Land north of Mill Lane

Sawston

Archaeological Technical Note
September 2026

Introduction

1. This report has been prepared by Iceni Projects on behalf of Northwest Biotherapeutics Capital Limited.

2. The purpose of this Archaeological Technical Note is to provide a pre-planning, high-level summary of potential archaeological assets within the Site at Land north of Mill Lane, Sawston ('the Site', Figure 1), indicating potential constraints and opportunities, and the potential scope of supporting documentation and fieldwork that may be required to support plan promotion purposes.

3. The Site is being promoted for Residential development for approximately 200 dwellings including means of access and other associated infrastructure and landscaping. This document is not intended to be submitted as part of the planning application.

4. An Historic Environmental Record (HER) search of a 1km radius from the centre point of the Site has been considered to inform the Technical Note. The radius of the Study Area follows the standard requirements for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments (DBA).

5. Historic structures (Built Heritage) are not specifically considered within this assessment except where they are relevant to the archaeological interpretation of the Site.

Sources

6. The following sources were consulted in the production of this Technical Note:

- **Archaeological Data Service (ADS)** - A comprehensive archive of published and unpublished fieldwork reports.
- **British Geological Survey (BGS)** - Solid and Drift geology digital mapping and geological borehole data where applicable.
- **Google Earth** - 2025 satellite imagery used as prospection tool for the Site and its surroundings.
- **Historic England** - Information on statutory designated assets data including the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Listed buildings, and any identified Heritage at Risk.

- **Historic England Aerial Archaeology Mapping Explorer** - to consult the available aerial imagery.

- **Historic Environment Record (HER)** - Information on archaeological findspots, locally listed buildings, archaeological designation, and the results of previous archaeological investigations within the Site and in the surrounding 1km Study Area. The HER Data was obtained in April 2026;

- **Host Authority planning policies** - Details within the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 and other information on historic environment policies, conservation areas and locally listed buildings where published online.

- **National Library of Scotland** - Ordnance Survey (OS) maps from their historic first edition through to modern OS mapping. Earlier historic maps were also consulted where available but not reproduced in this Technical Note.

Limitation and Assumptions

Limitations

7. The HER is not a record of all surviving heritage assets, but only of all the known buried heritage assets recorded in the area. The HER data does not preclude the subsequent discovery of further elements of the historic environment that are, at present, unknown.

8. The extent of truncation caused by previous development impacts and landscaping works cannot be fully ascertained without ground investigation.

9. Historic maps provide a glimpse of land-use at a specific moment. It is therefore possible that short-term structures or areas of land-use are not shown and therefore not recorded within this assessment.

Assumptions

10. This Technical Note has relied upon data and records provided by third parties, and therefore it has been assumed that this information is accurate and up to date at the time of reporting.

Site Location and Land Use

11. The Site is located to the north of Mill Lane and east of the A1301. The Site is bounded by the A1301 to the west, Mill Lane to the south-southeast, and residential development to the east. Agricultural land is situated to the north of the Site.

12. The Site is comprised of agricultural fields, divided centrally by a north-south aligned field boundary. The fields are regular in shape and are bounded by field boundaries and surrounding land uses.

13. The Site slopes from northeast to southwest, with elevations ranging from approximately 27m above Ordnance Datum (OD) at the northeast to approximately 24m above OD at the southwest. The southeast of the Site is situated at approximately 30m above OD, while the northwest is situated at approximately 26m above OD.

Archaeological and Historical Background

Geology and Geoarchaeological potential.

14. The majority of the Site is underlain by the Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation, a sedimentary chalk deposit of shallow-marine origin that formed during the Cretaceous Period, approximately 89.8 to 100.5 million years ago (Figure 4).

15. The northwest and southwest corners of the Site are underlain by the Zig Zag Chalk Formation, also a shallow-marine sedimentary chalk deposit formed during the Cretaceous Period, approximately 93.9 to 100.5 million years ago.

Designated Heritage Assets

16. There are no designated heritage assets situated within the Site.

Relevant Past Archaeological Assessments and Investigations within the Site

17. There have been no previous archaeological assessments or investigations within the Site.

Archaeological Baseline

18. The following archaeological baseline has been established from a high-level review of the HER data and the resources listed in Paragraph 5. Figure 2 and Figure 3 show the relevant HER entry considered for this Technical Note. A full review of the archaeological baseline will be carried out as part of the Archaeological DBA.

