

HERITAGE PROOF OF EVIDENCE

Tobias Carleton-Prangnell

Conservation Officer

SITE ADDRESS: Land West of Church Hill and Land Off Butts Close and Schoolhouse Lane, Marnhull

AGAINST THE DECISION OF DORSET COUNCIL TO REFUSE PLANNING

PERMISSION FOR: Hybrid planning application consisting of:

Full planning permission for a mixed-use development to erect a food store with cafe, plus office space and 2 No. flats above. Erect building for mixed commercial, business and service uses (Class E), (e.g. estate agents, hairdresser, funeral care, dentist, vet). Form vehicular and pedestrian accesses and parking. Form parking area for St. Gregory's Church and St Gregory's Primary School. Carry out landscaping works and associated engineering operations. (Demolish redundant agricultural buildings). Land west of Church Hill.

Outline planning permission (to determine access) to erect up to 120 dwellings. Land off Butts Close and Schoolhouse Lane.

CASE OFFICER: Robert Lennis

PINS Appeal Reference: APP/D1265/W/24/3351896

LPA Appeal Reference: P/OUT/2023/02644

DATE:11/03/2025

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Glossary

Authenticity	Work intended to change the function or appearance of a place
Conservation	The process of managing change to a significant place in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations
Conservation Area	An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance', designated under what is now s69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
Context	Any relationship between a place and other places, relevant to the values of that place
Designation	The recognition of particular heritage value(s) of a significant place by giving it formal status under law or policy intended to sustain those values
DC	Dorset Council
Fabric	The material substance of which places are formed, including geology, archaeological deposits, structures and buildings, and flora
GPA	Good Practice Advice (Historic England)
Harm	Change for the worse, here primarily referring to the effect of inappropriate interventions on the heritage values of a place
HEAG	Historic England Advice and Guidance
Heritage	All inherited resources which people value for reasons beyond mere utility
Heritage, Cultural	Inherited assets which people identify and value as a reflection and expression of their evolving knowledge, beliefs and traditions, and of their understanding of the beliefs and traditions of others
Heritage, Natural	Inherited habitats, species, ecosystems, geology and landforms, including those in and under water, to which people attach value
Historic Environment	All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible or buried, and deliberately planted or managed flora
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
Place	Any part of the historic environment, of any scale, that has a distinctive identity perceived by people
Proportionality	The quality of being appropriately related to something else in size, degree, or other measurable characteristics
Public	Of, concerning, done, acting, etc. for people as a whole
Setting	The surroundings in which a place is experienced, its local context, embracing present and past relationships to the adjacent landscape
Significance	The collective value of a place

Value	An aspect of worth or importance, here attached by people to qualities of places
Value, aesthetic	Value deriving from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place
Value, communal	Value deriving from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory
Value, evidential	Value deriving from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity
Value, historical	Value deriving from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present

Heritage Proof

1. Heritage Proof of Evidence – Summary

- 1.1. The *Heritage Summary* is provided as a separate document: *CD10.004 - DC Conservation Proof of Evidence Summary*.

Introduction

Witness experience and qualifications

- 1.2. My name is Tobias Carleton-Prangnell. I am a Senior Conservation Officer at Dorset Council. My full job title is Senior Conservation Officer Spatial Planning and Majors. I am a first-class honours graduate of University College Dublin in World Heritage Conservation and have been a conservation professional for over 25 years, working in both public and private sectors, in an international context. I am an expert member of the board for the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and serve as an advisor on the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee for UNESCO. I am an external senior consultant for Historic England and English Heritage advising on the conservation of historic vernacular architecture and am a part-time senior lecturer of Historic Building Conservation Theory at West Dean College of Arts and Conservation.
- 1.3. I have been involved with planning application P/OUT/2023/02644 since November 2023 and have undertaken multiple, detailed visits of the site and local environs.
- 1.4. The evidence that I have prepared and present in this proof of evidence is true and has been prepared, and is given in accordance with, the guidance of my professional institution.

Approach and Methodology

- 1.5. This proof comprises my consideration of the expected effect of the appeal scheme upon the historic environment. It contains sections on:
 - 1.5.1. Key historic environment terms and concepts to be considered within the inquiry and relevant guidance referred to;
 - 1.5.2. Assessment of baseline historic environment conditions and effects of proposed development; and
 - 1.5.3. Conclusions

Key terms and concepts

- 1.6. The following are key concepts for the consideration of effects to the historic environment in this case:

- Heritage asset;
- Significance;
- Setting;
- Harm; and
- Less than substantial harm.

1.7. A *heritage asset* is defined in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) as building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes (but is not limited to) designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing). Assets may be identified during the course of preparation for, or assessment of, a development proposal and their identification therefore involves a degree of professional judgement. Assets are components of the historic environment, shaped by human intervention at some point in the past and can include outwardly natural features such as woodlands and moors.

1.8. *Significance* is the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. Such interest is composed of a combination of factors and, owing to the evolution of terminology in legislation and policy over time, differing terms may be adopted between different authors. For clarity in this report, to understand the significance of heritage assets and the effect of proposed change, significance is expressed using the 'Conservation Principles' approach first outlined by English Heritage in 2008. This approach breaks down the significance of a heritage asset into a series of component values and is equally applicable regardless of the nature of the heritage asset under discussion. These values comprise:

- *Evidential value* – the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity;
- *Historical value* – the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. This often divides into two sub-aspects: associative historical value, the associations of an asset with a notable family, person, event or movement; and illustrative historical value, the ability of an asset to illustrate its original purpose and the activities it supported;
- *Aesthetic value* – the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place; and

- *Communal value* - the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

1.9. The *setting* of a heritage asset is defined, with reference to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and Historic England guidance on setting as the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. The setting of a heritage asset, or specific elements of that setting, can contribute to its heritage significance or can be neutral. In cases where setting is neutral, it is not a contributory factor in the asset's significance.

1.10. *Setting of a heritage asset. The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral (NPPF, Annex 2: Glossary).*

1.11. Views and Setting

The contribution of setting to the significance of a heritage asset is often expressed by reference to views, a purely visual impression of an asset or place which can be static or dynamic, long, short or of lateral spread, and include a variety of views of, from, across, or including that asset.

Views which contribute more to understanding the significance of a heritage asset include:

- *those where the composition within the view was a fundamental aspect of the design or function of the heritage asset*
- *those where town- or village-scape reveals views with unplanned or unintended beauty*
- *those with historical associations*
- *those with cultural associations, including landscapes known historically for their picturesque and landscape beauty, those which became subjects for paintings of the English landscape tradition, and those views which have otherwise become historically cherished and protected*
- *those where relationships between the asset and other heritage assets or natural features are particularly relevant*

Historic England, The Setting of Heritage Assets, 2nd edn (2017)

1.12. The PPG chapter on the historic environment emphasises that, although the extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to the visual

relationship, or views between the asset and the proposed development and associated visual/physical considerations, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors (such as noise, dust, smell and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity) and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places. For example, buildings that are in close proximity but are not visible from each other may have a historic or aesthetic connection that amplifies the experience of the significance of each. The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights of way or an ability to otherwise access or experience that setting. The contribution may vary over time.

- 1.13. *Harm* is defined as adverse effects to the heritage significance of a heritage asset as a result of natural processes and/or human agency. This recognises that change can occur both to heritage assets and within their setting, but that such changes do not automatically equate to harm if they leave the heritage significance of an asset unaffected.

1.13.1. *In assessing whether a proposal might cause harm is the impact on the significance of the heritage asset. As the National Planning Policy Framework makes clear, significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.*

1.13.2. *Proposed development affecting a heritage asset may have no impact on its significance or may enhance its significance and therefore cause no harm to the heritage asset. Where potential harm to designated heritage assets is identified, it needs to be categorised as either less than substantial harm or substantial harm.*

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, revised 23 07 2019, Planning Practice Guidance: Historic Environment, Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 18a-018-20190723

- 1.14. *Less than substantial harm* occurs when change either removes or reduces key elements associated with a heritage asset's significance. Less than substantial harm would be expected to occur if a change, even one perceived as relatively minor in extent, affected those elements of heritage significance associated with the asset. Such changes would be those which negatively impact on associated elements of an asset's significance and thus affect any ability to clearly appreciate the special context of the asset and its setting.
- 1.15. The Council has a statutory duty under section 66 of the 1990 Act requiring it to 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".

1.16. The Council has a statutory duty under section 72 of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 that '**special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area**'.

1.17. In addition, paragraph 212 of the NPPF requires that in considering whether to grant planning permission for any works or development, "**great weight should be given to the asset's conservation**".

Policy and Guidance

1.18. Relevant policy

- Section(s) 66/72 of the 1990 Act
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) section 16, paras. 207-221
- Adopted North Dorset Local Plan: Policy 5: The Historic Environment (2016)

1.19. Historic environment guidance

- Planning Practice Guidance, s.v. *Historic Environment*
- NPPF Annex 2: Glossary
- Historic England, Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2008)
- Historic England, Managing Significance in Decision: Taking in the Historic Environment - GPA2 (2015)
- Historic England, The Setting of Heritage Assets, 2nd edn – GPA3 (2017)
- Historic England, Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets - HEAG279 (2019)
- LUC, Strategic Landscape and Heritage Study for North Dorset Area: An Assessment of Land Surrounding the Larger Villages (2019)
- North Dorset Landscape Character Assessment (2008)
- The Strategic Landscape and Heritage Study for North Dorset and The Dorset Landscape Character Assessment for Marnhull
- BS 7913:2013, Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings (2013) *regarding setting*

1.20. Historic England, The Setting of Heritage Assets, 2nd edn – GPA3 (2017) recommends a five-step method for assessing the effects to heritage assets which arise as a result of change to their setting:

Step 1: Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected

Step 2: Assess the degree to which these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated

Step 3: Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance or on the ability to appreciate it

Step 4: Explore the way to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm

Step 5: Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes

1.21. GPA3 explicitly recognises that setting can be, but is not always, a factor in the heritage values that make up an asset's heritage significance, and that change in setting does not automatically equate to an effect on that significance. Since publication of the original guidance in 2011, this has become the accepted approach and utilised for the assessment of the effects of setting change upon heritage assets and aligns with the requirements of NPPF with regard to the articulation of the significance of assets. It should be noted that Step 5 is omitted from this report's assessment as it is the remit of the decision-maker.

