

on behalf of  
GA Pet Food Partners Group Ltd

Aslands Walks Energy Park  
Borough of Chorley  
Lancashire

archaeological desk-based assessment

report 5995  
August 2023

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## 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological desk-based assessment conducted in advance of the proposed development of Aslands Walks Energy Park, Borough of Chorley, Lancashire.
- 1.2 The works were commissioned by GA Pet Food Partners Group Ltd and conducted by Archaeological Services Durham University.
- 1.3 There is no direct evidence for prehistoric or Roman activity within the proposed development area, although palaeoenvironmental evidence from peat recovered from nearby Plocks Farm does indicate that the landscape was probably exploited in the Bronze Age. Settlement from the prehistoric period would be expected to have been located on higher ground, and it is considered unlikely that development will impact on a significant archaeological resource from this period.
- 1.4 Medieval settlement was located away from the site, and it is probable that the site itself was undrained low-lying land next to the River Douglas at this time, making it unsuitable for agriculture.
- 1.5 The proposed development area was probably drained and enclosed in the post-medieval period for agricultural purposes. Evidence for associated field boundaries and cultivation may survive below ground, although this would be of limited significance.
- 1.6 The proposed development has some limited potential to impact upon any archaeological resource that may be present through any groundworks associated with the development, including installation of turbines, solar panels and associated utilities.
- 1.7 It is recommended that the potential for an archaeological resource to be present on the site is evaluated through geophysical survey.

## 2. Project background

### Location (Figures 1 & 2)

- 2.1 The site is located on land off the A59, to the south-east of Tarleton, Borough of Chorley, Lancashire (NGR centre: SD 46110 19225). It is irregular in plan and covers an area of approximately 37.5 ha.

### Development proposal (Figure 3)

- 2.2 The proposed development is for a solar farm and wind turbine.

### Objective

- 2.3 The objective of the scheme of works was to assess the nature, extent and potential significance of any surviving archaeological resource within the proposed development area, so that an informed decision may be made regarding the nature and scope of any further scheme of archaeological works that may be required in relation to the proposed development.

### Methods statement

- 2.4 The works included the study of pertinent cartographic and other historical sources, records of previous archaeological interventions and sites listed in the Historic Environment Record (HER) within 1km of the proposed development area. Relevant HER references are given in brackets throughout the text of this report, and are listed in Appendix 1. A walk-over survey was also conducted, to help ascertain the potential of the proposed development area to contain any archaeological resource. A *pro forma* recording sheet was completed.

### Planning guidance

- 2.5 This assessment and its recommendations are a considered response to the proposed development in relation to Government policy, as it is set out in the *National Planning Policy Framework*.

### Dates

- 2.6 The field visit took place on 1st October 2020, as part of an earlier assessment. Due to the lack of change in the proposed development area, another visit was not required. This report was prepared for August 2023.

### Personnel

- 2.7 Research was conducted and this report prepared by Rebekah Walsh, with graphics by David Graham. The site visit and photography were undertaken by Catrin Jenkins.

### OASIS

- 2.8 Archaeological Services Durham University is registered with the Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigationS project (OASIS). The OASIS ID number for this project is archaeol3-517807.

## 3. Site description

### Geology and soils

- 3.1 The underlying bedrock geology of the area comprises Permian and Triassic sandstone of the Sherwood Sandstone Group, overlain by Tidal Flat Deposits of silt, clay and sand (British Geological Survey 2023).



- 3.2 No records of geotechnical works within the proposed development area were identified for this assessment.

#### Landscape characterisation

- 3.3 The proposed development area is within Natural England's Lancashire and Amounderness Plain (32) National Character Area. It is defined as an area of agricultural land, bordered by Morecambe Bay to the north, Liverpool to the south and the Bowland Fringe to the east. The landscape is generally low-lying, with mosslands, coastal marshes and dunes to the west and farmland to the east. The area south of the Ribble Estuary is predominantly large agricultural fields, divided by steep ditches and drainage systems (Natural England 2013).
- 3.4 LiDAR data, satellite images, and aerial photographs (Figure 4)  
Two distinct areas are visible within the proposed development area on the LiDAR data. The land in the southern half of the site has been ploughed on a north-east/south-west alignment. To the north, the ploughmarks are less obvious but can be faintly seen, aligned north-west/south-east. A former field boundary runs on the same orientation, just off-centre; this is approximately 350m long and does not extend across the entire field. The thin northern strip of the field that provides access from the A59 is level and unploughed.
- 3.5 Satellite imagery of the site dating to between 2000 and 2023 can be seen on Google Earth. The site comprises one large field for the entirety of this period, though different ploughing regimes and crops are visible within the field at different dates. The former field boundary visible on the LiDAR data is first present on satellite images from 2013, with another similar feature noted on the most recent 2023 image, in the southern part of the site aligned north-east/south-west. Parts of the southern half of the site appeared to be flooded in 2021.
- 3.6 An aerial photograph (raf\_3g\_tud\_uk\_187\_vp4\_5327) in the Historic England collection dating to 1946 shows the site as a patchwork of 16 irregular shaped arable fields. Another photo (raf\_542\_82\_v\_0052) in the collection, taken in 1954, only shows the southern part of the site. It has a similar arrangement of fields, though two boundaries have been removed.
- 3.7 Lancashire County Council's extensive collection of aerial photographs shows the site in the 1940s and 1960s. Again, these show an irregular patchwork of arable fields, with slightly changing field boundaries.
- 3.8 Site as existing (Figure 2)  
Photograph locations are given on Figure 2. The proposed development area was predominantly level with a mean elevation of approximately 7m OD. The River Douglas (Asland) borders the eastern edge of the site with the Rufford Branch of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal to the west. To the north is the Tarleton Bridge, across which is the A59. To the south is Eyes Lane farm track; further agricultural land lies in all directions.
- 3.9 The site comprises a single large arable field, which was ploughed and harrowed at the time of the site visit (Photos 1 to 7). The southern and part of the eastern boundary are marked by a water-filled ditch. The western and remainder of the eastern edges of the site are bounded by the River Douglas (Asland) and its canalised

