

A358 Taunton to Southfields Dualling Scheme

Preliminary Environmental Information Report - Appendix 6.2
Historic Landscape Characterisation

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1 Introduction

1.1 Historic Landscape Characterisation

- 1.1.1 Landscapes, alongside buildings, monuments, archaeological sites, places and areas, can possess significance derived from their heritage interest, which NPSNN defines as archaeological, architectural, artistic and historic [1]. This appendix contains an assessment of the historic landscape character of the area surrounding the project, which has been produced to inform the cultural heritage baseline. In addition to the figures contained within this report (Figures 6.2.1-6.2.8), Figure 6.3 Historic Landscape Assessment should also be referred to in relation to this assessment.
- 1.1.2 'Historic Landscape Character' (HLC) comprises the attributes and qualities of a landscape which reflect past land use and settlement and are legible in the present day. Over the last twenty years there has been an extensive programme of assessing and mapping HLC across the country. This data is invaluable for understanding the nature of the historic landscape, establishing methods to manage and protect it, and to assess potential impacts from development upon it. However, there are some limitations in how HLC data, in its raw form, can be used in the context of assessing the potential impacts of large-scale infrastructure projects. This is because the individual areas of land identified tend to be relatively small in comparison to the area affected by linear schemes, which can lead to an overstating of adverse impacts in proximity to the scheme boundary whilst understating the overarching effect on the wider historic landscape. The approach used in this assessment has been to identify Historic Landscape Character Areas (HLCA), which are broad areas of consistent patterning in the components of historic landscape, which share an overarching nature and quality. Historic landscapes are a part of the historic environment and can be considered as a cultural heritage resource. The HLCAs are not, themselves, a cultural heritage resource, but are intended to enable assessment of the impact of the proposed scheme on the historic landscape within them.

1.2 Assessment methodology

- 1.2.1 The approach used in this assessment takes the *Somerset and Exmoor HLC* [2] as a foundation from which larger HLCAs have been mapped, supplemented with current aerial imagery and walkover survey. The HLCAs have been created using a 1 kilometre study area, buffered from the scheme boundary, and should be considered against the backdrop of the wider areas mapped within the *Somerset and Exmoor HLC*. As a result, the external limits of the HLCAs reflect a limit to the assessment rather than the outward extent of the historic landscape areas they represent.
- 1.2.2 The significance of a historic landscape depends on a number of features, including its rarity and preservation of features representing time depth, and is determined through an assessment of its historical, archaeological, artistic or architectural interest. The value of historic landscapes has been assessed in line with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) approach used across the Cultural heritage assessment (see Chapter 6 Cultural Heritage and Table 1-1).

Table 1-1 Value

Value of the resource	Typical Description
Very High	Very high importance and rarity, international scale and very limited potential for substitution.
High	High importance or rarity, national scale, and limited potential for substitution
Medium	Medium or high importance and rarity, regional scale, limited potential for substitution
Low	Low or medium importance and rarity, local scale
Negligible	Very low importance and rarity, local scale

DMRB LA 104 *Environmental assessment and monitoring* Table 3.2 [3]

1.2.3 The *Somerset and Exmoor HLC* [2] categorises the landscape into land that is enclosed, including field systems and woodland, unenclosed, and other, which includes settlement, recreation, industrial and other uses. These groups were then further sub-divided using different attributes. In the case of enclosed field systems, which cover much of the study area, the attributes considered were:

- Form, differentiating between regular and irregular patterns of fields. Regular fields suggest a single moment of enclosure, typically a post-medieval process, rather than the irregular forms which were created by the piecemeal enclosure of earlier systems.
- Boundary shape, which identified straight, sinuous, mixed and other boundary shape. Straight boundaries are usually associated with Parliamentary enclosure or other 18th and 19th century enclosure. Sinuous patterns are typically assumed to be earlier.
- Average size of field, which is useful in understanding the patterning of field systems.
- Indicator, which was a record of specific attributes, such as a reversed 's' shaped boundary or a dog-legged shape, which both suggest the enclosure of previously open medieval fields.
- Pattern, such as grid-like, piecemeal or axial.
- Farm, which connects the fields to individual or groups of farms, reflecting the clustering or dispersed nature of farms within the landscape.
- Period, if known.
- Confidence (in the date given).
- Process (of enclosure), which records evidence of previous land use, method of enclosure and boundary loss, all of which can contribute to an understanding of the development of the fieldscape. Examples include piecemeal or Parliamentary enclosure.

1.2.4 These features are useful in understanding the value of the historic landscapes within the study area.

1.2.5 Figure 6.3 Historic Landscape Assessment shows the eight HLCAs which have been created for this assessment overlaid onto a simplified projection of the Somerset and Exmoor HLC. For visual clarity, HLC types have been grouped into a smaller range of categories but the full detail was used to inform the assessment contained within this Appendix. The simplified categories are:

- Anciently Enclosed Land (including all types of anciently enclosed land)
- Conifer Plantation

- Historic Landscape Park
- Industry or Military Site
- Other Woodland
- Other (including small areas used for golf, water treatment and race courses)
- Recently enclosed land (including all types of recently enclosed land)
- Replanted Ancient Woodland
- Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland
- Settlement, Post-Tithe Map (c1840)
- Settlement, Pre-Tithe Map (c1840)

1.2.6 In addition to the Somerset and Exmoor HLC, the following sources have been used to inform this assessment:

- Site visit.
- Natural England's National Landscape Character area reports for the Vale of Taunton and Quantock Fringes [4], Mid Somerset Hills [5] and Yeovil Scarplands [6].
- Lidar Data [7].
- Historic Ordnance Survey maps [8].
- Open source aerial imagery (Google Earth) .
- The Institute for Place Names at the University of Nottingham and their publication *Key to English Place Names* [9].
- The Extensive Urban Survey carried out for Taunton [10].
- Ilminster Conservation Area Appraisal [11].
- The Blackdown Hills AONB and East Devon River Catchments National Mapping Programme Survey – polygons provided by Somerset HER only. At the time of writing only the Phase 1 interpretative report has been published – the study area is within the project's Phase 2.
- An initial assessment of potentially 'important' hedgerows (as defined by *The Hedgerows Regulations 1997* [12]). This is based on the presence of hedgerows along boundaries shown on mid-19th century mapping, known historic parish boundaries and the limits of historic parks and estates. The biodiversity habitats surveys being undertaken to support the ES/DCO (see Chapter 8 Biodiversity) will be used to refine this and further detail will be included in the ES.

1.2.7 This appendix includes an overarching description of the historic landscape character of the study area, highlighting features of particular interest and heritage value. Following this there is a more detailed discussion of the eight HLCA's which have been created for the purposes of assessing the impact of the proposed scheme. An assessment of the impact of the proposed scheme on these areas and on the overall historic landscape character is contained within Appendix 6.4 Preliminary Impact Assessment with potential significant effects reported within Chapter 6 Cultural Heritage. This appendix includes figures showing each individual HLCA. For an overarching view of all eight, please see Figure 6.3 Historic Landscape Assessment.

