and furrow earthworks, and two possible headland deposits, were noted at the south-east end of the site. It appears that these represent the survival of a once more extensive ridge and furrow system.
- 4.96 A c.20m wide strip along the northern edge of the south-eastern part of the site, running parallel with the railway line, was heavily disturbed by recent infrastructure works, with signs of ground disturbance and vegetation clearance. Any earlier earthworks related to medieval/post-medieval cultivation practices, if present in this location, appear to have been entirely flattened by this activity.
- 4.97 Only a small section of the internal trackway, noted on historic maps in the south-east of the site, was accessible, as most of this was overgrown. It consists of a wide flat surface flanked by shallow ditches and hedgerows. No other features of archaeological interest were noted within the site.

Site Investigations

- 4.98 Between 1997 and 2005, a total of four archaeological fieldwork investigations were conducted in concentrated areas of the site.
- 4.99 In 1997, Oxford Archaeology conducted an archaeological trial trench investigation in the south-east of the site (**EOX103**). A total of 19 trial trenches were excavated.
- 4.100 These trenches identified multiple undated ditches, gullies, pits and a post hole, some or most of which may be the result of natural processes. The evaluation also identified a probable Roman enclosure ditch and other amorphous features from this period.
- 4.101 Whilst many of the gullies and ditches were undated, the investigators identified the possibility that there are two alignments of field systems within the site. Alignment 1, which is roughly east-north-east – west-south-west (or right angles to it), may be of Roman date, as it is on the same orientation as the Roman enclosure ditch in Trench 16. Alignment 2 is roughly north-east – south-west (or at right angles to it) and appears parallel or perpendicular to the ridge and furrow, and may therefore be of a later date. Alternatively, the field systems may both date to the Roman period.
- 4.102 Anglo-Saxon pottery was recovered from the topsoil and some possible natural features. This type of pottery is relatively rare for the area, but the sherds cannot be linked to any definite *in situ* archaeological deposits.
- 4.103 In 2005, CPM commissioned a magnetic susceptibility and gradiometer survey covering 16.25ha of the site (**EOX2160**). No archaeological features were identified, although it was considered to be possible that underlying alluvial deposits mask deposits.

- 4.104 In 2005, Cotswold Archaeology conducted an archaeological trial trench investigation in the north-west of the site (**EOX1936**). This investigation consisted of ten trial trenches which located one Iron Age pit, two undated gullies and a post-medieval stone spread. It was noted that modern ploughing had heavily truncated the remains. The investigation concluded that this part of the site has a low archaeological potential.
- 4.105 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken as part of a programme of geotechnical investigations during October 2006. No archaeological finds or features were recorded during the watching brief in either the eastern or western parts of the site.
- 4.106 On the basis of this information, it appears firstly that the site does not contain any substantial or extensive archaeological deposits. Secondly, the most likely types of archaeological remains to be encountered are agricultural remains, of no more than 'low value'; i.e. boundary ditches, ephemeral pits, etc. Thirdly, modern ploughing has heavily impacted the archaeological record, particularly in the north-west of the site.

LiDAR

- 4.107 The LiDAR data, which dates from 2017, was obtained from the DEFRA website (<https://environment.data.gov.uk/DefraDataDownload/?Mode=survey>) and is shown on **Plan EDP 5**. LiDAR Composite Digital Surface Model (DSM) and LiDAR Composite Digital Terrain Model (DTM) data was downloaded at the resolution of 2m. The data was converted to a vrt file and imported into QGIS 3.10 and then processed to show hill shade at an altitude of 45° with an azimuth of 315° in a multidirectional format. The DTM data overlays the DSM data to further highlight detail within the site.
- 4.108 This information augments observations made during the site walkover, particularly in terms of the presence of ridge and furrow. This type of earthwork is heavily denuded on the north-west of the site, but is faintly visible on LiDAR. Similarly, in the south-east, the ridge and furrow is clearly shown, albeit in places truncated or flattened, particularly in the south-east corner, where a late Victorian farmstead was previously located.
- 4.109 Other than underlining the likely agricultural use of the land from the medieval period onwards, the LiDAR data identifies no further potential archaeological features.

Previous Consultation

- 4.110 In 2006, a specification for phased archaeological investigation of the site was produced by EDP in consultation with the local authority's archaeological advisor. Through this, a robust methodology for the completion of mitigatory works in advance of and during construction was agreed.
- 4.111 Further consultation with the advisor in 2011 and 2014 determined that it still presented an appropriate and acceptable approach to the known and potential remains within the site. Most recently in 2021, consultation established that the specification continued to be

a suitable basis for a mitigation strategy. As such, this separate document has been updated, in-line with the current proposals, and included within the planning application.

Section 5 Historic Landscape Character

Introduction

- 5.1 The site is bounded and subdivided by a series of hedgerows, including one that marks the boundary between the parishes of Wretchwick (no longer in existence) and Launton. It also contains the remains of ridge and furrow earthworks and a trackway.
- 5.2 The following section considers the results of the Oxfordshire HLC project, with regard to the categorisation of the site. It evaluates the age, rarity and survival of the site's HLC-type, as well as considering the individual elements of the contemporary landscape within its boundaries.
- 5.3 As well as the Oxfordshire HLC project (OCC 2017), this assessment utilises information gathered from historic maps, aerial photographs and the previous study conducted by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) on the south-east portion of the site (OAU 1997).

Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Character

- 5.4 The information from the Oxfordshire HLC project, supplied alongside the HER information, identifies the site as 're-organised enclosures' that resulted from the railway line having been superimposed upon them. They are noted as broadly dating to between 1882 and 1920.
- 5.5 The Oxfordshire HLC data broadly describes this type of landscape as follows (OCC 2017):
"Fields showing signs of modern adaptation through large scale re-organisation of earlier field boundaries. Frequently occurring next to railways and modern infrastructure developments such as motorways, roadways and bypasses where older field patterns have been disrupted. Often characterised by significant boundary loss since the 1st Edition OS map. N.B. This HLC Type has been used variously throughout the project. It is described as a modern (i.e. post 1900) phenomena, but, at times, it has been used to describe 19th century reorganisation of earlier fields. Some of these are likely to be the result of Enclosure Acts."
- 5.6 This is a common HLC type in Oxfordshire, with the project noting it as 'abundant' and constituting 27.3% of the county. The 'reorganised enclosures'-type is itself a sub-category of the broader 'enclosure' HLC-type, which constitutes 73.8% of the county.

Constituent Landscape Features within the Site

Ridge and Furrow

- 5.7 The aerial photograph analysis demonstrates, through cropmarks and earthworks, the once extensive survival of ridge and furrow across the site.
- 5.8 The only area not included within cultivation appears to be the land adjacent to and either side of the brook which divides the site. This may have been because the ground was waterlogged or liable to flooding, and thus inappropriate for arable crops. This area is shown as being waste on the map of 1753 (see **Plan EDP 3a**).
- 5.9 Historic maps from 1607 (not reproduced here) and 1753 (see **Plan EDP 3a**), and the aerial photographs, appear to suggest that the land underwent piecemeal enclosure which respected the earlier medieval open field arrangements. Based on this evidence, the site likely comprised as many as seven furlongs arranged possibly within three open fields. Except for two furlongs in the far north-west end of the site, all of the ridge and furrow appears to be aligned north-west – south-east.
- 5.10 At least one headland deposit was identified by the site walkover and previous investigation (OAU 1997. 7). One additional possible headland deposit was also noted. These were later utilised as trackways aligned roughly north-east – south-west.
- 5.11 The exact date of the ridge and furrow is uncertain, but the earthworks can be broadly characterised as ‘medieval’, as suggested from evidence gathered by archaeological evaluation in the south-east of the site (OAU 1997. 21).
- 5.12 The LiDAR data (dated 2017) shows areas of ridge and furrow within the site. This information was ‘tested’ through ground observations during the site walkover in March 2021, and confirmed areas of surviving ridge and furrow are shown on **Plan EDP 6**. It was noted that some earthworks shown on the LiDAR data, such as in the north-west of the site, were so heavily denuded as not to be visible to the naked eye, but only appreciable through careful manipulation of the digital information. Such areas were considered to be so truncated as not to qualify as ‘surviving’ and are therefore not included on **Plan EDP 6**.
- 5.13 The best survival of ridge and furrow was noted in the central and south-east part of the site, although even here the remains are truncated and/or flattened in places, particularly in the former location of Frogleys Farm in the south-east corner.

Trackways

- 5.14 Internal trackways, in the south-east of the site, form an ‘H’-shaped access arrangement which was linked to the village of Launton, albeit now disrupted by a modern ring road. The south-eastern-most of these trackways utilises a former headland deposit as does, possibly, the north-western-most. Cartographic sources demonstrate that these trackways were in existence by at least the 17th century and are probably linked to post-medieval enclosure.

- 5.15 These trackways are now heavily overgrown with scrub. The north-eastern-most consists of a wide flat surface with shallow flanking ditches and associated hedgerows. The remaining two alignments could not be accessed, but in places it was seen that the tracks have not been entirely overgrown. One section of track, on the centre north edge of the site, is no longer extant.

Hedgerows

- 5.16 The earliest hedge boundaries represented in cartographic sources are in the south-east of the site and are depicted on a map of 1607, where one of which marks the Launton/Wretchwick parish boundary.
- 5.17 These hedges divide the south-east of the site into irregular sized strip fields, mirroring the older furlongs. They also demonstrate that the land adjacent to the brook, which previously had probably been waste and not cultivated, was reclaimed and in use for agriculture by the 17th/18th century. This is based on the fact that as the hedge boundaries extend beyond the limits of the ridge and furrow to the edge of the brook.
- 5.18 Later 19th century modification of this field system saw the removal of some 17th and 18th century hedgerows to create larger enclosures.
- 5.19 The earlier hedgerows mirroring the ridge and furrow arrangement and the irregularity of field size are all suggestive of piecemeal enclosure of medieval open fields through informal exchange of landholdings.
- 5.20 There are a total of 14 hedgerows shown on the Launton Parish Map of 1607, of which twelve survive. The single additional hedgerow shown on the 1753 map of Bicester does not survive. A hedgerow depicted on the Parish Map of Launton of c.1814 remains, as does one of the two additional hedgerows first shown on the First Edition OS map of 1881.

