

LAND NORTH OF STAPLEGRAOVE ROAD,
TAUNTON, SOMERSET

(NGR ST 2128 2623)

Heritage Technical Note

Prepared by:
George Chapman
and Andrew Passmore

On behalf of:
Abbey Manor Group Ltd

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Land North of Staplegrove Road, Taunton, Somerset

NGR ST 2128 2623

Heritage Technical Note

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 This technical note has been prepared by AC archaeology in April 2026, on behalf of Abbey Manor Group Ltd, to accompany a request to Somerset Council for pre-application advice for a proposed residential development on land to the north of Staplegrove Road, Taunton (Fig. 1). The site is centred on NGR ST 2128 2623 and occupies a single plot of agricultural land. This plot is bounded by a footpath to the east, beyond which is further agricultural land, and residential properties to much of the area to the north, west and south. A recreational area also bounds the site to the north at its northeast corner. The topography of the area is a south-facing hillslope, with the land within the site dropping down to the south between heights of 31m and 25m above Ordnance Datum, becoming gradually steeper towards the southern boundary closer to Staplegrove Road. The document considers the archaeological potential of the site, and designated heritage assets that could potentially be impacted by the development.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Fig. 1)

- 2.1 The Somerset Historic Environment Record (HER) contains two entries within the site which relate to archaeological fieldwork events. They comprise a geophysical survey which was undertaken across the site in 2016, and an archaeological watching brief undertaken in 2025, the latter during topsoil stripping and deeper excavations in association with the laying of a new sewer (HER refs 40927 and 49414 respectively; see also Gator 2016 and Davies 2025 respectively). The geophysical survey identified a possible double-ditched enclosure which in part corresponded to a cropmark enclosure previously identified during analysis of aerial photographs (HER ref. 44359), though much of the mapped cropmark did not produce magnetic responses. A field boundary shown on the Ordnance Survey First Edition 25-inch map of 1889 was also detected as a buried feature. The watching brief did not result in the observation of any features of archaeological interest; the route of the sewer was situated away from the double-ditched enclosure identified by the geophysical survey.
- 2.2 Subsequent to the geophysical survey a small-scale trial trench evaluation was carried out to investigate the anomalies identified by the geophysical survey (Prestige 2016). No archaeological features were exposed, and no finds were observed or collected. With the exception of a mapped former hedgebank it was tentatively suggested that the anomalies and cropmarks may relate to modern agricultural practices.
- 2.3 In the wider area, Iron Age and Romano-British activity is recorded on land approximately 430m to the north of the site. The evidence includes a rectangular

enclosure, shown to have been in use across both periods, as well as other ditches containing Iron Age and Romano-British pottery which suggested domestic activity, particularly in relation to the latter period (HER ref. 27190). Flint discoveries have also been made in two areas to the north of the site while Bronze Age burials are recorded some 800m to the northeast. The site lies approximately 1.4km to the east of the Norton Camp hillfort Scheduled Monument, a site with activity from the Bronze Age to Romano-British period.

- 2.4** The site is situated immediately south of the historic hamlet of Staplegrove which has a church dating to the 13th century with other buildings dating to the post-medieval period. The site also lies adjacent to an area of post-medieval landscaped parkland associated with Staplegrove Manor (HER ref. 43573). A possible fishpond associated with the park (and recorded on historic maps) is also present adjacent to the site (HER ref. 43574).

Historic mapping

- 2.5** The earliest detailed cartographic depiction of the area, the Ordnance Survey (OS) 1802 three-inch to one-mile map of Lydeard, shows the site occupying enclosed agricultural land. The 1837 Staplegrove tithe map shows the area in greater detail, and depicts the site as divided across two plots, consisting of a smaller southeastern plot under pasture (263) with the rest of the site forming part of a larger pasture field (264). According to the accompanying apportionment, also of 1837, the plots are associated with farms to the south: plot 263 is owned by James Chappell and occupied by Robert Bartholomew, and associated with Lavers (or Lewis's) Farm immediately to the south (now demolished and occupied in part by nos 218-218B Staplegrove Road), whilst plot 264 is owned by Sarah Horsey and occupied by John Westacott and associated with another (unnamed) farm to the south (the present 222 Staplegrove Road). Kibbys (in plot 265) and the land further to the north were glebe land occupied by the Reverend William Wood, indicating no association between the site and Kibbys at the time of the tithe survey.
- 2.6** The OS 25-inch map of 1889 shows changes within the site, with the eastern plot having been extended north creating two fields of broadly the same size. On the Second Edition 25-inch map of 1904 the internal boundary has been removed and the site takes its present form.

