

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED
ASSESSMENT OF LAND AT SILKS FARM,
AMAGE ROAD, WYE, KENT.

August 2020

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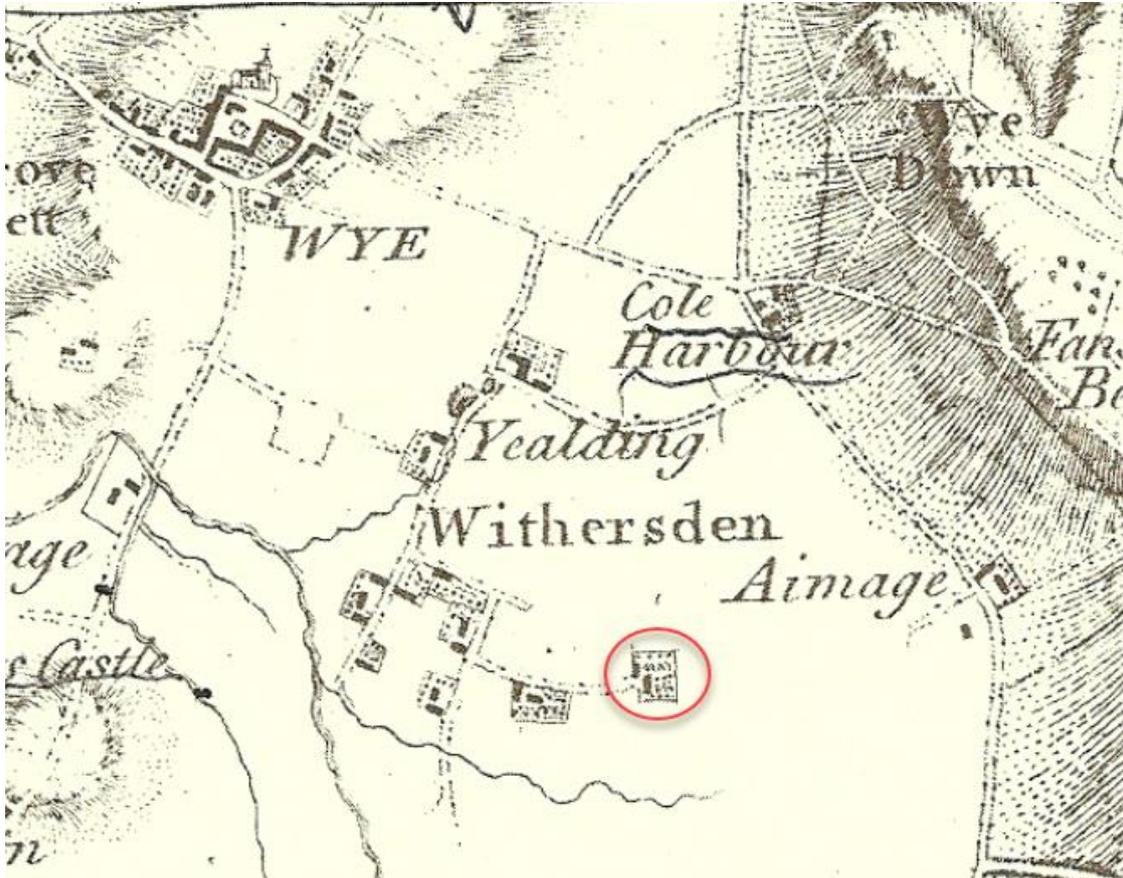


Figure 1: 1767 Andrews and Dury Map

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Silks Farm is in a small hamlet of Withersdane on the south east outskirts of the village of Wye. Originally a working farm and part of the Wye Agricultural college, the college having closed in 2009 and the farm buildings no longer used. Wye is set in an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, approximately 4 miles north west of Ashford.

There is little by way of below ground archaeology in the assessment area around Silks Farm with the Kent Heritage Records dominated by listed buildings and scattered farmsteads. 200m to the west is St Eustace's Well (TR 04 NE 6), named after Eustachius, Abbot of Flai who preached at Wye in 1200 AD and thought to be a natural spring. To the north in the garden of a cottage near Coldharbour Farm, a coin dating to 871-899 AD was discovered (TR 04 NE 16), although no further details are known. Just outside of the assessment area near Amage Farm, to the east, a Bronze age axe was found in antiquity, although the precise location is not known (TR 04 NE 15). The North Downs are running on a north west to south east alignment, some 0.5km to the east of the PDA and to the west of the PDA is the valley of the Great Stour, which made it an attractive location. Prehistoric barrows are located at various places along