Other Historic Features

- 5.21 A Victorian farmstead, noted as Frogley's Farm on the 25" to 1 mile First Edition OS Map of 1881 (see **Plan EDP 4**), was situated within the south-east of the site. A description of the form and development of this complex is included above (see **Early Maps**). This farmstead is now demolished and no remains connected to it were noted during the site walkover.

Historic Landscape Value

- 5.22 With regard to the site's HLC-type, as identified through the Oxfordshire HLC (OCC 2017), it is part of a common and 'abundant' type, which constitutes 27.3% of the county's landscape.
- 5.23 The earliest elements of the landscape within the site; i.e. the ridge and furrow earthworks; have suffered from the attrition of modern ploughing, but the layout of the post-medieval

piecemeal enclosure field system has survived relatively intact, other than where the railway is cut through it.

- 5.24 The 'time depth' can best be appreciated in the central and south-eastern part of the site, where the ridge and furrow survives best and historic, albeit now inaccessible, trackways preserve earlier headland deposits. In this area 17th-19th century hedgerows, which respect the ridge and furrow arrangement, also survive well.
- 5.25 The ridge and furrow earthworks in the remainder of the site have either been heavily truncated or entirely removed, leaving only 17th century or later enclosure hedgerows. This applies particularly to the land north-west of the brook and those fields directly adjacent to the brook in the south-east of the site.
- 5.26 Other areas, especially those fields in the south-east of the site which are directly adjacent to the A4421, Gavray Drive and the Birmingham to London railway line, have been substantially overgrown with self-seeded trees and undergrowth. This has resulted in the overgrowth of the hedgerows and has changed the nature of the site from open agricultural land to scrubland. In these peripheral areas of the site very little can be appreciated of the historic landscape form.
- 5.27 The demolition and removal of Frogley's Farm has removed a human aspect of the landscape. This lessens the appreciation of the purpose of the historic paths and field entrances, which once facilitated access from this farm complex. It has also removed an appreciation of the socio-economic restructuring of land organisation from the medieval/post-medieval communal system to the Victorian/modern system which concentrated power in the hands of individual farmers.
- 5.28 This restructuring would once have been demonstrated on the site by the shift of land management from the community at Launton, north-east of the site and reflected by historic trackways which linked it to this settlement, to the Victorian farmer, located at Frogley's Farm, to the south-west. With the loss of the farmstead, this shift in focus from community to individual is less obvious in the contemporary landscape.
- 5.29 In summary, only the 'time depth' of a relatively limited portion of the site can be appreciated, the majority being adversely impacted by modern ploughing and unmanaged plant growth. Where the 'time depth' can be appreciated it reflects a pattern of piecemeal enclosure, albeit which has been partly reorganized due to the later influence of the railway. Otherwise, the site is identified as falling into a common HLC-type, of which there are many examples in the county. Therefore, the overall historic landscape value of the site in its current form can be determined as being of 'local' value.

Section 6 Conclusions

- 6.1 This archaeological and heritage assessment has been prepared by EDP to inform planning proposals for land at Gavray Drive, Bicester. The site is allocated for residential development in the Local Plan under *Strategic Development: Bicester 13 – Gavray Drive*.
- 6.2 The report has confirmed that the site does not contain any designated heritage assets, as defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF, where there would be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation *in situ*. An assessment of designated heritage assets in the wider area has identified that the site does not form part of the setting of, nor contribute to the significance of, any such assets. The proposed development would not result in harm to the significance of any designated heritage assets.
- 6.3 In this regard, the proposals align with section 66 and section 72 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*, the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF and Policy ESD15 of the Local Plan.
- 6.4 Archaeological deposits from the prehistoric to Georgian periods have been previously recorded within the site by three archaeological field investigations. It should be noted that none of these deposits consist of substantial surviving remains, rather comprising of truncated deposits and features indicating past agricultural use of the site from the late-prehistoric period onwards.
- 6.5 The site is situated within c.250m of the former location of prehistoric and Roman settlements to the north-east and south-west. A total of 29 archaeological trial trenches have been excavated across the site, but only limited evidence for prehistoric or Roman activity has been located, all of which is associated with agricultural regimes. Therefore, the site has a high potential to contain archaeology from these periods, albeit most likely related to agricultural activity, with some potential for edge of settlement activity from the Roman period (albeit no such activity was located by the previous investigations within the site).
- 6.6 Pottery dated to the Anglo-Saxon period, which is rare for the area, was collected in the south-east of the site. However, these sherds were recovered from the topsoil and possible natural features. Therefore, they do not necessarily indicate the presence of *in situ* features. The site has a low potential for *in situ* archaeological features from this period, but a moderate potential for unstratified finds.
- 6.7 The site was most likely used for agriculture throughout the medieval-modern periods. This is demonstrated by the evidence for ridge and furrow earthworks which once covered the majority of the site. Therefore, the site has a high potential for archaeology from these periods, although probably of no more than ‘negligible value’; i.e. boundary ditches, plough soils and localised remains of a Victorian farmstead.

