

# LAND TO REAR OF BURSTON GARDEN CENTRE

## BUILT HERITAGE STATEMENT

JCH01200

Land to rear of Burston  
Garden Centre, St Albans,  
Hertfordshire

v.4

11 December 2020

## BUILT HERITAGE STATEMENT

### Document status

| Version | Purpose of document                                      | Authored by   | Reviewed by    | Approved by    | Review date |
|---------|--|---------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| 4       | Built Heritage Statement to support planning application | James Edwards | Jonathan Smith | Jonathan Smith | 11/12/20    |

### Approval for issue

Jonathan Smith



11 December 2020

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1 This Built Heritage Statement has been researched and prepared by RPS Heritage on behalf of the Castleoak Group to assess the potential impacts on the historic built environment arising from the proposed retirement village on land to the rear of Burston Garden Centre, St Albans, Hertfordshire. This report has been prepared to support an outline planning application for the above scheme.
- 2 The Site includes no built heritage assets. Development of the Site has the potential to have an impact upon two designated built heritage assets. Any potential impacts on these heritage assets will arise through development within their setting. Specifically, the Grade II\* listed Burston Manor to the north of the Site would likely experience a low level of less than substantial harm to its significance. An outbuilding associated with the Manor (Grade II listed) would also likely experience a low level of less than substantial harm.
- 3 Any less than substantial harm to the significance of designated heritage assets engages paragraph 196 of the NPPF for a decision maker faced with a planning application. This requires any harm to be weighed against the public benefits of a proposed development. This Built Heritage Statement is produced with regard to the requirements of the NPPF and local planning policy.
- 4 The findings of this report are based on the known conditions at the time of writing. All findings and conclusions are time limited to no more than two years from the date of this report. All maps, plans, and photographs are for illustrative purposes only.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Built Heritage Statement has been researched and prepared by RPS Heritage on behalf of the Castleoak Group to assess the likely potential impacts on the historic built environment arising from development on land to the rear of Burston Garden Centre, near St Albans, Hertfordshire (hereafter referred to as 'the Site'). The Site is centred on NGR TL 13664 03669 and is c.4 hectares in extent [Fig.1].
- 1.2 This Built Heritage Statement has been prepared to support a full application for development of a retirement community on the Site. It follows a refusal of earlier schemes, and a rejected appeal for a retirement community with a care home [PINS ref. APP/B1930/W/19/3235642]. Following the rejection of the appeal, the applicant has significantly revised the proposed development in light of the inspector's decision. The emerging scheme will propose a notable reduction in the quantum of development with the removal of the 64-bed care home in the north-eastern quarter of the Site.
- 1.3 There are no built heritage assets within the Site. The proposed development scheme set out in the application does, however, have the potential to have an impact on a number of surrounding designated built heritage assets, as it will constitute development within the settings of these assets. These are limited to the Grade II\* listed Burston Manor to the north of the Site and the associated Grade II listed outbuilding. No other heritage assets would be affected by the proposed development.
- 1.4 This report gives suitable regard to the relevant legislation contained within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and both national and local planning policy. In particular, this Statement meets the requirements of paragraph 189 of the NPPF. In addition, relevant Historic England guidance, notably *The Setting of Heritage Assets* and *Conservation Principles*, has been consulted to inform the judgements made. Relevant information, including the listing descriptions for the relevant heritage assets have also been consulted in preparing this Built Heritage Statement.
- 1.5 The conclusions reached in this report are the result of historic research, walkover surveys of the Site and publicly accessible locations in the surrounding area, map studies and the application of professional judgement.

## 2 LEGISLATIVE AND PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 The current national legislative and planning policy system identifies, through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), that applicants should consider the potential impact of development upon 'heritage assets. This term includes: designated heritage assets which possess a statutory designation (for example listed buildings and conservation areas); and non-designated heritage assets, typically compiled by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and incorporated into a Local List or recorded on the Historic Environment Record.

### Legislation

- 2.2 Where any development may affect certain designated heritage assets, there is a legislative framework to ensure proposed works are developed and considered with due regard to their impact on the historic environment. This extends from primary legislation under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 2.3 The relevant legislation in this case extends from section 66 of the 1990 Act which states that special regard must be given by the decision maker, in determining applications, to the desirability of preserving a listed building and its setting.
- 2.4 The meaning and effect of these duties have been considered by the courts in recent cases, including the Court of Appeal's decision in relation to Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd v East Northamptonshire District Council [2014] EWCA Civ 137.
- 2.5 The Court agreed with the High Court's judgment that Parliament's intention in enacting section 66(1) was that decision makers should give 'considerable importance and weight' to the desirability of preserving (i.e. keeping from harm) the setting of listed buildings.

### National Planning Policy

#### National Planning Policy Framework (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, February 2019)

- 2.6 The NPPF is the principal document that sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- 2.7 It defines a heritage asset as a: '*building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest*'. This includes both designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- 2.8 Section 16: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment relates to the conservation of heritage assets in the production of local plans and decision taking. It emphasises that heritage assets are 'an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance'.
- 2.9 For proposals that have the potential to affect the significance of a heritage asset, paragraph 189 requires applicants to identify and describe the significance of any heritage assets that may be affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail provided should be proportionate to the significance of the heritage assets affected. This is supported by paragraph 190, which requires LPAs to take this assessment into account when considering applications.
- 2.10 Under 'Considering potential impacts' the NPPF emphasises that 'great weight' should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, irrespective of whether any potential impact equates to total loss, substantial harm or less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage assets.

- 2.11 Paragraph 195 states that where a development will result in substantial harm to, or total loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset, permission should be refused, unless this harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits, or a number of criteria are met. Where less than substantial harm is identified paragraph 196 requires this harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposed development.

## National Guidance

### Planning Practice Guidance (DCLG)

- 2.12 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) has been adopted in order to aid the application of the NPPF. It reiterates that conservation of heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance is a core planning principle.
- 2.13 Key elements of the guidance relate to assessing harm. It states that substantial harm is a high bar that may not arise in many cases and that while the level of harm will be at the discretion of the decision maker, generally substantial harm is a high test that will only arise where a development seriously affects a key element of an asset's special interest. It is the degree of harm, rather than the scale of development, that is to be assessed.

### Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (English Heritage, April 2008)

- 2.14 Conservation Principles outlines Historic England's approach to the sustainable management of the historic environment. While primarily intended to ensure consistency in Historic England's own advice and guidance, the document is recommended to LPAs to ensure that all decisions about change affecting the historic environment are informed and sustainable.
- 2.15 The guidance describes a range of heritage values which enables the significance of assets to be established systematically, with the four main heritage values being:
- Evidential value: which derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity;
  - Historical value: which derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present;
  - Aesthetic value: which derives from the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place; and
  - Communal value: which derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

### Overview: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning

- 2.16 GPA1: *The Historic Environment in Local Plans* provides guidance to local planning authorities to help them make well informed and effective local plans. GPA2: *Managing Significance in Decision-Making* includes technical advice on the repair and restoration of historic buildings and alterations to heritage assets to guide local planning authorities, owners, practitioners and other interested parties. GPA 3: *The Setting of Heritage Assets* replaces guidance published in 2011. These are complemented by the Historic England Advice Notes in Planning which include HEA1: *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (February 2016), HEA2: *Making Changes to Heritage Assets* (February 2016), HEA3: *The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans* (October 2015), and HEA4: *Tall Buildings* (December 2015).

### GPA3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Second Edition; December 2017)

- 2.17 This advice note focuses on the management of change within the setting of heritage assets. This document replaces GPA3: *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (March 2015) and *Seeing History in the View* (English Heritage, 2011) in order to aid practitioners with the implementation of national legislation, policies and guidance relating to the setting of heritage assets found in the 1990 Act, the NPPF and PPG. The guidance is largely a continuation of the philosophy and approach of the 2011 and 2015 documents and does not present a divergence in either the definition of setting or the way in which it should be assessed.
- 2.18 As with the NPPF the document defines setting as '*the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve*'. Setting is also described as being a separate term to curtilage, character and context. The guidance emphasises that setting is not a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, and that its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset, or the ability to appreciate that significance. It also states that elements of setting may make a positive, negative or neutral contribution to the significance of the heritage asset.
- 2.19 While setting is largely a visual term, with views considered to be an important consideration in any assessment of the contribution that setting makes to the significance of an asset, and thus the way in which an asset is experienced, setting also encompasses other environmental factors including noise, vibration and odour. Historical and cultural associations may also form part of the asset's setting, which can inform or enhance the significance of a heritage asset.
- 2.20 This document provides guidance on practical and proportionate decision making with regards to the management of change within the setting of heritage assets. It is stated that the protection of the setting of a heritage asset need not prevent change and that decisions relating to such issues need to be based on the nature, extent and level of the significance of a heritage asset, further weighing up the potential public benefits associated with the proposals. It is further stated that changes within the setting of a heritage asset may have positive or neutral effects.
- 2.21 The document also states that the contribution made to the significance of heritage assets by their settings will vary depending on the nature of the heritage asset and its setting, and that different heritage assets may have different abilities to accommodate change without harming their significance. Setting should, therefore, be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- 2.22 Historic England recommends using a series of detailed steps in order to assess the potential effects of a proposed development on significance of a heritage asset. The 5-step process is as follows:
- Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected;
  - Assess the degree to which these settings and views make a contribution to the significance of a heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated;
  - Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on the significance or on the ability to appreciate it;
  - Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm; and
  - Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.

## Local Policy and Guidance

- 2.23 In considering any planning application for development, the planning authority will be mindful of the framework set by government policy, in this instance the NPPF, by current Development Plan Policy, and by other material considerations. The Publication Local Plan 2020-2036 (2018) for St Albans City and District is currently withdrawn at the direction of the Local Plan Inspector in February 2020. Until its formal adoption the current Local Plan for the St Albans District is made up of the saved

policies set out in the District Local Plan Review 1994. The relevant saved heritage related policy is set out below:

### **Policy 86 Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest**

*i.) 'In considering any application for listed building consent for the demolition, alteration or extension of a listed building (and also any application for planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting), the Council will have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of architectural or historic interest which it possesses.'*

2.24 Draft policy within the Publication Local Plan 2020-2036 (currently withdrawn) that would be relevant to this development proposal comprises:

### **Policy L30 - Historic Environment**

*'The character of the District's historic environment, which greatly contributes to a distinctive local 'sense of place' and a high quality of life for residents, businesses and stakeholders, will be preserved and, where possible, enhanced.*

*Aspects of the historic environment; referred to as 'heritage assets'; can be both designated and undesignated. Heritage assets include Scheduled Monuments, statutory Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and, Gardens, Registered Battlefields, Locally Listed Buildings, Parks and Gardens, Conservation Areas and areas of archaeological interest.*

*Known heritage assets are recorded on Local Information Service (Public GIS).*

#### Heritage assets

*Heritage assets will be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Great weight will be given to the conservation of the District's designated heritage assets. Currently undiscovered / undesignated heritage assets with equivalent interest will be similarly valued and conserved.*

*Heritage assets worthy of conservation include the District's high level of above and below ground archaeology, locally listed buildings, locally listed historic parks and gardens and other locally recorded features of heritage significance.*

#### Development affecting heritage assets

*Development that will affect heritage assets, including their setting, must have regard to the significance of the heritage asset. All submissions must include a Heritage Statement giving proportionate but sufficient information to enable full understanding of the proposals and their impact on the heritage assets significance.*

