

CPAT Report No. 1860

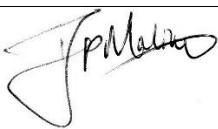
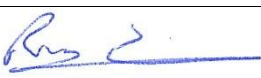
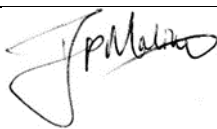
Old Farm, Isycoed, Wrexham

Heritage Impact Assessment



YMDDIRIEDOLAETH ARCHAEOLEGOL CLWYD-POWYS
CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Client name: Dulas Ltd
 CPAT Project No: 2610
 Project Name: Old Farm, Isycoed
 Grid Reference: SJ40344967
 County/LPA: Wrexham
 Planning Application: N/A
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Summary

A Heritage Impact Assessment was undertaken by the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust on behalf of Dulas Ltd as part of a proposed solar farm development on an c.18ha site at Isycoed, east of Wrexham. A 2km study area revealed one scheduled monument, six listed buildings (all Grade II), and 43 non-designated heritage assets, ranging in date from prehistory to World War Two. The site includes several hedged pasture fields, and the proximity to records of ridge and furrow shows that it is located within a former medieval open field system. Chance finds from elsewhere in the study area have been mostly made along routeways or close to settlement, and there are no known archaeological remains from within the site itself. The generally level nature of the landscape and the presence of hedges, suggest that the introduction of low solar panel structures are unlikely to result in any significant change to the setting of designated historic assets, and that there is a low – negligible probability of groundworks affecting buried archaeological remains.

Crynodeb

Bu Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Clwyd-Powys yn gwneud Asesiad o Effaith ar Dreftadaeth ar ran Dulas Ltd, fel rhan o ddatblygiad fferm solar arfaethedig ar safle o ryw 18ha yn Isycoed, i'r dwyrain o Wrecsam. Datgelodd ardal astudiaeth 2km un heneb gofrestredig, chwe adeilad rhestredig (pob un yn Radd II), a 43 ased treftadaeth heb eu dynodi, yn amrywio o ran dyddiad o'r cyfnod cynhanesyddol i'r Ail Ryfel Byd. Mae'r safle'n cynnwys nifer o gaeau pori â gwrychoedd, ac mae'r ffaith ei fod yn agos at safleoedd amaethu grwn a rych sydd wedi'u cofnodi'n dangos ei fod mewn hen gyfundrefn caeau agored canoloesol. Mae darganfyddiadau ar hap o fannau eraill yn ardal yr astudiaeth wedi'u gwneud yn bennaf ar hyd llwybrau neu'n agos at aneddiadau, ac nid oes yna unrhyw weddillion archaeolegol hysbys o'r tu mewn i'r safle ei hun. Mae natur wastad y dirwedd yn gyffredinol a phresenoldeb gwrychoedd yn awgrymu ei bod yn annhebygol y byddai cyflwyno strwythurau paneli solar isel yn achosi unrhyw newid sylweddol i amgylchedd yr asedau hanesyddol dynodedig. Felly isel-fawr ddim yw'r tebygolrwydd y bydd gwaith paratoi tir yn effeithio ar weddillion archaeolegol claddedig.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of report

In March 2022 Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust was commissioned by Dulas Ltd, acting for Novus, to undertake a Heritage Impact Assessment on land near Old Farm, Isycoed, Wrexham, LL13 9RL (National Grid Reference centroid SJ40344967) (Figure 1). This study is to inform a pre-application consultation for a potential solar farm which would supply energy to industrial units at the near-by industrial estate.