1.22. The assessment of effects to heritage assets has included the following tasks:

- Review of planning documentation;
- Review of published and unpublished sources on the history and development of Marnhull and its environs including historic mapping;
- Identification of heritage assets susceptible to effects from the development (GPA3: Step 1);
- Analysis of the contribution of the setting to the significance of identified heritage assets (GPA3: Step 2);
- Assessment of the expected effects of development (GPA3: Step 3); and
- Conclusion regarding enhancement and mitigation (GPA3: Step 4).

Background

2. Background and historical development

2.1. The application site is situated within a landscape extent classified as "Limestone hills" which forms an elevated, geological sequence closely bordering low-level, undulating, open planes. The extent, located on the upper ridge of the Blackmoor Vale, is characterised by an ancient pattern of small irregular pastoral fields and narrow lanes, interspersed with irregular patches of woodland.

2.2. The expansive, and generally open, landscape provides opportunity for wide spanning, distant views which incorporate the presentation of mixed farmland, dense boundary hedgerows, stonewalls, and infrequent, steep wooded slopes.

- 2.3. Typically, settlements are defined by the adoption of distinctive local yellow limestone with the use of Forest Marble and Cornbrash common. These picturesque and distinctive limestone villages, and concomitant church towers, vernacular dwellings, and scattered farmsteads, are all characteristic of the overall limestone scenery which contributes significantly to the village's rural and agrestic sense of place.
- 2.4. Furthermore, the intrinsic scenic quality, associated with the character of the limestone hills landscape and, more specifically, Marnhull's overall low-density presentation within both a localised and wider landscape context, promote a strong sense of tranquillity and remoteness. These perceptual and experiential qualities are fundamentally derived from the village's undeveloped rural character which contribute to the distinctiveness and sense of place at a local scale.
- 2.5. The open green spaces within the village and rural landscape, encompassing the village exterior, are broadly accessible by an established network of formal public right of way footpaths of which the Stour Valley Way and Hardy Way are considered significant in promoting views toward the unique, historic built form and character of the Village. From Marnhull's network of publicly accessible footpaths, views toward the village clearly and easily facilitate the appreciation and enjoyment of distinctive individual attributes, and associated form, that collectively populate and represent the linear format of the settlement.
- 2.6. Regressive map evidence from 1888 indicates the clear definition of footpaths (FP) which are still in active use to current day. Each footpath is considered unique in its purpose offering historical, functional, context associated with the dispersed nature of the village. Each footpath, by degree, supports a range of opportunities to appreciate both immediate and distant views through, across and onto the historic built form of the village and its historically undeveloped open rural spaces.

Appendix B - Historic footpath map overlay

2.6.1. Footpaths considered of relevant interest are:

- 2.6.1.1. N47/25
- 2.6.1.2. N47/27
- 2.6.1.3. N47/28
- 2.6.1.4. N47/29
- 2.6.1.5. N47/30
- 2.6.1.6. N47/31
- 2.6.1.7. N47/32

2.6.1.8. N47/33

2.6.1.9. N47/36

Appendix A – Viewpoints

- 2.7. Marnhull has strong associations with Thomas Hardy, providing the inspiration for ‘Marlott’ in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* with extant buildings within the conservation area appearing within the text (notably the Crown Inn and Church), thus making a contribution to associative heritage values.
- 2.8. Views, looking outward from the village, are mostly of undeveloped, wooded skylines with long-reaching views enclosed when viewed from north to south and south to north by existing development. The tower of the grade I listed St Gregory's Church is a prominent landmark feature on the skyline when looking toward the village, and from within the village looking outward, from a broad range of vantage points.
- 2.9. The specific address of future development and the maintenance of spirit of place regarding Marnhull is clearly evidenced within the *North Dorset Landscape Character Assessment 2008* and *The Strategic Landscape and Heritage Study for North Dorset and The Dorset Landscape Character Assessment for Marnhull* to which the following advice is given:
- Conserve and enhance the varied settlement pattern of the different limestone villages and their relationship with the associated surrounding copses/ woodlands
 - Maintain the undeveloped character of the area e.g. by resisting intrusive developments on sensitive and exposed hillside locations.

Impacts on Significance

3. Impacts and Effects

- 3.1. Predicated on the unique context of the application site, and its presentation within a notable character area of the localised, historic village extent, assets principally affected by the scheme have been identified as the Church of St Gregory, Senior's Farmhouse and Attached Barn, and the Marnhull Conservation Area.
- 3.2. Both application sites, as illustrated on supporting indicative plans, are situated outside the extent of the Marnhull settlement boundary which is presented in a distinctive linear format. Predicated on the proposed derivation from preserving

the village's historic settlement pattern, my initial concern relates to one of site allocation and, what is perceived to be, cumulative erosion (loss) of the village form through the schemes intent to site, infill, development between the two Marnhull Conservation Area extents.

- 3.3. I confirm that there are no designated heritage assets identified within the immediate extent of the application site, thus proposals are not considered to impact directly (physically) on the fabric of any encompassing assets. However, impact is considered expected by way of the scheme's presentation within the village-scape and, therefore, the setting of encompassing designated heritage assets.
- 3.4. Encompassing designations have been identified by adopting the publicly available, spatial GIS mapping service, Dorset Explorer, developed and managed by Dorset Council. All designation data published on Dorset Explorer references Historic England's centralised *Search the list* records.
- 3.5. The approach to assessment is proportionate to the significance of the identified heritage assets to which consideration is given to how proposals influence the setting of assets by enhancing or detracting from that significance and any ability to appreciate it.
- 3.6. The affected heritage assets are scheduled below, along with relevant aspects of their significance, including any contribution made by their setting. Where potential impacts are indirect (i.e. affecting setting) only, then only relevant contributory elements of setting are outlined.
- 3.7. For the purpose of this proof of evidence designated assets comprise:
 - 2 listed buildings
 - Church of St Gregory (Grade 1, 1172545)
 - Senior's Farmhouse and Attached Barn (Grade II*, 1172057)
 - Marnhull Conservation Area

N.B. Refer to document POUT202302644 Photomontage Viewpoint Locations (CO)

Northern parcel development

4. Affected assets: Site A - Northern parcel development (Tess Square)

- 4.1. The village's open farmland to the west of Church Hill has been adopted for agricultural use since the C19 based on the evidence of historical maps. The network of PRow's crossing this area are also considered to represent important routes that connect the village with its history of land use. The extent

proposed for the application site currently separates two parts of the village which promote a dispersed settlement pattern and sense of separation considered of principal importance to the setting of the Conservation Area. This distinct, historic settlement reference is currently well maintained despite the modern, postwar development connecting the village to the east of Church Hill. The proposed scheme comprising a food store, business units, and parking would occupy much of the currently unbuilt land, west of Church Hill, which I perceive would directly, negatively challenge the clear relational legibility and presentation between the two sections of the Conservation Area.

4.2. Step 1:

Statutory address - **Church of St Gregory**, New Street, Marnhull, NGR: ST 78151 18717

4.3. Step 2:

Elements of setting which contribute to the asset's significance include:

- 4.3.1. spatial and historically functional relationship within the localised extent and context of the village and its encompassing, immediate and distant, agrestic local landscape
- 4.3.2. the visual experience, from the building and grounds, that collectively promote the site's discrete (private) and tranquil rural setting
- 4.3.3. the visual experience toward the building within the context of its low-density village setting
- 4.3.4. the visual, static and kinetic, experience obtained from a full village radius of viewpoints toward the building that clearly exhibit the structures elevated prominence as an impressive landmark feature within the settlement boundary
- 4.3.5. Peripheral views that present the building within the wider context of the villagescape setting

4.4. St Gregory's Church presents as an imposing and predominant, elevated landmark feature, centrally set, within the uninterrupted skyline of the village radius. The Grade I designated 15th century church tower is widely visible across all open farmland, within the village core, and encompassing landscape.

4.5. Evidential value:

- 4.5.1. The oldest part of the Church dates back to around 1150, with one remaining pillar featuring carved capitals and three worked heads, possibly representing the masons involved in its construction.

