

**Ashington Site 5 and Site 6, West Sussex:
Heritage Assessment**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the University College London Centre for Applied Archaeology, was commissioned by Henry Adams Planning to undertake an assessment of the land identified as Sites 5 and 6 in the draft Ashington Neighbourhood Plan. The aim of the assessment was to assess the potential impacts of the development of the land units, including access routes, on the setting and significance of designated heritage assets (scheduled monument and two listed buildings) and a non-designated heritage asset (a moated site of medieval origin). This assessment relates to the proposed access route as detailed in plans supplied by the client (reproduced at the end of this document), but in the absence of specific development proposals considers the impacts of any wider development of the land in more general terms to identify heritage constraints.

1.2 The site comprises a group of agricultural fields and woodland on the western edge of Ashington. Site 5 consists of a pasture field to the west and south-west of Church Farm, separated from the house by a belt of trees. Site 6 occupies an arable field and two smaller parcels of pasture north-west of Church Farm (and bordering Site 5), with woodland to the north and west. The joint access comprises two adjacent existing single-track roads that run parallel along the southern side of the churchyard wall of St Peter & St Paul's Church, Ashington. The northern road is concrete, and provides access to Church Farm, with a gravel spur providing access to Church Farm House through a gap in a high coniferous hedge. The southern road is a tarmac and brick sett driveway and provides separate access to Church Farm House, crossing a public footpath at the western end via two wooden field gates, with another wooden field gate at the eastern end. The two roads are separated by a wooden fence and a narrow strip of grass. The site is bounded by the churchyard wall (flint with sandstone coping) to the north, and by landscaped grass and trees to the south with modern (post-1970s) housing beyond.



View of the church from the east – two existing access roads visible to the left



Existing access routes (Google StreetView)

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 2.1 Ashington lies on the southern edge of the Low Weald clay vale, near its junction with the fertile lower greensand shelf at the base of the South Downs. The claylands have traditionally been seen as poor land with limited occupation due to the heavy clay soils, but recent work in the Horsham area has begun to overturn this view. The excavation of a Late Bronze Age site at America Wood on the eastern side of the village hints at the potential for prehistoric occupation within the Ashington area. Roman evidence is more certain, with a large building, interpreted as a possible villa, located to the south-west (just outside the Site 5 boundary), and protected as a Scheduled Monument (NHLE¹ ref. 1005826). Roman material (including two worn coins) has also been recovered from the churchyard adjacent to the site at an unknown date, suggesting a possible axis of activity (WSHER² 4033).
- 2.2 Little is known of the earlier history of Ashington. The historic settlement pattern corresponds to the classic Wealden type of scattered farmsteads set within irregular fields cleared from the forest and other waste (assarts). Prior to the Norman Conquest, Ashington was held by Godwine, Earl of Wessex and father of King Harold II, and Domesday records that the Conqueror subsequently granted the manor to William de Braose, lord of the Rape of Bramber and a powerful marcher lord on the frontier with independent Wales. The present parish church appears to be 13th century in origin – Ashington originated as a chapelry of Washington, so there was not necessarily an earlier structure on the site (WSHER 1155). It was located next to a moated site, which still survives at Church Farm House, although very little is known of this feature (WSHER 4254). Ashington remained little more of a hamlet until the enclosure of the common in the early 19th century, when a settlement developed along the drove road that became the A24 (now bypassed), and since the Second World War it has grown as a dormitory settlement.

¹ National Heritage List for England

² West Sussex Historic Environment Record



- 2.3 The proposed joint access to the Site formed part of the original access corridor to Church Farm, as shown in the Tithe map of 1847 (plot 107, Church Green and Pond, owned by Sir Charles Burrell and leased by Walter Peachey), with a track that ran south of the church and curved around a large irregular pond, before presumably accessing the house from the north-west (although this is not explicit on the map). The house is shown in red within the former moated site, with a large T-shaped arrangement of farm buildings to the east, with another trackway where the public footpath now runs. This remained the case until recently, as the Ordnance Survey map of 1974 shows, indicating that the existing gravel drive is very recent in date:



- 2.4 The wider Site comprises agricultural fields and blocks of woodland. The Sussex Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) database³ identifies the Site as 'planned private enclosure' of late medieval/early post-medieval date. In this clayland context close to the sandstone ridge, this may be enclosure of earlier open-field style field systems, or of assarts carved out of the woodland, with the date range supported by the

³ Curated by East and West Sussex County Councils and available through the respective Historic Environment Records.

sinuosity of some of the field boundaries (although the straightness of others suggests some later modification). One small piece of woodland, Spring Copse adjacent to the south-west corner of Site 5, is designated as ancient woodland.