Prehistoric period (Palaeolithic to Iron Age – before AD 43)

There are no known prehistoric remains recoded in the HER within the Site. Within the wider Study Area, the following prehistoric archaeological remains are recorded:

- The Scheduled Monument (SM) of Borough Hill, a large multivallate hillfort dating between the Early Neolithic and Roman periods, is located approximately 220m west of the Site (MCB11571; National Heritage List Entry: 1009396).

- A flint scatter, including cores and flakes dating to either the Mesolithic or Early Neolithic period, was recovered from topsoil and subsoil approximately 525m southeast of the Site (MCB17619).

- A probable prehistoric rectangular enclosure, likely associated with Borough Hill SM, was observed during geophysical surveys undertaken at Borough Hill in 2000, approximately 635m west of the Site. An archaeological evaluation undertaken in 2001 confirmed the enclosure, which was thought to represent a small farmstead or settlement. Finds recovered included pottery dating between the Bronze Age and Iron Age and flints dating between the Neolithic and Bronze Age (MCB16940, ECB2184, ECB2183 and ECB6068).

- Bronze Age artefacts, comprising a spearhead and axe, were recovered approximately 605m northeast of the Site (MCB5484).

- Evidence for Neolithic and Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age activity was recorded approximately 692m east of the Site during an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Cambridgeshire Archaeology Archaeological Field Unit (CCC AFU) in 2003. Evidence for a Bronze Age field/enclosure system was recorded during further works undertaken by CCC AFU in 2006 (MCB15777 and ECB1464).

- Evidence for prehistoric remains was recovered during archaeological excavations undertaken in 2008, approximately 693m west of the Site. Finds included residual material dating to the Mesolithic period, Neolithic pottery sherds recovered from a ditch and well, and further features containing pottery dating between the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age (MCB15821, ECB535 and ECB3083).

- A probable Middle Bronze Age ditch was recorded approximately 730m northeast of the Site during an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Oxford Archaeology in 2011 (MCB19569 and ECB3658).

- Evidence of a large Bronze Age field/enclosure system was recorded approximately 767m east of the Site during an archaeological evaluation undertaken by CCC AFU in 2006. A small quantity of flints dating between the Mesolithic and Early Neolithic was also recovered (MCB17152 and ECB1972).).

Roman period (AD 43 – 410)

The majority of the evidence included in the HER data, dating to the Roman period has been retrieved from findspots through either fieldwalking or metal detecting activities. There are no known Roman remains recoded in the HER within the Site. Within the wider Study Area, the following Roman archaeological remains are recorded:

- An archaeological watching brief and evaluation undertaken by CCC AFU between 2004 and 2006 recorded evidence of two ditched enclosures, thought to represent Roman military camps dating to the 1st century AD, approximately 670m east of the Site (MCB15777 and ECB1464)

Saxon and Medieval period (AD 410 – 1485)

There is various evidence included in the HER data which dates to the Saxon and medieval periods, including evidence associated with settlement, agriculture, burial and medieval moated sites. Sawston is mentioned in the Domesday Book, within the hundred of Whittlesford and the county of Cambridgeshire. In 1086, Sawston had a recorded population of 38 households, placing it in the largest 20% of settlements recorded in that year. The settlement was owned by three landowners, including Count Robert of Mortain, Geoffrey de Mandeville and Eudo the Steward.

- A possible medieval plough soil layer was recorded approximately 210m southeast of the Site during an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Oxford Archaeology East in 2013. Although interpreted as medieval, no dating evidence was recovered (MCB26798 and ECB3987).

- A Saxon ‘S-shaped’ brooch was recovered approximately 585m south-southeast of the Site (MCB4983).

- A Saxon burial was recorded in 1806 approximately 600m northeast of the Site (MCB5483 and ECB6275).

- A medieval agricultural headland was recorded approximately 692m east of the Site during an archaeological evaluation undertaken by CCC AFU in 2006 (MCB15777 and ECB1464).

- Saxon and medieval features, comprising sunken feature buildings (SFBs) and a possible medieval field system, were recorded approximately 705m west of the Site during archaeological excavations undertaken in 2008–9 (MCB15821, ECB535 and ECB3083).

- Evidence of a cattle burial, likely dating between the 15th and 16th centuries, was recorded approximately 715m southeast of the Site during an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology (PCA) in 2013 (MCB20139 and ECB4055).

- A medieval moat was located approximately 745m southeast of the Site (MCB1637).

