

Site Collections Development Policy

Name of Museum: English Heritage – Grime’s Graves Neolithic Flint Mine

Name of Governing Body: English Heritage Trust

Date on which this policy was approved by the Acquisitions, Loans and Disposals Committee: 30 November 2023

Policy review procedure: The Site Collections Development Policy is owned by the Senior Curator for the geographical area. It will be reviewed at least once every five years as part of a cyclical process managed through Registry.

Date at which this policy is due for review: November 2028

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the Site Collections Development Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of the collections.

1. Management Arrangements and scope

- 1.1 This policy covers all the museum artefacts managed by English Heritage from or associated with the site whether they are held on site, at another English Heritage site or store, or on loan to a third party. This policy does not cover artefacts associated with other English Heritage sites which are stored or displayed at this site.
- 1.2 The site and its collections form part of the National Collection of English Heritage.
- 1.3 Grime’s Graves became a guardianship monument in 1931 under the protection of the Commissioner of Works and Public Buildings, and since 1984 it has been in the care of English Heritage. In 1985 it was also designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its flora and fauna. English Heritage manage the site.
- 1.4 Grime’s Graves is in Breckland in Norfolk, c. 2.74 miles north-east of Brandon, a town associated with the gunflint industry well into the 19th century. The guardianship area is set within Thetford Forest, an area of woodland managed by Forestry England. The guardianship area is maintained as natural heathland. It is a scheduled monument, list entry number 1003619, National Grid reference: TL 81698 89878.
- 1.5 The guardianship area comprises 433 mineshafts, pits, quarries and spoil dumps which survive as earthworks covering an area of 7.6 hectares. It is one of just ten Neolithic flint mines known to have existed in England, of which six still exist as earthworks.
- 1.6 Recent archaeological work has produced much new information about the scale and extent of mining activity on site.¹ It is known that the prehistoric

¹ N Linford, L Martin and J Holmes, Grime’s Graves, Norfolk Report on Geophysical Survey, November 2007, English Heritage Research Report 64/2009 (Swindon, 2009)

mines extended considerably north of the presently visible minefield and may also have extended a significant distance to the south and east in areas now covered by forest.

Archaeological work has demonstrated the existence of lithic material in these areas, suggesting significant prehistoric activity. Furthermore, excavations in the guardianship area have shown that the area was the location of a significant Middle Bronze Age (1500-1150BC) settlement. While the remains of any houses are yet to be found, archaeologists have discovered large rubbish deposits dating to this period. They contained many types of animal bones, evidence of crop cultivation as well as indications of textile production, pottery manufacture and leather and wood working. The size of these dumps makes it highly likely that the settlement was located nearby.

- 1.7 Grime's Graves is in the Breckland District Council area in the county of Norfolk.

2. Relationships to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation

- 2.1 The national *Collections Development Policy* approved by the Board of Trustees on 9 November 2016, (together with any amendments to, or replacements for, the policy approved by Trustees), apply to the site. In the event of any disagreement between this site policy and the national policy the national policy will apply.
- 2.2 Without limitation to the above, all the procedures, all ethical and legal considerations set out in the national policy apply to acquisitions, disposals and loans from or to the site's collection.
- 2.3 Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

3. History of the collections

- 3.1 Grime's Graves is the most widely explored and best-known flint mine in England. Much of the existing collection from Grime's Graves held by English Heritage and other heritage organisations is derived from excavations that have taken place on site. The principal excavations are:
 - 1868-1870: the first major excavation was undertaken by Canon William Greenwell. This was the first occasion at which the existence of deep shaft and gallery flint mining was recognised in Britain.
 - 1914: The Prehistoric Society of East Anglia excavated Pit 1 & 2 and several other areas following erroneous suggestions that the

(accessed 1 Sept 2015); B Bishop, 'Grimes Graves environs survey', PhD thesis, University of York, Department of Archaeology (2013); F Healy, P Marshall, A Bayliss, G Cook, C Bronk Ramsey, J van der Plicht and E Dunbar, 'When and Why? The Chronology and Context of Flint Mining at Grime's Graves, Norfolk, England' in *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, Volume 84, (December 2018), pp.277-301

mining may have been Paleolithic rather than Neolithic in date.