- 6.8 The medieval and modern ploughing will likely have impacted upon any earlier archaeological deposits on-site, as noted by the archaeological evaluation in the north-west. The areas of severest impact is demonstrable where the ridge and furrow earthworks have been ploughed flat and no above ground remains are evident.
- 6.9 An appropriate investigation strategy to mitigate the potential effect on these archaeological remains was previously agreed with the Council's archaeological advisor. Whilst this agreement did not foresee preservation *in situ* of any archaeological remains, the retention of large areas of public open space in the south-east of the site, including where part of a previously identified Roman enclosure is located, means that much of the remains in the south-east will be preserved regardless.
- 6.10 As such, the proposals are considered to have an overall moderate effect on the buried archaeology within the site, and would comply with the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF and Policy ESD15 of the Local Plan. The specification for archaeological mitigation has been updated in-line with current development proposals and is included as a separate document in the planning application.
- 6.11 The Council has categorised the HLC of the site as the common 're-organised enclosure'-type. In the case of the site, this system of field division mirrors the layout of the medieval furlongs and thus preserves the layout of an earlier field system. However, the site has undergone sustained attrition by modern impacts, including the loss of areas of ridge and furrow earthworks, the loss and rearrangement of hedgerows, the imposition of the railway, and the demolition of the Victorian farmstead of Frogley's Farm.
- 6.12 These impacts mean that 'time depth': appreciation of the changing uses of the farmland and restructuring of land organisation, is only appreciable in a relatively limited area of the site, in the south-east end. Therefore, taken as a whole, the site is considered to possess local historic landscape value.
- 6.13 It should be borne in mind that the HLC was not a reason for refusal or a key consideration in determining the planning application previously.
- 6.14 Regardless, a large amount of the site in the south-east, where the majority of the historic landscape features are located, will be preserved in its current form and with minimal change, including the preservation of the large majority of the field boundaries and surviving ridge and furrow. Indeed, in terms of the latter, the proposed residential development is located in the parts of the site where ridge and furrow has survived poorly, if at all. Therefore, the effect on the HLC value will be limited. Therefore, the proposals would comply with Policy ESD15 of the Local Plan in this respect.

Section 7 Bibliography

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List of Consulted Maps

Launton Parish Map, 1607

A new map of the Two Manors of Bicester Market-End and Kings-End e&c, 1753

Plan of the Parish of Launton, c.1814

The First Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1881

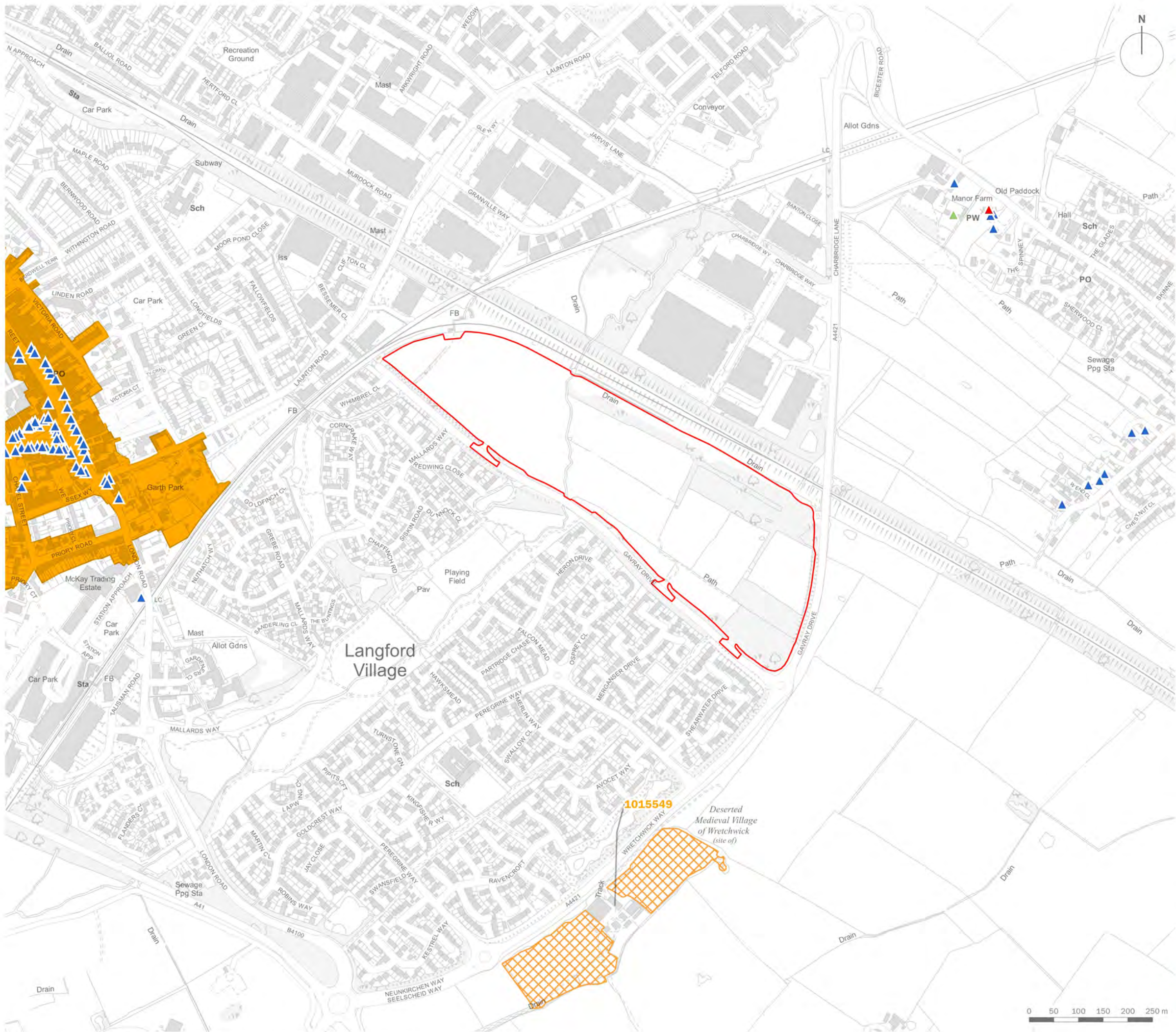
The Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1900