sections, the Leeds and Liverpool Canal (Rufford Branch). There is also a tow path along the western field edge. A former field boundary is defined by a linear band of rough ground in the western side of the field; this is identifiable on satellite and LiDAR imagery. Since the site visit another similar field boundary has been noted on satellite images of 2023.

#### 4. Historical and archaeological development

##### Previous archaeological works

- 4.1 The proposed development area (PDA) was included in a desk-based assessment in 2020 (Archaeological Services 2020a); it was named as 'Site A' within that report. No known archaeological resource was identified on the site, though the potential for unknown features to be present was noted.
- 4.2 A desk-based assessment on Plocks Farm (ELA 1701; Archaeological Services 2009), around 300m to the north of the site, identified the potential for peat deposits to survive in the area. Palaeoenvironmental coring was subsequently conducted close to the bend in the River Douglas, which recorded Bronze Age peat, reflecting a landscape of birch and alder trees and a range of herbaceous plants. There would have been open areas of meadow and pasture nearby (ELA 1702; Archaeological Services 2010). However, a scheme of archaeological evaluation revealed no further archaeological remains (Archaeological Services 2020b).
- 4.3 The prehistoric and Roman periods (up to AD 5th century)  
There is no direct evidence of prehistoric activity in the proposed development area. The prehistoric occupation in the wider area tends to be focussed on the higher ground, with few artefacts or sites identified on the lower ground around the Ribble Estuary and the Lancashire plain (Archaeological Services 2020a, 7). A few Neolithic flints recovered from the mosses around Tarleton are the sole definitive evidence of activity pre-dating the Iron Age in the near vicinity of the PDA (Martin 1995, 6).
- 4.4 Details of the Bronze Age landscape in the vicinity were examined through palaeoenvironmental coring (ELA 1702), though no evidence of human activity was identified.
- 4.5 To the south-west of the site, two cropmark enclosures have been recorded. These have not been dated but may pertain to the late prehistoric period. A slightly circular enclosure (HER 3443) was found at Strine Plat, c.975m away, and a sub-rectangular enclosure (HER 3444), possibly including a small bank, has been recorded at Manor Farm, 375m away to the south of Sollom.
- 4.6 There are Roman military sites at Wigan (c.17km south-east) and Walton-le-Dale, near Preston (c.13km north-east), though there is no evidence of Roman occupation within the site or its near vicinity (Archaeological Services 2020a). It is probable that any Iron Age occupation in the area continued to be inhabited into the Roman period.
- 4.7 Though there is scant evidence of occupation in the surrounding area during these periods, there is potential for a previously unknown resource to survive on the site.