- 4.5.2. The nave's extension westward and the addition of a north transept in the 14th century demonstrate the Church's growth and changing needs of the congregation.
 - 4.5.3. The 15th-century additions, including the south transept and the west tower, further illustrate the Church's development over time.
 - 4.5.4. Various architectural styles represented in the church reflect changing tastes and building techniques over the centuries.
- 4.6. Historical – associative value:
- 4.6.1. The Church has connections to notable families, including the Hussey family, for whom the north chapel is named (the Hussey Chapel).
 - 4.6.2. The Church has literary associations with Thomas Hardy, who based his novel 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' in Marnhull (referred to as Marlott in the book).
 - 4.6.3. The Church's history is linked to Glastonbury Abbey, which owned land in Marnhull and may have influenced the construction of the west tower.
- 4.7. Historical – illustrative value:
- 4.7.1. The Church's structure illustrates the evolution of religious practices and architectural styles from the 12th century onwards.
 - 4.7.2. The Church's location at a major crossroads, surrounded by other historic buildings, illustrates its central role in the community's development:
 - 4.7.2.1. Seniors Farm, once the 'Abbott of Glastonbury's Grange in Marnhull', is adjacent to the church.
 - 4.7.2.2. St Gregory's Primary School, established in 1873, continues to use the church for worship.
 - 4.7.2.3. The Old Rectory (Conyer's Place) and Church Farm nearby demonstrate the historical importance of the church in local life.
 - 4.7.2.4. The presence of monuments, hatchments, and ledger stones commemorating various important families provides a tangible connection to the social history of Marnhull.
 - 4.7.2.5. The Church's growth and alterations over the centuries reflect the changing needs and resources of the local community, illustrating the social and economic history of the area.
- 4.8. Aesthetic value:
- 4.8.1. Visual appearance
 - 4.8.1.1. *The Church's 15th-century west tower is a striking feature, visible for miles around and considered by many to be one of the finest examples in Dorset* (Dorset Historic Churches Trust).

- 4.8.1.2. The building's exterior, constructed of squared rubble and rough ashlar with finer ashlar dressings, presents a visually appealing mix of textures and stonework.
 - 4.8.1.3. The Church's prominent location near the centre of the village makes it a notable local landmark, and skyline focal point, contributing to the aesthetic character of Marnhull.
- 4.8.2. Architectural interest
- 4.8.2.1. The Church clearly exhibits a variety of architectural styles from different periods, reflecting its evolution from the 12th century onwards.
 - Romanesque elements, including a 12th-century pier with capitals in the north arcade.
 - 14th-century extensions and additions.
 - 15th-century features, including the impressive west tower.
 - 4.8.2.2. The interior exhibits architectural elements of interest such as:
 - A wagon roof in the enlarged north aisle. An important coffered roof with carved panels from around 1520 in the nave.
- 4.8.3. Artistic elements
- 4.8.3.1. The Church contains various artistic features that provide visual and intellectual stimulation.
 - 4.8.3.2. Remnants of 16th-century wall paintings on either side of the tower arch.
 - 4.8.3.3. Stained glass windows, including a small piece of medieval glass in a north aisle window.
 - 4.8.3.4. Monuments, hatchments, and ledger stones commemorating important local families.
- 4.8.4. Atmosphere and ambiance
- 4.8.4.1. The Church's interior and churchyard extent is considered a peaceful and tranquil space, offering a sense of stillness and contemplation.
 - 4.8.4.2. The Church's location at a major crossroads, surrounded by other historic buildings, creates an aesthetically pleasing and historically rich environment.
- 4.8.5. Landscape integration

- 4.8.5.1. The Church tower forms a significant part of the local landscape, visible from various vantage points and contributing to the area's scenic beauty.
- 4.8.5.2. St Gregory's Church offers a rich aesthetic experience through its architectural beauty, historical features, and serene atmosphere, making it a visually and intellectually stimulating landmark in Marnhull.

4.9. Communal value:

4.9.1. Central role in community life

- 4.9.1.1. The Church serves as a focal point for religious and social gatherings, hosting regular worship services, including Sunday Eucharists at 8am and 10am, as well as Morning Prayer on Wednesdays.
- 4.9.1.2. The Church plays a vital role in marking life events for the community, offering services for baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals, and memorial services.
- 4.9.1.3. The Church is open daily from 9am to 4:30pm for private prayer, providing a space for personal reflection and spiritual solace.

4.9.2. Educational and cultural significance

- 4.9.2.1. St Gregory's Primary School, established in 1873, continues to use the church weekly for worship and holds major celebrations there, fostering a connection between education and spiritual life.
- 4.9.2.2. The Church's long history of music contributes to the cultural identity of the community.
- 4.9.2.3. As the oldest and largest building in the village, it serves as a unique record of Marnhull's history, connecting current residents to their heritage.

4.9.3. Community engagement and outreach

- 4.9.3.1. The church's association with Thomas Hardy's novel "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" (where Marnhull is referred to as Marlott) provides a shared literary heritage for the community.
- 4.9.3.2. The Church's connections to notable local families, such as the Husseys, contribute to the collective memory and sense of local identity.

4.9.4. Landmark and visual identity

- 4.9.4.1. The Church tower is a significant landmark visible for miles around, serving as a visual anchor for the community and a symbol of Marnhull's identity in the wider landscape.
- 4.9.4.2. The Church's central location at a major crossroads, surrounded by other historic buildings, reinforces its role as a hub of community life and shared history.
- 4.9.4.3. St Gregory's Church holds substantial communal value, serving not only as a place of worship but also as a centre for community life, education, culture, and shared heritage, deeply intertwined with the collective experience and memory of Marnhull's residents.

4.10. Step 3:

- 4.10.1. Predicated on the contextual specificity of the application site, on heritage grounds, I consider the proposed scheme is not representative of an opportunity to offer benefit to, or enhancement of, the encompassing historic environment. Subsequently, in recognition of there being harm, and thus less than substantial harm, I consider that the proposed scheme would negatively impact on the significance of the asset and on that of a clear ability to appreciate it.
- 4.10.2. I perceive that the proposed development would fundamentally influence and negatively challenge the setting of the Church by introducing large scale, dominant, structures, parking, and associated infrastructure into the open, fielded extent of agricultural land considered to contribute to the immediate setting of the Church.

4.11. Step 4:

- 4.11.1. I consider there to be no opportunity for mitigation against impact and thus resultant harm to significance.

5. Step 1:

Statutory address - **Senior's Farmhouse and Attached Barn**, New Street, Marnhull, NRG ST 78102 18710

5.1. Step 2:

Elements of setting which contribute to its significance include:

- 5.1.1. spatial and historically functional relationship within the localised extent and context of the village and encompassing local, agrestic landscape
- 5.1.2. the visual experience, from the building and grounds, that collectively promote the site's tranquil rural setting

- 5.1.3. the visual experience toward the building within the context of its low-density village setting
 - 5.1.4. Peripheral views that present the building within the wider context of the villagescape setting
- 5.2. Seniors Farmhouse and attached barn is a Grade II* designated asset situated directly to the west of St Gregory's Church. Whilst removing the large asbestos agricultural structures, to the northwest, would be considered as an enhancement to the asset's setting, proposed development is perceived to erode the building's historic relational legibility within the immediate setting and extent of the encompassing agricultural landscape.
- 5.3. Evidential value:
- 5.3.1. The Farmhouse was once the "Abbott of Glastonbury's Grange in Marnhull," indicating its importance in medieval ecclesiastical history.
 - 5.3.2. The building still contains many period features, suggesting it can provide insights into historical construction techniques and architectural styles over different time periods
 - 5.3.3. The attached barn offers potential evidence of historical farming methods and rural life in Dorset
 - 5.3.4. As one of the oldest buildings in the village, Senior's Farmhouse would provide valuable information about the social and economic development of Marnhull over centuries
- 5.4. Historical – associative value:
- 5.4.1. Ecclesiastical connections: The farmhouse was once the "Abbott of Glastonbury's Grange in Marnhull," linking it to important religious institutions and figures of medieval England.
 - 5.4.2. Agricultural heritage: As one of the earliest houses in Marnhull, dating back to approximately 1500, it represents a longstanding connection to the area's farming history.
- 5.5. Historical – illustrative value:
- 5.5.1. The historical value of Senior's Farmhouse and attached barn is enhanced by its context within Marnhull, a village with a rich documented history including detailed census records from the 19th century and earlier. This allows the building to be appreciated as part of a broader historical narrative of rural Dorset life and development.
 - 5.5.2. Architectural evolution: The Grade II* listing of Senior's Farmhouse indicates exceptional interest due to its ability to illustrate changes in building techniques and styles over centuries.

- 5.5.3. Agricultural practices: The attached barn provides insight into historical farming methods and rural life in Dorset, illustrating the original purpose of the building complex.
- 5.5.4. Social and economic history: As a prominent early structure in Marnhull, the farmhouse can illustrate the social and economic development of the village from the 16th century onwards.
- 5.5.5. Local development: Its presence alongside other historic buildings like the 17th-century Old Rectory helps illustrate the growth and evolution of Marnhull over time.
- 5.5.6. Rural life continuity: The farmhouse's enduring presence demonstrates the continuity of agricultural life in the region from medieval times to the present day.

5.6. Aesthetic value:

5.6.1. Architectural

- 5.6.1.1. Historical design: As a Grade II* listed building, Senior's Farmhouse features exceptional architectural elements that reflect its origins around 1500.
- 5.6.1.2. Vernacular presentation: The farmhouse and barn exhibit local Dorset building traditions, potentially including limestone walls and clay tile roofs, common in the region.
- 5.6.1.3. Evolving design: The structure displays a variety of architectural features from different periods, offering visual interest and insight into changing tastes over centuries.