2 HLCA

2.1 Overarching summary

- 2.1.1 The proposed scheme lies between Taunton and Ilminster in Somerset. It is to the south and east of the higher ground of the Quantock and Blackdown Hills, and south-west of the low-lying Somerset levels. It is an area of gently rolling fields, the topography including lower-lying valley areas along watercourses and a ridge of higher ground crossing through the centre of the proposed scheme around West Hatch/Hatch Beauchamp which is a long spur running from the Blackdown Hills. The geology is formed of mudstones and interbedded mudstone and limestone lias rocks, overlain by superficial diamicton and gravel head deposits as well as bands of alluvium along the watercourses that thread across the area [13]. The building stone used across the study area reflects the geology, with both lias and ham stone, the latter quarried from near Yeovil to the south, frequently used. A full description of the current and potential future landscape baseline can be found in Chapter 7 Landscape.
- 2.1.2 The HLC for the study area is dominated by a mixture of anciently enclosed land, sometimes modified in the post-medieval period, and recently enclosed land, which was laid out in the 17th-20th century. The anciently enclosed land reflects the late medieval and early post-medieval enclosure of older field systems, typically in a piecemeal manner. As the post-medieval period progresses, enclosure became more common, with areas of irregular field boundaries reflecting the earlier part of this process. Parliamentary enclosure, which saw the large-scale creation of formal field systems, typically in regular patterned, straight-bounded fields, was mostly carried out in Somerset between 1750-1836 [2]. The land within the study area was traditionally mostly farmed for livestock, although there is some arable. The wool trade was a major part of the historic economy. Alongside pasture, there were also extensive cider orchards, traces of which often survive on the more poorly draining mudstone lands as characteristic planting ridges. They were used for drainage and often survive as slight earthworks or cropmarks [2]. There is also extensive evidence of extraction in the landscape, with small pits often now visible as small, wooded areas.
- 2.1.3 Although there is a broad level of similarity across the study area there is some local variation, particularly where one type of enclosed land or settlement predominates. Eight HLCAs have been mapped, including two areas of settlement, two areas of predominantly post-medieval enclosed fields, two with a mixture of anciently and more recently enclosed land, one of predominantly ancient enclosures and one which is a large 20th century airfield. There are considerable similarities between HLCA_002 to HLCA_005, with the divisions reflecting greater and lesser survival of ancient enclosures to allow for more nuance in the assessment of impacts potentially arising from the proposed scheme. The HLCAs are described in detail below and summarised in Table 2-2.

Table 2-2 HLCAs

HLCA ID	Name	Value
HLCA_001	Taunton and Bathpool	Low
HLCA_002	Post-medieval fields around Ruishton	Low
HLCA_003	Ancient and post-medieval fields, Somerset Hills	Medium
HLCA_004	Post-medieval fields north of Ashill	Low

HLCA ID	Name	Value
HLCA_005	Ancient and post-medieval fields north of Ilminster	Medium
HLCA_006	Ilminster	Low
HLCA_007	Ancient fields north of Creech St Michael	Medium
HLCA_008	Military Airfield	Low

2.2 HLCA_001: Taunton and Bathpool

- 2.2.1 Taunton and Bathpool (Figure 6.2.1) is an urban area mostly to the north of the scheme boundary. It reflects the current extent of urban development, which, in the 20th century, extended from a smaller town core surrounded by farmland and scattered settlements, including Bathpool to the east, to the larger area reflected in the HLCA. The south-eastern limit of the HLCA, and of Taunton's modern spread, is formed by the M5.
- 2.2.2 Taunton, the name deriving from the name of the River Tone and the Old English 'tūn', meaning a farmstead or settlement [9], is located on a crossing point of the Tone within its wide, sheltered valley. The town has early medieval origins; there was a settlement with a minster church to the south of the river from the 8th or 9th century AD [10]. Some of the surrounding lands were held by the Bishop of Winchester while others were held by the Kings of Wessex, who developed it as an administrative, judicial and commercial centre, its importance seen in the presence of a mint in the town in the mid-10th century. Following the Norman Conquest, a castle was built on the site of the early medieval minster and the town was granted a borough charter in 1136 [10]. The medieval core of the town grew out from the original early medieval settlement south of the river and, through the medieval period, grew in wealth and importance through the development of a woollen cloth trade. Textiles remained central to the town's economy in the earlier part of the post-medieval period, although its fortunes began to decline due to the rising importance of the mills in the north of the country, leading to a shift to silk milling in Taunton [4]. At the end of the 19th century, Taunton was still a recognisably distinct settlement within fields surrounding it, but rapid growth in the later 20th century has seen it expand to envelop a number of former villages in its hinterland.
- 2.2.3 The town of Taunton has substantial archaeological and historical interest, as well as numerous historically and architecturally important buildings. However, as a historic landscape, much of the distinctiveness of its medieval and post-medieval form has been obscured by 20th century development. Overall, the HLCA reflects a historic landscape of **low value**.

2.3 HLCA_002: Post-medieval fields around Ruishton

- 2.3.1 This HLCA is an area of predominantly post-medieval enclosed fields to the south-east of the M5 (Figure 6.2.2). It includes the village of Ruishton, which is in the Tone valley, a small area of anciently enclosed fields to the south-west of the village, and post-medieval fields mostly enclosed in the 18th-21st centuries.
- 2.3.2 Historic Ordnance Survey maps, from the end of the 19th century onwards [8], show that this HLCA was similar in character to much of the hinterland around Taunton. The construction of the M5 in the 1970s created a significant boundary which late 20th century urban spread of Taunton has largely respected. The landscape to the south-east of the motorway has retained much of its rural

character, although there is substantial new development occurring just east of J25 of the M5. The fields are lined with hedgerows and, with the exception of the A358, the roads are typically narrow and enclosed by high hedges. The village of Ruishton has a small core which predates the mid-19th century, but has mostly developed subsequently. The village's name, from the Old English 'risc' and 'tūn', meaning rushes and farmstead or settlement respectively, indicate a likely early medieval origin [9]. There is an area of anciently enclosed fields to the south-west of the village and traces of possible medieval strip fields can be identified as narrow rectangular parcels bounded by slight ditches, on both LiDAR data and aerial imagery [7] [14].

- 2.3.3 The HLCA is predominantly characterised by a landscape of post-medieval enclosed fields with some traces of earlier settlement and agriculture. Although there is evidence of time depth, it is of a kind fairly typical in the region, making it of **low value**.

2.4 HLCA_003: Ancient and post-medieval fields, Somerset Hills

- 2.4.1 This HLCA covers a large area of rolling fields, interspersed with small woods, farmsteads and villages (Figure 6.2.3). The predominant HLC types are anciently enclosed fields, with varying levels of boundary loss, and some with evidence of modification in the 17th-19th centuries. The likely medieval origin of many of these fields can be seen in the gently 's-shaped' boundaries and other irregular field shapes. In comparison to the other HLCAs created for this assessment, HLCA_003 is relatively wooded, reflecting the slightly higher ground it occupies which may have historically been more peripheral to settlement. There are several areas of ancient woodland. On the lower-lying ground, LiDAR data shows a regular patchwork of ditches, many of which may reflect former field boundaries.
- 2.4.2 There are a number of small villages, including Haydon, Henlade, Thornfalcon, Bickenhall, West Hatch and Hatch Beauchamp. These settlements have names which reflect largely agricultural origins, referencing hay meadows and hawthorn trees as well as personal names [9]. The older settlements are likely to indicate the sites of manor houses. Isolated farmsteads are also found across the HLCA.
- 2.4.3 While much of the pastoral landscape retains traces of medieval agriculture, there is substantial evidence of post-medieval activity as well, firstly through the enclosure of the earlier fields and through the presence of large estate parklands and the new infrastructure of the 18th and 19th centuries. Hatch Park and Hatch Court are both located on the eastern side of the HLCA, with areas of planting surviving in each. Much of the road network which crosses the HLCA dates to the 18th and early 19th centuries, when many of the roads were established by Turnpike Trusts. The Taunton to Chard railway (now disused) was also built across the landscape.
- 2.4.4 The HLCA retains evidence of considerable time depth through the large-scale survival of anciently enclosed land. As such it is of **medium value**.

