



LANDSCAPE REPORT

FINNS (1865) LTD
5918 - HARDRES COURT ROAD (LAND AT)
LOWER HARDRES, KENT, CT4 5NZ

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This landscape statement has been produced to inform the promotion of land at Hardres Court Rd, Lower Hardres, Canterbury, for allocation in the local plan for future residential development.
- 1.2 The report summarises key landscape baseline data and visual character, to identify landscape and visual sensitivities that might relate to its future development. It does not constitute a formal Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) as set out in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA 3rd edition 2013).
- 1.3 In the event that the land is brought forward for development, design work should be informed by a comprehensive understanding of landscape and visual character, so that any predicted adverse impacts can be addressed and mitigated.
- 1.4 In the baseline mapping set out in the following pages, an indicative 1.5km radius circle is shown centred on the site, as a 'study area'. This has been added to show context and scale, and has no other significance.

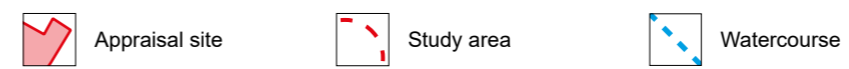
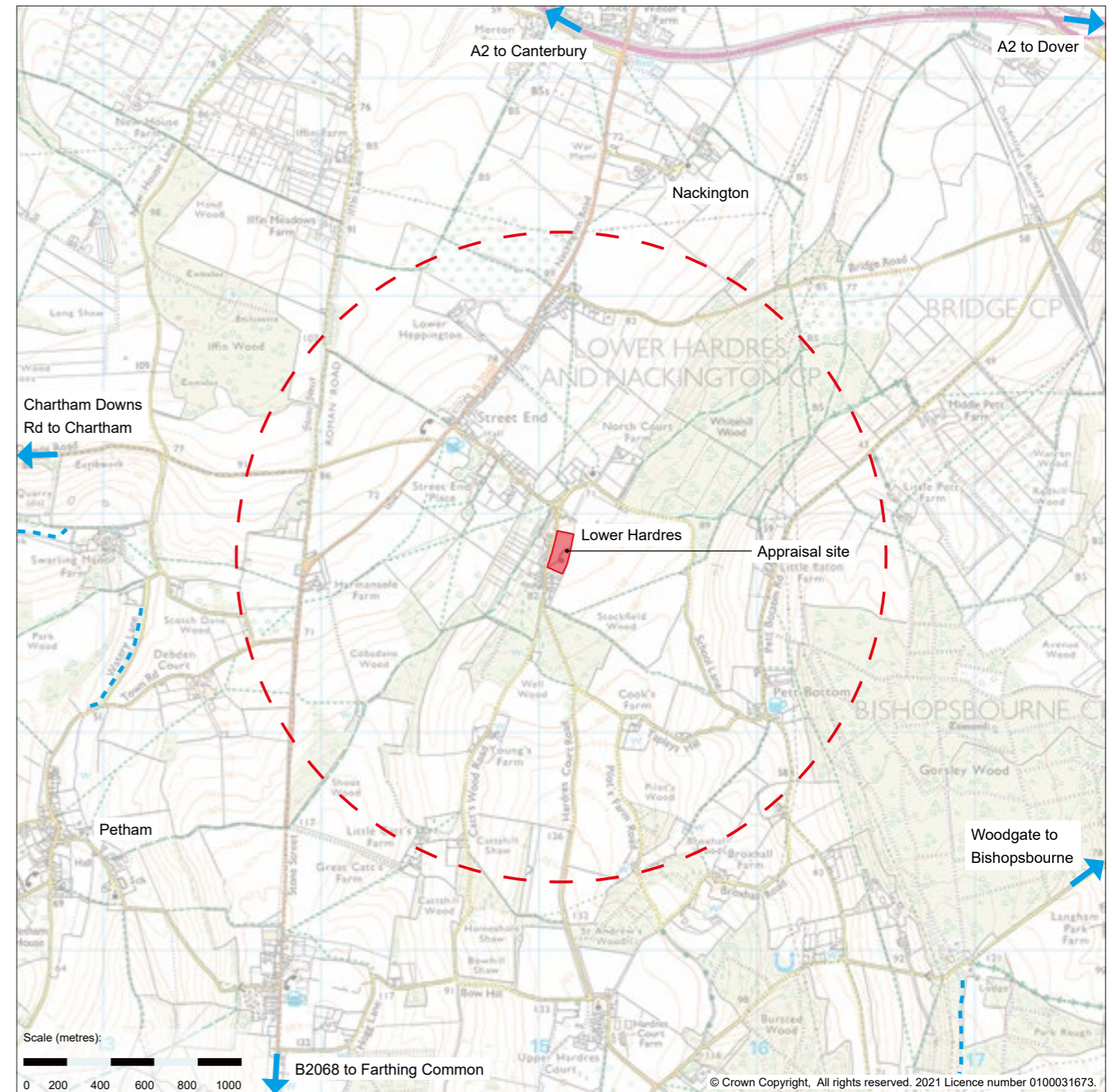
LOCATI

- 1.5 The site is located on the eastern side of Hardres Court Road, Lower Hardres. It is bounded to the north by Butts Farm, to the east by Butts Meadow (open arable field), to the south by the curtilage of dwellings located along the eastern side of Hardres Court Road, and to the west by Hardres Court Road itself.
- 1.6 The site is roughly rectangular in shape, and approximately 1.46 ha. in size.

ACCESS

- 1.7 There is no public access to the site, and there are no Public Rights of Way that cross or adjoin it.

Fig. 1: Ordnance Survey map indicating site location and surrounding features



2. LANDSCAPE DATA

POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 The site is located outside the settlement boundary and in planning policy terms is within the open countryside.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

2.2 The site is within the Kent Downs AONB. AONB is a designation for an area of land of national importance for its natural beauty. The origins of AONB are in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

2.3 AONBs are designated by the Government to ensure that the special qualities of our finest landscapes are conserved and enhanced. S.82 of The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000 confirms that the primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. S.85 of the CROW Act places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities requiring them to have regard to the purpose of AONBs when coming to decisions or carrying out their activities relating to, or affecting land within these areas. This is known as the 'duty of regard'. The 'duty of regard' requires all relevant authorities to have regard to the purpose of AONBs when coming to decisions or carrying out their activities relating to or affecting land within these areas.

2.4 Para 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF July 2021) states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. It states that the scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited, and that planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.

2.5 Policy LB1 in the adopted Canterbury Local Plan relates to AONB. It states:

2.6 *'High priority will be given to conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and planning decisions should have regard to its setting. Major developments and proposals which conflict with the objective to conserve and enhance the AONB, or that endanger tranquillity, will not be permitted except in exceptional circumstances where it is demonstrated to be in the public interest, the need is shown and any detrimental effect is moderated or mitigated.'*

In considering proposals for development within the AONB, the emphasis should be on proposals that are sustainably and appropriately located and designed to enhance the character of the AONB. The City Council will grant proposals which support the economy and social well being of the AONB and its communities, including affordable housing schemes, provided that they do not conflict with the aim of conserving and enhancing natural beauty by addressing location, scale, form, high quality design, materials and mitigation and have regard to the advice set out in the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan, and its supporting guidance.

Proposals will be encouraged where they facilitate the delivery of the statutory Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and are desirable for the understanding and enjoyment of the area.'

Area of High Landscape Value

2.7 The site is located within an Area of High Landscape Value designation (AHLV), Policy LB2 in the adopted Canterbury Local Plan (2017). The policy wording states:

'Within these areas, development will be considered in relation to the extent to which its location, scale, design and materials would impact on or protect the local landscape character and enhance the future appearance of the designated landscape and its heritage and nature conservation interest. Development proposals that support the landscape character (including settlement character), and have no significant impact upon historic setting, archaeological or nature conservation interests, where relevant, will be permitted.'

Within the Canterbury AHLV, development proposals should have particular regard to the historic setting of the City and the World Heritage Site.'

Conservation Area

2.8 The site is located within the Lower Hardres and Street End Conservation Area. There is no Conservation Area Appraisal for this Conservation Area. Policy HE6 in the adopted Canterbury Local Plan states:

Development within a conservation area should preserve or enhance its special architectural or historic character or appearance.

Development, in or adjoining a conservation area, which would enhance its character, appearance, or setting will normally be permitted. Important features or characteristics, which contribute to its special character and setting, that need to be protected, include; plan form, buildings, architectural features, built form, archaeological sites, materials, trees, streets and spaces and the relationships between these features.

New development in a conservation area should aim to preserve and enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment and respect its surroundings in terms of height, massing, volume, scale, form, materials, details, roofscape, plot width and the design of any new pedestrian, cycle or vehicular access.

Development within, affecting the setting of, or views into and out of, a conservation area, as shown on the Proposals Map and all Insets, should preserve or enhance all features that contribute positively to the area's character, appearance or setting. Particular consideration will be given to the following:

- a. *The retention of buildings, groups of buildings, existing street patterns, historic building lines and ground surfaces;*
- b. *Retention of architectural details that contribute to the character or appearance of the area;*
- c. *The impact of the proposal on townscape, roofscape, skyline, landscape and the relative scale / importance of buildings in the area;*
- d. *The need to protect trees and landscape;*
- e. *The removal of unsightly and negative features; and*
- f. *The need for the development.*