The 1923 Edition Ordnance Survey Map
The 1938-1952 Edition Ordnance Survey Map
The 1955-1958 Edition Ordnance Survey Map
The 1970 Edition Ordnance Survey Map
The 1984-1996 Edition Ordnance Survey Map

Plans

- Plan EDP 1** Overview of Designated Heritage Assets
(edp0124_d134b 08 June 2021 EJ/MM)
- Plan EDP 2** Overview of known Non-designated Heritage Assets
(edp0124_d135b 08 June 2021 EJ/MM)
- Plan EDP 3** Extracts of Historic Maps
(edp0124_d136b 08 June 2021 EJ/MM)
- Plan EDP 4** Extract from First Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1881)
(edp0124_d0137b 08 June 2021 EJ/MM)
- Plan EDP 5** LiDAR Data
(edp0124_d159a 08 June 2021 GY/MM)
- Plan EDP 6** Historic Landscape Character
(edp0124_d0138b 08 June 2021 EJ/MM)

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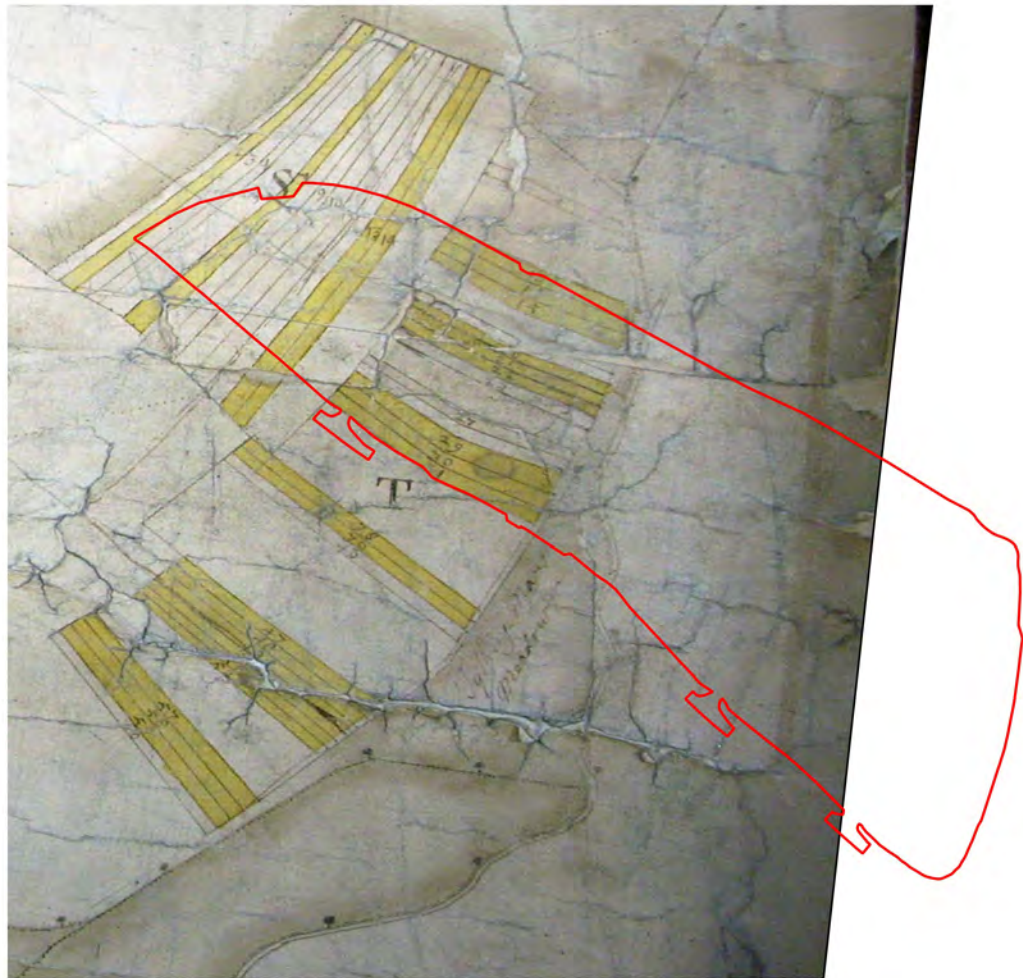
Site Boundary
 Scheduled Monument
Listed Buildings (Historic England)
▲ Grade I Listed
▲ Grade II* Listed
▲ Grade II Listed
 Bicester Conservation Area