2.5 HLCA_004: Post-medieval fields north of Ashill

- 2.5.1 The HLCA is a band of lower-lying fields to the east of the Blackdown Hills, characterised by the predominance of enclosed fields dating from the 18th-21st centuries (Figure 6.2.4). To the north and south are areas with a higher density of anciently enclosed fields and to the east and west, respectively, there is a large airfield and the rising ground of the Blackdown Hills.

- 2.5.2 Most of the settlement in the HLCA is dispersed, with isolated farmsteads, with the village of Ashill being the main exception. The name is derived from the Old English 'aesc', meaning ash tree and 'lēah', meaning a clearing or glade in woodland [9]. This indicates that the area may have been quite heavily wooded in the early, and possibly later medieval periods and there is some ancient woodland surviving in the east of the HLCA. To the north of Ashill, there was a medieval deer park. Surviving traces of the park include field names, pollarded oaks and several continuous field boundaries which could be former pales (HER record: 53514, Appendix 6.3).
- 2.5.3 The HLCA is predominantly characterised by a landscape of post-medieval enclosed fields with some traces of earlier settlement. Although there is evidence of time depth, it is of a kind fairly typical in the region, making it of **low value**.

2.6 HLCA_005: Ancient and post-medieval fields north of Ilminster

- 2.6.1 The HLCA is located around and to the north of Ilminster and is a mixture of anciently enclosed fields, fields enclosed since the 18th century and areas of historic parkland (Figure 6.2.5). It is a fairly low-lying area, crossed by the River Isle, with the Yeovil Scarplands to the south [6]. The largest settlement in the HLCA is the village of Broadway, which has a small medieval core but is mostly later 19th and 20th century ribbon development along Broadway Road. It is thought that the settlement shifted west in the medieval period, leaving the Church of St Aldhelm and St Eadburgha isolated amidst the surrounding fields (HER: 53331, see Appendix 6.3).
- 2.6.2 To the west of Ilminster was a large medieval deer park, still traceable in the names of fields although there is nothing remaining on the ground. Much more easily identifiable is the post-medieval landscaped park of Jordans. The country house associated with the parkland has now been demolished, but there are clear traces of the landscaped park in the surviving planting.
- 2.6.3 The HLCA retains evidence of considerable time depth through the surviving traces of anciently enclosed land as well as the (non-designated) post-medieval Jordans Park. As such it is of **medium value**.

2.7 HLCA_006: Ilminster

- 2.7.1 The HLCA is formed by the town of Ilminster, which is located in a small valley on the southern edge of a ridge of land overlooking the River Isle (Figure 6.2.6). The name is Old English, meaning minster (or monastery) on the River Isle [9] and reflects its likely early medieval origins. Like Taunton to the north, it was a prosperous in the medieval period, its wealth built on the woollen textile trade, and it had a locally important market [11]. In the post-medieval period it became known for its textiles and leather, with greater prosperity brought by the development of new infrastructure, first through the Chard Canal and then by the Taunton to Chard railway. The historic core of the town is designated as a conservation area, with the larger area around this reflecting 20th century development, which has drawn the settlement further north to connect with Horton on the junction with the A303.
- 2.7.2 Although the centre of the town has considerable time depth, the extent of 20th century development has largely obscured historic landscape traces beyond the centre. As a whole, it is a historic landscape of **low value**.

2.8 HLCA_007: Ancient fields north of Creech St Michael

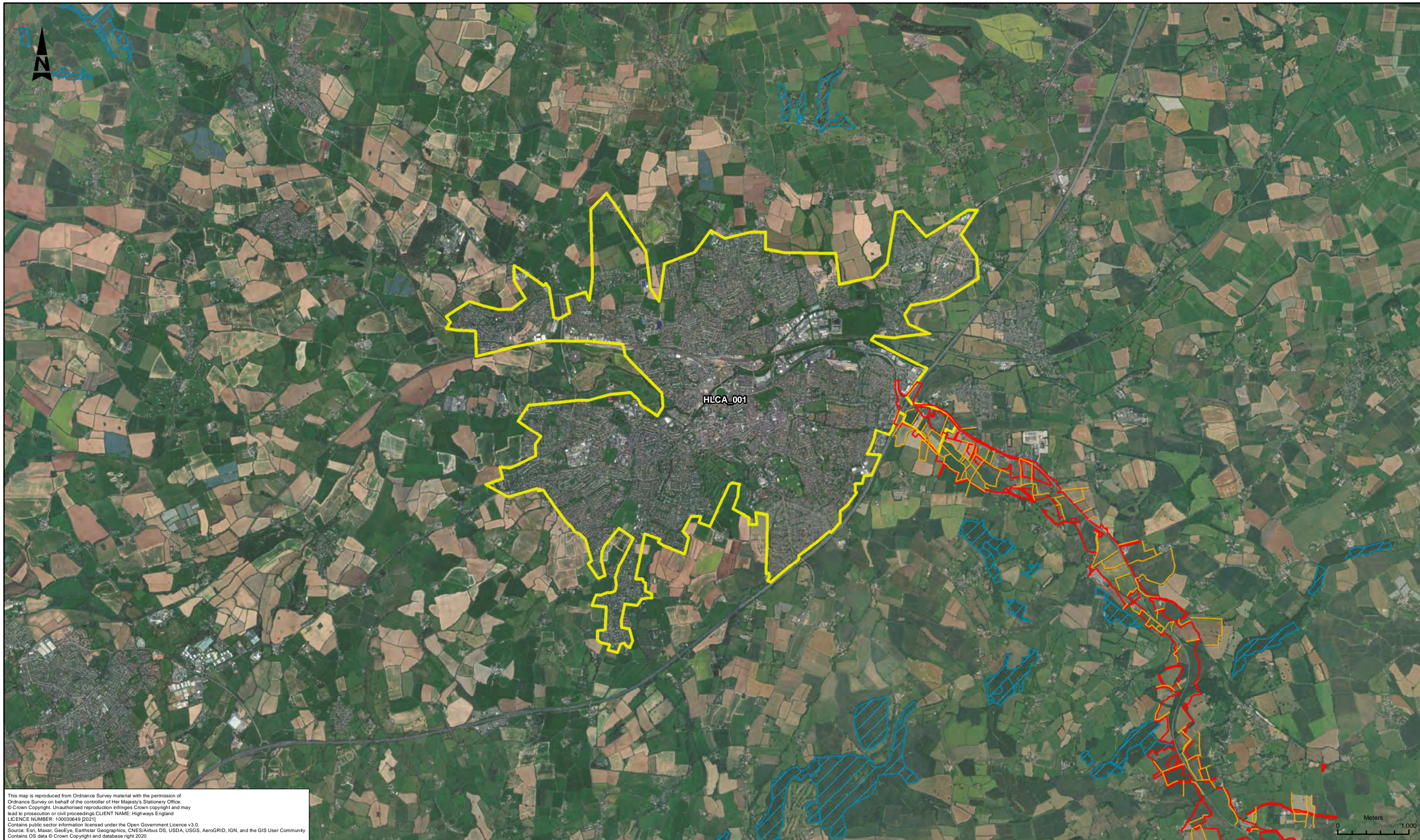
- 2.8.1 The HLCA extends north from the village of Creech St Michael and includes an area of predominantly anciently enclosed fields with a band of more recent enclosure along the road between Creech St Michael and Creech Heathfield (Figure 6.2.7). There are a number of small pre-1850s settlements, with larger expansion of Creech St Michael in ribbon development along Creech Heathfield Road. The HLCA is located on the northern side of the River Tone and is a relatively flat landscape of fields enclosed by hedgerows in the southern part of the Vale of Taunton [4]. The M5 cuts across the eastern part of the HLCA, intruding into the otherwise well preserved farming landscape.
- 2.8.2 The extent of survival in anciently enclosed fields gives this HLCA evidence of considerable time depth. As such it is of **medium value**.