the North Downs and at the base of The North Downs, prehistoric settlements are known although the area is likely to have been wooded and not heavily populated. The Pilgrims way to the east of the PDA is thought to date to prehistoric times when it followed the chalk escarpment where it was south facing and remained dry underfoot. It was only during Medieval times was it associated with Pilgrimage to the Becket shrine at Canterbury. Iron Age activity in the area can be found in the form of pits on The Downs near Wye where they mined these hills for their iron ore to make tools and weapons. There is an Iron Age hillfort is at Bigberry near Canterbury some 12km north of the PDA and in the wider area around the PDA to the east of Devil's Kneading Trough, Iron Age field systems have been identified. Springs were venerated in the Roman period and there are a number located nearby at the base of The Downs. Traces of Romano-British roads, a watermill, industrial sites and cremations have been found in and around Wye showing that the area was frequented by the Romans. Withersdane did not have an entry in the Domesday Book but Wye did. At the time is was very large with 143 households with meadow of 133 acres, woodland for 300 pigs, 4 mills and one church. At the time of the conquest it was owned by the King Edward the Confessor and passed to The Abbott of St Martin, of the place of Battle. Wye grew in the Medieval period and Withersdane had its own manor. The name meaning 'Wider's Farmstead', being 'Widres tun' in Old English, where in the development of the name, the final -ton having been corrupted to -don and then finally to Withersdane. Hasted, an historian at the end of the 18th century describes Withersden a place 'full of small inclosures, and the soil deeper'.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In August 2019 Dr Paul Wilkinson MCIFA of SWAT Archaeology carried out an archaeological desk-based assessment of available data on land at Silks Farm, Wye, Ashford, Kent.

1.2 Historic mapping, aerial photographs and the HER records were studied and archaeological activity within 500m of the proposed development site is minimal.

1.3 The principal elements of the archaeological survey involved the creation of a record and description of any known archaeological and historical sites within the environs of the PDA (Proposed Development Area) together with an analysis and interpretation of the site's origins and historic development.

1.5 A review of Historic OS mapping has been made and the Pevsner Architectural Guide (*Kent, East and East Kent 2012*) was consulted as was the National Heritage Register for England.

1.6 This report consists of a descriptive report accompanied by aerial photographs and annotated plans.

2.0 HISTORICAL/ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Location

The Proposed Development Area (PDA) is located on the southern side of a small group of houses at Silks Farm, which is reached via a track from the Amage Road to the north. The PDA contains a number of unused agricultural buildings. The NGR to the centre of site is TR 06431 45855 (Fig. 8).