TOPOGRAPHY

Broad Scale

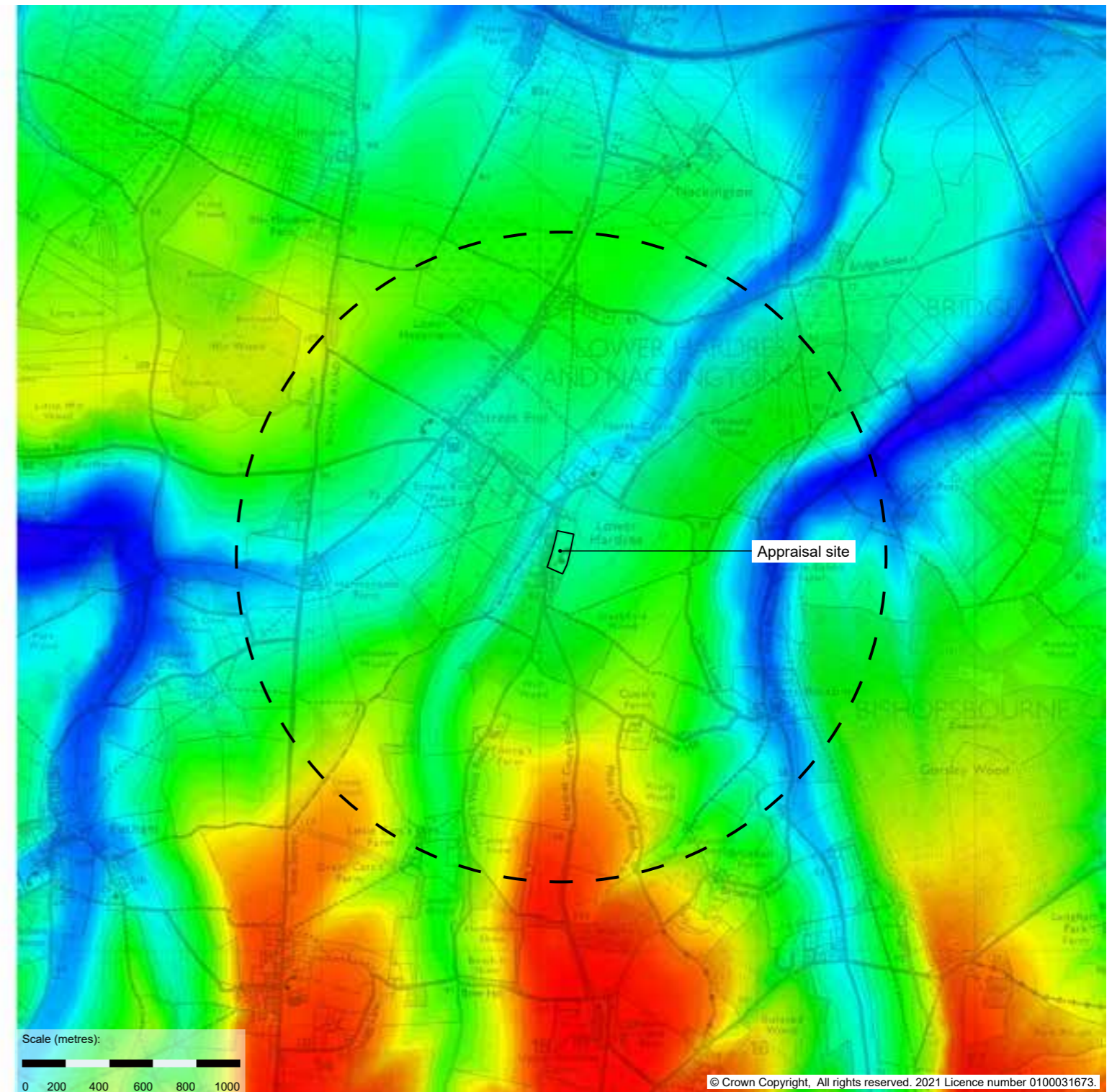
2.9 Within the study area, the topography is composed of generally falling terrain from south to north; the product of dip-slope geology combined with sometimes steeply sloping valleys (dry or seasonally flowing) draining towards the Stour, punctuated by ridges of higher land projecting from the south. The terrain ranges approximately from 32m to 134m.

Local Scale

2.10 The site is generally level, ranging from approximately 79m at the southern boundary, to 74m at the northern boundary. Land to the east rises to 95m AOD before falling abruptly into the valley at Pett Bottom.



Fig. 2: Ordnance Survey map indicating topography



2.11 **VEGETATION**

On-Site

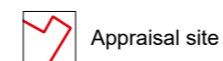
2.12 The vegetation on-site is a grazed paddock, with a mixed native species hedgerow forming the western boundary with Hardres Court Rd.

Surrounding Area

2.13 On a broad scale, the landscape is principally arable field and grazed paddock land, including horse paddocks. There are also areas of mature woodland, including plantation, remnant parkland, linear tree (shelter) belts, street / garden planting associated with nearby residential development, formal planting arrangements and areas of unmanaged grassland.

- a. Arable field.
- b. Paddock.
- c. Woodland.
- d. Street / garden parking.
- e. Unmanaged grassland.

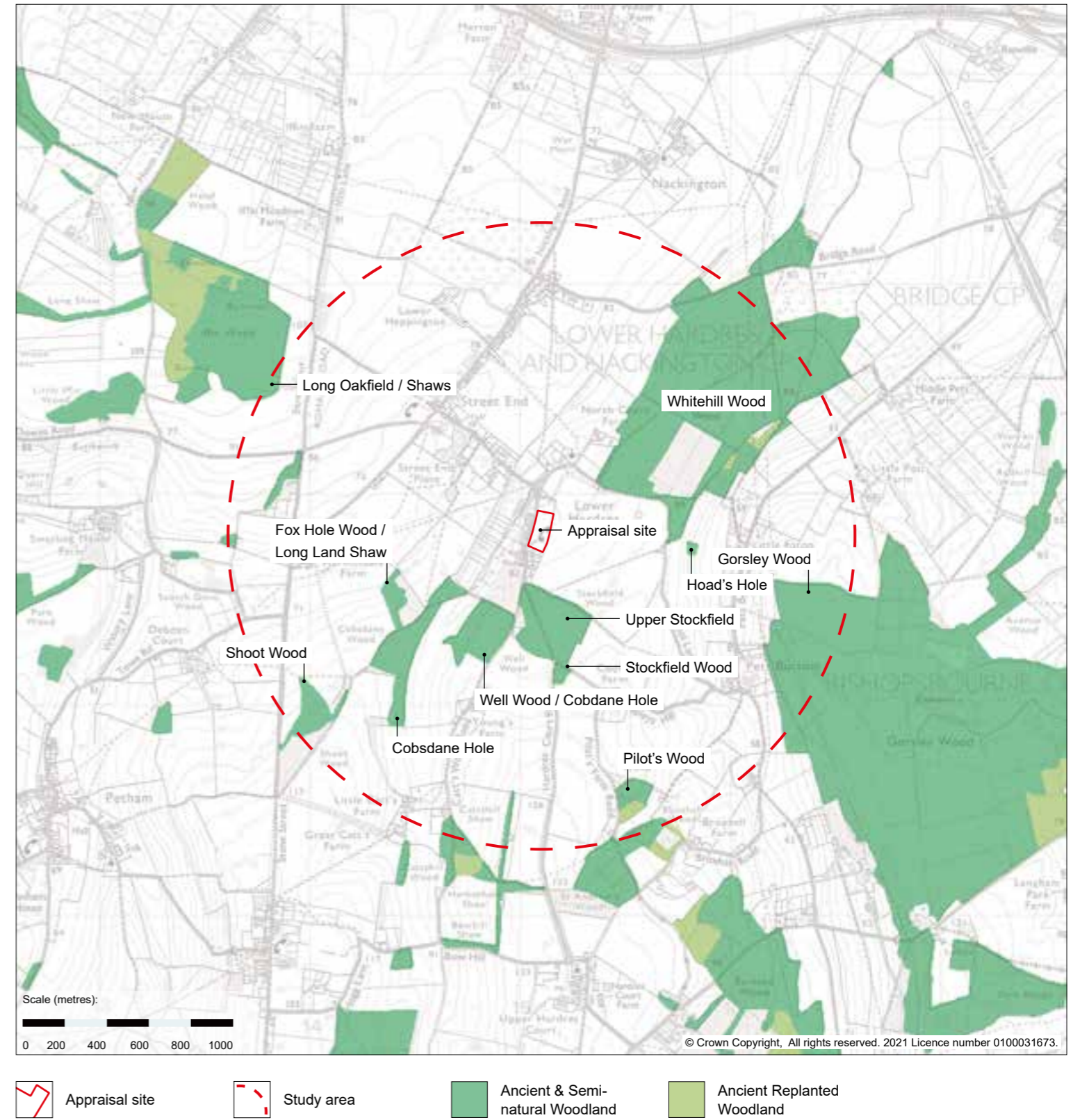
Fig. 3: Aerial photography indicating vegetation types



ANCIENT WOODLAND

- 2.14 Areas of ancient woodland within the study area are shown opposite.
- 2.15 There is no ancient woodland on or in close proximity to the site.
- 2.16 The nearest area of ancient woodland is Upper Stockfield, located approximately 170m south of the site.

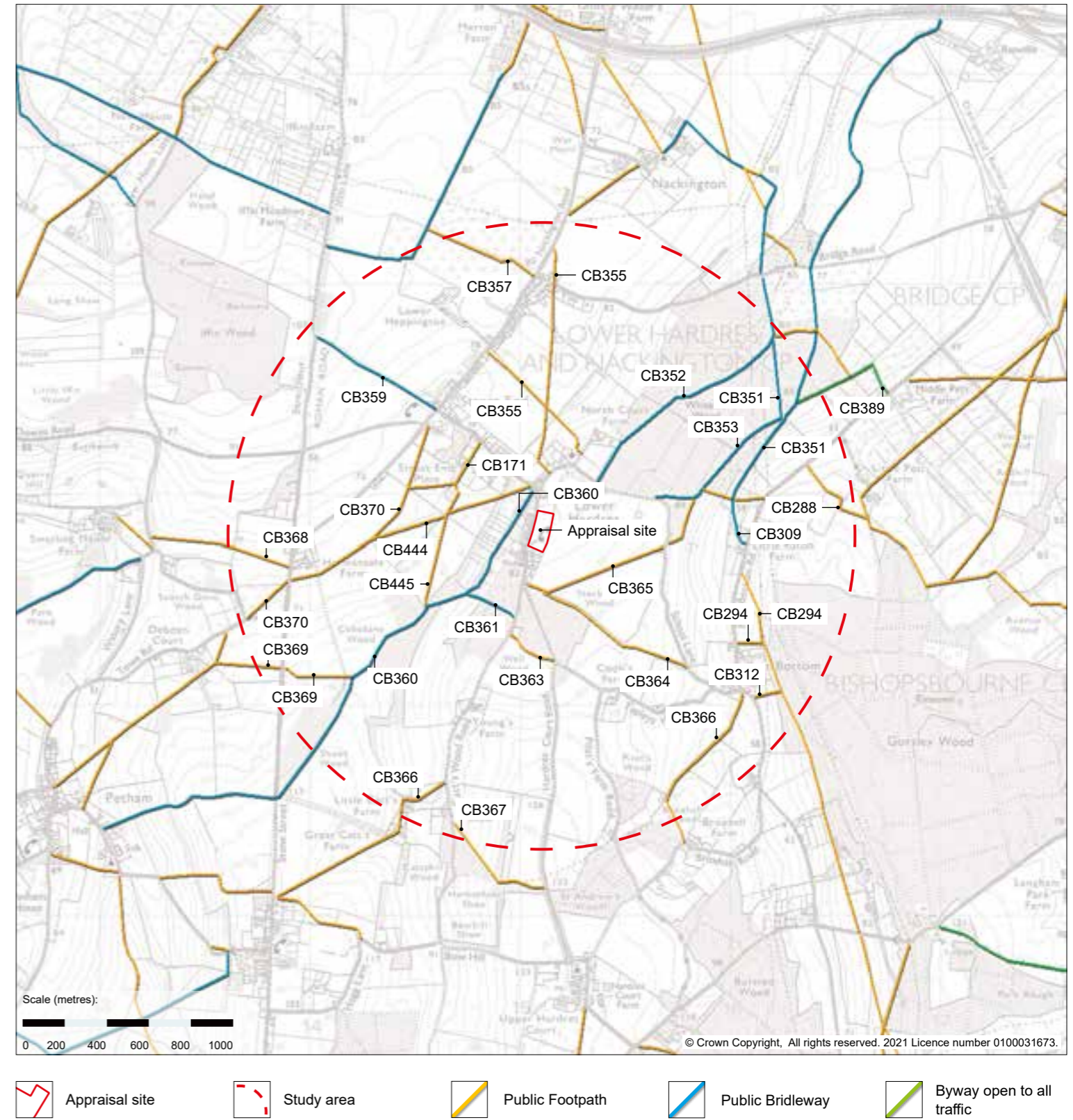
Fig. 4: Ordnance Survey map indicating ancient woodland



PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

- 2.17 Public Rights of Way (PRoW) within the study area are shown opposite.
- 2.18 No PRoW are located within or adjacent to site.
- 2.19 The closest PRoW to the site is Public Footpath CB360, located approximately 65m west of the site.
- 2.20 CB365 crosses the open arable field to the east of the site and provides views towards the appraisal site.
- 2.21 The PRoW network in the vicinity of the site is dense and well distributed, proving a high degree of public accessibility to the countryside and AONB, and a high level of recreational and visual amenity.

Fig. 5: Ordnance Survey map indicating extent of local public right of way network



2.22 HISTORIC FEATURES

2.23 Listed buildings and scheduled monuments within the study area are shown opposite.

Listed Buildings

2.24 There are no listed buildings within, immediately adjoining, adjoining, or adjacent to the site.

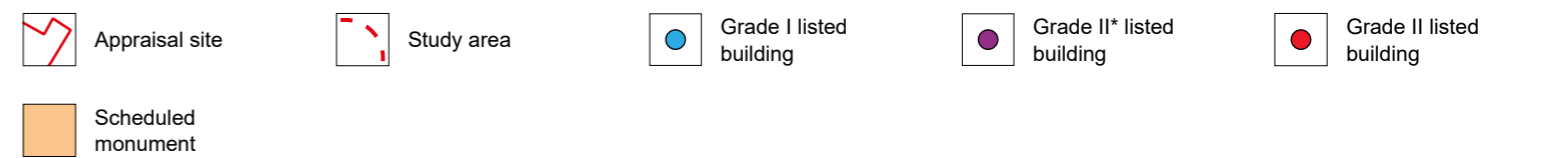
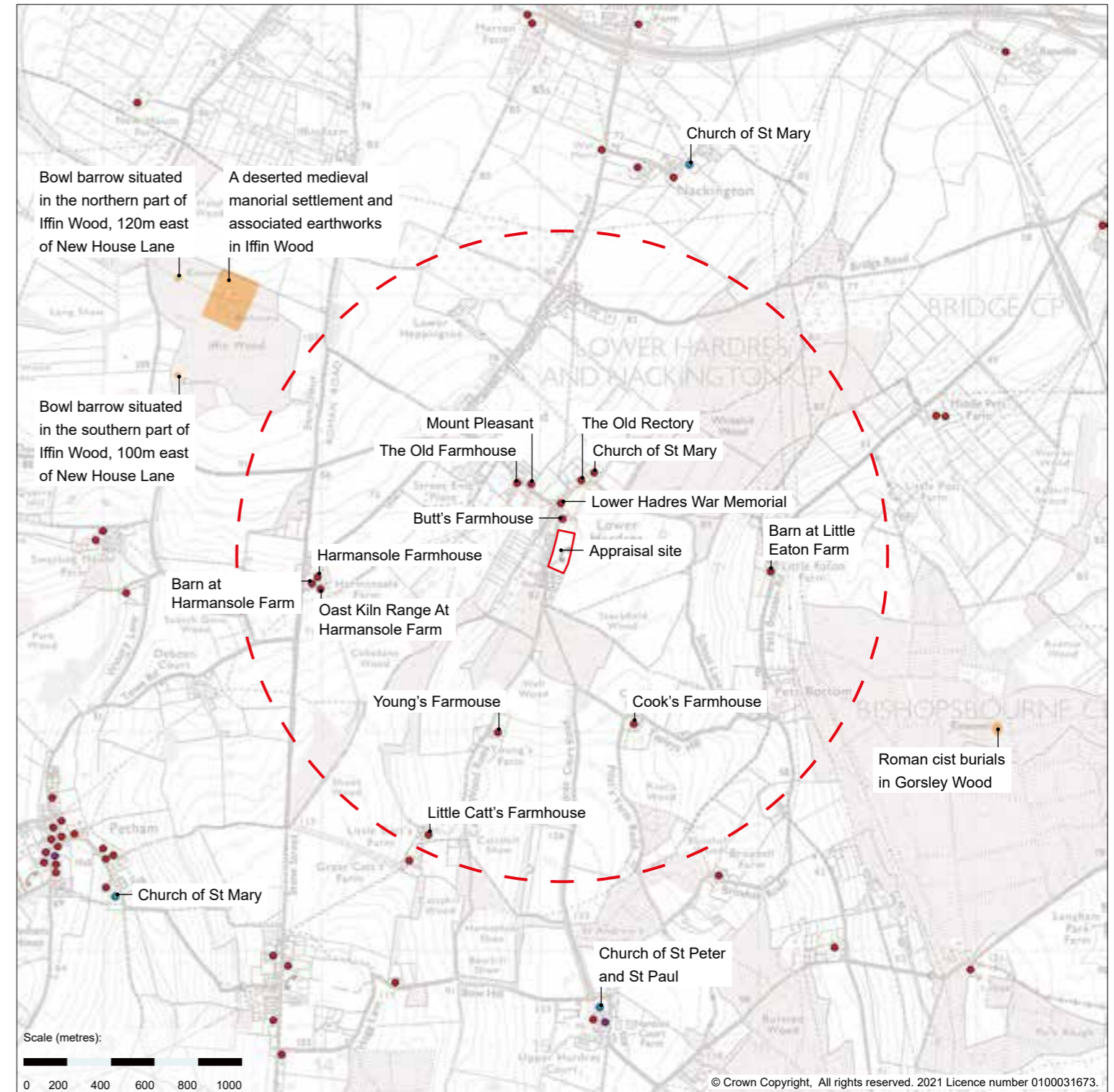
2.25 The nearest listed building is the Grade II Butt's Farmhouse, located approximately 65m north of the site.

Scheduled Monuments

2.26 There are no scheduled monuments within, adjoining to, or adjacent to the site.

2.27 The nearest scheduled monument is a deserted medieval manorial settlement and associated earthworks in Iffin Wood, located approximately 1.7km north-west of the site.

Fig. 6: Ordnance Survey map indicating locations of nearby listed buildings and scheduled monuments



ECOLOGICAL, WILDLIFE AND NATURE CONSERVATION-BASED DESIGNATIONS

2.28 Areas of ecological, wildlife and nature conservation-based designations within the study area are shown opposite.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