*New development must respect the wider context of the asset, with particular regard to important views of the District's built heritage and landscapes. Overall townscape character should be preserved and enhanced. Long views are particularly important in conservation of the historic City Centre of St Albans as the historic roofscape of the City is considered to be an important element of the Conservation Area's significance.*

*Development must seek to preserve, enhance or better reveal the significance of a heritage asset. This may include that arising from its setting, including any important views to or from the asset.*

*Where development leads to unavoidable change to a heritage asset or provides an opportunity to increase knowledge of the affected asset, conditions or planning obligations will be used to ensure effective recording and museum archiving of the records created.*

*Development affecting heritage assets will be assessed in relation to the following considerations:*

a) *Viable uses: Intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. Wherever possible, heritage assets will be put to an appropriate and viable use that is consistent with their conservation, as long as this would not be in direct, seriously harmful, conflict with other policies in the Local Plan and/or national guidance/legislation. A flexible approach to other relevant planning policies may be taken in exceptional circumstances if this will best preserve the special character of the asset and give it a sustainable future. Any proposals should not result in under-utilisation or possible deterioration of a heritage asset through poor maintenance. If substantial alterations are required for a long-term viable use, then comprehensive viability evidence will be required.*

b) *Demolition: Demolition or loss (in total or part) of a heritage asset will be refused if it negatively impacts on its significance. Demolition which is detrimental to the significance of a heritage asset can only be considered in exceptional circumstances. The viability of alternative uses for the asset must be fully explored (including the possibility of sale to an alternative user). Alternatively, substantial planning benefits to the community that will decisively outweigh the loss resulting from the demolition must be clearly demonstrated. Additionally, for any demolition there must be acceptable and detailed plans for any redevelopment. For such schemes a condition or planning obligation will be used to require that a contract for the works must be completed and evidenced before demolition commences.*

c) *Listed Buildings: Development will only be supported where the significance of the listed building, including any gained from its setting, is protected and respected, and, where relevant, better revealed. Proposals must not have a harmful impact on the building's historic fabric and features and special architectural and historic interest, including its setting. Proposals should not involve the removal, obliteration or encasing of features which are considered to contribute to an asset's significance, or be detrimental to their context or integrity.*

*Proposals which involve the addition of new features, including openings and walls, should appropriately respond to the character of the existing building and should not have a harmful impact on any features of interest or their context.*

*Extensions and new curtilage buildings should be subservient to the original and should not mask its form, unbalance or otherwise detract from the listed buildings significance.*

*Alterations, cleaning methods and materials should be appropriate, compositionally compatible and should neither cause undue damage to nor exacerbate any long term deterioration of the building's fabric. Reinstatement of traditional and natural materials, where doing so will not cause undue harm, will be encouraged.*

d) *Conservation Areas: All new development within Conservation Areas must preserve or enhance, and respond to the character, appearance and local distinctiveness of the Conservation Area. The character of the conservation area, as detailed in Conservation Area Character Statements, will be a material consideration.*

*New development should achieve a high standard of design and have well portioned massing and density which reflects the surrounding balance of landscape and buildings. Regard will be given to the prevailing building line and grain of the surrounding development. The height of the development will be appropriate to its context and the streetscene and, for extensions, the form of the original roof should be extended or repeated where it contributes positively to the significance of the Conservation Area.*

*Development should have appropriate wall to windows ratios, features and relief which complement and enhance the streetscene. Within conservation areas high quality materials, normally traditional and natural with long-term weathering characteristics, should be used.*

e) *Locally Listed Buildings: Locally listed buildings are recognised as having heritage significance and are considered to provide a positive contribution to a conservation area. Demolition of a locally listed building will be regarded as harmful to the conservation area and*

*will be assessed under the demolition of heritage assets policy. Alterations and extensions should conserve and respond to their significance.*

*f) Archaeology: Planning permission for development which would adversely affect the significance of, or fail to preserve or enhance, a designated or known archaeological site (including a Scheduled Monument) will be refused.*

*Development may be permitted in exceptional circumstances, following evaluation, if important remains would not be destroyed or the character of the site adversely affected.*

*Any archaeological work must be carried out by an appropriately qualified archaeologist approved under a planning condition.*

*g) Historic Landscapes: Development which would destroy, damage or adversely affect the character, appearance or setting of an historic landscape, or any of its features, including both designated and undesignated historic parks and gardens, will be refused. Schemes to improve, restore and manage the historic landscape will be sought in connection with, and commensurate with, the scale of any new development affecting an historic landscape. Development will only be supported where the proposals would preserve and enhance the character and special qualities of the landscape.*

*Management and maintenance plans, which may include increased public access, will be required by conditions or planning obligations where appropriate.*

*There are historic landscapes other than those on the national or local list of historic parks and gardens, and additional parks and gardens, to which this policy may apply. Historic landscapes also include ancient farming systems, unimproved grasslands, water meadows, old orchards, ancient woodlands, veteran trees, battlefields and former settlement sites'.*

## 3 HISTORIC BUILT ENVIRONMENT APPRAISAL

### Introduction

- 3.1 The following section includes an appraisal of the historic development of the Site and surroundings, together with an assessment of the significance of those built heritage assets that have the potential to be impacted by the proposed development, including consideration of the contribution of their settings to their significance. Section 4 will assess how the development proposals may impact on that significance.

### Historic Development

- 3.2 It is noted in the St Albans City and District HER that there was evidence of human activity in the area in prehistoric times. The area is perhaps best known for the Roman activity with the Roman settlement of Verulamium (St Albans) located to the north-east of the Site. It is likely that the Site formed part of a settled wider agricultural landscape.
- 3.3 Little is known about post-Roman St Albans [Niblett and Thompson, cited in RPS ref. JA/DH/JAC23515], though it is likely that it focussed around the Saxon Church and subsequent St Albans Cathedral. Offa, King of Mercia, made a grant of lands and towns to the monastery of St Albans in c.795 which probably included the lands of Burston, suggesting that the manor of Burston originated during the Anglo-Saxon period [VCH 1908, cited in RPS ref. JA/DH/JAC23515].
- 3.4 Burston Manor is not recorded in the Domesday Book (1086AD) though this may be on account of it forming part of the wider landholdings for the monastery of St Albans. An historic settlement is recorded in the HER as having been located around the Manor House, although there is nothing to indicate a nucleated settlement or, if there was, no more than a hamlet [Hertfordshire and St Albans Historic Environment Record (HER) ref.1003, TL 135 037] [RPS ref. JA/DH/JAC23515].
- 3.5 In the post-medieval period, a large farmstead was present immediately north of Burston Manor House. The 1766 Andrews and Drury Map of Hertfordshire (not reproduced in this report) shows the Site as comprising open land south of the Manor. The trackway leading from the manor runs south-east across the westernmost reaches of the Site to connect with local roads beyond. The Manor House sits in relative isolation from other development, with an area of woodland planting located a short distance to the south-west of the heritage asset. How Wood and Birch Wood are not shown.
- 3.6 Bryant's Map of 1822 (not reproduced in this report) identifies the Site as being undeveloped and in probable agricultural use. It also shows the woodland currently present to the east and south of the Site. These woodlands, known as How and Birch Wood, are presented as two separate woodlands in 1822.
- 3.7 The 1838 St Stephens parish Tithe Map [Fig.2] shows How and Birch Wood, and identifies the Site as falling within four field parcels in arable and pasture use. The Tithe Map identifies these field parcels, including the Site, as forming part of the landholding of Burston Manor Farm owned by Sarah Noyes and occupied by Daniel Kentish. The Site forms part of what is identified in the Apportionments as the 'Great Orchard' (nearest the Manor House), and 'Little Clay Pits' towards How and Birch Wood, set over to arable use. The westernmost reaches of the Site form part of a field known as 'Hither Cowleys' and also set over to pasture, with part of 'House Pond Field' forming the northernmost extent of the Site also in pasture.
- 3.8 The extent of the Manor House and associated farm is clearly defined in the Tithe Map, with the moated enclosure forming the southern boundary to the private gardens. The house and land within the moated enclosure falls under the apportionment title 'House, yard and garden'. It is apparent that the Site forms part of the agricultural extent of the landholding and not part of private, domesticated gardens, as within the moated area. The Tithe Map identifies further tree planting abutting up to the south-eastern flank of the Site, effectively linking How and Birch Wood but also,

in doing so, providing a robust screening to wholly restrict any distance views south-east. It is apparent that from this map long distance views south-west, south, south-east and east will have been curtailed by How Wood, Birch Wood and the linked planting between the woodland.

- 3.9 The 1872 Ordnance Survey Map [Fig.3] shows the Site as forming part of the same three field parcels as noted in the Tithe Map. The field identified as 'Great Orchard' is shown as having several trees planted throughout the field with more of these concentrated towards the moated enclosure – the southern extent of the private gardens. It may be that the original extent of any orchard planting may have been much greater with the entire 'Great Orchard' field parcel having been planted with fruit trees. This suggests that by at least the early nineteenth century the Grouping was operating as part of a farm rather than a manorial seat, and that productive use of the near surrounds of the manor took precedent over any use of these lands to facilitate the enjoyment of longer distance views or indeed to emphasise the visual prominence of the Grouping on the wider landscape. Boundary tree planting is also noted around the southern and south-western extent of the Great Orchard, including lining either side of a trackway on the south-western flank. The trackway leads into the southern field parcel of the Site (Little Clay Pits) directly from the farm complex associated with the Manor. The woodland link between How and Birch Wood is not identified on this plan, though views from the Manor are still likely to be limited by the orientation of the heritage asset relative to the surrounding woodland. Little changes by the 1898 Ordnance Survey mapping [Fig.4].
- 3.10 In the 1924 OS mapping [Fig.5], the Site has not markedly changed, though two new smaller field parcels have been created immediately south of the moated enclosure of the Manor House one of which, covering much of the southern boundary of the private grounds to Burston Manor, is now shown to have orchard planting within. Given that these fall within the wider parcel known as Great Orchard it is likely that these are remnant trees identified in earlier mapping. This mapping shows the Burston Manor Farmstead at its greatest extent with several buildings and infill development.
- 3.11 The 1938 Ordnance Survey mapping [Fig.6] shows the new road serving St Albans to the north of Burston Manor, which later became the A405 North Orbital Road. Feeding off this are areas of sporadic housing development. To the south-east of the Site, Birchwood Bungalow is now noted between How and Birch Woods. The Burston Manor Farmstead has reduced in size with the removal of a number of ranges and outbuildings. Alongside existing orchard planting further planting is now seen immediately in the second small plot (identified in 1924) immediately adjacent to the orchard south of the moat.
- 3.12 The 1960 Ordnance Survey mapping [Fig.7] shows the progressive suburbanisation of the landscape surrounding the Site. The 1962 Ordnance Survey Map [Fig.8] shows that the extent of the orchard south of the moat has increased further north towards the farm complex, fully enclosing the gardens on the south and eastern flanks with tree planting. Further tree planting is also noted along the western flank of the Manor grounds.
- 3.13 The 1968-73 [Fig.9] Ordnance Survey mapping shows the commercial nurseries adjacent to Burston Manor for the first time, comprising several glasshouses and outbuildings. Immediately south of the Manor House garden boundary lies a new building, likely to be that which exists presently and forming part of the nurseries. The Site is now one field parcel with evidence of nursery operations upon it. The wider surrounds have been heavily developed for housing estates including to the north around the North Orbital Road and south beyond Birch Wood.
- 3.14 Aerial imagery from 2006 [Fig.10] shows the extent of the rear gardens associated with the Manor now incorporating all of the former orchard extent with the bulk of the orchard removed and replaced with garden tree species. The moated enclosure now forms a feature within the garden, rather than a means of enclosure to the garden. This expansion of the private gardens is likely to have occurred in the mid-late twentieth century. The imagery also shows the extensive commercial nursery infrastructure on and adjacent to the Site, with extensive planting beds, polytunnels and glass houses.