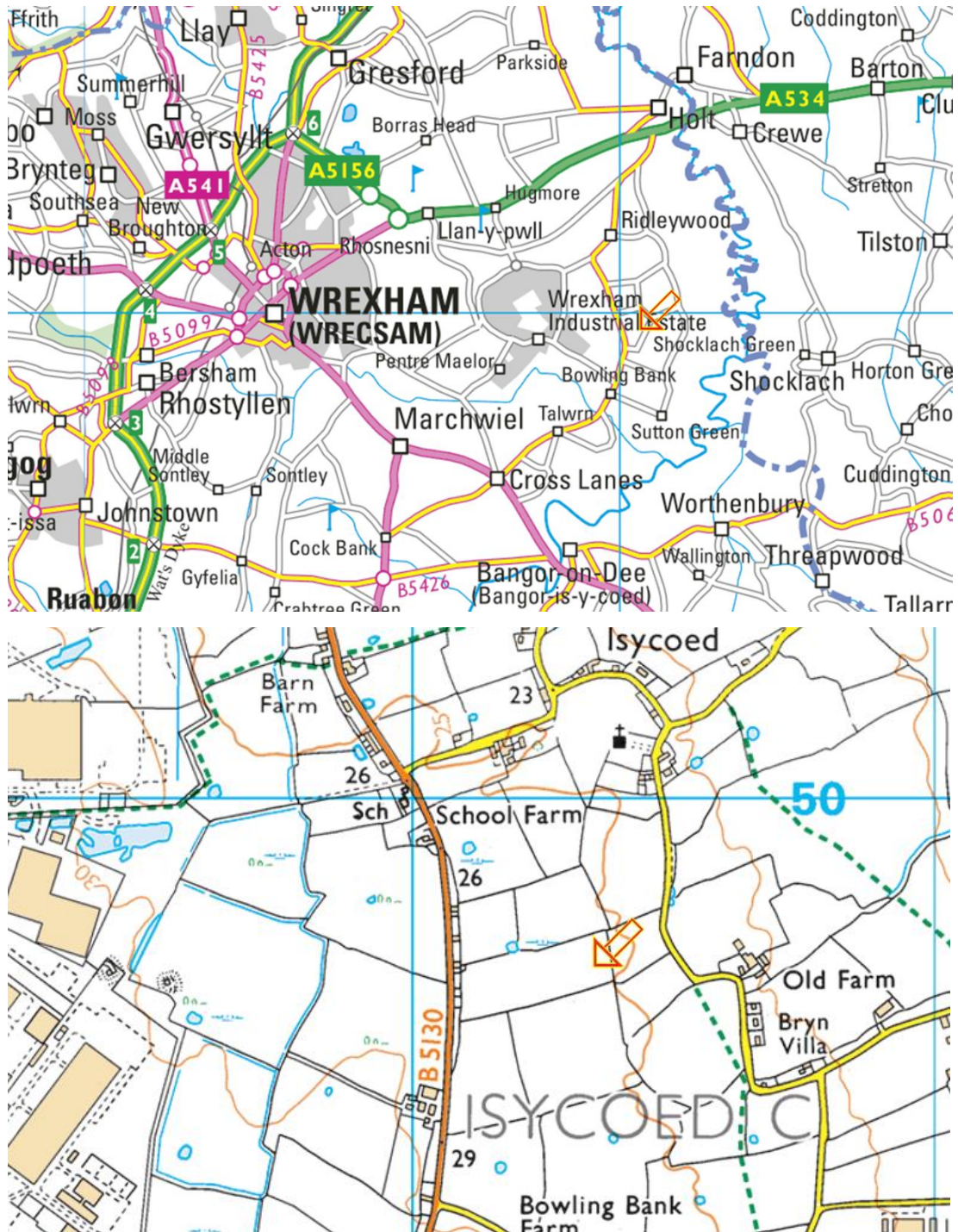


Fig. 1 Location of Old Farm, Isycoed, Wrexham
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1.2 Legislation, Policy and guidance

The following list comprises key legislation, policy drivers and national guidance that have relevance to this Heritage Impact Assessment:

- Overarching National Policy Statements EN – 1 (Energy) and EN – 3 (Renewable Energy Infrastructure) (published by the Department of Energy and Climate Change July 2011) contain sections 5.8 and 2.5.34 respectively, which outline the need to assess potential impacts on the historic environment, and for planning authorities to balance potential harm against need to deliver national targets for renewable energy and emissions reductions. Section 5.8.18 in EN – 1 discusses the potential effects from new development to the setting of designated heritage assets and states that planning authorities should seek to “preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to, or better reveal the significance of, the asset”;
- The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 is the primary statutory tool for protecting historic assets and sustainable management of the historic environment. It is designed to enable greater transparency into decisions taken on the historic environment and to make it a statutory requirement for information on the historic environment to be safe-guarded for the public good;
- The Well-being of Future Generations Act of 2015 defines sustainable development as 'the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action ... aimed at achieving the well-being goals'. It requires public bodies in Wales to consider the long-term impact of their decisions, and whether such decisions contribute to social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being in Wales;
- National policy within Wales is set out in by Planning Policy Wales Edition 11, December 2021 (“PPW”), in which Section 5.7 states the importance of Renewable Energy, and Section 6.1 The Historic Environment (within the chapter on Distinctive and Natural Places) explains the need for a reasonable and proportionate impact assessment to ensure Proposed Development is sustainable and to prevent unnecessary harm to historic assets;
- PPW is supported by Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (May 2017) which is designed to assist local authorities with developing their local plans and for determination of planning applications or listed building consent in relation to historic assets. The Welsh Ministers and Planning Inspectors will consider these guidance documents when considering the proposal;

The three principal guidance documents that will be followed in this assessment are those produced by Cadw on behalf of the Welsh Government for managing historic assets:

- Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales (May 2017)
- Setting of Historic Assets in Wales (2017); and
- Conservation Principles for the sustainable management of the historic environment in Wales (March 2011) to establish objective assessment of the value and significance of historic assets within and surrounding the Proposed Development site.