2.29 There are no SSSI within or in the vicinity of the site.

2.30 The nearest SSSI to the site is Larkey Valley Wood, located approximately 2.8km to the north-west.

Nature Reserves

2.31 There are no nature reserves within or in the vicinity of the site.

2.32 The nearest nature reserve to the site is Larkey Valley Wood, located approximately 2.8km to the north-west.

Fig. 7: Location of Sites of Special Scientific Interest

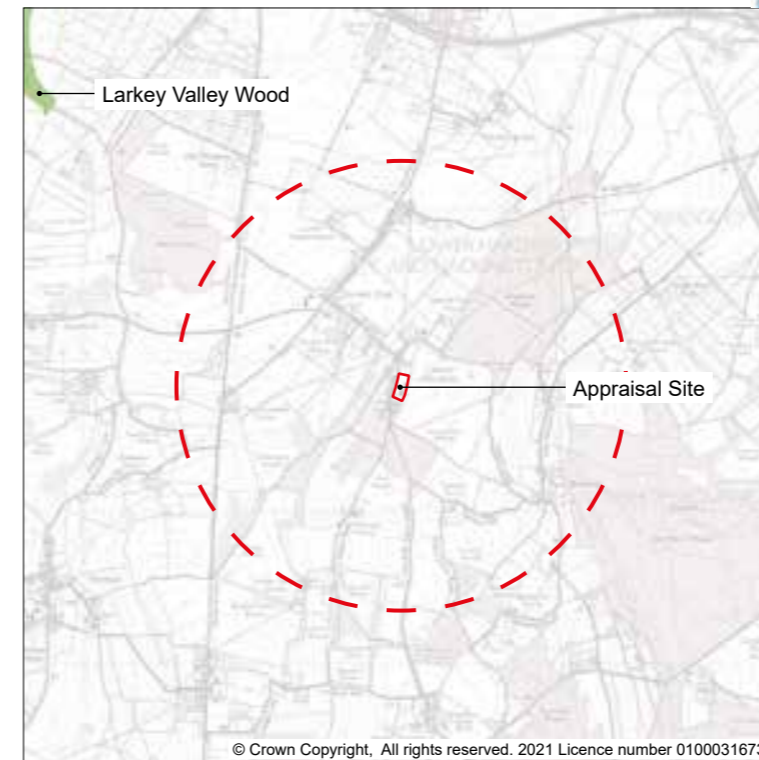
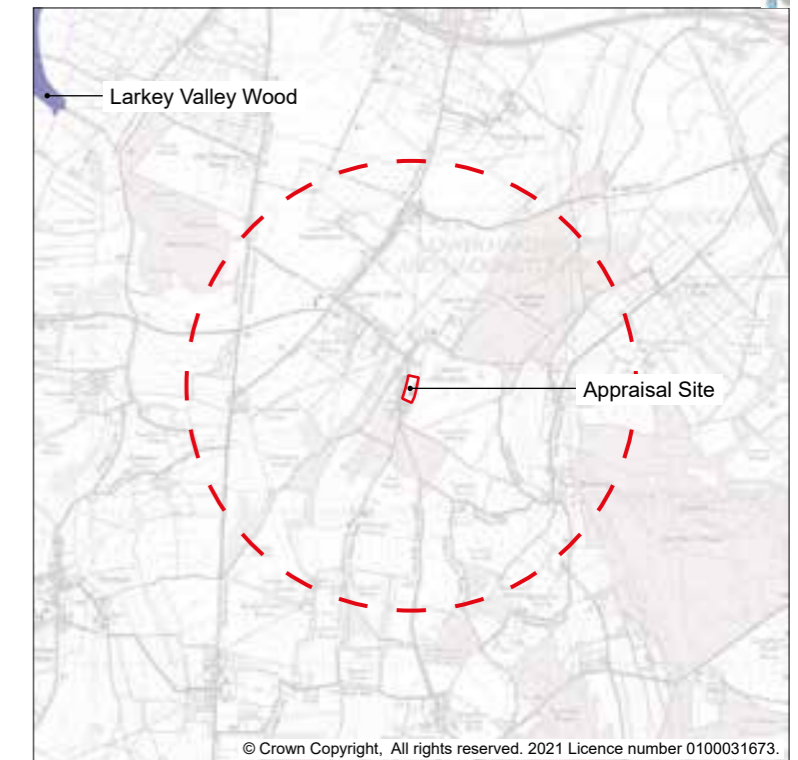


Fig. 8: Location of of Nature Reserves

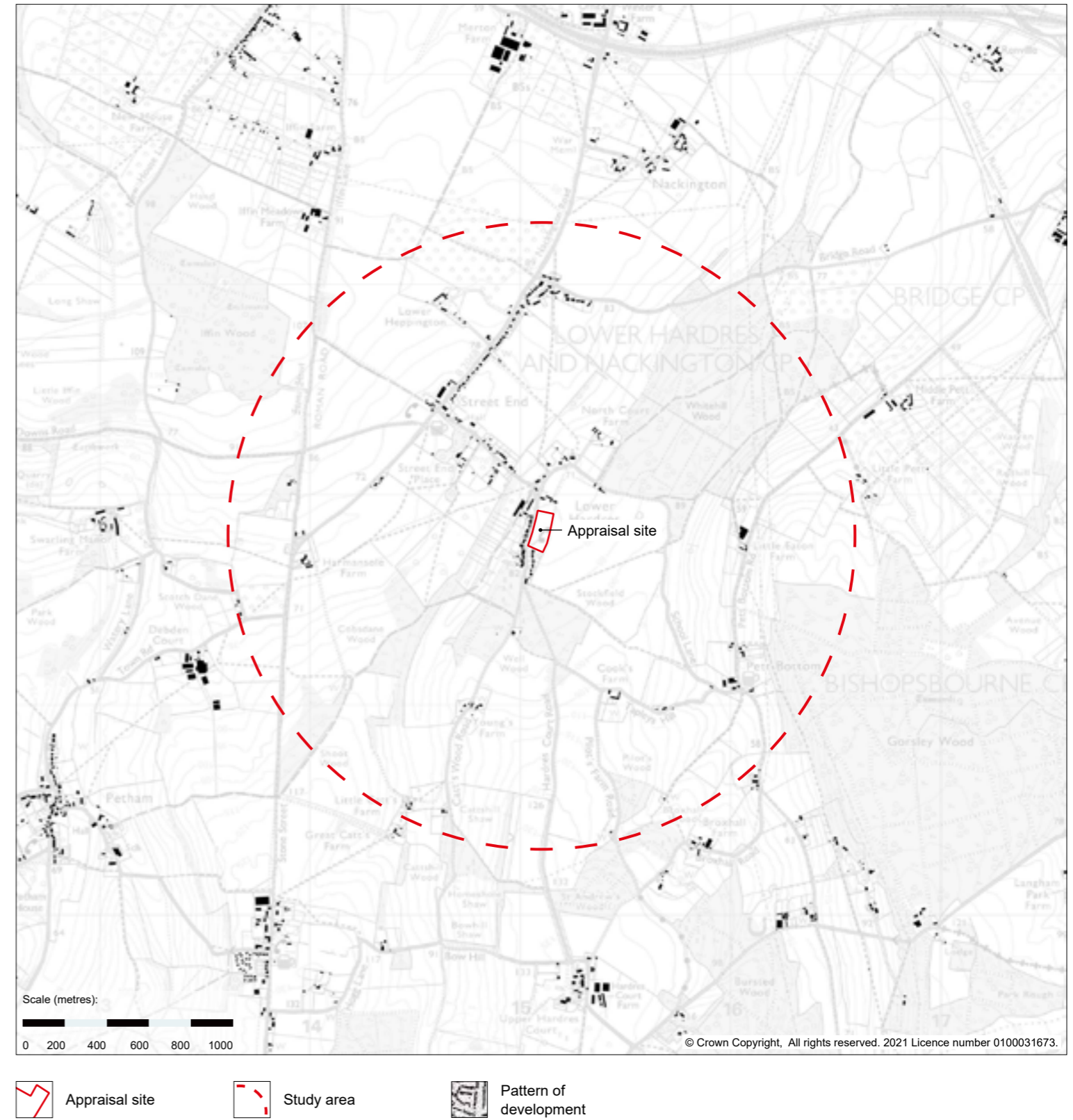


SETTLEMENT PATTERN

Pattern of Development

- 2.33 The patterns of development within the study area are shown opposite. The indicative pattern of development is arrived at by shading the built area black (derived from OS data).
- 2.34 Two patterns of development typologies are present within the study area:
 - Strong linear forms with single depth plots attenuated along the village streets and lanes; notably Faussett Hill (south eastern side) and Hardres Court Rd.
 - Individual farmsteads or former farmsteads, some diversified, often arranged in courtyard fashion; Cooks Farms, Netherwood House, North Court, and Catts Farm being examples.

Fig. 9: Ordnance Survey map indicating settlement pattern



AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

2.35 The site is located within the Kent Downs AONB (opposite).

Key Characteristics

2.36 The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014 - 2019 describes the key characteristics of the Kent Downs AONB to be as follows:

- *Dramatic landform and views*

The Kent Downs dramatic and diverse topography is based on the underlying geology. These features comprise: impressive south-facing steep slopes (scarps) of chalk and greensand; scalloped and hidden dry valleys - these features are especially valued where they have a downland character; expansive open plateaux; broad, steep-sided river valleys, and the dramatic, iconic white cliffs and foreshore. Breathtaking, long-distance panoramas are offered across open countryside, estuaries, towns and the sea from the scarp, cliffs and plateaux; the dip slope dry valleys and river valleys provide more intimate and enclosed vistas. Overlying this landform are diverse natural and man-made features creating distinctiveness at a local level.

- *Biodiversity-rich habitats*

Rich mosaics of habitats, plant and animal communities of national and local importance are sustained, although they may be isolated or fragmented in a modern agricultural landscape. These include: semi-natural chalk grassland and chalk scrub; ancient semi-natural woodland; traditional orchards, including cobnut plats; chalk cliffs, foreshore and sea platform; chalk rivers and wet pasture; ponds and spring lines; heath and acid grassland; woodland pasture and ancient trees and networks of linear features of species-rich hedgerows, flower-rich field margins and road verges. Sensitive management and conservation of all these features as well as the creation of functional ecological networks is essential to the survival of the AONB's important biodiversity heritage and landscape quality.