- The medieval period (5th century to 1540)
- 4.8 The PDA lies between the medieval villages of Tarleton and Bretherton, with the hamlet of Sollom to the south-west. The surrounding area would have been a mixture of farmland and grazing, with surviving boundaries of strip fields (HER 23896) located just to the north-west of the site. Aerial photographs of this area have also identified a potential village site (HER 3425), though this has not been confirmed by any further archaeological works.
- 4.9 The site may have been used as agricultural or grazing land for one or more of these settlements throughout the medieval period; however, it is more probable that its location close to the River Douglas would have meant it was undrained and therefore unsuitable for agriculture at this time.
- The post-medieval period (1541 to 1899)
- 4.10 Tarleton and Bretherton ('*Brotherton*') are both depicted on Speed's map of 1610. The PDA is undeveloped land by the river, near '*Bankhall*'. This relates to a moated manor house (HER 1348), believed to have been built in 1608, though heavily altered in the 19th century. However, there was probably a medieval predecessor on the site (<https://www.bankhall.org/history-of-bank-hall>).
- 4.11 The 17th century was a time of great progress across the Lancashire plain. Increases in the population at this time led to additional land being drained for agricultural use. The drainage systems included steep-sided ditched and culverts, with embankments constructed alongside the area's rivers to reduce flooding of arable land (Natural England 2014). Many farms in the vicinity originate in the 17th century, including Cross Farm (HER 10673), Green Lane Farm (HER 10674) and White Dial Farm (HER 10675), all in Sollom, and Bank Hall Farm (HER 12618), associated with the manor to the east. It is possible that the PDA was drained during this period, and utilised by one of the many farms in the area.
- 4.12 Yates' map of Lancashire (Figure 5), dating to 1786, shows a little more detail, including the road network between the rural settlements. The site is still shown as undeveloped land.
- 4.13 In the early 1700s, improvements were made to the River Douglas in order to make it navigable (HER 26315), with works to the river alongside the PDA conducted from around 1753. These works were continued by the builders of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal (HER 10369), which was opened for trade from Liverpool to Newburgh in the late 18th century. The canal made use of the bypass cut from Rufford, to the west of the meanders of the River Douglas (Asland). This became known as the Rufford Branch of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal (HER 10376). There were 8 locks on the Rufford Branch, a 7-mile stretch extending from Rufford, around 3.7km south of the PDA, northwards to the Ribble Estuary. One of these locks lay immediately west of the PDA, at Sollom (HER 7484). It was constructed in 1780, but fell out of use in 1803.
- 4.14 In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, following piecemeal reclamation of waterlogged ground, systematic drainage took place across the mossland (WLCC n.d.). Greenwood's map of 1818 (Figure 6) records the altered landscape. The PDA is shown between two waterways, the River Douglas to the east and the Rufford

Branch of the canal to the west. Sollom Lock is also labelled. The site had probably been drained for cultivation by this time, if not before.

- 4.15 The 1st edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map of 1847 (Figure 7) records a pattern of small, irregular fields across the site, numbering 26 in total. Drainage ditches are indicated by the presence of wooden bridges. The canal to the west is labelled as 'The old course of the River Asland'. The northern strip of the field leads up to Windgate Lane, joining the road between two bridges, Tarleton Bridge (HER 10658) over the river to the east and Bank Bridge (HER 10659) over the canal to the west, though this is named 'Canal Bridge' on the OS map. These bridges date to 1821 and 1790 respectively. A warehouse (HER 10660) is noted to the north of the road, which still survives today; this is contemporary with Bank Bridge.

- 4.16 There is little change on the 2nd edition OS map of 1894, with alterations within the PDA limited to the removal of several field boundaries in the northern part of the site, to create a single larger field in this area.

The modern period (1900 to present)

- 4.17 Into the 20th century, the PDA remained as agricultural land, with the 3rd edition OS map of 1910 showing no changes to the field boundaries and little development in the surrounding area.
- 4.18 The PDA was still agricultural by the mid-20th century. Aerial photographs from the 1940s show the same field boundaries as the 1894 and 1910 maps, with all the fields under arable cultivation. More aerial photographs were taken in the 1960s, again showing the site under arable crop, with little noticeable change.
- 4.19 Field boundaries were removed at some point in the late 20th century to create one large arable field, and the site remains like this today.

Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other Designated Heritage Assets

- 4.20 There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the proposed development area, or the near vicinity. There are 25 listed buildings within 1km of the site; of these, three are Grade II\* listed: Bank Hall (LB 1362113), the Church of St. Mary, Tarleton (LB 1073122) and Carr House (LB 1163160). The remaining assets are Grade II listed, with the nearest to the site being Tarleton Bridge (LB 1073123), Bank Bridge (also known as Canal Bridge; LB 1031385) and Bank Bridge Warehouse (LB 1361863). These are all clustered around the northernmost point of the PDA, with the rest of the listed buildings located in Tarleton, Sollom and around Little Hanging Bridge Farm, c.1km south of the site. There are 3 Conservation Areas in the vicinity of the site – Sollom, Rufford Park and Plox Brow, Tarleton.
- 4.21 It is not thought that the proposed development will have any effect on these assets. No other designated heritage assets were identified on or in the vicinity of the site.

## 5. The potential archaeological resource

- 5.1 There is no direct evidence for prehistoric or Roman activity within the proposed development area, although palaeoenvironmental evidence from peat recovered from nearby Plocks Farm does indicate that the landscape was probably exploited in

the Bronze Age. Settlement from the prehistoric period would be expected to have been located on higher ground, and it is considered unlikely that development will impact on a significant archaeological resource from the period.

- 5.2 Medieval settlement was located away from the site, and it is probable that the site itself was undrained low-lying land next to the River Douglas at this time, making it unsuitable for agriculture.
- 5.3 The PDA was probably drained and enclosed in the post-medieval period for agricultural purposes. Evidence for associated field boundaries and cultivation may survive below ground, although this would be of limited significance.

## 6. Impact assessment

- 6.1 The proposed development has some limited potential to impact upon any archaeological resource that may be present through any groundworks associated with the development, including installation of turbines, solar panels and associated utilities.

## 7. Recommendations

- 7.1 It is recommended that the potential for an archaeological resource to be present on the site is evaluated through geophysical survey.