Local planning policy is contained within Wrexham County Borough Council's Unitary Development Plan 2005 (UDP), although Wrexham Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) 2013 to 2028 is now in consultation. The following relevant policies in the UDP 1996-2011 include:

- Policy EC2 Development on agricultural land of grades 1, 2 or 3a will only be permitted if it does not lead to the irreversible loss of that land;
- Policy EC11 Development which would adversely affect the site or setting of a Scheduled Ancient Monument or archaeological site of national significance will not be permitted. Development that directly affects non-scheduled sites of archaeological importance will only be permitted if an archaeological investigation has been carried out to determine the nature, extent and significance of the remains, and this investigation indicates that in-situ preservation is not justified, and a programme of excavation and recording has been agreed. Development will also be carefully controlled to ensure that the setting of non-scheduled sites of archaeological importance is not harmed where appropriate.

1.3 Site geology and topography

The site is Grade 2 agricultural land and the solid geology is formed by Kinnerton Sandstone Formation, overlain by Boulder Clay (Hains 1991). The Boulder Clay was glacially deposited in the last 10,000 years and is extremely variable in composition with clasts of varying size surrounded by a clay matrix. In this area the depth of the Boulder Clay may extend to 30m or more. Occasional beds of sand, gravel and silt may be intercalated. The Land is relatively flat reflecting its glacial origin, at an altitude of c.25m AOD.

1.4 Methodology

Cadw's *Conservation Principles* (page 18) states in Managing Change to an Historic Asset: "*Changes to historic assets are inevitable To ensure the long-term future of historic assets, change needs to be managed to ensure that their significance is not diminished as a consequence*" and paragraph 47 "*When considering the severity of potential impacts upon an historic asset, there should always be proportionality and reasonableness*". The heritage assessment has used these key aims of the guidance to ensure the results of the study are focused on a proportionate response to potential impacts on heritage significance from the degree of change that might result from the Proposed Development.

The Proposed Development would result in change to the existing baseline, and change has been considered as impacts according to the degree of change they have caused to heritage significance. As appropriate the baseline survey has been guided by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment*. The assessment then identified impacts and effects as direct or indirect, adverse or beneficial, and short-term, long-term, reversible or permanent. Direct impacts are those which physically alter an asset and therefore its heritage significance; indirect impacts are those which affect the heritage significance of an asset by causing change within its setting.

Key aspects of a solar farm that might affect the historic environment, such as visual dominance, scale, intervisibility, vista and sight-lines, glint and glare effects, and unaltered setting, would form part of the criteria for assessment. More detailed guidance has also been issued by Cadw, including the *Setting of Historic Assets in Wales* (May 2017) and *Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales* (May 2017). These promote a staged approach to assessing assets, their historic significance and the potential impacts from development, and have been applied to undertake this assessment.

2 Baseline survey

2.1 Historical summary

This section provides a brief summary of the archaeology and history of the study area and its immediate surrounds, to enable the findings of the assessment to be placed in a wider context. Data were downloaded from the Lle Wales portal and purchased from the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust's Historic Environment Record (HER) on 7th March 2022 (enquiry number E6724) for a 2km study area from a central point within the proposed development site.

The ancient community of Isycoed was part of Bromfield and Yale lordship in the commot of Maelor Saesneg, which was often held by the king in medieval and early historic times. It was first mentioned in 1405 and the name means "below the wood" (Palmer & Owen 1910 p.248). Despite its proximity to Cheshire, located west of the Dee and close to the boundary, the area remained distinctly Welsh as the land tenure and laws followed were those of Wales. Isycoed included the townships of the greater part of Sutton, Dutton Diffaeth on Dee, Cacca Dutton, Dutton y brain, Woverton (now Gourton), Bieston, Erlisham (now Erlas), Borrasham Hwfa and Borrasham Riffri (now Burras), together with the absorbed townships of Crew Fawr, Crew Fechan, Eyton Fawr and Eyton Fechan (Palmer & Owen 1910, Appendix II, p233).

2.2 Designated historic assets

Within the study area there is one scheduled monument, Sutton Green round barrow ((DE291) HER 4030), which lies 800m south of the southern edge of the site boundary.

There are six listed buildings (all at Grade II). Four are within Isycoed, in relatively close proximity to the north-eastern part of the site, and the other two are at Pickhill and Sutton Green, c.1.2km south of the southern boundary of the site. All are post-medieval in date, three houses, a church, a redundant public house, and a bridge.

The closest listed building is Chapel House Farm House (LB number 1597) which the northern boundary of the proposed development site wraps around. Built as a medieval cruck house in the 15th or 16th centuries (Figure 2), the roof and walls have been raised and a range added in the 18th or 19th centuries. The timber-framing is infilled with bricks and a light scantling extends from the outer faces of the cruck blades.

The church of St Paul (LB number 17815) is located c100m north-east of the site boundary (Figure 3). It was constructed in red brick in 1829, but on the site of an earlier one from the 18th century. Formerly the community had been included in the parish of Holt, but in 1827 it became a separate parish. The listing description refers to it as a simple late Georgian style, constructed in flemish bond with light headers to give a chequered effect. It has a rectangular plan with a projecting sanctuary at the east end, and a slightly projecting tower at the west end. The east end is hipped and the roof is in slate.