- 1915-1939: after the 1914 excavations numerous individuals undertook work at the site, most notably Leslie Armstrong whose excavations continued almost uninterrupted until 1939. Among Armstrong's most notable discoveries was the existence of considerable evidence for later, Bronze Age, activity at the site, as well as the fact that flint extraction in the Neolithic had covered a much wider area than that represented by the extant earthworks and had taken a variety of forms. Armstrong's excavations have been largely overshadowed by the discovery of a chalk 'goddess' and other ritual objects during his last excavation in 1939.
- 1971-2: Roger Mercer led excavations on behalf of the Department of Environment, using modern scientific techniques to conduct and record the opening of two new pits. The excavations provided much useful information on the structure and content of two shafts, and a particularly detailed analysis of the stone tools and the by-products of how they were made.
- 1972-6: the British Museum re-opened Greenwell's Pit and others, recorded their structures and provided useful insights into the mining process. It also usefully assessed the assemblages from new and previous excavations.
- 1982-3: a cable trench was dug in 1982-3 between the entrance to the site and the visitor centre (285m in length) by Frances Healy.
- 1984: Small excavations preceded prior to the construction of a concrete capping above Greenwell's Pit in 1984.
- 2021: Norvic Archaeology were appointed to hold a watching brief and conduct small excavations prior to building works installing a new pit head building above Pit 1.

3.2 The above excavations have produced an extremely large archive and number of objects. Principal holders of collections relating to Grime's Graves are:

- The British Museum, who hold significant collections from the Greenwell, 1914, Armstrong, Mercer and 1972-6 excavations, plus objects donated to the museum by W.A. Sturge and others;²
- Norfolk Museums Service (including Norwich Castle, Ancient House Museum, etc.), who hold a collection formed through the donation by several well-known collectors, including W.G. Clarke, W.F. Curtis, H.H. Halls, H. Dixon, Hewitt, Rev. R.C. Nightingale, R.F. Parrott, E. Sainty, I.R. Stone, J.S. Wasburton and D. Woollestone. Many of these collections are largely unrecorded and unstudied.;
- English Heritage (see section 4 for details).

² The EH archive contains an agreement between the Department of the Environment/English Heritage and the British Museum regarding transfer of the archaeological archive and objects, with a stipulation that the British Museum agree to the loan of objects back to the site (assuming suitable conditions for display).

Additional organizations who hold archive and artefacts include:

- The Natural History Museum, who hold some of the animal and biological remains from the various excavations (possibly including the dog skeleton from Greenwell's Pit);
- Science Museum;
- Ashmolean Museum;
- Pitt Rivers Museum;
- Horniman Museum;
- Hunterian Museum;

Additional organizations likely to hold archive and artefacts may include (but are not limited to):³

- Colchester & Ipswich Museums;
- Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge;
- Amgueddfa Cymru / Museum Wales;
- Mildenhall Museum;
- Saffron Walden Museum;
- Reading Museum;
- Leeds Museum;
- Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto;
- Private collections.

3.3 Although excavated material from published archaeological investigations makes up the bulk of known collections, the site has been the subject of numerous poorly documented excavations. In particular, early antiquarian interest often seems to have involved little more than glorified object hunting. Little evidence of these excavations is available, but it is likely that that objects found in such forays represent a small but significant proportion of the total assemblage of objects from the site.

3.4 It should be noted that many objects attributed to Grime's Graves that do not come from known excavations (noted above) have very poor provenances. It appears to be a common trait that lithic objects found within the vicinity of Grime's Graves were often attributed to being from the site even if they were found some distance outside the guardianship area. Other objects that may have come from the guardianship area have often lost their specific find context. Flint is notoriously difficult to trace back to its mined source, so the veracity of these objects is difficult to ascertain. Without further work to identify and understand the full size of the mining field and without firmer provenance information for these objects, their archaeological value for the site (other than simply as evidence of lithic technology) is unclear.