- 3.15 Several important areas of planting are visible in this aerial imagery. Firstly, the robust and dense wedge-shaped area of tree planting to the immediate east of the rear garden of the Manor (included within the area of the Site), secondly, a line of mature conifer tree planting running from this wedge of planting in a south-eastern direction across the Site. This line of conifer tree planting served as a year-round wind break within the Site for the polytunnels and planting beds, but was removed about ten years ago. There is also a line of conifer planting running broadly south-west to north-east through the Site and a further line of conifers in the south-western reaches of the main body of the Site. The farmstead associated with Burston Manor has been further reduced in size by this time with only remnant farm buildings of a later date retained. Moving forward to the 2017 aerial imagery and 2018 Ordnance Survey map [Figs 11 & 12] excepting the removal of the line of trees through the Site, the Site and surrounds remain as seen here through until the present day.
- 3.16 It is apparent from historic mapping that since at least the early nineteenth century Burston Manor has seen varying levels of enclosure arising from general tree planting and later nursery development. How Wood and Birch Wood have, since this time, notably limited long-distance views from and to the Manor House. This general sense of enclosure is further seen with the extensive post-war housing to the north of Burston Manor and further tree planting within the Site. This includes a line of trees running south-east through the Site from the boundary of the Manor House garden which will have very much restricted views east over the eastern reaches of the Site.
- 3.17 The sense of enclosure more immediately around the garden to the Manor House is seen onwards from the time of the early extent of the private gardens (up to the moated enclosure) and previous nineteenth-century enclosure by orchard planting. In the second half of the twentieth century, this degree of enclosure continued to be maintained and increased with garden planting (including possible retention of a number of the orchard trees). The wholly domesticated and sequestered nature of the garden has been strengthened with the planting or further trees and the maturing of the existing trees within the garden and particularly along the margin to the western and southern boundaries.

## Site Assessment

- 3.18 The Site is situated to the south-west of St Albans near to the settlement of Chiswell Green [Plates 1-11]. The bulk of the Site is level and operating as a commercial nursery with the eastern extent, most recently nursery beds for roses, is now starting to revert to unmanaged grassland. Large parts of the Site comprise former planting beds, polytunnels, hard standing and glass houses, and a number of late twentieth-century industrial-style buildings located against the boundary of the Manor House gardens. The former nursery beds are visually wholly part of the wider nursery; all forming part of the same plot, with no separate enclosure. Separation is provided with the Manor House's garden and wider enclosure is provided by How Wood and Birch Wood.
- 3.19 The Site is heavily enclosed, as it has been since the early nineteenth century, on the east and southern flank with mature woodland beyond the Site limiting any onward visibility. The western flank abuts the remainder of the wholesale nurseries outside of the Site and comprises glasshouses and planting beds which are visible, in filtered views, from the gardens of Burston Manor. To the north private, domesticated gardens to Burston Manor abut the Site alongside the private grounds of several post-war dwellings to the north-east. The majority of Burston Manor's garden boundary is formed of mature trees. Collectively, as a result of this mature tree planting within and around the Manor House gardens, much of the House and the ancillary building is screened from the Site and, correspondingly, visually divorced from the wider surrounds within sequestered, wholly domesticated grounds.
- 3.20 To the east of the Manor House gardens a further belt of mature tree planting (outside of the Site) comprising coniferous and deciduous planting screens views west from the north-eastern reaches of the Site. A two-metre solid timber fence runs the entire length of the eastern boundary separating the Site from a public bridleway. To the south, Heras fencing separates the Site from Birch Wood.

The Site, with its associated nursery development, flows seamlessly into the wider nursery complex to the west.

- 3.21 The proposed access drive and entrance serving the development scheme is to be located on land presently comprising external storage (including shipping containers and palletised stacking), large industrial-style sheds, single-storey post-war buildings and glasshouses. Much of the Site here is bounded by fencing with some palisade style security fencing present. The interface between the Site and the A405 road presently comprises an access for the nursery and garden centre, and a separate access for the Manor House and other nearby buildings. Further security fencing provides some enclosure around additional car parking for the retail nursery which sits to the north-west of Burston Manor House.
- 3.22 In the wider surrounds, views from the Site are contained to the east and south by the mature nineteenth-century woodland planting. Some limited views are granted west over parts of the wider nursery outside of the Site with tree planting beyond this. To the north limited, filtered views are granted into parts of the garden of Burston Manor (with some glimpsed, filtered views of parts of the Manor House). Further to the north-east views feed into the curtilages of later post-war housing which have been built on the former field parcels around the Manor, though partially screened by mature tree planting adjacent to the northern boundary of the Site.
- 3.23 In return views the Site cannot be easily seen from the wider surroundings although some filtered views are likely obtained from the dwellings which back onto the Site to the north and from within the wider nursery. The woodland with boundary fencing limits views from the south and east. Wireframe views (forming part of the pack for the last refused planning application) taken from a first-floor level of the Manor House during the summer show an extensive quantum of tree planting within the gardens of the Manor House.
- 3.24 The eastern reaches of the Site are presently unmanaged grassland, former planting beds, forming part of the wider nursery operations. It does not exhibit as agricultural land, having ceased this use in the mid-twentieth century, but as forming part of the wider nursery operations which exist within and adjacent to the Site and Manor House.
- 3.25 The Site and commercial nursery are surrounded by a post-war suburban context with any vestiges of an agricultural landscape long since gone. Within the Site one experiences this suburban context through, amongst other things, the noise of the busy A405 and nearby M25, and also by the extensive background light spill which envelopes the entire nursery operation at night derived from the wider existing built development which surrounds the Site.

## Assessment of Heritage Assets

- 3.26 This report only considers above ground, built heritage assets. A 1km search area was established for the purpose of the Site walkover survey to identify built heritage assets potentially affected by the proposed development of the Site. The contained nature of the Site, its immediate surrounds and relatively level topography, combined with the nature of the proposed development (no undue noise, odour etc), meant that it was not deemed appropriate to assess any built heritage assets beyond this search area.
- 3.27 Within the 1km search area there are seven listed buildings, all of which are Grade II listed except the Grade II\* Burston Manor House. The Park Street Conservation Area also falls in part within the search area. However, the Site walkover survey and associated research demonstrates that of these built heritage assets, the majority share no intervisibility with the Site, and bear no historic ownership or functional associations with the Site. As such, many of these designated assets will not be affected by the proposed development and are discounted from further consideration below.
- 3.28 The remnant farm buildings associated with Burston Manor Farm are noted in the HER, though they are heavily screened from the Site and have been heavily altered to the extent that they are of the lowest significance, if any, with any interest largely in the contribution that they make to the setting

of the Manor House itself as part of a former farmstead. The surviving farm buildings have been converted to residential use. These will not be considered individually rather referred to as part of the wider Manor House Grouping. A number of other built heritage assets are noted on the HER as lying within the search radius, including Tenterden House, a nineteenth-century country house (now care home) some 650 metres south-west of the Site. This built heritage asset will not be considered further in this report.

3.29 The following built heritage assets may be affected by the proposed development on Site, and are detailed below and at Appendix A:

- *Burston Manor* (NHL ref 1102862) Grade II\* listed. Located c.60 metres north of the Site [Plates 12-14]; and
- *Outbuilding Immediately to East of Burston Manor House* (NHL ref. 1347270) located c.60 metres north of the Site [Plates 12-14].

3.30 Given the close proximity and associations between the Manor House and the immediately adjacent and separately listed outbuilding it is considered that in the interests of avoiding repetition, these two heritage assets will be assessed under the combined title of 'Burston Manor Grouping'. Full access to the grounds of the Manor House was realised during the Appeal. No access was granted within the Manor House.

### Burston Manor Grouping

3.31 **Significance:** Burston Manor House, now a private dwelling, originates from the first half of the twelfth century. The two-storey heritage asset has been extensively altered, remodelled and extended since this time, including in the fifteenth and seventeenth, nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It was re-cased in brick in the early-mid nineteenth century (listing citation). The building is timber framed with white painted weatherboarding to parts. To the rear (south side), the re-casing has resulted in a largely red brick rear elevation facing towards the main part of the Site. A plain tile roof is present as are sash windows on the front elevation (listing citation). Notable architectural detailing from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries includes a diamond mullion window, a four-centred arch door and an original fifteenth-century wall (listing citation). Elsewhere a gabled seventeenth-century projection to the rear is noted. Internally the building has fifteenth-century screens and evidence of geometrical relief plasterwork dating from the seventeenth century.

3.32 It is not clear when Burston Manor ceased to be the manorial seat, though it is likely that by the early nineteenth century it performed a farmhouse role only, tied to the adjacent farm complex. In the twentieth century it became a private dwelling with a much-reduced landholding amounting to the present private, domesticated gardens only.

3.33 Burston Manor House exhibits aesthetic and evidential value as a small former Manor House with twelfth-century origins and comprising a moat. These values arise from its materials, relative scale and the differing approaches to design as the building evolved over the centuries. Of particular note, the taste for re-casing timber framed buildings, reflecting the perceived desire to have brick rather than timber-framed buildings as a symbol of wealth and status by the nineteenth century. Internally there exists historic architectural detailing which also help to reinforce the relative importance of the house. The Grouping shares an historic, residual functional association with the Site, which historically formed a small part of the extensive agricultural landholding associated with Burston Manor House and farm, certainly at the time of the St Stephen's Tithe Map in 1838 [Fig.2].

3.34 The Manor House sits close to the separately listed Outbuilding positioned to its east. This Outbuilding was originally built as a granary and dovecote. The Outbuilding is of a single storey and was built in the seventeenth century and later altered in the early-nineteenth century. It is constructed in red brick with a plain tile pyramidal roof featuring a wooden ventilator at the pinnacle. The brick eaves are dentilled. A seventeenth-century garden wall running from this building also falls within the designation. The wall has saw-toothed corbels and saddleback coping (listing citation). A twentieth-century garage door has been inserted into the south elevation, which has had a negative

impact upon the asset's significance. It could not be confirmed what role the building now performs, though still appears as a garage with a contemporary garage door.