## 8. Sources

### Cartographic sources

Speed, J, Map of Lancashire 1610  
Yates, W, The county Palatine of Lancashire, 1786  
Greenwood, C, Map of Lancashire, 1818  
Ordnance Survey 1st edition, 1847  
Ordnance Survey 2nd edition, 1894  
Ordnance Survey 3rd edition, 1910

### Other sources

Archaeological Services 2009 *Proposed developments at Golden Acres, Plocks Farm, Bretherton: environmental statement*. Report 2183, Archaeological Services Durham University  
Archaeological Services 2010 *Plocks Farm, Bretherton, Lancashire: palaeoenvironmental assessment*. Report 2284, Archaeological Services Durham University  
Archaeological Services 2020a *GA Pet Food Partners – Green Energy Strategy: Site Appraisal (Options A Sollom, B Carr Brook & C Haunders Lane), Sollom and Much Hoole, Lancashire: archaeological desk-based assessment*. Report 5389, Archaeological Services Durham University  
Archaeological Services 2020b *Plocks Farm, Bretherton, Lancashire: archaeological evaluation*. Report 5348, Archaeological Services Durham University  
Martin, A L, 1995 *Report on an Archaeological Desk-based Assessment, Geophysical Survey and Archaeological Monitoring of Geotechnical Test-Pitting at Coe Lane, Tarleton, Lancashire*. Report 7026.R1, Gifford and Partners

Natural England 2013 *National Character Area Profile: 32. Lancashire and Amounderness Plain*.

West Lancashire County Council n.d. *Sollom Conservation Area: Character Appraisal*.

#### Websites

<https://researchframeworks.org/nwrf/>

<https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/>

<https://mapapps2.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html>

[www.naturalengland.gov.uk](http://www.naturalengland.gov.uk)

<https://historicengland.org.uk>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/>

<http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list>

<http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/lidar>

<http://maps.nls.uk>

<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>

<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk>

<https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/>

<https://lancashirecc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=28466a7354574ebf952e6a8a6f909577>

<https://www.bankhall.org/history-of-bank-hall>

#### Aerial photographs and LiDAR data

The Historic England aerial photograph collection was consulted, along with the collection of Lancashire County Council.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/>

<https://lancashirecc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=28466a7354574ebf952e6a8a6f909577>

Satellite imagery from 2000 to 2023 was viewed on Google Earth.

LiDAR data was accessed at <https://digimap.edina.ac.uk/lidar>.

## Appendix 1: Historic Environment Record

The tables include relevant sites recorded within the vicinity of the proposed development area (within an approximate radius of 1km from the site).

### Historic Environment Record and designated heritage assets

(PRN = Public Record Number, Designation - LB=Listed building)

PRN	Designation	Description	Grade	Date
1334	LB 1073122	St. Mary's Church, Tarleton	II*	Pre-1503/18th-century
1339	LB 1163160	Carr House, Carr House Lane, Bretherton	II*	17th-century
1348	LB 1362113	Bank Hall, Liverpool Road, Bretherton	II*	17th-century
3425		Aerial photograph of strip fields and possible village, St. Helen's Chapel, Tarleton		medieval
3443		Cropmark, Strine Plat, Tarleton		uncertain
3444		Cropmark, Manor Farm, Tarleton		uncertain
7484		Sollom Lock, River Douglas, Tarleton		18th-century
10369		Leeds and Liverpool Canal		18th- to 19th-century
10376		Leeds and Liverpool Canal (Rufford Branch)		18th- to 19th-century
10658	LB 1073123	Tarleton Bridge, Tarleton	II	19th-century
10659	LB 1031385	Bank Bridge, Tarleton	II	18th-century
10660	LB 1361863	Bank Bridge Warehouse, Tarleton	II	18th-century
10673	LB 1073125	Cross Farmhouse, Liverpool Old Road, Sollom	II	17th-century
10674	LB 1376901	Green Lane Farmhouse, Liverpool Old Road, Sollom	II	17th-century
10675	LB 1073126	White Dial Farmhouse, Liverpool Old Road, Sollom	II	17th-century
12618	LB 1163194	Bank Hall Farm, Liverpool Road, Bretherton	II	17th-century
23896		Strip fields, Coe Lane Fields (south), Tarleton		medieval
26315		River Douglas navigation		18th-century

### Previous archaeological interventions

PRN	Description
ELA 1701	Golden Acres, Plocks Farm: archaeological desk-based assessment
ELA 1702	Plocks Farm, Bretherton: palaeoenvironmental assessment
-	Sollom and Much Hoole, Lancashire: archaeological desk-based assessment
-	Plocks Farm, Bretherton, Lancashire: archaeological evaluation