- A medieval moated manor was located approximately 780m northeast of the Site (MCB222).

- Late Saxon features were recorded approximately 812m southeast of the Site during an archaeological evaluation undertaken by PCA in 2024 (MCB33475 and ECB7210).

- A possible early medieval settlement is thought to be located approximately 820m south-southwest of the Site. A geophysical survey undertaken by Rhee search community archaeology group in 2013 indicated the presence of possible foundations (MCB13240 and ECB5338).

- A medieval moat was located approximately 870m south of the Site (MCB1262).

- Late medieval features containing 15th- to 16th-century pottery were recorded approximately 930m south of the Site during an archaeological evaluation undertaken by CCC AFU in 1994 (MCB13418 and ECB1552).

Post-medieval to Modern period (AD 1485 – present)

The HER data includes evidence dating from the post-medieval period to the modern day, including agricultural, industrial, ecclesiastical, transport and military remains.

- Post-medieval features, including pits, were recorded approximately 220m southeast of the Site during an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Oxford Archaeology in 2013 (MCB26798 and ECB3987).

- A blacksmiths workshop was located approximately 705m southeast of the Site (MCB27135).

- A former gas works was located approximately 730m southeast of the Site (MCB27138).

- A Second World War pillbox was located approximately 820m south of the Site (MCB16383).

- Two chalk house platforms dating to the 16th and 18th centuries were recorded approximately 930m south of the Site during an archaeological evaluation undertaken by CCC AFU in 1994 (MCB13419 and ECB1552).

- A Second World War pillbox was located approximately 675m southwest of the Site (MCB16384).

- A Second World War pillbox was located approximately 880m southwest of the Site (MCB16385).

- Post-medieval field boundaries, which continued from the medieval period, were recorded approximately 695m west of the Site during archaeological excavations undertaken in 2008–9 (MCB15821, ECB535 and ECB3083).

- A former gravel pit was located approximately 730m northwest of the Site (MCB28697).

- A Second World War pillbox was located approximately 960m northwest of the Site (MCB16389).

- A corn mill was located approximately 860m east of the Site (MCB23285).

- A 19th-century cemetery is located approximately 483m east-northeast of the Site (MCB23535).

- A turnpike, in use between the 17th and 19th centuries, was located approximately 672m east of the Site (MCB31313).

- The churchyard of St Mary and St Andrew contained burials from the 16th century onwards and is located approximately 935m southwest of the Site. A number of burials were excavated during archaeological investigations undertaken by CCC AFU in 2005 (MCB16935, ECB2180 and ECB2494).

- A Second World War anti-tank ditch was located approximately 600m southwest of the Site (MCB28695).

- Sawston paper mill was located approximately 143m west of the Site (MCB21594).

- Part of the West Anglia Main Line, which connected Bishop's Stortford and Norwich, is located approximately 100m west of the Site (MCB24402).

- Towgood & Sons stationery works was located approximately 245m west of the Site (MCB30966).

- A Second World War anti-tank ditch was located approximately 980m north-northwest of the Site (MCB29681).

- A former chalk pit was located approximately 580m northwest of the Site (MCB34010)

19. Cartographic sources indicate that the Site has remained undeveloped to the present day. To the east of the Site, slow residential development began in the 1930s and continued thereafter.

Archaeological Risk and Opportunities

Archaeological Potential and Significance

20. The assessment of Archaeological Potential and Significance takes into account that the substantial lack of intrusive investigations within the Site and its immediate surroundings may limit the visibility

of archaeological potential, but does not preclude the discovery of further, currently unknown, elements of the historic environment.

21. The Site is located within a landscape containing significant prehistoric archaeology, including the Scheduled Monument of Borough Hill, a large multivallate hillfort dating between the Early Neolithic and Roman periods, approximately 220m west of the Site. A probable prehistoric rectangular enclosure, thought to represent a small farmstead or settlement associated with Borough Hill, is located approximately 635m west of the Site. Further prehistoric remains, including flint scatters, Bronze Age artefacts, field/enclosure systems and prehistoric settlement evidence, are recorded within the wider Study Area. The proximity of these remains indicates that the Site may have formed part of the wider prehistoric landscape associated with Borough Hill.

22. Considering the above preliminary baseline information, the Site has **Medium to High Potential** to contain previously unrecorded sub-surface archaeological remains from the prehistoric period, particularly those associated with prehistoric settlement, agricultural activity and land management. The presence of the Scheduled Monument and associated prehistoric remains increases the potential for remains associated with the wider prehistoric landscape to extend beyond the recorded archaeological sites.