2.9 HLCA_008: Military airfield

- 2.9.1 This HLCA is formed of the RNAS Merryfield airfield, formerly RAF Merryfield, which was created during the Second World War. It was built by John Laing Ltd, with work commencing in 1942, and had a main runway of 6,000 ft (1829m) length, 50 hard standings and two T-2 hangars. It was formally opened in 1944. In the 1970s, ownership was transferred to the Royal Navy for use in helicopter training and exercises [15].
- 2.9.2 The HLCA is distinctive within the wider landscape, the airfield completely alien to the earlier landscape of enclosed fields depicted on historic mapping and still surviving across the surrounding area. It was used during the latter part of the Second World War for staging Paratroops for the D-Day operation, supplies and subsequently troops and casualties were transported to and from Normandy. This contributes to the airfield's historic interest and the landscape, through its clear functional design, is associated with that. However, as a historic landscape, it has been altered over time, reflecting its changing use. It is of **low value**.

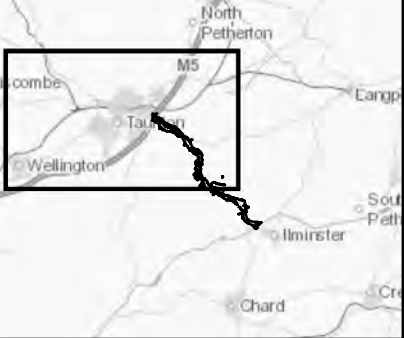
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LEGEND	
	HISTORIC HEDGEROW
	HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA
	SCHEME BOUNDARY
	ANCIENT WOODLAND