Figure 2: 1797 OS Surveyors Drawing

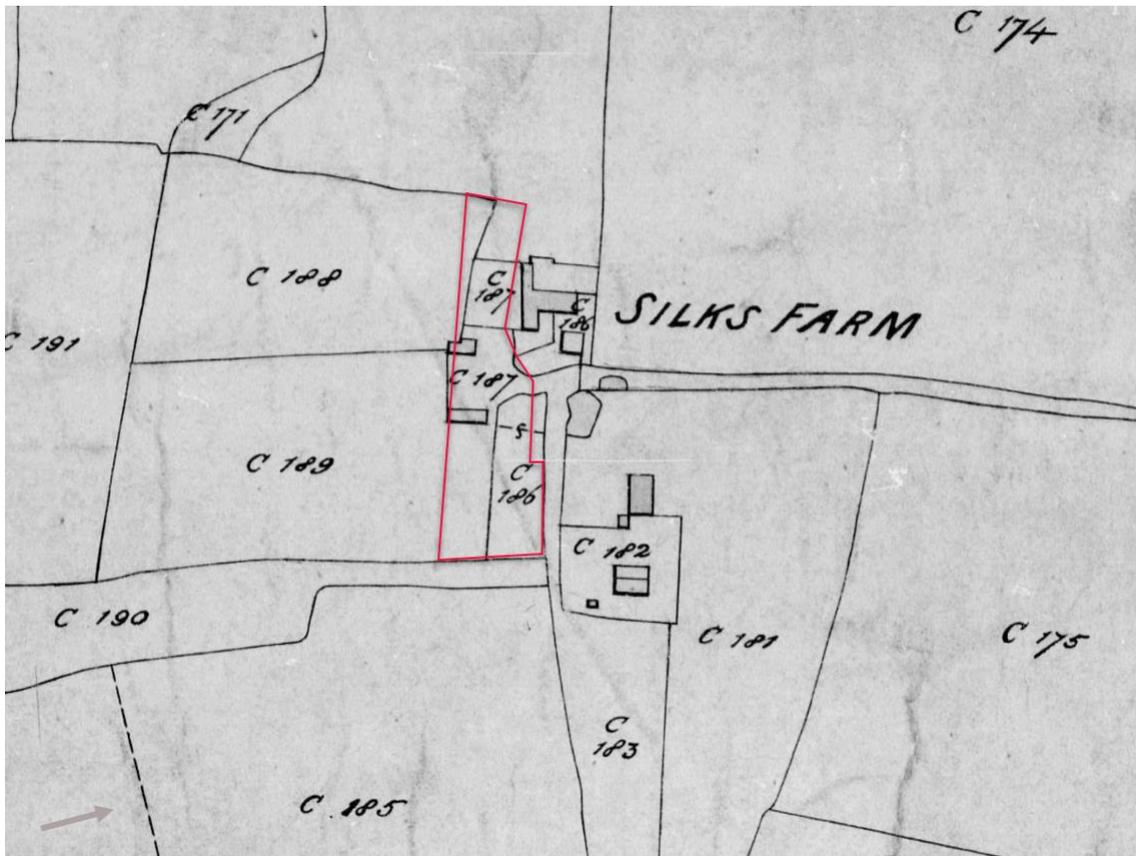


Figure 3: 1841 Wye Tithe Map

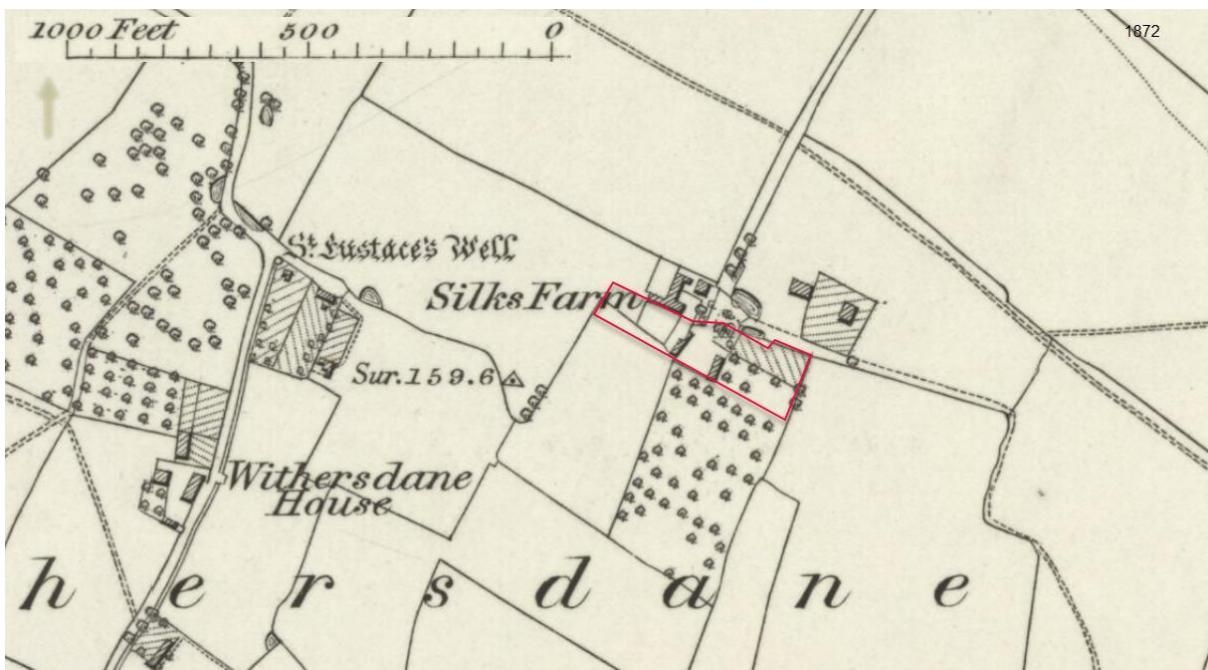


Figure 4: 1872 OS map

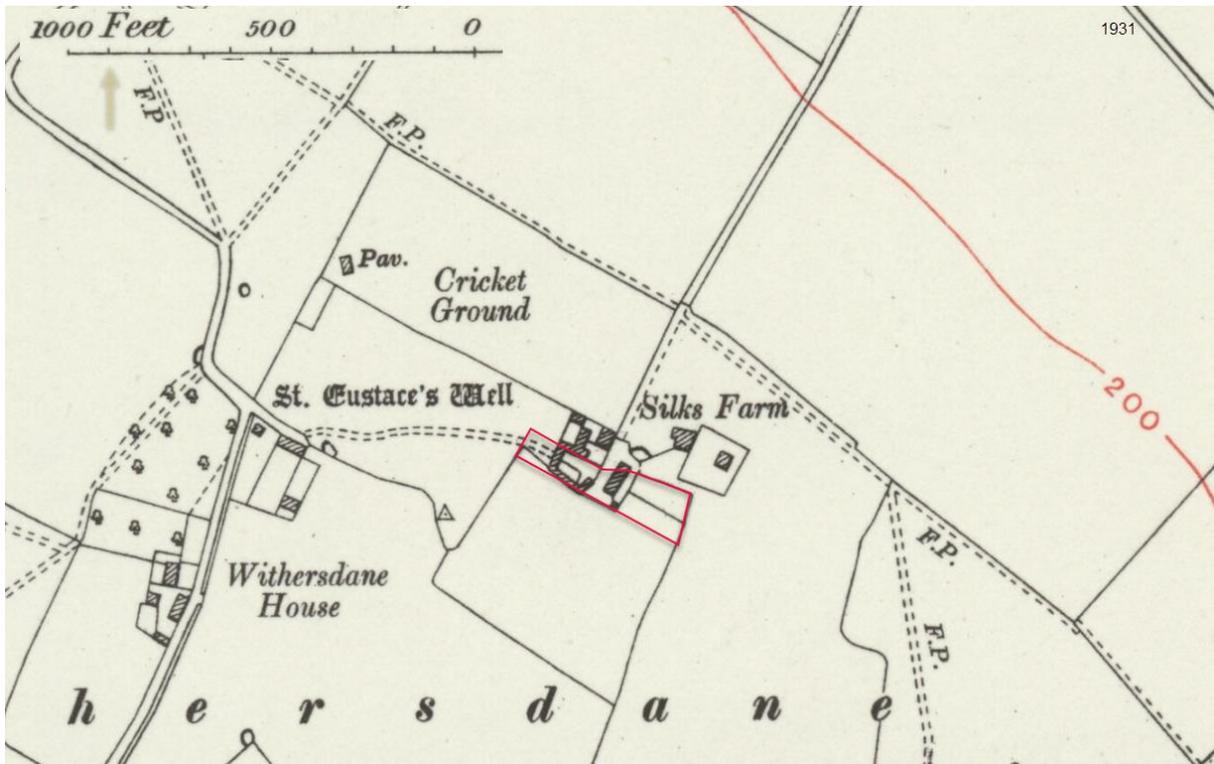


Figure 5: OS map surveyed in 1931

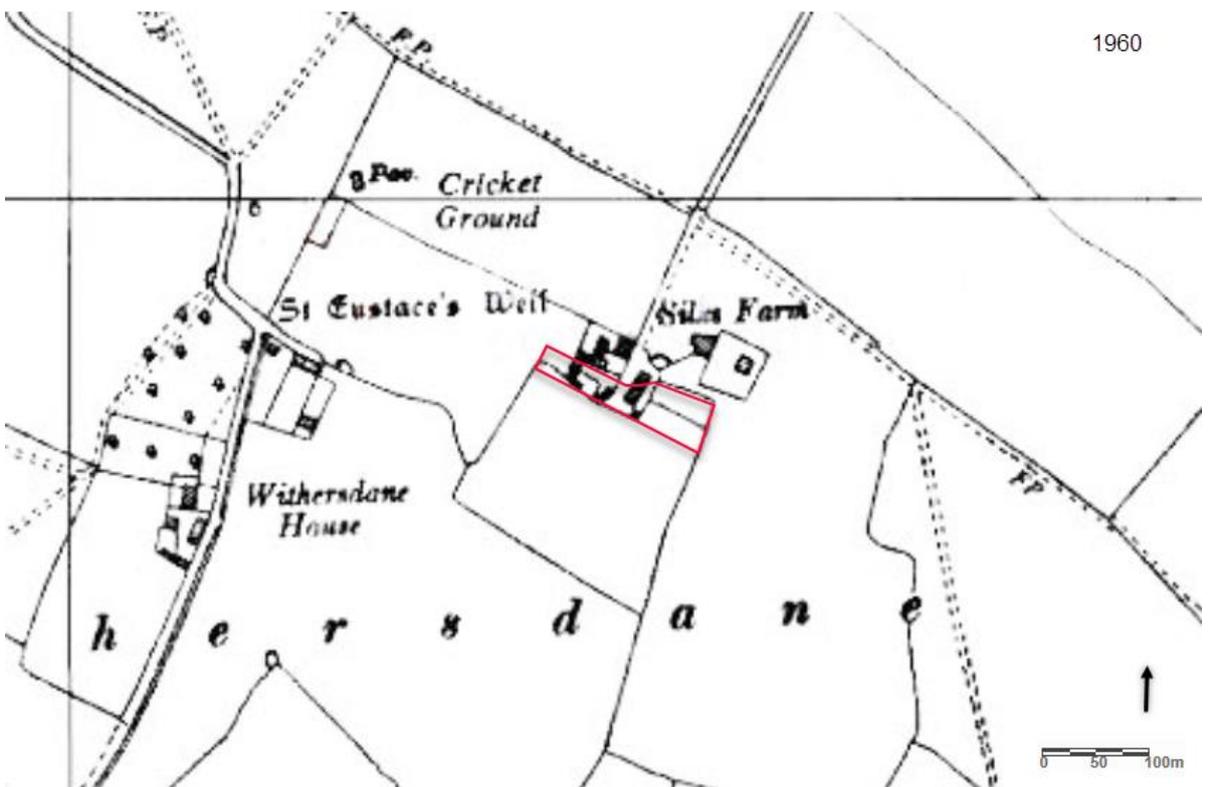


Figure 6: OS map surveyed in 1960

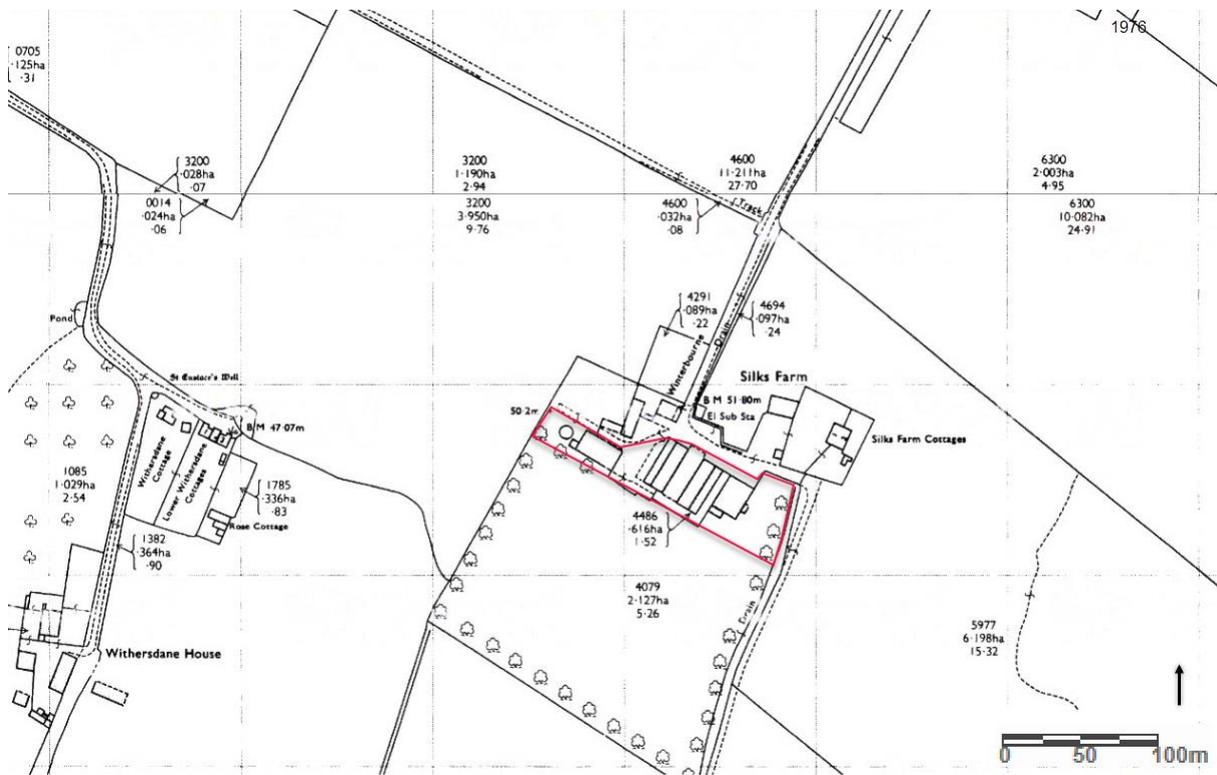


Figure 7: OS map surveyed in 1976

2.5 Historic Background

2.5.1 A map assessment of the Andrew's and Dury map of 1767 shows a sparsely populated agricultural landscape with scattered farms and houses. The main hamlet of Withersden is to the west and the PDA is accessed from the west (Fig. 1). The 1797 Ordnance Surveyors Drawing shows that the access has changed from the west to from the north. In addition, there appears to be