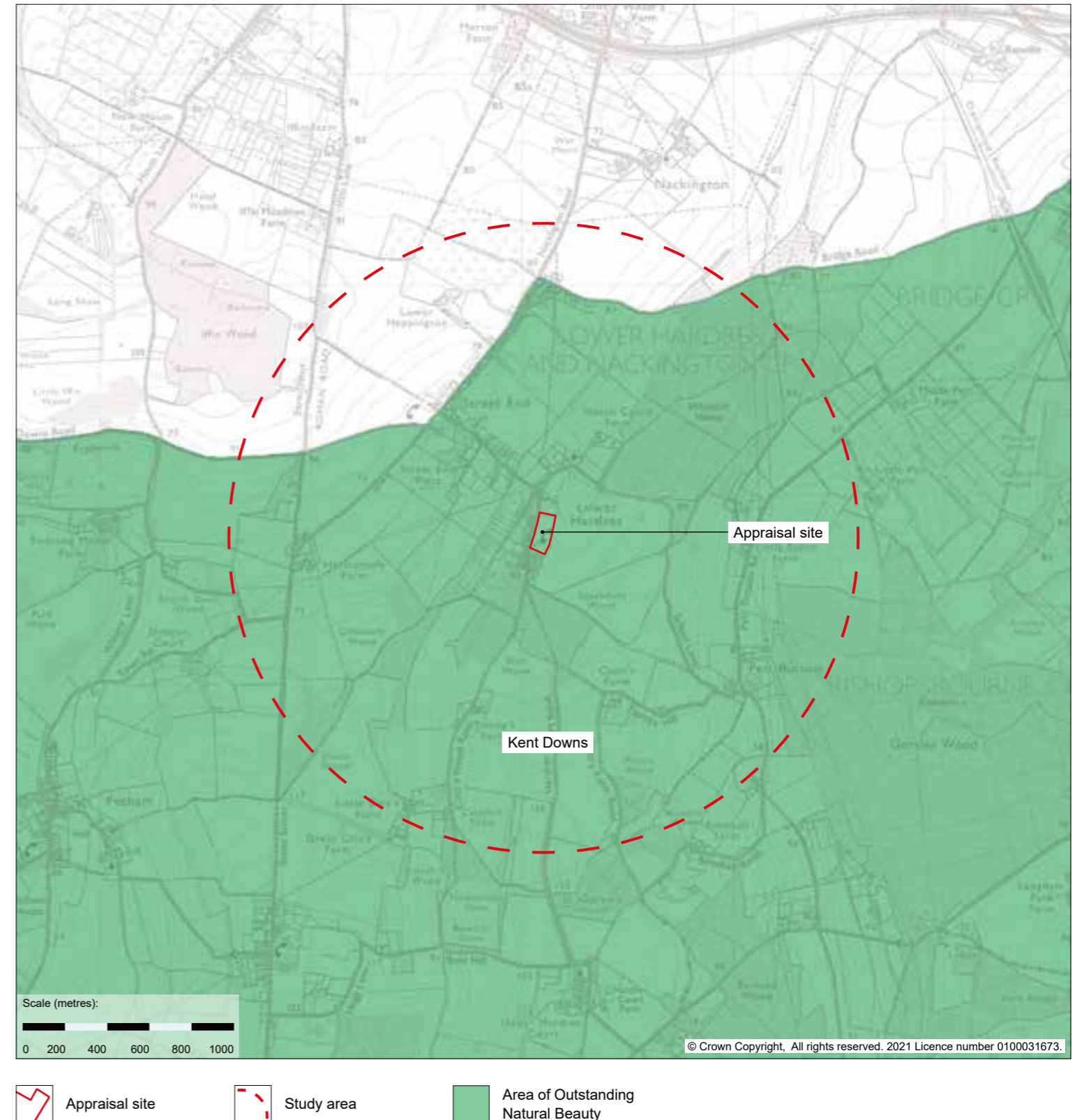
- *Farmed landscape*

A long-established tradition of mixed farming has helped create the natural beauty of the Kent Downs. The pastoral scenery is a particularly valued part of the landscape. Farming covers around 64% of the AONB. Expansive arable fields are generally on the lower slopes, valley bottoms and plateaux tops. Disconnected 'ribbons' of permanent grassland (shaves) are found along the steep scarp, valley sides, and on less-productive land, grazed by sheep, cattle and increasingly by horses. Locally concentrated areas of orchards, cobnut plats (nut orchards), hop gardens and other horticultural production are also present, their regular striate form can enhance the rise and fall of the land. At a national level, uncertainty hangs over the future policy and funding regimes for agricultural production and agri-environment schemes. At a local level, more farms are being managed together in large contracts where rotations can be at whole farm rather than field level. Elsewhere farm owners with non-agricultural incomes are becoming more common. Provision for leisure including equine activities, shooting and increasingly renewable energies are replacing and augmenting traditional farming practices.

- *Woodland and trees*

Broadleaf and mixed woodland cover 23% of the Kent Downs and frame the upper slopes of the scarp and dry valleys and plateaux tops. Some large woodland blocks are present but many

Fig. 10: Ordnance Survey map indicating extent of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



woodlands are small, fragmented and in disparate land ownership and management. Over half of the woodland sites are ancient (continuously wooded since 1600), supporting nationally important woodland plant and animal species. Large areas of sweet chestnut coppice are present throughout. Woodland management is critical to secure this resource and efforts to secure new markets for woodland products are beginning to effect resurgence in management. Tree disease and deer are now probably the greatest threats to this vital resource.

- A rich legacy of historic and cultural heritage

Millennia of human activity have created an outstanding cultural inheritance and strong 'time depth' to the Kent Downs. In the original designation the villages, churches and castles are particularly noted. There are the remains of Neolithic megalithic monuments, Bronze Age barrows, Iron Age hill-forts, Roman villas and towns, medieval villages focused on their churches, post-medieval stately homes with their parks and gardens and historic defence structures from Norman times to the twentieth century. Fields of varying shapes and sizes and ancient wood-banks and hedges, set within networks of droeways and sunken lanes have produced a rich historic mosaic, which is the rural landscape of today. Architectural distinctiveness is ever present in the scattered villages and farmsteads and oasthouses, barns and other agricultural buildings, churches and country houses. The diverse range of local materials used, which includes flint, chalk, Ragstone, timber and tile, contributes to the character and texture of the countryside. The AONB landscape has been an inspiration to artists, scientists and leaders, from Shakespeare to Samuel Palmer and Darwin to Churchill.

- Geology and natural resources

The imposing landform and special characteristics of the Kent Downs is underpinned by its geology. This is also the basis for the considerable natural capital and natural resources which benefit society. These include the soils which support an important farming sector and the water resources which support rivers teeming with wildlife and offering enchanting landscapes. Hidden below the chalk is a significant aquifer providing 75% of Kent's drinking water. Much of the AONB provides surprisingly tranquil and remote countryside – offering dark night skies and peace. These are much valued perceptual qualities of the AONB.'

LOCAL DESIGNATIONS

Areas of High Landscape Value (AHLV).

2.37 The Area of High Landscape Value designation in relation to the site is shown opposite.

2.38 The site is entirely within the AHLV designation.

2.39 The Canterbury District Local Plan (2017) states that:

‘Canterbury City Council has retained a number of landscape designations, because of their ‘greater than local’ importance and where the Council is certain that their special importance requires particular policy recognition. Of particular note is the Canterbury Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV), described in more detail in the heritage section of this Local Plan. Three other AHLVs are defined on the proposals map. The North Downs AHLV, the Blean Woods AHLV and the North Kent Marshes AHLV were all designated as Special Landscape Areas in the Kent and Medway Structure Plan. Both the Canterbury AHLV and the Wantsum Channel AHLV were originally designated in the Canterbury District Local Plan (2006).’

‘Canterbury AHLV (the Valley of the River Stour around Canterbury) has been identified to protect the historic and landscape setting of the City and the World Heritage Site. Policy HE3 and associated text also sets out requirements for protecting the setting of the City.’

‘Policy LB2 Areas of High Landscape Value

The following Areas of High Landscape Value are defined on the Proposals Map and

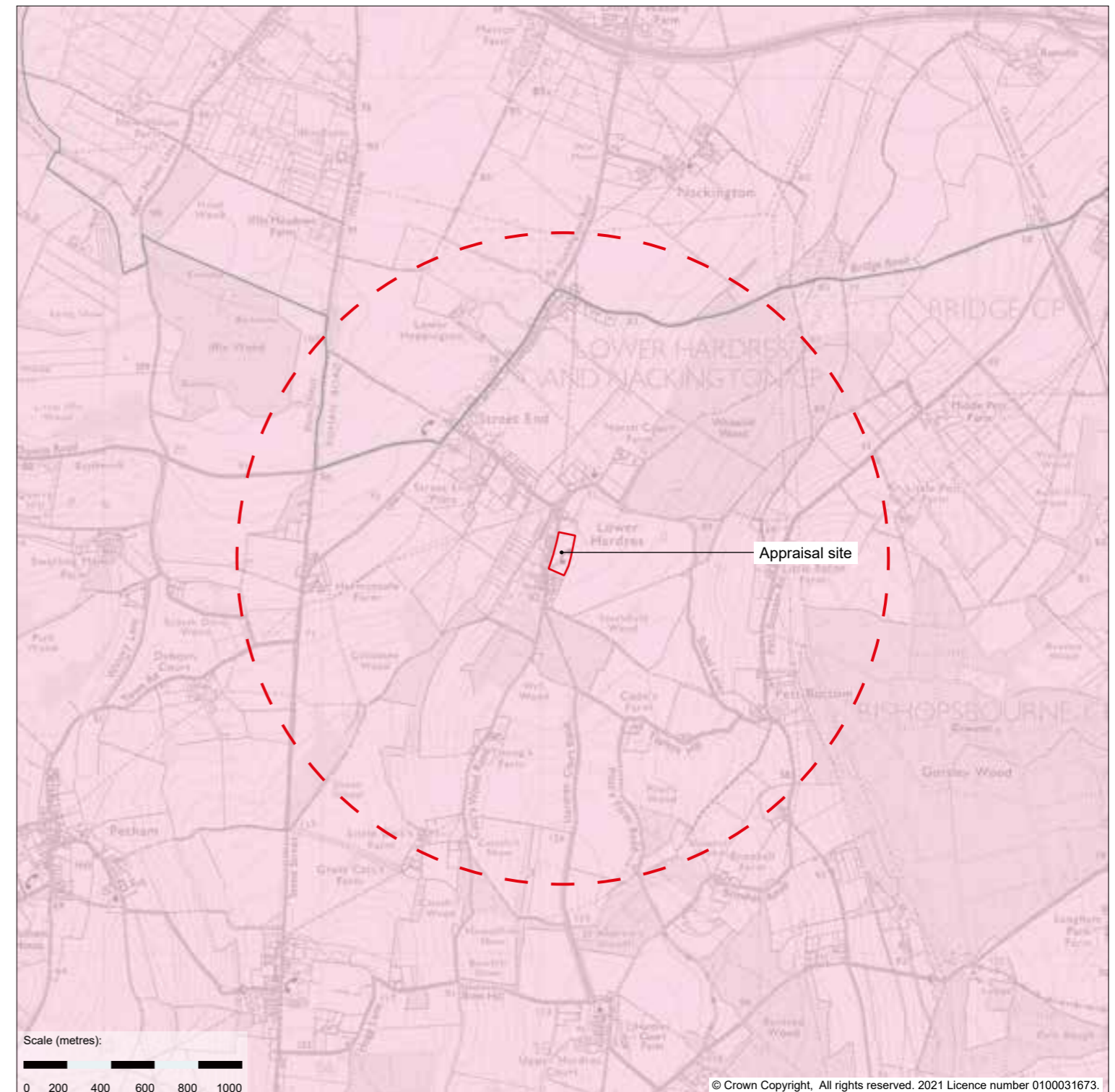
Inset Maps:

- a. The North Kent Marshes;
- b. The North Downs;
- c. Blean Woods;
- d. Wantsum Channel;
- e. Canterbury (the valley of the River Stour around Canterbury).

Within these areas, development will be considered in relation to the extent to which its location, scale, design and materials would impact on or protect the local landscape character and enhance the future appearance of the designated landscape and its heritage and nature conservation interest. Development proposals that support the landscape character (including settlement character), and have no significant impact upon historic setting, archaeological or nature conservation interests, where relevant, will be permitted.

Within the Canterbury AHLV, development proposals should have particular regard to the historic setting of the City and the World Heritage Site.’