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS

Scheduled Monument: Roman building 200yds (180m) NW of Spring Copse (NHLE Ref. 1005826)

- 3.1 The listing record describes the asset as follows:
The monument includes a Roman building surviving as below-ground archaeological remains. It is situated on gently sloping ground above a stream, north-west of Spring Copse near Ashington. The building dates from the second century AD and is associated with a number of ditches. In 1947, partial excavation identified the north-east corner of the foundations of a substantial flint and mortar building about 0.5m below ground level. Within the walls Roman building material and tiles were recovered. Outside the building a small number of Roman coins were found, including one of Constantine, along with Romano-British greyware pottery sherds, dating to the second century AD, and glass fragments. In 1999, geophysical survey confirmed the location of the building, which extends east across a field boundary above Spring Copse, and identified contemporary field ditches surviving as buried features. The extensive area of the building indicates that it is probably a minor Roman villa.
- 3.2 The interpretation of the site as a villa is based on a limited programme of test-pitting carried out by the Worthing Archaeological Society in 1947, for which no published report has been located. Up until recently, there was a tendency to interpret masonry structures on Roman rural sites as evidence for villas, perceived as high-status residences with an agricultural focus. Recent work on Roman rural settlement has allowed a more sophisticated understanding, with villas existing within a larger spectrum of rural sites with no definable boundary between large farmsteads and small villas, and with masonry structures existing on many different types of site (Smith *et al.* 2016).
- 3.3 The scheduled area comprises a rectangular area of scrubby woodland and undergrowth located on a south-facing slope extending down to a stream valley containing a pond. The excavated remains comprised two adjoining mortared flint walls representing the north-east corner of a building. There is no indication whether it was an entirely walled structure, or whether the footings relate to a dwarf wall on which a timber superstructure would have sat, although it did have a tiled roof. It is unknown exactly where the 1947 excavations were located, although the HER record locates them at the foot of the slope in an area of scrub, and it is difficult to relate them to the geophysical evidence. The 1999 survey (Martin 1999) identified anomalies in both the magnetometry and resistivity surveys across both fields that could be interpreted as buildings, but relate to the southern ends of any such structures. The artefacts recovered are unremarkable – the nature of the glass is

unknown, and while window glass would suggest a high-status building, vessel glass could be utilitarian and consistent with a farmstead.

- 3.4 However, a recent detailed magnetometer survey of the Site 5 field (Fradgley 2019) has provided further evidence, including a rectilinear anomaly in the south-east corner of the site surrounded by strong magnetic anomalies suggestive of fired brick, tile or other burnt deposits, with a strong thermoremanent response immediately north. This is interpreted as a potential bath-house with associated heating furnace. The location next to a spring would be ideal for water supply. An additional smaller kiln-like feature lies further north. The area of possible buildings in the western part of the field, identified in 1999, produced a weak magnetic response suggestive of more ephemeral features such as timber buildings. Both surveys also identified a series of linear features across the northern half of the field interpreted as ditches relating to a field system, although one east-west boundary could conceivably represent the boundary of a precinct boundary (another common feature with villas), with the southern boundary formed by the stream, a topographical feature of some antiquity. Structural evidence appears limited to the southern slope.
- 3.5 This additional evidence adds weight to the identification of the asset as a villa. Bath-houses are often located some distance from the main house, mostly because they were a fire risk: one example at Gorhambury (Hertfordshire) was located 120m from the house, within a separate enclosure.

Listed Building: Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul (Grade II* - NHLE Ref. 1027442)

- 3.6 The listing record describes the asset as follows:
Chancel with south chapel, nave with south aisle and porch. C15, restored by Robert Wheeler of Tunbridge Wells in 1872, when the south aisle was added.

