

02. SITE LOCATION, ACCESS AND CONTEXT

2.1 Site location

The map shows the site located to the west of the B3390 road at Crossways, 5km to the east of Dorchester. The site extends to some 227 hectares (561 acres) of land. There are currently three main points of access from the local road network, marked with arrows on the plan:

- the principal entrance is off the B3390 Warmwell Road
- a second access from the north, off the road to West Stafford
- from the unnamed lane off Highgate Lane, in the north west corner of the site.

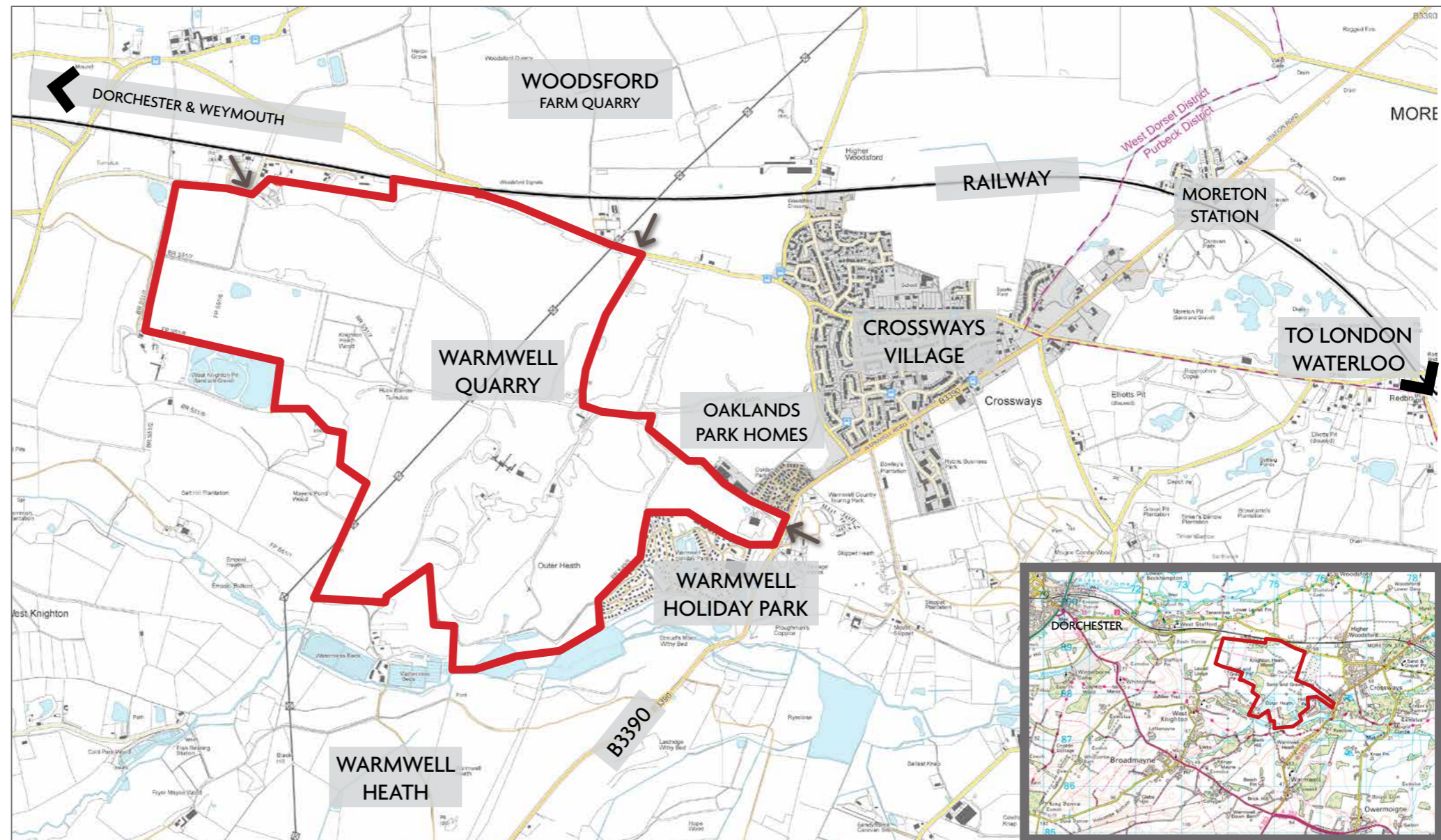
There are several footpaths/bridleways within and adjacent to the site. The railway just to the north of the site is part of the South West Main Line (Weymouth to London Waterloo). Moreton station is conveniently located just to the north of Crossways village, some 1.5km from the north east edge of the site. In spite of the extensive extraction operations that have taken place, there are several retained key landscape features present, the most notable of which is Knighton Heath Wood.