LiDAR imagery

- 2.7** Using LiDAR composite DTM (2022) 1m resolution data, displayed using a hillshade analysis, a linear north-south-aligned depression is visible running across the site, and corresponds to the field boundary shown on historic maps. A second shallow and wide depression also appears along the northern part of the site and may represent a paleochannel, as no feature was identified in this location during the geophysical survey, while the LiDAR image also predates the groundworks for the sewer pipeline.

Archaeological potential

- 2.8** Taken on their own (or together) the aerial photographic analysis and the geophysical survey indicate the site has some archaeological potential, relating to a double-ditched enclosure in the centre of the field. However, the trial trench evaluation targeted a number of anomalies in the geophysical survey that should have represented various ditches in different parts of the enclosure, but no evidence of these ditches, or any other features or deposits were encountered, nor were any artefacts found. The

evaluation concluded that the anomalies and cropmarks may have resulted from modern agricultural activity. It is therefore concluded, based on the results of this evaluation and the more recent watching brief in other parts of the field, that the application site has no archaeological potential.

3. DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS (Fig. 1)

- 3.1 There are no designated heritage assets within the site itself. Adjacent to the site to the north is the *Staplegrove Conservation Area*, which contains 14 Grade II Listed Buildings. The closest Listed Building to the site within this designated area is *Kibbys* (National Heritage List for England (NHLE) ref. 1307700), a late-17th century cob and rubble farmhouse. To its north, set within a surrounding graveyard, is the *Church of St John the Evangelist* (NHLE ref. 1060479). *Pomeroy's Farmhouse* (NHLE ref. 1176820) is situated approximately 150m to the north of the site, northeast of the church. Approximately 40m to the south of the site is *222 Staplegrove Road*, an 18th-to 19th-century two-storey colourwashed rubble house (1276319).

Site visit

- 3.2 A site visit undertaken on 30 July 2025 identified that, other than *222 Staplegrove Road*, which was screened by trees, vegetation and topography, all of the above designated heritage assets were visible from the application site. In particular, *Kibbys*, which is situated adjacent to the site, is visible from much of the field. However, the body and tower of the *Church of St John the Evangelist* are only visible from the eastern part of the site. *Pomeroy's Farmhouse* is less visible due to screening provided by intervening trees to the north (and to a lesser extent by solid boundary walls). However, intervisibility between the site and Listed Buildings in this direction is likely to be greater during winter the months.

Setting

- 3.3 Given the early function of *Kibbys* as a farmhouse, it would be anticipated that the building has some historical connection with its associated (surrounding) agricultural land. As the building was part of the local Glebe land in 1837 it is difficult to establish the extent of any associated specific landholding. The Glebe Land at Staplegrove was small comprising 10 plots including the parsonage and tenements situated between the church and Manor Road to its south. All were recorded as being occupied by the Rev. Wood, and no lessees are recorded in the tithe apportionment. Agricultural land included the plots either side of *Kibbys* and to the south of Manor Road (the present recreation ground to the northeast and the modern houses to the southwest), and these could have been farmed from *Kibbys*. There was no historical connection with the fields within the present site boundary or other land to the south and east.
- 3.4 The site falls within the setting of *Kibbys*, and can be considered to form part of rural landscape surrounding the Listed Building, al be it as noted above not land historically associated with the property. Its setting also includes the wider Conservation Area in which it is located, including its proximity to the parish church. Its setting also includes its surrounding grounds to the east and south; the former are walled, whilst the latter is defined by a low wall with an iron fence, clearly allowing for views out from the property. It is not clear whether the building originally had designed views, and it may be that views into the site were created (along with the form of the gardens) in the early-19th century when the rear wings were added to the earlier core of the house.

The property is accessed from Manor Road to the northwest (which also forms part of its setting as there are good views of the front of the house from here). Given the form of its northwest, roadside elevation (and the presence of a chimney stack in its rear, southeast elevation) it seems likely that until the early-19th century any key views from the building were in this direction towards the road from which it was accessed, the historic highway into and out of Staplegrove.