Listed Building: Church Farmhouse (Grade II – NHLE Ref. 1353978)

- 3.7 The listing record describes the asset as follows:
C17 or earlier L-shaped timber-framed building with plaster infilling. Horsham slab roof. Casement windows. Two storeys. Three windows.

Non-Designated Heritage Asset: Moated site – Church Farm (WSHER Ref. MWS4254)

- 3.8 The WSHER record describes the asset as follows:
A possible moated site is shown on the 1st ed. OS map at NGR TQ 1278 1580, immediately west of Church Farm, Ashington.
- 3.9 Moated sites are a medieval monument form often, although not exclusively, associated with high status settlement. There are over 200 recorded in Sussex (Jones 1999), and they comprise a moated platform sometimes containing a collection of domestic buildings, often a manorial centre, although many contained only gardens (Creighton 2009). The

size of the original platform is difficult to ascertain – historic maps show ponds and watercourses defining an L-shaped area, but it is unclear how this has developed. As existing, it measures c.0.5ha, although field inspection suggests it may have been extended from an original smaller oval platform on which the house is set; fieldwork in Suffolk has found that sites larger than 0.4ha tend to indicate manorial sites, with sites smaller than this occupied by free tenants, although it is difficult to extrapolate across regions (Creighton & Barry 2012). Whatever the social status of the occupants, the moat was designed more as a status symbol than a serious defensive measure. According to English Heritage:

They form a significant class of medieval monument and are important for the understanding of the distribution of wealth and status in the countryside. Many examples provide conditions favourable to the survival of organic remains... Most moats were constructed between 1250 and 1350.

- 3.10 The asset now comprises a 17th century house located within a wooded garden. The site is defined by wet ditches to the west and east, extending from springs to the south and draining into two irregular-shaped ponds situated each side of the modern farmyard north of the house. The eastern ditch is an incised channel several metres wide, while the western is a shallow meandering stream. Any southern linking channel between the two ditches has been lost, although an earthwork gully linking the two channels at the edge of the main lawn could be the remains of such a feature (although it currently runs uphill). The site is recognisable as a moated site, but not readily, and is primarily experienced as a landscaped wooded garden.

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF SETTING ISSUES RELATING TO HERITAGE ASSETS

- 4.1 An assessment was made of the potential impact of the proposed development in relation to heritage assets and their settings. This assessment was carried out in accordance with Historic England guidance relating to assessing the significance and setting of heritage assets (*Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment*; *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets*). The key issue to bear in mind when assessing potential impacts on the setting of heritage assets (as defined in the guidance) is that the setting of a heritage asset ('the surroundings in which an asset is experienced') has no intrinsic importance or value in itself, only the extent to which it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset in question. A proposed development does not necessarily have to be visible from a heritage asset to affect its setting or significance. Similarly, a proposed development can be fully visible from or even directly adjacent to an asset but will not have a significant impact if the setting does not contribute to the significance of the asset, or if the development does not fall within that setting if it does contribute. Consequently, general issues of visual impact and views are not directly relevant to this assessment unless they have heritage significance.

Identifying affected heritage assets

Scheduled Monument

- 4.2 The scheduled monument is located immediately west of Site 5, separated by the hedgerow (see map extract below). The results of geophysical survey suggest that associated archaeological deposits extend into Site 5, although this has not been confirmed by excavation.