3.5 There is some question over the existence of objects which remain in Greenwell's Pit. This pit was investigated by Canon Greenwell in 1868-70 and again by the British Museum in the 1970s. It is therefore unclear why a small number of objects (i.e., antler picks and chalk debitage) were left in

³ This group has been largely reproduced from the list of museums who received objects excavated during the 1914 excavation. See Clarke, WG (ed.), Report on the Excavations at Grimes Graves, Weeting, Norfolk, March-May 1914 (London, 1915), pp. 145-6. It is possible that there are other organisations with small assemblages

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- 3.6 Although the archive and collated assemblages are relatively well understood and feature in several published excavation reports and academic publications, the collections in storage are often poorly documented or represented through collections online facilities.

4. An overview of the collections

This section covers the English Heritage collection only. A full assessment of external collections is outside the remit of the current document and is currently complicated by access to other stores.⁴ Further work is required to fully understand the collections in other organisations, although it is likely that there is wide scope for unification and/or rationalization.

- 4.1 English Heritage holds the material from the 1982-3 cable trench excavations. This amounts to some 1,759 objects, mostly struck flakes taken from the trench spoil, making up 41 Homs records. This was the subject of a published report and a separate unpublished internal report including find lists, maps and sections.⁵
- 4.2 English Heritage also hold a collection of worked flint objects from several known prehistoric sites within Norfolk and Suffolk (mostly within 30 miles of Grime's Graves), transferred to English Heritage from the Alexander Keiller Museum. This collection amounts to some 406 objects from 17 different sites. These objects were the subject of a report by Dr Ben Chan in 2021, a physical copy of which is kept at the Wrest Park store.
- 4.3 There is a further collection of unprovenanced finds listed on HOMS (EH's collections database) as 'unprovenanced but collected from the site at Grime's Graves'. This amounts to 15 bags of flint debitage and 33 identified flint tools.
- 4.4 EH hold a collection sourced from an undocumented fieldwalking exercise, which most probably took place during the last project on site (c.2010). This amounts to 30 bags of flint debitage and 64 identified flint tools.
- 4.5 EH hold a collection of unaccessioned antler picks, previously sent for radiocarbon dating.
- 4.6 In 2024 it is expected that Norvic Archaeology will deposit an archaeological archive with English Heritage, arising from works around Pit 1 as part of ongoing project to renew the above pit building. Some significant finds, including a flint axehead, sickle and two discoidal knives have already been deposited with EH in advance of the full archive so that they can be put on display.
- 4.7 In 2023 it further expected that Colchester & Ipswich Museums will transfer their collection of 5 antler picks to the care of EH. These picks

⁴ At the date of writing, the British Museum is moving their Grime's Graves collection from Blythe House to other premises. Additionally, Norfolk Museums Service is developing Norwich Castle, meaning that obtaining access to their collections is problematic.

⁵ Healy, F, 'Recent work at Grime's Graves, Weeting with Broomhill' in *Norfolk Archaeology*, 39 (1985), 175–81 & EH 88107142

are mostly (and likely all) provenanced to the 1914 excavation listed above.

- 4.8 There is a small archive related to Grime's Graves held at the Wrest Park store This archive is of very limited use for display purposes but includes some important documents in relation to the collection as well as correspondence of general relevance to the history of the site during its time under guardianship.
- 4.9 Highlights of the collection include:
 - 4.9.1 The axehead, sickle and discoidal knives mentioned in 4.5 (note that these objects have not yet been formally accessioned)
 - 4.9.2 The collection from Norfolk and Suffolk contains many individual objects which are fine examples of their type and as examples of prehistoric flint working, and range in date from the Paleolithic to the Bronze Age.

5. Themes and priorities for future collecting

- 5.1 Archaeological material:
 - 5.1.1 The main priority for ongoing collecting is archaeological material found within the scheduled area (pink on the map below), to further inform our understanding of the Late Neolithic and post Neolithic history of the site.
 - 5.1.2 Any future large-scale excavation on site is likely to produce significant quantities of material, including flint/chalk debitage and flint tools. Such archives would only be accepted following negotiations with the excavator, considering issues such as capacity and costs.
 - 5.1.3 We would also seek to collect, through negotiation, all known and future chance discoveries (single or small group) from the collecting area.
 - 5.1.4 As set out in section 1.6 the geographic extent of the minefield and wider prehistoric landscape (including Late Bronze Age settlement) is not fully established. EH should therefore be willing to adapt its collecting policy as archaeological understanding of the site improves, particularly regarding the fields and areas of forestry immediately surrounding the guardianship area.
- 5.2 Dispersed collections:

We seek to unify split assemblages whether through acquisition or disposal.