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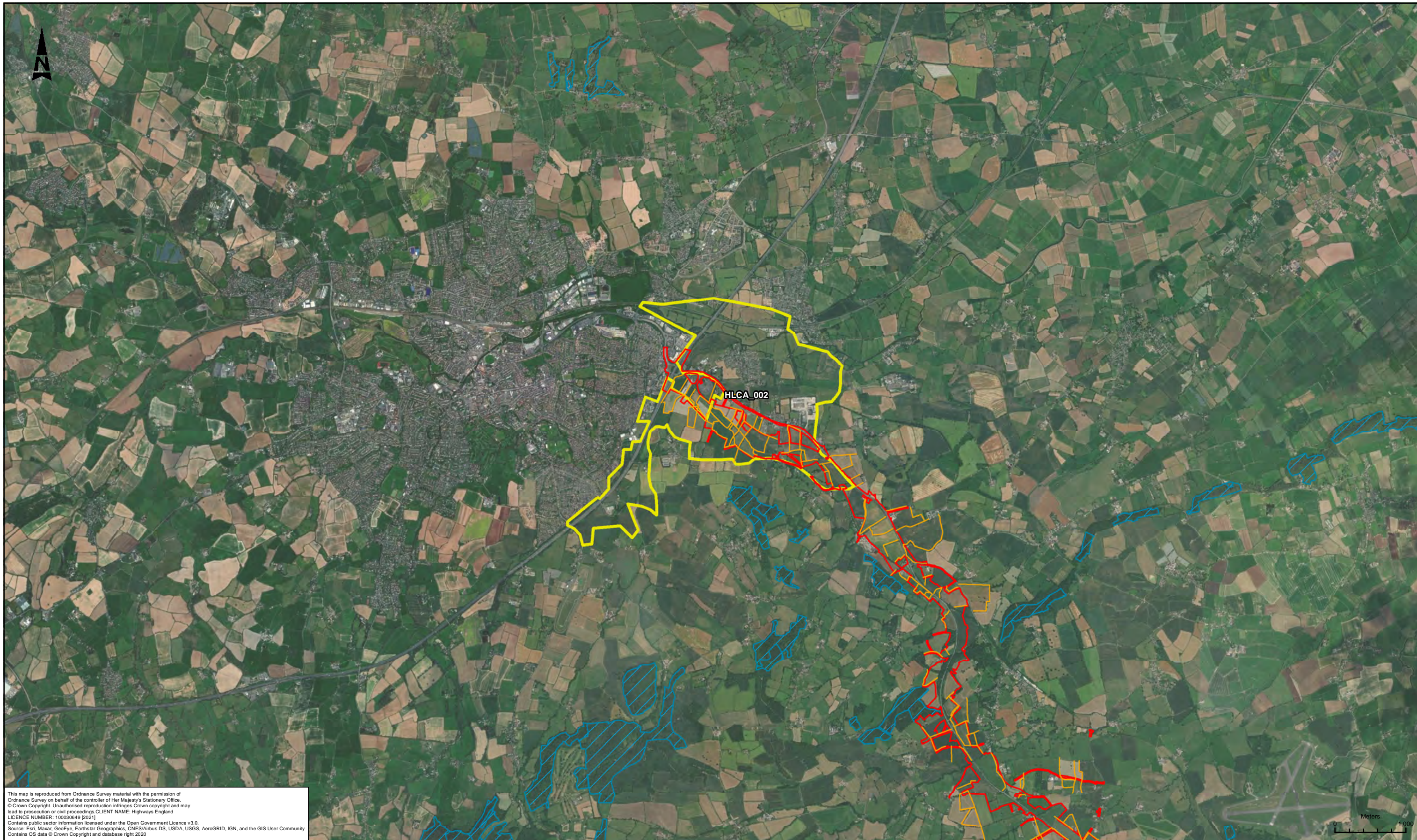
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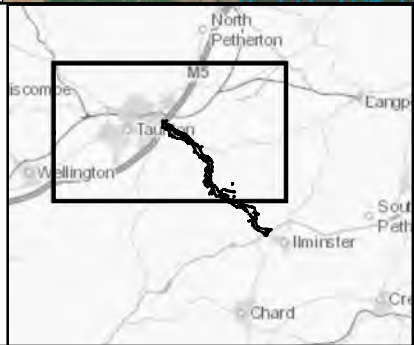
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Project Title: A358 TAUNTON TO SOUTHFIELDS					
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LEGEND	
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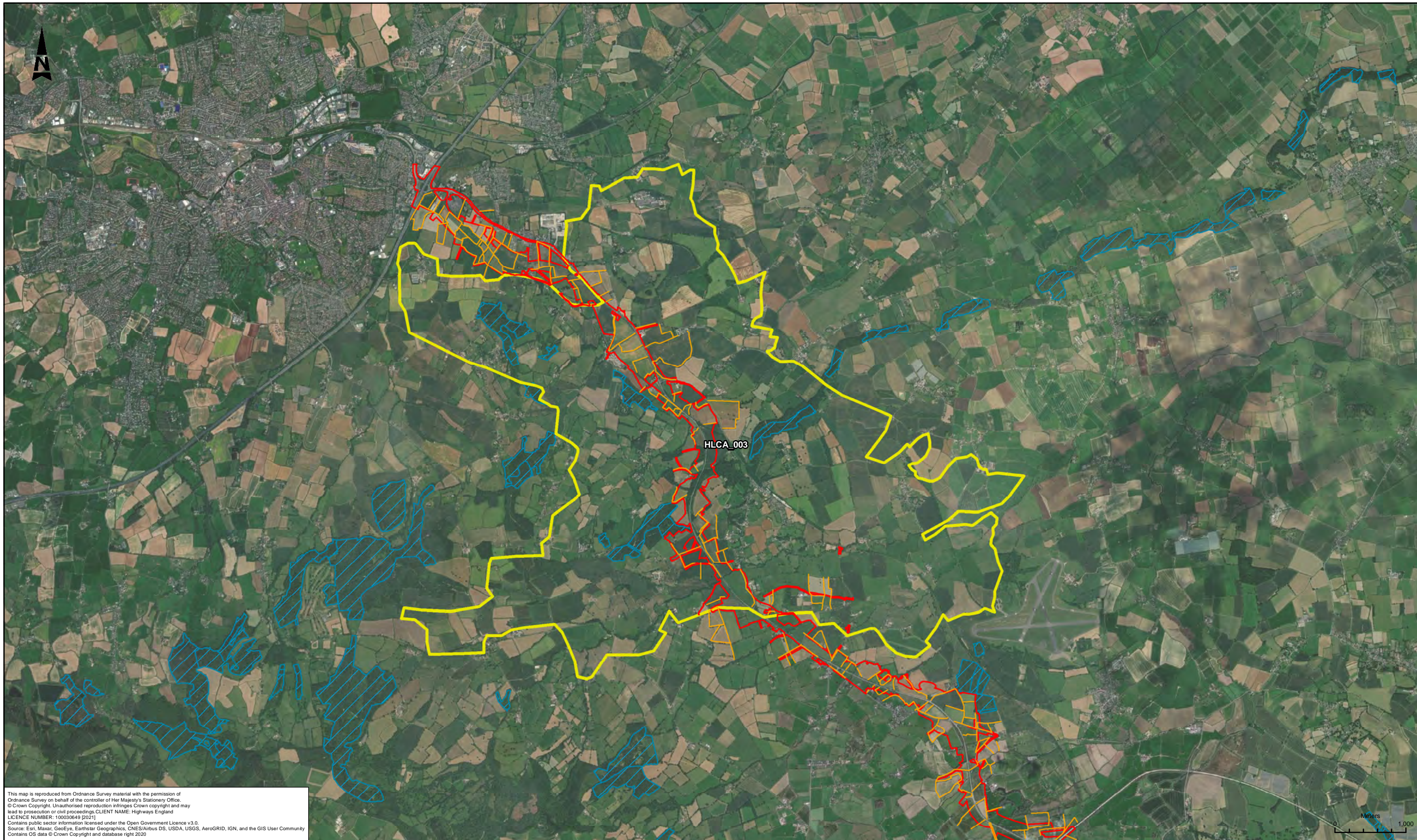
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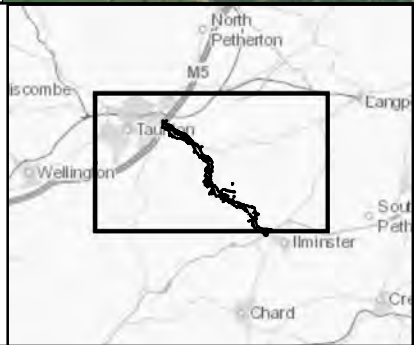
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FIGURE 6.2.2 HLCA_002 POST-MEDIEVAL FIELDS AROUND RUISHTON		A3	15/09/21	15/09/21	15/09/21	15/09/21	C01
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MAINTENANCE / CLEANING	NONE
USE	NONE
DECOMMISSIONING / DEMOLITION	NONE

Rev.	Date	Description	By	Chk'd	App'd	Auth'd
C01	15/09/21	CLIENT APPROVED	AC	CA	CE	PC

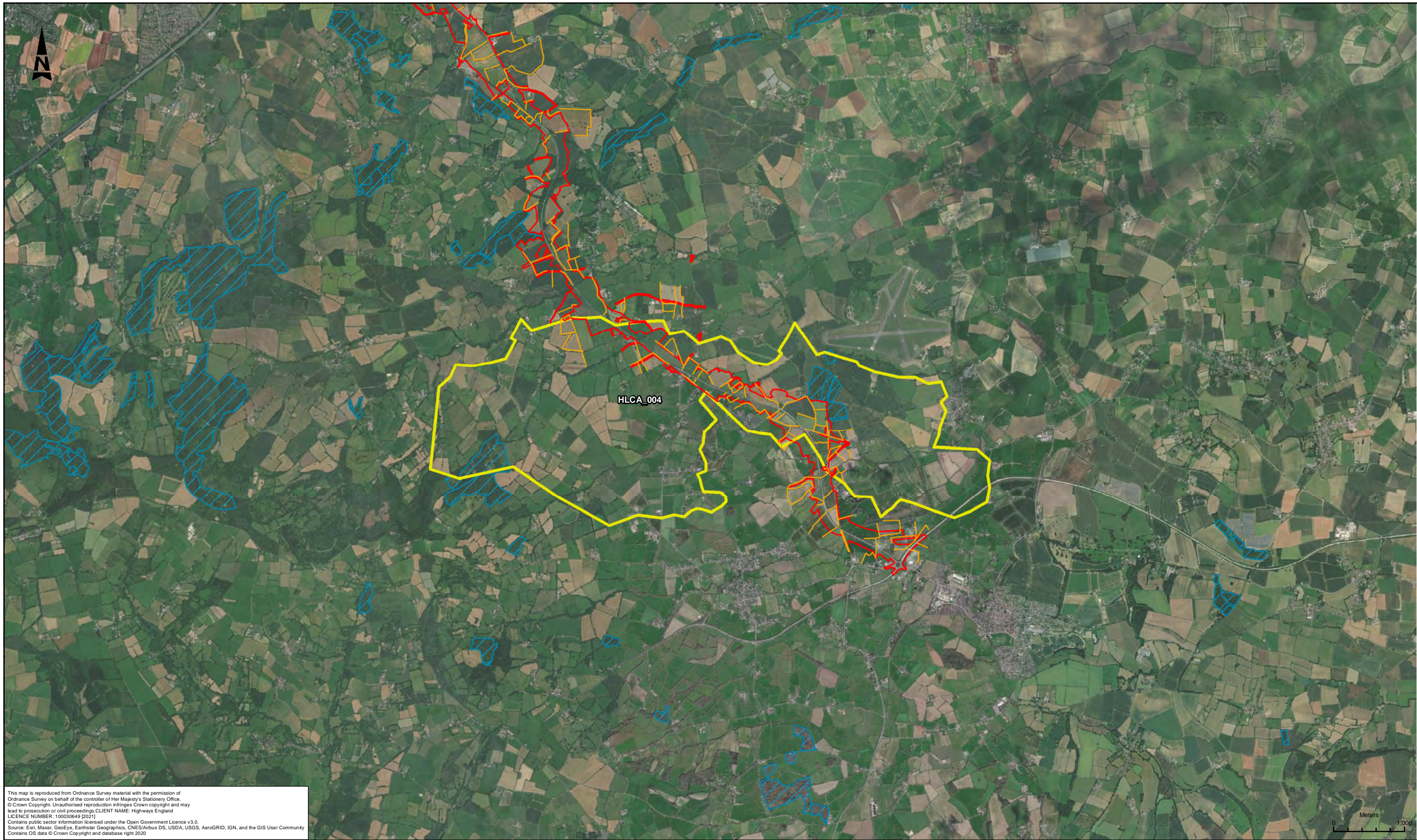
Suitability: A3
 Drawing Status: AUTHORISED AND ACCEPTED