Fig. 11: Ordnance Survey map indicating extent of AHLV designation



Appraisal site
 Study area
 Area of High Landscape Value

3. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

3.1 in relation to Natural England's National Landscape Character Assessment the site falls within the 119 - North Kent Downs.

3.2 It describes key landscape characteristics as follows:

- *Cretaceous Chalk forms the backbone of the North Downs. A distinctive chalk downland ridge rises up from the surrounding land, with a steep scarp slope to the south providing extensive views across Kent, Surrey and Sussex and across the Channel seascape to France.*
- *The broad dip slope gradually drops towards the Thames and the English Channel, affording extensive views across London and the Thames Estuary. The carved topography provides a series of dry valleys, ridges and plateaux.*
- *Chalk soils are predominant across the NCA but the upper part of the dip slope is capped by extensive clay-with-flint deposits. Patches of clay and sandy soils also occur with coombe deposits common in dry valleys.*
- *The North Downs end at the dramatic White Cliffs of Dover, one of the country's most distinctive and famous landmarks. Most of the coast between Kingsdown and Folkestone is unprotected, allowing for natural processes. The cliffs are home to internationally important maritime cliff-top and cliff-ledge vegetation.*
- *The area is cut by the deep valleys of the Stour, Medway, Darent, Wey and Mole. The river valleys cut through the chalk ridge, providing distinctive local landscapes which contrast with the steep scarp slope.*
- *The south-facing scarp is incised by a number of short, bowl-shaped dry valleys, cut by periglacial streams and often referred to as combes. The undulating topography of the dip slope has also been etched by streams and rivers, today forming dry valleys, some of which carry winterbournes that occasionally flow in the dip slope, depending on the level of the chalk aquifer.*
- *The footslope of the escarpment supports arable cropping, the dominant land use within the NCA. In the east, the richer, loamy soils of the lower dip slope support large tracts of mixed arable and horticultural production.*

- *Woodland is found primarily on the steeper slopes of the scarp, valley sides and areas of the dip slope capped with clay-with-flints. Wellwooded hedgerows and shaws are an important component of the field boundaries, contributing to a strongly wooded character. Much of the woodland is ancient.*
- *Tracts of species-rich chalk grassland and patches of chalk heath are important downland habitats and of international importance.*
- *Ancient paths, drove roads and trackways, often sunken, cross the landscape and are a distinctive feature of the dip slope. Defensive structures such as castles, hill forts and Second World War installations, and historic parks, buildings and monuments are found throughout.*
- *Small, nucleated villages and scattered farmsteads including oasts and barns form the settlement pattern, with local flint, chalk and Wealden brick the vernacular materials.*
- *In the western part of the area, around and to the west of Sevenoaks and into Surrey, there is increased urban development.*

KENT DOWNS AONB LANDSCAPE CHARACTER - KENT DOWNS AONB HANDBOOK 2014-2019 CHAPTER 3 - LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA DESIGN GUIDANCE

3.3 The Kent Downs AONB Landscape Management Plan locates the appraisal site within landscape character area 10: East Kent Downs, Local Character Areas: Petham, Elham, Alkham.

3.4 Key characteristics of this LCA are defined as:

- Long wooded ridges.
- Dry valleys with open valley bottoms.
- Extensive coppice and conifer woodlands.
- Coastal downs.
- Thick shaws or overgrown hedges on the valleysides.
- Narrow uncultivated banks or 'shaws'.
- Tiny remote settlements incorporating traditional building materials
- (flint, brick and tile).
- Large arable fields on ridge-top plateaux.
- Maze of sunken one-track lanes.
- Scattered military remains, e.g. pill boxes and gun emplacements.

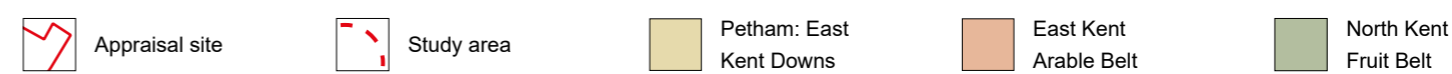
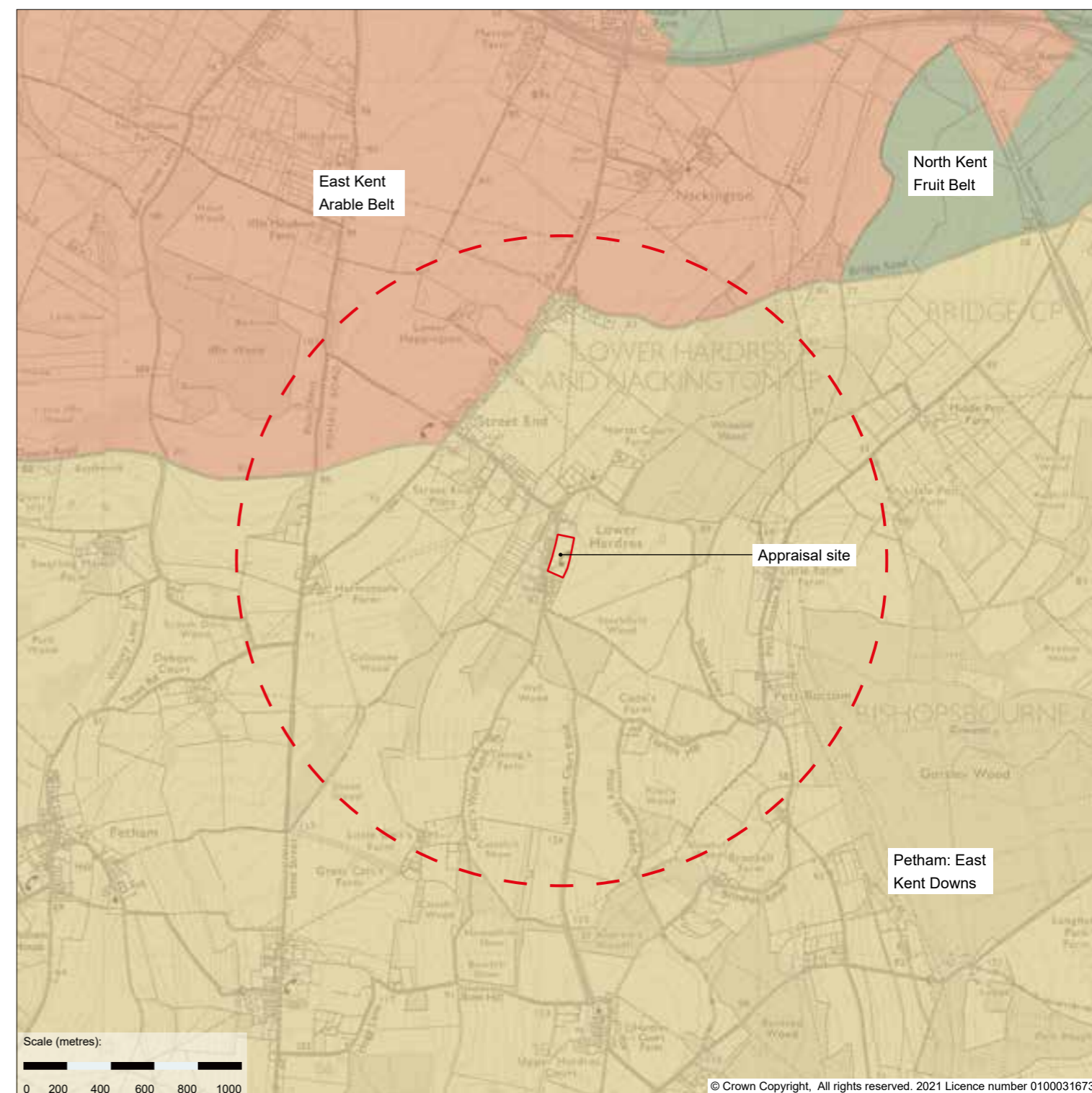
3.5 Key characteristics of the Petham sub-character area are:

- Intimate rolling valleys.
- Scattered farmsteads.
- Block of deciduous woodlands on ridges.
- Extensive views into secluded coombes.
- Areas of traditional chalk grassland.
- Frequent redundant oast houses.
- Almost no hop gardens still in production.
- Hedges and hedgerow trees

KENT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER - THE LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT OF KENT 2004

- 3.6 The site in relation to the county-level Landscape Character Areas is shown opposite.
- 3.7 The Landscape Assessment of Kent 2004 locates the appraisal site within the Petham: East Kent Downs character area.
- 3.8 It describes the key characteristics as follows:
 - *'Intimate, remote, long rolling valleys.*
 - *Deciduous woodland on ridges.*
 - *Chalk grassland/rough grass shaws/rare species.*
 - *Overgrown hedgerows with many trees.*
 - *Scattered farms and redundant oasts.*