5.6.2. Sensory experience

- 5.6.2.1. Material variety: The combination of stone walls, wooden beams, and other traditional materials provides visual interest for residents and visitors.
- 5.6.2.2. Rural ambiance: The farmhouse and attached barn setting evoke the sights, sounds, and smells of traditional rural life in Dorset.
- 5.6.2.3. Patina of age: The weathered surfaces and worn features of the buildings create a sense of authenticity and connection to the past

5.6.3. Contextual interest

- 5.6.3.1. Landscape integration: The farmhouse and barn complement the surrounding Dorset countryside, creating a harmonious visual relationship between built and natural environment.
- 5.6.3.2. Village character: As a prominent historical structure, it contributes significantly to Marnhull's overall aesthetic appeal and sense of place

5.7. Communal value:

- 5.7.1. Historical continuity: The farmhouse, dating back to around 1500, represents a tangible link to Marnhull's agricultural heritage. As one of the oldest buildings in the village, the building serves as a physical reminder of the community's long-standing rural identity and traditions.
- 5.7.2. Collective memory: As a prominent feature in the village landscape for over 500 years, Senior's Farmhouse figures in the collective memory of generations of Marnhull residents. Its presence has been a constant through centuries of local history and change.
- 5.7.3. Cultural identity: The farmhouse and Barn embody the agricultural character of Marnhull and the wider Blackmore Vale region. The buildings contribute to the village's sense of place and rural identity, which remains important to residents despite changes in the local economy.
- 5.7.4. Educational value: The Grade II* listed status of Senior's Farmhouse indicates its exceptional interest. This designation enhances its perceived value among locals as an important historical asset, potentially serving as an educational resource for understanding local architectural and social history.
- 5.7.5. Community landmark: As a visually striking and historically significant building, Senior's Farmhouse serves as a local landmark, contributing to the community's sense of place and distinctiveness within the Blackmore Vale.
- 5.7.6. Agricultural Heritage: In a village where farming remains "an important element of the village's day-to-day life", Senior's Farmhouse and barn stand as symbols of Marnhull's enduring connection to its agricultural roots, even as fewer residents now work directly in farming (Marnhull Messenger).
- 5.7.7. The value of Senior's Farmhouse and attached barn is further enhanced by Marnhull's strong sense of community and active engagement with its heritage, as evidenced by the village's numerous clubs, societies, and efforts to preserve its rural character.

5.8. Step 3:

- 5.8.1. Predicated on the contextual specificity of the application site, on heritage grounds, I consider the proposed scheme is not representative of an opportunity to offer benefit to, or enhancement of, the encompassing historic environment. Subsequently, in recognition of there being harm, and thus less than substantial harm, I consider that the proposed scheme would negatively impact on the significance of the asset and on that of a clear ability to appreciate it. Therefore, the introduction of challenging, commercial scale structures to the north

are perceived to negatively impact on the setting associated with the asset's distinctive rural environs.

5.9. Step 4:

- 5.9.1. I consider there to be no opportunity for mitigation against impact and thus resultant harm to significance.

6. Step 1:

Marnhull Conservation Area (Designated 1971) - currently comprising two defined extents:

- Marnhull north (Burton Street)
- Marnhull south (New Street/ Crown Road)

- 6.1. Whilst there is physical separation between each conservation area extent, predicated on the unique character of the Village, I consider impact in a collective context and, therefore, one that affects the total extent of the Marnhull Conservation Area irrespective of any perception of separation.

6.2. Step 2:

- 6.2.1. Elements which contribute to its significance include:

- 6.2.1.1. *Marnhull is a large village and one with a special character. Instead of a single centre, it has groups of stone cottages clustering at the angles of a square of roads, with the church at a SE angle. This pattern is a very loose one, but one feels it quite strongly.*

The Buildings of England: Dorset, Pevsner (fp 1972)

- 6.2.1.2. *The village of Marnhull is situated in the west of the North Dorset area, on the upper valley slopes of the River Stour (to the north and west) and within the North Dorset Limestone Ridges Landscape Character Area. A small part of the western extent of the assessment area is within the Upper Stour Valley Landscape Character Area, whilst the far eastern end of the assessment area is within the Blackmore Vale Landscape Character Area. Marnhull is a large village with a dispersed settlement pattern. The village was first formally recorded in 1150 in the listings of the Abbot of Glastonbury. Marnhull is surrounded by undulating mixed pasture and arable farmland, characterised by hedgerow boundaries with many mature trees which integrate the settlement into the landscape.*

- 6.2.1.3. *Existing settlement is low density and is laid out in a distinctive and historic linear settlement pattern.*

- 6.2.1.4. *Looking outward from the village are mostly undeveloped, wooded skylines with long-reaching views. The tower of the grade I listed St Gregory's Church is a landmark feature on the skyline when looking towards the village and is visible from most directions.*
- 6.2.1.5. *Despite its size, the village retains strong rural perceptual qualities with high levels of tranquillity. The surrounding network of minor rural lanes which have not been significantly altered by modern development also contributes to the rural character of the village.*
- 6.2.1.6. *A strong network of public rights of way surrounds the village, allowing appreciation of the landscape. These include parts of the Hardy Way and Stour Valley Way long distance recreational routes.*
- 6.2.1.7. *Marnhull has strong associations with Thomas Hardy, providing the inspiration for 'Marlott' in Tess of the d'Urbervilles with extant buildings within the conservation area appearing in the text (notably the Crown Inn), making a substantial contribution to associative heritage values.*
- 6.2.1.8. Within Marnhull Conservation Area and wider settlement there is the grade I listed Church of St Gregory [1172545] and the grade II* listed Senior's Farmhouse and attached barn [1172057], as well as numerous grade II listed buildings and some non-designated built heritage assets. Not all of these buildings will have a meaningful relationship with the assessment area, but those that may (e.g. the grade I listed Church of St Gregory [1172545], the grade II* Senior's Farmhouse and attached Barn [1172057] and the grade II Pond Farmhouse [1110408], Street Farmhouse [1324542], Cross Tree Farmhouse [1110402], and Church Farmhouse [1110406] as well as, potentially, some of the cottages), could have their heritage significance affected by development

LUC, Strategic Landscape and Heritage Study for North Dorset Area: An Assessment of Land Surrounding the Larger Villages (2019)

6.3. Step 3:

- 6.3.1. Both north and south conservation area extents will be affected by development where the open, undeveloped rural nature of the site, historically permitting clear and uncompromised intervisibility, will be significantly compromised. The parcel of land, parallel to the west of *Church Hill*, is considered a vital attribute of the village and is fundamentally associated with the maintenance of uncompromised legibility between the two conservation area extents. Predicated on the contextual specificity of the application site, on heritage grounds, I consider the proposed scheme is not representative of an opportunity to

offer benefit to, or enhancement of, the Marnhull Conservation Area. Subsequently, in recognition of there being harm, and thus less than substantial harm, I consider that the proposed scheme would negatively impact on the significance of the designated extent and on that of a clear ability to appreciate it.

6.4. Step 4:

- 6.4.1. I consider there to be no opportunity for mitigation against impact and thus resultant harm to significance.

Southern parcel development

7. Affected assets: Site B – Southern parcel development (Residential)

- 7.1. Proposals to build 120 houses, occupy the full extent of agricultural land bordered by Chippel Lane and Schoolhouse Lane. From the north approach to the village, St Gregory's Church is clearly presented as a key landscape feature at the convergence point of Chippel Lane and Schoolhouse Lane. This section offers easily obtainable views of the asset across, subtly elevated open farmland, north, toward the foreground of the village's south boundary. Therefore, I consider development would fundamentally alter the historic relationship between the Church and its setting by introducing a densely developed foreground to key views, north, towards the Conservation Area and Church. I acknowledge a degree of mitigation, by way of the scheme's design format, however, perceive that the proposals will negatively challenge and diminish the visual prominence of the tower which further serves to erode the historically open, rural setting of the Church
- 7.2. Step 1:
Statutory address - **Church of St Gregory**, New Street, Marnhull, NGR: ST 78151 18717
- 7.3. Step 2:
Per para. 4.3.
- 7.4. Step 3:
Per para. 4.10.
- 7.5. Step 4:

- 7.5.1. I consider there to be no opportunity for mitigation against impact and thus resultant harm to significance.

8. Step 1:

Marnhull Conservation Area (Designated 1971) - currently comprising two defined extents:

- Marnhull north (Burton Street)
- Marnhull south (New Street/ Crown Road)

8.1. Step 2:

Per para. 6.2

8.2. Step 3:

- 8.2.1. Both north and south conservation areas will be affected by development where the characteristic linear settlement pattern of the village will be compromised. Furthermore, the parcel of land bordered by Chippel lane and Schoolhouse Lane is considered a vital attribute that is fundamentally associated with the maintenance of uncompromised legibility between the two conservation area extents. Predicated on the contextual specificity of the application site, on heritage grounds, I consider the proposed scheme is not representative of an opportunity to offer benefit to, or enhancement of, the Marnhull Conservation Area. Subsequently, in recognition of there being harm, and thus less than substantial harm, I consider that the proposed scheme would negatively impact on the significance of the designated extent and on that of a clear ability to appreciate it.

8.3. Step 4:

- 8.3.1. I consider there to be no opportunity for mitigation against impact and thus resultant harm to significance.

Planning History

9. Relevant planning application history

- 9.1. Application number: 2/2018/0448/OUT - Land North of Chippel Lane, Marnhull (Status: Withdrawn - with effect from 8 September 2021)
- Proposal: Develop land by the erection of up to 58 No. dwellings. Form vehicular and pedestrian access, central parkland and open space, play area and attenuation basin. (Outline application to determine access).

- Heritage conclusion: Unable to support based on a result of less than substantial harm where the extent of associated harm to heritage assets was identified as warranting a *clear reason for refusal*.