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Project Title		Drawing Title	
A358 TAUNTON TO SOUTHFIELDS		FIGURE 6.2.3 HLCA_003 ANCIENT AND POST-MEDIEVAL FIELDS, SOMERSET HILLS	
Scale: 1:50,000	By: AC	Checked: CA	Approved: CE
Original Size: A3	Date: 15/09/21	Date: 15/09/21	Date: 15/09/21
Authorized: PC			
Drawing Number: HE551508 - ZZ	Originator: ARP	Volume: EHR	Revision: C01
Location: ZZ	Type: DR	Role: LH	Number: 000010



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MAINTENANCE / CLEANING	NONE
USE	NONE
DECOMMISSIONING / DEMOLITION	NONE

Rev.	Date	Description	By	Chk'd	App'd	Auth'd
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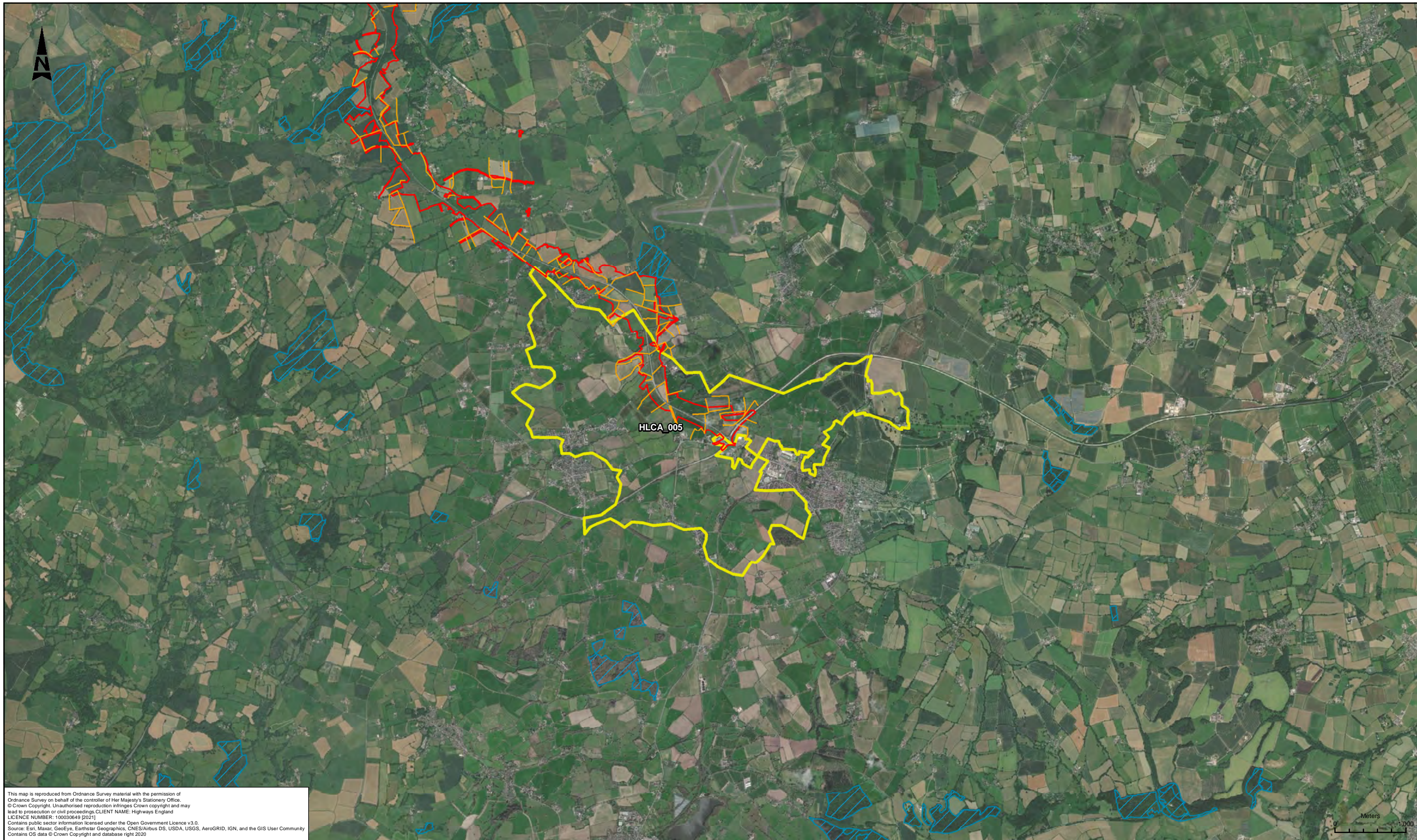
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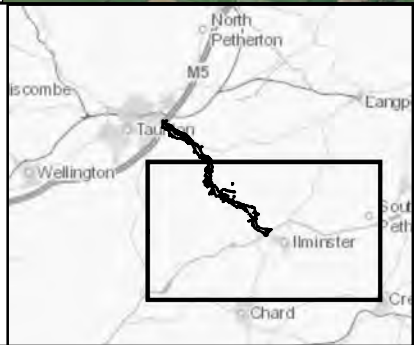
Client: **highways england**

Project Title		Scale		By	Checked	Approved	Authorised
A358 TAUNTON TO SOUTHFIELDS		1:50,000		AC	CA	CE	PC
Drawing Title		Original Size	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
FIGURE 6.2.4 HLCA_004 POST-MEDIEVAL FIELDS NORTH OF ASHILL		A3	15/09/21	15/09/21	15/09/21	15/09/21	15/09/21
Drawing Number	HE PIN	Originator	Volume	Revision			
HE551508 - ZZ		ARP - DR - LH - 000011	EHR	C01			
	Location	Type	Role	Number			



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DECOMMISSIONING / DEMOLITION	NONE