a reduction in the size of the hamlet which appears to have fewer houses. It is unclear how reliable position of the buildings seen in the 1769 map are, but it suggests that Teyes Barn (TR 04 NE 91) exists and other barns (TR 04 NE 216), with part of the PDA an orchard. (Fig. 2). Teyes Barn is Grade II listed (1221236) and is 17th century or earlier being a five-bay timber framed weatherboarded barn with a brick single storey outbuilding to the right. The barn to the east is considered to be early 18th century that is also Grade II listed (1217570) that is timber framed and weatherboarded on a red brick base with three bays.

2.5.2 The 1841 tithe map is the first map that clearly shows the buildings (Fig.3). The PDA encompasses areas designated C186 and C187 of Silks Farm. By this time Winterbourne (TR 04 NE 94) immediately next to Teyes Barn has been built as have 1 & 2 Silks Cottages (C182), which was original one building as the farmhouse. Within the PDA itself, there are just two

buildings. C187 is described as yard and buildings owned by John Samuel Wanley Sawbridge Erle Drax Esquire and occupied by a George Parkin. George Parkin resides at C186 being the House and Garden of Silks Farm. The farm consisting of arable, pasture a small wood and hops. Sawbridge being a wealthy Kentish landowner, that was MP and also Lord Mayor for London who resided at Withersdane Hall. C182 shows Silks Farm cottages as possibly already two separate buildings. These were owned by William Fuller and occupied by Arthur Davies and evidently no longer part of the farm. The estate was sold off in 1868.