Fig. 2 The cruck- and timber-frame house at Chapel House Farm with ridge and furrow in field to east of it



Fig. 3 The Church of St Paul seen from the site looking north

The Plough Inn (LB number 1598) is located just to the east of the church, but its 19th century appearance (Figure 4) hides origins as a cruck-framed house in the 15th or 16th centuries, with roof and walls raised in the 17th century, and then further changes in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is described as a single storey with attic dormers.

Cobham Cottage (LB number 15912) is located 400m to the north east of the site boundary. It is described as a timber-framed building of 17th century origin, brick infilled and modified in the 18th century. The listing description states it is a single storey house with a slate roof.



Fig. 4 The former Plough Inn looking east

Pickhill Bridge (LB number 18059) lies 1.2km to the south-west, and Pear Tree House (LB number 17816) in Sutton Green is a similar distance to the south of the site. The functional nature of the road bridge, and the domestic nature of the house set back from Sun Lane, result in each having settings of a very local character that contribute to their heritage significance, and as these would not be affected by the proposed solar farm due to their distance from it and the low-level structures that will comprise the installation, these listed buildings are not assessed further.

2.3 Non-designated historic assets

The only prehistoric evidence within the study area comes from an artefact found c.1km to the south-west at Bowling Bank. This was a copper alloy 'fob' or 'dangler', believed to be a harness fitting (141456 (Drawing 2)). Several other metalwork items including Roman and medieval coins, a pottery vessel and spindle whorl, have been found around Pickhill and Bowling Bank to the south-west of the site (Drawing 1), with a further medieval coin found along the B5130 road north-west of the site, and a medieval buckle to the east near Cobham Farm.

Within the site there are two non-designated heritage assets identified on the Historic Environment Record (HER) (128262 and 128263 (Drawing 2)). These are both areas of ridge and furrow cultivation of probable medieval date, which are recorded from aerial photography. Two further areas of ridge and furrow lie in close proximity, one east of Old Farm (128261) and one west of the church (128258) (Figure 2). Additional areas of ridge and furrow are located at Barn Farm 400m to the north-west (128257), c.1km and 1.2km to the north-east (128259 and 128260) at Lower Hall and Higher Hall, and near Sutton Green to the south over a distance of more than 1km (106055, 128266, 128271, 106033 and 128272). Drawing 2 shows the general distribution of medieval ridge & furrow cultivation within the area. Other features of medieval date are noted at Roden's Hall and its moated site (101545 and 101547) located 400m to the south-east of the site.



Fig. 5 The former independent meeting house now a school

Also in close proximity across the road at the north-western edge to the site, lies the school, which was formerly an independent meeting house (Figure 5) erected in 1817 (NPRN 7637). The HER includes an entry for the historic settlement of Isycoed (15678) noted to have been situated on a slight terrace above the Dee flood plain, and also for a WW2 airplane crash site in the vicinity (130230).

Nineteen further WW2 military structures are listed in the HER, but all lie 800m and more to the south-west of the site, and do not affect the heritage significance of it, as they were located to provide defence of the Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF) at Wrexham. They comprise pillboxes, railway lines, a bunker, and remains of the ROF.

2.4 Archaeological investigations and historic landscape character assessment

A total of seven archaeological surveys and investigations are recorded within the study area and the distribution of these is shown in Drawing 3. They include historic settlement survey, WW2 aircraft crash sites, photographic recording of barns and buildings prior to demolition or conversion, and watching briefs.

The historic landscape character assessment describes the site as an area of regular fieldscape (Drawing 1). In effect this reflects sub-division of previously open fields from the medieval period, by parliamentary enclosure.

2.5 Historic maps

The Tithe map for Dutton Diffeth dated 1845 shows the site with a pattern of fields almost identical to what survives today (Figure 6). The apportionments show that the southern fields within the site were owned by the "Poor of Anglesea" and farmed by Robert Parker, whereas the northern fields and Chapel House Farm were owned by Brownlow Wynne Esq. and farmed by Phillip James (Table 1). Generally the eastern and north-western sides were in pasture and the south-western side arable. The first edition Ordnance Survey map at 1:10560 scale surveyed in 1872 (published 1879 (Figure 7)) shows a very similar field pattern.



Fig. 6 1845 Tithe map of the Site (Map of the township of Dutton Diffeth)

Field No.	Field name	Owner	Occupier	Land-use
109	Pool Road Field (part of)	Poor of Anglesea	Robert Parker	Pasture
110	Big Acre	Poor of Anglesea	Robert Parker	Tillage
111	No name	Poor of Anglesea	Robert Parker	Tillage
112	Middle Acre	Poor of Anglesea	Robert Parker	Tillage
113	Pool Road Acre	Poor of Anglesea	Robert Parker	Tillage
114	Little Acre	Poor of Anglesea	Robert Parker	Pasture
115	Little Acre (part of)	Poor of Anglesea	Robert Parker	Pasture