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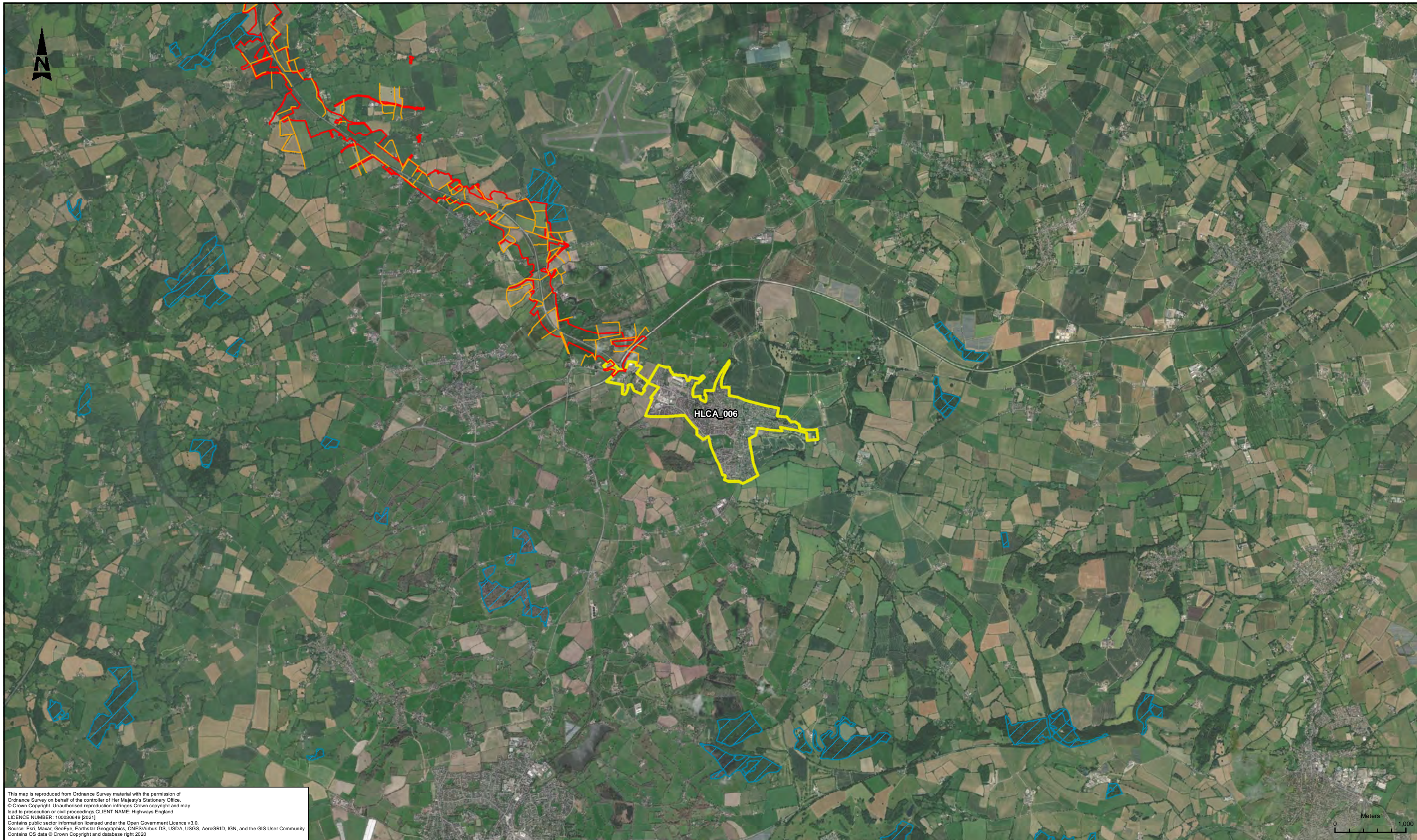
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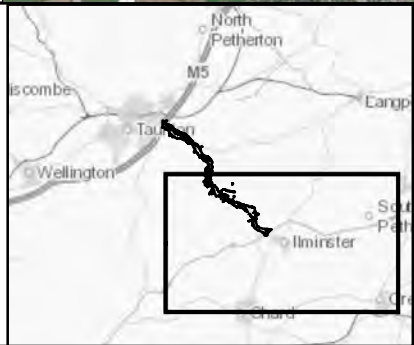
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Project Title		Scale		By	Checked	Approved	Authorised
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Drawing Title		Original Size	Date	Date	Date	Date	
FIGURE 6.2.5 HLCA_005 ANCIENT AND POST-MEDIEVAL FIELDS NORTH OF ILMINSTER		A3	15/09/21	15/09/21	15/09/21	15/09/21	
Drawing Number	HE PIN	Originator	Volume	Revision			
HE551508 - ZZ		ARP - DR	EHR - LH - 000012	C01			
Location	Type	Role	Number				



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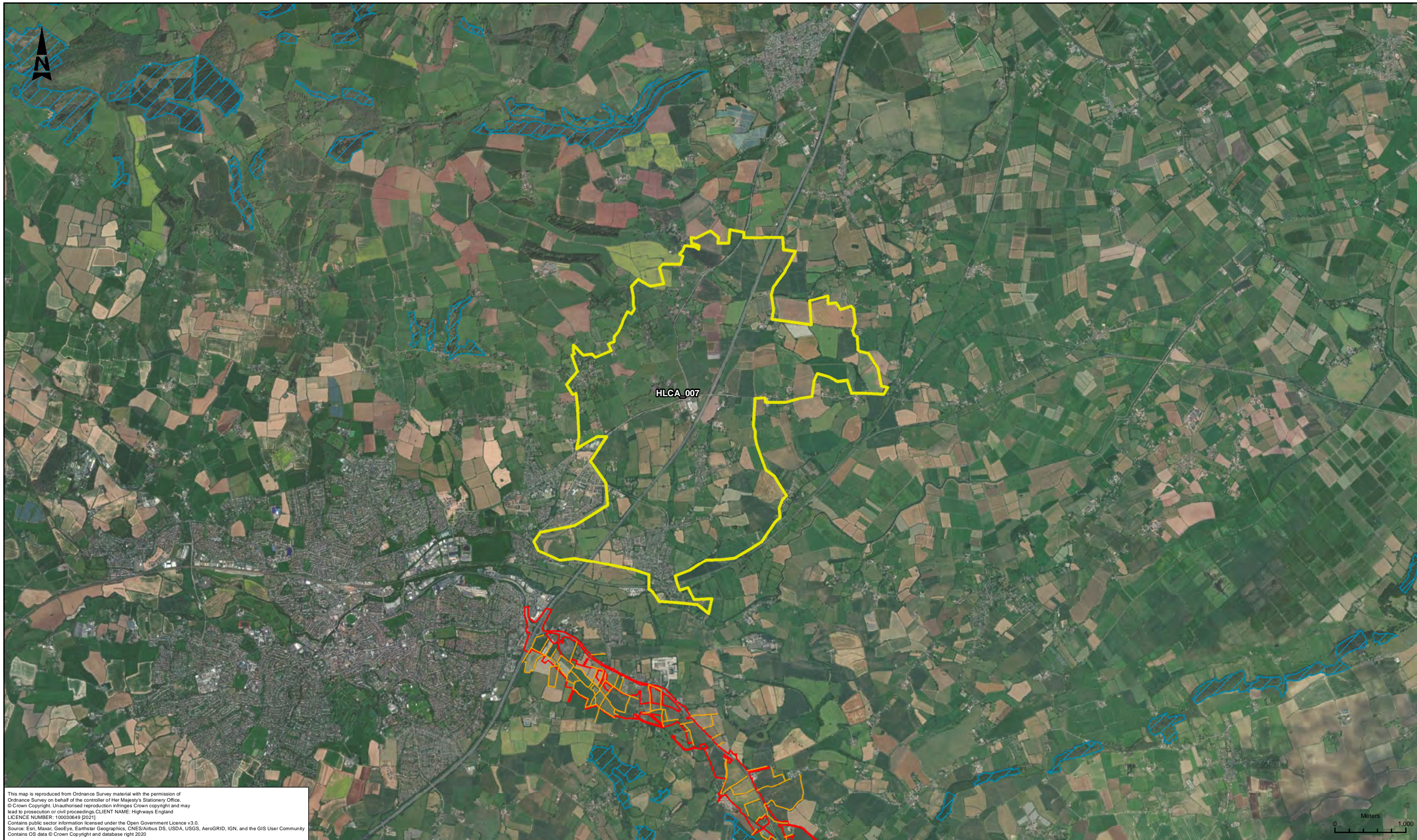
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A358 TAUNTON TO SOUTHFIELDS		FIGURE 6.2.6 HLCA_006 ILMINSTER		1:50,000		AC		CA		CE		PC	
Original Size	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
A3	15/09/21	15/09/21	15/09/21	15/09/21	15/09/21	15/09/21	15/09/21	15/09/21	15/09/21	15/09/21	15/09/21	15/09/21	15/09/21
Drawing Number		Originator		Volume		Revision		HE PIN		Type		Role	
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Location		Type		Role		Number		Location		Type		Role	