2.5.3 In the 1872 map (Fig.4) there is little change but by 1931 a number of larger outbuildings have been built on the PDA, including a large barn in the centre on broadly a north-south axis and a range around the south west corner on three sides (Fig.5). By 1960, the configuration of buildings in the south west corner has altered slightly (Fig.6) and by 1976 (Fig.7), there have been major changes with a significant number of modern farm buildings now located on the PDA.

2.5.4 Assessment of the aerial photography (Plates 1-4) confirm that in the 1940s, only half of the PDA contained farm buildings. One large barn on the eastern side of the yard with a number of other smaller ranges around the western and south western corner. The remaining part of the PDA as farmland. By 1960, there are additional buildings (Plate 2) However, by 1990, there are a significant number of buildings located across the site. From left to right these include a circular grain silo, an Atcost grain drying barn, a large cow barn in the centre (Plate 3). An Atcost hop barn and on the far eastern side a workshop and modern pole barn. The cow and hop barn were removed by the college following a fire in the 1990s. By 2017, little had changed (Plate 4). Taves Barn was converted to residential in 1993, and Silks Barn, east of Winterbourne converted to residential use in 1992.

2.5.5 Newspaper archives confirm that in 1930 Cold Harbour Farm to the north of the PDA, Amage Farm to the east and Silks Farm, totalling 480 acres had been purchased as demonstrating and experimental farms, although the Wye Agricultural College had been using the farms since the late 18th century when they established the South Eastern Agricultural College in Wye.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

3.1 The KCCHER records (Fig. 8) show that the majority of records are those of Listed Buildings and scattered farmsteads on the outskirts of Wye. There is little by way of below ground archaeological records in the assessment area. Interestingly the KHER records two separate farmstead records at the location of the PDA. In the area of Tayes Barn, the farmstead of Winterbourne (MKE87435), a courtyard L plan type farm, recorded as having partial loss of original form. In the area of Silks Barn, the dispersed plan farmstead of Silks Farm (MKE87434). There is no map evidence referring to Winterbourne Farm, only Silks Farm. Both Silk Farm Cottages and Winterbourne appear to have been built at the same time, where previously it appears that originally there were just the remote out barns of Tayes Barn and Silk Farm Barn. Based on the tithe map, the map suggests that Silk Farmhouse soon after it was built was converted into two buildings although the description refers to 'Fostall Cottage' and the land on the eastern side of the track from Coldharbour under separate ownership to that of Winterbourne. It is possible that the conversion of Silks Farmhouse into two cottages did not actually occur until sometime in the 20th century. Sometime later, Winterbourne becoming the main farmhouse for Silks Farm once land had amalgamated. By the late 19th century, it was being used by the agricultural college as a demonstration farm.

4.0 DISCUSSION

4.1 A review of the available data shows that the site of the PDA is of low archaeological interest. The proposed development is for three residential dwellings following the removal of the remaining agricultural buildings on the site. The location of the proposed dwellings are positioned in that they fall within the footprint of the demolished or current modern to be demolished buildings. Silks farm which is likely to have been in a farm since the Post Medieval period, although there did not initially appear to have a farmhouse attached until Winterbourne was built in the early 19th century. The historical barns having converted to residential use in the late 20th century, the PDA remained a working farm, with a range of modern buildings until the early 21st century when the agricultural college who had used the site for at least the previous century, closed. The modern sheds with concrete hardstanding areas are likely to have has a high impact upon any potential archaeology at the site. Therefore, the proposed development will not impact on any known archaeological

resource. The need for, scale, scope and nature of any further assessment and/or archaeological works should be agreed through consultation with the statutory authorities.

5.0 PARAMETERS

5.1 The archaeological survey was conducted using on-line data from Historic England and other agencies.

Dr Paul Wilkinson PhD., MCIfA., FRSA. Dated 5th August 2019



Plate 1: Aerial image of the site in 1940s (Google Earth)