Photo 1: View from the south-west corner of the site, looking north-east



Photo 2: View along the southern boundary of the site, looking west



Photo 3: View along the eastern boundary of the site, looking north





Photo 4: View across the site from the north, looking south-west



Photo 5: The narrow northern part of the site, looking north



Photo 6: The narrow northern part of the site, looking south-east

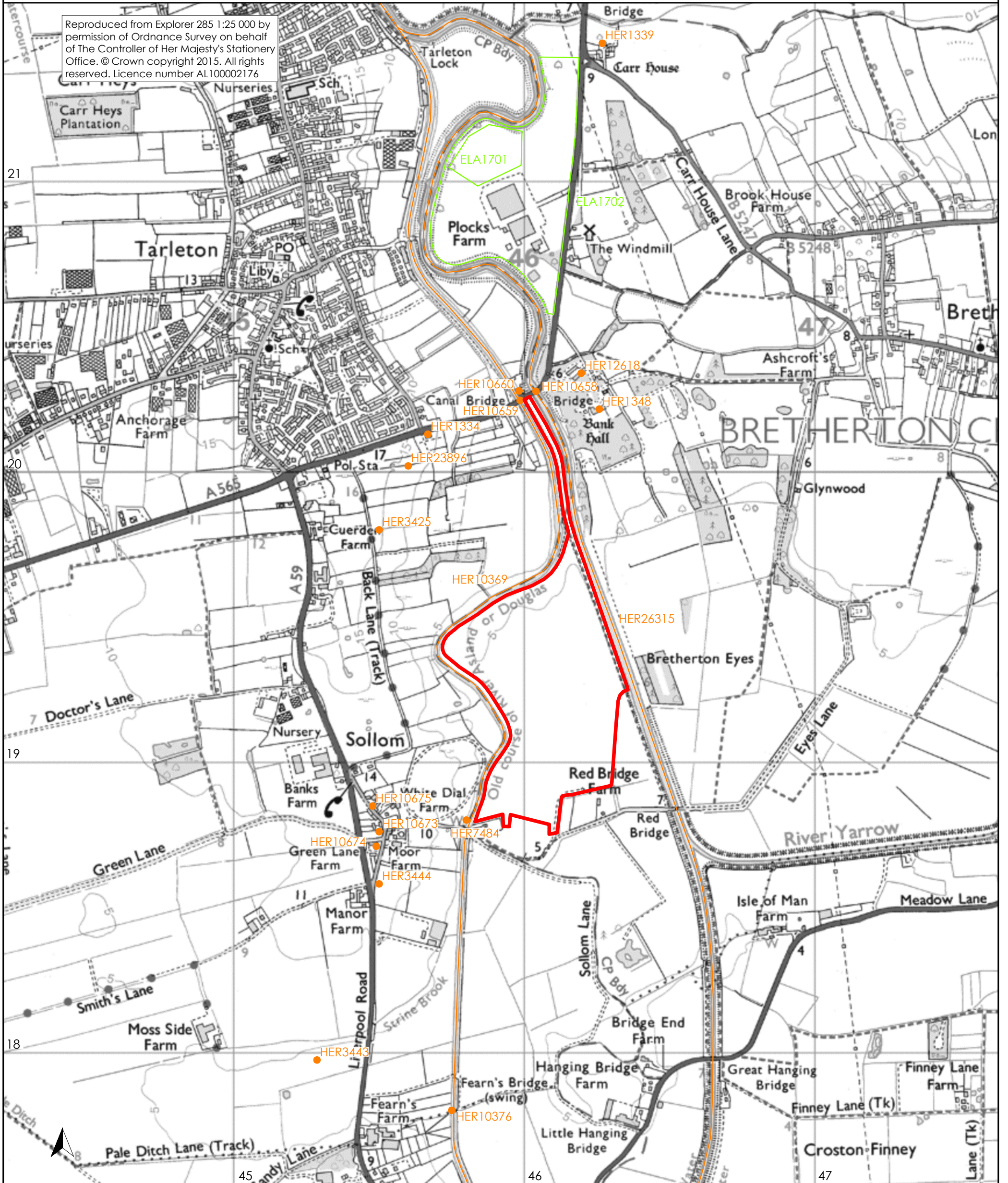


Photo 7: View across the southern part of the site from the tow path to the west, looking south