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MAINTENANCE / CLEANING	NONE
USE	NONE
DECOMMISSIONING / DEMOLITION	NONE

Rev.	Date	Description	By	Chk'd	App'd	Auth'd
C01	15/09/21	CLIENT APPROVED	AC	CA	CE	PC

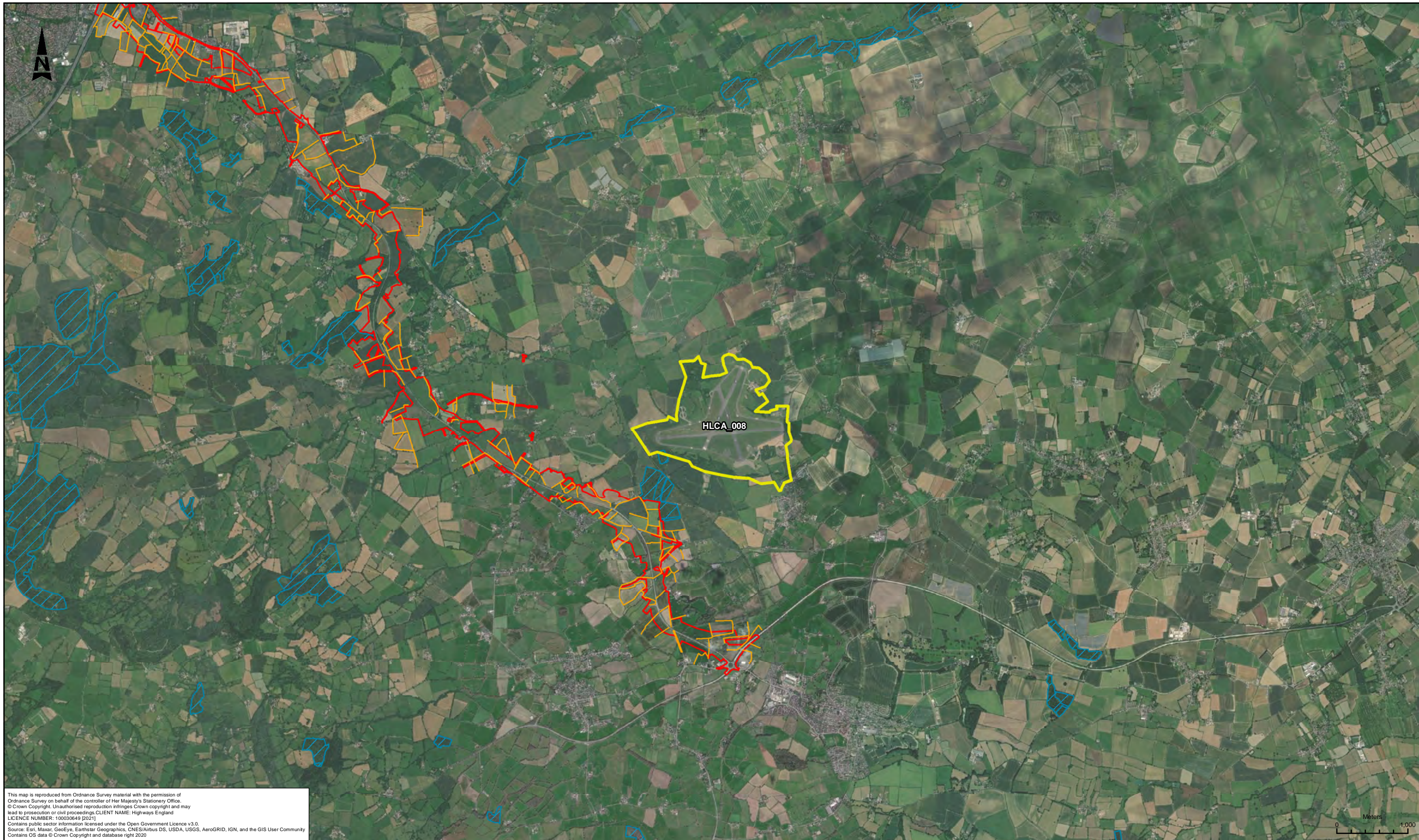
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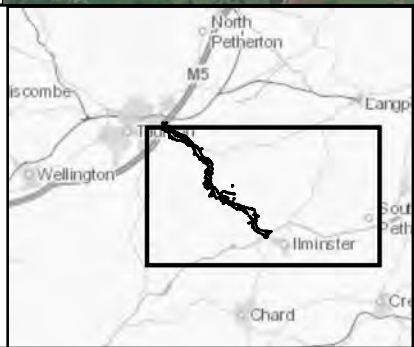
Project Title		Drawing Title							
A358 TAUNTON TO SOUTHFIELDS		FIGURE 6.2.7 HLCA_007 ANCIENT FIELDS NORTH OF CREECH ST MICHAEL							
Scale	1:50,000	By	AC	Checked	CA	Approved	CE	Authorised	PC
Original Size	A3	Date	15/09/21	Date	15/09/21	Date	15/09/21	Date	15/09/21
Drawing Number	HE PIN	Originator	ARP	Volume	- EHR	Revision	C01		
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Project Title		A358 TAUNTON TO SOUTHFIELDS							
Drawing Title		FIGURE 6.2.8 HLCA_008 MILITARY AIRFIELD							
Scale	1:50,000	By	AC	Checked	CA	Approved	CE	Authorised	PC
Original Size	A3	Date	15/09/21	Date	15/09/21	Date	15/09/21	Date	15/09/21
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