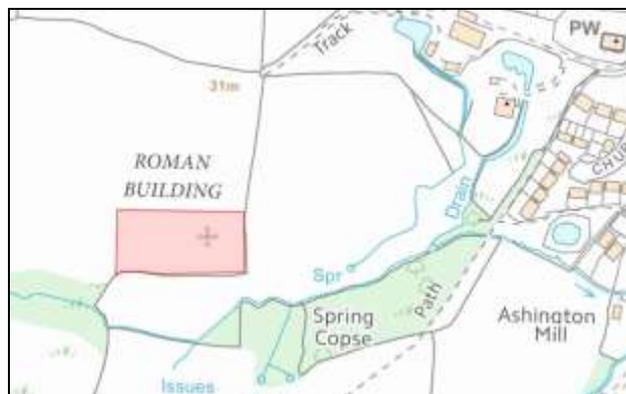


Image derived from NHLE

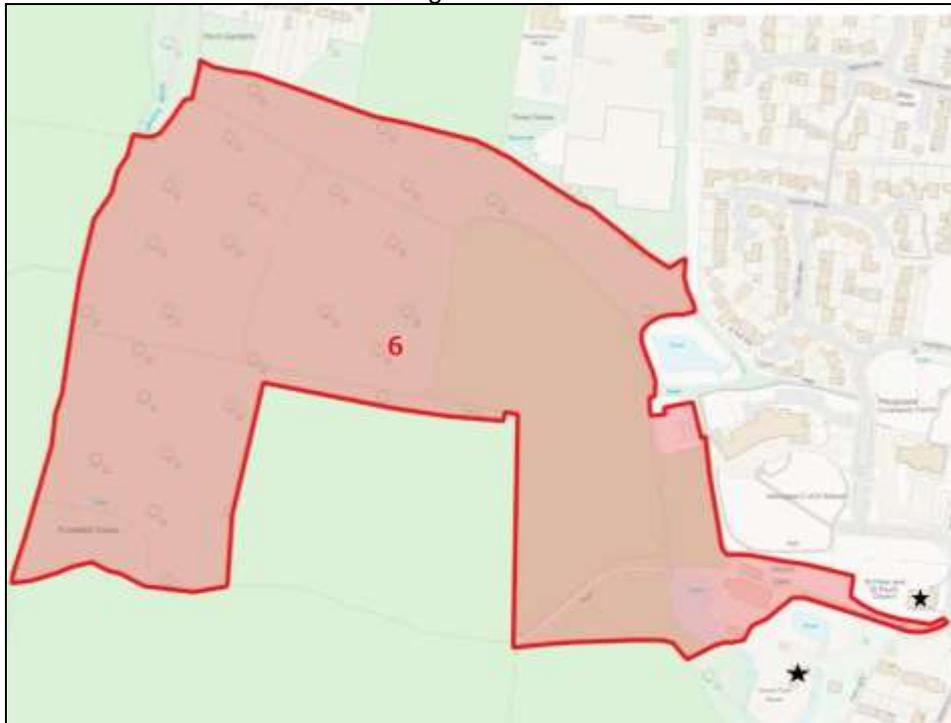
Listed Buildings

- 4.3 Two listed buildings are located within close proximity to the proposed access route (marked by stars on the map extracts below): the Parish

Church of St Peter and St Paul (Grade II* - NHLE Ref. 1027442) and Church Farmhouse⁴ (Grade II – NHLE Ref. 1353978). The latter also marks the location of the non-designated moated site. These have been assessed for potential impacts on their setting.



Site 5 in relation to the listed buildings



Site 6 in relation to the listed buildings

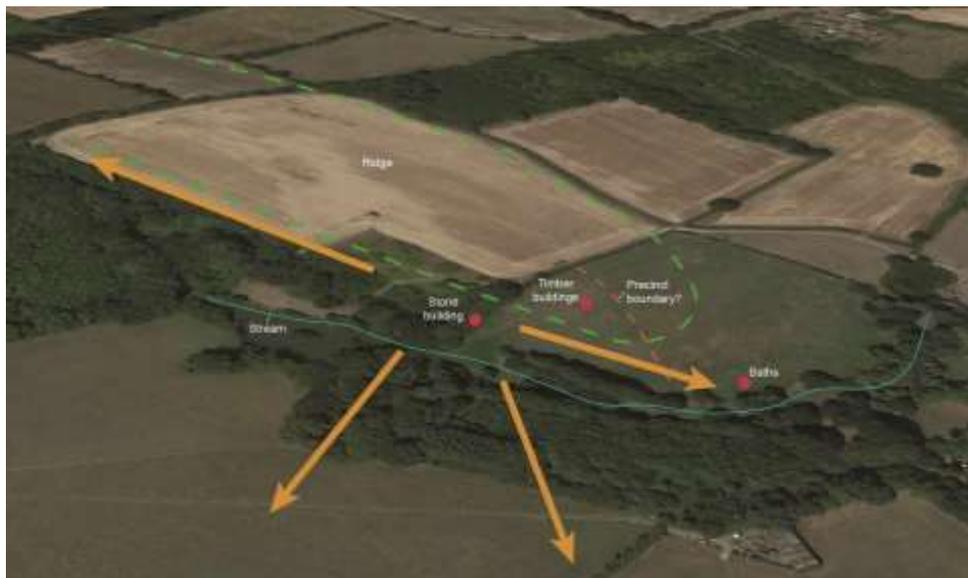
- 4.4 The remaining designated heritage assets comprise a number of other listed buildings. These are located some distance from the Site, and are separated by significant levels of modern residential development, screening vegetation and topography. The Site does not form part of their setting and there is no intervisibility with the Site. Consequently, they have been omitted from further assessment as there will be no impact on them from the proposed access road. There is no conservation area within Ashington.

