

Land North West of Thornbury

Archaeology and Heritage Appraisal

Introduction

- 1.1 This appraisal has been prepared by BSA Heritage Limited and confirms the likely heritage and archaeological potential of an area of pasture fields lying to the north west of Thornbury, South Gloucestershire on behalf of Barwood Development Securities Limited and the Thornbury Landowners Consortium (Figure 1).
- 1.2 The site covers a total area of approximately fifty hectares and is centred on NGR ST 6325 9165. The land is generally level, with a slight slope downwards from the south east to the north west and from circa 15m to 10m Above Ordnance Datum. The geology is recorded by the British Geological Survey as Mercia Mudstone, with some superficial deposits of clay and silt in the south.
- 1.3 The site lies west of land with planning permission for new residential development and which is in the process of being developed. Old Bury Lane marks much of the site's northern boundary, with further pasture fields beyond the road and north west of the site. The ancient woodland of Parkmill Cover lies west of the site, with a watercourse marking the southern boundary and further pasture fields beyond. Pickedmoor Lane Rhine runs from south east to north west through the southern part of the site.
- 1.4 This appraisal considers the suitability of the site for residential and related development in terms of both archaeological potential and heritage assets which may be affected directly or indirectly through harm to their setting.
- 1.5 The assessment of the potential impact on heritage assets and potential sub-surface archaeological remains has been informed by consultation with the South Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record and Historic England's National Heritage List for England. Online sources including 19th century historic maps and a report on recent archaeological evaluation east of the site and a site walkover in November 2017 have also informed the assessment.

Policy Context

- 1.6 The relevant 1979 and 1990 Acts are a consideration. In particular, the requirement in the 1990 Act that, in reaching planning decisions, the local planning authority should have special regard to preserving listed buildings and their settings and the character and appearance of conservation areas.

- 1.7 Current national and local policy is contained in the 2012 *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) and policies in both the South Gloucestershire *Core Strategy* and recently adopted *Policies Sites and Places Plan* (DCLG 2012, SGC 2013 & 2017). The NPPF requires that the impact of development on significant heritage remains, including designated heritage assets and their setting, be considered when development is proposed.
- 1.8 Relevant national and local guidance has also been considered and includes the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Practice Guidance which supports the NPPF (DCLG 2014) and Historic England's *Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment* and *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (Historic England 2015a & 2015b). South Gloucestershire's publications relating to Locally Listed Buildings and Thornbury Conservation Area have also been considered (SGC 2008 and 2004).

Heritage Assets

- 2.1 There are no designated heritage assets within the site, nor any known undesignated assets. Within the study area of a kilometre's radius around the site there are a number of designated heritage assets, lying to the south and east of the site on the edges of Thornbury. These are shown on Figure 1, Identified Heritage Assets and Archaeology, contained at the end of this Appraisal. A desk-based assessment has uncovered the potential for undesignated assets within the site, and these are considered further below.

Thornbury Conservation Area

- 2.2 The northern edge of Thornbury Conservation Area falls to the south of the site; at a distance of less than a hundred metres at its closest point (Figure 1). Its northern part extends across undesignated parkland which relates to Thornbury Castle; 400m south of the site, and it directly adjoins the now permitted development to the east. The conservation area extends considerably further to the south, enclosing the earlier parts of Thornbury, focussed on Castle and High streets. A buffer of open space and appropriate planting could prevent any harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Thornbury Castle Complex and Immediate Setting

- 2.3 The castle complex of designated heritage assets includes the Grade I listed main building itself, a late medieval 'great house' for the 3rd Duke of Buckingham, which sits on the site of an earlier manor house. Walls enclosing the main house and its curtilage are also Grade I listed, whilst two lodges to the south are Grade II listed. Immediately south of the site lies the Grade I listed medieval parish Church of St Mary the Virgin.

- 2.4 Part of the castle site is also designated as a scheduled monument given the potential for sub-surface remains relating to its earlier phases of use. The castle structure and its immediate surroundings are designated as a Grade II Registered Park and Garden, but this does not extend into the parkland beyond.
- 2.5 The church and castle sit on higher land and the church in particular is visible for a considerable distance from certain locations to the north. Through the masterplanning process, it will be necessary to consider this inter-visibility, and explore opportunities to provide landscape screening and retention of key views where the proposals affect the significance of these designated heritage assets.

Thornbury Castle – Wider Setting

- 2.6 At a greater distance, the open nature of the land is likely to reflect the cultivated open fields which lay north of the Castle in the medieval period, and could have formed part of parkland created by the 3rd Duke in the 16th century. However, the earlier arable ridge and furrow has now been replaced with pasture and a regular pattern of post-medieval hedgerows. There is little surviving evidence parkland extended into the site area itself. The modern landscape has also been altered since by plantations, modern farm structures and the extensive new residential development to the north east.