- 3.35 Like the principal Manor House, the Outbuilding exhibits a high degree of historic value, derived from it being a component of a small gentry house; its design and materials; and, its original use as a dovecote and granary, which provides a visual identifier as to the relative historic wealth and status of the Manor. It shares a strong and important group value with the Manor House, having been historically subsidiary to this building.
- 3.36 Both buildings have been significantly altered throughout their existence, which has included the removal of original fabric. More recent detrimental alterations include inserting a garage door in the separately listed Outbuilding, and, to a degree, changes to the setting including the cessation of farm operations and neighbouring uses (discussed below).
- 3.37 **Setting:** The Burston Manor Grouping is primarily experienced from within its immediate and intermediate setting. These comprise the surrounding former farm complex and the sequestered, private, domesticated gardens, including the remains of the moat. The moated enclosure formed the historic extent of the Manor House grounds when it was the manorial seat. This helps to provide some historic context to its understanding as such. It has progressively played a less visual role as the means of enclosure (see below) though provides remnant visual evidence of its historic role. There is no sense at all of the presence of the moat from the Site.
- 3.38 The former farm buildings have been heavily altered, most recently to residential use. These buildings are of very low, if any, significance, which is compounded by the fact that they no longer perform an agricultural role. They are not identified as non-designated heritage assets. Consequently, they make a very limited contribution to the overall significance of the Burston Manor Grouping. Any contribution they make to the assets' setting relates to their historic functional role in the overall former farm operation when set alongside Burston Manor House and the adjacent dovecote/granary. The fact that the former farm complex is surrounded by several detached twentieth-century private dwellings further compounds the limited contribution that the complex makes to the significance of the Grouping.
- 3.39 The Outbuilding's immediate setting is considered to contribute positively to its significance insofar as its setting includes the Manor House to which the Outbuilding was once functionally associated (as part of a functioning farmstead), and with which the Outbuilding shares group value. The wider surrounds make a much reduced contribution to its significance even though the Outbuilding and surrounding landscape were historically part of the agricultural estate serving Burston Manor. However, this functional connection was severed when the surrounding farmland was disposed of, and there is no visual legibility of the former agricultural role of the surrounding landscape due to its present developed nature (including the nursery and garden centre).
- 3.40 The wider setting of the Burston Manor Grouping has changed over time, including the construction of the former farm complex to the north. As a manorial seat, pre-nineteenth century historic mapping suggests that the Grouping may have existed in relative isolation and in a largely rural context. The degree of woodland planting around the Site, present from at least the nineteenth century, has significantly minimised any historic long-distance views to and from the Manor House. Beyond the extent of the woodland and also to the north of the Grouping, the extensive post-war suburban housing estates, the busy North Orbital Road 100 metres north of the Grouping and the M25, c.800 metres south-west, all further enclose the heritage assets and introduce noise and background light spill at night.
- 3.41 The orchard planting [Fig.5] seen from at least the nineteenth century around the moated enclosure (which marked the original extent of the gardens when the asset was a farmhouse) would have provided a markedly more agricultural visual context to the Grouping from at least this period. This orchard planting will also have served to restrict views out of, and back towards, the Manor House. The orchard planting provides a visual clue as to the increasingly agricultural role once performed by the Manor House, as a farmhouse, rather than a manorial seat.

- 3.42 The post-war period has seen the greatest change to the surrounds, including the development of the nursery around much of Grouping and the wider extensive residential development with associated busy roads infrastructure. Allied to the current usage of the Site is the post-war planting abutting up to and within both the Site and Manor House gardens. This planting, much of which is coniferous, has further reduced views to and from the Manor House and its private grounds. Its present context is, therefore, highly altered from its pre-twentieth century surrounds. The LPA has confirmed as part of the commentary for an earlier planning application for the Site [5/2018/1324, dated 5th March 2019] that they are of the view that the “*existing contribution of the site to the setting of the [Grouping] is negative*”. Accordingly, the surrounds are now viewed in a commercial brownfield context as a working nursery. Fig.10 provides a visual comparator between the 1924 mapping of the Site and surrounds [Fig.5], the last time that the near surrounds of the Grouping were experienced in any agricultural context, and the 2006 aerial imagery [Fig.10] in its present heavily developed context. The comparator shows the profound change in character of the surrounds to the Grouping to the urbanised character currently seen.
- 3.43 The degree and nature of planting that has surrounded the Grouping since the early nineteenth century is representative of several phases in the role performed by the Grouping, namely in the nineteenth century the extensive orchard planting providing a more utilitarian (agricultural) context to the surrounds when the Grouping served as part of a wider farm complex, moving through to the later twentieth century where the garden’s tree planting provided the means of enclosure to create sequestered, private, domesticated grounds for the stand-alone dwelling and deliberate visual screening of the commercial nursery beyond. The addition of later coniferous planting within and around the Site further changed the nature of the surrounds around the grounds of Burston Manor. Any role that the near surrounding landscape once performed in accentuating the visual prominence of the Manor House was progressively lost during the nineteenth century when Burston Manor served as a farmhouse and during the twentieth century when the Manor became a private residence neighbouring the operation of a commercial nursery to the west and south.
- 3.44 The Grouping is now heavily screened from much of the surrounds by mature tree planting though there are filtered, glimpsed, partial views of some upper reaches of the Manor House and the outbuilding from the Site to the south and immediate west of the Manor House boundary. The moated enclosure cannot be seen at all from the Site. It is now a feature of a domesticated garden, rather than a means of enclosure to the private, domestic grounds, as was its pre-nineteenth-century historic role. Any minimal glimpses from the Site of the former farm complex behind are limited to parts of the roof only with no ability to understand any interest they hold or the contribution that they make to the significance of the Grouping.
- 3.45 From the Site it remains difficult, if not impossible, to appreciate much of the heritage significance of the Grouping, with Burston Manor now viewed, where that is possible, as a moderate sized dwelling set in private grounds with little visual interaction to the surrounds given the extent of mature boundary planting around the edge of and within the garden, the use of surrounding landscape as a commercial nursery (including the Site) and the long cessation of any farming operations associated with the Manor House. The post-war development of the surrounding landscape creates an extensive suburban, rather than agricultural, context.
- 3.46 Longer outward views from the upper reaches of the Manor House are now curtailed by the mature planting within the gardens and at their boundary, though where limited and filtered views are afforded (mostly to the south-west of the House) this is defined by the mature woodland backdrop around the Site but also views of the planting beds, greenhouses and sheds in the foreground. This is confirmed by the wireframe views (notably View 1 which accompanied the last refused application) showing a robust tree cover during the summer between the Manor House and the Site. This tree cover, within the gardens of the Manor House, is both coniferous and deciduous. The loss of an agricultural use on the surrounding land has markedly changed these parts of the assets’ setting. Allied to this, the extension of the garden beyond the moated enclosure confuses any potential legibility as to what the original extent of the historic immediate grounds were.

- 3.47 The existing commercial activity associated with the nursery operations, including light spill and plant movements, has further altered the surrounds.
- 3.48 The Manor House's historic setting, that of an agricultural landscape, has been entirely lost over the twentieth century. Any views outwards are impacted by the extensive post-war housing surrounding the Site and the nursery infrastructure which is visible in the filtered first-floor level wireframe views submitted as part of the last refused application. Until relatively recently views towards the Grouping from the unmanaged grassland, former planting beds, in the south-eastern reaches of the Site would have been curtailed by a mature conifer planting belt (see 2006 aerial photograph – Fig.10) which ran from the boundary with the Manor's garden, south-east into the Site. Similarly, return views towards the Grouping would have been largely non-existent from the south-east of the Site when these trees were present. These trees have since been removed further emphasising the negative visual impact of the nursery infrastructure which forms the foreground of any views towards the Grouping.
- 3.49 The Site makes a negative contribution to the overall significance of the Grouping arising from the use of the Site for a commercial nursery and the visual and audible impact that this has upon the Grouping. The degree of existing screening from tree planting within and immediately adjacent to the grounds of the Grouping helps reduce the impact however and in doing so further visually divorces the Grouping from its wider surrounds.
- 3.50 As the Manor House has continually evolved in its role, through the cessation of an agricultural role for the Grouping as part of the former farm, the loss of agricultural land surrounding the Grouping for housing and commercial nursery means that the Grouping has lost any extant functional tie to the surrounding landscape which is no longer rural or agricultural, in terms of perception or actuality.
- 3.51 Any value in the existing unmanaged grassland, former rose planting beds, to the eastern reaches of the Site does not reflect the reality of the overall existing suburban context. The near surrounds of the Manor, namely the garden with surviving elements of the moat, the Outbuilding and remnant farm makes an important, yet secondary contribution to the significance of the asset through historic functional associations and visual identifiers as to the previous role. Beyond these nearer surrounds, the contribution that the wider setting makes (including the Site as part of the commercial nursery) makes a very limited, if any, contribution to the significance of the Grouping. The landscape surrounding the Grouping no longer forms part of an agricultural operation (and there is absolutely no perception of this historic use), with the use of the Grouping as forming a single private dwelling with its associated sequestered, mature garden planting further divorcing the Manor from its surrounds.
- 3.52 **Summary:** The Burston Manor House Grouping comprises heritage assets of high national significance as recognised by their Grade II\* and Grade II listed status. This significance is primarily derived from their architectural and historic special interest of the buildings in the Grouping and their attendant group value. This also includes the visual ties with the remains of the moat now forming a garden feature rather than a means of enclosure. The buildings within the Grouping have evidently been altered significantly over time, which has removed original fabric. Some of these changes have been detrimental to the overall significance.
- 3.53 The assets' wider setting has been heavily altered over time, including the use of the Site and near surrounds as a commercial nursery, but also the development of extensive housing estates in the near surrounds. Specifically:
- The Site cannot be viewed as an agricultural or rural landscape (there is no legibility of this former use), nor indeed can the wider surrounds of the Grouping;
  - The historic 'original' setting of the Manor House - as an isolated dwelling surrounded by agricultural land - has been lost;
  - It's historic setting as a farmhouse, served by a farm and surrounded by agricultural land, has also been lost (there is no legibility of this former situation from the Site);

- The wider surrounds of the Grouping are extensively post-war suburban development with busy arterial roads, noise and high levels of background light spill from this heavily developed context;
- The degree of mature tree planting within and around the Grouping has served to visually enclose the gardens and visually divorce it from its wider surrounds, notably much of the Site; and
- There is minimal legibility of the assets' significance from the Site (where there are views available, these are glimpsed and filtered views – even in winter - of the elements of the asset's roofscape and apexes of some of the south-facing gables) [Plate 2].

3.54 Consequently, though setting remains an important contributor, namely the immediate and intermediate setting of the Manor House's domestic grounds, it makes a secondary contribution to the overall significance of the Grouping. As a secondary contributor, the Site currently makes an aggregate **negative contribution** to the overall significance of the Grouping.

## 4 PROPOSALS AND ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

### Proposals

- 4.1 The planning application submission states that the proposed development is for the:
- 'Demolition of all existing buildings, structures and hardstanding and redevelopment of the site to provide a new retirement community comprising assisted living bungalows and apartments, with community facilities together with associated access, bridleway extension, landscaping, amenity space, car parking and other associated and ancillary works'.*
- 4.2 Reference should be made to other accompanying plans and documentation which have been prepared as part of the full planning application submission relating to the design of a retirement community on the Site. These accompanying documents include the Design and Access Statement; Proposed Block Plan drawing; Proposed Site Plan drawing; and the Planning Statement. The documentation provides both an illustrative and descriptive analysis of both the reasons for refusal as well as the Inspector's justification for dismissing the appeal and explain how the current proposals seek to address the appeal Inspector's concerns. In summary, the development proposals include:
- Removal of all existing sheds/buildings, shipping containers, glasshouses, polytunnels and hardstanding from the Site. This includes the removal of several sections of glasshouse to the west of the Manor House and two large industrial sheds immediately south of the Manor House garden;
  - Construction of a retirement community including, assisted living with care comprising 80 no. one, two and three-bedroom apartments and 44 no. two-bedroom bungalows;
  - Additional landscaping and planting will be provided throughout the Site;
  - Dedicated areas of open space including a central village green and a number of courtyards;
  - A club house with communal amenities overlooking the village green.
  - Off-street private parking spaces; and
  - Vehicular access will be from the A405 at the present entrance to the retail garden centre, north-west of Burston Manor. A dedicated access road will run along the western boundary of the Manor House curtilage before tapering into the principal part of the Site below the Manor House grounds.
- 4.3 The appeal of the previously refused planning application for a retirement community on the Site was dismissed. The main issues are detailed in the Planning Statement. Those that relate to built heritage issues are centred on the effect of the proposal on the significance of the Grade II\* listed Burston Manor and Grade II listed Outbuilding, as derived from their setting. These specifically included:
- the presence of the proposed care home in the north-eastern quarter of the Site that, due to its scale, would have a large and dominating effect in the setting of the heritage asset; and
  - the quantum of development would cause a limited separation between the proposed built form and the boundaries to the grounds of Burston Manor (the importance of the Site's northern boundary was noted by the appeal inspector).
- 4.4 In response to the built heritage issues raised by the appeal inspector, the applicant and their design team has undertaken a thorough revision of the scheme as set out in the draft masterplan presented in the pre-planning process. The key changes comprise:
- A substantial reduction in the quantum of units and, therefore, footprint;

- The removal of the care home from the scheme, thereby particularly reducing the quantum and massing of development in the north-eastern quarter of the Site;
- The built form has been pulled back from the boundary with Burston Manor's grounds;
- the access road has been realigned to allow strengthening of the landscape buffer with the grounds of Burston Manor; and
- The main axis of the least filtered and partial view across the Site between the Manor House and How Wood (south-eastwards from the Manor House) [Plate 2], is largely to remain undeveloped and without significant elements of landscaping.