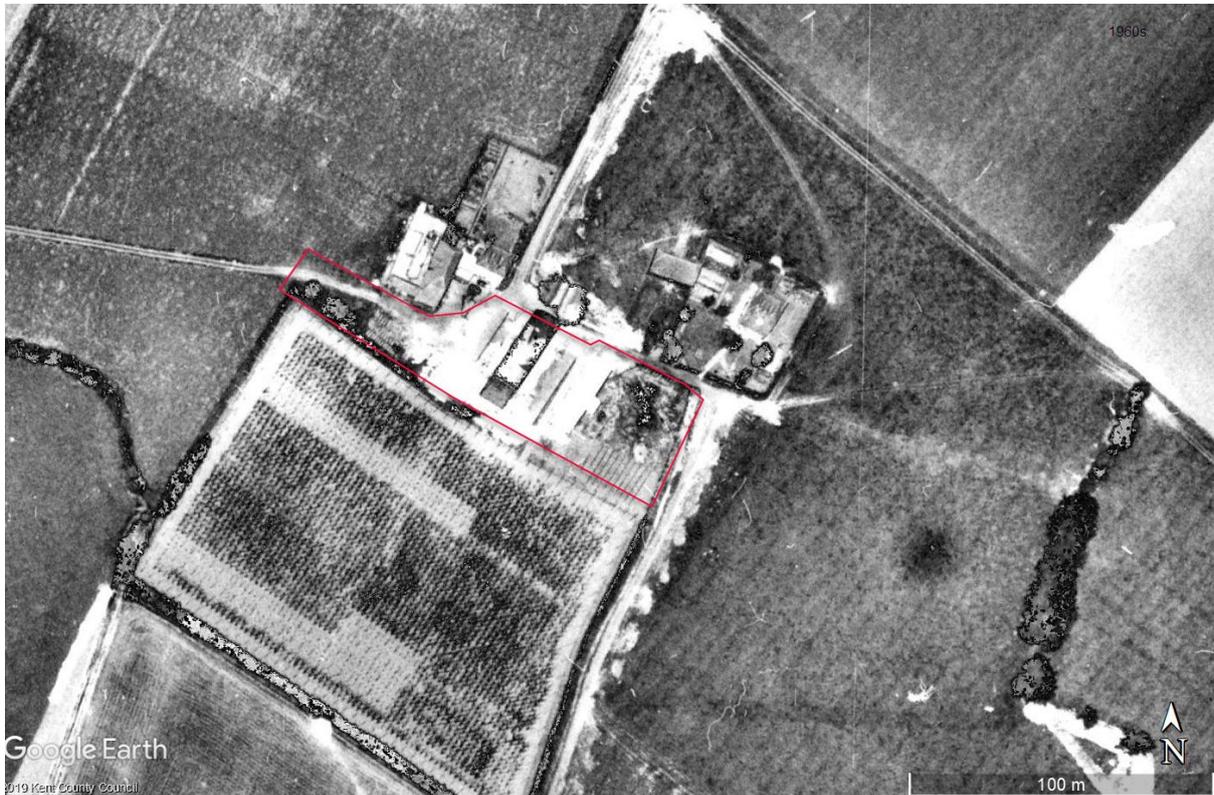


Plate 2: Aerial image of the site in 1960s (Google Earth)



Plate 3: Aerial image of the site in 1990 (Google Earth)



Plate 4: Aerial image of the site in 2017 (Google Earth)