⁴ As spelled by Historic England

Assessing contribution of setting to significance

Scheduled Monument

- 4.5 The villa site is located on the south-facing slope of a prominent ridge, and is currently experienced as a rectangular area of scrub and woodland, defining the rectangular monument boundary. The slope is fairly steep in places, and the main aspect overlooks the stream valley immediately to the south, with the downland ridge prominent on the horizon, focussed on Chanctonbury Ring⁵. Views north are constrained by the ridge, with distant views of the village from the northern edge of the SM but the foreground screened by the ridge, although with more open views northwards from the possible timber buildings and the bath-house. There are clear views westwards along the southern slope of the ridge, and eastwards towards the southern half of Site 5.



Landscape setting and location of archaeological features in relation to key views (yellow arrows) and stream



Looking NE from the NW corner of the SM (Site 5 beyond the hedgerow in the distance, Site 6 not visible behind the ridge, SM extends downslope to the right of the picture)

⁵ now marked by a post-medieval tree clump, but in the Roman period occupied by a temple, which may have been visible as a focal point, in the manner of an 18th century eye-catcher



View of interior of the SM, looking E (building identified in 1999 geophysics lies at the base of the slope to the right of the photograph)



View south from the interior of the SM across the stream valley towards the downland ridge and Chanctonbury

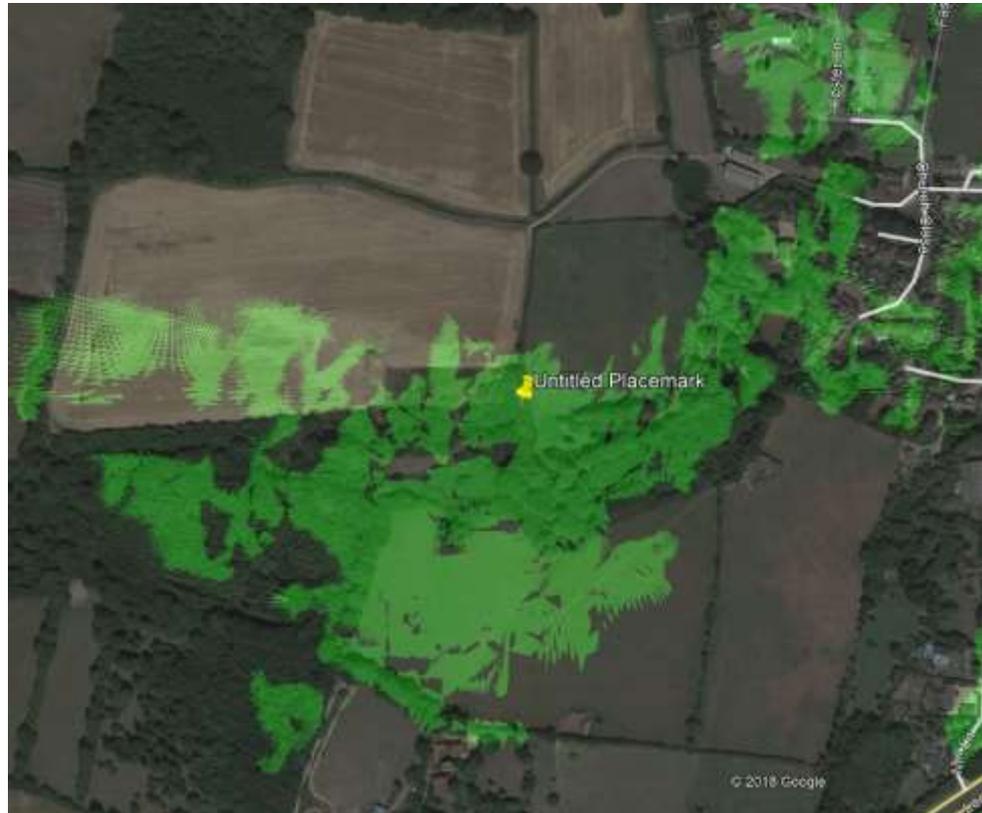
- 4.6 The new geophysical evidence suggests that the villa complex extends further east than previously thought. A loose reconstruction of layout is possible (see above), with a stone structure located towards the southern edge of the slope within the SM, extending into the western edge of Site 5 itself (closely constrained by steep rising ground preventing any views northwards) (see 6 on the figure below). Further structures, possibly of timber construction, lie just to the north-east on the southern edge of the ridge-top (9). A further stone structure, interpreted as a bath-house (1), lies at the foot of the slope to the east, within the stream valley. A linear feature running between the bath-house and the northern edge of the possible timber buildings may represent a precinct boundary following the edge of the ridge (though it could also be part of an associated field system or a much later feature) (5 – southern line). Field systems lay to the north.