4.5 This last aspect of the changes of the submitted scheme compared to the previous refused and appeal schemes needs to be further illuminated. The strategy of the previous schemes had been to largely complete the current extensive screening of the two heritage assets from the Site. Contrastingly, the submitted scheme has identified the least screened viewing corridor or cone of (parts of) Burston Manor that is available across the Site. This has been identified as extending from the western portion of the asset slightly south of eastwards across the Site to How Wood.

4.6 This now allows views from parts of the upper storey of the asset of How Wood and the associated skyline and filtered views through the Site that take in the green, open spaces of the scheme's Orchard Garden [10 – on the proposed landscape Masterplan]; Village Green [5] (including the interpretation board [23]); Courtyard Garden [14], including a seating area [23]; and the Productive Garden [15]. It should be noted that the proposed pedestrian access from the bridle path in the eastern portion of the Site leading on to a meandering pathway that follows the view cone from Burston Manor, connecting along the green, open spaces towards the Village Green and visually to the asset beyond.

### Assessment of Impact:

4.7 The below assessment considers the likely impacts upon the significance of the previously identified built heritage assets arising from the scheme set out in the outline planning application. This assessment has been made in accordance with Historic England guidance *GPA3: The Setting of Heritage Assets*.

### Burston Manor Grouping

4.8 Any functional associations with the Site have been largely lost with the use of the Site as a commercial nursery, and both the Site and Manor House Grouping are in separate ownership. Any functional associations are historic only and are entirely visually unappreciable. Similarly, the historic, former agricultural use of the Site is also wholly illegible. The Site is not in agricultural use and has not been for many decades. Furthermore, the wider surrounds are not agricultural, rather they comprise extensive suburban development and accordingly, the Site cannot and does not provide a functional or visual link for the heritage assets to a wider agricultural setting that no longer exists.

4.9 The bulk of the Site has been in recent active nursery use with any remnant unmanaged grassland, (former planting beds) viewed in the context of the extensive nursery infrastructure both within and adjacent to the Site to the west, with this infrastructure currently dominating the views throughout the Site. The LPA, in commentary for an earlier application for a care village, concluded that the Site makes a negative contribution to the setting of the Grouping [dated 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019].

4.10 Some parts of the upper elements of Burston Manor are visible from parts of the Site including from the south-eastern reaches and, more closely, there are some highly filtered views from along the route of the proposed access road along the heritage asset's western boundary. However, from this distance and with the level of screening surrounding the Grouping, it is not currently easy to experience and understand the special interest of the heritage assets. They are also viewed in the

context of the negative impacts of the nursery operations. From other parts of the Site, including the southern reaches, there is robust tree screening and built development associated with the nursery which limits views of the Grouping. In the few glimpsed views available, the Manor House presents as a moderate-sized dwelling with multiple gables/cross wings set within landscaped gardens. There is no visual evidence as to the existence of the moated enclosure from within the Site.

- 4.11 The landscape planting and extended buffer, proposed within the scheme between the boundary and the nearest bungalows along the northern edge of the Site, will add to the existing planting within the grounds of the Manor. In views out from some of the Manor House's upper floor there will likely be a degree of perception of some elements of the roofscape of the development on Site, but that with the additional landscape planting, these incidental glimpsed and highly filtered views will reduce over time. The maturing of the existing planting within the Manor House garden and around its boundary is also increasing this effect over time.
- 4.12 Any future potential views of the proposed development from the upper floors of the Manor House should be considered in comparison to the context of the existing industrial sheds, polytunnels and glasshouses which extend the full width of the northern flank of the Site abutting up to the Manor garden's boundary and make no positive contribution to the assets' wider setting or the ability to appreciate the significance of the heritage assets. It should also be read in the context of the varying elements of planting that have, since the early nineteenth century, enveloped much of the immediate surrounds of the Manor House and have limited the ability to appreciate the special interest of the heritage asset. Such planting includes former orchard planting, conifer shelter belts or domestic landscape and boundary planting within the Manor House's garden.
- 4.13 Longer distance views across and beyond the Site have also been curtailed by the woodland planting in the nineteenth century and also by the robust garden and nursery planting. In general, the Site does not make a positive contribution or indeed help inform the viewer as to the special interest of this much enclosed and sequestered Grouping, whether as a manor house or, later, as a farmhouse. It is suggested that when viewing from the Manor House and garden, the proposed planting in the extended buffer immediately south of the garden will, over time, help to visually link the existing garden planting to the established woodland backdrop south-east and south of the Site; lifting the eye over the proposed built development. In fact, the depth of landscaping along the Site's north-eastern boundary with How Wood has been increased and will contribute to this effect.
- 4.14 While much of the proposed landscape planting of the scheme will strengthen screening and the sequestered character of the Manor House within its immediate setting of a domesticated garden, the main axis of the least filtered and partial view across the Site extending south of eastwards from the Manor House towards How Wood [Plate 2], will be largely maintained within the Site (even if it will be reduced over time by the maturing of the planting in the garden). Where this view currently crosses the Site, the axis will remain largely undeveloped and without significant elements of landscaping. Specifically, this view cone or corridor will take in the green, open spaces of the scheme's Orchard Garden [10 – on the proposed landscape Masterplan]; the Village Green [5] (including the interpretation board [23]); Courtyard Garden [14], including a seating area [23]; and the Productive Garden [15]. It should be noted that the proposed pedestrian access from the bridle path in the eastern portion of the Site leading on to a meandering pathway that follows the view cone from Burston Manor, connecting along the green, open spaces towards the Village Green and visually to the asset beyond.
- 4.15 This will allow some maintenance of the current degree of perception of the relative openness in this the better view between the Manor House and the woodland backdrop. Also in the return view, while currently limited, it will maintain the existing level of legibility of the assets' significance from across the Site (this effect will clearly be eroded over time by the maturing of planting, or any further planting, within the Manor House's garden). Further than this, the intentional formation of the view cone from the eastern edge of the scheme through the open, green spaces to the Manor House will help draw the eye to the asset. There will be perception of complex, extensive roofscape over a multi-gabled building set in a separate greened and sequestered space. As the viewer moves

through the open, green spaces of the scheme, the central open space, the Village Green, will include an interpretation board that will set out the history and significance of Burston Manor, setting out the narrative to link to the viewer's visually peaked interest.

- 4.16 Elsewhere in the Site, given the relatively close proximity of the access road long the western flank of the Manor House's garden, this enables clearer views of the heritage asset, though still through boundary planting and therefore severely filtered. The current views are dominated by poor quality palisade fencing, industrial sheds and buildings, shipping containers and external storage. This presents a poor-quality aspect upon which both views of the Grouping are afforded, but also in outward views to the west over the Site. The proposed scheme will draw back the existing extent of glasshouses on this western flank and provide tree planting along either side of the access drive, and this will be extended compared to the refused application. This planting will reinforce existing relatively thin planting on this flank and will, over time, provide a robust screen not only to the access road, but also to the remaining glasshouses, forming part of the wider commercial nursery. The proposed planting along the access drive will represent an enhancement to the current setting on this aspect. The removal of the wider storage space along this edge will also likely see a consequent reduction in the movement of plant accessing the storage.
- 4.17 The proposed development will result in areas of enhancement including most notably:
- The provision of further tree planting along the western boundary to the Grouping which will over time provide a robust screen to the retained wider commercial nursery beyond this boundary;
  - The creation of an access drive, realigned and further distanced from the boundary, will necessitate the removal of several glasshouses and the clearance of existing buildings, notably two large industrial sheds, and external storage including shipping containers and pallet stacks. This will draw the retained commercial nursery further away from the western boundary of the Grouping;
  - The reduced tree planting along the southern boundary of the Grouping, planted within a widened buffer, will improve openness, where presently views are afforded of the nursery polytunnels, glasshouses and industrial sheds. This will reinforce the existing characteristics of the sequestered, private gardens of the Grouping with its extensive and mature planting regime; and
  - The better, least filtered and partial view cone or corridor connecting the scheme's green, open spaces (with associated pathway, seating areas and interpretation board) between the Manor House and How Wood [Plate 2], extending south-eastwards from the House, will be maintained in the Site. This will draw the viewer's eye to the roofscape of the asset and any peeked interest will be fed by the interpretation board on the scheme's Village Green.
- 4.18 Overall, and taking into consideration the scope for these further mitigation measures it is considered that the full application scheme will likely give rise to a low level of less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage assets. This will be notably lower than the level of harm identified for the previous applications for a care village on the Site. Paragraph 196 of the NPPF would be engaged, which requires this harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme. The proposed development on Site will increase the extent and density of built form and activity immediately south of the Manor House grounds. This low level of harm will need to be clearly and convincingly justified.
- 4.19 This proposed development scheme would therefore give a greater opportunity to control and soften the interface between the Burston Manor Grouping and the Site and the degree of harm recognises that the Site is no longer in agricultural use, operating as a commercial nursery with a considerable bulk of the Site comprising industrial style buildings, glasshouses, polytunnels and matting; elements of which are currently visible in glimpsed and filtered views from some parts of the Grouping.
- 4.20 In respect of weighing the public benefits of the scheme against the harm to the significance of the built heritage assets, while a built heritage statement is not the place to measure this, in general

terms those benefits identified in the last refused application for the Site and the subsequent appeal largely pertain here. They include, in general terms and as set out in detail in the planning statement:

- The proposed development provides new residential units to help meet the LPA's five-year housing land supply which they are not currently meeting;
- The proposal will provide high-quality care accommodation for the local area;
- There is no availability of sequentially preferable sites in the locality upon which to provide the proposed development;
- The proposed development will free up other sectors of the housing market by providing accommodation for the older population;
- Site access for the wider Burston Garden Centre and neighbouring properties will be improved as part of the proposed development providing enhanced safety for road users; and
- The proposed development will foster closer ties with the wider community including local schools, places of worship and community groups, alongside granting public access to communal facilities in the clubhouse on the Site.