site boundary HER site event

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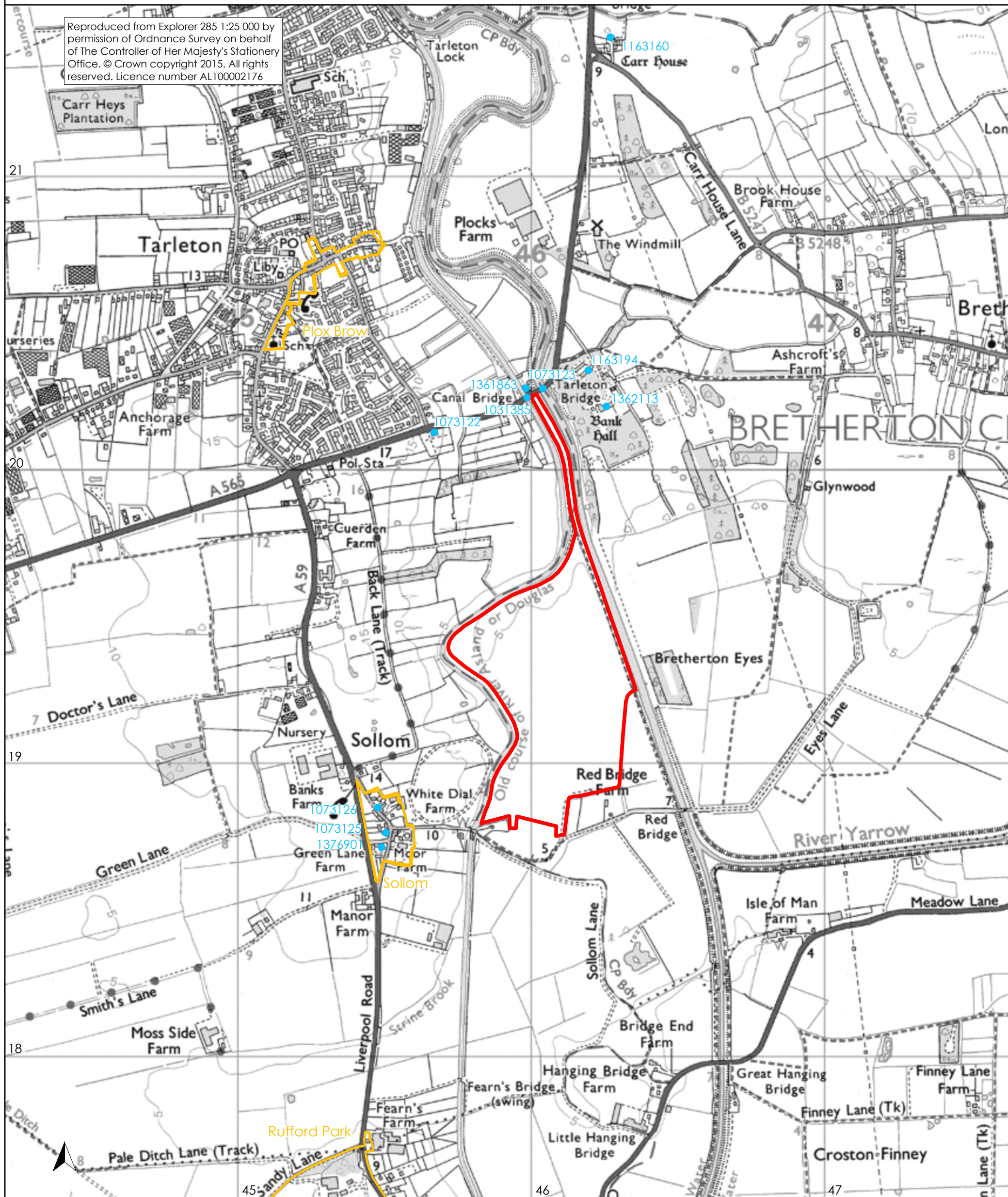
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Figure 1a: Site location and Historic Environment Record