Extract from Fradgley 2019

- 4.7 This complex is located on the eastern edge of a ridge defined by narrow stream valleys, and forms a pocket of lighter greensand soils sandwiched between poorer areas of Folkestone Beds and Weald Clay, both of which are still marked on late 18th century maps as common waste. Given this topographical location, the easiest access route to the villa would be along the ridge from the west – travelling westwards, Park Lane is crossed, which is a typical north-south aligned Wealden droveway linking Warminghurst with Washington – the pattern of parish boundaries suggests that Warminghurst was carved out of the larger original manor of Washington, originating as outlying forest pasture, thus the trackway is likely to be of great antiquity. A little further west (along a line now followed by a public footpath) the Roman road known as the Greensand Way is reached as it crosses Heath Common, providing the villa with easy access to the provincial communication network – Pulborough is only a few miles to the north-west, where the Greensand Way meets the major military trunk route of Stane Street.
- 4.8 In conclusion, therefore, the site comprises a linear complex of buildings spreading along the southern side of a prominent east-west ridge, comprising a possible stone house and timber outbuildings set within an enclosed precinct, with a small bath-house beyond where the ridge descends to the stream. The main aspect of the site is constrained by the topography and is focussed to the south, towards the stream valley and

the downland in the distance. Views between the house and the bath-house will also have been important, as was the main approach along the ridge from the west. The land to the north formed part of the rural landscape associated with the villa, but was of lesser significance given the lack of significant intervisibility from most of the villa complex as currently understood (see viewshed below⁶).



View N from the SE corner of the SM (location of the possible stone building surveyed in 1999) – the N edge of the SM broadly corresponds to the large tree in the left margin

⁶ Derived from the viewshed tool within Google Earth, based on a viewer located at the approximate location of the stone building surveyed in 1999 (yellow pin), with a viewing height of 2m above ground level. The theoretically visible ground is coloured green.



View E from SE corner of the SM towards the bath-house



View N from NE corner of the SM



View W from the bath-house towards the SM, showing the slope of the ridge – the N edge of the SM lies level with the large central tree, extending down to the left, The stone structure located in 1999 lies at the point where the treeline extending from the left meets the hedgerow