The various land uses surrounding the site include:

- The railway line, public roads and rights of way
- Crossways village
- Nursery and allotments
- Warmwell Holiday Park (south east)
- Oaklands Park Homes (east)
- Caravan Club site (east of Warmwell Road)
- Agricultural uses (west of the site)
- Tadnoll Brook and Warmwell Heath (south)

Crossways is a large village of just over 2,000 people. It is one of the main service villages in West Dorset District and has seen moderate growth over the past 20-30 years.

Site location Plan



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2.2 Historic and natural context

Historic context

Quarry operations have been ongoing since the 1930s and as a result of the continued selective working, the disturbed surface extends over a large area. From 1937 to 1946, some of the land was used by the RAF and the United States Army Air Force. RAF Warmwell airfield consisted of grass runways, with hangers, pens and aircraft standings sited around the perimeter along with accommodation for personnel. Some remnant structures from WW2 are still present on the site.

The land consists predominantly of mineral workings, with fixed and mobile plant for the recovery and processing of minerals; silt management areas; restored and naturally re-vegetated areas; areas of hard-standing and areas of woodland and heathland not within the working area. Re-vegetation has occurred where some parts of the quarry have not been worked for some time, notably in the south of the site. Overhead electricity conductors run across the centre of the quarry site in a southwest-northeast alignment.

Knighton Heath Wood

Knighton Heath Wood has not been subject to any mineral extraction. This distinctive square block of woodland is largely hazel / oak with additional planting of beech, turkey oak, sycamore and sweet chestnut. There are areas of bluebells in the southwest and northwest possibly indicating some ancient origins but generally, being largely shaded, the ground flora appears to be species poor.

The wood contains a number of WW2 relics including protective mounds around former Spitfire parking bays (photo centre-right), underground shelters in various states of disrepair, and other elements. There is also a Bronze Age Scheduled Monument, Huck Barrow, within the south eastern corner of Knighton Heath Wood, which survives as an earthwork feature in deciduous woodland.



Outer Heath Site of Nature Conservation Importance

Outer Heath SNCI consists of a small remnant of heath and mire habitat with scrub encroaching from all sides.

Crossways Village

Much of the present village of Crossways is built on the eastern part of the former airfield site. The present Village Hall was used by the airmen for recreational use - cinema, gymnasium and NAFFI, and was used on occasions as a morgue.

The village has a mixture of housing, some traditional, with a number of housing estates, some new development, a school, shops, the Spitfire Club, and a number of business and employment uses.

Warmwell Holiday Park

Warmwell Holiday Park adjoins the eastern boundary of the site. The park has accommodation in the form of lodges, caravans, as well as touring pitches. It includes walking and woodland trails, fishing lakes, water sport facilities, golf, an indoor swimming pool, shops, a bar restaurant, a rolling rink and a 110 metre outdoor ski slope.