site boundary listed building conservation area





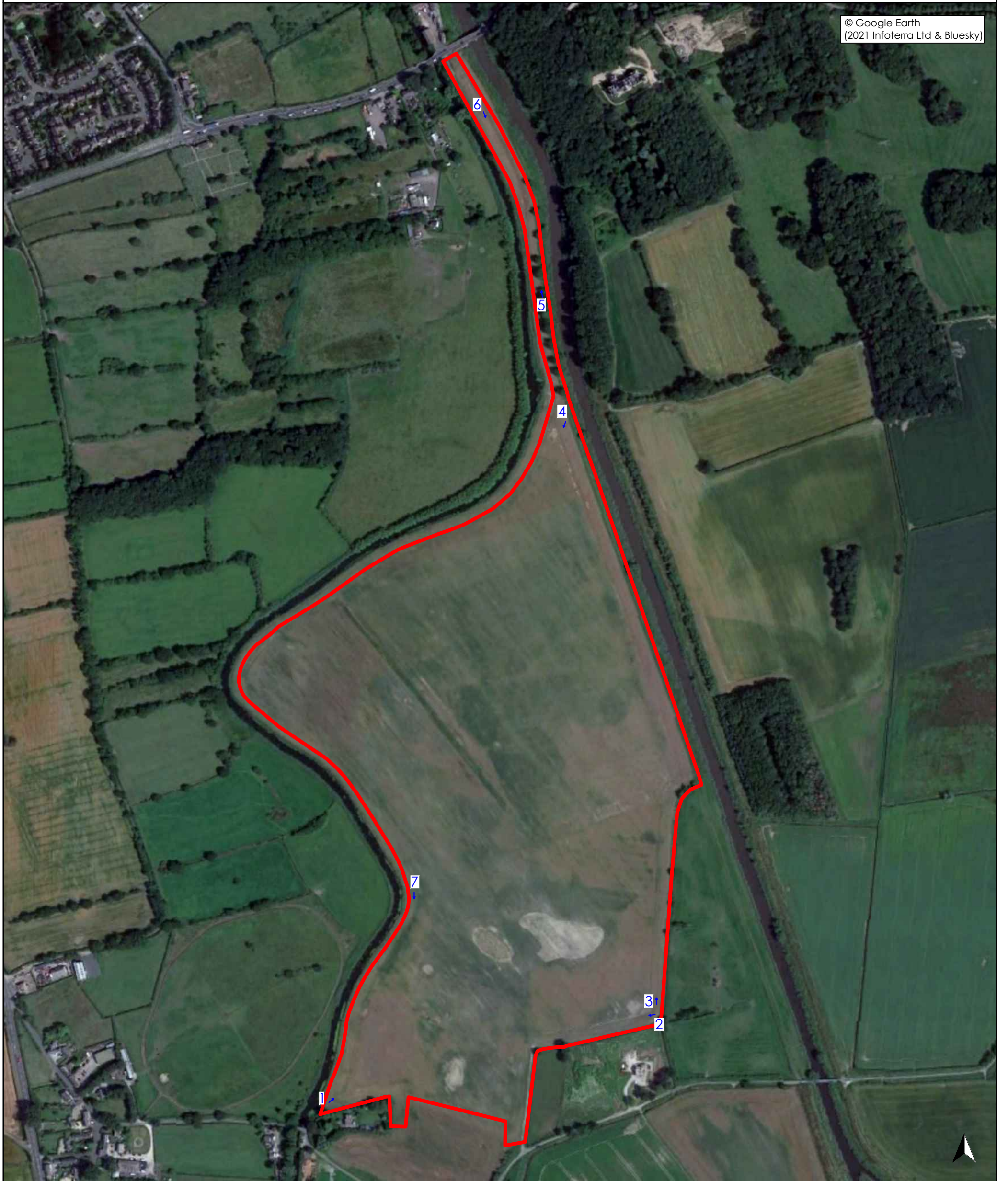


site boundary



photograph

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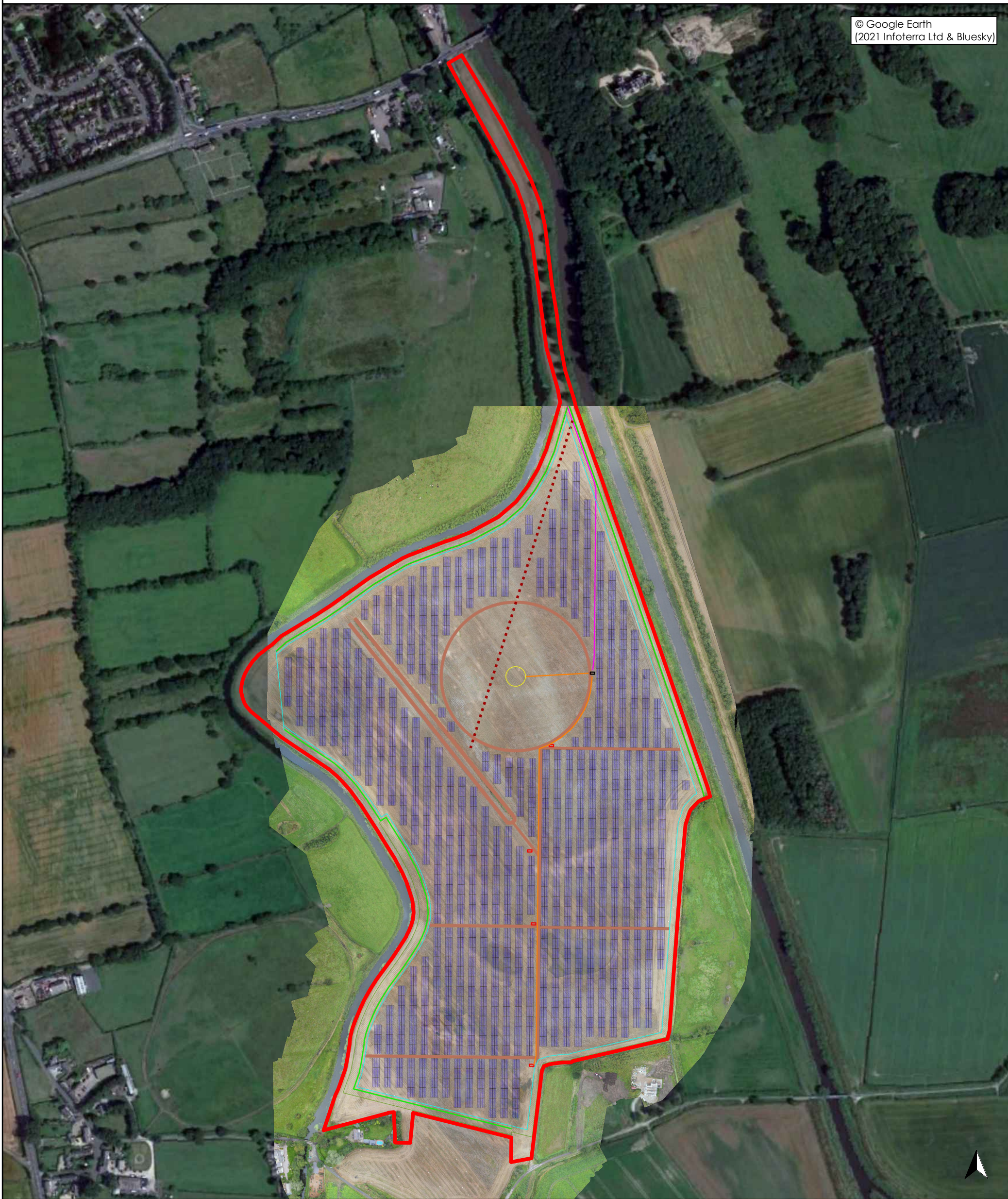
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Figure 2: Site as existing