143	House, garden, fold etc	Brownlow Wynne Esq	Phillip James	Pasture
144	Chapel Field	Brownlow Wynne Esq	Phillip James	Tillage
147	Barn Field	Brownlow Wynne Esq	Phillip James	Pasture
148	Thatchsprig Field	Brownlow Wynne Esq	Phillip James	Pasture
149	Orchard Field	Brownlow Wynne Esq	Phillip James	Pasture
150	Tan Chapel Field	Brownlow Wynne Esq	Phillip James	Tillage
167	Foot Road Field (part of)	Poor of Anglesea	Robert Parker	Pasture

Table 1 Tithe apportionments for the site



Fig. 7 1879 Ordnance Survey map at 1:10560 scale Denbigshire Sheet XXIX with proposed development area outlined in red

The 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map at 1:2500 scale (Figure 8) shows the detail of the northern end of the site and adjacent fields, with the location of the principal listed buildings labelled. It also shows the independent meeting house depicted on the earlier maps (No. 68 on the Tithe map) has been converted into a school by then end of the 19th century. A series of small ponds across the site are evident in all the maps, probably pits for extracting marl used to improve the fertility of the fields before lime and modern fertilisers were available.

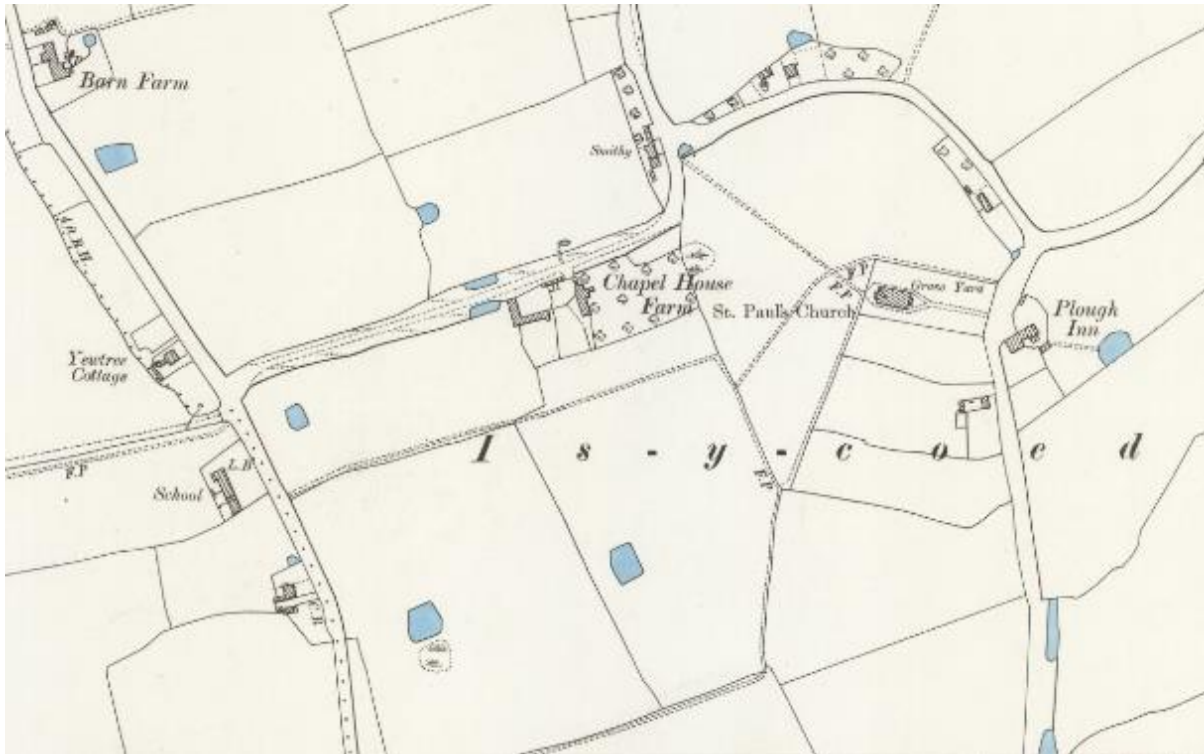


Fig. 8 1899 Ordnance Survey map at 1:2500 scale Cheshire Sheet LIX.3 (detail of northern part of site)

2.6 Field survey

A site visit and walkover survey was conducted on 8th March 2022 in good weather conditions. The fields were all under grass management, and separated by chest-high, well-maintained hedges with some mature trees within them (Figures 9 – 12). There was very little variation in topography with the landscape being relatively level, apart from a gradual slope to the east which opens up long distance views into Cheshire from the eastern side of the site (Figure 9). An overhead powerline crossed the southern fields, and a small area of dumped material (including concrete and tyres) was found along one of the field boundaries in the central western part of the site.

Ridge and furrow cultivation was not seen as earthworks within the proposed solar farm fields, but it was evident in the north-western field within the red line boundary (Figure 14). It was also evident to the west of the church, in the field between this and Chapel House Farm (Front Cover photograph and Figure 2).

Views of the development site to and from the church were only possible at the north-eastern limits of the proposed development, and intervening hedges and trees reduce the intervisibility (Figures 12 and 13). The same minimal lack of intervisibility is even more pronounced for Chapel House Farm, and there is no intervisibility with the other listed buildings.