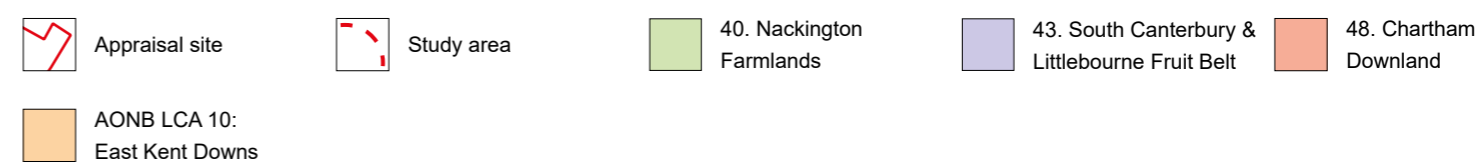
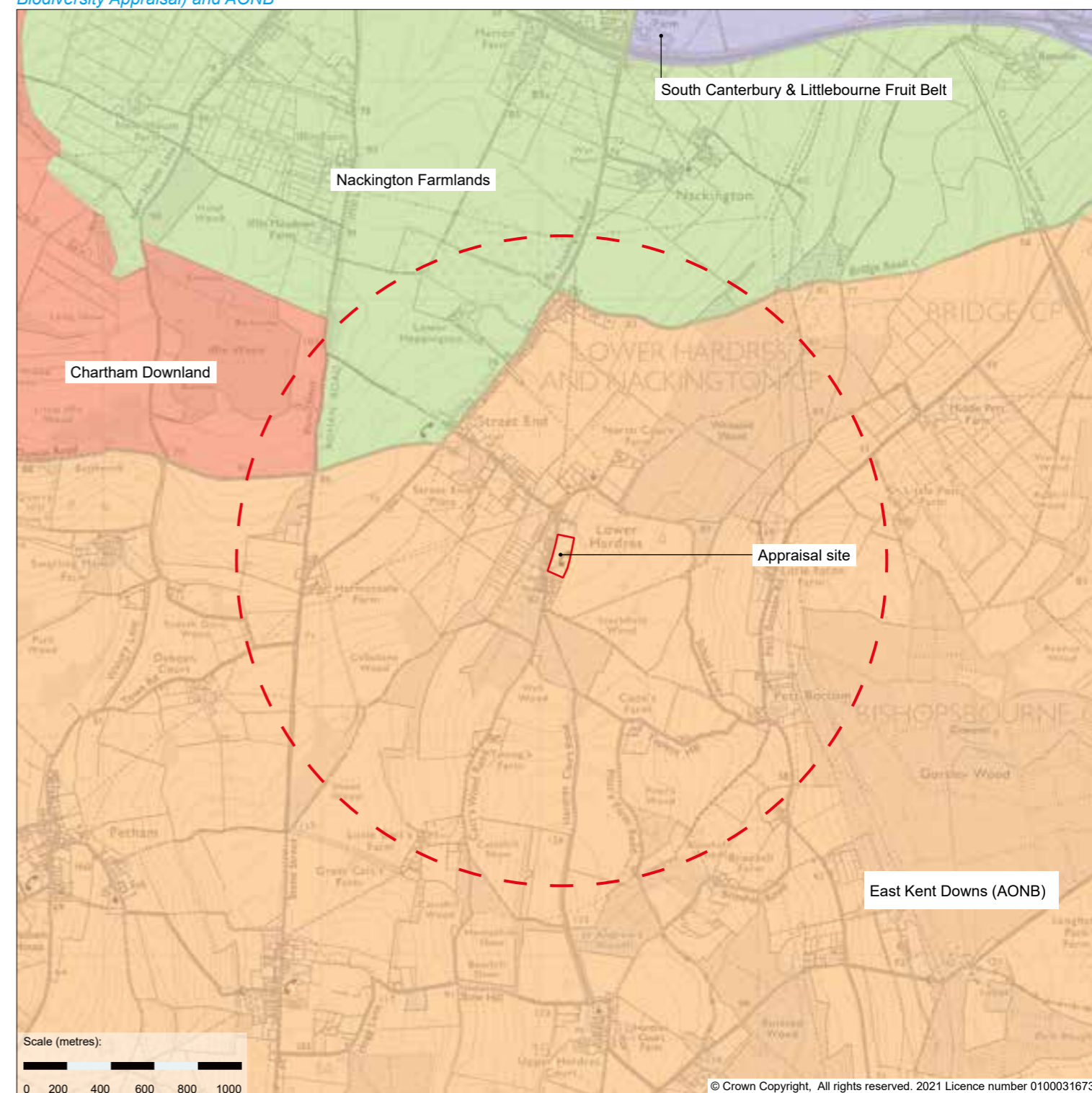
Fig. 12: Ordnance Survey map indicating extent of the Kent County landscape character areas.



LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER - CANTERBURY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND BIODIVERSITY APPRAISAL 2012

3.9 The geographical coverage of the Canterbury Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal 2012 does not include areas within the Kent Downs AONB designation, as this is covered in the AONB characterisation exercise (above). The appraisal site is therefore excluded from the Canterbury study.

Fig. 13: Ordnance Survey map indicating extent of the local landscape character areas (Canterbury Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal) and AONB



SITE-SPECIFIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- 3.10 The appraisal site and its wider landscape context share some, but not all of these identified characteristics, from national down to local scale.
- Typical rolling downland landform. The appraisal site itself is generally flat with rising land to the east.
 - Long ridges and narrow, dry valleys
 - Scattered farmsteads
 - Undulating topography
 - Large arable fields
 - Blocks of woodland, much of which is ancient woodland
 - Wooded horizons
 - Modern (post-war) residential development, some two-storey and some bungalows.
 - Many smaller paddocks, including for equestrian use
 - Mixed native species roadside hedgerows
 - Linear pattern of rural settlement
 - Narrow hedge lined lanes
 - Occasional views of St Mary's Church steeple amongst the trees.
- 3.11 The site's character is strongly influenced by the surrounding landscape structure, where the post-war linear development pattern to the west and south of Hardres Court Rd has defined a rectangular paddock of land that has a stronger physical and visual relationship with the settlement than with the wider arable landscape to the east.

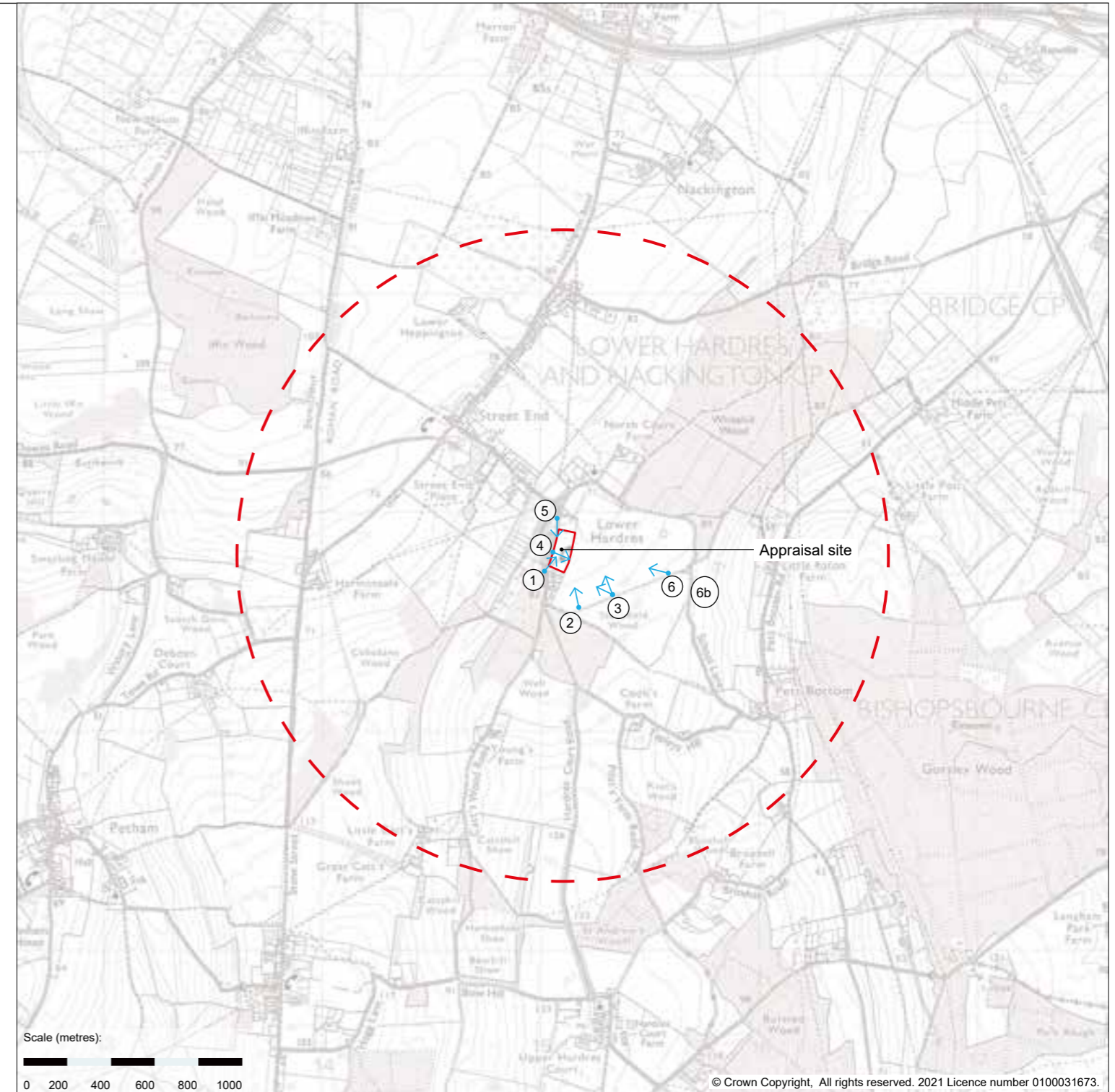
4. VISUAL CHARACTER




Fig. 14: Ordnance Survey map indicating locations of photo viewpoints

4.1 The following photographs have been take to provide an indication of the site's general visual character. They have not been taken in accordance with the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note TGN 06/19 'Visual Representation of Development Proposals.'

4.2 The photographs were taken on 17 August 2021 using an Apple iPhone 12 Max Pro camera using the standard 1x photo setting. Where the telephoto function was used this is stated on the photosheet.

- Photo 1: View north-east from Hardres Court Road
- Photo 2: View north-west from Public Footpath CB365
- View 3: Panoramic view north-west from PRow CB365
- View 4: View south-east from Hardres Court Road
- View 5: View south from Hardres Court Road
- View 6a: View west from Public Footpath CB365
- Photo 6b: Panoramic view west from Public Footpath CB365 (telephoto)