N.B. Refer to document 220180448OUT Photomontage Viewpoint Locations

Matters in Dispute

10. Differences of opinion with appellant's assessment

10.1. Matters not in dispute

The proposed development would have 'less than substantial harm' on grade I listed Church of St Gregory, grade II listed Senior's Farmhouse and Attached Barn, and Marnhull Conservation Area (Statement of Common Ground, Matters not in dispute, para. 7.1.4).*

10.2. Matters that remain in dispute

Whether the 'less than substantial harm' identified would be outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal (Statement of Common Ground, Matters that remain in dispute, para. 8.1.4).

10.3. As stated in the Statement of Common Ground:

- 1 Harm to heritage assets can be considered on a sliding scale.
- 2 The weight to be attributed to the public benefits of the scheme.

Note: Point 2 is not a matter for heritage witnesses to determine.

10.4. Where, under *matters not in dispute*, agreement is reached that proposed development would have *less than substantial harm* on grade I listed Church of St Gregory, grade II* listed Senior's Farmhouse and Attached Barn, and Marnhull Conservation Area, comments regarding *matters that remain in dispute* are provided, specifically in address of Point 1 *Harm to heritage assets can be considered on a sliding scale*.

10.5. Any official methodology for assessing harm to an asset, on the basis of a *sliding scale* of harm is entirely deficient within the formal guidelines of best practice for assessing harm. Furthermore, a rationale supporting the convention of a sliding scale does not formally exist nor is one adopted as a consideration in the process of determination.

10.6. The PPG supporting section for the *Historic Environment* makes clear recommendation to the following binary consideration.

- *Proposed development affecting a heritage asset may have no impact on its significance or may enhance its significance and therefore cause no harm to the heritage asset. Where potential harm to designated heritage assets is identified, it needs to be categorised as either less than substantial harm or substantial harm.*

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, revised 23 07 2019, Planning Practice Guidance: Historic Environment, Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 18a-018-20190723

10.7. *National policy recognises that different proposals affecting heritage assets may result in different ‘scales’ of harm to their significance. For the purposes of decision-making, the Council will seek to establish the ‘scale of harm’ associated with any proposal affecting a heritage asset, in terms of:*

- *the total loss of the heritage asset;*
- *substantial harm to the heritage asset; or*
- *less than substantial harm to the heritage asset.*

Para. 4.147, Adopted North Dorset Local Plan: Policy 5: The Historic Environment (2016)

10.8. *The Council will expect developers to be able to demonstrate that all reasonable steps have been taken to mitigate the harm a proposal will cause to the significance of a heritage asset. Such mitigation will be taken into account by the Council when seeking to establish the scale of harm associated with the proposal.*

Para. 4.149, Adopted North Dorset Local Plan: Policy 5: The Historic Environment (2016)

10.9. References to a *scale of harm* can only reasonably be considered within a fixed context which comprise three categorisations as identified in local policy per para. 10.7.

10.10. The matter is well established that there is no diminishment within the category of harm or, to rephrase, that there are no recognised scales within less than substantial harm: ‘minor’ or ‘reduced’ harm is nonetheless construed as ‘harm’ according to national and local policies.

10.11. Predicated on these terms of understanding, if commitment to *minor harm* or *lower end of the scale* informal categories were to be pursued, out of a formal categorised context by dint of there being a recognition to a degree of harm, where potential harm to designated heritage assets has been identified, it needs only to be considered and categorised as less than substantial harm.

10.12. Therefore, it can only be logically concluded that the schemes mutual agreement of identified affected assets, and their resultant categorisation of less than substantial harm, are considered as such and not within a fictional

construct of tolerance.

- 10.13. *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*

NPPF, Section 16, para. 215

Summary

11. Summary and conclusions

- 11.1. Based on the proposed intent of the scheme and relational proximity to the Conservation Area, overall, impact is considered expected by way of negative challenge (harm) to unique attributes which positively contribute to the setting and, therefore the significance of encompassing designated assets. Subsequently, para. 215 of the NPPF is engaged in address of less than substantial harm.

- 11.2. *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*

NPPF, Section 16, para. 212

- 11.3. In accordance with para. 212 the following assets should be proportionately weighted accordingly:

- 11.3.1. The Church of St Gregory (G1) – Awarded the highest designation status representing a building of *exceptional interest*. Approximately 2.5% of listed buildings nationally are classified Grade I.

- 11.3.2. Senior's Farmhouse and Attached Barn (II*) – Awarded the second highest designation status representing an *important* building of *more than special interest*. Approximately 5.8% of listed buildings nationally are classified Grade II*.

- 11.4. Where development seeks to impact upon the historic setting of a G1 and GII* designated asset, very great weight should be applied where assets are considered of *highest significance* and are thus of the highest importance.

11.5. Where both red line extents, associated with the application site, are considered to contribute toward the immediate setting of identified designated assets, Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is engaged.

11.5.1. *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.*

Section 66 of the 1990 Act

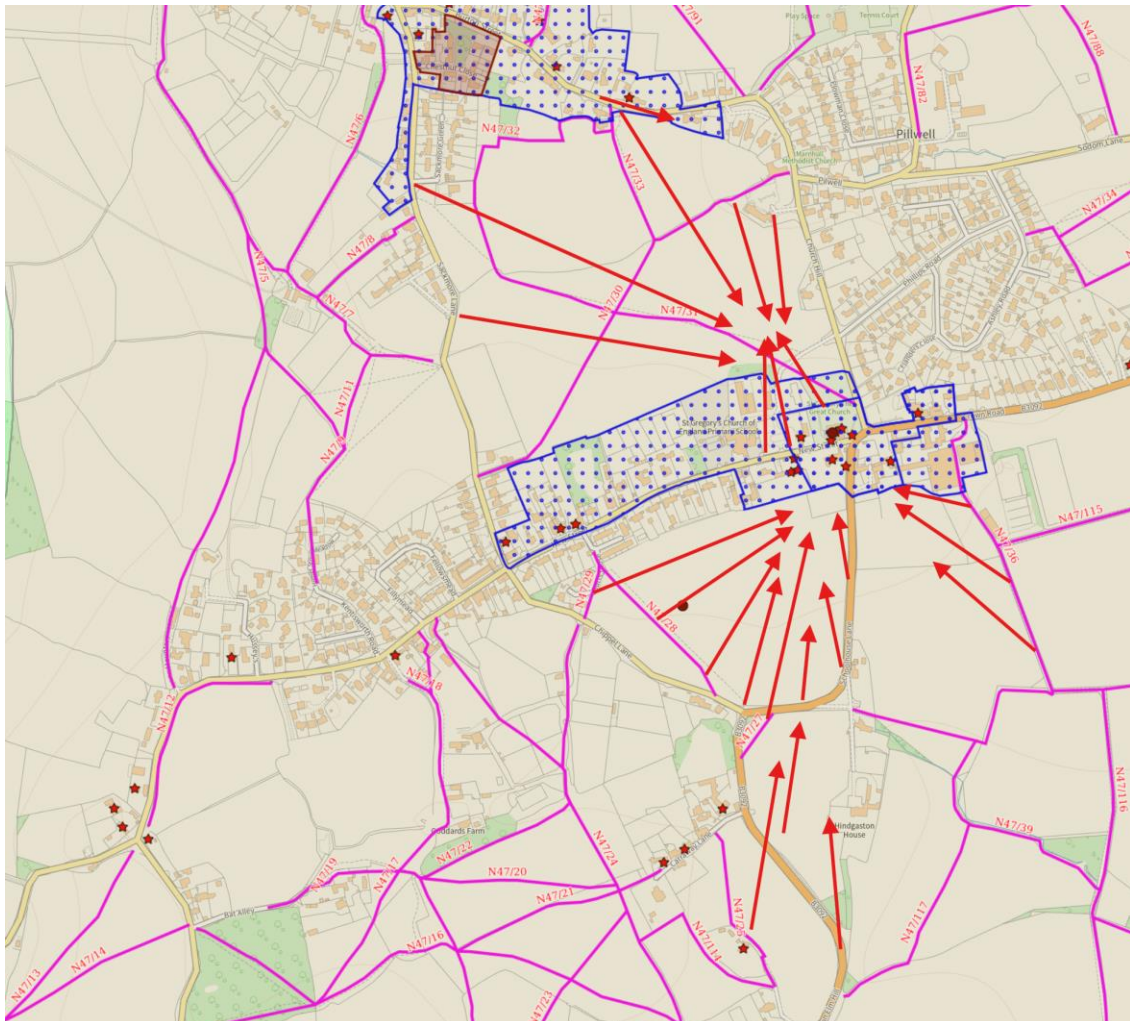
11.6. Where both red line extents, associated with the application site, are considered to contribute toward the immediate setting of identified designated assets, located within the Marnhull Conservation Area, Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is engaged.