client
L&Q Estates
 project title
Gavray Drive, Bicester
 drawing title
Plan EDP 1: Overview of Designated Heritage Assets
 date **08 JUNE 2021** drawn by **EJ**
 drawing number **edp0124_d134b** checked **MM**
 scale **1:7,500 @ A3** QA **RB**

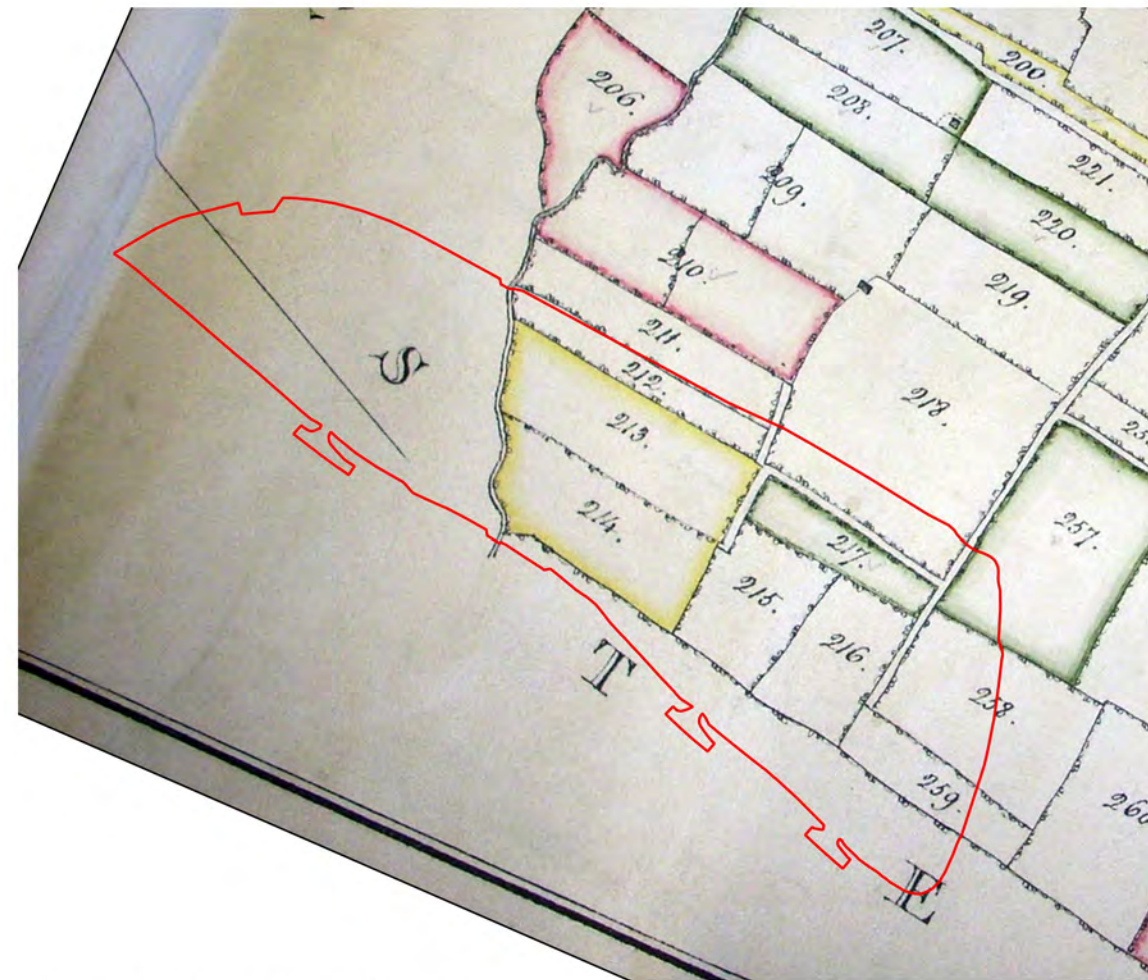


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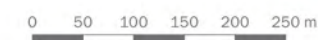
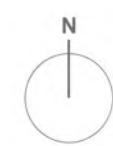
 Approximate Site Boundary