 - 5.2.1 The British Museum hold the majority of the finds from the site taken from excavations between 1914-1976. It is not anticipated that the British Museum will seek to transfer this archive, which would require huge amount of resource to manage. As per November 2022 the collection is currently being documented in preparation for its removal from Blythe House to new storage premises near Reading. The British Museum has undertaken a massive documentation project in advance of the move, which should improve future access to the collection. Discussions with curators at the British Museum

(Rebecca Scott / Neil Wilkin) have highlighted the fact that the BM might seek to rationalise/dispose of some material. EH (through curator Dickon Whitewood and Property Historian Jennifer Wexler) have indicated that EH would seek to be consulted about any future rationalisation or disposal with a view to possible transfer to EH. Although large-scale transfer of the BM collection to EH is not anticipated, it is expected that the BM might seek to transfer a small number of unregistered finds as part of their current project. Discussions with BM curators has indicated this material is restricted to a small number of antler picks and other flint objects.

- 5.2.2 Significant scope exists for partnership working with the British Museum. BM curators have indicated that the collection from Grime's Graves is unlikely to be put on display for the foreseeable future. There is therefore the possibility of loaning objects for display, up to and including a full partnership gallery between EH and the BM should on-site site facilities ever be improved.⁶ Further planning and developments on site (e.g., a new visitor centre) should be aware of this possibility, which also has the potential to attract significant funding opportunities and lead to increased visitor numbers.
- 5.2.3 It is possible that the organisations listed in section 3.2 will in future seek to rationalise their collections. Other than the British Museum and Norfolk Museums Service, these collections are restricted to a small number of objects, which can be assessed on ad hoc basis when EH is notified of their intention to dispose/transfer.
- 5.2.4 English Heritage would collect known archaeological material currently held by private individuals originating from the collecting area if it was to be offered to English Heritage and fulfilled all other criteria for collecting.
- 5.3 Prints, paintings and maps:
We would seek to acquire prints, paintings and maps that show key views of Grime's Graves, in particular those with a detailed level of recording which aid our understanding of the history of the site and archaeological discoveries.
- 5.4 Objects Photographs and postcards:
We would seek to acquire photographs and postcards that show key views of Grime's Graves; in particular those which show detailed views of excavated features, site layout, the historic museum and collections as well as events held at Grime's Graves which relate to the history of the site.
- 5.5 People:
We would seek to collect objects relating directly to the key excavators and their work at Grime's Graves. This could include personal effects, diaries, photographs, etc.

⁶ See <https://britishmuseum.org-work/national/uk-touring-exhibitions-and-loans/partnership-galleries>

6. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

- 6.1 There is potential to rationalize the collections of unprovenanced flint material and fieldwalking collections from Grime's Graves, especially the bags of flint debitage. material is little understood and without further information (e.g. documents from the fieldwalking exercise) it is unclear what evidential value these assemblages have.
- 6.2 There is potential to rationalize the bags of debitage from the 1982-3 excavation, especially the bags of flint debitage. As this excavation has been published, it is unclear what evidential value this material continues to hold. Further discussions with Dr Frances Healy (the excavator) are recommended to fully understand the collection prior to rationalization.
- 6.3 Although the Norfolk & Suffolk collections in most cases derive from sites unconnected to EH, the range and quality of the objects make them suitable to be retained, especially as they relate to tools/technologies directly analogous to activity on site at Grime's Graves during the Late Neolithic and Bronze Age.

7. Collecting policies of other museums

- 7.1 English Heritage will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related subject areas or fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.
- 7.2 It is not anticipated that any of the organisations (with the possible exception of Norfolk Museums Service) would be interested in any future material found or excavated on site.
- 7.2 Specific reference is made to the following museums and organisations:
 - 7.2.1 British Museum – regarding any large-scale excavations on site
 - 7.2.2 Norfolk Museums Service – regarding any collection given to English Heritage (e.g. handed in to the site team), particularly from areas outside of the guardianship area.