- 3.5** The site forms part of the setting of the *Staplegrove Conservation Area*. The character of this setting varies, with the majority of its surroundings being 20th-century houses along historic highways and groups of small residential developments on by new cul-de-sac roads. There is very little of the historic rural setting surviving, with only three fields directly adjoining the Conservation Area's boundaries.
- 3.6** The site also forms part of the wider setting of the *Church of St John the Evangelist*, and to a lesser extent *Pomeroy's Farmhouse*, forming part of the wider landscape from which the church and farmhouse can be appreciated. The contribution of the site to the setting and significance of these assets is minimal due to the distances involved and the limited intervisibility from only part of the overall site.

4. COMMENTS

- 4.1** A geophysical survey across the site in 2016 identified a possible double-ditched enclosure in the centre of the site, which backs up earlier analysis of aerial photographs. However, a subsequent targeted trial trench evaluation did not expose any archaeological features or recover any artefacts. A watching brief in 2025 in other parts of the site also did not expose any archaeological features. It is therefore concluded that the site does not have any archaeological potential.
- 4.2** The site falls within the setting of a number of nearby Listed Buildings situated within the Staplegrove Conservation Area. Initial proposals for the development have been drawn up following an assessment of various constraints, such as the existing sewer and the topography that affects the location of attenuation facilities. It is proposed that a wide green corridor will be established along the eastern side of the site (incorporating the existing footpath). This will preserve the existing views into the Staplegrove Conservation Area including the long-distance glimpsed views of the *Church of St John the Evangelist* and *Pomeroy's Farmhouse*. This is likely to result in a beneficial change to the settings and significance of these buildings due to the increased public access and improved appreciation of the buildings from their setting and within the more local setting of the Conservation Area. The green corridor extends around the northern part of the site providing a buffer between the proposed development and the Listed Building *Kibbys*. It is proposed that development along the northern edge here will be single storeyed, creating a graduated effect of new builds softening the change to views from the house. It is likely that the development would impact the setting of this Listed Building, but the design elements noted above limit the harmful effects. As with the *Church of St John the Evangelist* and *Pomeroy's Farmhouse* increased public access to the currently private field (including the green corridor and a cycle path) would improve appreciation of the building allowing views of the rear of the house (in addition to the existing views of the front from Manor Road). This benefit would offset the harm caused by the change in character from rural to residential.

5. SOURCES CONSULTED

British Geological Survey geology viewer

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

Davies, I., 2025. *Archaeological Monitoring and Recording Report: Staplegrove Sewer Scheme, Taunton*. ADAS report.

Gator, J., 2016. *Geophysical Survey Report, Project Name: Staplegrove, Taunton*, Stratascan job ref. J10049.

National Heritage List for England

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

Ordnance Survey 3-inch to 1-mile map sheet 43.1, Lydiard St Lawrence (1802)