Fig. 9 View to south-east across south-eastern part of site



Fig. 10 View to west across south-western part of site



Fig. 11 View south across north-western part of site



Fig. 12 View north across north-eastern part of site with St Paul's church in background



Fig. 13 View south towards north-western part of site from the church



Fig. 14 View south-east towards north-western part of site with ridge & furrow in near field

3 Heritage significance and impact assessment

The assets with highest heritage significance are the listed buildings, specifically Chapel House Farm and the church, and the single scheduled monument. The non-designated heritage assets have local importance, and the ridge and furrow which is the closest type of asset and most prolific within the study area, is not rare and of relatively low significance.

The site visit has identified that current intervisibility between the proposed development area and the designated heritage assets is poor, and the nature of the development, c.1m high solar panels and related infrastructure, are unlikely to have more than a slight effect to heritage significance due to development within their setting. The land is relatively level and the solar panels will be located within hedged fields, making it unlikely that they will stand out as visually prominent structures, or produce significant glint and glare that would affect historic assets. Although groundworks would have a direct, physical impact on any buried remains, at present there are no known heritage assets within the development area, and so the probability of harm occurring is low - negligible.

4 Conclusions

The assessment has followed Planning Policy Wales (section 6.1) and the relevant Cadw guidance *Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales* in a manner proportionate to the significance of the assets and the degree of change that might affect them. It has identified known heritage assets within and surrounding the site. It has assessed their significance and sensitivity and concluded the development is unlikely to cause major or moderate harm. There is potential for impacts on previously unknown buried archaeological remains, although the likelihood of finding such remains appears to have low probability. There are no specific zones within the area currently selected for solar panels which should be avoided due to heritage constraints, but it is likely that some form of site investigation will probably be required by the planning authority, pre- or post-consent.

This Heritage Impact Assessment shows that the proposed development would not affect the statutory requirement¹ to preserve listed buildings in their settings, and it provides information that allows the application to pass the test set in Policy EC11, that no harm to designated heritage assets would result if this development was to be given consent. Although there is a chance of unknown buried remains that might be affected, such a level of uncertainty would not justify refusal.

In conclusion there is no reason to refuse consent for this application based on the potential impact it might have on the historic environment.

¹ Town & Country Planning Act 1990 Section 66 "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."

5 Sources

Published sources

Hains, B.A.. 1991 *Applied geological mapping in the Wrexham area: geology and land-use planning*. Nottingham, UK, British Geological Survey, 104pp. (WA/91/004) (Unpublished)

Palmer, A.N., and Owen, E. 1910 *A history of ancient tenures of land in north Wales and the Marches* self-published printed by Woodall, Minshall & Thomas, Wrexham and Oswestry