## 5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This Built Heritage Statement has been prepared for the Castleoak Group in order to assess the potential impact on the historic built environment arising from the proposed development of the Site. This Built Heritage Statement meets the requirements of the NPPF and local planning policy. It provides sufficient information and assessment to identify the potential impacts arising from the development of land to the rear of Burston Garden Centre near St Albans in Hertfordshire.
- 5.2 This Built Heritage Statement concludes that the proposed development of the Site will result, where there is any harm, in a less than substantial level of harm to the high significance of the Grade II\* listed Burston Manor House and the Grade II listed Outbuilding; specifically, and in line with the guidance of the PPG 18a-018, this will be no greater than a minor or low level of harm within the spectrum of less than substantial harm.
- 5.3 The NPPF states in paragraph 196 that *'where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal'*. The statutory duty placed on the decision maker in this case is derived from section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which require the decision maker to *'have regard to the desirability of preserving'* (i.e. keeping from harm) a listed building.
- 5.4 Although great weight must be given to any harm by the decision maker to the identified designated asset's significance made by the proposed development, it is concluded that this level of harm, where harm has been identified, remains no greater than minor or low and at the lower end of the spectrum of less than substantial harm.
- 5.5 It is also concluded that the proposed development, in terms of built heritage issues, is not contrary to St Albans City and District's Policy 86 (Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest) or the NPPF. The scheme successfully minimises any negative impacts to the identified heritage assets' significance and does not restrict the Council in having a special regard to keeping the identified heritage assets from harm and allows the appropriate engagement of paragraph 196 of the NPPF.
- 5.6 In summary, the development scheme, as set out in the outline application will mainly comprise development in an already developed parcel of land. It will introduce built form to a very small portion of the identified heritage assets' wider setting. The Site retains only a residual, historic functional and ownership association with Burston Manor House and the Outbuilding, due to the change from a manorial seat to a farmstead by at least the nineteenth century and then to a domestic residence in the mid twentieth century.
- 5.7 The planning application sets out the development scheme's public benefits. The application sets out that the planning balance for the decision maker will include sufficient public benefits to outweigh the less than substantial harms to the two noted heritage assets. The identified public benefits provide the justification for the aggregate minor or low level of harm noted above.
- 5.8 The proposed development will cause no more than minor or low level of harm at the lower end of the spectrum of less than substantial harm to the significance of the two identified heritage assets' significance. The application sets out that the no greater than minor or low level of harm is clearly and convincingly justified, with the public benefits of the scheme outweighing this harm. Consequently, on built heritage grounds, the planning application can be consented

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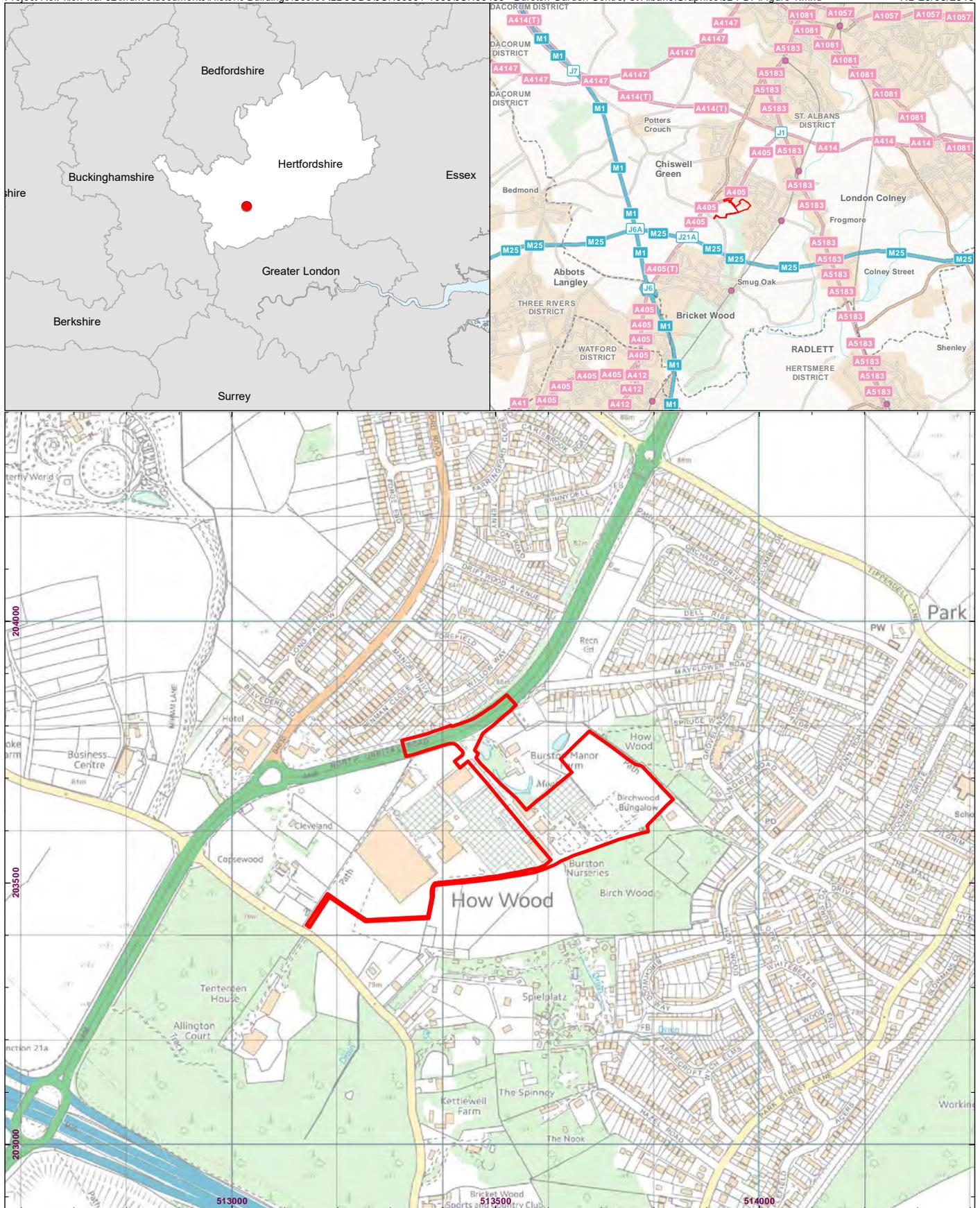
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Street Map— [www.streetmap.co.uk](http://www.streetmap.co.uk)