Other Designated Assets

- 2.7 Further designated heritage assets lie south and east of the site and include the Grade II listed early 19th century main building at Shieling School, east of Thornbury Castle and church. A hall at the post-war purpose built school is designated a locally listed building too (Figure 1). However, the school site is well enclosed and the wider landscape, including the fields of the site, does not enhance the significance of these structures.
- 2.8 East of the site lies a scheduled area of fishponds which now lie in woodland and are thought to have been part of the works commissioned by the 3rd Duke. North of these lie a number of Grade II listed former farmhouses, residences and barns including those at Park Farm and Morton House. Permitted residential development will soon have encircled these assets such that change to land within the site would have no further adverse effect on their significance.

Archaeology & Historic Landscape

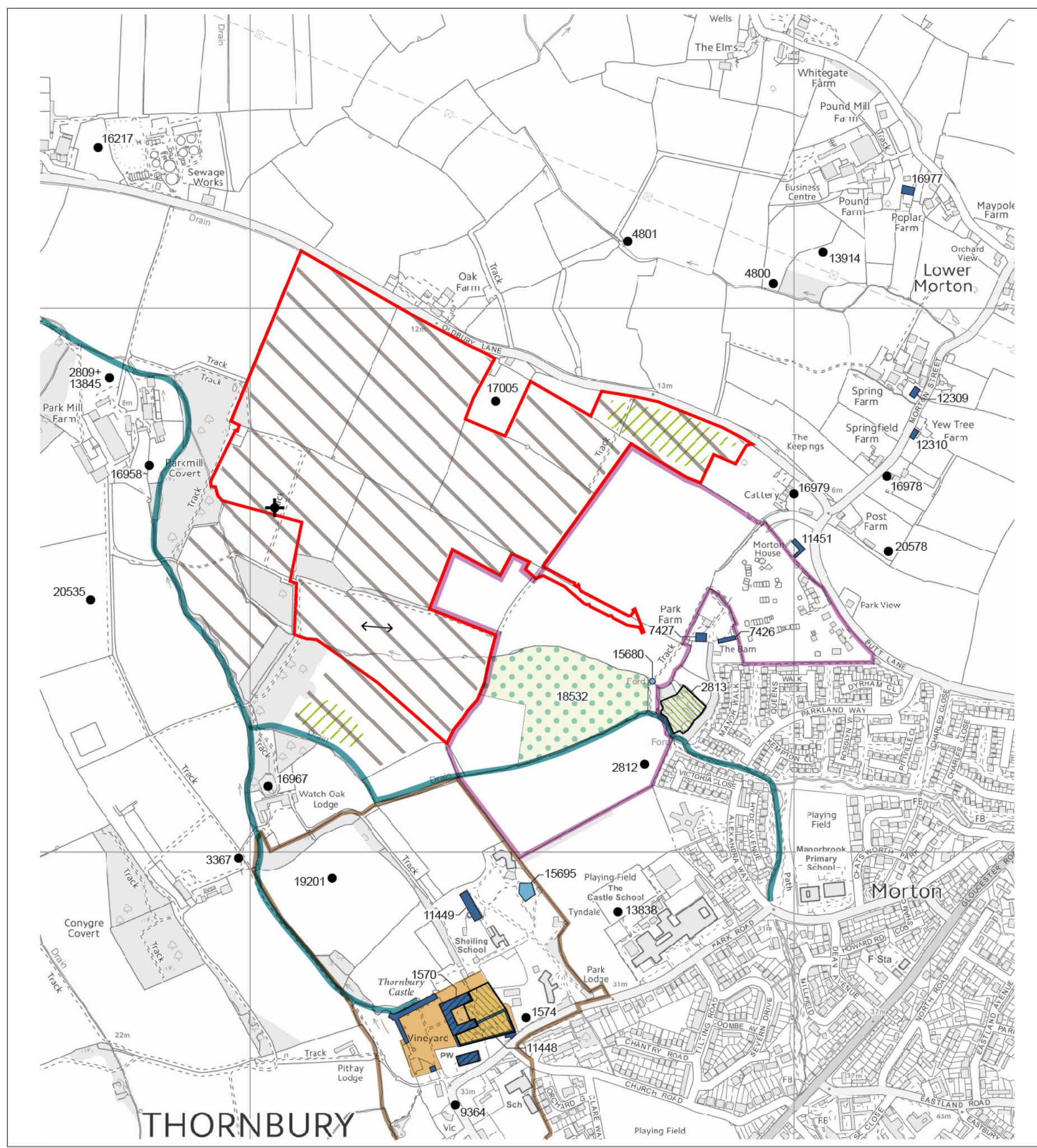
- 3.1 No HER records for known archaeological sites, findspots or past investigation are located within the site itself. Past analysis of aerial photographs has identified remains of medieval ridge and furrow across much of the site and also linear features in the west (Figure 1, NMP). However, the site visit confirmed that traces of ridge and furrow are now minimal and such residual remains are of negligible significance. The presence of ridge and furrow is a good indication that the site never contained any medieval or post-medieval settlement.
- 3.2 The HER does record the find of a Roman vessel north west of the site and also records the results of recent archaeological investigations across the land which has permission for residential development east of the site, the report for which has also been considered (Cotswold Archaeology 2010). Work here recorded hitherto late prehistoric ditches and likely Romano-British occupation areas (Figure 1).
- 3.3 Such sub-surface remains may extend into the site itself and the linear features in the west of the site may be related. However, such remains are common across the district and more widely, and would rate as of local significance only. As with the land to the east, such remains would not prevent development of the site.
- 3.4 Research and the site visit did not identify any surviving historic landscape features of note. The fields are defined by hedgerows, but the regular pattern of these suggests they are relatively late. There is no indication of any park pale boundary within the site and the only indication of potential 'parkland' is a single fine oak in the west. The significance of the historic landscape has been reduced further with the development of housing and schools on the north western edge of Thornbury.
- 3.5 The HER does suggest that watercourses on the southern edge of the site area may have been adapted or excavated to create a canal from Thornbury Castle to the Severn by the 3rd Duke of Buckingham (Figure 1). A wharf has been identified west of the castle. Any elements of such an early private canal would be of regional if not national significance. However, these elements fall on the site periphery, and development of the site is capable of retaining these features, and providing an appropriate setting.