a) A New Map of the Two Manors of Bicester (c.1753)



b) A Plan of the Parish of Launton (c.1814)



client
L&Q Estates

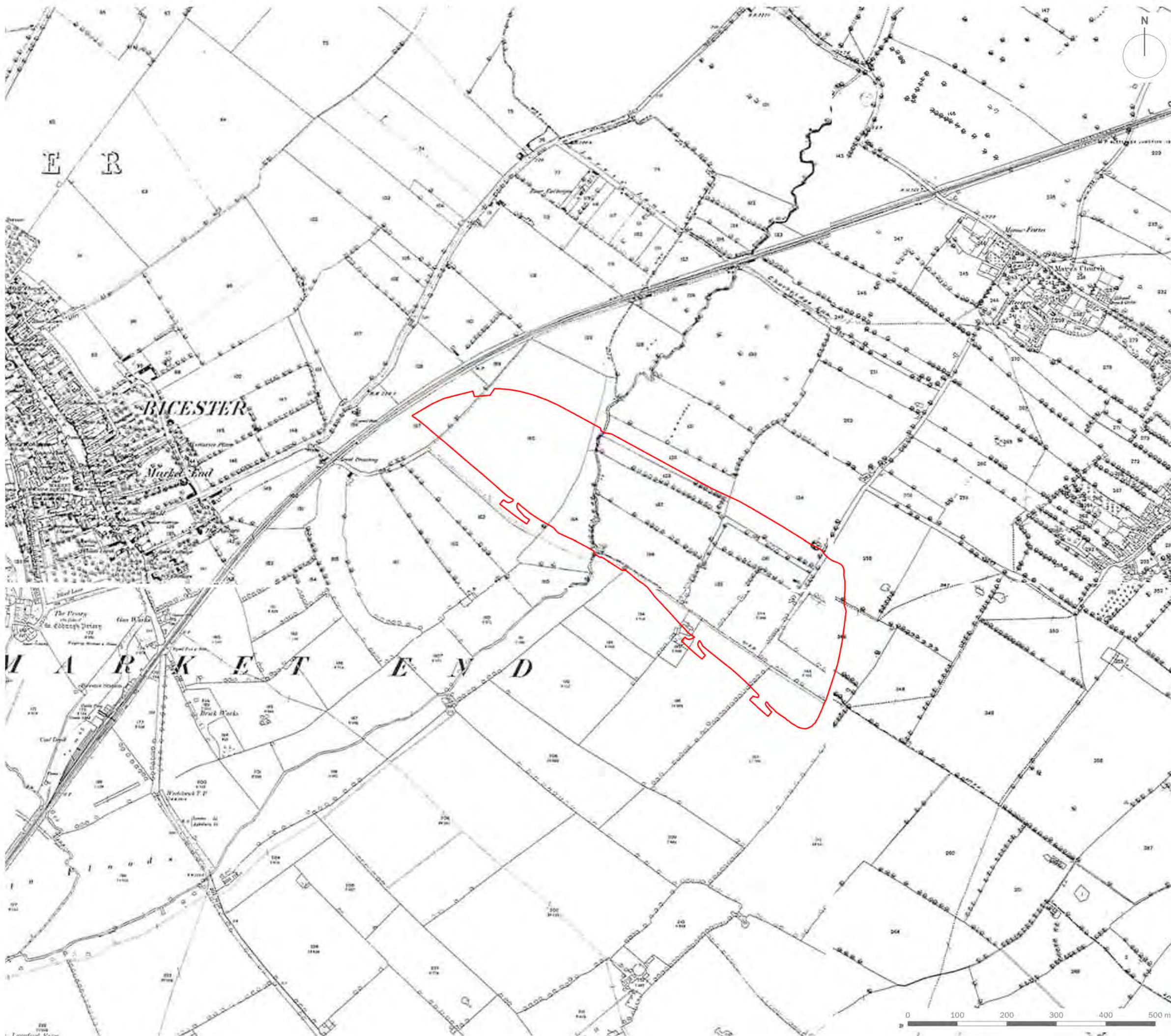
project title
Gavray Drive, Bicester

drawing title
Plan EDP 3: Extracts of Historic Maps

date **08 JUNE 2021** drawn by **EJ**
drawing number **edp0124_d136b** checked **MM**
scale **Refer to scale bar @ A3** QA **RB**