Cartographic sources

1845 Dutton Diffeth township Tithe map and Apportionments: National Library of Wales

1879 Ordnance Survey map at 1:10560 scale Denbighshire Sheet XXIX

1899 Ordnance Survey map at 1:2500 scale Cheshire Sheet LIX.3

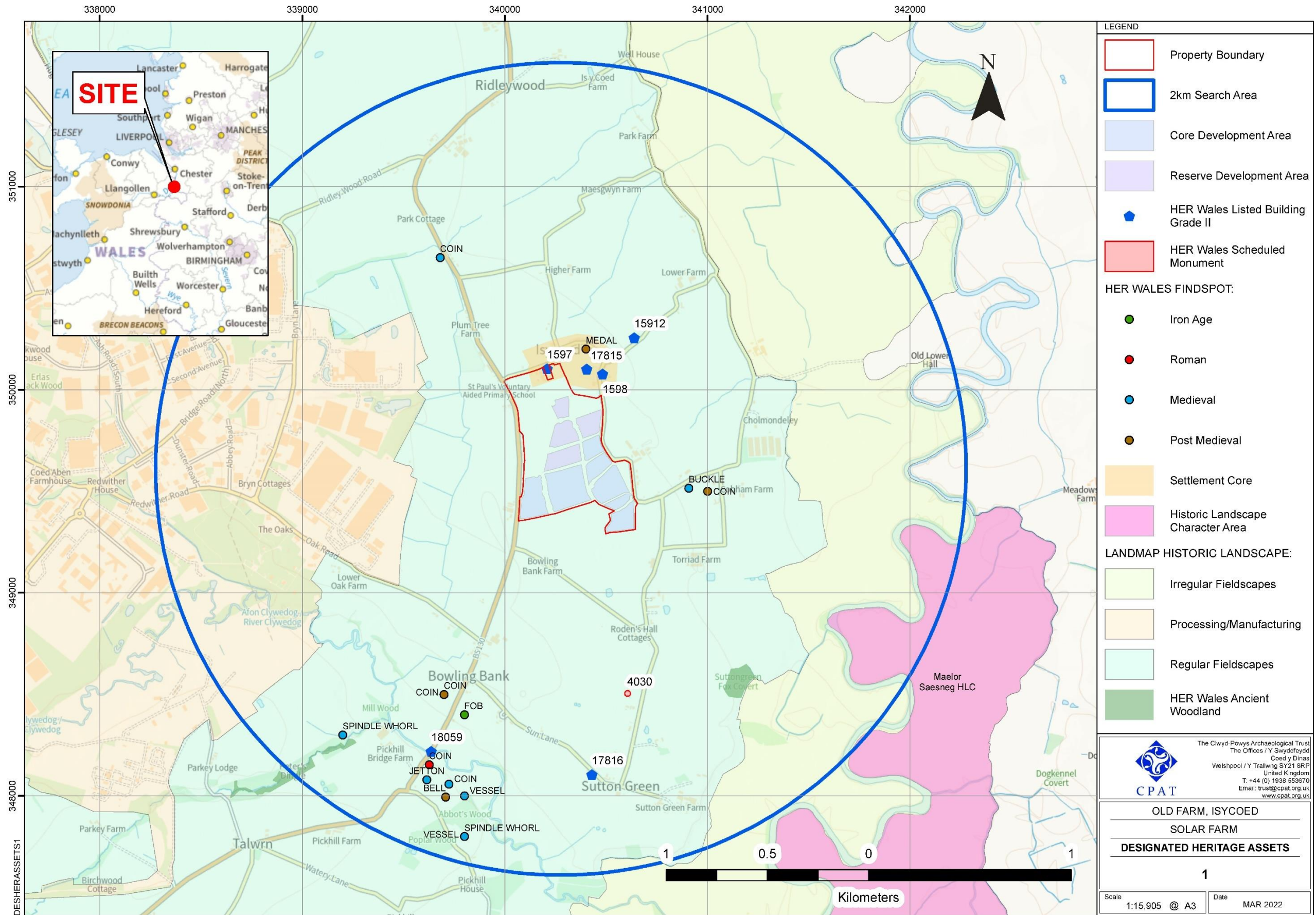
6 Archive deposition Statement

The project archive has been prepared according to the CPAT Archive Policy and in line with the CIfA *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives guidance* (2014). The digital archive only will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust and the paper/drawn/digital archive with the National Monuments Record (RCAHMW).