11.6.1. *The Council has a statutory duty under section 72 of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 that 'special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'.*

Section 72 of the 1990 Act

Supporting Documentation

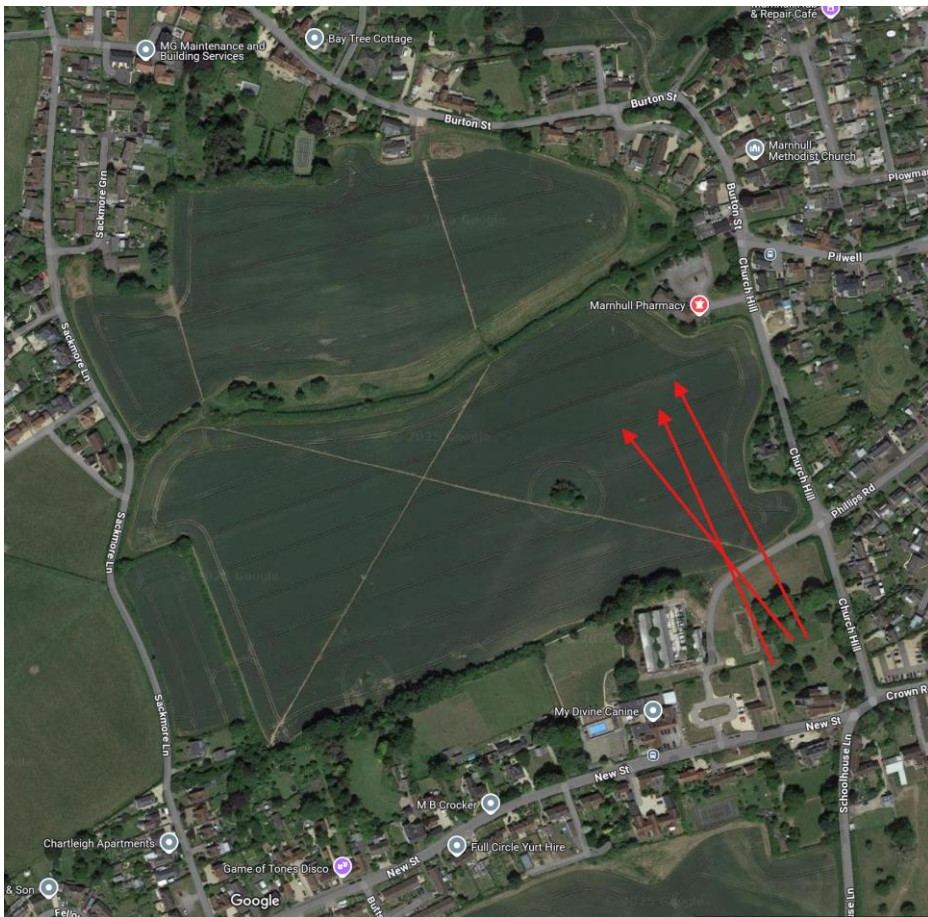
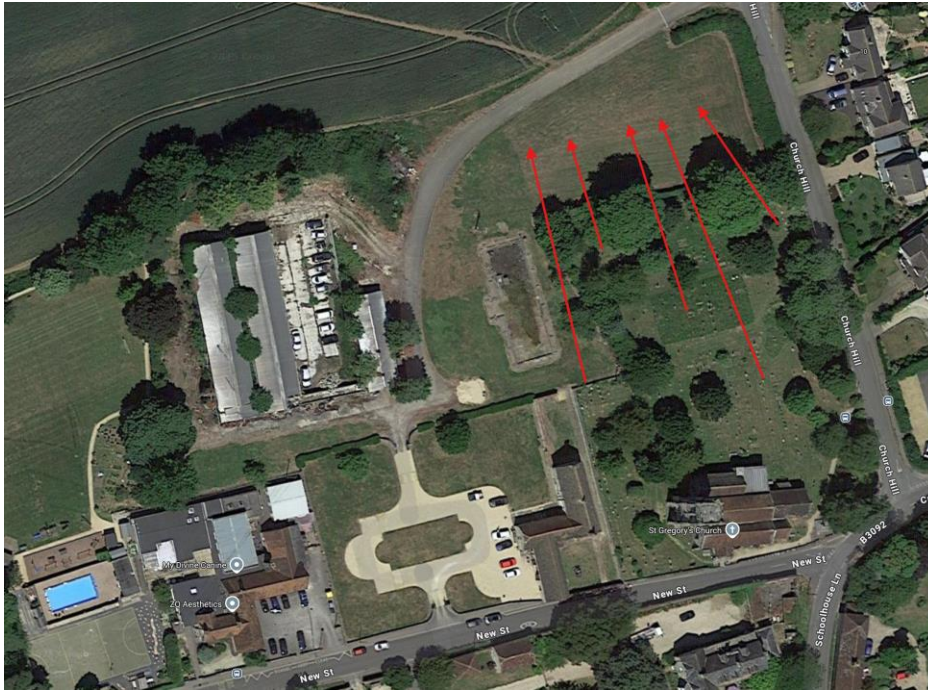
Appendix A – Viewpoints



N.B. Blue dotted area partially illustrates the Marnhull Conservation Area extent

Site A - Northern parcel development (Tess Square)

VPs1. Church of St Gregory (views within the church grounds across the application site to the north/ NW)





Additional views obtained from N47/31

VPs2. Marnhull Pharmacy (views within the Marnhull Pharmacy extent across the application site to the south/ SE toward Church of St Gregory and Senior's Farmhouse and attached Barn)

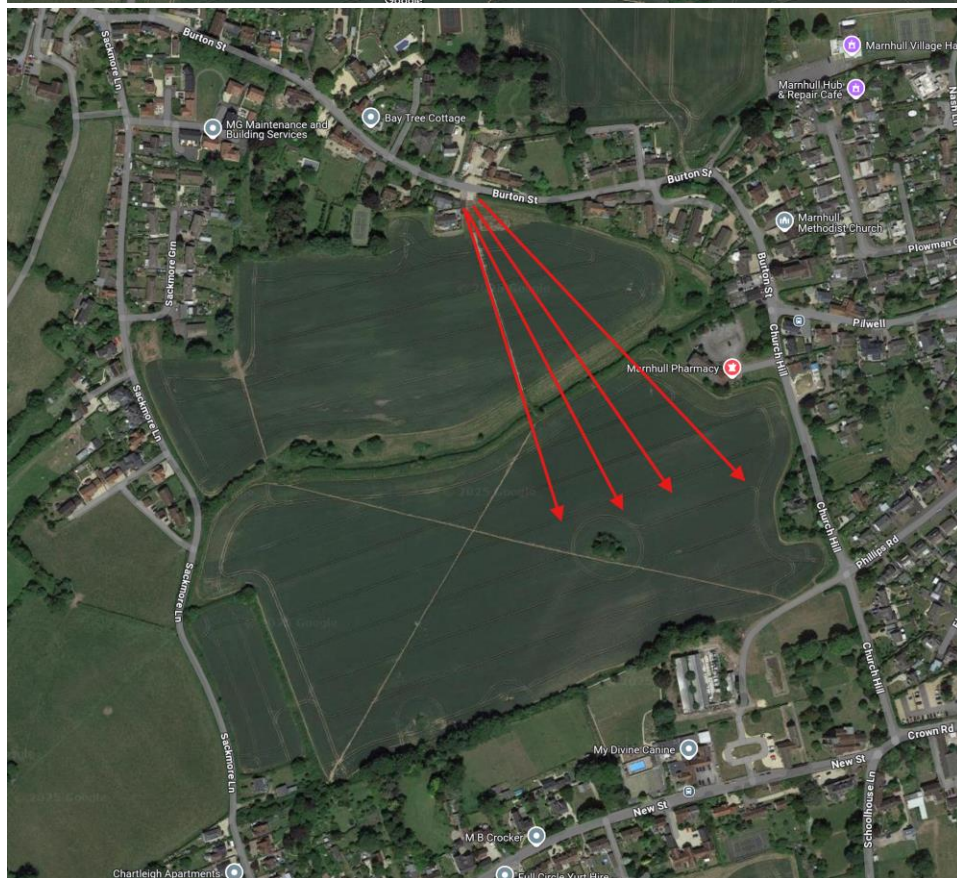






Additional views obtained from N47/30

An aerial photograph of a residential and agricultural area. Burton St runs horizontally across the middle. To the left, there are houses and a building labeled 'MG Maintenance and Building Services'. To the right, there are more houses and a building labeled 'Marshall Surgery'. Three red arrows originate from a point on Burton St and point towards a large, open field in the center. The field has some tracks or paths visible. The bottom of the image shows more fields and a road labeled 'Church Hill'.



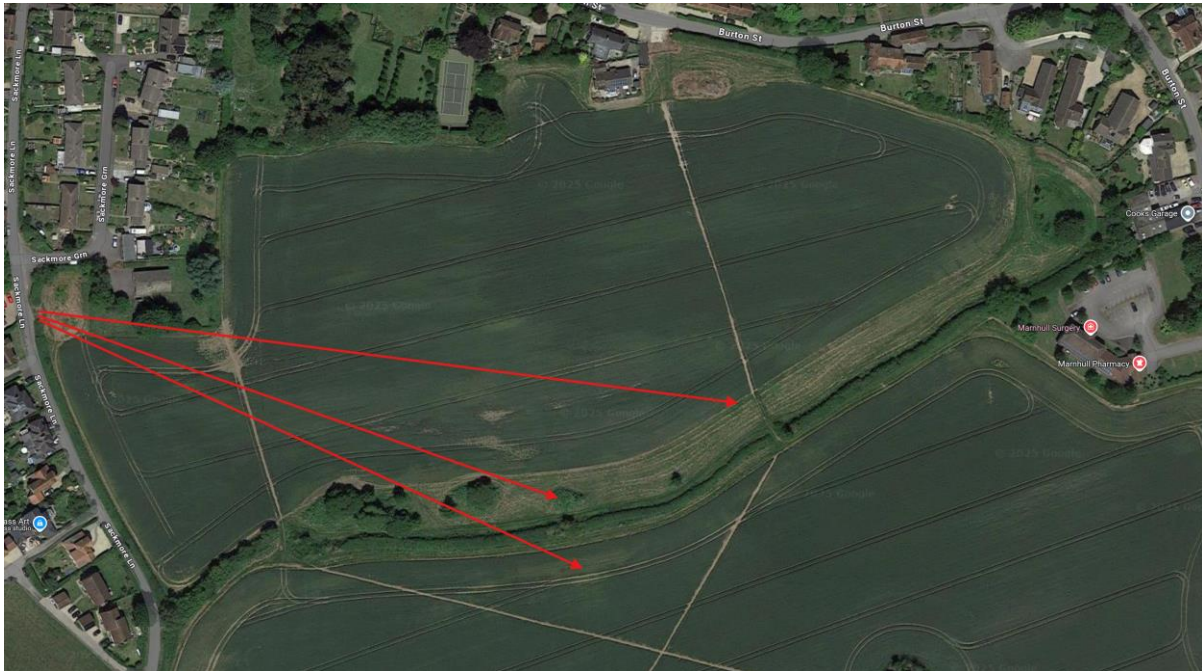


Additional views obtained from N47/33

VP4. Burton Road streetscape (streetscene view to the east/ south east incorporating Dowers Cottage, Orchard House assemblage, and Tapshays House, incorporating views across the application site toward the Church of St Gregory. An excellent example of significant, collective attributes and materiality)