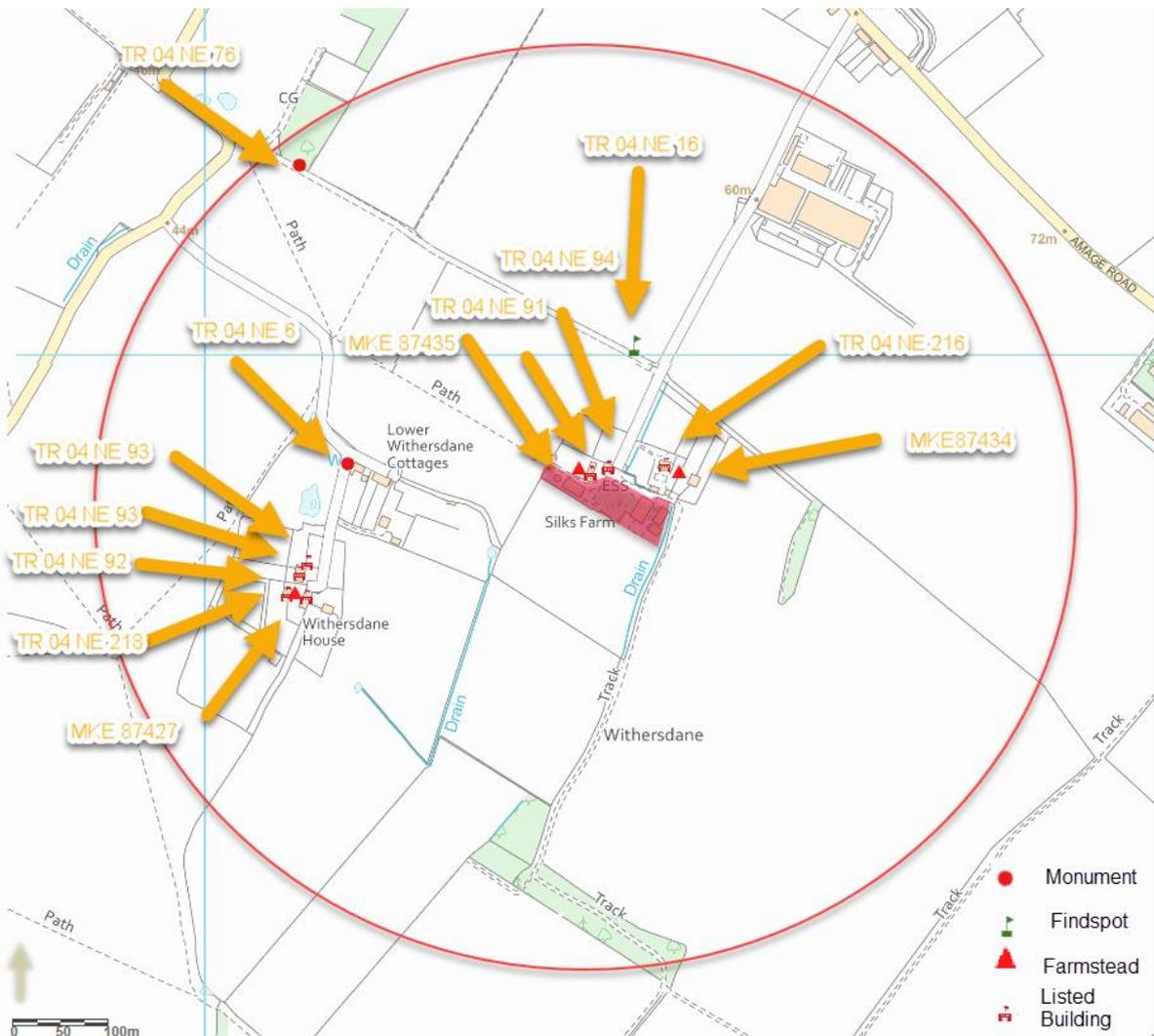


Figure 8: Site plan 1:5,000 and KCC HER Data

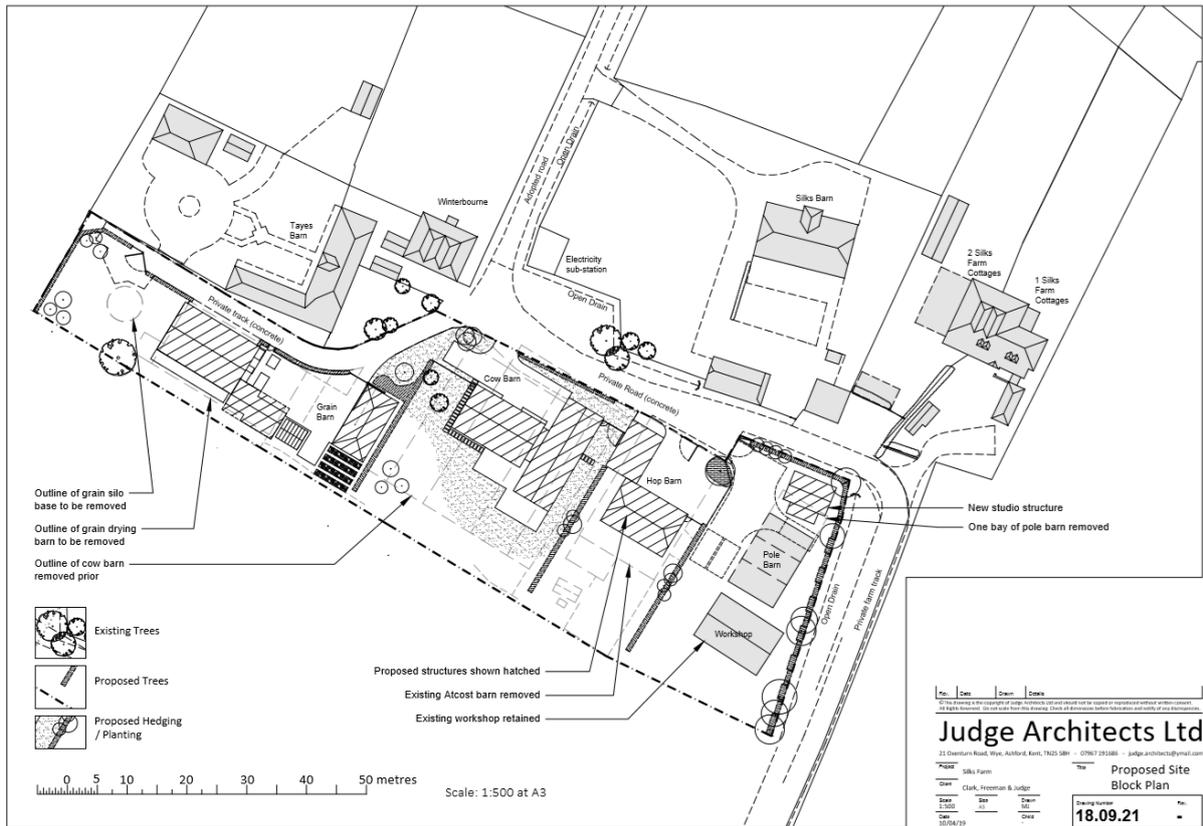


Figure 9: Proposed Development



Plate 5: View towards the southern boundary of the PDA (facing NE)



Plate 6: View across PDA from south east corner (facing NW)



Plate 7: View across PDA from north west corner (facing SE)



Plate 8: View across the centre of the PDA (facing SE)



Plate 9: View along the eastern end of the PDA (facing SSW)



Plate 10: View along the eastern boundary of the PDA (facing SSW)



Plate 11: View across the centre of the PDA (facing NNW)