23. The Site has **Medium Potential** to contain previously unrecorded sub-surface archaeological remains from the Roman period. The recorded Roman military camps approximately 670m east of the Site indicate the potential for associated activity within the wider landscape. However, there is currently no direct evidence of Roman remains within the Site, and the potential is therefore not considered High at this stage.

24. The Site has **Medium Potential** to contain previously unrecorded sub-surface archaeological remains from the Saxon and medieval periods. The recorded Saxon burial and brooch, medieval agricultural headland, possible medieval field system, moated sites and possible early medieval settlement indicate that the Site may have formed part of the wider agricultural and settlement landscape of Sawston. The absence of recorded remains within the Site does not preclude the survival of previously unrecorded archaeological features.

25. The Site has **Medium Potential** to contain previously unrecorded sub-surface archaeological remains from the post-medieval period. The Site has remained undeveloped and historically comprised agricultural fields, and therefore may contain previously unrecorded remains associated with agricultural activities and land management. The absence of recorded post-medieval remains within the Site does not preclude the survival of such features.

26. Considering the assessment of the HER data and historical maps carried out for this Technical Note, it is likely that any remains present on Site would be related to agricultural activities and/or land management of **Low (Local) Significance**. However, remains associated with prehistoric settlement

or activity, particularly those potentially forming part of the wider landscape of Borough Hill, could be of greater significance depending on their nature, preservation and extent.

27. Remains associated with prehistoric settlement, including those potentially forming part of the wider landscape of Borough Hill, may be of **Medium (Regional) Significance**. Roman military or settlement remains may be of **Low (Local) to Medium (Regional) Significance**, depending on their nature, preservation and extent. Saxon and medieval settlement remains may be of **Low (Local) to Medium (Regional) Significance**, depending on their nature, preservation and extent. Medieval agricultural remains and post-medieval agricultural activities are expected to be of **Low (Local) Significance**, unless they demonstrate an association with significant settlement or landscape development.

Archaeological Considerations

28. In light of the above, it is expected that the following will be required to support any future planning application:

Compilation of a Desk Based Assessment (DBA)

A DBA (which is a document suitable for submission as part of a planning application) will be required to place the Site within its full archaeological and historical context based on geology, topography, a full Historic Environment Record Data assessment, and historic sources, along with assessing the likely presence and significance of any heritage assets on the Site. The DBA will provide a more accurate archaeological baseline for the Site and Study Area, an assessment of the survival potential and significance of the archaeological assts, and of the likely impact of the Proposed Development on known and potentially unknown archaeology.

The DBA will assist the Local Planning Authority in determining whether planning consent is permissible with consideration to the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework. Furthermore, the DBA will assist the Local Planning Authority (LPA) in determining what archaeological evaluation is required in this instance to inform a decision on the planning application, or whether any such requirement can be addressed via planning condition.

Archaeological Evaluation (Geophysical Survey and Trial Trenching)

Given the potential for archaeological remains to be present within the Site and the lack of substantial archaeological investigation carried out, the Archaeological Advisory Team to Cambridgeshire will likely advise that the application is not appropriate for determination without more robust information on the potential presence of significant sub-surface archaeological remains.

In first instance, the Archaeological Advisory Team to Cambridgeshire would likely request a geophysical survey to be carried out within the whole extent on the Site, to expand on the information collected as part of the DBA.

Depending on the results of the DBA and geophysical survey, an archaeological evaluation via trial trenching might be required to inform the required mitigation strategy. The trial trenching may be required to be carried out on the whole extent of the Site, or only on specific locations, identified by the DBA and geophysical survey.

If the potential for geoarchaeological deposits is confirmed, it is likely that the archaeological evaluation will also include boreholes and/or geoarchaeological sampling as needed. This might be carried out during the trial trenching phase, or as a stand-alone exercise.

At this stage, it is not possible to establish whether the trial trenching evaluation can be addressed via planning condition. Given the potential for archaeological remains, and the substantial lack of previous evaluation within the Site, it is expected that both the geophysical survey and the trial trenching evaluation will be required to inform a decision on the planning application. Therefore, enough time should be programmed for the above work to be undertaken prior to planning submission.

The requirement for fieldwork might only be decided once the archaeological advisor has reviewed the DBA.