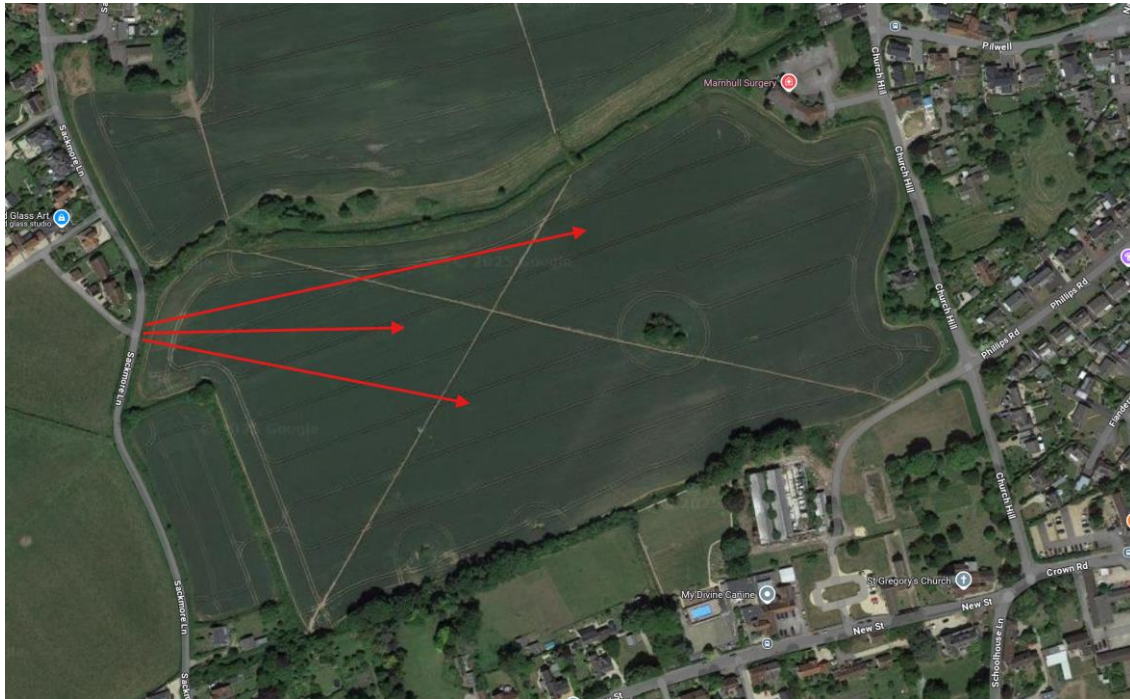


VP5. Sackmore Lane 1 (From field gate, views to the east/ SE across the application site incorporating Church of St Gregory)



Additional views obtained from N47/32

VP6. Sackmore Lane 2 (from outside Midway House drive entranceway, views to the east/ SE across the application site incorporating Church of St Gregory)



Site B – Southern parcel development (Residential)

VPs7. Butts Close (View across the application site to the NE / east and SE incorporating Church of St Gregory. Immediate, extended and open distant views toward Moorside and beyond evidence the rural context to the village)





Additional views obtained from N47/28 and N47/29

VPs8. Chippel Lane/ B3092 junction and Schoolhouse Lane (A framed view on approach to main linear settlement pattern, across the application site, incorporating Church of St Gregory to the north/ NE. Further views are obtainable of Church of St Gregory to the north along Schoolhouse Lane to the junction of New Street)



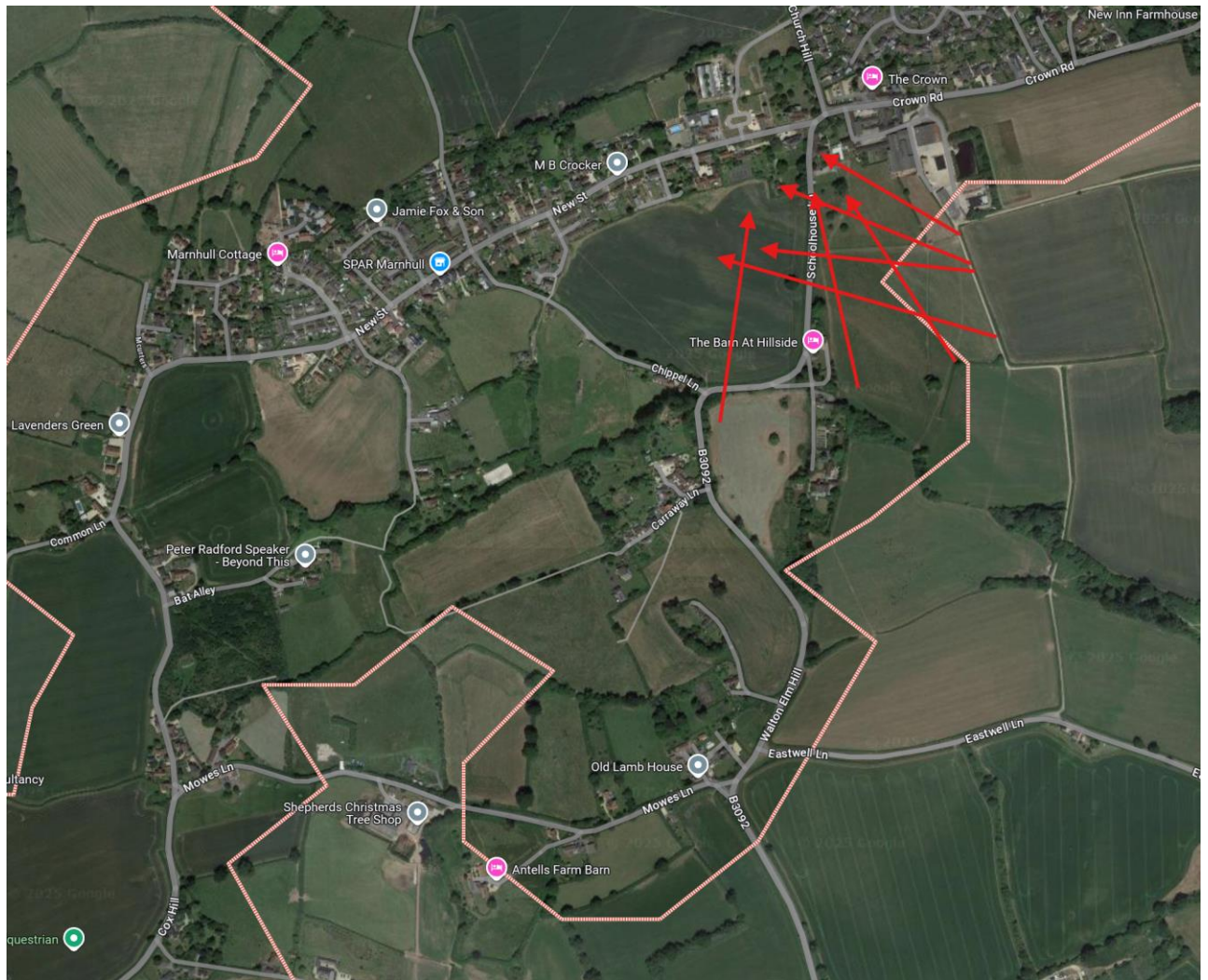


VPs9. B3092/ Walton Elm Hill (Frequent views obtained of Church of St Gregory, progressing north, along the main road presenting the application site in the foreground of the Church. Contextual views of encompassing localised rural landscape and of clear relationship between Tess Cottage and Church of St Gregory with regard the narrative of Thomas Hardy)





VPs10. Hardy Way (Direct and peripheral views obtained of Church of St Gregory, across application, progressing north along the defined route of Hardy Way)