 Appraisal site
  Study area
  Photo viewpoint

View 1 - View north-east from Hardres Court Road



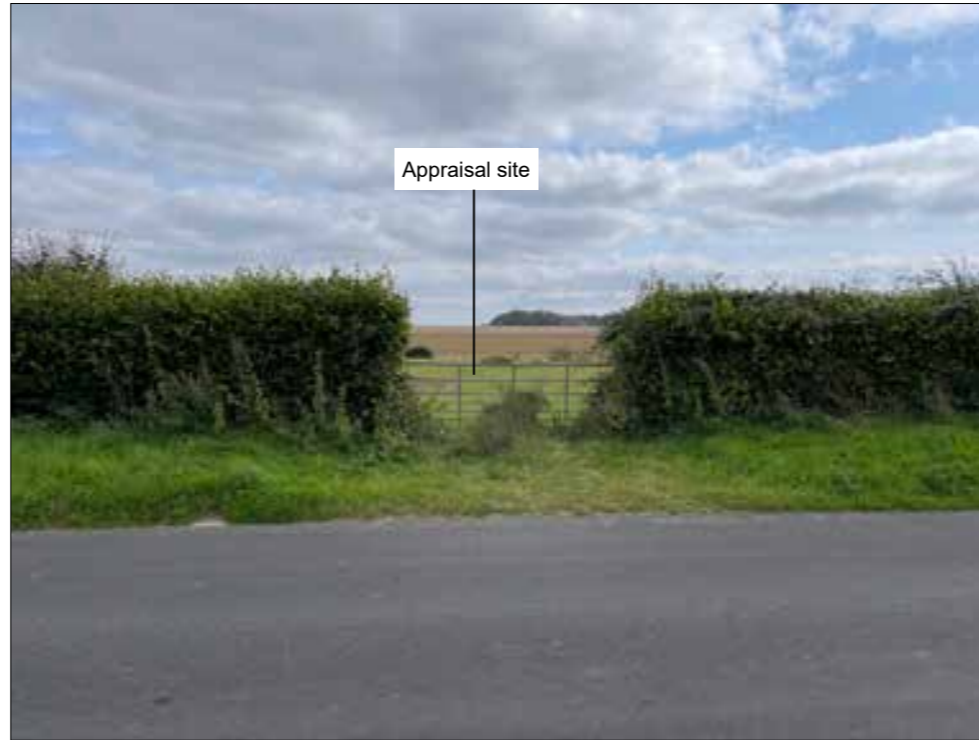
View 2 - View north-west from Public Footpath CB365



View 3 - Panoramic view north-west from Public Footpath CB365



View 4 - View south-east from Hardres Court Road



View 5 - View south from Hardres Court Road



View 6a - View west from Public Footpath CB365



Photo 6b: Panoramic view west from Public Footpath CB365 (telephoto)



5. DISCUSSION - CAPACITY FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT - KEY LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ISSUES

- 5.1 The site's principal landscape and visual characteristics and sensitivities are summarised below, together with an outline of the constraints operating on the site.
- 5.2 The site is relatively flat and enclosed by strong landscape features to the north, west and south. The eastern boundary is less strong physically, but it is differentiated in character from the wider farmed landscape to the east by its smaller scale and by its land use / management. This creates an implied landscape structure that can be recreated and reinforced to establish a logical eastern boundary to the site.
- 5.3 The site has a strong relationship with Hardres Court Road and the linear development pattern along it.
- 5.4 The roadside hedgerow currently restricts views eastwards from Hardres Court Rd, although this will depend on the height to which the hedgerow is maintained. There is also a single view through a gate towards the rising land eastwards. There are open views westwards and north westwards towards the site from PRoW CB365. In these views the relationship between the site and the existing development along Hardres Court Rd is apparent, and it is also clear in these views that the appraisal site possesses a different character to the wider arable field from where these views are gained.
- 5.5 In these views from the east, the appraisal site and the developed land along Hardres Court Rd are viewed against a backdrop of woodland on the horizon. Any new development on the appraisal site would be set below this horizon, and located in front of existing residential development along Hardres Court Rd. Viewed from this direction, development of the site would appear as a logical infill as part of the village, rather than an extension of settlement into the open countryside.
- 5.6 Developed plots on the eastern side of Hardres Court Rd possess long back gardens, meaning that built form is located away from the eastern curtilage boundary. This could be replicated on the appraisal site to ensure that elevations and gables are kept away from the boundary, allowing green space and planting between. This could take the form of long rear gardens (which would be consistent with existing adjacent plots), or it could take the form of a band of communal informal amenity space, with (say) fruit trees and mown grass paths.
- 5.7 Occupants of existing dwellings on the western side of Hardres Court Rd have some visual amenity benefits from views east across the appraisal site and beyond, especially from first floor windows (less so for the bungalows due to the presence of the roadside hedgerow). The layout and design of any new development would need to take into account the need to protect private amenity.
- 5.8 The introduction of new development onto the appraisal site would represent an infill of a pocket of well-defined roadside paddock land in part of the village characterised by a linear pattern of development. It would not appear as an inappropriately located or ill-defined development within the AONB.
- 5.9 The existing roadside hedgerow on Hardres Court Rd is a local landscape feature which will need to be breached to provide site access. There is already a gap in the hedge accommodating an agricultural access gate, but the location of the site access would need to be designed by a highways engineer. It will be necessary for a wider gap to be created, and this will require the removal of a section of hedgerow for the access and possibly for sightlines. This represents a degree of harm to a landscape feature in the AONB, although the degree of loss might be mitigated by the fact that there is already a broad grass verge between the hedgerow and the road, which would be within the required sightlines. The hedgerow might also be of ecological value (subject to specialist survey). It would also be possible to plant sections of new hedgerow behind sight lines if necessary.
- 5.10 No trees would need to be removed to accommodate development on the site. Development of the site would provide an opportunity to increase tree cover on the site and on its boundaries.
- KENT DOWNS AONB**
- 5.11 The Kent Downs AONB Management Unit has produced design guidance for development and management proposals within the designation. It provides generic design principles that are applicable to land management schemes and issues throughout the AONB, including rural settlement development, as well as more specific design guidance for individual landscape character areas, in this case the East Kent Downs Local Character Areas: Petham, Elham, Alkham (referenced above).
- 5.12 The AONB Management Unit has also published design guidance on Street and Lanes within the designation (2009) which would inform the design of any new access and street frontage.
- 5.13 With regard to Policy LB1 in the adopted Canterbury Local Plan in considering proposals for development within the AONB, the emphasis is placed on proposals that are sustainably and appropriately located and designed to enhance the character of the AONB. The policy states that the City Council will grant proposals which support the economy and social well being of the AONB and its communities, including affordable housing schemes, provided that they do not conflict with the aim of conserving and enhancing natural beauty by addressing location, scale, form, high quality design, materials and mitigation and have regard to the advice set out in the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan, and its supporting guidance.
- 5.14 Proposals for development within the national AONB landscape protection designation must demonstrate that they contribute positively to the protection and enhancement of natural beauty. Their design should contribute and respond to (and be informed by) prevailing landscape characteristics. This has clear implications for:
- design, layout and density
 - choice of materials for buildings and landscape
 - landscape and visual impact of proposals, including appropriate mitigation
 - streetlighting and dark skies
 - selection of plant species for hedgerows and trees
 - sustainable drainage
 - long term landscape and ecological management.
- AREA OF HIGH LANDSCAPE VALUE**
- 5.15 Development of the site would represent an increase in the quantum of development within the AHLV designation.
- 5.16 AHLV status does not preclude development. The policy states that development will be considered in relation to the extent to which its location, scale, design and materials would impact on or protect the local landscape character and enhance the future appearance of the designated landscape and its heritage and nature conservation interest. Development proposals that support the landscape character (including settlement character), and have no significant impact upon historic setting, archaeological or nature conservation interests, where relevant, will be permitted.

5.17 As a grazed paddock the site is unlikely to be of high nature conservation interest, although the boundary vegetation may offer some habitat. This would need to be confirmed by ecological survey. Development of the site would offer an opportunity to increase site biodiversity over what is likely to be a low current baseline, delivering a biodiversity net gain.

CONSERVATION AREA

5.18 The baseline study indicates that there are heritage features in the vicinity of the appraisal site, and the site is located within a Conservation Area.

5.19 Local plan policy requires that proposed new development within the Conservation Area will need to demonstrate through design that it preserves or enhances its special architectural or historic character or appearance. As there is no Conservation Area Appraisal, a thorough understanding of local heritage assets and the Conservation Area itself will be necessary to comply with this requirement. This will include plan form, the buildings and structures themselves, architectural features, built form, archaeological sites, materials, trees, streets and spaces and the relationships between these features.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 The site at Hardres Court Rd is constrained by landscape and conservation policy, with designations from national to local level.

6.2 In terms of landscape assessment methodology, such as the industry standard Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, these designations increase the sensitivity of the site, which would tend to reduce the capacity of the site to accommodate new development.

6.3 In the instance of the Hardres Court Rd site, however, the paddock (appraisal site) would appear to be a suitable site for new development within the village, being well-defined in terms of landscape structure, and possessing a good relationship with the existing settlement pattern, and unlikely to cause harm to landscape and visual resources.

6.4 The policy constraints offer design opportunities, because if planning permission is to be granted for development on this site, it must be designed to a high standard to comply with the policy tests.

6.5 This high level landscape statement concludes that the site could accommodate new development and at the same time protect and enhance prevailing landscape and visual assets provided it is of an appropriate high quality design and layout that responds to and respects the AONB, AHLV and Conservation Area policy status.

6.6 Should proposals be brought forward for the development of the site, they should be subject to rigorous scrutiny using the methodology set out in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition, published by the Landscape Institute and IEMA.

7. OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS PLAN

Constraints and Opportunities Plan

Land at Hardres Court Road

Lower Hardres



Consider informal planting of signature trees, such as lime and beech, along site frontage to reflect and perpetuate the sylvan character of Hardres Court Rd to the north and south

Amenity of existing residents of Hardres Court Rd to be considered / protected

Proposed vehicular access taken from Hardres Court Rd (position to be advised by highways engineer)

Creation of site access and safe sightlines will require removal of a section of frontage hedgerow. The existing hedgerow is set back behind a broad grass verge which may mitigate the loss

Planting of informal avenues of large canopy street trees within proposed development area (NPPF Para 131)

Any new development to deliver a demonstrable net gain in biodiversity

Location of site within AHLV designation will require location, scale, design and materials of any new development to protect the local landscape character and enhance the future appearance of the designated landscape and its heritage and nature conservation interest.

Layout of new development to respond to Conservation Area status and prevailing settlement pattern

AONB status will dictate high quality architecture, detailing, materials and landscape design reflecting local landscape character

Traditional design and massing of domestic scale, using pitched roofs and natural clay / slate / brick, to reflect local vernacular. Avoid bright or reflective finishes

Maximum development height 2 storeys plus roof to be consistent with prevailing building heights

New hedgerow / scrub belt with trees to be planted outside private curtilages and maintained in accordance with a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan, financed

New planting along eastern site boundary will mitigate views from local PROW, but consider allowing some framed views through to the rising landscape to the east

Unbuilt landscape zone to be retained along eastern site boundary - to be given over to garden space, communal amenity space, orchard or similar green function

Create and reinforce landscape structure by planting mixed native species hedgerow and trees along eastern boundary, reflecting wider landscape characteristics

New landscape belt will create corridor habitat and ecological linkages with wider habitats

Amenity of existing residents of Hardres Court Rd to be considered / protected