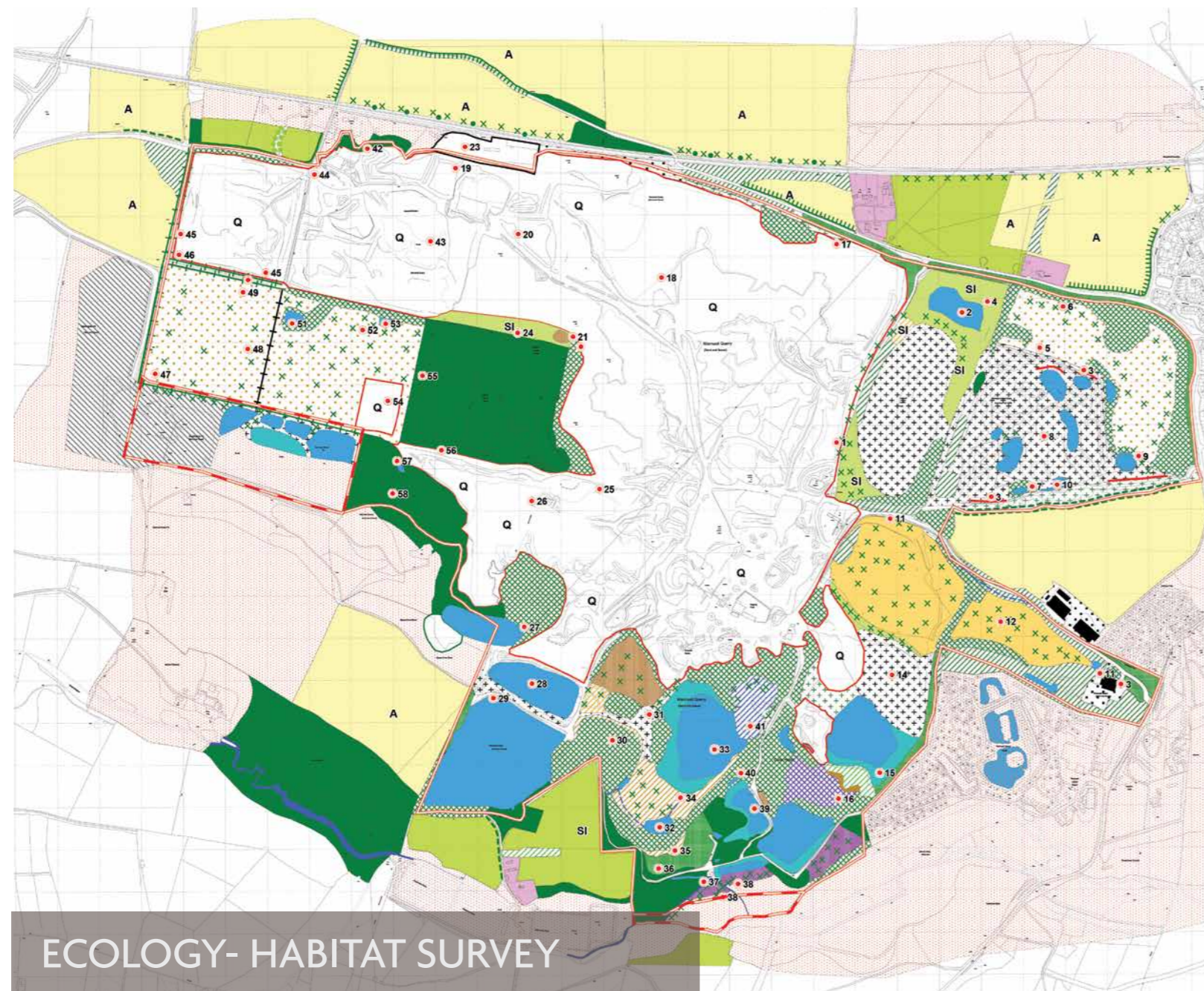
Warmwell Heath (south)

Warmwell Heath is a relatively large, but isolated, complex of typical Dorset heath habitats that include dry dwarf shrub heath and gorse scrub on the upper slopes, extending down into valley mire and wet woodland near the Tadnoll Brook. There are also peripheral areas of acid grassland, dry oak-birch woodland and tall herb fen and sedge-swamp.