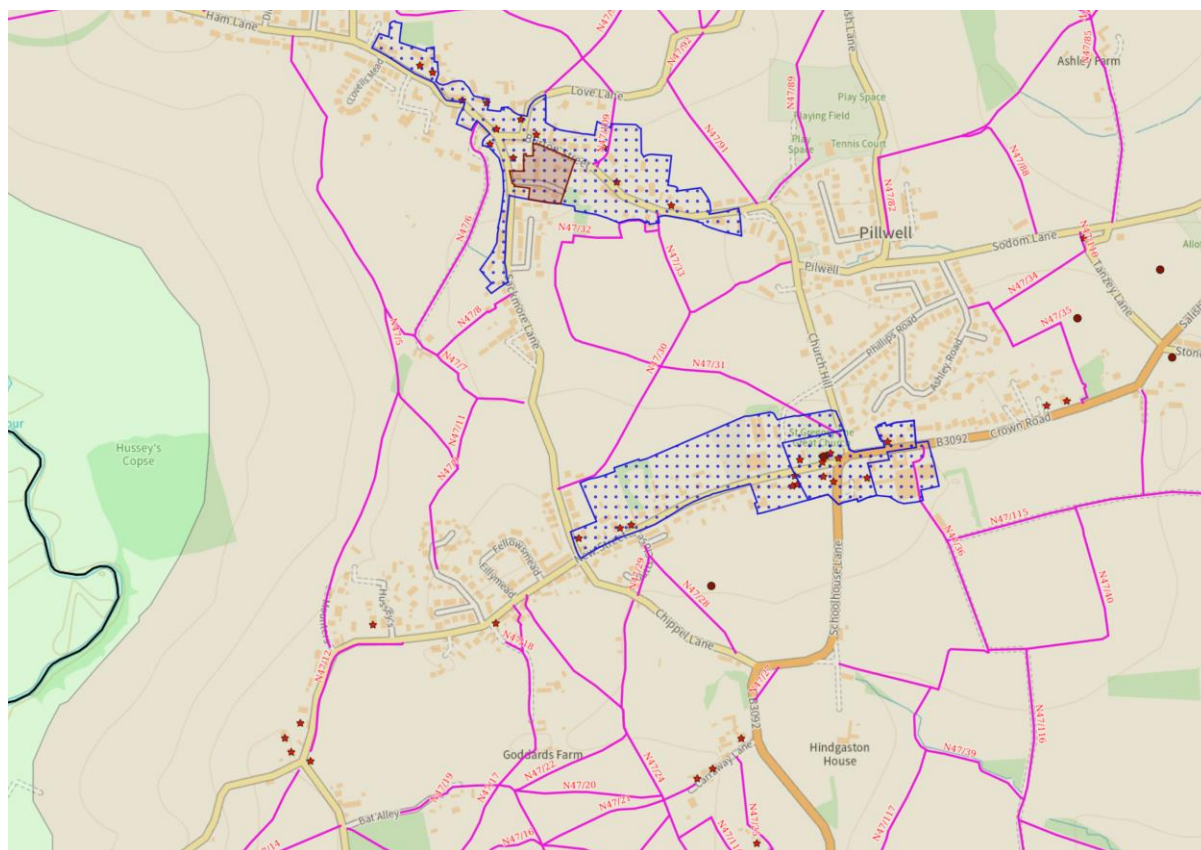




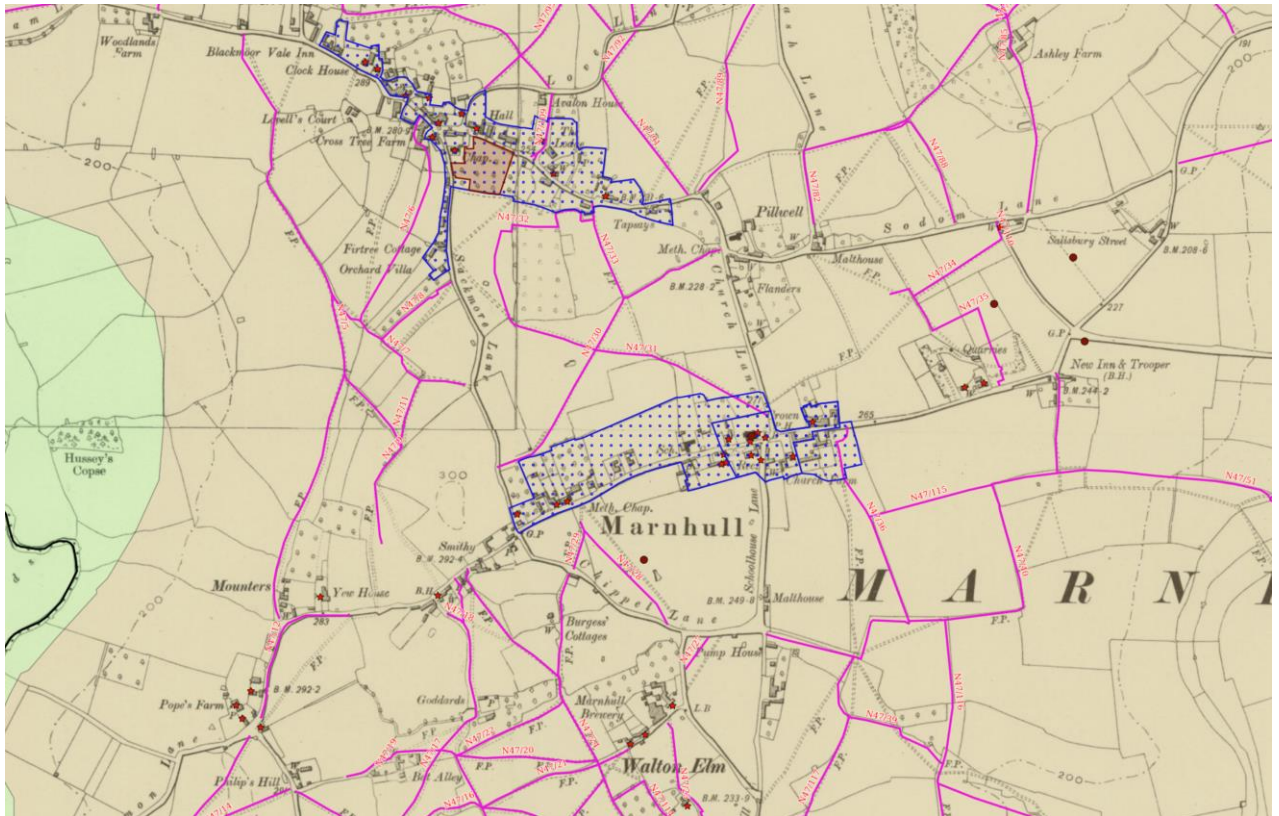


Views obtained from N47/27 – N47/39 and N47/36

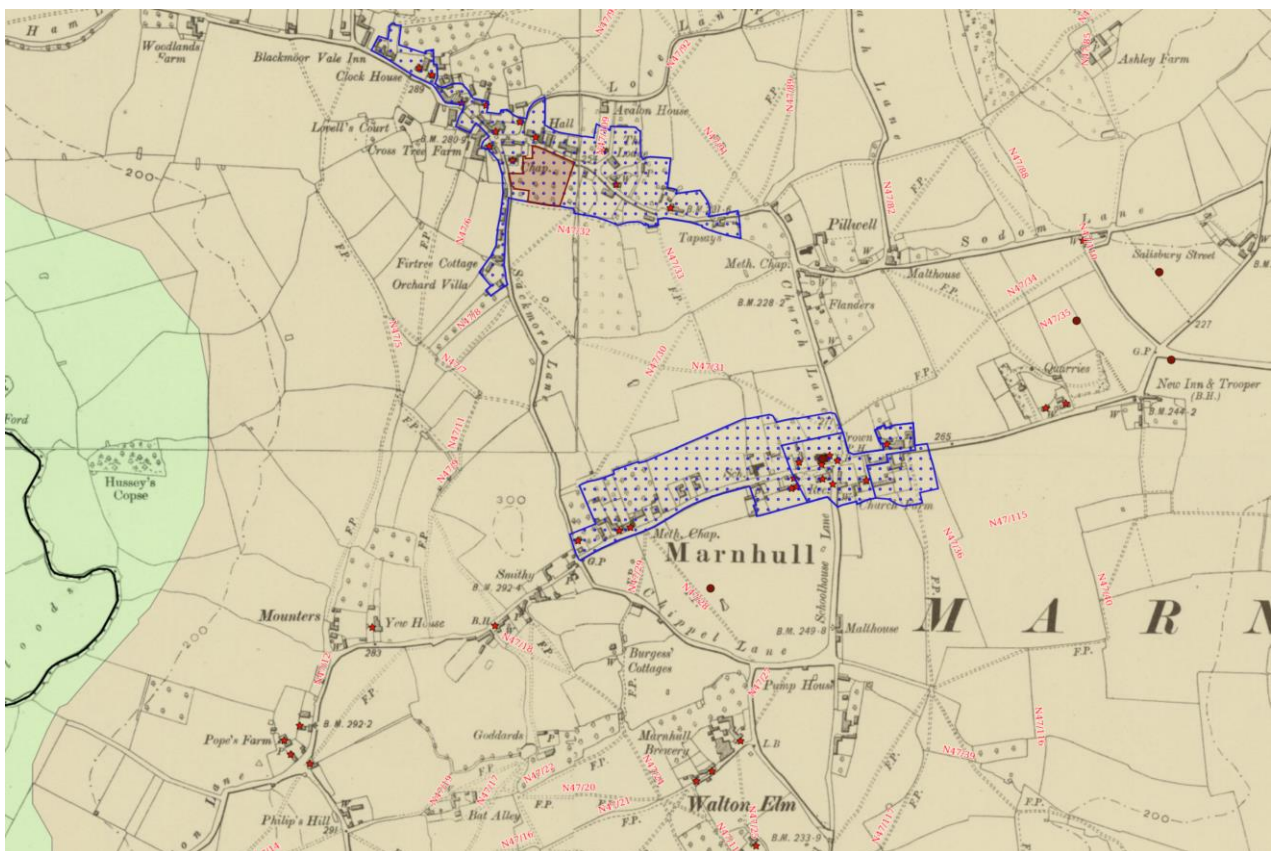
Appendix B - Historic footpath map overlay



Footpaths 2025



Footpaths 1888 with 2025 route and name overlay



Footpaths 1888 with 2025 with name overlay