# FIGURES



 Site Boundary



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Scale at A4: 1:10,000



Figure 1  
Site Location



 Site Boundary

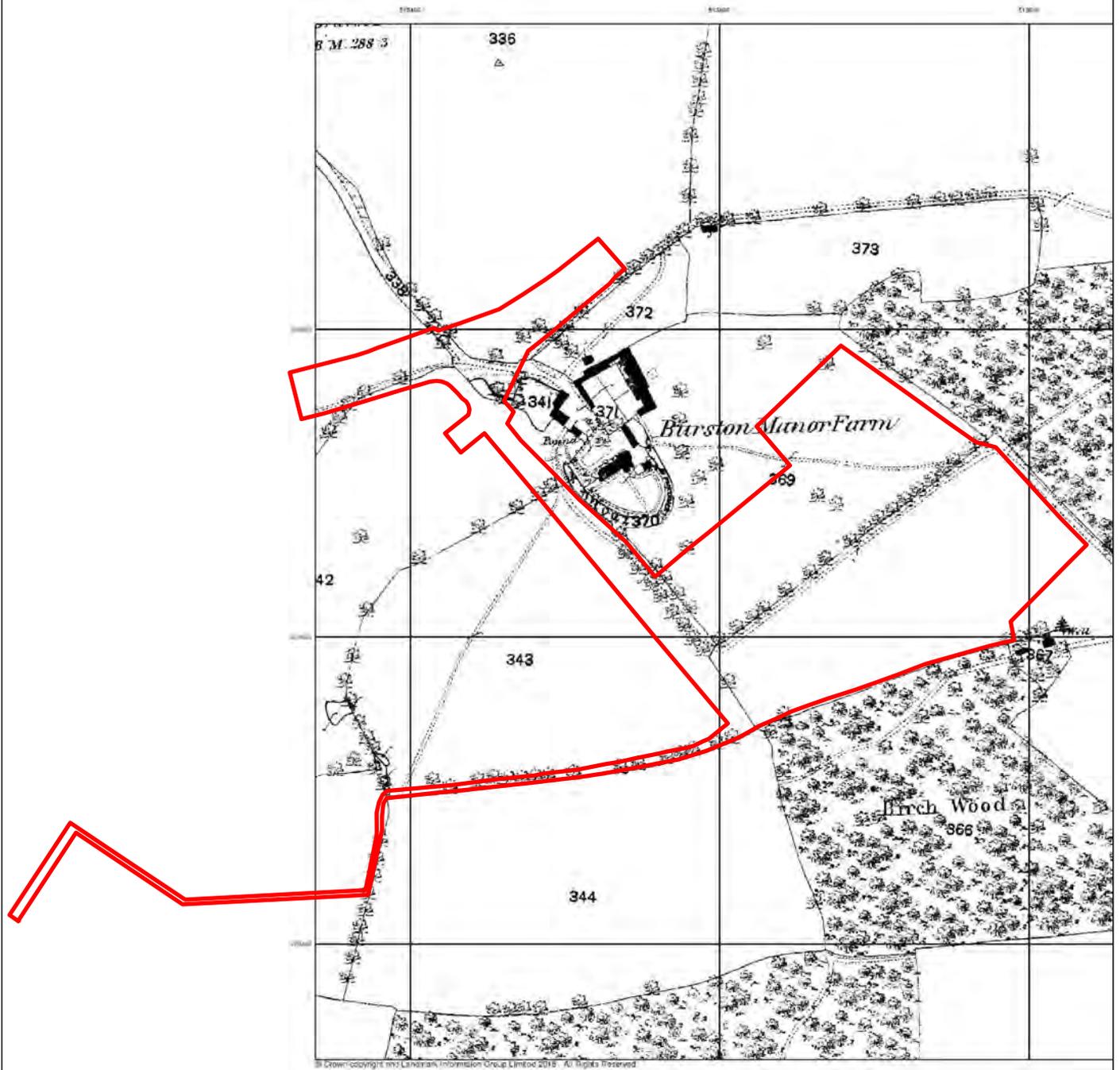


Not to Scale  
Illustrative Only



Figure 2

1838 St Stephen Parish Tithe  
Map



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 Site Boundary

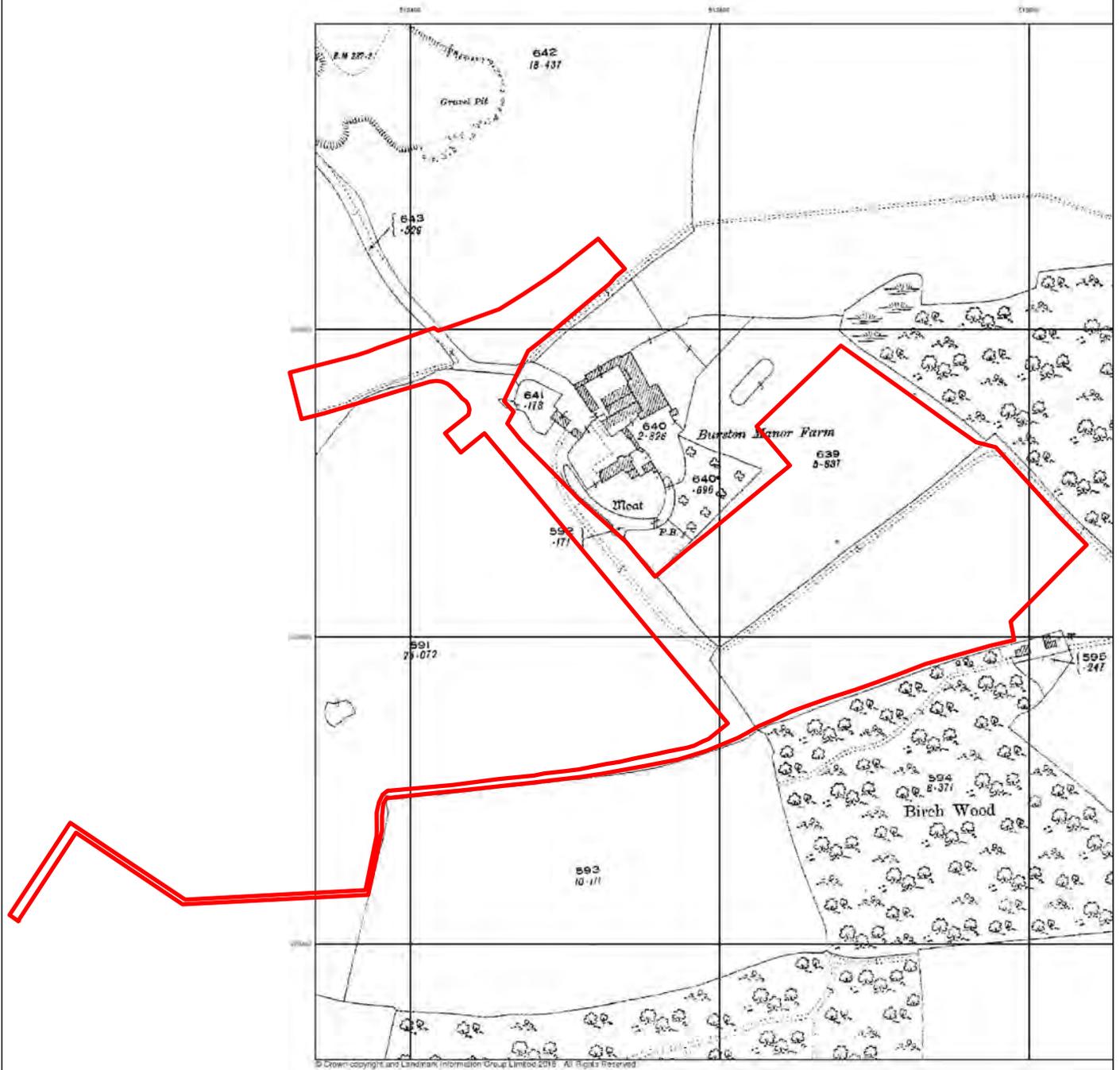


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Figure 3  
1872 Ordnance Survey Map