Mitigation Measures

If substantial archaeological remains are recorded during the archaeological evaluations, an appropriate mitigation strategy will be identified, discussed and agreed as appropriate. All work will be undertaken in consultation with the Archaeology Advisory team to Cambridgeshire. This will be further detailed in the baseline reporting.

Mitigation and subsequent public dissemination (if needed) of the results would an appropriate strategy to offset any impact on archaeological remains, if found to survive on the Site.

It is expected that the following industry-wide recognised archaeological mitigation measures might be included in the program of archaeological mitigation, if needed, as forms of control and mitigation over any potential impact on buried heritage assets, depending on their significance and the extent of the Proposed Development’s impacts:

- Archaeological excavation or strip, map and record excavation;
- Archaeological watching brief

Conclusion

29. This Site has **Low** to **High Potential** to contain unknown archaeological remains and geoarchaeological deposits. While at the current stage it is not possible to establish their nature, location and significance, it is not believed that any such remains would constitute a heritage or planning risk for any development proposed within the Site. The anticipated levels of Potential are as follows;

    - **Low Potential** for prehistoric remains of **Medium (Regional) Significance**
    - **Low** to **Medium Potential** for Roman remains of **Medium (Regional) Significance**
    - **High Potential** for medieval and post-medieval remains **Low (Local) Significance**
    - **Low** to **Negligible potential** for geoarchaeological deposits

30. In light of the information available to date, it is expected that any detrimental effects on archaeological remains, if present, could be successfully offset by a combination of embedded mitigation and archaeological mitigation.

31. Further archaeological work will be needed to confirm this initial statement, and to identify a suitable, proportionate, and cost-efficient evaluation and mitigation strategy.

32. A full archaeological DBA will be the first step to be undertaken to both inform on the archaeological potential and risk, and to start the consultation with the Archaeology Advisory team to Cambridgeshire to define the requirements, scope, and timescale of the archaeological evaluation.

33. On the basis of the information currently available, there is no identified archaeological constraint that would preclude the allocation of the Site for residential development. While further archaeological assessment and evaluation will be required to confirm the archaeological potential and inform an appropriate mitigation strategy, any archaeological impacts arising from development are considered capable of being appropriately addressed through the planning process.