View E along approach to villa from Park Lane

Listed Buildings and Moated Site

- 4.9 The church, moated site and farmhouse, formerly a manorial settlement, form a historic settlement nucleus, originally isolated as clearly shown on historic mapping, with the area of the proposed access route forming a corridor linking the two sites. The original agricultural landscape context survives, partly modified, to the west of the church and farmhouse, retaining an historic field pattern, but the area of the proposed access has been hemmed in by modern developments to the south, east and also north of the church, providing a modern suburban character. Intervisibility between the two listed buildings has been blocked by a large coniferous hedge, which has served to isolate the farmhouse from its surroundings. In addition, the church has no intervisibility with Site 5 or with Site 6 (where it is screened by the existing modern farm buildings, which comprise steel sheds on concrete bases within a concrete yard), in marked contrast to the open views across the modern developments to the north, east and south. Site 5 slopes up to the west, and the lower eastern edge is visible in partial views from the farmhouse through a screening belt of mixed woodland; this may be seasonal in effect, although some of the species are non-deciduous. There is no intervisibility between the farmhouse and Site 6, due to screening by the intervening farmyard buildings and a dense and high coniferous hedge. Neither of the listed buildings are visible in views back towards them from Site 5 and 6. The wooden fencing that lines the existing private access to Church Farm House provides a pseudo-rustic character, but is inauthentic in a landscape historically bounded by thick hedgerows and wooded shaws.
- 4.10 Thus, while the physical relationship between the church and the farmhouse/moated site still exists, its ability to be ‘read’ as a manorial landscape of medieval origin has been eroded by modern intrusions, and the heritage assets are not experienced as one historical unit. The existing roads, while preserving a historic route, are predominantly modern in character (as a utilitarian concrete farm access road and an upmarket ‘ranch-style’ driveway). The farmhouse and the farmyard have been separated functionally since 1979 (*pers. comm.* Malcolm Woolley) and are physically and visually separated by modern property boundaries.

- 4.11 Consequently, while the setting of the two listed buildings does contribute to their overall significance as a rural settlement of agricultural origin, this is limited due to the extent of modern change within the area, particularly the separation of church and farmhouse from each other and the separation of both from the surrounding landscape by existing screening vegetation. There is some limited visibility between the listed farmhouse and Site 5, but no significant appreciation of the wider landscape. There are no significant views from either listed building towards either Site 5 or 6 due to existing screening vegetation. Both are now experienced as part of the village rather than as elements within the rural landscape beyond. The character of the moated site has been eroded by landscaping and modern intrusion, and its key significance is its relationship with the church and with the watercourses forming its perimeter, rather than the generic fields beyond.



View towards Church Farmhouse from the church, looking SW



View towards farmyard from the access road next to the church, looking W



View towards Site 5 from garden of Church Farmhouse, looking SW



View towards Church Farmhouse from the farmyard, looking SE



View towards church and farmhouse (neither visible) from SW corner of Site 5, looking NE



View towards church and farmhouse (neither visible) from western side of arable field in Site 6, looking SE (visible building is the modern steel barn)



View towards church from farmyard, looking E

5.0 PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

- 5.1 In the absence of a detailed development proposal, the impact of development on the setting of the identified heritage assets can only be considered in general terms (with the exception of the access route). It is expected that any future planning application would be accompanied by a detailed archaeological and heritage assessment.
- 5.2 Development within Sites 5 and 6 would have an indirect impact on the significance of the listed buildings and moated site through the removal of the remaining rural context, although there will be no physical impact on these assets. However, given the minor contribution the setting makes to the overall significance of these heritage assets, this impact will be limited, and could be reduced by careful design.
- 5.3 Two phases of geophysical survey have identified significant archaeological deposits relating to the villa, bath-house and associated precinct within the southern part of the Site. The results in the northern half suggest field ditches of lesser sensitivity. The key setting of the scheduled monument in terms of its heritage significance extends from the SM towards the bath-house to the east, and along the ridge to the west, and particularly to the south where it would (in the absence of intervening trees) enjoy a panoramic view of the downland ridge and Chanctonbury. The topographical location on the southern edge of a steep ridge and the geophysical evidence for a possible enclosure boundary reinforce this, and suggest that, while the southern half of Site 5 lies within the immediate setting of the villa site, the northern half of Site 5 and Site 6 lie beyond this in the wider rural landscape. No development is proposed in the southern part of Site 5, and the archaeological deposits and their immediate setting will be preserved within open space.
- 5.4 The proposed access route comprises a two-lane road, 5.5m in width, flanked to the north by a 1.8m wide pavement, replacing the existing farm road and driveway. It will also involve the removal of the existing high coniferous hedge and the wooden fence.
- 5.5 The proposed access will be constructed within a historic route corridor, and will replace existing infrastructure of modern date and character. Given the predominantly modern character of this area (and the farmyard to the west), it is unlikely that there will be a significant adverse impact on the setting of either listed building. In fact, the removal of the high coniferous hedge may potentially improve intervisibility between the church and the farmhouse, which will have the beneficial effect of improving the legibility of the historical relationship between the two sites. It will be important that any works relating to the access road do not impact on the fabric of the churchyard wall.

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