 site boundary

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Figure 3: Proposed development



 site boundary



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Figure 4: LiDAR data





approximate location of the site boundary





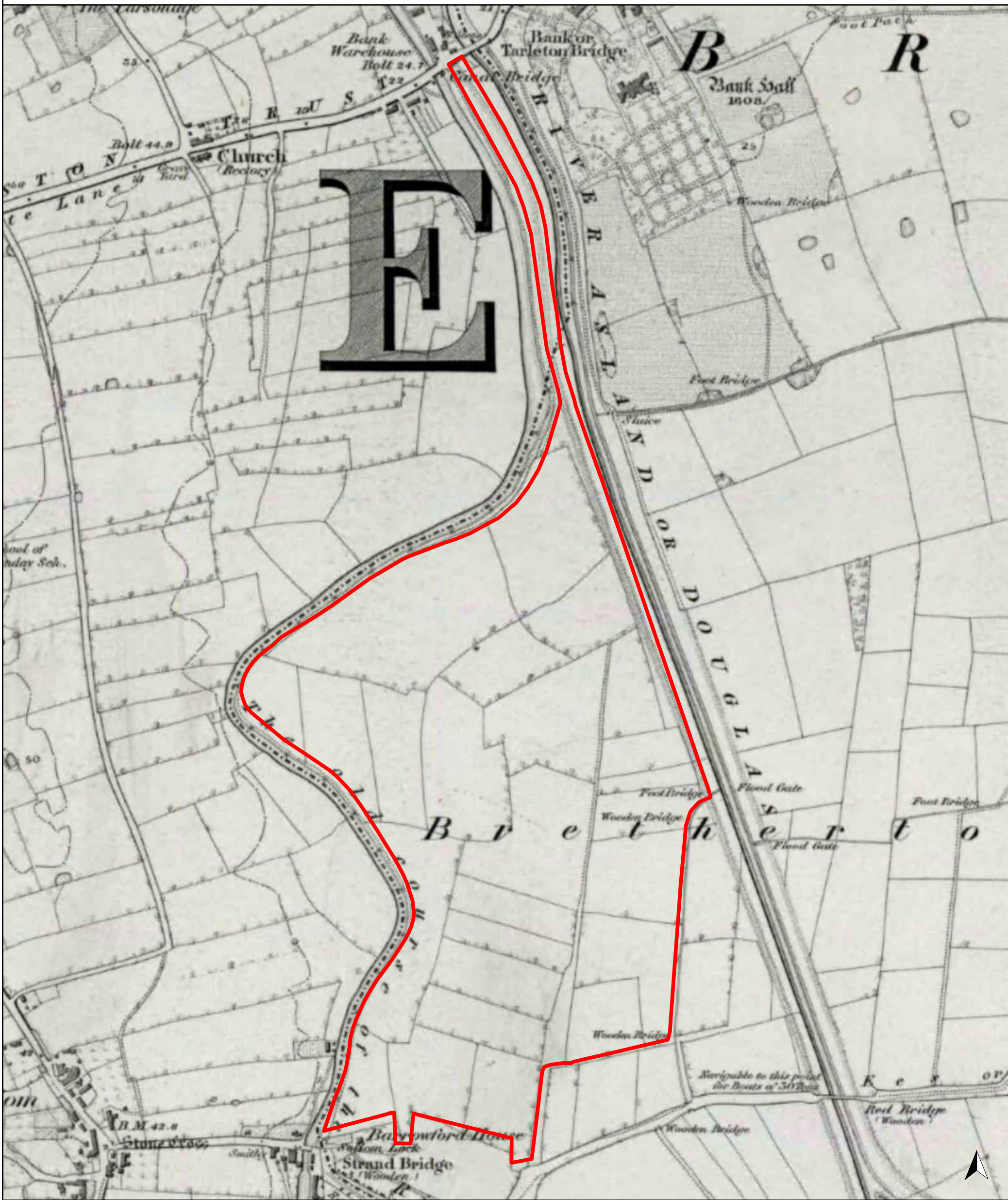


approximate location of the site boundary





 site boundary



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Figure 7: Extract from the 1st edition Ordnance  
Survey map, 1847