Appendix A - Figures

Land north of Mill Lane

Sawston

Archaeological Technical Note
September 2026

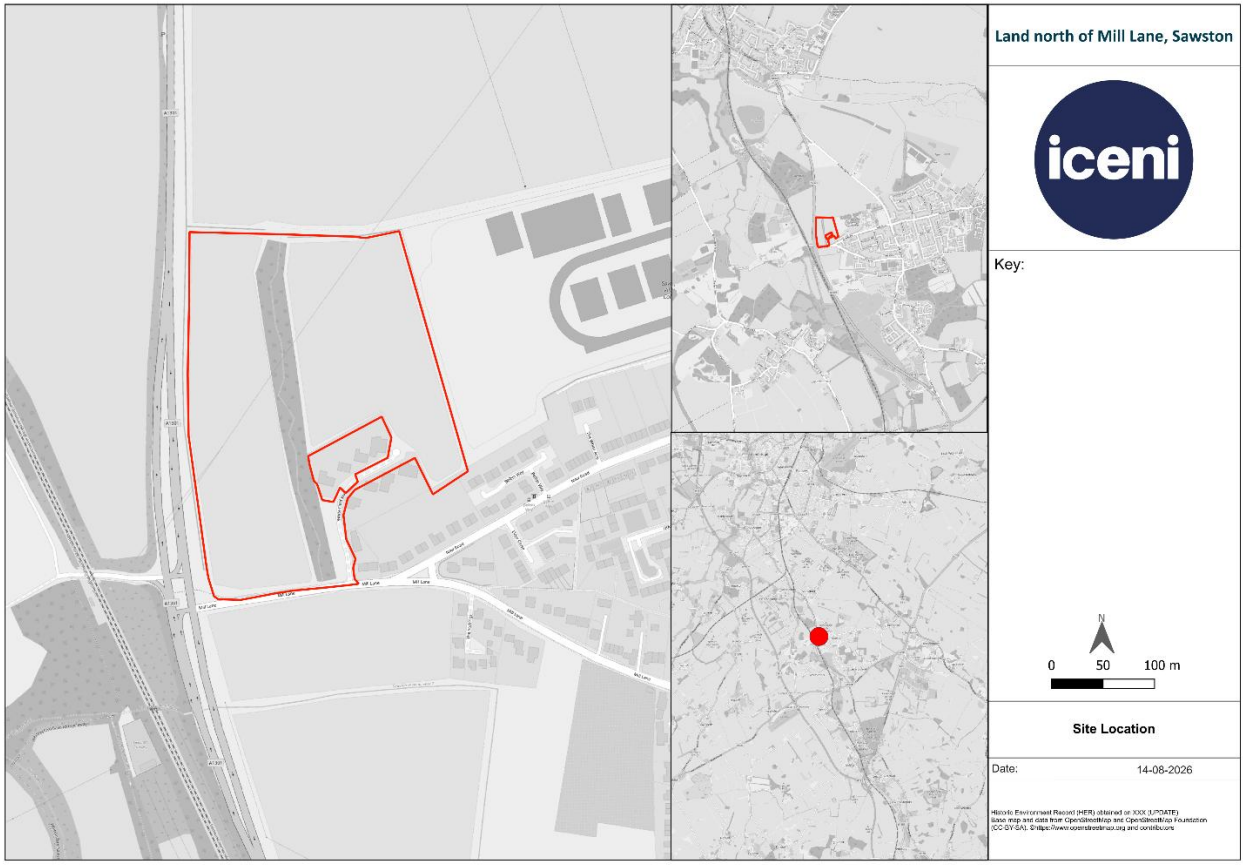