8. Plan of the Scheduled Area

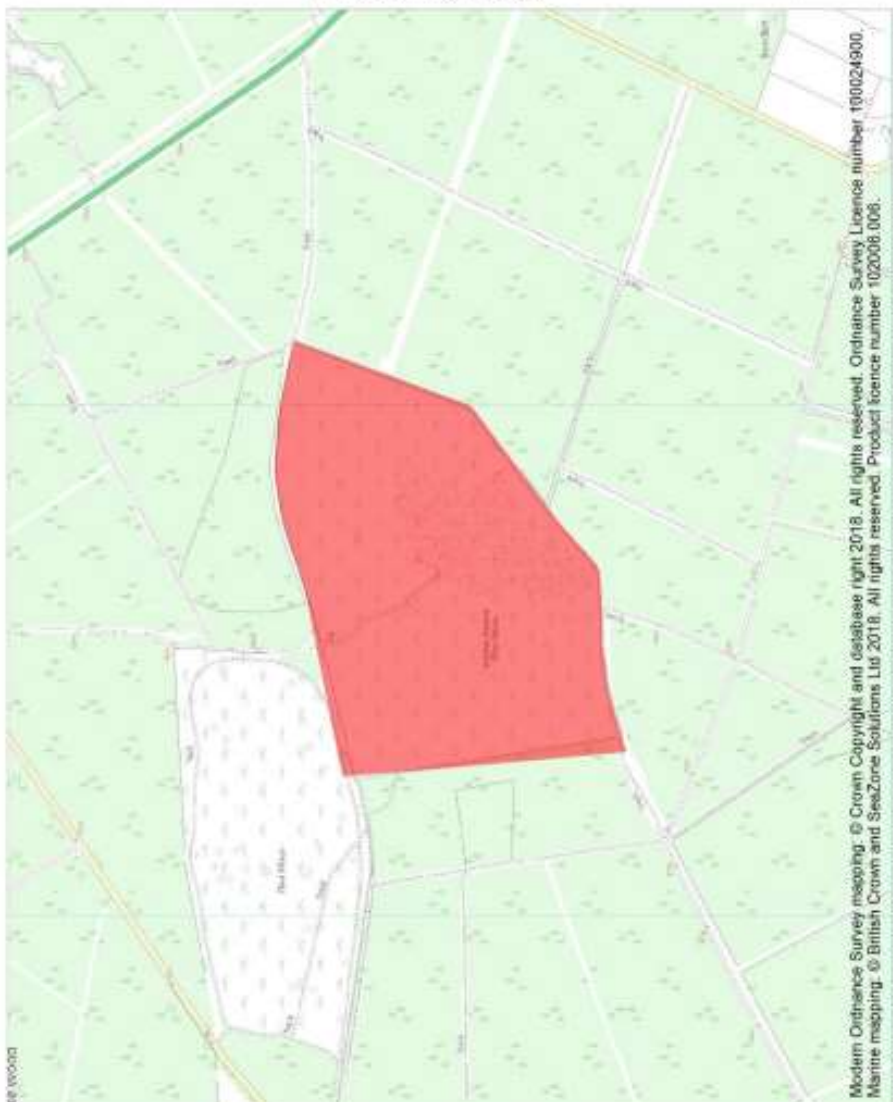
See page 9 for guardianship area (from Historic England website) and page 10 for SSSI area (from Natural England). Note that the SSSI area also includes the neighboring field currently owned by the MoD.

Heritage Category:	Scheduling
List Entry No :	1003619
County:	Norfolk
District:	Breckland
Parish:	Weeding-with-Broomhill, Lynford

Each official record of a scheduled monument contains a map. New entries on the schedule from 1988 onwards include a digitally created map which forms part of the official record. For entries created in the years up to and including 1987, a hand-drawn map forms part of the official record. This map here has been translated from the official map and that process may have introduced inaccuracies. Copies of maps taken from part of the official record can be obtained from Historic England.

This map was delivered electronically and when printed may not be to scale and may be subject to distortions. All maps and grid references are for identification purposes only and must be read in conjunction with other information in the record.