Ordnance Survey 25-inch Somerset map sheet LXX.7

First Edition, surveyed 1887, published 1889

Second Edition, revised 1902, published 1904

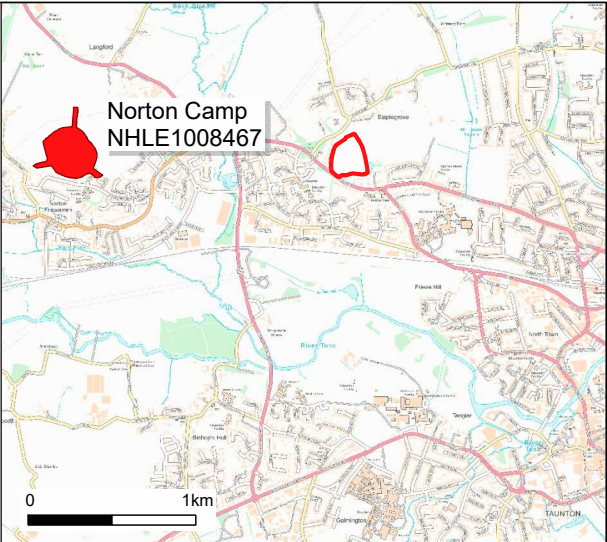
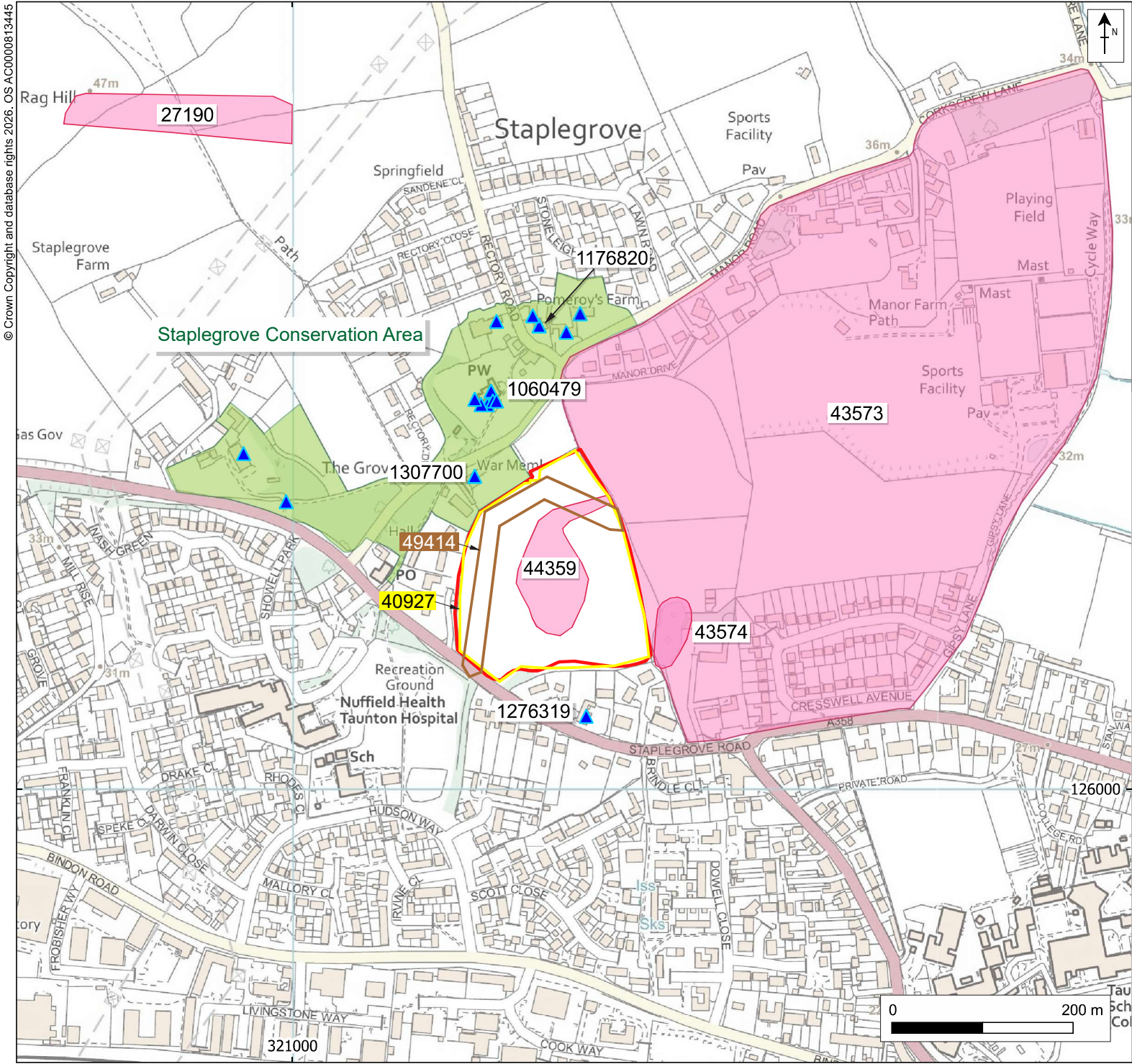
Prestige, O., 2016. *Land at Staplegrove, Taunton, Somerset, An Archaeological Field Evaluation*, Context One Archaeological Services reference **C1/EVA/16/STS**.

Somerset Historic Environment Record

<https://www.somersetheritage.org.uk>

Staplegrove tithe map and apportionment, both 1837

George Chapman and Andrew Passmore
AC archaeology
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Key

- Site
- Staplegrove Conservation Area
- Grade II Listed Building
- Relevant HER data

Previous Archaeological Investigations

- Geophysical survey
- Watching brief on a pipeline corridor

PROJECT

Land North of Staplegrove Road,
Taunton, Somerset

TITLE

Fig. 1: Location of the site and relevant
historic environment data

AC archaeology

Devon Office

AC archaeology Ltd
Unit 4, Halthaies Workshops
Bradninch
Nr Exeter
Devon
EX5 4LQ

Telephone: 01392 882410

www.acarchaeology.co.uk