Figure 1 Site Location

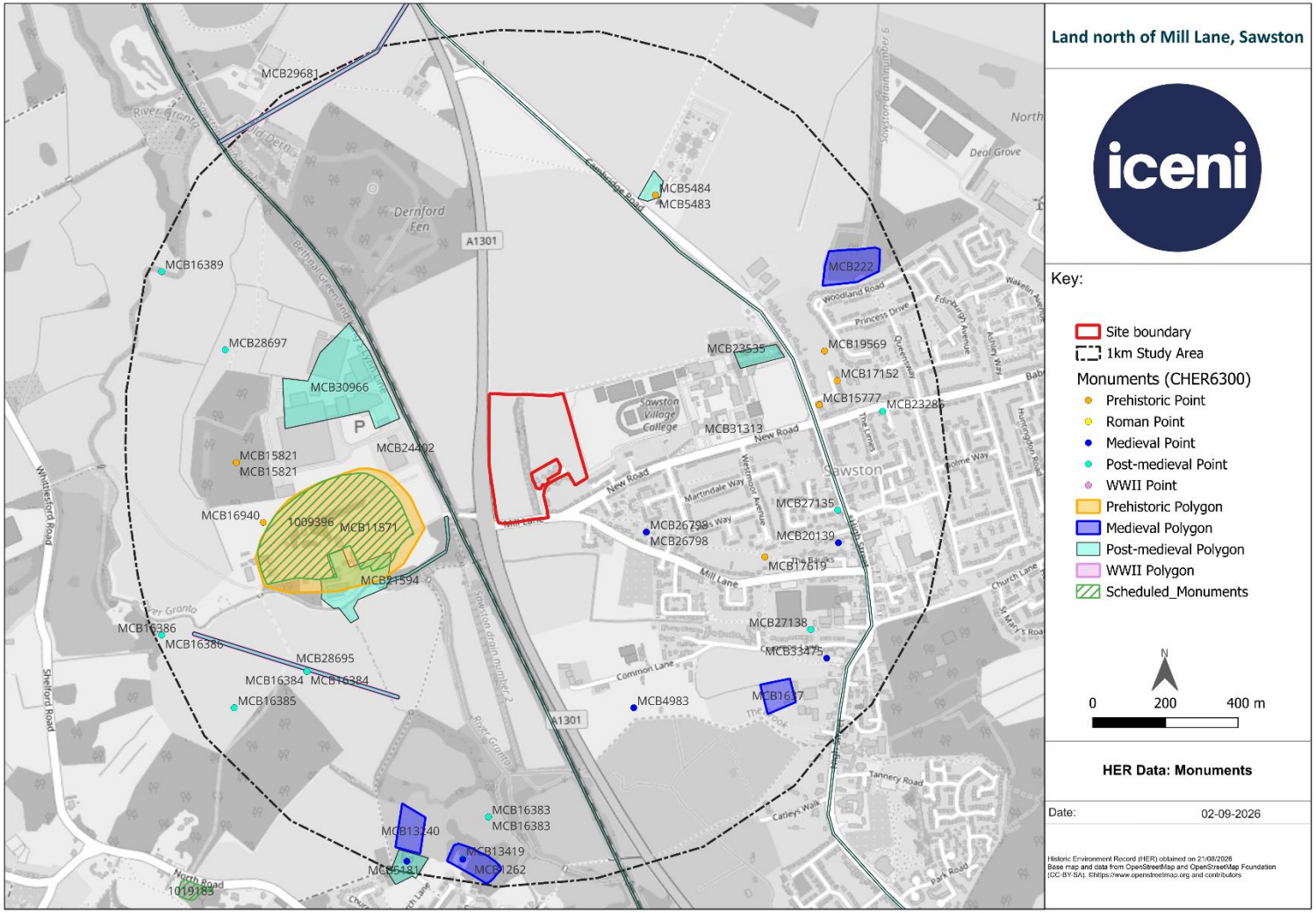


Figure 2 HER Data: Monuments

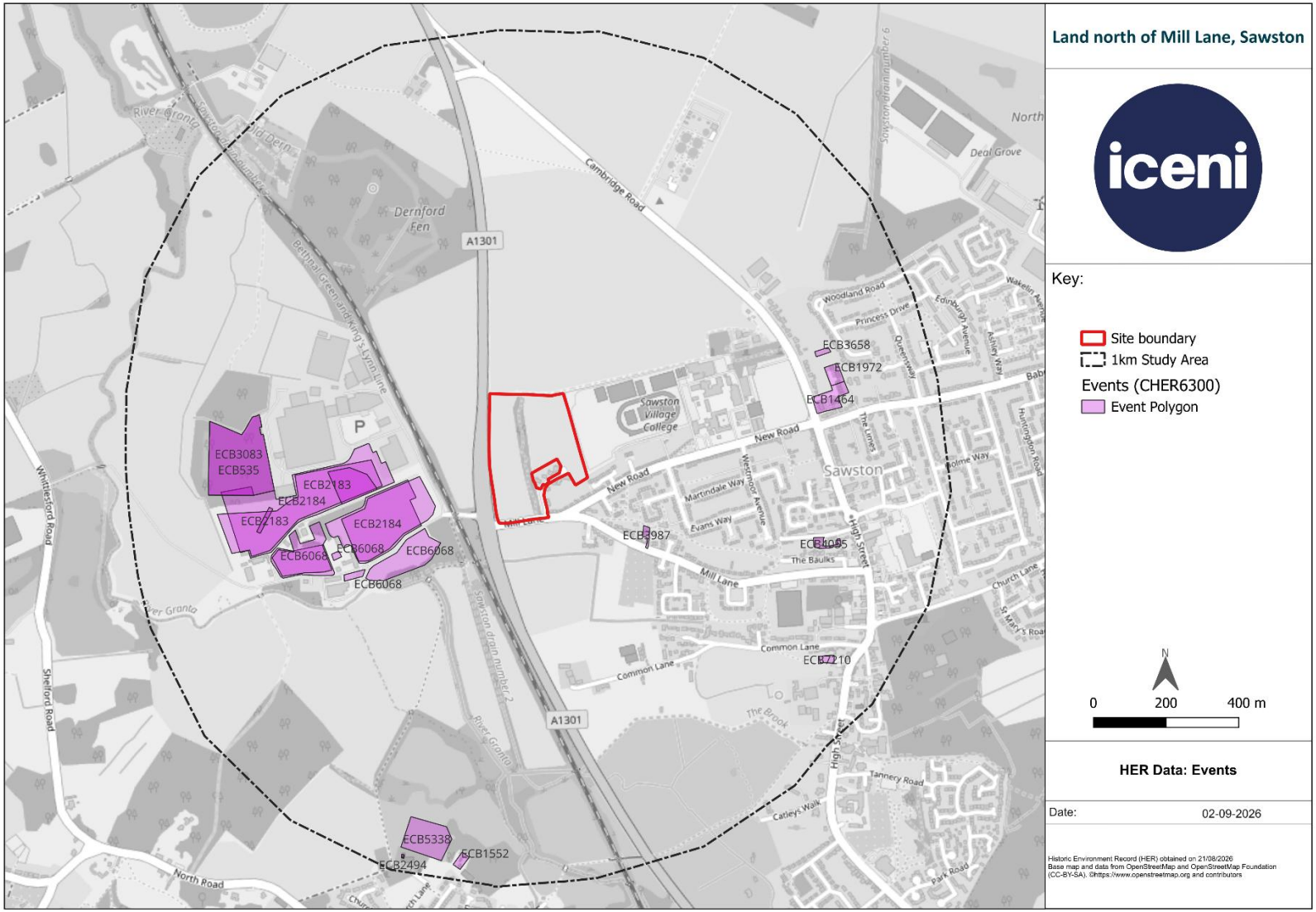