 Site Boundary

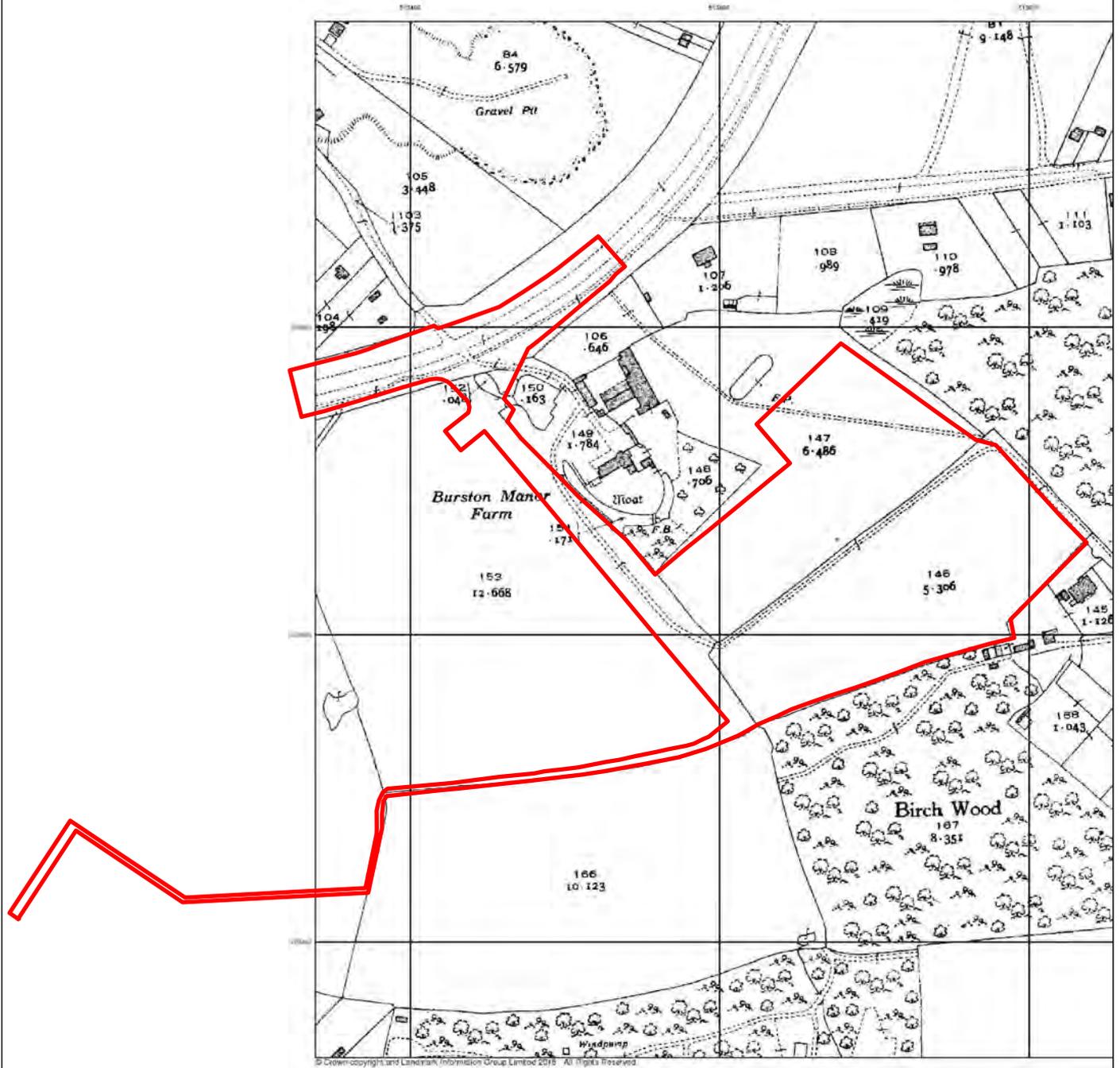


Not to Scale  
Illustrative Only



Figure 5

1924 Ordnance Survey Map



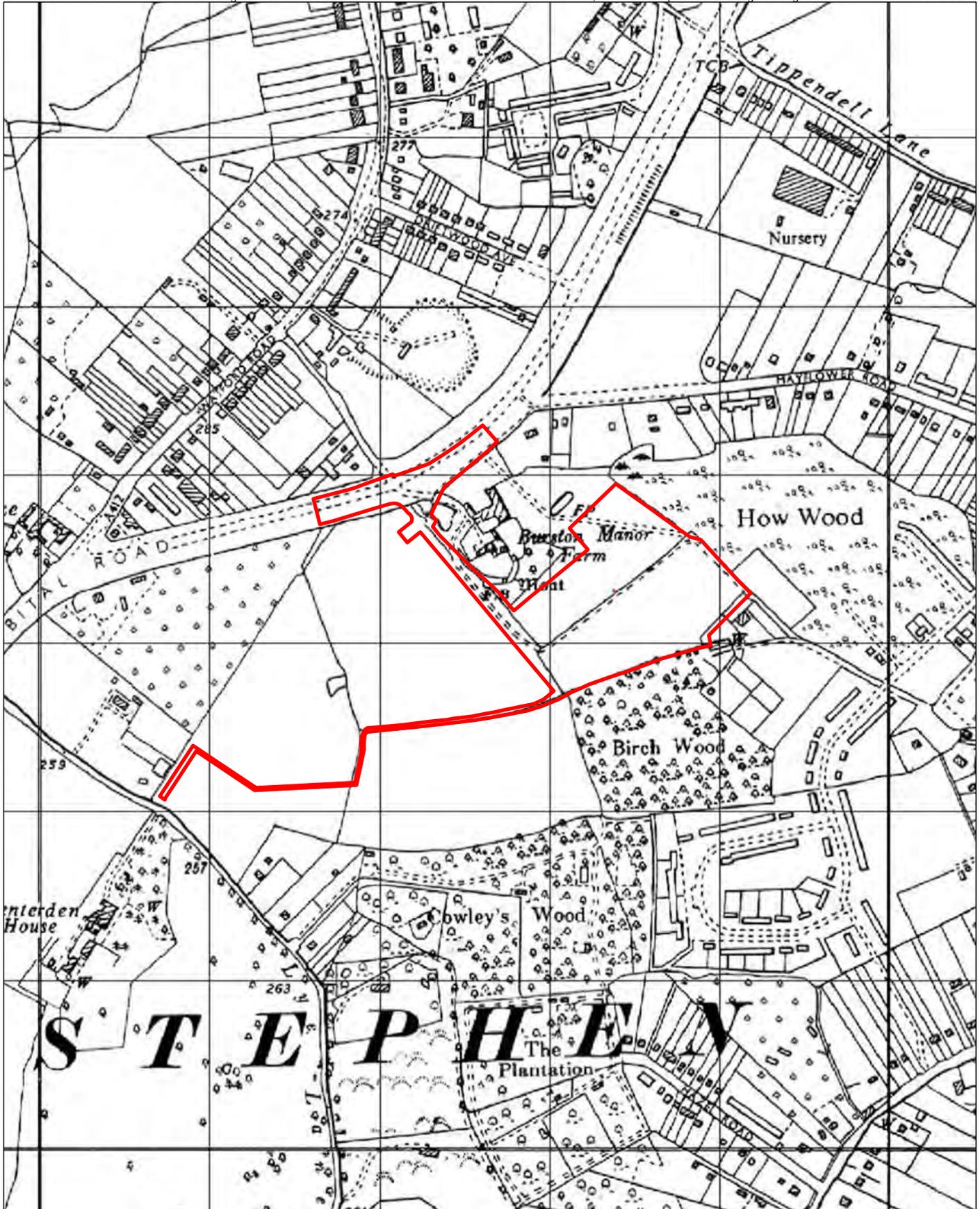
 Site Boundary



Not to Scale  
Illustrative Only



Figure 6  
1938 Ordnance Survey Map



 Site Boundary

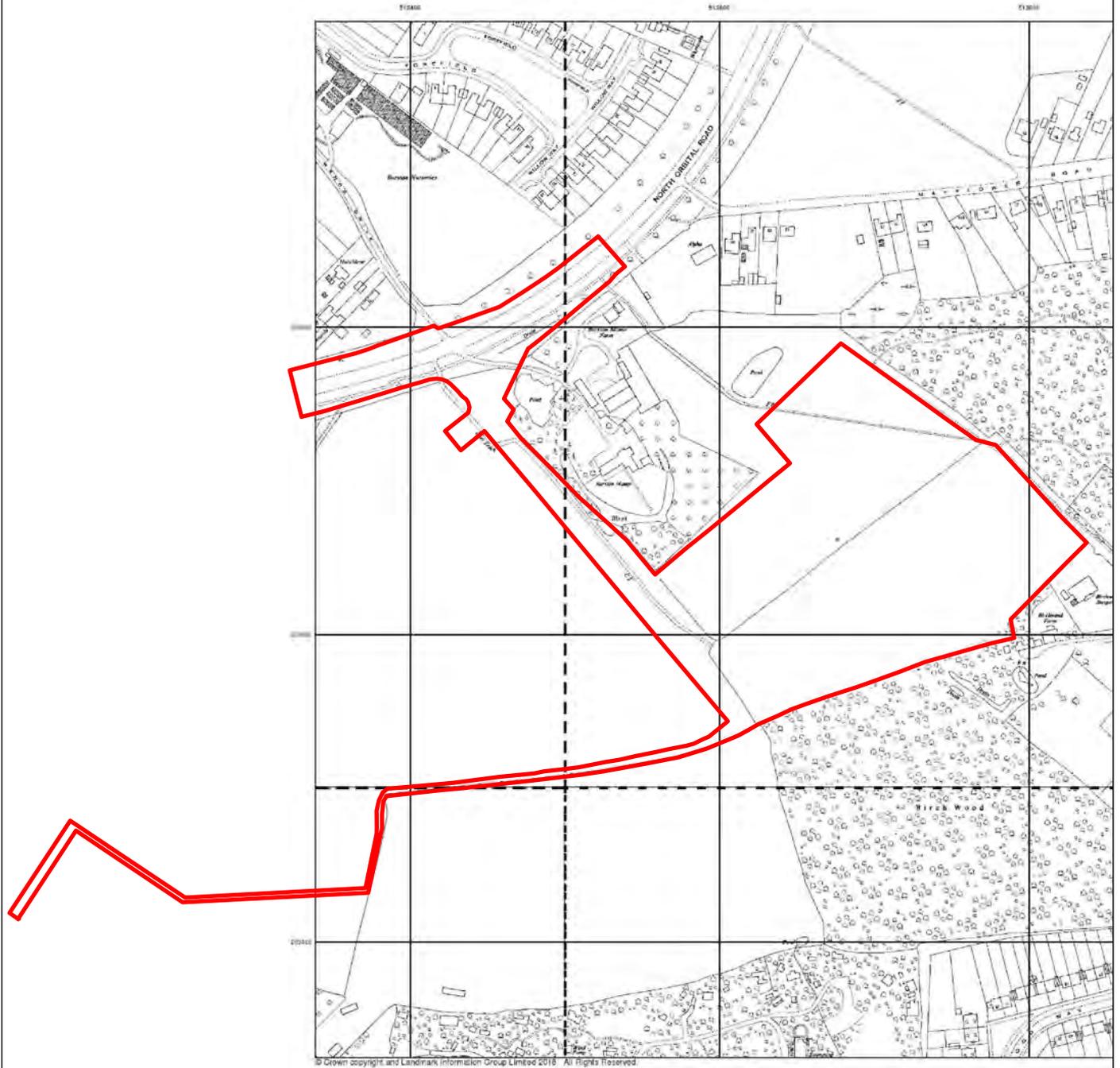


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Figure 7

1960 Ordnance Survey Map



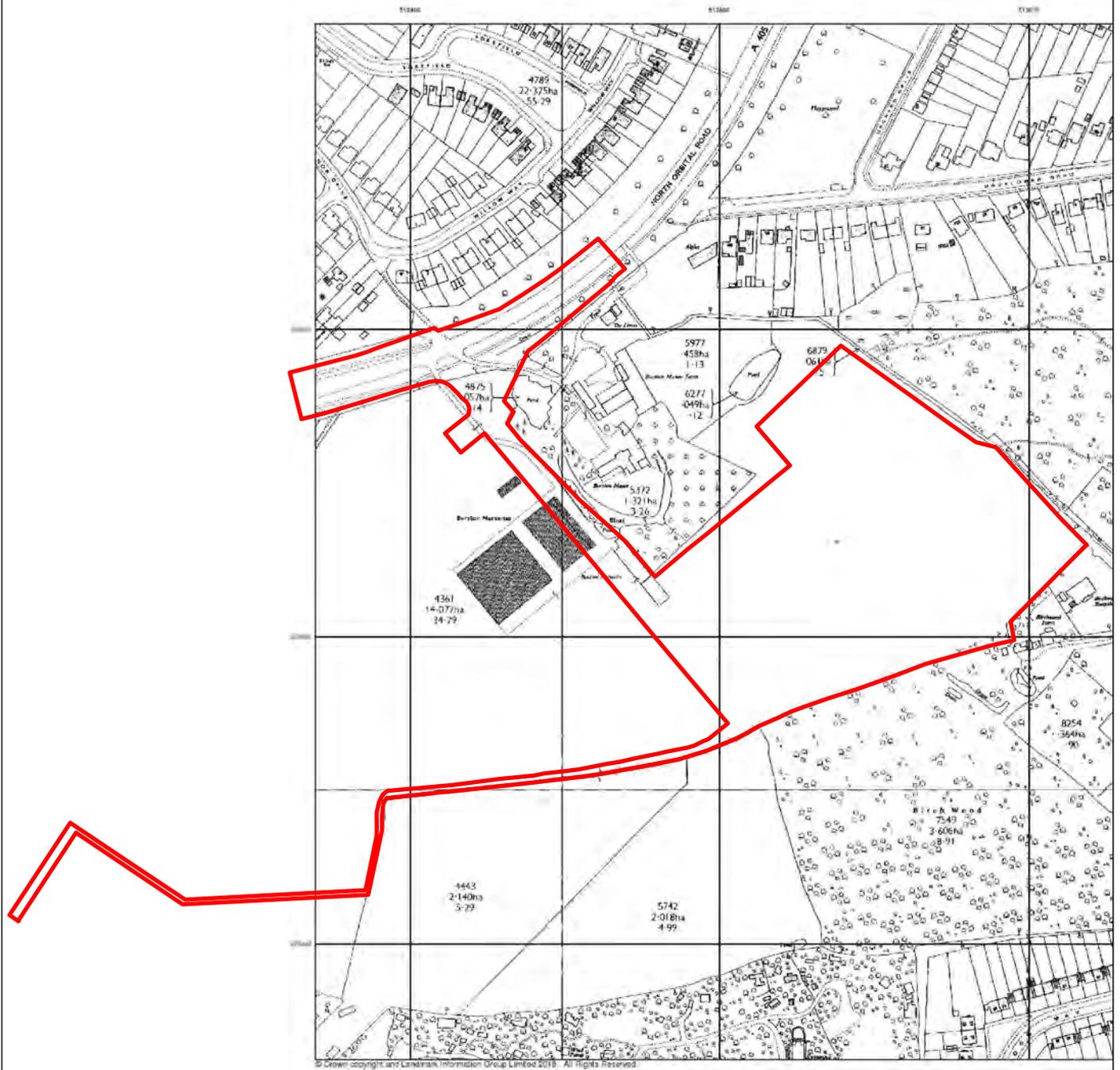
 Site Boundary



Not to Scale  
Illustrative Only



Figure 8  
1962 Ordnance Survey Map



 Site Boundary



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Illustrative Only



Figure 9

1968-1973 Ordnance Survey Map



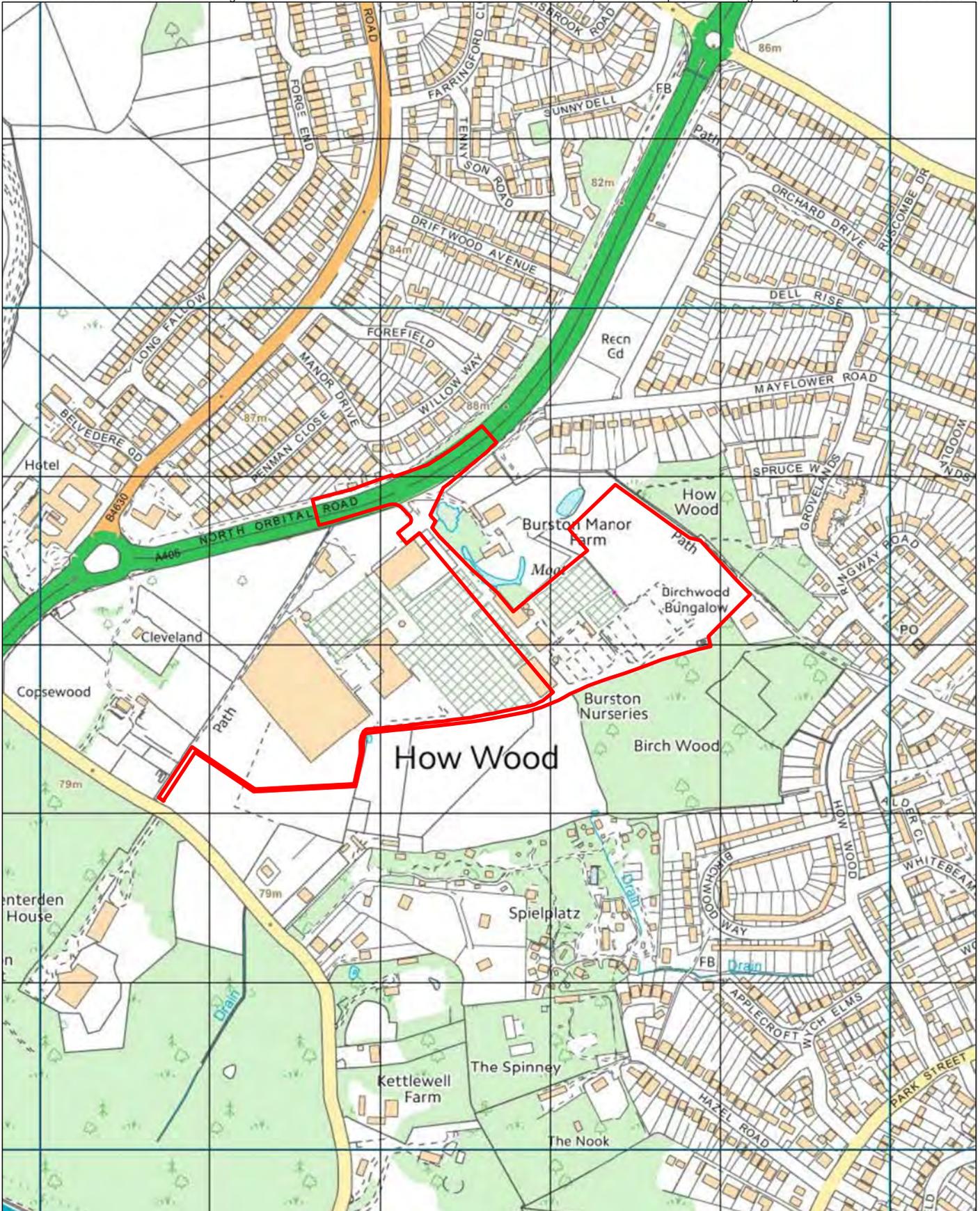
 Site Boundary



Not to Scale  
Illustrative Only



Figure 10  
2006 Aerial Photograph



 Site Boundary



Not to Scale  
Illustrative Only



Figure 11

2018 Ordnance Survey Map

## PLATES



Plate 1: View south from edge of Site along northern boundary.



Plate 2: View looking north-west from south-eastern corner of Site towards Burston Manor.



Plate 3: View south-east from edge of Site on northern edge.



Plate 4: View from southern boundary looking over Site towards Burston Manor above glasshouses.



Plate 5: View from southern edge of Site looking to the north-east.



Plate 6: View along southern boundary of Site to west incorporating several buildings (centre right) to be removed as part of the proposals.



Plate 7: View east from western edge of Site.



Plate 8: Looking north along proposed access drive corridor through present storage area.



Plate 9: looking towards Burston Manor from area of access drive with buildings in view to be removed.



Plate 10: Buildings on Site to be removed as part of proposals.



Plate 11: View looking west from edge of car parking area adjacent to entrance to Burston Manor (left).



Plate 12: Burston Manor viewed from proposed access drive to west of the Manor House's gardens.



Plate 13: View of Burston Manor from southern corner of the Site.



Plate 14: Burston Manor viewed from east (outside and to the north of the Site) with separately listed Outbuilding (centre left with louvred vent at its apex).