Looking East across the site towards Crossways village, over Knighton Heath Wood
NB. the field in the foreground is currently being quarried, the final stage of mineral extraction.

03. ASSESSMENT



- KEY**
- Site Boundary (as per 24/05/12 information)
 - Additional areas added to site boundary
 - Target Notes
 - Scattered Broad-leaved Tree
 - Scattered Coniferous Tree
 - Scattered Scrub
 - Dry Ditch
 - Fence
 - Hedge - Unspecified (broad habitat)
 - Hedgerow and Trees - Species Poor
 - Hedgerow Defunct - Species Poor
 - Hedgerow Intact - Species Poor
 - Inland Rock Exposure - Acid
 - Arable
 - Bare Ground
 - Broad-leaved Plantation Woodland
 - Buildings
 - Coniferous Plantation Woodland
 - Dense/Continuous Bracken
 - Dense/Continuous Scrub
 - Dry Dwarf Shrub Heath
 - Ephemerals/Short Perennial
 - Inundation Vegetation
 - Marsh/Marshy Grassland
 - Mixed Plantation Woodland
 - Mosaic of Acid and Neutral Grassland
 - Other Habitat
 - Pond
 - Poor Semi-improved Grassland
 - Private Gardens and Buildings (broad)
 - Private/Not Accessible
 - Quarry
 - Recently Felled Broad-leaved Woodland
 - Recently Restored Quarry (broad habitat)
 - Running Water
 - Scattered Scrub
 - Semi-improved Acid Grassland
 - Semi-improved Grassland (broad habitat)
 - Semi-natural Broad-leaved Woodland
 - Swamp
 - Unimproved Acid Grassland
 - Valley Mire
 - Wet Modified Bog



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3.4 Heritage

The Warmwell Quarry site is located within an extensive area of recorded archaeological remains. However, twentieth-century aggregate extraction has occurred across almost the entire site, hence there are now few archaeological remains. The areas within the site that have not undergone mineral extraction are not proposed for any groundworks. Hence the proposed development will have no impact on the recorded or potential archaeological resource.

Huck Barrow

Huck Barrow Scheduled Monument is a Bronze Age barrow comprising a large earth mound approximately 16m wide and 2.7m high, located in the south east of Knighton Heath Wood. Huck Barrow is a heritage asset of high value, derived from its physical fabric and potential to contain significant prehistoric archaeological remains. The setting of Huck Barrow includes a strong visual relationship with Knighton Heath Wood Barrow immediately to the west. Other elements of its setting make a negative contribution to the overall significance of Huck Barrow and comprise the extensive area of open cast quarry to the south and east, the World War Two weapon pits that have physically damaged the barrow, and the public footpath that extends across the northern part of the barrow.

Pillbox

There is a type 22 pillbox which survives in isolation within woodland on a narrow ridge (not exploited for aggregates) in the south-eastern part of the site. As an asset of limited intrinsic value (but with the potential to contribute to local research objectives) and poor survival of contextual associations, this pillbox is considered to have a low value to the heritage of the area. It will be retained.

World War Two features

Within Knighton Heath Wood a number of World War Two structures and earthworks are present in Knighton Heath Wood. As the former airbase at RAF Warmwell has been removed through 20th-century aggregate extraction these features have a poor survival of contextual associations.

Surviving wartime elements in the locality include the war memorial at Crossways, the military graves at Warmwell Church, the village hall and a number of local street names (e.g. Spitfire Close and Hurricane Close). It is proposed to utilise this WW2 history as part of a Heritage and Interpretation Trail in Knighton Heath Wood.

Blister Hanger

The derelict blister hanger in the eastern part of the site was moved to its current location in the later 20th century. Although of wartime date, it does not relate to the use of the site as part of RAF Warmwell, and was re-constructed on its current site in the 1960s for use by the Warmwell Sands and Gravel Company. As a surviving wartime feature, albeit in a poor structural condition and removed from its original context, the blister hanger is a heritage asset of negligible value. It will be demolished for safety reasons.