Figure 3 HER Data: Events

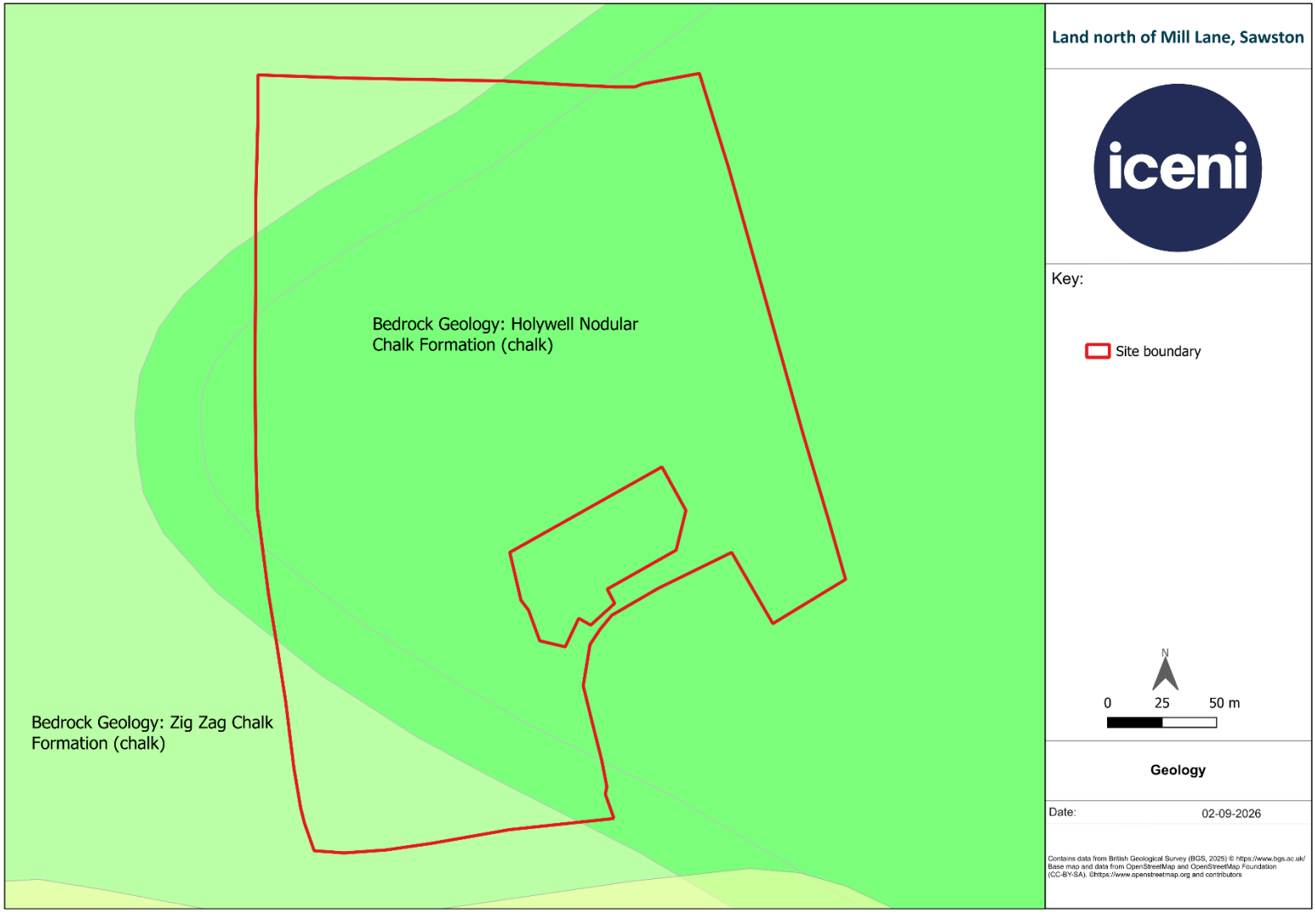


Figure 4 Geology



Figure 5 Masterplan