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 Approximate Site Boundary

client	L&Q Estates		
project title	Gavray Drive, Bicester		
drawing title	Plan EDP 4: Extract from First Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1881)		
date	08 JUNE 2021	drawn by	EJ
drawing number	edp0124_d137b	checked	MM
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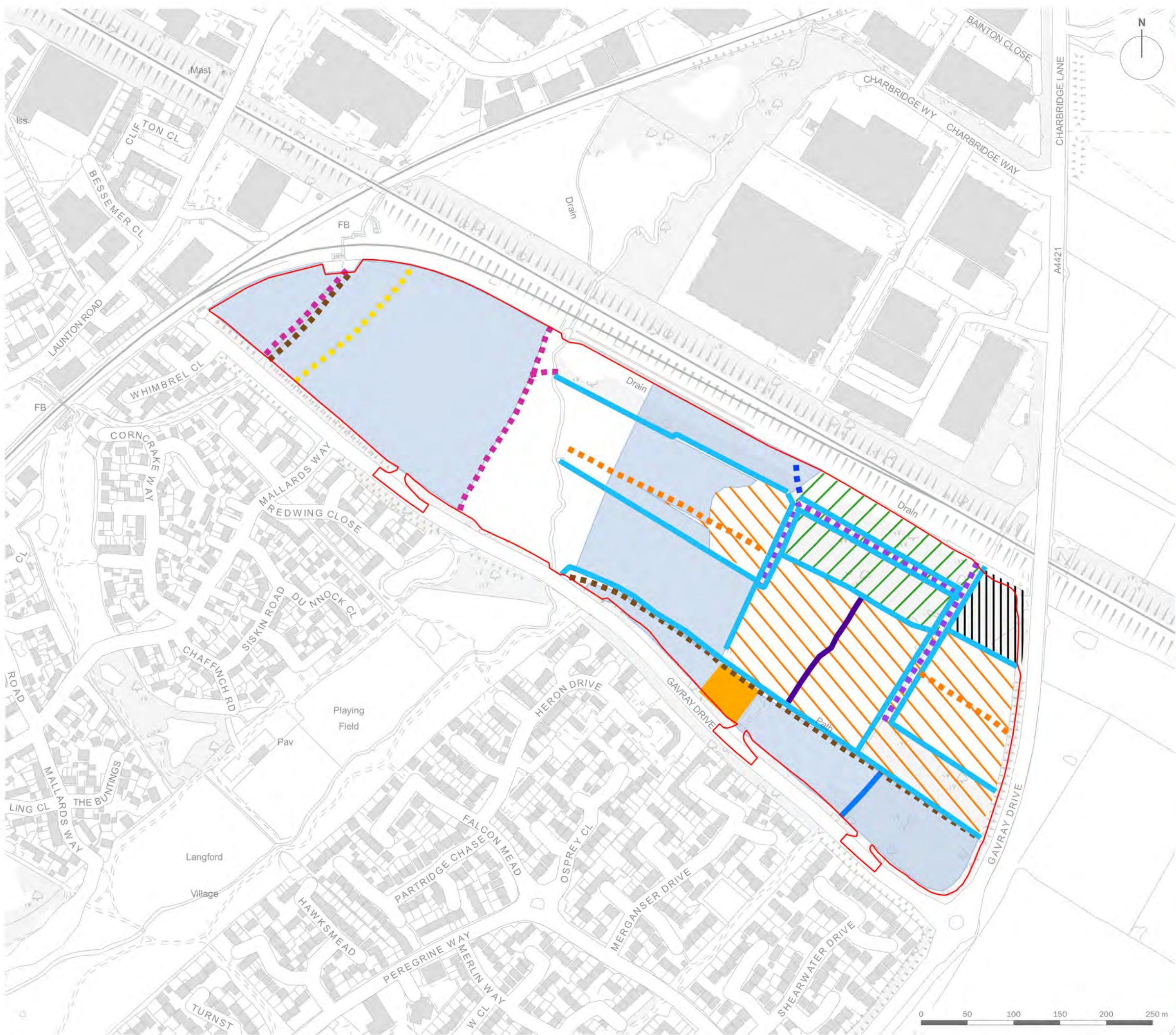


Site Boundary
 LiDAR Data Using 2m Digital Surface Model (DSM) with Multi-directional Azimuth Shading

client		
L&Q Estates		
project title		
Gavray Drive, Bicester		
drawing title		
Plan EDP 5: LiDAR Data		
date	08 JUNE 2021	drawn by GY
drawing number	edp0124_d159a	checked MM
scale	1:4,000 @ A3	QA RB



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- Site Boundary
- Extant Hedge Depicted on the Launton Parish Map of 1607
- Extant Hedge Noted on First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1881
- Extant Hedge Noted on Plan of the Parish of Launton c.1814
- Non-extant Hedge Depicted on the Map of Bicester 1753
- Non-extant Hedge Noted on First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1881
- Non-extant Trackway Noted on Launton Parish Map of 1607
- Path Noted on First Edition Ordnance Survey of 1881
- Extant Trackway Noted on Launton Parish Map of 1607
- Non-extant Hedge Depicted on the Launton Parish Map of 1607
- Appropriate Location of Non-extant Victorian Farmstead
- Area Inaccessible for Survey
- Extant Ridge and Furrow Noted on Previous Survey (OAU 1997) but not Confirmed on Site Walkover
- Extant Ridge and Furrow Noted on Walkover (March 2021)
- Non-extant Ridge and Furrow Noted on Aerial Photographs

client
L&Q Estates

project title
Gavray Drive, Bicester

drawing title
Plan EDP 6: Historic Landscape Character

date	08 JUNE 2021	drawn by	EJ
drawing number	edp0124_d138b	checked	MM
scale	1:4,000 @ A3	QA	RB



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