Conclusions

- 4.1 An archaeological and built heritage appraisal has been completed for land north west of Thornbury. This work indicates that little of interest lies within the site itself. A desk-based assessment has identified the potential for late prehistoric or Roman period sub-surface remains within the site, as found on land currently being developed to the east.
- 4.2 In accordance with current policy and guidance, any application for planning permission will be supported by the results of archaeological evaluation across the site area. Initial geophysical survey and subsequent trial trenching would confirm if the site holds any significant sub-surface remains and would define where these lie.

- 4.3 If necessary, the detailed design of development could allow for the preservation *in situ* of remains through retention of open space or foundation design. It is more likely that remains with local significance would be found and that subject to investigation and recording, that these would not require preservation *in situ*.
- 4.4 As far as practicable, existing hedgerows within and on the edges of the site would be retained. However these, and the landscape they form part of, are not of special significance. The loss of some stretches of hedgerow represents a minor impact of the site's development.
- 4.5 No designated or otherwise significant heritage assets lie within the site. A possible undesignated 'canal' on the western edge of the site could be protected with a buffer of open land to its east. Grade II listed buildings and scheduled fishponds to the east of the site will be screened from the site by the existing permitted residential development, and as such no additional harm would be caused.
- 4.6 The northern extent of Thornbury Conservation Area extends to within a hundred metres of the site boundary. However, through retention of a buffer of land and sensitive planting on the edge of the site, the special character and appearance of the conservation area can be preserved.
- 4.7 The change to the setting of the group of listed buildings at Thornbury Castle is likely to have an adverse effect on the appreciation of their significance. They are positioned on higher ground and are consequently visible from a great distance. The open agricultural land of the site and beyond reflects the open land which would have been Thornbury Castle's post-medieval landscape.
- 4.8 However, the setting of the Thornbury Castle and church group provides only a limited enhancement of the significance of these structures, with most of this due to the closer parts of its environs which have a parkland character. More widely, there has been considerable change, with enclosure of once open arable fields and modern development. Although a 'castle' in name, Thornbury was in reality a Tudor palace designed to be seen, with defensive virtues a secondary consideration.
- 4.9 Whilst the character of the modern landscape north of the site is not park-like, copses and trees are a significant element, including relatively recent plantations. Even in winter, views between the site and the castle complex are filtered. It would also be appropriate in this context to include planting of screening belts as part of any development design.
- 4.10 Given this, development of the site area could be achieved with a 'less than substantial' to negligible level of harm to the significance of Thornbury Castle and church. In accordance with current legislation and policy, such a low level of indirect harm would then need to be considered against the benefits of the scheme.

Figure 1: Identified Heritage Assets and Archaeology



- KEY**
- Site area
 - Scheduled monument
 - Grade I listed building
 - Grade II Listed building
 - Locally listed building
 - Thornbury Conservation Area
 - Grade II Registered Park and Garden (HER 4214)
 - Permitted residential development (HER 19198)
 - Possible canals (HER 1563)
 - Other HER records
 - Romano-British remains
 - NMP/Lidar features
 - Extent of geophysical survey and trial trenching
 - Vestigial ridge and furrow
 - Area of archaeological significance



Project Pickedmoor, Thornbury

Drawing Title **Figure 7.1: Identified Heritage Assets and Archaeology**

Scale As shown @ A3

Drawing No. BSA 1773_1

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Checked BS/KJ



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