List Entry NGR:	TL 81688 88878
Map Scale:	1:10000
Print Date:	22 November 2022

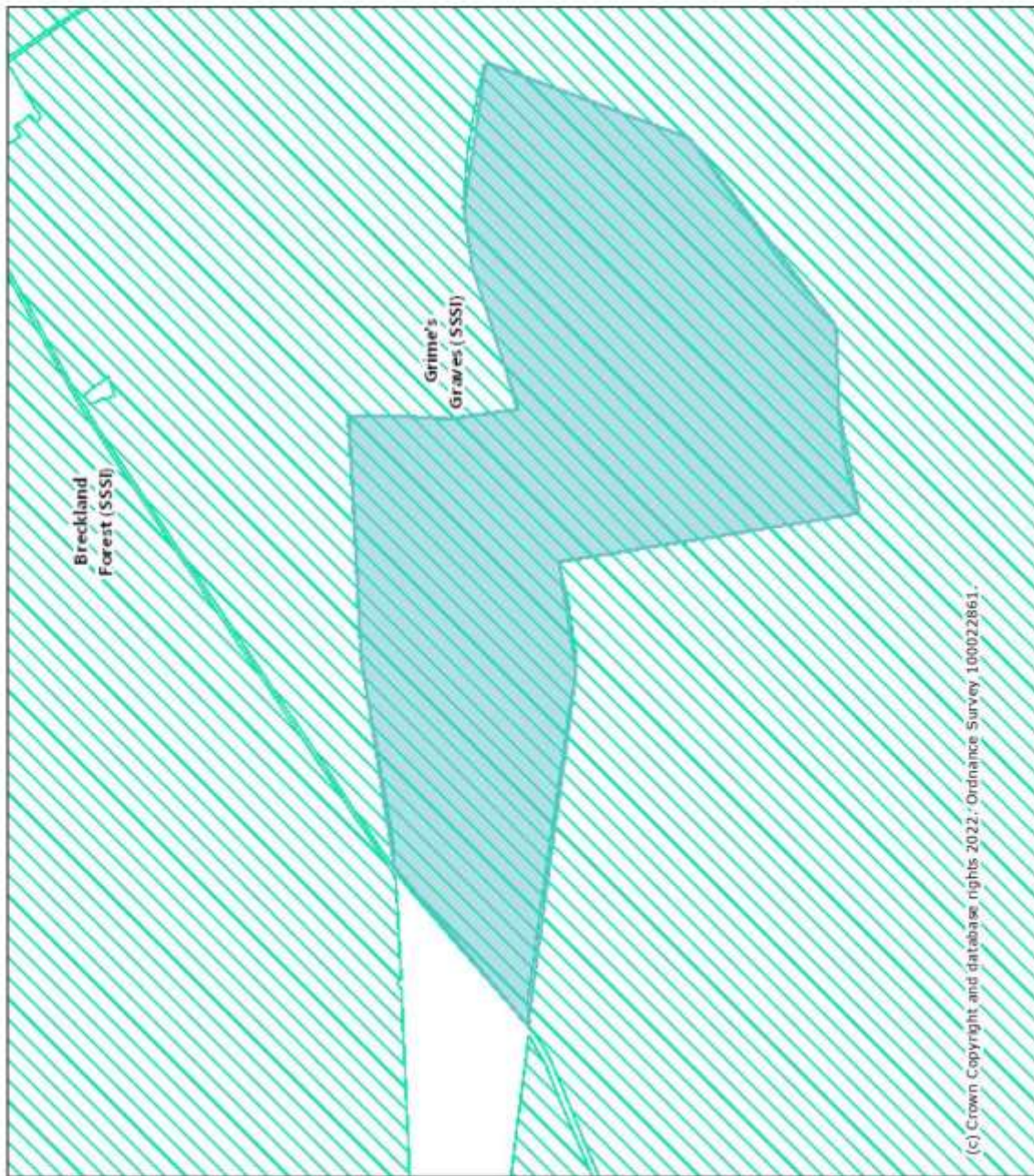


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This is an A4 sized map and should be printed full size at A4 with no page scaling set.

Name: Grimes Graves, including round barrow in Grimes Graves Plantation





Legend

-  Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)

Projection = OSGB36
xmin = 579200
ymin = 289100
xmax = 583200
ymax = 291100



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