Archive summary

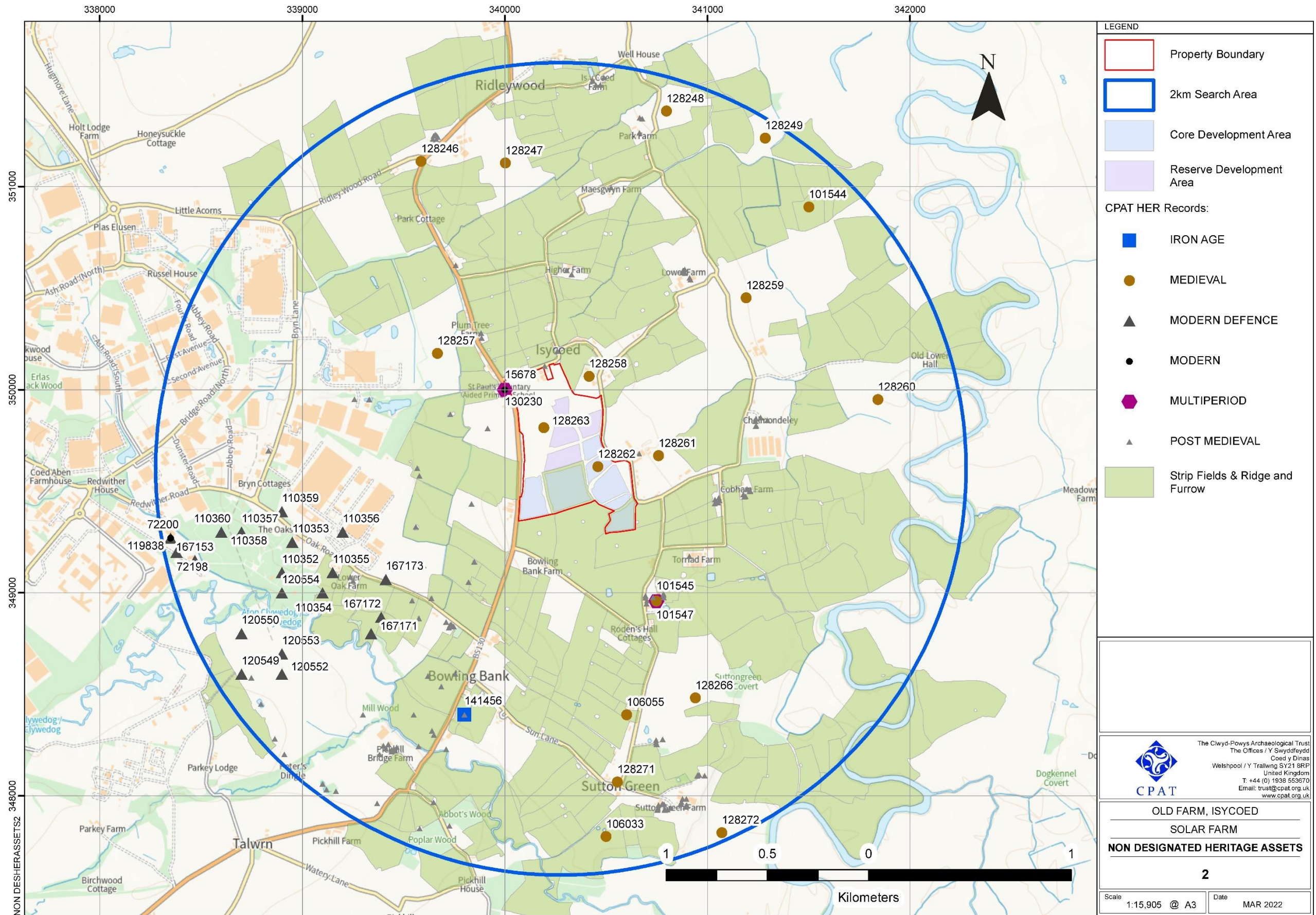
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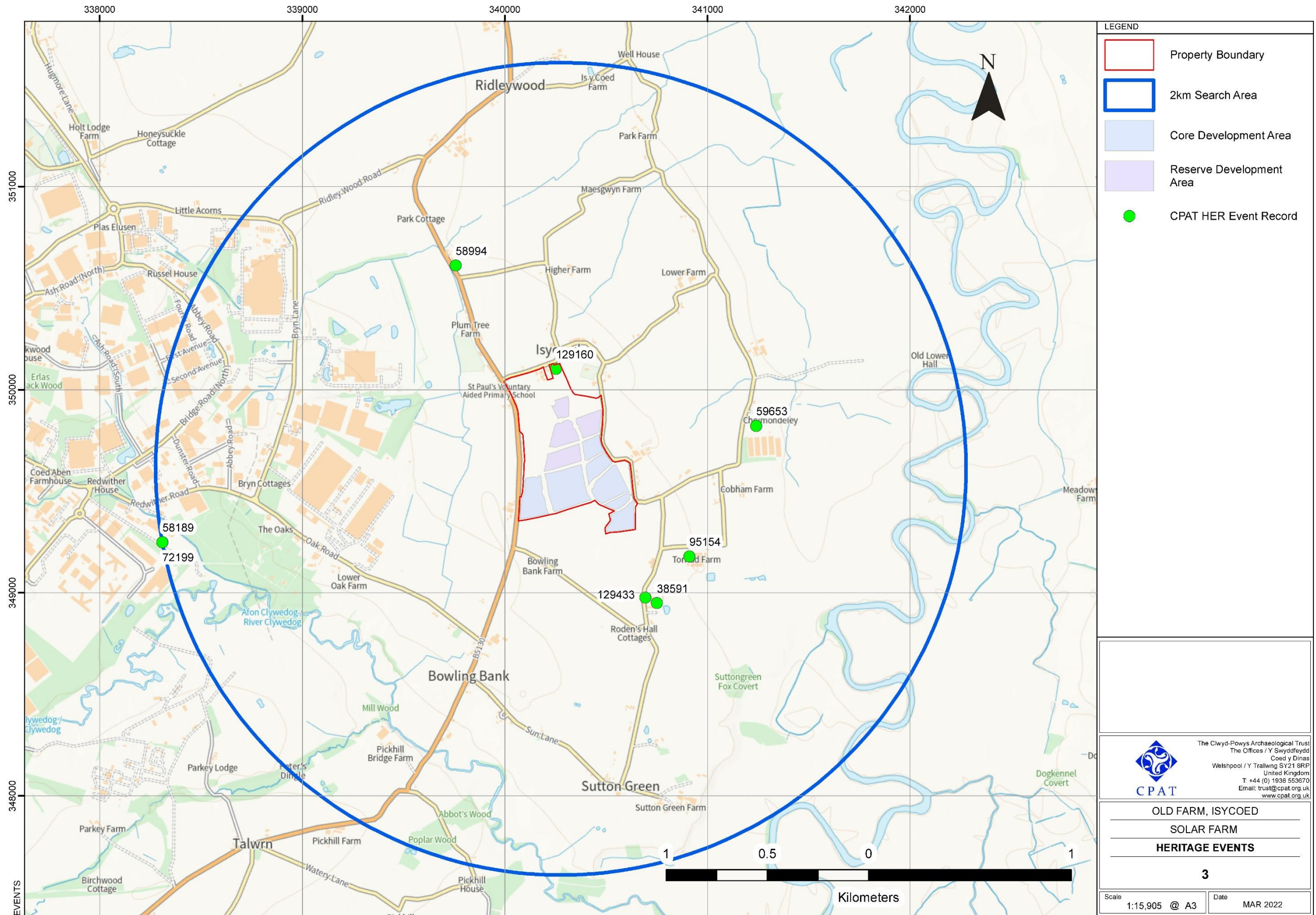
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